

 A Publication of  
Shepherds of Christ  
Ministries

# shepherds of Christ

NEWSLETTERS

*Selected Writings*  
*On Spirituality*  
— *For All People* —  
*As Published in*  
*“Shepherds of Christ”*  
*Newsletter for Priests*

## Volume 3

Rev. Edward J. Carter, S.J., Editor

*Shepherds of Christ Publications*  
Madison, Indiana

This book is published by Shepherds of Christ Publications, a subsidiary of Shepherds of Christ Ministries, a tax exempt religious public charitable corporation organized to foster devotion to the Two Hearts, the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

For additional copies, contact us:

Shepherds of Christ Ministries  
P.O. Box 627  
China, IN 47250-0627  
USA

(toll free number) 1-888-211-3041  
(phone) 1-812-273-8405  
(fax) 1-812-273-3182

<http://www.sofc.org>

#### Acknowledgements

The editor acknowledges the use of certain book excerpts as follows:

From *The Jerusalem Bible* by Alexander Jones, ed., © 1966 by Darton, Longman & Todd, Ltd. and Doubleday, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc. Used by permission of Doubleday, a division of Doubleday, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc.

From the English translation of *The Liturgy of the Hours* © 1974, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. All rights reserved.

From *The Documents of Vatican II*, reprinted with permission of America Press, Inc., 106 West 56th Street, New York, New York 10019, © 1966. All rights reserved.

Copyright © 2008 Shepherds of Christ Publications

First Printing: 2008

# Contents

## ..... Newsletter Issues .....

<b>Foreword</b> .....	v
-----------------------	---

### 2000 ISSUE 1

<b>Christ is Our Strength</b> .....	1
The Father and Mary .....	3
The Holy Spirit in Our Lives .....	3
The Eucharist. ....	4
The Church. ....	7
Priesthood. ....	8
Prayer and Self Identity .....	9
Various Thoughts .....	10
Pope John Paul II and Fatima .....	11
The Christian and the World .....	12
A Prayer for Priests .....	12
Act of Consecration (new) .....	13
Letters .....	14

### 2000 ISSUE 2

<b>Suffering: A Source of Life</b> .....	17
Our Father .....	21
The Holy Spirit in Our Lives .....	22
Mary and the Priest .....	22
The Church - Reflection of the Trinity, Body of Christ, and Spouse of Christ .....	23
The Eucharist .....	26
Priesthood .....	27
Prayer .....	28
Becoming .....	29
The Christian and the World .....	30
Various Thoughts. ....	31
A Prayer for Priests .....	32
Act of Consecration (new). ....	32
Letters .....	33

**2000 ISSUE 3**

<b>An Overview of the Spiritual Life</b> . . . . .	35
Indwelling of the Trinity and the Life of Grace . . . . .	37
Life In and With Jesus . . . . .	39
The Father's Will for Us - Our Source of Peace . . . . .	44
The Holy Spirit and Mary . . . . .	47
The Church . . . . .	48
The Sacraments . . . . .	52
The Eucharist . . . . .	52
Priesthood . . . . .	57
Prayer . . . . .	62
Relationship with Others . . . . .	66
The Christian and the World . . . . .	67
Purification . . . . .	68
The Vision of Faith . . . . .	69
Trust in God . . . . .	70
Humility . . . . .	71
Strength in Weakness . . . . .	71
Living in the Present Moment . . . . .	72
Surrender to God . . . . .	73
Spiritual Guidance . . . . .	74
Mind and Heart . . . . .	76
The Mystical Life . . . . .	77
Heart of Christ, Heart of Mary . . . . .	79
The Theology of Consecration . . . . .	80
Act of Consecration (new) . . . . .	81
A Prayer for Priests . . . . .	82
Letters . . . . .	82

**2000 ISSUE 4**

<b>The Value of Work</b> . . . . .	85
Jesus . . . . .	89
The Father's Love for Us . . . . .	90
Devotion to the Holy Spirit . . . . .	91
Mary . . . . .	91
The Eucharist . . . . .	92
Priesthood . . . . .	94
Henri Nouwen on Prayer . . . . .	95
Words from Mother Teresa . . . . .	96
Avery Dulles and the Theological Thought of John Paul II . . . . .	97
The Christian and the World . . . . .	98
Prayer for Priests . . . . .	98
Act of Consecration . . . . .	99
Letters . . . . .	100

<b>Shepherds of Christ Associates Prayer Manual</b> . . . . .	103
---	-----

# Foreword

God created us in His image and likeness and God is love. We were created for Him. Fr. Carter in writing the Priestly Newsletter 2000 Issue 3 was editing his masterpiece on the Spiritual life.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit dwell in the graced baptized soul. In learning to live more deeply in God, recognizing how God created us to be more and more in that image and likeness of Him and recognizing how vital consecration to the Pure and Holy Hearts of Jesus and Mary are – I state clearly what the mission in these Priestly Newsletters hope to accomplish –

Greater intimacy with God – Greater life **IN HIM**. Living out the Pascal mystery we go to the fountain of His life outpoured to us in the Church.

We love our priests so very much and thank God for calling them and their “yes” to this awesome vocation God gives to these men. We give our lives praying for the priests, the Church and the world in this network of prayer chapters and circulating the Priestly Newsletter begun by Fr. Carter May 31, 1994. Our lives are a mystery unfolding more and more **IN HIM**.

God is preparing us through our cooperation to be living forever in the beatific vision. The Church and the sacraments is the primary way God helps us.

We go to the Eucharist to be saturated more and more with His grace and we sing, read, and ponder the Word of God as it lives more and more in us.

So we can say with St. Paul

...I have been crucified with Christ and yet I am alive; yet it is no longer I, but Christ living in me. *Galatians 2: 19-20*

As we go to the Pure and Holy Heart of Mary – the Holy Spirit works more and more performing His marvelous wonder – bringing us forth more and more in the image of God – The incarnation goes on in us in the spiritual womb of Mary her Immaculate Heart.

Mary takes us to the Heart of Jesus and there we dwell in the vat of love of Jesus' most burning Heart and experience the greatest treasures of knowing and loving God and others more deeply through His Pure and Tender Heart of love.

We live out our baptismal commitment dwelling in deep love in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

**The cover of this book pictures Christ's image in stone – Our stony hearts are molded more and more in His image as we grow in the spiritual life.**

Mary takes us to the Heart of Jesus who takes us to the bosom of the Father –

Oneness in God – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit the perfect community – our model for oneness – a glimpse of life forever in the embrace of the Almighty God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

After communion filled so deeply with His presence – I touched you God and in that embrace I knew You in great oneness – I tasted greater insight into Your Divine Mysteries and I knew that all we do here in dwelling in the Hearts of Jesus and Mary and leading souls to deeper intimacy with God – deeper love of the Eucharist – living deeper life in God would help lead men to deeper oneness as members of the body of Christ, deeper intercessors and deeper love in God.

Rita Ring, Co-founder  
Shepherds of Christ Ministries

# shepherds of Christ

A SPIRITUALITY NEWSLETTER FOR PRIESTS

2000 ISSUE 1

Chief Shepherd of the Flock

## Christ is Our Strength

**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)<sup>1</sup>**

St. Paul tells us: *It is, then, about my weaknesses that I am happiest of all to boast, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me; and that is why I am glad of weaknesses, insults, constraints, persecutions and distress for Christ's sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong.* (2 Cor 12:9-10)

This brief passage contains one of the greatest lessons of the spiritual life. As we progress along our spiritual journey, we become increasingly aware of how weak we are in ourselves, but how strong we are in Christ.

To experience our weakness involves suffering. The degree and kind of suffering can vary. The suffering can include the experience of the classical dark night of the spirit as described by St. John of the Cross.

One of the main purposes of the dark night is to make a person keenly aware of his or her helplessness without God. This is a most necessary point that mystics must pass through if the spiritual marriage, or transforming union with God in Christ, is to occur. In this transforming union, there is a profound exchange between God and the mystic. God's self-communication to the mystic is most profound, and the mystic makes a profound gift of self to God. In this state the mystic is supremely aware of living by the life of God, and without experiencing one's helplessness without God, this lived awareness does not occur.

If not all on the spiritual journey experience the classic dark night, all must undergo a proportionate purification which includes increased awareness of personal weakness. In this process one more and more abandons the self to Christ and increasingly lives by His life, by His strength. Again St. Paul speaks to us: *I have been crucified with Christ and yet I am alive; yet it is*

*no longer I, but Christ living in me. The life that I am now living, subject to the limitation of human nature, I am living in faith, faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:19-20)*

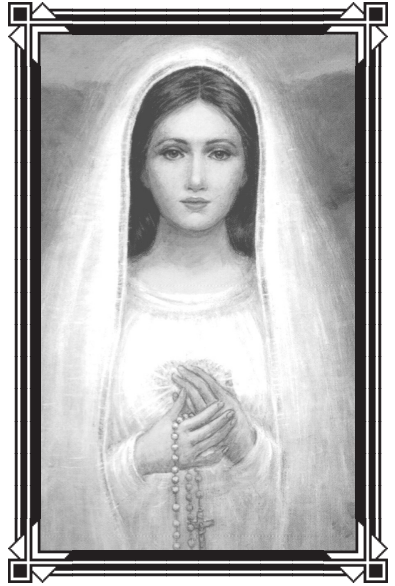
Our sense of weakness is not a paralyzing one. It does not hinder our performance of duty. On occasion, athletes and other performers may, for various reasons, feel very inadequate regarding the exercise of their particular skill. The sense of inadequacy, in turn, can detract from performance. In the spiritual life, however, our sense of weakness does not impair our capacity to function as Christians. On the contrary. If, sensing our helplessness, we increasingly abandon ourselves to Christ, we act with greater spiritual vitality. We do this with a basic peace of which the world knows not. St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, one of the greatest apostles of devotion to the Heart of Christ, speaks about this peace and its connection with surrender to Christ and His strength. In one of her letters she says: “Try especially to preserve peace of heart... The way to preserve this peace is not to have a will of our own any more, but to put the will of the Sacred Heart in the place of ours, and let Him will for us whatever gives Him the most glory, being content to submit and abandon ourselves. In a word, this loving Heart will supply whatever is wanting in you. He will love God for you, and you will love God in Him and through Him.”<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, to those who are unspiritual, the concept of striving to grow through the sense of our weakness is complete folly, utter craziness. To those who have received the gift of the Holy Spirit, however, being properly aware of one’s weakness is strength and peace and consolation.

Jesus is our Savior. When we are tired and weary, let us go to the Heart of Christ. Let us not worry about anything. Let us not fret. Our work for Christ is the work of God. Do we not trust that God will take care of His own work?

To be able to say in the midst of adversity and struggle, “Jesus’ hand is here and He knows what is happening, I will let go of my anxiety and be at peace,” is to have reached a great plateau of trust in Christ. Yes, let us trust in Jesus in all our trials. Let us refuse to worry. What good does worry accomplish? Let us convert the energy put into worrying into the energy of trusting in Our Lord.

Jesus spread His arms on the cross in the greatest love for each of us. He





knew each of us by name. If He endured such agonizing suffering for love of each of us, why do we not have the greatest trust that He wants to be so close to us, attending to all our needs — if only we allow Him?

The more we place our trust in Jesus, the more we experience His peace. Again, let us refuse to worry. Let us place all cares in the hands of Jesus and trust that He will tend to them. He is present to us, loving us, guarding us, asking for our love, asking for our surrender.

We end these reflections concerning how we find our strength in Christ with another quotation from St. Paul: *As for me, I am full of joy in the Lord, now that at last your consideration for me has blossomed again; though I recognise that you really did have consideration before, but had no opportunity to show it. I do not say this because I have lacked anything; I have learnt to manage with whatever I have. I know how to live modestly, and I know how to live luxuriously too: in every way now I have mastered the secret of all conditions: full stomach and empty stomach, plenty and poverty. There is nothing I cannot do in the One who strengthens me.* (Phil 4:10-13)

## The Father and Mary

In his Encyclical, *Redemptor Hominis* (Redeemer of Man) Pope John Paul II states: “The special characteristic of the motherly love that the Mother of God inserts in the mystery of the Redemption and the life of the Church finds expression in its exceptional closeness to man and all that happens to him. It is in this that the mystery of the Mother consists. The Church, which looks to her with altogether special love and hope, wishes to make this mystery her own in an ever deeper manner..”

“The Father’s eternal love, which has been manifested in the history of mankind through the Son whom the Father gave... comes close to each of us through this Mother and thus takes on tokens that are of more easy understanding and access by each person.”<sup>3</sup>

## The Holy Spirit in Our Lives

◆ Archbishop Luis Martinez gives us these words of wisdom: “Our love for the Father is tender and confident like that of children; eager to glorify Him as His only-begotten Son taught us to do by word and example. Love for the Father is the intense desire to have His will fulfilled on earth as it is in heaven. Our love for the Son, who willed to become flesh for us, is characterized by the tendency to union with Him and transformation into Him...”

“Love for the Holy Spirit also has its special character, which we should

study in order completely to understand devotion to Him. We have explained how the Holy Spirit loves us, how He moves us like a divine breath that draws us to the bosom of God, like a sacred fire that transforms us into fire, like a divine artist who forms Jesus in us. Surely, then, our love for the Holy Spirit should be marked by loving docility, by full surrender, and by a constant fidelity that permits us to be moved, directed, and transformed by His sanctifying action.”<sup>4</sup>

## 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)<sup>5</sup>

◆ *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)<sup>6</sup>

◆ *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*) <sup>7</sup>

◆ Romano Guardini observes: “The gift of the Eucharist and Our Lord’s death are in the deepest sense one and the same mystery.

“The love that drove Him to die for us was the same love that made Him give us Himself as nourishment. It was not enough to be giving us gifts, words, instructions; He gave us Himself as well. Perhaps we must seek out Woman, the loving-mother, to find someone who understands this kind of longing; to be giving not some thing, but rather oneself — to give oneself, with all one’s being. Not only the spirit, not only one’s fidelity, but body and soul, flesh and blood, everything — this is indeed the ultimate love, to want to feed others with the very substance of one’s own self. And for that Our Lord went to His death, so He might rise again in the resurrection, in that condition wherein He desired to give Himself to all mankind for evermore.

“And now He who died for us lives again, within us.” <sup>8</sup>

◆ St. John Vianney, Curé of Ars, movingly says: “What does Jesus Christ do in the Eucharist? It is God who, as our Savior, offers himself each day for us to his Father’s justice. If you are in difficulties and sorrow, he will comfort and relieve you. If you are sick, he will either cure you or give you strength to suffer... If the devil, the world, and the flesh are making war against you, he will give you the weapons with which to fight, to resist, and to win the victory. If you are poor, he will enrich you with all sorts of riches for time and eternity. Let us open the door of his sacred and adorable Heart, and be wrapped about for an instant by the flames of his love, and we shall see what a God who loves us can do. O my God, who shall be able to comprehend...

“How great was the charity of Jesus Christ in choosing for the institution of the Eucharist the eve of the day he was to be put to death!... Men are weaving the blackest plots against him, and he is only occupied in giving them the most precious gift he has. They are only thinking of setting up an infamous cross for him that they may put him to death, and he is only thinking of setting up an altar that he may immolate himself every day for us. They are preparing to shed his Blood, and Jesus Christ wills that this same Blood shall be to us a draught of immortality for the consolation and happiness of our souls” <sup>9</sup>

◆ Here are words from a spiritual journal: “This is how I am with Jesus. I am empty. I want Him to make Himself known to me. I didn’t have much theological knowledge when I started sitting in front of the tabernacle. I was looking for love from Jesus. Nobody loved me the way my soul wanted to be loved. I craved to be with Jesus. I wanted my heart filled. I wanted the craving I felt inside satisfied. I thirsted for love. I sat with Him present in the

tabernacle and He filled me. He revealed Himself to me. He was the Bridegroom of my soul and I His bride. As I became more intimately united to Him, sitting there in silence and going to Him, I cried. I was so filled with love. I found what I was looking for all my life. He wrote the knowledge of Himself on my soul. He wrote this knowledge in the intimate moments I spent with Him at Mass after Communion and before the tabernacle.”<sup>10</sup>

◆ How much do we appreciate the great opportunity of participating in the Eucharistic Sacrifice? Here is a story which should inspire us all: “A priest who was in the German prison camp Dachau describes the Mass after all the German guards were in bed. He said, ‘Our lives were in danger if we were ever discovered. A young priest had to memorize the names of all of those who had received Communion. After night call and bed check, we would set our guards, darken the windows, and the lucky one to be chosen to celebrate for this momentous occasion would carefully brush his pathetic garb, put the stole over his shoulders, and by the small light of his smuggled candle begin the commemoration of that great passion... We could understand the Mass. All that could crowd into the room were there, tears of joy running down our cheeks. Christ the Lord, who knew what suffering was, was coming... to bring us strength and consolation. The small hosts were broken into as many particles as possible so that the greatest number could communicate. We had to keep a secret roster of those who received. We missed some of the liturgy perhaps, but I think that God looked down into that prison room and

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

found a particularly refreshing response to his cry of love from the cross, ‘I thirst.’ There was nothing that could keep us from doing all in our power to be closer to God.”<sup>11</sup>

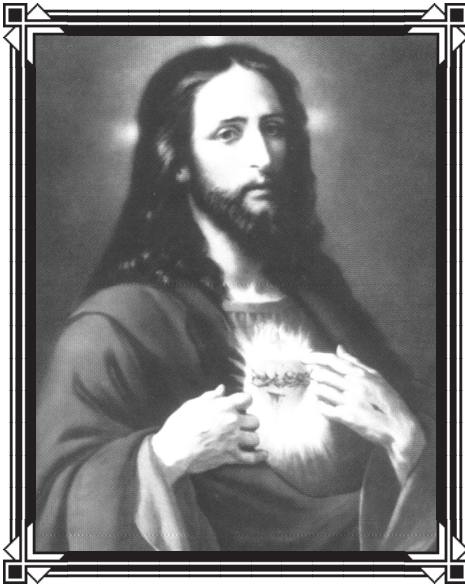
◆ From a spiritual journal: “I struggle intently to do His work, and I am weary from running the race. I am tired, I am truly human, but the unquenchable love I have for Him in my heart is at the core of my existence. It is in Him I exist and in Him I love. I love Him so intently and yet I am so unworthy of His gifts given to me. I long more for the desire to help souls, and His desires become mine through my deep union with Him especially after the reception of the Eucharist. On this day (Feast of the Assumption), I felt the unquenchable purity of the Heart of Mary and the joy of dwelling deeply in His Heart in her pure love. It was a special gift He gave to me, to be wrapped in Mary’s Heart despite my faults. He gave Himself so completely to me. I only long for this, knowing this presence.”<sup>12</sup>

# The Church

◆ Avery Dulles, S.J., the well-known theologian who has written much about the Church, observes: “The Church, as I have already contended, is essentially a mystery of grace, a wonderful encounter between the divine and the human. Even in its visible structures, the Church is not a mere organization to be judged on grounds of efficiency, but a sacrament of God’s saving deed in Jesus Christ. From this it follows, in my judgment, that the Church’s forms of speech and life, and indeed its entire corporate existence, must be such as to mediate a vital communion with Christ the Lord. The Church must be a place of prayer and worship, praise and witness. Any institutional change in the Church must be carefully assessed for its effect on the spiritual life of the members. Does it intensify their faith, their hope, their charity? Does it help them to center their lives on Christ and to ground their existence in the God who raised him from the dead?”<sup>13</sup>

◆ There has been much written about the Church in these our times. Regarding those writings which have dealt with reform in the Church, some of these, even while pointing out shortcomings in the life of the Church, have been put forth in a positive, constructive way. Others, sad to say, have done more harm than good and have contributed considerably to polarization in the Church. We again refer to Avery Dulles, S.J., in reference to this polarization: “Polarization, in my opinion, is more deleterious to the Church than any external opposition. When the Church suffers persecution from hostile powers, it often reacts with heroism and energy. Polarization, however, produces lethargy and disgust.”<sup>14</sup>

◆ One person who could never be accused of contributing to polarization in the Church is the eminent theologian Henri de Lubac. This man, possessing a profound knowledge and love of the Church, has left us these words: “The Church is at once human and divine, at once a gift from above and a product of this earth... She is orientated towards the past, which contains a memorial she well knows is never past; she tends toward the future, elated by the hope of an ineffable consummation of whose nature no sensible sign gives a hint. Destined in her present form to leave all behind as ‘the image of this world’, she is destined in her innermost nature to remain intact for the day when what she is will be manifested. Multiple or multi-form, she is nonetheless *one*, of a most active and demanding unity. She is a people, the great anonymous crowd and still — there is no other word — the most personal of beings. Catholic, that is universal, she wishes her members to be open to everything and yet she herself is never fully open but when she is withdrawn into the intimacy of her interior life and in the silence of adoration. She is humble and she is majestic. She professes capacity to absorb every culture, to raise up their highest values; at the same time



we see her claim for her own the homes and hearts of the poor, the undistinguished, the simple and destitute masses. Not for an instant does she cease — and her immortality assures continuity — to contemplate him who is at once crucified and resurrected, the man of sorrows and lord of glory, vanquished by, but saviour of, the world. He is her bloodied spouse and her triumphant master. From his generous heart, ever open and yet always infinitely secret, she has received her existence and the life it is her wish to communicate to all...

“The Church is my mother because she brought me forth to a new life. She is my mother because her concern for me never slackens, any more than do her efforts to deepen that life in me, however unenthusiastic my cooperation. And though in me this life may be a fragile and timid growth, I have seen its full flowering in others...

“Happy those who from childhood have learnt to look on the Church as a mother! Happier still those whose experience, in whatever walk of life, has confirmed its truth! Happy those who one day were gripped by (and whose appreciation of it ever grew) the astonishing newness, richness and depth of the life communicated to them by this mother!”<sup>15</sup>

## Priesthood

◆ Pope John Paul II speaks to his brother priests: “*In a certain way prayer is the first and last condition for conversion, spiritual progress and holiness.* Perhaps in the recent years — at least in certain quarters — there has been too much discussion about the Priesthood, the priest’s ‘identity’, the value of his presence in the modern world, etc., and on the other hand there has been too little praying. There has not been enough enthusiasm for actuating the Priesthood itself through prayer...in order to confirm the priestly identity. It is prayer that shows the essential style of the priest; without prayer this style becomes deformed. Prayer helps us always to find the light that has led us since the beginning of our priestly vocation, and which never ceases to lead us, even though it seems at times to disappear in the darkness. Prayer enables

us to be converted continually, to remain in a state of continuous reaching out to God, which is essential if we wish to lead others to Him. Prayer helps us to believe, to hope and to love, even when our human weakness hinders us.

“Prayer likewise enables us continually to rediscover the dimensions of that kingdom for whose coming we pray every day, when we repeat the words that Christ taught us. Then we realize what *our place is in the realization of the petition*: ‘Thy kingdom come’, and we see how necessary we are in its realization.”

And here are further words of John Paul II to priests: “Dear brothers: ...you who have put your hand to the plough and do not turn back, and perhaps even more those of you who are doubtful of the meaning of your vocation or of the value of your service: think of the places where people anxiously await a priest, and where for many years, feeling the lack of such a priest, they do not cease to hope for his presence. And sometimes it happens that they meet in an abandoned shrine, and place on the altar a stole which they still keep, and recite all the prayers of the Eucharistic Liturgy; and then, at the moment that corresponds to the transubstantiation a deep silence comes down upon them, a silence sometimes broken by a sob... so ardently do they desire to hear the words that only the lips of a priest can efficaciously utter... So deeply do they feel the absence of a priest among them!... Such places are not lacking in the world. So if one of you doubts the meaning of his Priesthood, if he thinks it is ‘socially’ fruitless or useless, reflect on this!<sup>16</sup>

## Prayer and Self Identity

Here are words which unite prayer and one’s quest to grow in an awareness of one’s self-identity. “Since the only real identity we have is our relationship with God in Christ — we are in God’s image mediated by Christ — we grow in achieving true self-identity through growth in the awareness that each of us is a unique reflection of God, that we live by His life — indeed, we participate in his life through grace...

“Prayer plays a profound role in achieving self-identity. In the loving quiet of prayer God reveals both Himself to us and us to ourselves. These aspects are intimately connected. As God communicates knowledge concerning Himself, He also gives insight into ourselves, we who are in His image. As prayer grows, this insight concerning God and ourselves deepens. We become more aware of what is involved in living by the life of God, in living according to the divine image, in living a Christ-like existence. All these expressions point to the same reality — that we are finite expressions of the infinite, and each of us uniquely so, and that growth in self-identity means an increased lived awareness of this sublime truth.

“When this awareness reaches a certain consistency, we have arrived at a change in consciousness. This stage of the spiritual journey is of the utmost importance. If one goes forward after this change in consciousness, one’s life will never again be the same. One has achieved a new way of comprehending the answer to the mystery of human existence.

“Before this change in consciousness occurs, even the committed Christian can ask at times, ‘Is this all there is to life?’ This question can nag at the human heart even as one enjoys significant accomplishments, experiences the joy-dimension of the human condition, and feels a sense of love and security emanating from personal relationships.

“‘Is this all there is to life?’ For the Christian, this question and the manner in which he or she confronts it, is of critical importance. It is not as though the Christian who faces this existential challenge has not previously possessed the key to life’s mystery. The vision of faith has already provided this key. The vision of faith, however, operates on different levels. The more spiritually mature person, the one further advanced in prayer, has a better grasp on how to live the mystery of life than does one less spiritually advanced...

“Confronting properly, then, the haunting question ‘Is this all there is to life?’, will lead to this deeper Christian existence which will manifest that, yes, indeed, there is more to life than one had previously known. If one follows the lead of grace, if one grows in the life of prayer and consistently lives on the level where the Christ-like self is dynamically operative, one will never again be haunted by the feeling that life is not yielding a sufficient sense of fulfillment.”<sup>17</sup>

## Various Thoughts

◆ John Henry Cardinal Newman observes: “Be our mind as heavenly as it may be, most loving, most holy, most zealous, most energetic, most peaceful, yet if we look off from Him for a moment, and look towards ourselves, at once these excellent tempers fall into some extreme or mistake. Charity becomes over-easiness, holiness is tainted with spiritual pride, zeal degenerates into fierceness, activity eats up the spirit of prayer, hope is heightened into presumption. We cannot guide ourselves. God’s revealed word is our sovereign rule of conduct; and therefore, among other reasons, is faith so principal a grace, for it is the directing power which receives the commands of Christ, and applies them to the heart.”<sup>18</sup>

◆ Mother Mary Francis, P.C.C., writes: “The foundress of the Poor Clare nuns, St. Clare of Assisi, was a woman who quite noticeably and even notably used her mind. Just the fact of her being the first woman in history herself to write a Rule of Life for nuns indicates a mind well occupied with



the proper business of a mind. The complementary fact that she trailed beauty after her, shed loveliness about her, took ladyhood as a continual manner of living gives evidence that her heart was in good partnership with her mind. It was the same with...her mentor, St. Francis of Assisi, whose great mind was enlightened by God and used by himself to initiate a whole new way of religious life in the Church, while his heart made of him a poet, a singer, and sometimes a dancer, on occasion, while delivering his sermons.”<sup>19</sup>

## Pope John Paul II and Fatima

On May 12, 1982, Pope John Paul II made a pilgrimage to Fatima. One of his motives for his visit was to offer thanks for Mary’s intercession in saving his life relative to the assassination attempt a year earlier.

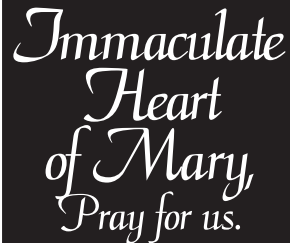
Some fifteen years later in 1997, the Holy Father gave us the following words regarding Fatima. Lynne Weil, a newspaper reporter, gives this account: “Pope John Paul said the series of Marian apparitions at Fatima, Portugal, rank as one of the most significant events of this century.

“The string of apparitions that ended 80 years ago was ‘one of the greatest’ signs of the times, ‘also because it announces in its message many of the signs that followed and it invites (us) to follow their call’, the pope said in a letter to Bishop Serafim de Sousa Ferreire Silva of Leiria - Fatima, Portugal. The message, dated October 1, was released at the Vatican October 14 (1997).

“Pope John Paul said the event at Fatima ‘helps us to see the hand of God’ even in the 20th century, with its wars and other mass tragedies. And it showed that despite having ‘removed itself from God’, humanity was offered God’s protection, the pontiff said.

“Pope John Paul recalled that in Gospel accounts of Jesus’ death, he invoked clemency on his captors even as he was being crucified and entrusted humanity to the care of his mother, Mary.

“The pope repeated the exhortation stemming from the Marian apparitions at Fatima that the faithful recite the rosary every day. He asked pastors to recite the rosary, and to teach others to recite it, daily. —CNS”



*Immaculate  
Heart  
of Mary,  
Pray for us.*

# The Christian and the World

From a Christmas address Pope Paul VI has left us these words: “Our Messiah and Saviour is so near that all of us today are almost necessarily seeking him. Not excluded are those who wish he were dead or forgotten, those who are deceived and wish to be able to replace him and to create a new humanism without his light and without his love. True humanism cannot be anything but Christian.

“Men of good will, do not fear today to be known as Christians! Do you not realize that by promoting justice and peace you are searching for him — Christ? Do you not see that in aspiring for liberation... you have him in mind, you are calling upon him? Do you not understand that while perhaps you try to avoid him and flee from him he pursues you? And would you... doubt that turning toward him you would discover him today, not angered and unfriendly, but rather as the Good Shepherd who attracts you powerfully and kindly in such a way as to fill you with tears of joy, and as one ready to be by your side, with your dear ones, the living and deceased, to celebrate with you a blessed Christmas?

“Yes, let this bright possibility become our trust and our confidence...

“It is thus that we have you, the people of Rome, at this moment before our eyes and in our heart. It is the same for the entire Church and the entire world. And our glance is turned especially to those places where there is still war, hunger, suffering and distress — wherever the coming of justice and peace is still awaited.”<sup>20</sup>

## 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:*

Shepherds of Christ P.O. Box 627 China, IN 47250-0627 USA  
 (toll free number) 1-888-211-3041  
 (phone) 1-812-273-8405 (fax) 1-812-273-3182

## Act of Consecration (new)

“Jesus, You show us Your Heart as symbol of Your life of love in all its aspects, including Your most special love for each of us as unique individuals. Out of Your great love for us, You died a brutal death, nailed to the wood of the cross. Out of Your great love for us, You rose gloriously from the dead.

“From Your pierced Heart the Church with her life-giving Sacraments was born. In the Eucharist, Crown and Center of the Church’s life, You continue to give Yourself to us with the deepest, most tender, most on-fire, most complete love.

“Jesus, since in Your great love You give Yourself so completely to us, it is only fitting that we make a gift to You in return. It is entirely fitting that we give ourselves completely to You. Yes, we consecrate ourselves to Your most loving Heart. Each of us says to You, O Lord, our Savior and our Friend: ‘Jesus, take me wholly, take me completely to Your magnificent Heart. Out of love I give myself to You. Live in and through me. In love You give Yourself completely to me. In love and in a spirit of reparation, I want to give myself, with the help of Your grace, entirely to You. Take me, Jesus, to an ever closer union with the Father, in the Holy Spirit, with Mary my Mother at my side. Pierced, Glorified, Eucharistic 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, including your most special love for me as this unique individual. You are the Mother of my Savior. You are also my Mother. 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, Glorified, Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, Chief Shepherd of the flock.”

# Letters

◆ Dear Father Carter,

For years I have received *Shepherds of Christ Newsletter*; I do not know who put me on your mailing list, but I'm grateful to you both. Since I first began to receive the newsletter I have been assigned as the Director of Formation Advising for the Pontifical North American College in Rome.

I would like to know if it would be possible to make a bulk order so that our seminarians could benefit from the newsletter as well. I will make sure they are distributed to our seminarians. At present we have about 200 seminarians and student priests on our campus, all eager for good spiritual reading!

Please let me know if we can make an arrangement for the delivery of the newsletter here at the college.

Please keep our faculty and seminarians in your prayers.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. J. Mark Williams  
 Director of Formation Advising  
 Pontifical North American College  
 00120 Vatican City State

◆ Dear Rev. Father,

Greetings to you from Dimapur. During the past year I have been receiving *Shepherds of Christ* newsletters from the diocese. Having found it very fruitful and enriching I thought that I would offer it to all my priests of this Province. Will it be possible for you to send me 140 books of your newsletters? I would like to offer it as a Millennium gift to all my priests. From the year 2000 I would like to get regularly the newsletters for our priests. I am sure the contents of the newsletters will inspire my priests to a life of renewal.

Congratulations for the wonderful work you are doing. Yours in Christ,  
 The Good Shepherd

Fr. Varghese Palathingal, sdb., Provincial,  
 Don Bosco Provincial House, Nagaland, India

◆ Dear Father Carter,

I am praying for your work and I have asked all other priest beneficiaries to pray for you and all who are working with you.

I am receiving *Shepherds of Christ* regularly and I distribute them among some of our priests who are interested. I need not say how useful they are for personal reflection and for homilies and other talks.

If possible kindly send us some audio cassettes.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Fr. V. Savarimuthu, Tamilnadu, India

◆ Dear Fr. Carter,

I received the parcel you so kindly sent me. Thank you for the book “Shepherds of Christ” and the set of audio cassettes.

May I request of you this favour. There are more than 100 priests in the dioceses of Cuddapah and also Kurnool where I served as Apostolic Administrator for three years. They love me also and visit me when they come this side. I want to give them all the book, “Shepherds of Christ” and ask them to study and meditate on it.

I admire this great work that you are doing for the priestly holiness. The holiness of the Church depends on the holiness of its priests. It is a great pity that many fail to be “Christ”. Only prayer and love can bring them around. My congratulations to you once again. With love and blessings,

Rev. S. A. Aruliah D.D.

Bishop Emeritus of Cuddapah, India

◆ Dear Father Carter,

I have thoroughly enjoyed your compiled newsletters in “Shepherds of Christ”. Please continue to send your letters to me as I use them for morning meditations. Thank you for providing these wonderful letters! Please accept the enclosed donation as a small token of my appreciation!

Sincerely in Him,

Rev. Salvatore Piazza, Ransomville, NY

◆ Dear Revd. Edward,

May peace of God which transcends all understanding guard your heart and your mind in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen.

Thank you for *Shepherds of Christ* which I so much admire, love, value and treasure. In this connection, I humbly request a free copy of cassettes so as to more fully acquaint myself with the Spirituality it teaches to priests in its practicality.

Praying always that the good Lord should imbue you with His Spirit. Amen.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Revd. Fr. Williams Adeforth  
St. Gregory’s Catholic Church  
Nigeria

◆ Dear Fr. Edward J. Carter,

I have followed with keen interest your publication titled “Shepherds of Christ” newsletter. I write from the Diocese of Little Rock, Arkansas, here in States to encourage you, Father.

Spirituality is an on-going process in the life of every man and woman. Hence, do not relent in your publications. Everybody needs it, for many lives have been enriched spiritually via your publications.

May Christ the Good Shepherd invigorate you.  
Prayerfully yours,

Rev. Fr. Oliver Ochieze  
St. Mary's Church, North Little Rock, Arkansas

◆ Dear Father,

Greetings from Kenya - Africa. I am grateful that you have continued to send me your most edifying Newsletter which supports my spiritual journey.

May I also request you to send me the newsletter in book form and the audio-cassettes.

With best wishes for your apostolate, I remain,  
Yours sincerely in the Lord,

Fr. Francis Gichia Mwaniki  
Our Lady of Victory, Nakuru - Kenya

#### NOTES

1. Scripture quotations are taken from *The New Jerusalem Bible*, Doubleday.
2. *The Letters of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque*, translated by Clarence Herbst, S.J., Henry Regnery Company, p. 186.
3. Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptor Hominis*, (*Redeemer of Man*), United States Catholic Conference, No. 22.
4. Archbishop Luis M. Martinez, *The Sanctifier*, Pauline Books and Media, pp. 67-68.
5. *The Documents of Vatican II*, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy", America Press edition, No. 17.
6. *Ibid.*, No. 48.
7. Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter, *Mystici Corporis*, AAS, XXXV, pp. 232-233.
8. Romano Guardini, *Jesus Christ*, Henry Regnery, as in *Daily Readings in Catholic Classics*, edited by Rawley Myers, Ignatius Press, p. 102.
9. St. John Vianney, "Sermon for Holy Thursday", in *Eucharistic Meditations*, Source Books, as in *Adoration*, Ignatius Press, pp. 92-93.
10. Rita Ring, Shepherds of Christ Ministries, January 10, 2000.
11. *Through the Year with Fulton Sheen*, Servant Books, pp. 99-100.
12. Rita Ring, Shepherds of Christ Ministries, August 12, 1998.
13. Avery Dulles, S.J., *The Resilient Church*, Doubleday & Company, p. 39.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
15. Henri de Lubac, S.J., *The Church: Paradox and Mystery*, translated by James R. Dunne, Alba House, pp. 2-4.
16. Pope John Paul II, *Holy Thursday Letters to My Brother Priests*, edited by James P. Socias, Scepter Publications and Midwestern Theological Forum, pp. 38-40.
17. Edward Carter, S.J., *The Mysticism of Everyday*, Sheed & Ward, pp. 44-46.
18. John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, as in *The Heart of Newman*, A Synthesis arranged by Erich Przywara, S.J., Ignatius Press, p. 224.
19. Mother Mary Francis, P.C.C., *Forth and Abroad*, Ignatius Press, pp. 120-121.
20. Pope Paul VI, "Christmas Message to the World", 1972, as in *Teachings of Paul VI, 1972*, United States Catholic Conference, pp. 346-347.

# shepherds of Christ

A SPIRITUALITY NEWSLETTER FOR PRIESTS

2000 ISSUE 2

## Chief Shepherd of the Flock

### Suffering: A Source of Life

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)<sup>1</sup>

*Yet ours were the sufferings he was bearing, ours the sorrows he was carrying, while we thought of him as someone being punished and struck with affliction by God; whereas he was being wounded for our rebellions, crushed because of our guilt; the punishment reconciling us fell on him, and we have been healed by his bruises. We had all gone astray like sheep, each taking his own way, and Yahweh brought the acts of rebellion of all of us to bear on him. Ill-treated and afflicted, he never opened his mouth, like a lamb led to the slaughter-house, like a sheep dumb before its shearers he never opened his mouth. (Is 53:4-7)*

◆ He hung upon a cross on a hill called Calvary. Death was near. How much Jesus had already suffered! He had been derisively crowned with thorns. In a terribly weakened condition, He carried the heavy cross to the hill of Golgotha. There He was stripped of His garments and mercilessly nailed to the cross. After all this brutal and agonizing suffering, Jesus finally died.

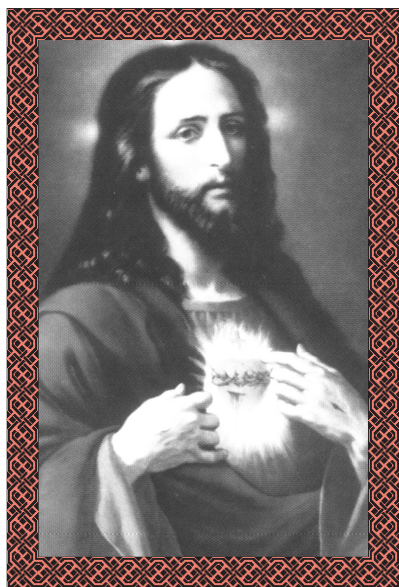
Truly the Good Shepherd had laid down His life for His sheep. That magnificent Heart, overflowing with love for His Father and all of us, had beat its last.

On the third day, Jesus rose: 'Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews replied, 'It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple: are you going to raise it up again in three days?' But he was speaking of the Temple that was his body, and when Jesus rose from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and what he had said. (Jn 2:19-22)

Yes, the Good Shepherd died and rose for our salvation. Behold, the paschal mystery of Jesus!

When we are baptized we are incorporated into Christ's paschal mystery of death and resurrection. St. Paul speaks of this marvelous union with Jesus: *You cannot have forgotten that all of us, when we were baptised into Christ Jesus, were baptised into his death. So by our baptism into his death we were buried with him, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glorious power, we too should begin living a new life.* (Rm 6:3-4)

Christ has structured the Christian life by the way He lived, died, and rose from the dead. It is obvious, then, as Paul tells us above that the pattern of death-resurrection must be at the heart of the Church's life. Individually and collectively, we continually die in Christ so that we may continually rise in Him. Thus we pass over in a process of ongoing religious transition to a greater participation in Christ's resurrection. It is true that our participation in Christ's resurrection will reach its completion only in eternal life. Nevertheless, we begin the life of resurrection here upon earth, in the here and now of human life, in the midst of joy and pain, in the experience of success and failure, in the sweat of our brow, in the enjoyment of God's gifts. As Christians, we should have a sense of dynamic growth concerning our here and now life of resurrection.



We cannot maintain the life of resurrection or grow in it without a willingness to suffer. This does not mean that we need to feel overwhelmed and heavily burdened in our lives. The greater portion of suffering for most Christians seems to be an accumulation of ordinary hardships, difficulties, and pains. At times, however, deep suffering, even suffering of agonizing proportions can enter into one's life. Whether the sufferings one encounters are of the more ordinary variety or of the more rare and extreme type, Christians must convince

themselves that to relate properly to the cross is to grow in resurrection, and growth in resurrection means we will also have an increased capacity to help give resurrection to others.

◆ Pope John Paul II speaks of the role suffering plays in the Christian life: "Every man has his own share in the redemption. Each one is also called to share in that suffering through which the redemption was accomplished.



He is called to share in that suffering through which all human suffering has also been redeemed. In bringing about the redemption through suffering, Christ has also raised human suffering to the level of the redemption. Thus each man in his suffering can also become a sharer in the redemptive suffering of Christ...

“Those who share in Christ’s sufferings have before their eyes the paschal mystery of the cross and resurrection, in which Christ descends, in a first phase, to the ultimate limits of human weakness and impotence: Indeed, he dies nailed to the cross. But if at the same time in this weakness there is accomplished his lifting up, confirmed by the power of the resurrection, then this means that the weaknesses of all human sufferings are capable of being infused with the same power of God manifested in Christ’s cross. In such a concept, to suffer means to become particularly susceptible, particularly open, to the working of the salvific powers of God offered to humanity in Christ. In him God has confirmed his desire to act especially through suffering, which is man’s weakness and emptiness of self.”<sup>2</sup>

◆ Dom Hubert Van Zeller observes: “Men and women who might be turning their afflictions over to God, who have only to unite themselves in spirit with Christ’s passion, are found so often to stop short, and even to make of their trial further matter for selfishness. Even if we do not rebel positively against God’s providential will, we can become so preoccupied with our troubles as to leave God out of account.

“Instead of making us compassionate for others we can squander compassion on ourselves. Suffering is meant to enlarge our hearts, not shrink them. With suffering goes the grace of patience, peace, fortitude, penitence and love. All this can be missed if we make the mistake of turning in upon ourselves as the result of our trials.

“To the Jews the cross was a stumbling block, and to the gentiles foolishness. What is it to us? Often it can be an emblem merely, the significance of the symbol forgotten. The cross is something in which we are, by reason of our Christian inheritance, inextricably involved. Do we yield to it or harden ourselves against it? The cross is not just two planks fitted together on a certain day in the history of the world, and of all the relics which we venerate the most sacred, but a fact of our human experience which may or may not be sacred according to what we do about it.”<sup>3</sup>

◆ Contrary to what many think, Fr. Edward Leen reminds us that suffering is compatible with happiness: “If men are prone to err in conceiving the nature of happiness, they will necessarily err in judging of its opposite. They commonly think that a man cannot possibly be happy if he is a prey to constant sickness; if he is condemned to experience habitual poverty and to be buried in obscurity; if he fails to take an important part on the world stage; if he is unsuccessful in his enterprises; if he is deprived of the opportunities of

intellectual or aesthetic development; and finally, if he fails to gain the applause and the esteem of his fellows. Now though all these things mean grievous sufferings for men, neither singly nor in combination have they the power to rob him of essential happiness.

“Apart from the consideration of the life of the Redeemer, certain undeniable facts of history justify this contention. The saints, in all ages, have been persons whose lot it was, generally speaking, to undergo greater trials and sufferings than others are called upon to endure. Yet they were habitually happy, buoyant and joyous human beings...

“The saints were not violently wresting words from their literal meaning when they proclaimed themselves happy. For the happiness they enjoyed was that which is proper to, and satisfying for man...

“God planned an unbroken life of happiness for man. The Fall modified, but did not prevent the realization of this plan. Suffering, but not unhappiness, becomes the condition of the earthly portion of men’s existence. God does not make unhappiness here to be the price to pay for happiness hereafter. To be happy, in the minds of all men, is to fare well, that is, to live excellently... The Saviour Himself suffered intensely, but He lived the highest life possible for men. He was, therefore, happy. He assured men that He could share His own blissful experience with them. It may appear paradoxical to associate happiness with the mental image of One Who is called the Man of Sorrows. But an analysis of the nature of happiness will show that it was fully realized in the earthly life of the Saviour...”<sup>4</sup>

◆ Caryll Houselander writes with great sensitivity regarding the second station of the Way of the Cross: “They put His own garments on Him again, and Jesus comes out from the judgment hall of Pilate to receive His cross.

“He comes to it gladly! This is a strange thing, for the cross is a symbol of shame, and it is to be His deathbed. Already He sees the very shape of His death in the wide-spread arms. From this moment He will be inseparable from it, until He dies on it. He will labour and struggle under the weight of it... Yet Christ welcomes the cross. He embraces it. He takes it into His arms. He lays His beautiful hands on it tenderly, those strong hands of a carpenter that are so familiar with the touch of wood.”<sup>5</sup>

◆ Henri Nouwen tells this story: “I would like to tell you the story of a middle-aged man whose career was suddenly interrupted by the discovery of leukemia, a fatal blood cancer. All his life plans crumbled and all his ways had to change. But slowly he was able to ask himself no longer: ‘Why did this happen to me?’ but instead: ‘What is the promise hidden in this event?’ When his rebellion became a new quest, he felt that he could give strength and hope to other cancer patients and, that by facing his condition directly, he could make his pain a source of healing for others. To this day, this man not only does more for patients than many ministers are able to, but he also

refound his life on a level that he had never known before.”<sup>6</sup>

◆ St. Paul tells us: *But we hold this treasure in pots of earthenware, so that the immensity of the power is God’s and not our own. We are subjected to every kind of hardship, but never distressed; we see no way out but we never despair; we are pursued but never cut off; knocked down, but still have some life in us; always we carry with us in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus, too, may be visible in our body. Indeed, while we are still alive, we are continually being handed over to death, for the sake of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus, too, may be visible in our mortal flesh.* (2 Co 4:7-11)

## Our Father

We have these words from Roman Guardini: “It is only through Christ that we come to the Father. When speaking of God the Father, we ought to add that we mean Him whom Christ means when He says ‘My Father.’ Thus we would signify that we were not thinking of a vague concept of deity whose power one may suspect behind the government of the world, but that holy countenance which revealed itself for the first time in the words of Christ. When we ‘go to the Father,’ we must go together with Christ, along His path and in His spirit. There can be no other way to the Father...”

“So that we may be able to follow Christ we must never cease to dwell on His life and teaching; otherwise our prayer to God will inevitably assume the character of a vague cosmic worship. Only through Christ can we reach the real Father in heaven.

“Christ has laid down for us how we should pray to the Father...”

“Rightfully understood, and spoken in the spirit in which Christ taught them, the words of the Lord’s Prayer have profound and eternal significance. Their key lies in the body of teaching which is known as the Sermon on the Mount. They are illumined by the parables in which Christ explains the relationship between God and man; for example, by the parable of the Prodigal Son; thus, if rightfully understood in this wider context, they become a living path leading us to the Father.

“Because the Lord’s Prayer is so full of meaning and truth, and yet so simple, it frequently suffers the fate of being said thoughtlessly, without true reverence and inner intent. It happens so much that we ought to remind ourselves of our responsibility as Christians to preserve and treasure Christ’s holy heritage. We should say the Lord’s Prayer in a collected mood, thoughtfully, and putting our heart into its words. Only then will it open the doors to the kingdom of the Father which the Son’s love has prepared for us.”<sup>7</sup>

# The Holy Spirit in Our Lives

Romano Guardini also speaks to us concerning the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives: “As a historical figure Christ is easily blurred by similarity with other historical figures, and also by the fact that man has an instinctive aversion to anything which goes beyond the purely human. The Holy Spirit must grant us the gift of discrimination. The figure of Christ as well as His message is surrounded by misunderstandings, distortions and hostility. The Holy Spirit must give the assurance to our hearts and minds so that we may find Him. Christ is the Truth...

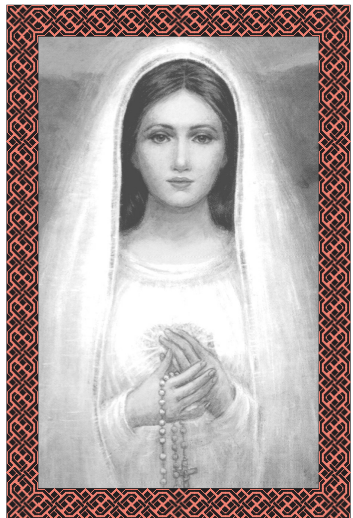
“The Holy Spirit teaches us to understand Christ, and in Christ, God and ourselves. It is the kind of understanding which comes from the heart... It is true comprehension; more than that, it is illumination.

“The Holy Spirit gives the answers to those questions which the mind cannot answer because the mind invariably couples the word ‘why’ with the word ‘I’. ‘Why must *I* endure this suffering? Why am *I* denied what others have? Why must *I* be the way I am, live the way I do?’ These are some of the most essential and decisive questions in the life of the individual, and to those questions men and books remain silent. The true answer comes only when our heart is free from revolt and bitterness, when our will has come to terms with life as it is for us, recognizing in it the working of the will of God. The intellect may acquiesce readily enough, but this is not sufficient. Instruction must go deeper. Acceptance must come from our inmost heart. Only then will we find the answer to the *why*, and with it, peace, for truth brings peace. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>8</sup>

## Mary and the Priest

The *Directory of the Ministry and Life of Priests* tells us: “There is an ‘essential rapport ... between the Mother of Jesus and the priesthood of the ministry of the Son,’ stemming from the existing one between the divine maternity of Mary and the priesthood of Christ.

“In light of such a rapport, Marian spirituality is rooted in every priest. Priestly spirituality could not be considered complete if it were to fail to include the message of Christ’s words on the Cross, in which He conferred His Mother to the



beloved disciple, and, through him, to all priests called to continue his work of redemption.

“Like John at the foot of the Cross, every priest has been entrusted, in a special way, with Mary as Mother (cf Jn 19:26-27).

“Priests, who are among the favored disciples of Jesus, crucified and risen, should welcome Mary as their Mother in their own life, bestowing her with constant attention and prayer. The Blessed Virgin then becomes the Mother who leads them to Christ, who makes them sincerely love the Church, who intercedes for them and guides them toward the Kingdom of heaven...

“But they are not devout sons if they do not know how to imitate the virtues of Mary. The priest will look to Mary to be a humble, obedient and chaste minister and to give testimony of charity in the total surrender to God and the Church.”<sup>9</sup>

## The Church- Reflection of the Trinity, Body of Christ, and Spouse of Christ

Henri de Lubac states: “The Church is a mysterious extension in time of the Trinity, not only preparing us for the life of unity but bringing about even now our participation in it. She comes from and is full of the Trinity. She is for us -- in a favourite phrase of Bossuet -- ‘Jesus Christ ... communicated’. She is ‘the Incarnation continued.’ She is, as Dietrick Bonhoeffer used to say, ‘the presence of Christ on earth’ --- she speaks with ‘the authority of Christ living and present in her.’... St. Paul applies to her this same word ‘mystery’ which he had first used of Christ. She is after all, the spouse of Christ and his body.”<sup>10</sup>

Let us, then, reflect upon the Church as a reflection of the Trinity, the Church as Body of Christ, the Church as Spouse of Christ.

The Christian community is a reflection of the ultimate and absolute community -- namely, the Trinity. In a special way, we are privileged to give witness to Trinitarian life, a life of divine intimacy, a life of divine knowing and loving.

Grace, or the Christ-life, is a created participation in Trinitarian life. This Christ-life, consequently, calls us to a special existence of knowing and loving. Christian faith and love, which are created participations in the Trinity’s knowing and loving, allow us to know and love God in a special manner. Faith and love also give us a new capacity to relate to both our fellow Christians and to all others..

Because the life of the Trinity is person-centered, so must the life of the Church be person-centered. For many years, it seems, we were not sufficiently person-conscious. However, the theology that has emanated from Vatican II is helping to rectify this situation. In the pre-Vatican II Church, structures in the Church were at times treated by some as if they were ends in themselves rather than as means of serving the persons in the Church. Slowly but surely, structures in the Church are being renewed so that they might better serve their true purpose, which is to aid in the ongoing spiritual development of her members -- leading them closer to the Father, through and with Christ, in the Holy Spirit.

The Church, in turn, develops when those who make up that community develop as authentic Christians. Just as each divine Person contributes perfectly to the community life of the Trinity according to the Self-Gift of the fullness of His personhood, so each Christian contributes to the community life of the Church in proportion to the degree of his or her gift of self, according to the degree of his or her personal holiness.

Authentic interpersonal relationships help to develop community. The Trinitarian community is a community of profound relationships. Because the Church reflects Trinitarian community, her members are intended to have relationships, not only with the Persons of the Trinity, but likewise with others. Authentic interpersonal relationships not only unite in a deeper knowledge and love the persons directly involved, they also make a person more capable of loving others more deeply, and, therefore, more capable of deepening the bonds of total community. If a person is growing in the capacity to love his or her friends, for example, that person is concurrently growing in the capacity to also love all others -- both those who are members of the Church and those who are not.

The fact that the Church is here on earth a reflection of the Trinitarian Community easily leads us to reflect upon the Church as the Body of Christ, since this name given to the Church also emphasizes the communitarian aspect of the Church. St. Paul tells us: *For as with the human body which is a unity although it has many parts -- all the parts of the body, though many, still making up one single body -- so it is with Christ. We were baptised into one body in a single Spirit, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as free men, and we were all given the same Spirit to drink. And indeed the body consists not of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, 'I am not a hand and so I do not belong to the body', it does not belong to the body any the less for that. Or if the ear were to say, 'I am not an eye, and so I do not belong to the body', that would not stop its belonging to the body. If the whole body were just an eye, how would there be any hearing? If the whole body were hearing, how would there be any smelling?*

*Now Christ's body is yourselves, each of you with a part to play in the whole.*

*And those whom God has appointed in the Church are, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers; after them, miraculous powers, then gifts of healing, helpful acts, guidance, various kinds of tongues. Are all of them apostles? Or all prophets? Or all teachers? Or all miracle-workers? Do all have the gifts of healing? Do all of them speak in tongues and all interpret them? (1 Cor 12:12-17; 27-30).*

The concept of the Church as Body of Christ certainly emphasizes the sense of corporateness that should permeate the consciousness of the Church's members. We depend upon each other. We each have a very important contribution to make to the life of the Church. We must think in terms of both what is good for the entire Church and, through this Church, what is good for the total human community. Even when we disagree among ourselves, we do so not because we want to glory in having the upper hand, but because we believe that to disagree here and now is necessary so that the truth might better emerge for the good of the community. St. Paul speaks to

*Mary, Queen of Peace,  
Pray for us.*

us about this sense of corporateness: *So if in Christ there is anything that will move you, any incentive in love, any fellowship in the Spirit, any warmth or sympathy -- I*

*appeal to you, make my joy complete by being of a single mind, one in love, one in heart and one in mind. Nothing is to be done out of jealousy or vanity; instead, out of humility of mind everyone should give preference to others, everyone pursuing not selfish interests but those of others. Make your own the mind of Christ Jesus. (Phil 2:1-5)*

Finally, we reflect upon the Church as Spouse of Christ. Fr. Joseph Murphy, S.J., tells us: "John Paul II always quotes the rich doctrinal and patristic traditions of the Church which refer to Christ as the Spouse of the Church and the Spouse of souls, given to both in the Eucharistic mystery. For him the key to understanding the sacramentality of marriage, not to mention the nature of humanity, is the spousal love of Christ for the Church demonstrated in Ephesians 5. Christ is the Head of the Church as Savior of His Body. The Church is exactly that Body which receives from Him all that through which it becomes and is His Body. As Head and Savior of the Church He is also Bridegroom of His Bride..."<sup>11</sup>

Here is a prayer for intimacy with the Lamb, the Bridegroom of the Soul: "O Lamb of God, Who take away the sins of the world, come and act on my soul most intimately. I surrender myself, as I ask for the grace to let go, to just be as I exist in You and You act most intimately on my soul. You are the Initiator. I am the soul waiting Your favors as You act in me. I love You. I

adore You. I worship You. Come and possess my soul with Your divine Grace, as I experience You most intimately.”<sup>12</sup>

## 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)*<sup>13</sup>

◆ *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)*<sup>14</sup>

◆ *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)*<sup>15</sup>

◆ The Sacrifice of Calvary is sacramentally made present in the Mass. When we pray the Morning Offering Prayer, united to the Holy Sacrifice of



the Mass, we act as Intercessors, pleading to God that great graces be released all day through our prayerful actions as we act in love according to the Father's will. Whether we are eating, taking care of a sick parent, enjoying time spent with a friend, working at our job, we can help bring down great graces for the world.

When we pray the Morning Offering Prayer we offer our lives to the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, with the prayerful assistance of Mary, our Mother. Let us pray together united in our hearts in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. There follows a Morning Offering Prayer.

“My dear Father, I offer You this day all my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings in union with Jesus in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in the Holy Spirit.

“I unite with our Mother, Mary, all the angels and saints, and all the souls in purgatory to pray to the Father for myself, for each member of my family, for my friends, for all the people throughout the world, for all the souls in purgatory, and for all other intentions of the Sacred Heart.

“I love You, Jesus, and I give You my heart. I love you, Mary, and I give you my heart. Amen.”<sup>16</sup>

◆ St. John Vianney, the Curé of Ars, offers us these consoling words: “If we really loved God, we should make it our joy and happiness to come and spend a few moments before the tabernacle to adore him, and ask him for the grace of forgiveness --- Oh! how sweet and consoling are moments spent with the God of goodness. Are you in sorrow? Come and cast yourself at his feet and you will feel quite consoled. Are you despised by the world. Come here and you will find a good friend whose faithfulness will never fail you. Are you tempted? It is here that you will find strong and terrible weapons to vanquish your enemies --- Are you oppressed by poverty? Come and find a God infinitely rich... You who are reconciled with him, beg for the precious gift of perseverance. Oh! Tell him that if you are to offend him again, you would rather die. Would you begin to taste the joy of the saints? Come here and you will know the happy beginnings of it.”<sup>17</sup>

## Priesthood

In one of his Holy Thursday letters to priests, Pope John Paul II says: “Attempts to make the priest more like the laity are damaging to the Church. This does not mean in any way that the priest can remain remote from the human concerns of the laity: he must be very near to them, as John Mary Vianney was, but as a priest, always in a perspective which is that of their salvation and of the progress of the Kingdom of God. He is the witness and dispenser of a life other than earthly life. It is essential to the

Church that the identity of the priest be safeguarded, with its vertical dimension. The life and personality of the Curé of Ars are a particularly enlightening and vigorous illustration of this...

“Saint John Mary Vianney did not content himself with the ritual carrying out of the activities of his ministry. It was his heart and his life which he sought to conform to Christ.

“*Prayer* was the soul of his life: silent and contemplative prayer, generally in his church at the foot of the tabernacle. Through Christ, his soul opened to the three divine Persons, to whom he would entrust ‘his poor soul’ in his last will and testament. ‘He kept a constant union with God in the middle of an extremely busy life.’ And he did not neglect the office or the rosary. He turned spontaneously to the Virgin.”<sup>18</sup>



## Prayer

Dom Hubert Van Zeller observes: “If when we speak of prayer and faith *transcending* the drawbacks to human existence we mean a blind, uncaring ascent into a dream world where the realities of life are left behind for others to cope with, we have got it wrong... ‘Transcendence’ here denotes...the detachment which is brought about by the spirit, but which has not lost touch with the things of sense.

“Without suppressing the emotions, faith enables the soul to rise above the emotions. And if this sounds cold and superior, it must be remembered that those who are essentially souls of faith, the saints, are just those who feel things deeply. It is because they feel things deeply that they are able to help others, and again it is because they feel things deeply that their prayer is all the more pleasing to God.

“So to transcend the contingencies of life is not the same as to hold aloof, to show indifference, to avoid involvement. Anything which breeds insensitivity is bound to be on the wrong lines. Compassion, as we know from the example of Christ and his mother, is inherent in the service of God. Followers of Christ must necessarily be involved. It is their vocation to live as members of one another. But by their faith and prayer they will use material contacts as a lever to the world of the spirit. Involvement instead of pulling them down from contemplation of God, will raise their natural operation, because performed in charity, to the supernatural level.”<sup>19</sup>

# Becoming

No one has to remind us that we live in a rapidly changing world. The temporal order is very much undergoing a process. It is engaged in a phenomenal manifestation of change. Some of this is for the better, but there is a dimension which is not good, because some of modern society's becoming is only apparent progress or becoming. To put it in another way, since a certain segment of modern man's activity is marked by immorality, it is actually retrogression rather than progress.

True becoming is inherent in the human person. The human person is a creature who is both always the same and always different. The human person, then, possesses both unchangeable and changeable dimensions. Regarding the changeable dimension, Vatican II says: "History itself speeds along on so rapid a course that an individual person can scarcely keep abreast of it. The destiny of the human community has become all of a piece, where once the various groups of men had a kind of private history of their own. Thus, the human race has passed from a rather static concept of reality to a more dynamic, evolutionary one. In consequence, there has arisen a new series of problems, a series as important as can be, calling for new efforts of analysis and synthesis."<sup>20</sup>

Because we are creatures who are both unchangeable and changeable, our authentic becoming respects both dimensions. We are not meant to become by denying the aspect of stability. We are not to become by always making fresh starts, but by building properly upon what we are and what we have been.

To feel psychologically at ease with ourselves, we need to develop a proper balance between the unchangeable and the changeable.

Our becoming, our growth, is rooted in God's will for us. He has made us for continual growth, for continual development. This process of growth depends upon our relationship with God. The Father, out of His great love for us, is always inviting us to a deeper union with Him, through Christ, and in the Holy Spirit.

In the depths of our heart we know we want this deeper union with God, and yet at times we are frightened at the



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

prospect. We can be tempted to avoid coming closer to God for fear of what His love may ask of us. This is a critical point in the relationship. Many apparently draw back at this juncture, deciding that the closeness of deep love is too demanding. In our relationship with God -- unlike what can happen in a rela-

tionship with a human person who possesses a wounded nature because of sin -- we can be assured that becoming closer to Him will not end in any kind of disappointment. God will never be unreasonable in His demands. Growing, or becoming, through a closer love-union with Him will result in a greater happiness. Our quest for happiness will be more and more satisfied -- not without some pain, because our growth does involve suffering. But whether the suffering be now slight, now moderately severe, or even at times seemingly almost unbearable, we know in the depths of our heart we have to want deeper union with God if we truly want to continue to grow, to continue to become. Growth in happiness means developing the union of love with God. And if this means that suffering is one element of that process, then a voice deep within us, rising from the depths of the authentic self, whispers to us that we should be willing to bear with the pain involved -- for the sake of a deeper life, a greater becoming, a greater love.

Although our process of growing or becoming is rooted in our relationship with God, this relationship does not stand alone. According to God's will, our union with Him involves also other relationships. God calls us to the gift of self in relationships with others. He also wants us to be properly related to material creation.

We grow or become, then, through a going out in love to God, to others, to material creation. Much of this becoming is according to a more or less established and predictable pattern. But sometimes God surprises us. Sometimes He asks us to become in a way we ourselves would not have considered. God does not always act according to the more ordinary and predictable ways. He is an infinitely wise God, and His holy wisdom is perfectly capable of leading us along paths previously unknown to us. Whatever the case may be, His ways -- if we follow them -- always lead us to greater growth, to greater becoming, to greater happiness.

## The Christian and the World

Henri Nouwen, one of the most well-known spiritual writers of our times, spent an extended period of time as a guest in a Trappist monastery. His following words remind us how a certain amount of prayerful solitude brings us closer to the world, how it helps develop in us a Christian concern for the world: "My stay at the monastery, however, has not only brought me closer to Christ, it has brought me closer to the world as well. In fact, distance from the world has made me feel more compassionate toward it. In my work in New Haven I am often so busy with immediate needs asking for an immediate response that my world narrows down to my daily worries, and I lose my perspective on the larger problems. Here in the monastery I could look more easi-

ly beyond the boundaries of the place, the state, the country, and the continent, become more intimately aware of the pain and suffering of the whole world and respond to them by prayers, correspondence, gifts, or writing. I also felt that in this retreat my friends and family came closer to me. I experienced especially that a growing intimacy with God creates an always widening space for others in prayer. I had a real sense of the power of prayer for others and experienced what it means to place your suffering friends in God's presence right in the center of your heart." <sup>21</sup> Most people cannot arrange for an extended time of retreat in a monastery. Everyone can, however, structure times of prayerful solitude into one's schedule which allow, among other things, for a deepened awareness and concern for the world with its many problems and challenges. In turn, this deepened concern for the world should lead to increased prayer for all the world's needs and other appropriate activity in accord with one's vocation and opportunities. There is still so much to be done to make this world more what God destines it to be. As the Christopher Movement's motto reminds us: "It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness."

## Various Thoughts

◆ Here are words of Therese of Lisieux, saint and doctor of the Church: "O Jesus! why can't I tell all little souls how unspeakable is Your condescension? I feel that if You found a soul weaker and littler than mine --- You would be pleased to grant it still greater favors, provided it abandoned itself with total confidence to your Infinite Mercy." <sup>22</sup>

◆ Jesus calls us to surrender. He wants us to let go, to relate to persons, places, and things only according to His will. He wants us to renounce those things which prevent a closer union with Him. If we do this, we will experience the joy of being free, the joy of being deeply united to Him, the joy of being deeply possessed by Him.

Jesus sustains us. Others move in and out of our lives, some betray us, some become indifferent to us. Jesus is our Rock, the One we can always depend on, the One Who always loves us with an unfathomable love: *Jesus Christ is the same today as he was yesterday and as he will be for ever.* (Heb 13:8)

◆ Sometimes we are tempted to think our efforts are rather useless. We must resist the temptations. The battle is hard, and the path at times seems to be all uphill. We have to pray for the light to realize that our efforts put forth for God are not in vain. When we are united to Jesus, our efforts are having a great effect in the work of the Kingdom. Let us keep our candles burning. Let us keep our focus on Jesus, and not worry about results. Our

lives spent in Jesus' service please Him greatly, and they produce great good, although so much of this good can be hidden from our eyes.

## 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:*

Shepherds of Christ

P.O. Box 627

China, IN 47250-0627 USA

(toll free number) 1-888-211-3041

(phone) 1-812-273-8405

(fax) 1-812-273-3182

## Act of Consecration (new)

“Jesus, You show us Your Heart as symbol of Your life of love in all its aspects, including Your most special love for each of us as unique individuals. Out of Your great love for us, You died a brutal death, nailed to the wood of the cross. Out of Your great love for us, You rose gloriously from the dead.

“From Your pierced Heart the Church with her life-giving Sacraments was born. In the Eucharist, Crown and Center of the Church's life, You continue to give Yourself to us with the deepest, most tender, most on-fire, most complete love.

“Jesus, since in Your great love You give Yourself so completely to us, it is only fitting that we make a gift to You in return. It is entirely fitting that we give ourselves completely to You. Yes, we consecrate ourselves to Your most loving Heart. Each of us says to You, O Lord, our Savior and our Friend: ‘Jesus, take me wholly, take me completely to Your magnificent Heart. Out of love I give myself to You. Live in and through me. In love You give Yourself completely to me. In love and in a spirit of reparation, I want to give myself, with the help of Your grace, entirely to You. Take me, Jesus, to an ever closer union with the Father, in the Holy Spirit, with Mary my Mother at my side. Pierced, Glorified, Eucharistic 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, including your most special love for me as this unique individual. You are the Mother of my Savior. You are also my Mother. 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, Glorified, Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, Chief Shepherd of the flock.”

## Letters

◆ Dear and Rev. Edward,

Loving and cordial greetings to you from Most Rev. G. Johannes, Bishop of Kurnool.

I am glad to learn that you are publishing a magazine by name *Shepherds of Christ*. Recently, I was given some magazines to be distributed to our priests by Most Rev. Bishop S. A. Aruliah of Cuddapah and the magazines are very good and worth reading.

As the magazines are useful to our priests, I would like to get them for our priests too. Presently there are 70 priests in our diocese and distribution of these magazines to our priests will surely help their spiritual life. As your magazine covers so many theological, pastoral themes, it helps our priests in their pastoral life.

Hence, I request you to send at least 70 *Shepherds of Christ* magazines to us so that we may distribute to our priests. I also request you to send some audio-video tapes which can help our priests pastorally.

With Blessings,  
GORANTLA Johannes D. D.  
Bishop of Kurnool, India

◆ Dear Father Edward J. Carter, S. J.

Greetings and good wishes for Christmas and happy New Year 2000!

I am a diocesan priest. I am working in Mbanga Diocese. I, by good chance, came across your *Shepherds of Christ, A Spirituality Newsletter for Priests*.

After having read it, I decided to ask for a free copy of the newsletter both in cassette form and in book form. I believe that this book and the cassette will continue helping me to fervently renew my spirituality. I hope that this will be useful too to my fellow priests who are engaged in the pastoral activities.

Thanking you in advance, and May God bless your work too,

Yours sincerely,  
 Father Andrew J. Ndimbo, CARITAS Director  
 MBINGA DIOCESE  
 TANZANIA

NOTES:

1. Scripture quotations are taken from *The New Jerusalem Bible*, Doubleday.
2. Pope John Paul II, *On The Christian Meaning of Human Suffering*, United States Catholic Conference, Nos. 19 and 23.
3. Dom Hubert Van Zeller, *More Ideas for Prayer*, Templegate, p. 112.
4. Edward Leen, C. S. Sp., *Why the Cross?*, Sheed & Ward, pp. 246-247, 255, 285.
5. Caryl Houselander, *The Way of the Cross*, Sheed & Ward, p. 21.
6. Henri Nouwen, *Out of Solitude*, Ave Maria Press, p. 57.
7. Romano Guardini, *Prayer in Practice*, Pantheon Books, p. 115.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.
9. *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, No. 68, as in *Inside the Vatican*, Special Supplement, November, 1994, p. 25.
10. Henri de Lubac, S. J., *The Church: Paradox and Mystery*, translated by James R. Dunne, Alba House, p. 24.
11. *The Thought of Pope John Paul II: A Collection of Essays and Studies*, John M. McDermott, S. J., Editor, Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, p. 135.
12. Rita Ring, *Holy Spirit Novena*, Shepherds of Christ Ministries, p. 5.
13. *The Documents of Vatican II*, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," America Press edition, No. 17.
14. *Ibid.*, No. 48.
15. Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter, *Mystici Corporis*, AAS, XXXV, pp. 232-233.
16. Rita Ring, *Rosary Meditations for Parents and Children*, Shepherds of Christ Ministries, p. 189.
17. Saint John Vianney, "Sermons for Holy Thursday", in *Eucharistic Meditations*, editor Sr. Mary Benvenuta, O. P., translated by Abbé H. Convert, as in *Adoration*, compiled by Daniel Guernsey, Ignatius Press, p. 96.
18. Pope John Paul II, *Holy Thursday, Letters to My Brother Priests*, edited by James P. Socias, Scepter Publications and Midwestern Theological Forum, p. 148.
19. Dom Hubert Van Zeller, *More Ideas About Prayer*, Templegate, pp. 50-51.
20. *The Documents of Vatican II*, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World", America Press Edition, No.5.
21. Henri Nouwen, *The Genesee Diary*, Doubleday, p. 212.
22. *Story of a Soul, The Autobiography of St. Therese of Lisieux*, ICS Publications, p. 200.



# shepherds of Christ

A SPIRITUALITY NEWSLETTER FOR PRIESTS

2000 ISSUE 3

## Chief Shepherd of the Flock

### **An Overview of the Spiritual Life**

**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)<sup>1</sup>**

The Good Shepherd gave His life so that we may have life and have it in abundance. In this issue we offer an overview of the life Jesus came to give. We begin by presenting a brief sketch of the spiritual life. This will be followed by content which speaks in a more detailed manner about the various dimensions of the spiritual life -- our life in Christ.

#### ***A Sketch of the Spiritual Life***

The Christian life is rooted in the great event of the Incarnation. We must consequently always focus our gaze upon Christ, realizing that the Father has spoken to us in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. It only remains for us, then, to strive to understand with greater insight the inexhaustible truth of the Word Incarnate (Heb 1:1-2).

What was the condition of the human race at the time of Christ's coming? In some ways, people were much the same as we are today. There were those just being born into this world of human drama. There were those who, in death, were leaving it, some of whom had grasped but little of life's meaning. There were those who were healthy and vigorous. There were those who were sick and lame. Some especially felt the burdens, the grief, the suffering of the human condition. Others were ebullient and desired all the pleasures life could provide. There was some good being accomplished. Immorality, however, was rampant. What St. Paul tells us concerning the time that immediately followed Christ's existence certainly could also be applied to the time of His entrance into the world. It is, in short, an ugly picture that St. Paul depicts for us (Rom 1:22-32).

Into such a depraved condition Jesus entered, with a full and generous

Heart, to lead the human race from the depths of sinfulness to the vibrant richness of a new life in Himself. Through His enfleshment, this Christ became the focal point of all history. The authentic hopes and dreams of the human family, now so overshadowed by the ugliness of sin, came converging upon this Christ. He would gather them up in Himself, give them a new luster and brilliance and dynamism, and would lead the human family back to the Father in the Holy Spirit.

Christ was radically to release us from the dominion of sin and elevate us to a new level of existence. This life Christ has given us is not a type of superstructure which is erected atop human existence. Although nature and grace are distinct, they do not lie side by side as separate entities. Rather, grace permeates nature. The Christian is one graced person. The Christian is one who has been raised up, caught up, into a deeper form of life in Christ Jesus. Nothing that is authentically human in the life of the Christian has been excluded from this new existence. Whatever is really human in the life of the Christian is meant to be an expression of the Christ-life. The simple but deep joys of family life, the wonderment at nature's beauty, the warm embrace of a mother for her child, the agony of crucial decision making, the success or frustration that is experienced in one's work, the joy of being well received by others, and the heartache of being misunderstood—all these experiences are intended to be caught up in Christ and made more deeply human because of Him.

Jesus has come, then, not to destroy anything that is authentically human, but to perfect it by leading it to a graced fulfillment. The more God-like we become through Christ, the more human we become.

We, through our incorporation into Christ which occurs at Baptism, are meant to relive the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. In doing so, we are not only accomplishing our own salvation, but we are assisting in the salvation of others also. The Incarnation continues all the time. Christ, of course, is the one Who fundamentally continues the Incarnation. But He enlists our help. The world no longer sees Jesus, no longer is able to reach out and touch Him. We are the ones who now, in some way, make Christ visible and tangible. In union with the invisible, glorified Christ, and depending on Him as our source of life, we continue the Incarnation in its visible and temporal dimensions. This is our great privilege. This is our great responsibility.

The Christian is initiated into the mystery of Christ, into his or her role in prolonging the Incarnation, through Baptism (Rom 6:3-4).

It is not sufficient, however, that we be incorporated into Christ through Baptism. All forms of life require nourishment. So, too, our life in Christ must be continually nourished. How can we continually keep in contact with Christ? There are various ways as we live our life within the Church. We contact Christ in a most special way through the liturgy, above all in the Eucharistic liturgy. Through our most special and most personal meeting

with Jesus in the Mass, we are more deeply incorporated into Christ. Also, we should remember that all the sacraments make up part of the Church's liturgy.

The reading of Scripture provides another special opportunity for meeting Jesus. This is true for both Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament pre-figures the New Testament and leads to it. It is obvious, however, that we meet Christ especially in the pages of the New Testament. How true it is to say that not to be familiar with Scripture is not to know Jesus properly. We should resolve to read from Scripture daily.

We also meet Jesus in our interaction with others. Everyone we meet, everyone we serve, is in the image of Jesus. We have to take the means to grow in this awareness. If I truly believe that everyone has been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, how should I treat everyone?

These, then, are some of the ways we keep in contact with Jesus. Common to the various ways of meeting Jesus is a certain degree of prayerful reflection. Our contact with Jesus in the liturgy, in Scripture, and in our interaction with others, and so forth, will not be all that it should be unless we are persons of prayer. The light and strength of prayer enables us to keep in contact with Jesus as we should.

We live out our Christ-life in an atmosphere of love. Indeed, the life Jesus has given us is centered in love. It has its origins in the mysterious love of God (Jn 3:16).

Our new life in Jesus has arisen out of God's fathomless love. Christ, in His descent into human flesh, has established a milieu of love. The life He came to give can flourish only in the framework of love. Indeed, we can summarize the meaning of the Christian life by stating that it is our loving response to God's love. The pierced Heart of Jesus, this Heart which shed its last drop of blood in the greatest love for each one of us, is the symbol of God's tremendous love for us. Christ's Heart also calls us to respond by giving ourselves in love to God and neighbor. Yes, Jesus invites us to respond to God's love by giving ourselves in love to Him in an ever closer union. The more closely we are united to Him, the greater is our capacity to love God and neighbor. The more closely we are united with Jesus, the more closely He unites us to the Father in the Holy Spirit, with Mary our Mother at our side.

## The Indwelling of the Trinity and the Life of Grace

The spiritual life, the life of holiness, begins at Baptism. Archbishop Luis Martinez says:

“When we are born we are endowed by God with all we need for our human life, a complete organism, and a soul with the full range of faculties.

Of course they are not all developed from birth, but we have them then as the source of everything we are going to need in life. And thus it is also in the spiritual order. When someone is baptized, he receives in all its fullness that supernatural world which the Christian carries within his soul. He receives grace, which is a participation of the nature of God; the theological virtues, which put him in immediate contact with the divine; the moral virtues, which serve to regulate and order all his life; and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the divine, mysterious receivers for picking up the Spirit's inspirations and movements."<sup>2</sup>

Another author states: "The Three Divine Persons inhabit the sanctuary of our soul, taking their delight in enriching it with supernatural gifts and in communicating to us a Godlike life, similar to theirs, called the life of grace.

"All life, however, implies a threefold element: a *vital principle* that is, so to speak, the source of life itself; *faculties* which give the power to elicit vital acts; and lastly, the acts themselves which are but its development and which minister to its growth. In the supernatural order, God living within us produces the same elements. He first communicates to us *habitual grace* (the life of sanctifying grace) which plays the part of a *vital supernatural principle*. This principle deifies, as it were, the very substance of the soul and makes it capable, though in a remote way, of enjoying the Beatific Vision and of performing the acts that lead to it.

"Out of this grace spring the *infused virtues* and the *gifts of the Holy Spirit* which perfect our faculties and endow us with the immediate power of performing Godlike, supernatural, meritorious acts.

"In order to stir these faculties into action, He give us actual graces which enlighten our mind, strengthen our will, and aid us both to act supernaturally and to increase the measure of habitual grace that has been granted to us.

"Although this life of grace is entirely distinct from our natural life it is not merely superimposed on the latter. It *penetrates it through and through*, transforms it and makes it divine. It assimilates whatever is good in our nature, our education and our habits. It perfects and supernaturalizes all these various elements, directing them toward the last end, that is toward the possession of God through the Beatific Vision and its resultant life."<sup>3</sup>

Our being in the state of sanctifying of grace and the special indwelling of the Persons of the Trinity within us always exist together. We cannot have the one without the other. Our life of grace, which is a sharing in Trinitarian life, allows us to know and love Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in a most intimate fashion. Through grace we are in the image of the Trinity, and we enjoy special relationships with the Divine Persons.

Again, we listen to the words of Archbishop Martinez as he speaks about our relationships with the Divine Persons:

“Love, we have said, is the foundation of devotion to the Holy Spirit, as it is also the foundation of Christian perfection. But love as a reflection of God, as His own image, is something that encloses within its simplicity a boundless wealth and a variety of forms. Who can fathom the depths of love?”

“Human love in all its manifestations is admirably in harmony with the love of charity; it is confident in filial love, trusting in friendship, sweet and fruitful in the love of husband and wife, disinterested and tender in the love of a mother. Our love of God must include all these forms of human love; every fiber of our heart must vibrate when the harmonious and full canticle of love bursts forth from it. But since God is one in essence and triune in Persons, our love for Him takes on a particular aspect accordingly as it is directed to each one of the divine Persons.

“Our love for the Father is tender and confident like that of children; eager to glorify Him as His only-begotten Son taught us to do by word and example. Love for the Father is the intense desire to have His will fulfilled on earth as it is in heaven. Our love for the Son, who willed to become flesh for us, is characterized by the tendency to union with Him and transformation into Him; by imitation of His example, participation in His life, and the sharing of His sufferings and His Cross. The Eucharist, mystery of love, of sorrow, and of union, reveals the characteristics of this love.

“Love for the Holy Spirit also has its special character, which we should study in order completely to understand devotion to Him. We have explained how the Holy Spirit loves us, how He moves us like a divine breath that draws us to the bosom of God, like a sacred fire that transforms us into fire, like a divine artist who forms Jesus in us. Surely, then, our love for the Holy Spirit should be marked by loving docility, by full surrender, and by a constant fidelity that permits us to be moved, directed, and transformed by His sanctifying action.

“Our love for the Father tends to *glorify* Him; our love for the Son, to *transform* ourselves into Him; our love for the Holy Spirit, to *let ourselves be possessed and moved by Him*.”<sup>4</sup>

## Life In and With Jesus

◆ The spiritual life centers in Christ. Here are words from the *Jerusalem Catecheses*: “When we were baptized into Christ and clothed ourselves in him, we were transformed into the likeness of the Son of God. Having destined us to be his adopted sons, God gave us a likeness to Christ in his glory, and living as we do in communion with Christ, God’s anointed, we ourselves are rightly called ‘the anointed ones.’”<sup>5</sup>

◆ Msgr. Robert Guste says: “Ideal Catholics held up to us by the Church are the saints. As you read their lives, what do you notice? One after the other, they were men and women who had a deep, personal relationship with Our Lord Jesus Christ. Their hearts were on fire with love for Him...”<sup>6</sup>

◆ When we are baptized we are incorporated into Christ’s paschal mystery of death and resurrection. St. Paul speaks of this marvelous union with Jesus: *You cannot have forgotten that all of us, when we were baptised into Christ Jesus, were baptised into his death. So by our baptism into his death we were buried with him, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father’s glorious power, we too should begin living a new life.* (Rm 6:3-4).

Christ has structured the Christian life by the way He lived, died, and rose from the dead. It is obvious, then, as Paul tells us above, that the pattern of death-resurrection must be at the heart of the Church’s life. Individually and collectively, we continually die with Christ so that we may continually rise with Him. Thus we pass over in a process of ongoing religious transition to a greater participation in Christ’s resurrection. It is true that our participation in Christ’s resurrection will reach its completion only in eternity. Nevertheless, we begin the life of resurrection here upon the earth, in the here and now of human life, in the midst of joy and pain; in the experience of success and failure, in the sweat of our brow, in the enjoyment of God’s gifts. As Christians, we should have a sense of dynamic growth concerning our here and now life of resurrection.

We cannot maintain the life of resurrection or grow in it without a willingness to suffer. This does not mean that we need to feel overwhelmed and heavily burdened in our lives. The greater portion of suffering for most Christians seems to be an accumulation of ordinary hardships, difficulties, and pains. At times, however, deep suffering, even suffering of agonizing proportions, can enter into one’s life. Whether the sufferings one encounters are of either the more ordinary variety or the more rare and extreme type, Christians must convince themselves that to relate properly to the cross is to grow in resurrection, and growth in resurrection means we will also have an increased capacity to help give resurrection to others.

◆ The Church invites us to share deeply in the passion of Christ, in the cross of Christ. She does so that we might share deeply in His life of resurrection—here and hereafter. The more we die with Christ, the more we share in His life of resurrection—here and hereafter. Our ultimate goal here below is not the cross, but resurrection—the newness of life the cross leads to - here below as well as in eternity.

We are meant to share in all of the mysteries of Christ here below—we are meant to relive them in our own lives. And all of these mysteries are directed to the crowning mystery of Jesus, His resurrection: “As the Church is ever re-enacting, during all the ages, the life story of her Divine Spouse—undergoing

in the Mystical Body what He suffered in His Natural Body, so it must be too, in some measure, for every individual Christian that lives in real unity with Christ. It was thus that the saints understood the life of the Divine Master. *They not merely contemplated it, they lived it.* This was the source of the immense sympathy they were capable of experiencing for Him in His different states. They felt in a certain measure what He felt, and what is true of Our Lord's life considered as a whole must be true in no imperfect or limited manner of that which was the supreme and crowning mystery in that life—namely, the Resurrection. *This must be, not merely a fact in Christian history, but a phase of Christian experience ...* We do not readily perceive that, in God's plan, not only the Cross, but the Risen Life that followed it, is meant to be part of our terrestrial existence. Christ did not pass from the Cross straight to heaven. The Christian is not meant to do so either. In the case of Jesus the Cross preceded, prepared and prefaced a risen life on earth. In the case of the Christian the Cross is meant to play a somewhat similar role—that is, to be the prelude to a risen life, even here below.

“The Cross cannot be completely understood except it is viewed in the full light of the Resurrection. It is the latter, not the former, that is the ultimate mystery for us...The Cross is a means, not an end; it finds its explanation only in the empty tomb; it is an entrance into life, not a mode of death. Any death that enters into God's plan must necessarily issue forth in life. If He lays upon us the necessity of dying it is in order that we may live...In order that we may live as we ought, our rebellious nature must be crucified. Crucifixion always remains the only mode of salvation.

“God sends trials and crosses simply to deaden in us the activity of the forces that make for the decay of the spiritual life, in order that that spiritual life may develop and expand unimpeded. According as the life of perverse nature ebbs away from us on our cross united with Christ's, the Divine Life that God has placed in all whom He has called begins to make itself more manifest and to display increased vigour and vitality...It is to that Resurrection, that life in death, that God directs all the circumstances of our life—it is the object He aims at in His dealing with us.”<sup>7</sup>

In his above words, Fr. Edward Leen, C.S.Sp., speaks about a special episode of our participation in the resurrection of Jesus. He speaks of our Christ-life, our life of grace, in the highly developed state. We should all strive for this state. We must realize, however, that all those who live in the state of grace are, in an essential way, living the life of resurrection. They are alive in Christ Jesus.

◆ The following words of St. John Eudes remind us of the glorious goal the Christian is called to: the most intimate union with Jesus.

“I ask you to consider that our Lord Jesus Christ is your true head and that you are a member of his body. He belongs to you as the head belongs to

the body. All that is his is yours: breath, heart, body, soul and all his faculties. All of these you must use as if they belonged to you, so that in serving him you may give him praise, love and glory. You belong to him as a member belongs to the head. This is why he earnestly desires you to serve and glorify the Father by using all your faculties as if they were his.

“He belongs to you, but more than that, he longs to be in you, living and ruling in you, as the head lives and rules in the body. He desires that whatever is in him may live and rule in you: his breath in your breath, his heart in your heart, all the faculties of his soul in the faculties of your soul...

“You belong to the Son of God, but more than that, you ought to be in him as the members are in the head. All that is in you must be incorporated into him. You must receive life from him and be ruled by him. There will be no true life for you except in him, for he is the one source of true life. Apart from him you will find only death and destruction. Let him be the only source of your movements, of the actions and the strength of your life.

“Finally, you are one with Jesus as the body is one with the head. You must, then, have one breath with him, one soul, one life, one will, one mind, one heart. And he must be your breath, heart, love, life, your all. These great gifts in the follower of Christ originate from baptism. They are increased and strengthened through confirmation and by making good use of other graces that are given by God. Through the holy eucharist they are brought to perfection.”<sup>8</sup>

◆ St. Ignatius of Antioch was deeply consumed with love for Jesus: “At last I am well on the way to being a disciple. May nothing, seen or unseen, fascinate me, so that I may happily make my way to Jesus Christ! Fire, cross, struggles with wild beasts, wrenching of bones, mangling of limbs, crunching of the whole body, cruel tortures inflicted by the devil—let them come upon me, provided only I make my way to Jesus Christ.”<sup>9</sup>

◆ Cardinal Newman tells 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 born at random... God sees every one of us; He creates every soul, He lodges it in a body, one by one, for a purpose. He needs, He deigns to need, every one of us.”<sup>10</sup>



*“Everyone who breathes, high and low, educated and ignorant, young and old, man and woman, has a mission, has a work. We are not born at random... God sees every one of us; He creates every soul. He lodges it in a body one by one, for a purpose.”*

*- Cardinal Newman*



Because of the uniqueness of each Christian's existence, he or she presents Christ with a unique opportunity. Each Christian has the vocation to offer Christ his or her humanity so that Jesus can live in that individual in a special way. This Jesus is Priest, Prophet and King. To the extent that an individual Christian offers his or her humanity to Jesus, that person has a unique opportunity to help to continue the work of the redemption--an opportunity that no one else can fulfill. Likewise, to the extent that an individual fails to offer his or her humanity to Christ, Jesus loses the opportunity to continue His redemptive work according to that person's uniqueness.

◆ Concerning the prophetic or teaching office of Christ, each of us has the ever-present opportunity of witnessing to the truth of Christ by the way we live. Mother Teresa gives a striking example of this. She says: "I received a letter from a wealthy Brazilian man. He assured me that he had lost his faith -- not just his faith in God but his faith in humanity as well. He was fed up with his situation and everything around him. He only thought about suicide.

"One day, walking on a busy street downtown, he saw a television set in a store window. The program was about our Home for the Dying in Calcutta, and it showed our Sisters taking care of the sick and the dying.

"The man confessed that when he saw that, he felt the urge to kneel and pray, after many years of not ever kneeling or praying.

"From that day on, he recovered his faith in God and in humanity, and he was convinced that God still loves him."<sup>11</sup>

◆ St. Paul, one who loved Jesus so deeply, has left us these words: "*But we hold this treasure in pots of earthenware, so that the immensity of the power is God's and not our own. We are subjected to every kind of hardship, but never distressed; we see no way out but we never despair; we are pursued but never cut off; knocked down, but still have some life in us; always we carry with us in our body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus, too, may be visible in our body. Indeed, while we are still alive, we are continually being handed over to death, for the sake of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus, too, may be visible in our mortal flesh.*" (2 Cor 4:7-11).

◆ Here are words from St. Claude La Columbière, one of the great apostles of devotion to the Heart of Christ. Speaking to Jesus, Claude says:

You share my burdens,  
 You take them upon yourself.  
 You listen to me fondly when I tell you my troubles.  
 You never fail to lighten them.

I find You at all times and in all places.  
 You never leave me.  
 I will always find You wherever I go.

Old age or misfortune will not cause You to abandon me.

You will never be closer to me than  
 When all seems to go against me.  
 No matter how miserable I may be,  
 You will never cease to be my friend.

You tolerate my faults with admirable patience.  
 You are always ready to come to me, if I so desire it.

Jesus, may I die praising you!  
 May I die loving you!  
 May I die for the love of you.<sup>12</sup>

## The Father's Will For Us — Our Source of Peace

◆ Pope John Paul II instructs us: “The Church, as a reconciled and reconciling community, cannot forget that at the source of her gift and mission of reconciliation is the initiative, full of compassionate love and mercy, of that God who is love (see 1 John 4:8) and who out of love created human beings (see Wisdom 11:23-26; Genesis 1:27; Psalms 8:4-8)...He created them so that they might live in friendship with Him and in communion with one another.

“God is faithful to His eternal plan even when man, under the impulse of the evil one (see Wisdom 2:24) and carried away by his own pride, abuses the freedom given to him in order to love and generously seek what is good, and (instead) refuses to obey his Lord and Father. God is faithful even when man, instead of responding with love to God’s love, opposes Him and treats Him like a rival, deluding himself and relying on his own power, with the resulting break of relationship with the One who created him. In spite of this transgression on man’s part, God remains faithful in love.

“It is certainly true that the story of the Garden of Eden makes us think about the tragic consequences of rejecting the Father, which becomes evident in man’s inner disorder and in the breakdown of harmony between man and woman, brother and brother (see Genesis 3:12 ff; 4:1-16). Also significant is the Gospel parable of the two brothers (the parable of the ‘prodigal son’; see Luke 15:11-32) who, in different ways, distance themselves from their father and cause a rift between them. Refusal of God’s fatherly love and of His loving gifts is always at the root of humanity’s divisions.

“But we know that God...like the father in the parable (of the prodigal son), does not close His heart to any of His children. He waits for them, looks for them, goes to meet them at the place where the refusal of communion imprisons them in isolation and division. He calls them to gather

about His table in the joy of the feast of forgiveness and reconciliation.

“This initiative on God’s part is made concrete and manifest in the redemptive act of Christ, which radiates through the world by means of the ministry of the Church.”<sup>13</sup>

◆ *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, after saying this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy at seeing the Lord, and he said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so am I sending 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 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."<sup>14</sup>

◆ 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."<sup>15</sup>

◆ St. Teresa of Avila, one of the three women doctors of the Church, tells us how the spiritual life is summed up in loving conformity to the Father's will:

"All that the beginner in prayer has to do -- and you must not forget this, for it is very important -- is to labor and to be resolute and prepare himself with all possible diligence to bring his will in conformity with the will of God. As I shall say later, you may be quite sure that this comprises the very

greatest perfection which can be attained on the spiritual road.”<sup>16</sup>

Again she states: “...love consists ... in the firmness of our determination to try to please God in everything.”<sup>17</sup>

## The Holy Spirit and Mary

The late Archbishop Luis M. Martinez of Mexico strikingly speaks of the ongoing cooperation of Mary with the Holy Spirit regarding the reproduction of Jesus within us: “Christian life is the reproduction of Jesus in souls...”

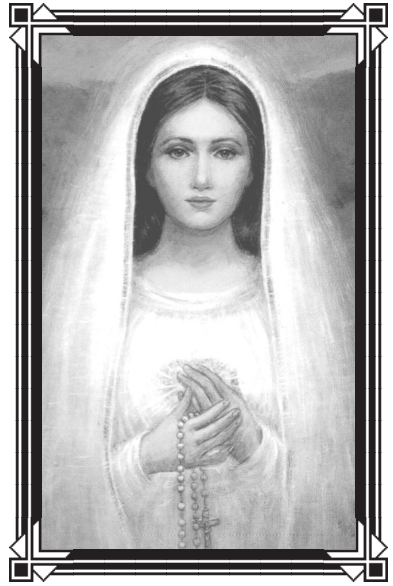
“Now, how will this mystical reproduction be brought about in souls? In the same way in which Jesus was brought into the world, for God gives a wonderful mark of unity to all His works. Divine acts have a wealth of variety because they are the work of omnipotence; nevertheless, a most perfect unity always shines forth from them because they are the fruit of wisdom; and this divine contrast of unity and variety stamps the works of God with sublime and unutterable beauty.

“In His miraculous birth, Jesus was the fruit of heaven and earth... The Holy Spirit conveyed the divine fruitfulness of the Father to Mary, and the virginal soil brought forth in an ineffable manner our most loving Savior, the divine Seed, as the prophets called Him...

“That is the way He is reproduced in souls. He is always the fruit of heaven and earth.

“Two artisans must concur in the work that is at once God’s masterpiece and humanity’s supreme product: the Holy Spirit and the most holy Virgin Mary. Two sanctifiers are necessary to souls, the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, for they are the only ones who can reproduce Christ.

“Undoubtedly, the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary sanctify us in different ways. The first is the Sanctifier by essence; because He is God, who is infinite sanctity; because He is the personal Love that completes, so to speak, the sanctity of God, consummating His life and His unity, and it belongs to Him to communicate to souls the mystery of that sanctity. The Virgin Mary, for her part, is the co-operator, the indispensable instrument in and by God’s design. From Mary’s maternal relation to the human body of Christ is derived her relation to



His Mystical Body which is being formed through all the centuries until the end of time, when it will be lifted up to the heavens, beautiful, splendid, complete, and glorious.

“These two, then, the Holy Spirit and Mary, are the indispensable artificers of Jesus, the indispensable sanctifiers of souls. Any saint in heaven can co-operate in the sanctification of a soul, but his co-operation is not necessary, not profound, not constant: while the co-operation of these two artisans of Jesus of whom we have just been speaking is so necessary that without it souls are not sanctified (and this by the actual design of Providence), and so intimate that it reaches to the very depths of our soul. For the Holy Spirit pours charity into our heart, makes a habitation of our soul, and directs our spiritual life by means of His gifts. The Virgin Mary has the efficacious influence of Mediatrix in the most profound and delicate operations of grace in our souls. And, finally, the action of the Holy Spirit and the co-operation of the most holy Virgin Mary are constant; without them, not one single character of Jesus would be traced on our souls, no virtue grow, no gift be developed, no grace increased, no bond of union with God be strengthened in the rich flowering of the spiritual life.

“Such is the place that the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary have in the order of sanctification. Therefore, Christian piety should put these two artisans of Christ in their true place, making devotion to them something necessary, profound, and constant.”<sup>18</sup>

## The Church

We live out our spiritual lives within the Church. The Church is a multi-splendored reality. Let us reflect upon some of the key ideas connected with the Church.

◆ Henri de Lubac states: “The Church is a mysterious extension in time of the Trinity, not only preparing us for the life of unity but bringing about even now our participation in it. She comes from and is full of the Trinity. She is for us -- in a favourite phrase of Bossuet -- ‘Jesus Christ ... communicated’. She is ‘the Incarnation continued.’ She is, as Dietrick Bonhoeffer used to say, ‘the presence of Christ on earth’ --- she speaks with ‘the authority of Christ living and present in her.’... St. Paul applies to her this same word ‘mystery’ which he had first used of Christ. She is after all, the spouse of Christ and his body.”<sup>19</sup>

◆ Fr. Bruno Forte tells us: “The Church comes from the Trinity, reflects in itself the Trinitarian communion—oneness in diversity—and journeys toward the Trinity, to the final handing over of all things to Christ, so that he might hand them over to the Father and God might be all in all. As ‘a people gathered in the unity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,’ the

Church is the Church of the Father. In his universal salvific plan, God has willed it to be a sign and instrument of the unity of people among themselves and with him. It is the Church of the Son, who through his incarnation and the paschal mystery has placed it in history as His Body. It is the Church of the Spirit, who makes the Risen Christ present in human history and enriching the people of God with charisms and ministries, leads it toward the promised future goal.”<sup>20</sup>

◆ The fact that the Church is here on earth a reflection of the Trinitarian Community easily leads us to reflect upon the Church as the Body of Christ, since this name given to the Church also emphasizes the communal aspect of the Church. St. Paul tells us: *For as with the human body which is a unity although it has many parts -- all the parts of the body, though many, still making up one single body -- so it is with Christ. We were baptised into one body in a single Spirit, Jews as well as Greeks, slaves as well as free men, and we were all given the same Spirit to drink. And indeed the body consists not of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, 'I am not a hand and so I do not belong to the body', it does not belong to the body any the less for that. Or if the ear were to say, 'I am not an eye, and so I do not belong to the body', that would not stop its belonging to the body. If the whole body were just an eye, how would there be any hearing? If the whole body were hearing, how would there be any smelling?*

*Now Christ's body is yourselves, each of you with a part to play in the whole. And those whom God has appointed in the Church are, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers; after them, miraculous powers, then gifts of healing, helpful acts, guidance, various kinds of tongues. Are all of them apostles? Or all prophets? Or all teachers? Or all miracle-workers? Do all have the gifts of healing? Do all of them speak in tongues and all interpret them? (1 Cor 12:12-17; 27-30)*

◆ Some two thousand years ago Christ walked the earth teaching, healing the sick, forgiving sins, extending His mercy and kindness. By such a life which culminated in death and resurrection, Christ redeemed the world. This objective redemption was accomplished by Christ alone. Through it, He won for people of all time the necessary graces for their salvation and sanctification.

However, it is necessary that such graces be distributed to each individual as one plays out his or her part in the drama of human existence. Such a distribution of grace is the work of subjective redemption.

Jesus still walks the earth as the work of redemption continues. However, He now walks the earth according to a different type of existence. He does not walk the earth in His physical body, but rather in His Mystical Body, the Church, the People of God. Through the members of His Church, Christ continues to be present as He teaches, administers the sacraments, extends His mercy -- all done through the members of His Body, the Church. This

mystical Christ, in turn, derives all supernatural power from Christ, the Head, who reigns gloriously with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The Church, therefore, is the earthly continuation of Christ's redemptive Incarnation. This mission which the Church has, although a great responsibility, is also a great privilege. In proportion as each Christian offers and commits himself or herself to Christ, the Church in her entirety more and more mirrors forth Christ to the world. This Christ, whom the Church portrays to the world, is the Christ who is Prophet, King and Priest.

◆ We now reflect upon the Church as Spouse of Christ. Fr. Joseph Murphy, S.J., tells us: "John Paul II always quotes the rich doctrinal and patristic traditions of the Church which refer to Christ as the Spouse of the Church and the Spouse of souls, given to both in the Eucharistic mystery. For him the key to understanding the sacramentality of marriage, not to mention the nature of humanity, is the spousal love of Christ for the Church demonstrated in Ephesians 5. Christ is the Head of the Church as Savior of His Body. The Church is exactly that Body which receives from Him all that through which it becomes and is His Body. As Head and Savior of the Church He is also Bridegroom of His Bride..."<sup>21</sup>

◆ The Church is a mother to us. Henri de Lubac speaks concerning this beautiful truth:

"The Church is my mother because she brought me forth to a new life. She is my mother because her concern for me never slackens, any more than do her efforts to deepen that life in me, however unenthusiastic my cooperation. And though in me this life may be a fragile and timid growth, I have seen its full flowering in others..."



*"The Church is my mother because she brought me forth to a new life. She is my mother because her concern for me never slackens, any more than do her efforts to deepen that life in me..."*

*- Henri de Lubac*

"Happy those who from childhood have learnt to look on the Church as a mother! Happier still those whose experience, in whatever walk of life, has confirmed its truth! Happy those who one day were gripped by (and whose appreciation of it ever grew) the astonishing newness, richness and depth of the life communicated to them by this mother!"<sup>22</sup>

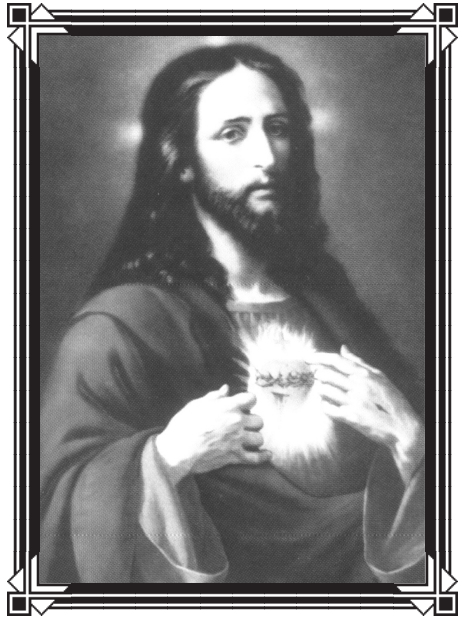
◆ Avery Dulles, S.J., the well-known theologian who has written much about the Church, observes: "The Church, as I have already contended, is essentially a mystery of



grace, a wonderful encounter between the divine and the human. Even in its visible structures, the Church is not a mere organization to be judged on grounds of efficiency, but a sacrament of God's saving deed in Jesus Christ. From this it follows, in my judgment, that the Church's forms of speech and life, and indeed its entire corporate existence, must be such as to mediate a vital communion with Christ the Lord. The Church must be a place of prayer and worship, praise and witness. Any institutional change in the Church must be carefully assessed for its effect on the spiritual life of the members. Does it intensify their faith, their hope, their charity? Does it help them to center their lives on Christ and to ground their existence in the God who raised him from the dead?"<sup>23</sup>

◆ Fr. Gerald Vann, O.P., speaks movingly about our life in the Church:

"If you live in the Church and try to use the power of the Church



to increase the life of the Church, then the power of the Church will make you yourself whole; and in your wholeness you will help to make your family and make your world. But you will be building for a more than earthly beatitude because you will be building the city which is eternal. Here you build in shadow, you build for a future which is invisible, and so you can only build in hope. And often your plans will be wrecked and your dreams come crashing about your ears, and you will need the strength of the Rock which is Christ to give you patience and fortitude...

"And when death has come to you...the Church will bless you for the life you have added to it, and there will be men to heed you better than they did when you were here..."

"But you, for your part, will be no longer in the shadow but in the glory of the Light inaccessible; you will be in the City that is yours because you helped to build it; you will see Him at last as He is, and be wholly with Him; and you will have no more any mourning or weeping or any other sorrow, for all these former things will have been transmuted into happiness and peace, and you will walk with Him--together with all those you have helped to bring to Him, even until the end of the world--you will walk with Him in happiness for ever, in the cool of the eternal evening."<sup>24</sup>

# The Sacraments

The Church's existence centers in her liturgy. Vatican II says: "The liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which all her power flows."<sup>25</sup> The Church's liturgical life is centered in the sacraments and, most especially, in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. We will briefly consider the sacraments in general, and then more extensively develop ideas about the Mass.

The sacraments are special encounters with Christ. Jesus unites Himself with the sacramental sign as He offers His grace to the recipient. In this sense, Christ and His sacraments become one; the sacrament and its minister are merely instruments that Christ employs to give Himself anew. The primary sacramental encounter is between Jesus and the recipient.

Christ offers Himself through the Church and her sacraments so that we might become ever more united to Him. This incorporation into Christ begins at baptism, through which the Christian becomes a member of both Christ and the Church. What is more, this incorporation into the life of Christ means being incorporated into his paschal mystery. Death-resurrection was the summary mystery of Christ's redemptive existence. Death-resurrection was the central mystery whereby Christ gave us life, and it is the central mystery that the Christian must relive in Christ.

Each one of the sacraments deepens our incorporation into Jesus' death-resurrection; each one achieves this in a somewhat different manner according to its primary purpose; finally, and very importantly, each of the sacraments deepens this incorporation within an ecclesial framework. The sacraments, because they are realities of both Christ and his Church, intensify the Christian's relationship not only with Jesus, but also with the members of the Church and, ultimately, with all others.

## The Eucharist

◆ The death-resurrection of Jesus, which is encountered in a special way through the sacraments, is most especially renewed in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Consequently, we can see the logical connection between the sacraments and the Mass. Indeed, all of the sacraments point to the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

◆ *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*

*pascal 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)<sup>26</sup>

◆ *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)<sup>27</sup>

◆ *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)<sup>28</sup>

◆ Pope John Paul II states: "This worship, given therefore to the Trinity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, above all accompanies and permeates the celebration of the Eucharistic Liturgy. But it must fill our churches also outside the timetable of Masses. Indeed, since the Eucharistic Mystery was instituted out of love, and makes Christ sacramentally present, it is worthy of thanksgiving and worship. And this worship must be prominent in all our encounters with the Blessed Sacrament, both when we visit our churches and when the sacred species are taken to the sick and administered to them.

"Adoration of Christ in this sacrament of love must also find expression *in various forms of Eucharistic devotion*: personal prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, Hours of Adoration, periods of exposition—short, prolonged and annual (Forty Hours) - Eucharistic benediction, Eucharistic processions,

Eucharistic congresses. A particular mention should be made at this point of the Solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ as an act of public worship rendered to Christ present in the Eucharist, a feast instituted by my predecessor Urban IV in memory of the institution of this great Mystery.

“All this therefore corresponds to the general principles and particular norms already long in existence, but newly formulated during or after the Second Vatican Council.

“...The Church and the world have a great need of Eucharistic worship. Jesus waits for us in this sacrament of love. Let us be generous with our time in going to meet Him in adoration and in contemplation that is full of faith and ready to make reparation for the great faults and crimes of the world. May our adoration never cease.”<sup>29</sup>

◆ The following words of Fr. M. Raymond, O.C.S.O., 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.”<sup>30</sup>

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 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, also points out the great importance of personal holiness in the Church relative to the effectiveness of the Eucharistic sacrifice: “It is, then, of the greatest importance that there should be in the Church many holy, many very holy persons. Devout people, men and women, 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 perfection? 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.”<sup>31</sup>

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.

◆ The Sacrifice of Calvary is sacramentally made present in the Mass. When we pray the Morning Offering Prayer, united to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we act as intercessors, pleading to God that great graces be released all day through our prayerful actions as we act in love according to the Father’s will. Whether we are eating, taking care of a sick parent, enjoying time spent with a friend, working at our job, we can help bring down great graces for the world.

When we pray the Morning Offering Prayer we offer our lives to the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, with the prayerful assistance of Mary, our Mother. Let us pray together united in our hearts in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. There follows a Morning Offering Prayer.

“My dear Father, I offer You this day all my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings in union with Jesus in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in the Holy Spirit.

“I unite with our Mother, Mary, all the angels and saints, and all the souls in purgatory to pray to the Father for myself, for each member of my family, for my friends, for all the people throughout the world, for all the souls in purgatory, and for all other intentions of the Sacred Heart.

“I love You, Jesus, and I give You my heart. I love you, Mary, and I give you my heart. Amen.”<sup>32</sup>

◆ Fr. Edward Leen, C.S. Sp., tells us: “Unless we are pleasing to God we cannot be saved, we cannot realize the purpose of our divine adoption. We cannot please God unless we resemble Jesus Christ, and the Blessed Sacrament is instituted for the very object of perfecting in us this likeness. Bodily food is transformed into the flesh of him that receives it; this heavenly food, the food of our souls, which is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, has the directly opposite effect: it changes him who receives it into Itself. It must not be forgotten that the presence in us which follows the reception of Holy



*“It must not be forgotten that the presence in us which follows the reception of Holy Communion is a living active presence. Our Lord is more present with us than is a person with whom we are speaking.”*

*- Edward Leen*

Communion is a living active presence. Our Lord is more present with us than is a person with whom we are speaking. As He influenced whilst on earth those who allowed themselves to fall under the charm of His Personality, so He exercises a profound effect on the soul of the communicant, if that soul wishes to submit to His action. We cannot be in the society of one who is good without being incited to goodness; we cannot be with Our Lord—and we are as close to Him as our desires extend—without receiving the effects of His virtue and without being stirred to become as he was, without being drawn, in a mystical sense to become one with Him, to become ‘Christified.’”<sup>33</sup>

◆ 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.

“This is how I am with Jesus. I am empty. I want Him to make Himself known to me. I didn’t have much theological knowledge when I started sitting in front of the tabernacle. I was looking for love from Jesus. Nobody loved me the way my soul wanted to be loved. I craved to be with Jesus. I wanted my heart filled. I wanted the craving I felt inside satisfied. I thirsted for love. I sat with Him present in the tabernacle and He filled me. He revealed Himself to me. He was the Bridegroom of my soul and I His bride. As I became more intimately united to Him, sitting there in silence and going to Him, I cried. I was so filled with love. I found what I was looking for all my life. He wrote the knowledge of Himself on my soul. He wrote this knowledge in the intimate moments I spent with Him at Mass after Communion and before the tabernacle.

“I struggle intently to do His work, and I am weary from running the race. I am tired, I am truly human, but the unquenchable love I have for Him in my heart is at the core of my existence. It is in Him I exist and in Him I love. I love Him so intently and yet I am so unworthy of His gifts given to me. I long more for the desire to help souls, and His desires become mine through my deep union with Him especially after the reception of the Eucharist. On this day (Feast of the Assumption), I felt the unquenchable purity of the Heart of Mary and the joy of dwelling deeply in His Heart in her pure love. It was a special gift He gave to me, to be wrapped in Mary’s Heart despite my faults. He gave Himself so completely to me. I only long for this, knowing this presence.”<sup>34</sup>

◆ Mother Teresa of Calcutta shares these thoughts with us: “I make a holy hour each day in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. All my

sisters of the Missionaries of Charity make a daily holy hour, as well, because we find that through our daily holy hour our love for Jesus becomes more intimate, our love for each other more understanding, and our love for the poor more compassionate. Our holy hour is our daily family prayer where we get together and pray the Rosary before the exposed Blessed Sacrament for the first half hour, and the second half hour we pray in silence. Our adoration has doubled our vocations. In 1963, we were making a weekly hour together, but it was not until 1973, when we began our daily holy hour that our community started to grow and blossom."<sup>35</sup>

◆ St. Peter Julian Eymard, founder of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers, tells us: "The Eucharist, behold the Christian's treasure, his delight on earth. Since Jesus is in the Eucharist for him personally, his whole life ought to be drawn to it like a magnet to its center."<sup>36</sup>

## Priesthood

The above thoughts on the Eucharist easily lead us to thoughts on the priesthood:

◆ The *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* now speaks to us concerning the priest and his relationship with the Eucharist:

"If the service of the Word is the foundational element of the priestly ministry, the heart and the vital center of it is constituted, without a doubt, in the Eucharist, which is, above all, the real presence in time of the unique and eternal sacrifice of Christ.

"The sacramental memorial of the death and Resurrection of Christ, the true and efficacious representation of the singular redemptive Sacrifice, source and apex of Christian life in the whole of evangelization, the Eucharist is the beginning, means, and end of the priestly ministry, since 'all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate are bound up with the Eucharist and are directed towards it.' Consecrated in order to perpetuate the Holy Sacrifice, the priest thus manifests, in the most evident manner, his identity.

"There exists, in fact, an intimate rapport between the centrality of the Eucharist, pastoral charity, and the unity of life of the priest, who finds in this rapport the decisive indications for the way to the holiness to which he has been specifically called.

"If the priest lends to Christ, Most Eternal High Priest, his intelligence, will, voice and hands so as to offer, through his very ministry, the sacramental sacrifice of redemption to the Father, he should make his own the dispositions of the Master and, like him, live those gifts for his brothers in faith. He must therefore learn to unite himself intimately to the offering, placing his entire life upon the altar of sacrifice as a revealing sign of the gratuitous and anticipatory love of God."<sup>37</sup>

◆ 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 ministers. 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...

“This most holy Synod desires to achieve its pastoral goals of renewal within the Church, of the spread of the gospel throughout the world, and of dialogue with the modern world. Therefore it fervently exhorts all priests to use the appropriate means endorsed by the Church as they ever strive for that greater sanctity which will make them increasingly useful instruments in the service of all of God’s People.”<sup>36</sup>

What Vatican II puts before seminarians regarding spiritual formation can also obviously be implemented by priests: “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 Blessed Virgin Mary, who was given as a mother to His disciple by Christ Jesus as He hung dying on the cross.”<sup>39</sup>

◆ Pope John Paul II builds upon the teaching of Vatican II: “There can be no doubt that the exercise of the priestly ministry, especially in the celebration of the sacraments, receives its saving effects from the action of Christ himself who becomes present in the sacraments. But so as to emphasize the gratuitous nature of salvation which makes a person both ‘saved’ and a ‘savior’ -- always and only in Christ -- God’s plan has ordained that the efficacy of the exercise of the ministry is also conditioned by a greater or lesser human receptivity and participation. In particular, the greater or lesser degree of the holiness of the minister has a real effect on the proclamation of the word, the celebration of the sacraments and the leadership of the community in charity.”<sup>40</sup>

◆ Father Arthur Culkins, a contemporary Marian scholar, offers us these words on Mary and the priest:

“If every Christian ought to see himself in the Apostle John, entrusted to



Mary as her son or daughter, how much more ought priests to recognize themselves as sons of Mary, as the subject of a ‘double’ entrustment to her. I say ‘double’ because they are successors of John by a twofold title: as disciples and as priests. This is beautifully drawn out by our Holy Father in his “Holy Thursday Letter to Priests” of 1988: ‘If John at the foot of the Cross somehow represents every man and woman for whom the motherhood of the Mother of God is spiritually extended, how much more does this concern each of us, who are sacramentally called to the priestly ministry of the Eucharist in the Church!’...

“Although Jesus had already entrusted every priest to his Mother from the height of the Cross and the Pope has done it even hundreds of times, it is still necessary for the priest to do so himself if he would truly experience the power and the protection of the Mother of God in his life as her Divine Son intends it. Priests who have done so know the difference it makes”.<sup>41</sup>

◆ Fr. Jean Galot, S.J. gives us these insightful words on the priesthood: “Christ requires of the Twelve a more complete consecration, more like his own. He calls upon them to forsake everything to follow him and thereby associates them more closely to his own Incarnation...”

“Consecration, too, establishes a special bond between priests and the redeeming mystery of Christ. Because Jesus brings his own consecration to fruition through sacrifice, those on whom he bestows his pastoral power are called upon to realize in themselves the definition of the good shepherd who gives his life for his sheep. Priests cannot limit their sacrificial offering to the ritual performance of the Eucharist. They are called upon to commit themselves completely by making that total gift of their own selves which the Eucharist implies for their own personal lives. Their commitment to sacrifice is not just the one required of every Christian by virtue of the universal priesthood but the one demanded of them by a consecration that is specifically the priest’s own.

“As to the mission of the priest, it is entirely an expression of redemptive Incarnation in its pastoral aspect. The Incarnation is revealed in this mission because the powers bestowed on the priests to be exercised in the name of Christ are divine powers: the power to hand down revealed truth authoritatively, the power to offer... Christ’s own sacrifice in the Eucharist, the power to forgive sins and to mediate Christ’s holiness, the power to lead the community and to promote the development of a kingdom which is God’s own. Thus, the priest emerges as the man of God, the man in whom God acts with a special power.

“The priestly ministry brings redemption to fruition also because of the indissoluble bond which Christ establishes between service and sacrifice. The Son of Man has come to serve and to give his life as a ransom for mankind. Prolonging this service of the Son of Man and making it available to men in every age and place means prolonging at the same time the sacri-

vice that imparts freedom. All the aspects of the priestly ministry bear the distinctive mark of sacrifice. The priest cannot impart the truth and the life of Christ, nor live his pastoral love, without a profound commitment to the way of the cross.”<sup>42</sup>

And here are further words of Fr. Galot: “As a mediator, the priest is a shepherd in the name of God, or more precisely in the name of Christ, and through Christ, in the name of the Father. In the priest is realized the prophetic oracle of Ezechiel in which Yahweh promises to be the Shepherd of his people. (Ezek 34).

“Some implications of this principle must be underlined. The priest does not draw the inspiration for his pastoral zeal from his own feelings, from his own personal resolve to create a better world. He is shepherd on the strength of God’s pastoral intention and represents specifically Christ the shepherd. Consequently he is called upon to fulfill his pastoral mission not according to ideas of his own and his own personal ambitions, but in keeping with God’s own dispensation and the design of salvation devised by the Father and carried out by Christ. Like Jesus himself, the priest is at the service of the Father.”<sup>43</sup>

◆ Pope John Paul II speaks to his brother priests: “*In a certain way prayer is the first and last condition for conversion, spiritual progress and holiness. Perhaps in the recent years — at least in certain quarters — there has been too much discussion about the Priesthood, the priest’s ‘identity’, the value of his presence in the modern world, etc., and on the other hand there has been too little praying. There has not been enough enthusiasm for actuating the Priesthood itself through prayer...in order to confirm the priestly identity. It is prayer that shows the essential style of the priest; without prayer this style becomes deformed. Prayer helps us always to find the light that has led us since the beginning of our priestly vocation, and which never ceases to lead us, even though it seems at times to disappear in the darkness. Prayer enables us to be converted continually, to remain in a state of continuous reaching out to God, which is essential if we wish to lead others to Him. Prayer helps us to believe, to hope and to love, even when our human weakness hinders us.*

“Prayer likewise enables us continually to rediscover the dimensions of that kingdom for whose coming we pray every day, when we repeat the words that Christ taught us. Then we realize what *our place is in the realization of the petition*: ‘Thy kingdom come’, and we see how necessary we are in its realization.”

And here are further words of John Paul II to priests: “Dear brothers: ...you who have put your hand to the plough and do not turn back, and perhaps even more those of you who are doubtful of the meaning of your vocation or of the value of your service: think of the places where people anxious-

ly await a priest, and where for many years, feeling the lack of such a priest, they do not cease to hope for his presence. And sometimes it happens that they meet in an abandoned shrine, and place on the altar a stole which they still keep, and recite all the prayers of the Eucharistic Liturgy; and then, at the moment that corresponds to the transubstantiation a deep silence comes down upon them, a silence sometimes broken by a sob... so ardently do they desire to hear the words that only the lips of a priest can efficaciously utter... So deeply do they feel the absence of a priest among them!... Such places are not lacking in the world. So if one of you doubts the meaning of his Priesthood, if he thinks it is 'socially' fruitless or useless, reflect on this! <sup>44</sup>

◆ 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' ".<sup>45</sup>



# Prayer

◆ Prayer is a special occasion in which we deepen our awareness of our relationship with God. In prayer we become especially aware of God's loving presence and respond with our pledge of love. Prayer deepens our desire for God and deepens our determination to carry out His will. Prayer unites us more intimately with the Father, through Christ, and in the Holy Spirit.

◆ The best way to pray is that method which at any particular time seems best able to put us in contact with God. For one person this may be meditative reading—for example, a prayerful reflection on a selected Scripture passage. As many passages may be prayed over as seems fruitful for a particular prayer period. For another, the best method here and now may well be a simple discussion with God concerning the happenings of one's life. Another person may choose reflection on the words of a favorite prayer. Prayer over a scene of Christ's life is another popular method. All the above are some of the common methods used in making meditative prayer. To have a deepened sense of God being present to us and we to God, and to realize that this occurs in the atmosphere of love—this is the important thing. The prayer method we use at any particular time should best serve this purpose.

No matter what prayer method I use, my prayers should always be Trinitarian and Christocentric. I should always strive to realize that the Father speaks to me through Christ in the Holy Spirit, and that I respond to the Father through and with Jesus in the Holy Spirit.

As prayer develops, it usually becomes more simplified. Beginners in the life of prayer often experience numerous ideas and images regarding God and the things of God together with various acts of the will. As prayer develops there usually occurs a simplification process which is threefold. First, acts of the intellect become fewer, even to the extent that one idea clearly predominates. The acts of the will also become fewer, and that of love more and more emerges and, in summary fashion, contains all other movements of the will. Finally, prayer's simplification process reaches out and touches everything in the person's life. The person sees life harmoniously unified in Christ, and this simplified vision gives a sense of concentrated purpose and strength to one's existence which was previously not present.

Prayer and its growth process are not void of all difficulties. The path of prayer, as with the spiritual life in general, is not always a smooth one. Sometimes we encounter lesser sufferings along the way; sometimes the pain is more severe. The sufferings, if properly coped with, are meant to lead to greater union with God. It is once again a question of living Christ's paschal mystery of death and resurrection.

One of the common difficulties encountered in prayer is that of coping

with distractions. It is only in higher mystical prayer, during which God takes special hold of the faculties, that distractions are completely absent. In the more ordinary stages of prayer, we will always have to cope with them. The challenge, then, is to strive to bypass distractions when they do occur. Essential concentration on God and the things of God is still possible although distractions come and go.

Dryness in prayer is another common suffering. Often God bestows sweet consolations upon one beginning the life of prayer in order to help the person become initiated into the rewarding but arduous life of prayer. Often, as prayer progresses, the periods of emotionally-felt consolation may become less frequent. A dryness of the emotions is noticeably present. The person, grounded in the practice of prayer, is now strong enough to continue in it even though times of emotionally-felt consolation may be less frequent. One is learning to seek God, rather than just God's gifts of consolation. In seeking God, the person will also receive consolations as God chooses to give them.

Of all the difficulties encountered during prayer, surely the most painful is to experience God as seeming to be distant. This is such a penetrating type of suffering because it strikes at the very heart of prayer—the fact that prayer is a special meeting with God in which I strive to be aware of God with heightened consciousness.



There are two basic reasons for God seeming to be distant. God can actually be more distant because the person is at fault. There is something of considerable significance which the

person is doing and should not be doing, or something which he or she should be doing and is not. The solution to the difficulty is obvious. Corrective action should be taken. If, however, upon examination the person honestly cannot discover any such significant commission or omission, he or she can be reasonably assured that this is a trial associated with prayer's growth process. Passing through this trial successfully, the person will discover that the relative darkness has turned into a greater light, and a closer love union with God in Christ is now experienced.

◆ We should not be afraid to look at ourselves in prayerful self-reflection. Prayerful reflection upon myself in union with Jesus will give me a growing sense of peace and security, resulting from an increased prayerful awareness of how much Jesus loves me as this unique companion. If there is pain involved in prayerful self-reflection, the pain soon fades to the background. In prayer Jesus shows us how lovable we are. He loved us unto His brutal

death. Redeemed by the love of God, how can we be unlovable? We have been touched by Jesus' redemptive blood. We are thus beautiful in His sight. His love for us continues, and the more we surrender to the boundless love of His magnificent Heart, the more the truth, the goodness, and the beauty of our persons shine forth.

◆ Fr. John Wright, S.J., tells us: "It is frequently said that the prayer of beginners is more active and that as time goes on and prayer matures it becomes more passive. But it seems to me that we must distinguish here our attitudes and awareness from our actual activities and operations. Initially, our attitude is more active than passive. We are more conscious of doing and acting than of receiving. We are more aware of what we do by way of response than of what God does in His initiative. Gradually this changes, so that we become more and more aware of His action in us, illuminating, inspiring, strengthening, encouraging, and so forth. This means, of course, that our attitude becomes more passive. But our actual activity in operation doesn't itself become less. There is indeed a greater dependence on God's action, and what we do is done more freely, more simply, more intensively and spontaneously. Our attention, then, is more upon God than upon ourselves, but we are actually more active in the real sense. For we see more clearly, believe more deeply, love more purely, rejoice more unselfishly..."<sup>46</sup>

◆ Thomas Merton speaks to us about the place of love in prayer: "The instinctive characteristic of religious meditation is that it is a search for truth which springs from love and which seeks to pursue the truth not only by knowledge but also by love. It is, therefore, an intellectual activity which is inseparable from an intense consecration of spirit and application of the will. The presence of love in our meditation intensifies our thought by giving it a deeply affective quality. Our meditation becomes charged with a loving appreciation of the value hidden in the supreme truth which the intelligence is seeking. The affective drive of the will...raises the soul above the level of speculation and makes our quest for truth a prayer full of reverential love and adoration striving to pierce the dark cloud which stands between us and the throne of God. We beat against this cloud with supplication, we lament our poverty, our helplessness, we adore the mercy of God and His supreme perfections, we dedicate ourselves entirely to this worship."<sup>47</sup>

◆ Growth in prayer not only increases our love of God, but also enhances our loving concern for others.

A great example of this is seen in the study of the prayer life of Catherine of Sienna, saint and doctor of the Church. Sr. Mary O'Driscoll, O.P., tells us:

"Twenty-six of Catherine of Sienna's prayers have been preserved for us. With one possible exception, they are not prayers that she herself wrote or

even dictated to others. Rather, they were transcribed by her followers who were present as she prayed aloud. All of these prayers belong to the last four years of her life. They impress us by their simplicity, their intense concentration on God, who is repeatedly praised and thanked, and their constant desire for the salvation of others...

“As her prayers make evident, Catherine of Sienna was a great intercessor. In them we find her pleading with God persistently and urgently for mercy for all the world, the Church, the pope, her friends and followers, all in need. It is obvious that she does not regard intercession as merely a passing prayer to God on behalf of one or other persons in time of crisis, but rather as an expression of her deep, loving, permanent commitment both to God and to her neighbors. In Catherine’s own life, the importance and intensity of her intercession increased according as her union with God and her concern for others increased. This observation tells us something very significant about the prayer of intercession in the Christian life, namely, that it is not, as is sometimes thought, a type of prayer which one passes on the way to the heights of mystical prayer, as though intercession were for beginners and mysticism for those who are advanced in the spiritual life, but as a type of prayer which belongs most particularly to the life of contemplative union with God.”<sup>48</sup>

◆ Pope Paul VI on the rosary: “As a Gospel prayer, centered in the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation, the Rosary is therefore a prayer with a clearly Christological orientation—the Jesus that each Hail Mary recalls is the same Jesus Whom the succession of the mysteries proposes to us...By its nature the recitation of the Rosary calls for a quiet rhythm and a lingering pace, helping the individual to meditate on the mysteries of the Lord’s life as seen through the eyes of her who was closest to the Lord. In this way the unfathomable riches of these mysteries are unfolded.”<sup>49</sup>

◆ In speaking of Fatima, Pope John Paul II also speaks of the rosary.

On May 12, 1982, Pope John Paul II made a pilgrimage to Fatima. One of his motives for his visit was to offer thanks for Mary’s intercession in saving his life relative to the assassination attempt a year earlier.

Some fifteen years later in 1997, the Holy Father gave us the following words regarding Fatima. Lynne Weil, a newspaper reporter, gives this account: “Pope John Paul said the series of Marian apparitions at Fatima, Portugal, rank as one of the most significant events of this century.

“The string of apparitions that ended 80 years ago was ‘one of the greatest’ signs of the times, ‘also because it announces in its message many of the signs that followed and it invites (us) to follow their call’; the pope said in a letter to Bishop Serafim de Sousa Ferreire Silva of Leiria - Fatima, Portugal. The message, dated October 1, was released at the Vatican October 14 (1997).

“Pope John Paul said the event at Fatima ‘helps us to see the hand of God’ even in the 20th century, with its wars and other mass tragedies. And it showed that despite having ‘removed itself from God’, humanity was offered God’s protection, the pontiff said.

“Pope John Paul recalled that in Gospel accounts of Jesus’ death, he invoked clemency on his captors even as he was being crucified and entrusted humanity to the care of his mother, Mary.

“The pope repeated the exhortation stemming from the Marian apparitions at Fatima that the faithful recite the rosary every day. He asked pastors to recite the rosary, and to teach others to recite it, daily. —CNS”

## Relationship with Others

◆ Growth in the Christ-life gives us an increased awareness of our relationships with others. That is to say, the true Christian is keenly aware that, to a great degree, God intends each of us to press on toward maturity in the spiritual life through proper relationships with our fellow human beings. Indeed, the Christian imperative reminds us that we are to walk life’s path, not in isolation, but hand in hand with our brothers and sisters of the human family.

To authentically relate to others, we must be aware of who they really are. We must be able to penetrate beyond surface appearances, which may or may not be appealing to us, and contact others in their core existence. When we are truly in touch with others at the core of their beings, we are aware of their awesome dignity. We are conscious that these persons are created and redeemed by God in His overwhelming love for them. Fortified with this proper awareness, we are then in a position to relate to others as we should.

In order to be in touch with the inner self of others, we must be aware of or in touch with our own inner or true self. This awareness, in turn, is also an awareness that our self is in the image of God, that we have been divinized in Christ, that we are oriented toward love of God and neighbor. Here, then, we see the profound interaction between the three awarenesses and loves: awareness and love of God, self and neighbor.

As Christians, consequently, we should have a maturing sense of how our existence is, in varied ways, profoundly interlinked with the existence of others. This reality of union with others is not limited to those we directly meet but includes all members of the human family.

◆ Our relationship with others includes a Christ-like spirit of service.

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 neighbor. For most of us, however, such opportunities will probably never occur, and this is just as well. Our courage could well be far less in a real situ-



ation than it is in the inflated proportions of dreamlike musings. Most people perform much better in the less heroic atmosphere of everyday sameness. Yet each day, so ordinarily similar to both the one which has preceded and the one which will follow, offers constant opportunities for the laying down of

*As Christians, consequently, we should have a maturing sense of how our existence is, in varied ways, profoundly interlinked with the existence of others. This reality of union with others is not limited to those we directly meet but includes all members of the human family.*

one's life 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 in the course of human affairs. Dying daily for others means fidelity to our work, even though this fidelity must be expressed amid temptations such as discouragement, laziness, and disinterest. Dying daily for our neighbor means these and many other things, some of which we all share in common, some of which are peculiar to each person'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.

Jesus, of course, is our great exemplar regarding the service of others: *But Jesus called them to him and said, 'You know that among the gentiles the rulers lord it over them, and great men make their authority felt. Among you this is not to happen. No; anyone who wants to become great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.* (Mt 20:25-28).

## The Christian and the World

God calls us to share His love for His creation. Growth in Christ develops our awareness of this truth. The Christian should have a deeper love for the world than the non-believer. All that is good and true and beautiful, all that

we humans reach out for in hope, all the possibilities for our true earthly progress, all the worthwhile and enthusiastic dreams of the human heart for a better world—yes, the Christian should yearn more deeply for all this than the non-believer. Why? Because the Christian knows that the world belongs to Christ. The Christian knows that the human race's pursuit of the true, the good, and the beautiful is ultimately a pursuit of Christ. The Christian knows that any authentic step forward that the human family takes marks a deepening of the Christic evolutionary process whereby mankind and this world are more fully united to the center and the crown of the universe—Christ Himself.

Obviously, we do not love and embrace the world's sinful dimension. A holy sadness should touch us when we reflect upon the sinful depravity that defiles the world's Christic image. We do not refuse secular involvement, however, because of the world's sinfulness. We must behave in a way that is different from the way much of the world thinks and acts, yet we must be different in a way that does not make us shirk our responsibility towards the secular. All of us, whether we live within monastery walls or within the explosiveness of the inner city, have this responsibility—each in his or her own way.

## Purification

Growth in the spiritual life entails an ongoing and progressive purification. This purification enables us to grow in union with God as it allows God to increasingly possess us through the Christ-life of grace.

The process of purification takes many forms. It comprises everything which cleanses us more and more of the false self — the self which operates outside of God's will — and which allows the true self, the Christ-like self, to increasingly emerge.

One of the forms of purification is what has traditionally been called asceticism. Asceticism is that active self-purification aimed at helping the divine image in us to be more manifest and operative. Asceticism helps us to become more like the persons God wants us to be.

The Christian must experience an ongoing conversion away from the non-authentic self to a greater Christ-likeness, to greater development of the authentic self. Asceticism is the graced control, the active self-purification, of one's total being.

Christian asceticism is at the service of freedom, of life. In aiding us to be more Christ-like, it helps us be more alive. Far from confining our capacity to live and to enjoy life, asceticism contributes to the ongoing process of our being persons capable of deeper love, and, therefore, capable of greater life. One who practices a reasonable asceticism is not one who is less interested in love and life. Such a person is rather one who is willing to bear with the hard-

ships involved in a reasonable, graced control of one's being with all its various dimensions — intellect, will, memory, emotions, and so forth — so that one may be more alive, more capable of authentic love.

## The Vision of Faith

◆ Vatican II speaks to us about faith in today's world, a world which is to a considerable degree, characterized by unbelief:

“The remedy which must be applied to atheism, however, is to be sought in a proper presentation of the Church's teaching as well as in the integral life of the Church and her members. For it is the function of the Church, led by the Holy Spirit who renews and purifies her ceaselessly, to make God the Father and His Incarnate Son present and in a sense visible.

The result is achieved chiefly by the witness of a living and mature faith, namely, one trained to see difficulties clearly and to master them. Very many martyrs have given luminous witness to this faith and continue to do so. This faith needs to prove its fruitfulness by penetrating the believer's entire life, including its worldly dimensions, and by activating him toward justice and love, especially regarding the needy. What does the most to reveal God's presence, however, is the brotherly charity of the faithful who are united in spirit as they work together for the faith of the gospel and who prove themselves a sign of unity.”<sup>50</sup>

◆ As the virtue of infused love assimilates us to God's loving activity, and this gives us a special, God-like capacity for the exercise of love, so the infused virtue of faith, as St. Thomas Aquinas tells us, assimilates us to the divine knowing (cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Boeth de Trinitate*, q. 3, a.1)

Through faith we share in God's knowing activity in a special way, and we are able to know God and creation in relationship to God in a supernatural, God-like fashion.

If we are to properly progress in the spiritual life, we must allow this vision of faith to more and more penetrate our activities. Increasingly, we should become contemplatives in action: we should view reality in a way that is similar to God's view of reality. Increasingly, everything we see should remind us of God because everything that is really good and true and beautiful does reflect God. The beauties of nature, for example, manifest this beauty; the raging storm at sea reflects his power; and the goodness, the kindness, and the love that we observe in others around us tell us that God is infinitely good and kind and loving.

The vision of faith allows us to see the human family and the world in a manner that differs from the nonbeliever's view. As contemplatives in action, we should act upon this vision. Every man, woman, and child is marked with the blood of Christ. If Jesus loved them so much—indeed, if

he *now* loves them so much—can we be indifferent to their needs, both spiritual and material? Can we be indifferent to all the problems that burden modern men and women? If we are Christians of living faith, we know that we cannot be indifferent. This vision of faith should inspire us to action according to our vocation, talents, opportunity, time, and energy. We should be laboring to make the human family and the world more reflective of Christ's image.

## Trust in God

The virtue of trust is extremely important for growth in the spiritual life. Here are words on confidence, on trust, in God from St. Claude La Colombière, one of the great apostles of devotion to the Heart of Christ.

“My God, I am so convinced that you keep watch over those who hope in You, and that we can want for nothing when we look for all from You, that I am resolved in the future to live free from every care, and to turn all my anxieties over to You...

“Men may deprive me of possessions and of honor, sickness may strip me of strength and the means of serving you...but I shall never lose my hope. I shall keep it till the last moment of my life; and at that moment all the demons in Hell shall strive to tear it from me in vain...

“Others may look for happiness from their wealth or their talents; others may rest on the innocence of their life, or the severity of their penance, or the amount of their alms, or the fervor of their prayers. As for me, Lord, all my confidence is my confidence itself. This confidence has never deceived anyone. No one, no one has hoped in the Lord and has been confounded.

I know, alas!, I know only too well, that I am weak and unstable. I know what temptation can do against the strongest virtue. I have seen the stars of heaven fall, and the pillars of the firmament; but that cannot frighten me. So long as I continue to hope, I shall be sheltered from all misfortune; and I am sure of hoping always, since I hope also for this unwavering hopefulness.

“Finally, I am sure I cannot hope too much in You, and that I cannot receive less than I hoped for from You. So I hope that you will hold me safe on the steepest slopes, that You will sustain me against the most furious assaults, and that You will make my weakness triumph over my most fearful enemies. I hope that You will love me always, and that I too shall love You

without ceasing. To carry my hope once for all as far as it can go, I hope from You to possess You, O my Creator, in time and in eternity. Amen.”<sup>51</sup>

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

# Humility

Humility is a very important virtue given to us for the spiritual journey.

Humility is both the realization of what we are as creatures of God and the concrete implementation of this realization in our Christian lives. Humility, therefore, is not an exercise in self-depreciation; it is not telling yourself that you are no good, that you really have nothing of any significance to contribute to the service of God. Humility is based on truth. It is compatible with the recognition that God has given a person certain gifts, even great gifts, of nature and grace. If we do not recognize our God-given gifts, we do not thank God for them as we should, nor properly develop these gifts according to His will. God wants us not only to recognize the good that is in us, but also to realize the source of this goodness. Although we have a responsibility to cooperate with His graces, God is the One Who is chiefly responsible for what we are. If one person has advanced to a level in the Christian life that is beyond the level of another, it is ultimately because God has given that person greater graces.

If humility is based on truth and, consequently, allows us to properly recognize our gifts, it also necessitates that we admit to the evil within us, which is also part of the truth and must be acted upon. Humility not only bids us to admit that there is evil in us, but also tells us that, as creatures of God, we should conform to His will and work against this evil side of our persons. In summary, humility allows us to properly evaluate both the good and evil within ourselves.

Here is a quotation from St. Paul which helps us to preserve, and grow in, humility: *Who made you so important? What have you got that was not given to you? And if it was given to you, why are you boasting as though it were your own?* (1 Cor 4:7).

And in the *Letter of James* we read: *Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will lift you up.* (Jm 4:10)

# Strength in Weakness

*“and that is why I am glad of weaknesses, insults, constraints, persecutions and distress for Christ’s sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong.”* (2 Cor 12:10)

According to the wisdom of the world, it is often thought to be a sign of weakness if one feels a sense of powerlessness and admits the same. According to the wisdom of Christ, it is of paramount importance that one admits weakness and powerlessness and builds upon this realization.

If we do not admit our weakness and our helplessness, then we are living a lie. Jesus has told us that without Him we can do nothing. It is a sign of

Christian maturity if we not only admit to our weakness theoretically, but consistently live this realization. It is not a question of giving in to this weakness, of capitulating to it in an evil way. It is rather a question of realizing our helplessness and throwing ourselves into the arms of Christ. Then we become strong with his strength; then his grace more and more strengthens us and we actually are surprised at the depth of our Christian existence.

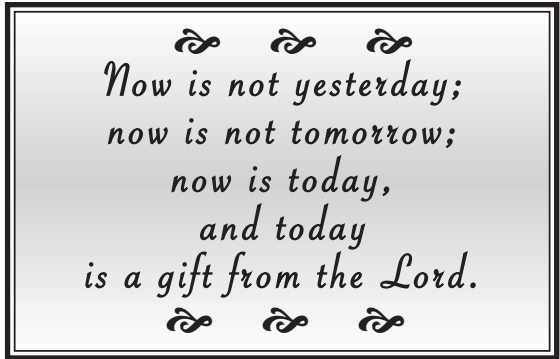
At certain rather rare points along the path of life, we become overwhelmed, for various reasons, with the burden of life. We feel adrift upon the turbulent waters of worry and anxiety; fear gradually strengthens its paralyzing grip. Life temporarily seems to be too much, and we feel ourselves deluged, barely capable of coping with the harshness of the human condition. Such episodes, painful as they are, are magnificent opportunities for Christian growth. If we act as we should at such times -- abandon ourselves anew to Jesus -- then our Christian life takes on a new depth and vitality; for we have become so much more closely united to Jesus Who is our nourishment, our life, our happiness.

Of course, it is not only at times of special trial and anxiety that, realizing our helplessness, we should turn to Jesus. If we are spiritually sensitive, we will always be aware of our weakness. But, very importantly, this realization of our powerlessness is not meant in any sense to make us feel depressed or discouraged. If we build properly upon the understanding of our weakness, we will experience deeper peace, and love, and security -- because Jesus is very near.

## Living in the Present Moment

I suggest that one of the most difficult acts of self-discipline in the spiritual journey is to concentrate on the present moment. We have a very strong tendency to often disregard the importance of the present moment by focusing in a wrong way on the past or in a wrong way on the future. When we give in to this tendency we suffer a significant spiritual loss. There are proper occasions for thinking of the past and the future. For example, we have to learn from the past and we have to prepare for the future, but our great emphasis has to be upon the present. There is a latin axiom which says, *age quod agis*, which means: do what you are doing, concentrate on the present. And, of course, we are familiar with the term in the history of spirituality: the sacrament of the present moment. Growth in self-discipline should include a greater determination to get as much as we can out of the present moment. People with a terminal illness have an opportunity, as they prepare for death, for increased prayer, contrition, love of God. For those who have this opportunity of knowing with some certainty the time of their death, I'm sure as they look back on their lives, they are saddened by the times they did not use time and opportunities for the service of the Lord properly, and are overjoyed at those times in

which they did use the present opportunity properly. A great means we have of living in the present properly is a greater focus upon our Lord. For if I have that awareness of the fact I am united with Jesus here and now, why should I be concerned so much about the future or the



past? Yes, a great help in living in the present and deriving all the good we can from it for ourselves and others is an ever greater focus on Jesus, because the more I focus upon Jesus and the more I live with Him in the present moment, the more I am satisfied with the present moment. And so let us resolve to grow in that self-discipline which is required to really live in the present with the fullness of our being as much as is possible, with the help of God's grace. To do so is extremely important for proper growth in the spiritual life.

Now is the time. Now is the time to live and to love. Now is the time to become more united to Christ, to be more one with Him. Now is not yesterday; now is not tomorrow; now is today, and today is a gift from the Lord.

## Surrender to God

God gives ultimate meaning to our lives. God reveals to us how the laughter and the tears, the work and the play, the pain and the joy, all fit together. As we live in God, God gathers up what would otherwise be the fragmented pieces of our lives, and arranges them into harmonious unity. This unity emanates from our living according to God's plan, a plan embodying a way of existence that leads to an ever greater experience of the true, the good, and the beautiful.

We can put obstacles in the way of God's transforming designs, of God's plan for us. We can at times say "no" to God's initiative. We can refuse to be open to God's tender, loving touch. We can engage in a process of self-enclosure. We can determine to map out our own path to supposed happiness, forgetting that plans for happiness which exclude God are ultimately plans for experiencing frustration and emptiness. Briefly, we can act in an obstinate fashion regarding God's offer of Self-communication.

At other times, it is not so much stubbornness which leads us to say "no" to God; it is fear. We realize that the closer we come to God, the more God will ask of us, gently but firmly. We fear the white heat of God's love. Such

episodes along the spiritual journey are crucial. If we keep pulling back from the intensity of God's love, if we keep refusing what this love wants to accomplish in us and through us, then we will live on a rather superficial level.

We must strive to overcome whatever attitude prevents us from increasingly giving ourselves over to God. We must realize that progress in the spiritual life is measured by the degree to which we abandon ourselves to God. We must realize that, if we hope to grow spiritually, we must increasingly allow God to direct our lives.

Let us pray, then, for an increase in the spirit of abandonment to God. As we live more according to this attitude, we will experience in greater measure the warmth and security of God's love, this God Who is the ground of our being, the goal of our existence, the source of our happiness.

## Spiritual Guidance

Spiritual guidance is an aspect of the communal dimension of Christianity. We go to God with the help of others, and we in turn aid others in various ways along the spiritual journey. A spiritual guide is, then, one who helps us achieve Christian maturity.

The guide in spiritual matters is not out front, as it were, directing us according to some pre-conceived plan concerning how the Spirit will guide us. Of course, we must properly understand this statement. We all must follow the teaching and example of Christ. However, since we are unique individuals, the assimilation to Christ will always differ in various ways according to each one's personal uniqueness.

A key task of a spiritual guide, consequently, is to try to determine how the Spirit desires to lead this particular individual. A person seeking spiritual direction, therefore, must be willing to share his or her prayer life with the guide. This allows the guide to help the person discern the Spirit's action. A guide should not discern the Spirit's action in order that he or she may make decisions for the person being directed, but that the person himself or herself may make the proper decision in the Spirit.

And another important task of a spiritual director is to be ready to offer correction when needed. When the directee is going astray, the guide must gently but firmly point out the person's errant ways.

A common difficulty in the spiritual life, especially for beginners, is encountering discouragement. A further responsibility of the guide, then, is to help the person in coping with this obstacle. The guide must assist in developing the virtue of trust in the Lord. As trust grows, so does one's conviction that the Lord is present to us to help us deal with the various difficulties we encounter in the quest for spiritual maturity.



What about the frequency of spiritual direction? This will vary somewhat between individuals. For beginners in the spiritual journey, sessions will be more frequent than for persons more advanced. This is to be expected. There are numerous principles and practices of the spiritual life. The beginner not only must become aware of these, but must also learn how to incorporate them into his or her personal life. This is not an easy task, and the help of a spiritual director or guide is most advantageous. Sessions with a director will also be more frequent at critical points along the spiritual pilgrimage—when severe trials enter a person's life, or when one must make crucial decisions.

A good spiritual director should possess requisite knowledge concerning spiritual matters. Different degrees of knowledge are necessary depending upon the types of persons one directs. A guide who directs persons blessed with mystical prayer should be conversant with the ways of mysticism, whereas such knowledge is not strictly necessary for the guide who works with those traveling the more ordinary paths.

In choosing a director one must determine as best as possible whether that person seems to possess the knowledge requisite for giving competent advice.

Good spiritual guidance is a gift of God. If such guidance is not reasonably available, God will compensate. If it is available, one should not disdain it, but utilize it as one of the providential means afforded us in the quest of putting on Christ.

There follows some rules of St. Ignatius Loyola which will prove helpful for spiritual discernment to both the spiritual director and the one being directed.

It is characteristic of God and His Angels, when they act upon the soul, to give true happiness and spiritual joy, and to banish all the sadness and disturbances which are caused by the enemy. It is characteristic of the evil one to fight against such happiness and consolation by proposing fallacious reasonings, subtilities, and continual deceptions.

In souls that are progressing to greater perfection, the action of the good angel is delicate, gentle, delightful. It may be compared to a drop of water penetrating a sponge.

The action of the evil spirit upon such souls is violent, noisy, and disturbing. It may be compared to a drop of water falling upon a stone.

In souls that are going from bad to worse, the action of the spirits mentioned above is just the reverse. The reason for this is to be sought in the opposition or similarity of these souls to the different kinds of spirits. When the disposition is contrary to that of the spirits, they enter with noise and commotion that are easily perceived. When the disposition is similar to that of the spirits, they enter silently, as one coming into his own house when the doors are open.

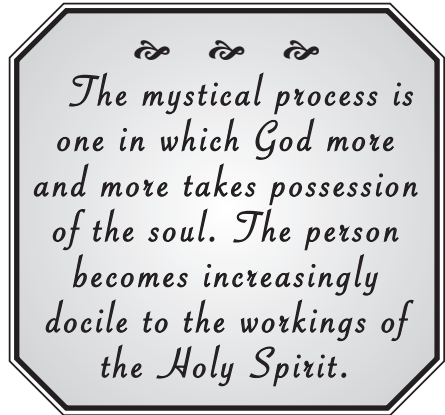
# Mind and Heart

◆ Mother Mary Francis, P.C.C., astutely observes: “There is an appalling dearth of thinking in our times even in the theological domain, where the strangest conclusions are sometimes drawn from the most tortured syllogisms. However, there is also what may be simply and accurately described as a lack of heart. When the powers of the mind have gone as far as they can go and concluded as much of truth as lies within their possibilities, then those powers must give humble heed to the heart. Is not, in fact, a humble mind one that has energetically exhausted all its potential in order to recognize its limitations?”

“‘All that I have written seems to me as a little straw,’ concluded St. Thomas Aquinas toward the end of his life. His humble assessment of himself and his works was accurate. For is not indeed everything that the mind can achieve really only ‘straw’ before the greatness of God and his incredible designs? He is a God, however, who is glorified by our gathering all the ‘straw’ we can for his service and the directing of our own free willed lives, while vigorously routing a temptation toward torpor of intellect.

“Yes, a mind is for using. Its sound conclusions call for the most serious pondering. And for the heart to claim absolute sovereignty whether over life itself or the decisions that make for life’s unfolding pattern is clearly an unjustified and perilous assumption. Yet, for the mind to insist on its supreme authority in decision making, including the decision to disregard the evidence of the heart, is a counter insistence fraught, if not always with peril, at least with frequent and sometimes very serious loss to the proprietors of mind and heart. Indeed, it is the mind that delivers to the will the evidence on which the will pronounces. Nonetheless, cerebral conclusions need enfleshing with what only the heart can contribute: the finding of love that can never, if the love is real and true, be at enmity with the mind but which can sometimes unseat the mind’s best justified decisions or even topple them..”<sup>52</sup>

◆ Mother Mary Francis further writes: “The foundress of the Poor Clare nuns, St. Clare of Assisi, was a woman who quite noticeably and even notably used her mind. Just the fact of her being the first woman in history herself to write a Rule of Life for nuns indicates a mind well occupied with the proper business of a mind. The complementary fact that she trailed beauty after her,



shed loveliness about her, took ladyhood as a continual manner of living gives evidence that her heart was in good partnership with her mind. It was the same with...her mentor, St. Francis of Assisi, whose great mind was enlightened by God and used by himself to initiate a whole new way of religious life in the Church, while his heart made of him a poet, a singer, and sometimes a dancer, on occasion, while delivering his sermons.”<sup>53</sup>

◆ The following words are from a paper prepared by Fr. Stephen J. Rossetti for the United States National Conference of Catholic Bishop’s Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry. This paper was later published in the quarterly *Human Development*, from which we quote. Fr. Rossetti is president and chief executive officer of Saint Luke Institute in Silver Spring, Maryland.

“At our Institute, we recently ran a study that found that the average intelligence quotient of our priest patients is 122, which is well above the societal norm of 100. This places our men in the upper 7 percent of their peers. Priests, as a group, are very bright men.

“Also in their education and training, they have developed their intellectual skills well. Catholic priests are verbal men who engage regularly in public speaking. They can debate ideas and abstract concepts easily. Indeed, these qualities are important to the successful ministry of a priest.

“Nevertheless, having a personal relationship with Jesus also means praying from the heart, the place within which he dwells. Yet so many of the men who wither in priesthood cannot find the ‘heart’ because they are stuck in their ‘heads’...

“Developing a personal relationship with God, or anyone else, involves the important task of moving our prayer and dialogue out of the head and into the heart. In this case, the term *heart*, used in a metaphorical sense, does not refer only to one’s affective life; it primarily indicates ‘the locus of vital forces in a person, to quote from Xavier Leon-Dufour in the *Dictionary of the New Testament*. It is one’s most ‘hidden place’, the place where ‘the spirit of the Son dwells.’<sup>52</sup>

## The Mystical Life

Gustave Thils gives a very good description of some of the key elements of the mystical life: “It has been said, quite accurately, that Christianity is *basically mystical*. As we have explained, to live as a Christian is to participate in the very life of God and to perform our temporal task according to the indications of His divine will. Every Christian will understand, without difficulty, that this participation in the divine life is, of its very nature, the mystical life in germ. What could be more mystical than the very life of God? What other foundation for mysticism could we desire? What other source of mysticism could we expect? And, on the other hand, how could a Christian say that he is

in the state of grace and deny that he is on the way to the Christian mystical life? Certainly, there is mysticism and mysticism. But the essential will always



be incontestably the participation in the life of God. Every Christian is, consequently, rich with the very foundation of all mysticism.

“This divine foundation can be found in a Christian who is still physically and morally a child. In this case, one cannot

yet speak of Christian mysticism. Mysticism requires, in a general way, the realization of the ... presence of God. First of all, the mystical life implies a certain form of consciousness: a realization of presence, an intimate connection, a deep certitude, an interior evidence, an intuition ... experience, which are employed with all the nuances and all the precisions given by the spiritual authors, and the object of this consciousness: the Transcendent Being, the Lord and Master of the supernatural order, the God Who is love.

“This realization of ... presence manifests itself in the ... life of faith, hope and charity. Many of the faithful have been able to live it at certain moments of their existence, in very brief fashion, but really; some after they have gone to Holy Communion; others in the course of a visit to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament; others on the occasion of a liturgical ceremony, an ordination, a consecration; still others in the solitude of their home, in joy, in suffering, in mourning. If we must avoid speaking lightly of mysticism, it is also important not to underestimate certain minor transitory forms of true and authentic mysticism. In order that one might be able to speak of the mystical life, it is necessary that this realization of the presence of God become *habitual*. It must be customary, easily found again, met within the course of one’s daily existence, taken up again as soon as the mind is active, and easily enlivened in joy, even during periods of darkness or of aridity in faith.

“In order that the Christian life reach the mystical level, this habitual realization of the...presence of God must be *predominant* ...

“The realization of the ... presence of God, which is habitual and predominant: this is what we will henceforth call the mystical level of the Christian life. We dare not say that many Christians are at this point. But certain persons are at this point ...”<sup>55</sup>

Between the occasional realization of God’s presence and the habitual and predominant realization of His presence there are all the stages and all the degrees.

The mystical process is one in which God more and more takes possession of the soul. The person becomes increasingly docile to the workings of

the Holy Spirit. The predominant realization of God's presence leads to a deepened desire to do the Father's will in all things, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, with the maternal assistance of Mary.

The mystical process is very much Christ-centered. The person becomes increasingly transformed in Christ. When the mystical experience becomes consistent and predominant, the person can say with the deepest meaning: *I have been crucified with Christ and yet I am alive; yet it is no longer I, but Christ living in me. The life that I am now living, subject to the limitation of human nature, I am living in faith, faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.* (Ga 2:19-20)

## Heart of Christ, Heart of Mary

Pope John Paul II speaks to us movingly concerning the Heart of Christ: "The Heart of the Redeemer enlivens the whole Church and draws men who have opened their hearts 'to the inscrutable wealth' of this unique Heart....

"I desire in a special way to join spiritually with all those who inspire their human hearts from this Divine Heart. It is a numerous family. Not a few congregations, associations and communities live and develop in the Church, taking their vital energy in a programmed way from the Heart of Christ. This spiritual bond always leads to a great reawakening of apostolic zeal. Adorers of the Divine Heart become people with sensitive consciences. And when it is given to them to have a relationship with the Heart of our Lord and Master, the need also reawakens in them to do reparation for the sins of the world, for the indifference of so many hearts, for their negligence.

"How necessary these ranks of vigilant hearts are in the Church, so that the love of the Divine Heart shall not remain isolated and without response! In these ranks, special mention deserves to be made of all those who offer up their sufferings as living victims in union with the Heart of Christ pierced on the cross. Transformed in that way by love, human suffering becomes a particular leaven of Christ's saving work in the Church...

"The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus reminds us, above all, of those moments when this Heart was 'pierced by the lance,' and, thereby, opened in a visible manner to man and the world. By reciting the litany and venerating the Divine Heart in general, we learn the mystery of the Redemption in all its divine and human profundity."

And the Pope also speaks to us about the heart of Mary: "The Immaculate Heart of Mary was open to the word, 'Woman, there is your son.' It went to meet spiritually the Heart of the Son opened by the soldier's lance. The heart of Mary was opened by the same love for man and for the world with which Christ loved man and the world, offering up himself on the cross, even to that lance stroke from the soldier.

“Consecrating the world to the Immaculate heart of Mary means approaching the same Source of Life, through the Mother’s Intercession, that life which flowed forth from Golgatha, the source which gushes out ceaselessly with redemption and grace. Reparation for the sins of the world is continually being accomplished in it. It is ceaselessly the font of new life and holiness.

“Consecrating the world to the Immaculate Heart of the Mother means returning under the Cross of the Son. More: it means consecration of this world to the pierced Heart of the Savior, by bringing the world back to the very source of its Redemption. Redemption is always greater than man’s sin and ‘the sin of the world.’ The power of Redemption infinitely surpasses the whole range of evil in man and in the world.

“The Heart of the Mother is aware of it, more than anyone in the whole cosmos, visible and invisible. This is why she calls. She does not call only to conversion; she also calls upon us to let ourselves be helped by her, the Mother, to return to the source of the Redemption.”<sup>56</sup>

## The Theology of Consecration

A. Bousard 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 indwelled 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.

“And what Christ does brings with it a ‘consecration’ for His disciples, a very special belonging to God, since He imparts to them His own life precisely by making them participate in His own consecration.

“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 (cf. 1 Peter 2:9; 7 Peter 1:3-4; Rev. 5:9, etc.). 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...”<sup>57</sup>

## Act of Consecration (new)

“Jesus, You show us Your Heart as symbol of Your life of love in all its aspects, including Your most special love for each of us as unique individuals. Out of Your great love for us, You died a brutal death, nailed to the wood of the cross. Out of Your great love for us, You rose gloriously from the dead.

“From Your pierced Heart the Church with her life-giving Sacraments was born. In the Eucharist, Crown and Center of the Church’s life, You continue to give Yourself to us with the deepest, most tender, most on-fire, most complete love.

“Jesus, since in Your great love You give Yourself so completely to us, it is only fitting that we make a gift to You in return. It is entirely fitting that we give ourselves completely to You. Yes, we consecrate ourselves to Your most loving Heart. Each of us says to You, O Lord, our Savior and our Friend: ‘Jesus, take me wholly, take me completely to Your magnificent Heart. Out of love I give myself to You. Live in and through me. In love You give Yourself completely to me. In love and in a spirit of reparation, I want to give myself, with the help of Your grace, entirely to You. Take me, Jesus, to an ever closer union with the Father, in the Holy Spirit, with Mary my Mother at my side. Pierced, Glorified, Eucharistic 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, including your most special love for me as this unique individual. You are the Mother of my Savior. You are also my Mother. 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, Glorified, Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, Chief Shepherd of the flock.”

# 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:*

Shepherds of Christ  
 P.O. Box 627  
 China, IN 47250-0627 USA  
 (toll free number) 1-888-211-3041 (phone) 1-812-273-8405  
 (fax) 1-812-273-3182

## Letters

◆ Dear Fr. Carter,

I have been reading the newsletter book *Shepherds of Christ* meditatively since it came. All the articles are deep theology and spirituality. If only priests read it properly and prayerfully, a change towards Christ cannot but come. All my Diocesan priests got the book and are reading it. I have sent a few copies to the seminary rector in South India whom I know, asking him to read it and also order the newsletter. I am sure they will profit by it.

Bishop S.A. Aruliah  
 Cuddapah, India

◆ Congratulations on a first-class publication.

Gerard Joubert, O.P.  
 Houston, Texas



◆ Rev. and Dear Fr. Carter,

Compliments of the Easter Season to you! After reading your recent newsletter *Shepherds of Christ*, I found it very profitable and thought of making a request for subsequent copies as the one I read was given to me by one of our priests.

I shall, therefore, be very thankful if you do me the favour of sending me copies of the newsletter in the future. May God bless your apostolate most abundantly.

In union of prayers in the Lord's Vineyard, I remain,

Sincerely yours in the Lord  
Rev. Fr. Charles Anemelu  
Berkeley Heights, New Jersey

NOTES:

1. Scripture quotations are taken from *The New Jerusalem Bible*, Doubleday.
2. Archbishop Luis M. Martinez, *The Sanctifier*, Pauline Books and Media, pp. 124-125.
3. Adolphe Janquery, S.S., *The Spiritual Life*, Desclee & Co., p. 18
4. Archbishop Martinez, op. cit., pp. 67-68,
5. *Jerusalem Catecheses*, as in *The Liturgy of the Hours*, Catholic Book Publishing Co., Vol. II, p. 608.
6. Msgr. Robert Guste, *The Gift of the Church*, Queenship Publications, pp. 22-23.
7. Edward Leen, *In the Likeness of Christ*, Sheed and Ward, pp. 290-300.
8. St. John Eudes, from a treatise on the Admirable Heart of Jesus, as in *The Liturgy of the Hours*, Catholic Book Publishing Co., Vol. IV, pp. 1331-32.
9. St. Ignatius of Antioch, "Ignatius to the Romans," as in *The Treasury of Catholic Wisdom*, Ignatius Press., p. 14.
10. John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations*, Longmans, Green and Co., pp. 111-112.
11. Mother Teresa, *In My Own Words*, Liguori Publications, p. 44.
12. *St. Claude de la Columbiere*, as published by Apostleship of Prayer, Detroit Province of the Society of Jesus.
13. Pope John Paul II, as in *Celebrate 2000!*, Servant Publications, pp. 140-141.
14. "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.
15. Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, *The Gift of Peace*, Loyola University Press, pp. 151-153.
16. St Teresa of Avila, *Interior Castle*, translated by E. Allison Peers, Doubleday and Co., "Second Mansions", p. 51.
17. *Ibid.*, "Fourth Mansions", p. 76.
18. Archbishop Luis M. Martinez, *The Sanctifier*, op. cit. pp. 5-7.
19. Henri de Lubac, S. J., *The Church: Paradox and Mystery*, translated by James R. Dunne, Alba House, p. 24.
20. Fr. Bruno Forte, *He Loved Them to the End*, St. Paul Books & Media, p. 74-75.
21. *The Thought of Pope John Paul II: A Collection of Essays and Studies*, John M. McDermott, S. J., Editor, Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana, p. 135.
22. Henri de Lubac, S.J., *The Church: Paradox and Mystery*, op. cit., pp. 2-4.
23. Avery Dulles, S.J., *The Resilient Church*, Doubleday & Company, p. 39.
24. Gerald Vann, O.P., *The Heart of Man*, Longmans, Green and Co., pp. 151-152.
25. *The Documents of Vatican II*, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy", America Press Edition, No. 10.
26. *Ibid*, No. 17
27. *Ibid*, No. 48.

28. Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter, *Mystici Corporis*, AAS XXXV, pp. 232-233.
29. Letter of Pope John Paul II, *The Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist*, Pauline Books and Media, No. 3
30. M. Raymond, O.C.S.O. *This Is Love*, Bruce, p. 106.
31. 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 and Ward, p. 240.
32. Rita Ring, *Rosary Meditations for Parents and Children*, Shepherds of Christ Ministries, p. 189.
33. Fr. Edward Leen, C.S.Sp., *In the Likeness of Christ*, Sheed and Ward, pp. 250-252.
34. Rita Ring, *Mass Book - A Journey Into the Heart of Jesus*, Shepherds of Christ Ministries, p. 101.
35. Mother Teresa, *Rosary Meditations from Mother Teresa*, contact Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament, PO Box 1701, Plattsburgh, New York.
36. St. Peter Julian Eymard, *Eucharistic Handbook*, Emmanuel Publications, as in *Adoration*, Ignatius Press, p.97.
37. *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, as in special supplement, *Inside the Vatican*, No. 48
38. *The Documents of Vatican II*, “Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests”, America Press Edition, No. 12.
39. *The Documents of Vatican II*, “Decree on Priestly Formation”, No. 8.
40. Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *I Will Give You Shepherds*, St. Paul Books and Media, No. 25.
41. Arthur Culkins, *Soul Magazine* Jan-Feb, 1995, p. 30.
42. Jean Galot, S.J., *Theology of the Priesthood*, Ignatius Press, pp. 124-125.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 144.
44. Pope John Paul II, *Holy Thursday Letters to My Brother Priests*, edited by James P. Socias, Scepter Publications and Midwestern Theological Forum, pp. 38-40.
45. Nicholas Cachia, *The Image of the Good Shepherd As A Source for the Spirituality of the Ministerial Priesthood*, Editrice Pontificia Universita Gregoriana.
46. Fr. John Wright, S.J., *A Theology of Christian Prayer*, Pueblo Pub., p. 101.
47. Thomas Merton, *A Thomas Merton Reader*, Thomas P. McDonnell, editor, Doubleday, p. 325.
48. *Catherine of Sienna, Selective Writings*, ed, Mary O’Driscoll, O.P., New City Press, p. 50.
49. Pope Paul VI, *Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary (Marialis Cultus)*, United States Catholic Conference, Nos. 46-47.
50. *The Documents of Vatican II*, op. cit., “The Church in the Modern World”, no. 21.
51. St. Claude de la Columbière, *An Act of Confidence in God*, Apostleship of Prayer, Chicago Regional Office.
52. Mother Mary Francis, P.C.C., *Forth and Abroad*, Ignatius Press, pp. 121-123.
53. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-121.
54. Fr. Stephen J. Rossetti, “Spirituality of the Priesthood” as in *Human Development*, Vol 18. No. 1, Spring, 1997, pp. 26-32.
55. Gustave Thils, *Christian Holiness*, Lunnoo Publishers, pp. 556-558.
56. Pope John Paul II. *Prayers and Devotions*, edited by Bishop Peter Canuis Johannes Van Lierde, Viking, pp. 449-451.
57. A. Boussard in *Dictionary of Mary*, Catholic Book Publishing Co., pp. 54-55.

# shepherds of Christ

A SPIRITUALITY NEWSLETTER FOR PRIESTS

2000 ISSUE 4

## Chief Shepherd of the Flock

### The Value of Work

**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)<sup>1</sup>**

◆ In his encyclical, *On Human Work*, Pope John Paul II observes: “The Church is convinced that work is a fundamental dimension of man’s existence on earth. She is confirmed in this conviction by considering the whole heritage of the many sciences devoted to man: anthropology, paleontology, history, sociology, psychology, and so on; they all seem to bear witness to this reality in an irrefutable way. But the source of the Church’s conviction is above all the revealed word of God, and therefore what is a conviction of the intellect is also a conviction of faith. The reason is that the Church -- and it is worthwhile stating it at this point -- believes in man: she thinks of man and addresses herself to him not only in the light of scientific knowledge, but in the first place in the light of the revealed word of the living God. Relating herself to man, she seeks to express the eternal designs and transcendent destiny which the living God, the creator and redeemer, has linked with him.

“The Church finds in the very first pages of the Book of Genesis the source of her conviction that work is a fundamental dimension of human existence on earth...”<sup>2</sup>

◆ Again, let us listen to the words of Pope John Paul II: “The Church considers it her duty to speak out on work from the viewpoint of its human value and of the moral order to which it belongs, and she sees this as one of her important tasks within the service that she renders to the evangelical message as a whole.

“At the same time she sees it as her particular duty to form a spirituality of work which will help all people to come closer, through work, to God, the creator and redeemer, to participate in his salvific plan for man and the

world and to deepen their friendship with Christ in their lives by accepting, through faith, a living participation in his threefold mission as priest, prophet and king, as the Second Vatican Council so eloquently teaches.”<sup>3</sup>

◆ Vatican II also speaks to us about human labor: “Human labor which is expended in the production and exchange of goods or in the performance of economic services is superior to the other elements of economic life. For the latter have only the nature of tools.

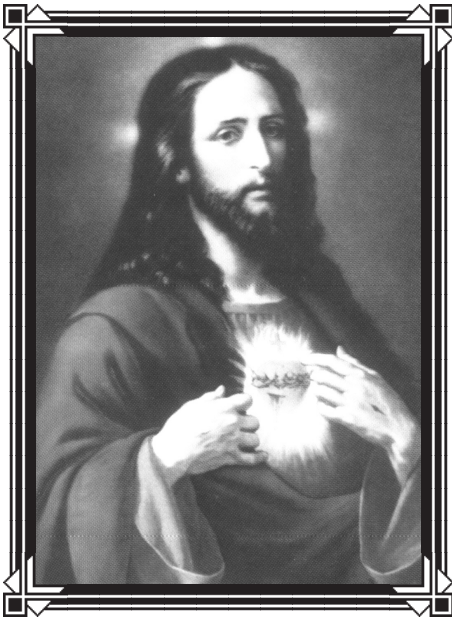
“Whether it is engaged in independently or paid for by someone else, this labor comes immediately from the person. In a sense, the person stamps the things of nature with his seal and subdues them to his will. It is ordinarily by his labor that a man supports himself and his family, is joined to his fellow men and serves them, and is enabled to exercise genuine charity and be a partner in the work of bringing God’s creation to perfection. Indeed, we hold that by offering his labor to God a man becomes associated with the redemptive work itself of Jesus Christ, who conferred an eminent dignity on labor when at Nazareth He worked with His own hands.

“From all these considerations there arise every man’s duty to labor faithfully and also his right to work. It is the duty of society, moreover, according to the circumstances prevailing in it, and in keeping with its proper role, to help its citizens find opportunities for adequate employment. Finally, payment for labor must be such as to furnish a man with the means to cultivate his own material, social, cultural, and spiritual life worthily, and that of his dependents. What this payment should be will vary according to each man’s assignment and productivity, the conditions of his place of employment, and the common good.”<sup>4</sup>

◆ Fr. Edward Leen, C.S.Sp., speaks to us about Jesus and His work as a carpenter at Nazareth: “Not even after Joseph’s death did the existence of Our Lord undergo much change, unless that it became more laborious. For the support of the family and its care of the poor devolved, then, entirely on His shoulders. He had to work hard in order to keep Himself and His Mother and to have something to give to others less favoured than themselves. Unremitting toil became His lot, and the soft hands of the boy became roughened and hardened with the constant pressure of the tools of His trade. Work could not have been plentiful in the confines of that narrow village and it is likely that He had, often, to go abroad to look for employment. He had to face rebuffs from those who needed not His services, and discourtesy and rudeness from those who employed Him. The Nazarenes were not a polite people. As He handed over to His grumbling clients the accomplished tasks, He had to hold forth His hand to receive His wages...There is something inexpressibly touching in this picture of God receiving from His creatures the wages He earned in their employment!...

“A monotonous life, one would say, but this would be a very superficial judgment; monotony consists in the dull repetition of acts, uninteresting,

devoid of significance and all stamped with the character of sameness. But there is no monotony in the soul's relations with God. Each act in which it expresses its love for its Creator is fresh with the freshness of novelty; each communication of the love of the Creator to the creature comes with all the charm of a new revelation. Each step forward in the knowledge of God makes it seem to us as if we had never known Him before. And the external material acts which proceed from the soul enjoying this intimacy with the Lord partake of this quality of freshness and novelty. Although to the senses each little task of the day resembles in all respects that of the day before, yet, in reality, these tasks that recur are not the same. The newness and freshness



given by a greater love in the doing far surpasses the newness given by a material change in the occupation. The love of God is never stationary. It grows with each act done in the fullness of actual charity possessed by the soul. Hence for the saint the task of today, which materially resembles the task of yesterday, is clothed with all the charm of novelty, for it is transmuted and transfigured by a greater love. All men naturally desire to be great. To achieve greatness it is not necessary to seek it afar or to ascend into the heights in its pursuit. It lies at our door and is within the reach of all. It is found by bring-

ing a great love of God to bear on the doing of the most ordinary of life's tasks. Our Lord in His hidden life has shown how we may attain to greatness and perfection in the accomplishment of the humblest of life's duties.<sup>75</sup>

◆ As important as work is, it still is just a means to an end. In the Christian perspective, it is an expression of our love of God and neighbor.

Upon reflection, we can see the consequences of this. When work, for whatever reason, is interfering with our relationship with God and others, something is obviously wrong. For example, an upward-moving professional becomes so absorbed in his work, so taken with the idea of promotion and salary increase, that he becomes extremely narrow-minded. Concern for God and others is relegated to the far recesses of consciousness where it has little effect upon the person's thoughts and activities.

Even though we claim such an extreme situation does not describe our

own, we nevertheless can fall prey to lesser faults. For instance, we diminish the time we should rightfully be spending with family members and friends. Perhaps we become so absorbed with our work that we claim we have little time for prayer. If we find ourselves in such circumstances, we must make an effort to confront ourselves with this question, “What is the God-given purpose of work?” Surely, if we are honest, we must say that our work should first be done for the love of God. If we work from this proper motive, we are acting for our own benefit also, for what is done for God and others promotes our own good also. And work done for God must be accomplished according to His will.

Much of our contemporary society places great emphasis on external success, the recognition of one’s work, and the earning of more and more money -- and all of this, in a very secularistic manner with little regard for God and neighbor. In such an atmosphere, it is not easy to maintain the Christian perspective of work. In many ways we must go counter-culture. If we do so, we will be following One Who Himself was not afraid to go against certain cultural aspects of His own times. His name is Jesus.

◆ Thomas Merton observes: “All Christian life is meant to be at the same time profoundly contemplative and rich in active work. This must not be mistaken for a kind of semipelagian productivism which is obsessed with visible results and enamoured of technological prowess. It is true that we are called to create a better world. But we are first of all called to a more exalted task: that of creating our own lives. In doing this, we act as co-workers with God. We take our place in the great work of mankind, since in effect the creation of our own destiny, in God, is impossible in pure isolation. Each one of us works out his own destiny in inseparable union with all those others with whom God has willed us to live. We share with one another the creative work of living in the world. And it is through our struggle with material reality, with nature, that we help one another create at the same time our own destiny and a new world for our descendants. This work of man, which is his peculiar and inescapable vocation, is a prolongation of the creative work of God Himself. Failure to measure up to this challenge and to meet this creative responsibility is to fail in that response to life which is required of us by the will of our Father and Creator.”<sup>6</sup>

◆ *His answer to them was, ‘My Father still goes on working, and I am at work, too.’ (Jn 5: 17)*

◆ Here are words of St. Paul: *We urged you when we were with you not to let anyone eat who refused to work. Now we hear that there are some of you who are living lives without any discipline, doing no work themselves but interfering with other people’s. In the Lord Jesus Christ, we urge and call on people of this kind to go on quietly working and earning the food that they eat. (2 Th. 3: 10-11)*

◆ St. Paul himself was no stranger to hard work: *You remember, brothers, with what unsparing energy we used to work, slaving night and day so as not to be a burden on any one of you while we were proclaiming the gospel of God to you.* (1 Th 2: 9)

## Jesus

◆ Cardinal Newman tells us: “Christ Himself vouchsafes to repeat in each of us in figure and mystery all that He did and suffered in the flesh. He is formed in us, born in us, suffers in us, rises again in us, lives in us; and this not by a succession of events, but all at once.”<sup>7</sup>

◆ The following words emphasize the profound union that is meant to exist between Jesus and the Christian: “The mysteries of the life of Jesus are not dead, static, historical happenings that have been. They are living and dynamic. They have been lived for the members of Christ. All the states that the Saviour traversed, all the human experiences that He willed to go through, have for their purpose the sanctification of all that enters into a man’s deliberate life. These mysteries of His have accumulated vast reservoirs of merit in order to communicate this human-divine quality to the Christian’s doings and sufferings...The events of the New Testament give us life. Into these latter has passed the vitality of the Incarnation. That vitality is ever ready to communicate itself to all parts of the Mystical Body, vivifying them with the divine life of Christ.

“That this divinizing process take place, there is required a willed contact between the individual and Christ. This contact is effected by the activity of the virtue of faith. It is perfected by sympathy and love. The Christian who wills to have the life of Christ develop in himself, must consent to ‘steep’ mind, imagination and heart in the earthly career of Jesus. He must aim at a *sympathy* with the Saviour in all that He went through. He must strive to identify himself with the Divine Master, to think with Him, to feel with Him, to judge with Him, to see with His eyes and to speak with His tongue. He must will to be as the Saviour was in all these incidents.”<sup>8</sup>

◆ Romano Guardini speaks about Jesus. “Love proceeded from Him everywhere. We encounter love all about Him. But we want to seek it out in the flaming, radiant center. Love is what He shows toward the delicate blossoming of His Father’s creation, when He speaks of the lilies of the field, and how God has clothed them more magnificently than Solomon in all his glory. He shows love toward all things...

“...Love is what seizes Our Lord when He sees the obscure, abandoned masses of the people, and takes pity on them...There is something heroic, strong, in this love for people forsaken, in distress... It is love again when He

receives the sick; when He lets that great sea of misery wash up to Him; when He lifts up, strengthens, heals... Oh, this tremendous Lover and the might and majesty of His heart taking up arms against the massive world-force of sorrow, magnificently sure of His inexhaustible power to comfort, to strengthen, to bless!”<sup>9</sup>

## The Father’s Love for Us

St. Alphonsus Liguori, Doctor of the Church, speaks to us concerning the Father’s love for us manifested in the gift of His Son to us: “All holiness and perfection of soul lies in our love for Jesus Christ our God, who is our redeemer and our supreme good. It is part of the love of God to acquire and to nurture all the virtues which make a man perfect.

“Has not God in fact won for himself a claim on all of our love? From all eternity he has loved us. And it is in this vein that he speaks to us: ‘Oh man, consider carefully that I first loved you. You had not yet appeared in the light of day, nor did the world yet exist, but already I loved you. From all eternity I have loved you.’

“Since God knew that man is enticed by favors, he wished to bind him to his love by means of his gifts: ‘I want to catch men with the snares, those chains of love in which they allow themselves to be entrapped, so that they will love me.’ And all the gifts which he bestowed on man were given to this end. He gave him a soul, made in his likeness, and endowed with memory, intellect and will; he gave him a body equipped with the senses; it was for him that he created heaven and earth and such an abundance of things. He made

*Mary, Queen of Peace,  
Pray for us.*

all these things out of love for man, so that all creation might serve man, and man in turn might love God out of gratitude for so many gifts.

“But he did not wish to give us only beautiful creatures; the truth is that to win for himself our love, he went so far as to bestow upon us the fullness of himself. The eternal Father went so far as to give us his only Son. When he saw that we were all dead through sin and deprived of his grace, what did he do? Compelled, as the apostle says, by the superabundance of his love for us, he sent his beloved Son to make reparation for us and to call us back to a sinless life.

“By giving us his Son, whom he did not spare precisely so that he might spare us, he bestowed on us at once every good...”<sup>10</sup>



# 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.”<sup>11</sup>

## Mary

Here are inspiring words concerning Mary from Fr. Joseph Dean, SCJ:

Blessed Virgin Mary,  
by faith and the power of the Spirit,  
you bore God for our salvation.  
In your days on earth,  
you pointed to Jesus, your Son, and said:  
“Do whatever he tells you.”  
With your Son’s beloved disciple,  
you stood at the foot of the cross.  
You believed in the midst of the night.  
You loved with a pierced soul.

Mary, my mother,  
pray for me today.  
May I follow Jesus as you did,  
welcoming the Holy Spirit,  
responding to your Son’s love,  
living in communion with his love for the Father,  
cooperating with his work of redemption in the  
midst of the world.  
In this way, may my heart be joined with yours.  
May I follow your example of faith and love  
bringing the Heart of your Son to the  
heart of the world.  
Amen.

# 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)* <sup>12</sup>

◆ *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)* <sup>13</sup>

◆ *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)* <sup>14</sup>

◆ *The Sacrifice of Calvary is sacramentally made present in the Mass. When we pray the Morning Offering Prayer, united to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we act as intercessors, pleading to God that great graces be released all day through our prayerful actions as we act in love according to the Father's will. Whether we are eating, taking care of a sick parent, enjoying time spent with a friend, working at our job, we can help bring down*

great graces for the world.

When we pray the Morning Offering Prayer we offer our lives to the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, with the prayerful assistance of Mary, our Mother. Let us pray together united in our hearts in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. There follows a Morning Offering Prayer.

“My dear Father, I offer You this day all my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings in union with Jesus in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in the Holy Spirit.

“I unite with our Mother, Mary, all the angels and saints, and all the souls in purgatory to pray to the Father for myself, for each member of my family, for my friends, for all the people throughout the world, for all the souls in purgatory, and for all other intentions of the Sacred Heart.

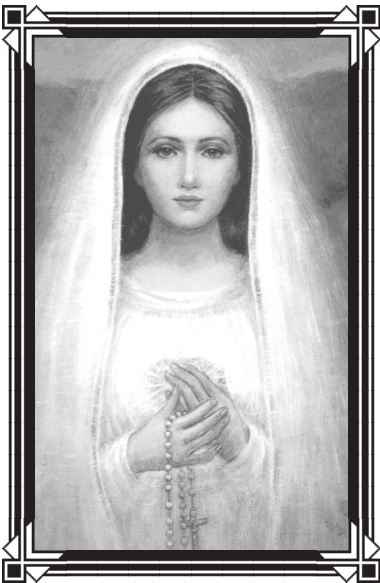
“I love You, Jesus, and I give You my heart. I love you, Mary, and I give you my heart. Amen.”<sup>15</sup>

◆ From a spiritual journal we are given these words: “When a priest is filled with the love of Jesus, he unites more deeply with Christ in the great sacrifice being offered to the Father. The faithful more easily see Jesus, through the priest, offering sacrifice to the Father. They more easily experience, at this great sacrifice, the presence of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

“At the Mass we unite in offering sacrifice to the Father. We all unite as one and give ourselves in such oneness with Jesus, in such love to the Father, in the Holy Spirit. We desire to die to all the things that are not of God and join in the great miracle taking place. The Father looks down and He sees the sacrifice of His Son being offered through His priest. Heaven unites to

earth. Earth cries out in such jubilation at the great gift of the Almighty God, and we unite as creatures giving ourselves as a sacrifice to our beloved Creator. Do we experience the presence of God as His power flows through His priest, who takes bread and wine, and changes them into the Body and Blood of our Lord? Do we hear Jesus speak, as He did at the Last Supper, with the intensity in His voice reflecting the knowledge of the upcoming events of His passion and death?

“Do we hear the priest say the words of consecration with the emotion of Jesus about to give His life for His beloved ones? And the earth stands still. There is, at that moment, the sacrifice of Calvary sacramentally made present through the



words of the priest. Oh, that God so loved the world to give His only Son as a sacrifice, and that God wants us in this deep oneness with Him! I give You myself, my Savior, my beloved Jesus, as You so willingly gave Yourself to me on Calvary. I want to die and rise more and more with You in the deepest possible love for You and for those for whom You died a brutal, bloody death on the cross, and for whom You rose gloriously from the dead!"<sup>16</sup>

## Priesthood

◆ The *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* tells us: "The command of the Lord: go to all the nations (Mt 28: 18-20) definitively expresses the place of the priest *in front of* the Church. Sent -- missus -- by the Father by means of Christ, the priest pertains in 'an immediate' way to the universal Church..."

"The spiritual gift received by priests in Ordination prepares them for a wide and universal mission of salvation. In fact, through Orders and the ministry received, all priests are associated with the Episcopal Body and, in hierarchical communion with it, according to their vocation and grace, they serve the good of the entire Church. Therefore, the membership to a particular church, through incardination, must not enclose the priest in a restricted and particularistic mentality, but rather should open him to the service of other churches, because each church is the particular realization of the only Church of Jesus Christ, such that the universal Church lives and fulfills her mission in and from the particular churches in effective communion with her. Thus, all the priests must have a missionary heart and mind and be open to the needs of the Church and the world."<sup>17</sup>

◆ Pope John Paul II speaks to his brother priests: "The priest always, and in an unchangeable way, finds the source of his identity in Christ the Priest. It is not the world which determines his status, as though it depended on changing needs or ideas about social roles. The priest is marked with the seal of the Priesthood of Christ, in order to share in his function as the one Mediator and Redeemer.

"So, because of this fundamental bond, there opens before the priest the immense field of the service of souls, for their salvation in Christ and in the Church.

"This service must be completely inspired by love of souls in imitation of Christ who gives his life for them. It is God's wish that all people should be saved, and that none of the little ones should be lost..."

"The priest is for the laity: he animates them and supports them in the exercise of the common Priesthood of the baptized -- so well illustrated by the Second Vatican Council -- which consists in their making their lives a

spiritual offering, in witnessing to the Christian spirit in the family, in taking charge of the temporal sphere and sharing in the evangelization of their brethren. But the service of the priest belongs to another order. He is ordained to act in the name of Christ the Head, to bring people into the new life made accessible by Christ, to dispense to them -- the Word, forgiveness, the Bread of Life -- to gather them into his Body, to help them to form themselves from within, to live and to act according to the saving plan of God. In a word, our identity as priests is manifested in the 'creative' exercise of the love for souls communicated by Christ Jesus.

"Attempts to make the priest more like the laity are damaging to the Church. This does not mean in any way that the priest can remain remote from the human concerns of the laity: he must be very near to them, as John

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

Mary Vianney was, but as a priest, always in a perspective which is that of their salvation and of the progress of the Kingdom of God. He is the witness and dispenser of a life other than earthly life. It is

essential to the Church that the identity of the priest be safeguarded, with its vertical dimension. The life and personality of the Curé of Ars are a particularly enlightening and vigorous illustration of this."<sup>18</sup>

◆ Fr. Jean Galot, S.J., gives us these words: "By tracing our steps back to the origin of the priestly ministry, we can find in the very words of Christ a principle of unity by reference to which all the priestly functions can be grasped as a unity. This is the quality of the shepherd. Jesus defines himself as a shepherd, thus suggesting what constitutes the ministry of his own priesthood. Since his priesthood is a new and original creation, and loftier than the Jewish priesthood, it is the shepherd's quality that best epitomizes the priestly functions.

"Christ the shepherd leads the flock by the word he speaks and guarantees the truth of his teaching by the supreme testimony which is the gift of his own self. He offers himself in sacrifice in order to impart to his sheep a bountiful life, especially through the Eucharist. By leading the flock, he makes it one. The three functions -- preaching, worship, and leadership -- become the expression of the shepherd's love, and from that love they draw their inspiration."<sup>19</sup>

## Henri Nouwen on Prayer

◆ Henri Nouwen, one of the most popular spiritual writers of our times, observes: "Prayer is often considered a weakness, a support system, which is

used when we can no longer help ourselves. But this is only true when the God of our prayers is created in our image and adapted to our own needs and concerns. When, however, prayer makes us reach out to God, not on our own but on his terms, then prayer pulls us away from self-preoccupation, encourages us to enter into a new world which cannot be contained within the narrow boundaries of our mind and heart. Prayer, therefore, is a great adventure because the God with whom we enter into a new relationship is greater than we are and defies all our calculations and predictions. The movement from illusion to prayer is hard to make since it leads from false certainties to true uncertainties, from an easy support system to ... surrender, and from the many 'safe' gods to the God whose love has no limits."<sup>20</sup>

◆ Nouwen spent a number of months in a Trappist monastery. During his stay in the monastery, he derived this insight concerning the life of contemplation, a life all are called to share according to their state of life and particular occupation: "Contemplative life is a human response to the fundamental fact that the central things in life, although spiritually perceptible, remain invisible in large measure and can easily be overlooked by the inattentive, busy, distracted person that each of us can so readily become. The contemplative looks, not so much around things, but through them into their center."<sup>21</sup>

## Words from Mother Teresa

◆ Mother Teresa tells us a story which warms the heart: "One day a young couple came to our house and asked for me. They gave me a large amount of money.

"I asked them, 'Where did you get so much money?'

"They answered, 'We got married two days ago. Before we got married we had decided not to celebrate the wedding, not to buy wedding clothes, not to have a reception or a honeymoon. We wanted to give you the money we saved.'

"I know what such a decision meant, especially for a Hindu family.

"That is why I asked them, 'But how did you think of such a thing?'

" 'We love each other so much,' they answered, 'that we wanted to share the joy of our love with those you serve.'

"To share: what a beautiful thing!"<sup>22</sup>

◆ And here are further words from Mother Teresa: "To die in peace with God is the culmination of any human life.

"Of those who have died in our houses, I have never seen anyone die in despair or cursing. They have all died serenely.

"I took a man I had picked up from the street to our House for the Dying in Calcutta.

“When I was leaving, he told me, ‘I have lived like an animal on the streets, but I am going to die like an angel. I will die smiling.’

“He did die smiling, because he felt loved and surrounded by care.

“That is the greatness of our poor!”<sup>23</sup>

## Avery Dulles and the Theological Thought of John Paul II

The well-known and respected theologian, Avery Dulles, S.J., has rendered a distinct service to us all in summarizing much of Pope John Paul II’s theological thought in his book, *The Splendor of Faith: The Theological Vision of Pope John Paul II*. Dulles points out the great importance for our times of John Paul II as theologian: “Among the Catholic theologians of the second half of this century, John Paul II holds a place of special eminence. Perhaps more than any other single individual he has succeeded in comprehensively restating the contours of Catholic faith in the light of Vatican II and in relation to post-conciliar developments in the Church and in the world. With his keen interest in contemporary culture, philosophy, economics, and international affairs, he has been able to give fresh relevance to the Catholic tradition. Avoiding the pitfalls of compromise and polemics, he has offered a serene and balanced presentation of what Catholics may and should believe on a multitude of questions. No private theologian, however brilliant, speaks with comparable authority.”<sup>24</sup>

In his concluding words to the book, Dulles says: “This final summary, which restates themes more fully explained in the preceding chapters, may be warranted because of the breadth and complexity of the teaching of John Paul II. He has written so voluminously on so many topics that it is easy to lose sight of the unity and coherence of his thought. His theological vision reaches back to the origins of revealed religion and outward to the furthest reaches of human communication. While making himself the faithful guardian of the deposit of faith, this pope shows an astonishing openness to dialogue with other churches, other religions, and the secular worlds of science and technology. Guided by his philosophical studies and his experience of the Second Vatican Council, he has forged a Christocentric humanism and a dynamic personalism capable of encountering and respectfully challenging all opposing ideologies and spiritual movements. The Catholic Church and, I submit, the world at large have been greatly blessed by the intellectual leadership of this brilliant, energetic, and prayerful successor of Peter.”<sup>25</sup>

# The Christian and the World

Pope John Paul II tells us: “Love for others, and in the first place love for the poor, in whom the Church sees Christ himself, is made concrete in the *promotion of justice*. Justice will never be fully attained unless people see in the poor person, who is asking for help in order to survive, not an annoyance or a burden, but an opportunity for showing kindness and a chance for greater enrichment. Only such an awareness can give the courage needed to face the risk and the change involved in every authentic attempt to come to the aid of another. It is not merely a matter of ‘giving from one’s surplus,’ but of helping entire peoples which are presently excluded or marginalized to enter into the sphere of economic and human development. For this to happen, it is not enough to draw on the surplus goods which in fact our world abundantly produces; it requires above all a change of lifestyles, of models of production and consumption, and of the established structures of power which today govern societies. Nor is it a matter of eliminating instruments of social organization which have proved useful, but rather of orienting them according to an adequate notion of the common good in relation to the whole human family.”<sup>26</sup>

*Immaculate  
Heart of Mary,  
Pray for us.*

## 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:*

Shepherds of Christ  
 P.O. Box 627  
 China, IN 47250-0627 USA  
 (toll free number) 1-888-211-3041  
 (phone) 1-812-273-8405  
 (fax) 1-812-273-3182

## Act of Consecration

“Jesus, You show us Your Heart as symbol of Your life of love in all its aspects, including Your most special love for each of us as unique individuals. Out of Your great love for us, You died a brutal death, nailed to the wood of the cross. Out of Your great love for us, You rose gloriously from the dead.

“From Your pierced Heart the Church with her life-giving Sacraments was born. In the Eucharist, Crown and Center of the Church’s life, You continue to give Yourself to us with the deepest, most tender, most on-fire, most complete love.

“Jesus, since in Your great love You give Yourself so completely to us, it is only fitting that we make a gift to You in return. It is entirely fitting that we give ourselves completely to You. Yes, we consecrate ourselves to Your most loving Heart. Each of us says to You, O Lord, our Savior and our Friend: ‘Jesus, take me wholly, take me completely to Your magnificent Heart. Out of love I give myself to You. Live in and through me. In love You give Yourself completely to me. In love and in a spirit of reparation, I want to give myself, with the help of Your grace, entirely to You. Take me, Jesus, to an ever closer union with the Father, in the Holy Spirit, with Mary my Mother at my side. Pierced, Glorified, Eucharistic 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, including your most special love for me as this unique individual. You are the Mother of my Savior. You are also my Mother. 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, Glorified, Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, Chief Shepherd of the flock.”

# Letters

◆ Dear Ed,

The latest special issue of Shepherds of Christ is very good (Issue 3, 2000). I like the idea that you are expanding it so that although aimed for the needs of priests it is an available resource for lay people as well. It will keep it more viable in the long run. But the choice of articles and topics in the issue are an excellent thematic list of the major spiritual topics of today.

My best,

Lawrence Boadt, CSP  
Paulist Press  
Mahwah, NJ

◆ Dear Father Carter,

Please let me tell you how much I am grateful for your “Shepherds of Christ” newsletter. I received the Issue 3, 2000, manual from a long-time family friend and monk who handed it along to my family. The articles are interesting and inspirational!

I am a 20-year old college student and I attend a private, secular school. The prayers and articles in “Shepherds of Christ” help me understand the Eucharist and live a life focused on Jesus. I especially like the Act of Consecration prayer. It is so beautiful! I say it daily.

Thank you again and may God bless all those involved in the “Shepherds of Christ” ministry.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Deignan  
Farmingdale, New Jersey

◆ Dear Fr. Carter,

I just finished reading the Special Issue “Overview of the Spiritual Life” Excellent! Please send me the book form of the 1st 12 issues.

Thank you.

In Christ

Fr. Gerald Sherer  
Hermosa, SD

◆ Reverend and dear Fr. Ed,

Mabuhay! Greetings from the Philippines! Please allow me to congratulate you for the expansion of your readership. It is indeed true that even the laity would benefit from your spiritual publication. As for my case, I am not yet a priest yet I found your notes to be helpful in my personal spiritual journey. Thus, I am asking for a personal copy of Shepherds of Christ. The

ones that I had been reading were given by a fellow seminarian. May I also request the audio cassette recording of your previous issues. Thank you very much for your dedication. May Mary's protection never leave you in your life.

In Christ

Sem. Nono Acompañado  
Holy Rosary Major Seminary  
Concepcion Heights, Naga City  
Philippines

◆ Dear Father Carter,

Greetings in the name of the Risen Lord! I hope you had a good Lent and a joyful celebration of Easter. Here at St. Anne the Vigil and the Easter Sunday celebrations were memorable.

Father, since the time I started receiving these spiritual newsletters through my Vicar General Mons. Joseph Kimu of St. John the Baptist Major Seminary in the diocese of Mangochi here in Malawi, I feel my spiritual life has been enriched tremendously.

On the other side, I would like to welcome most gratefully the idea of extending the readership to the laity. I think there could be some food for them too. We as priests, and they as the flock need each other's assistance.

Sincerely in the Risen Christ

Rev. Fr. Lucious Kamwana  
St. Anne Catholic Parish  
Balaka - Malawi - AFRICA

◆ Dear Father Ed,

I have been receiving your newsletters for over a year now and have enjoyed it immensely. Every issue I read from front to back. I am now 48 years ordained and each newsletter renews me spiritually.

Enclosed is a little donation. I enjoy each issue very much.

Yours in Christ and Mary,

Father John Graham, C. SS. R  
St. Cecilia's Rectory  
New York, NY

## NOTES:

1. Scripture quotations are taken from *The New Jerusalem Bible*, Doubleday.
2. Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter. *On Human Work*, United States Catholic Conference, No. 4.
3. *Ibid.*, No. 24.
4. *The Documents of Vatican II*, “The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World”, No. 68. America Press edition.
5. Edward Leen, C.S. Sp., *In the Likeness of Christ*, Sheed and Ward, pp. 126-128.
6. Thomas Merton, *Love and Living*, Harcourt Brace and Company, pp. 177-178.
7. John Henry Cardinal Newman, “Parochial and Plain Sermons”, v, pp 139-40, as in *The Heart of Newman*, A Synthesis Arranged by Erich Przywara, S.J., Ignatius Press, pp. 171- 172.
8. Edward Leen, C. S. Sp., *The True Vine and Its Branches*, P. J. Kenedy & Sons, pp. 25-26.
9. Romano Guardini, *Jesus Christ*, Henry Regnery Publ., as in *Daily Readings in Catholic Classics*, edited by Rawley Myers, Ignatius Press, p. 85.
10. St. Alphonsus Liguori, Tract, *de praxi amanda Jesum Christum*, edit. latina, Romae, 1909, pp. 9-14, as in the *The Liturgy of the Hours*, Catholic Book Publishing Co., Vol IV, pp. 1264-1265.
11. Archbishop Luis M. Martinez, *The Sanctifier*, Pauline Books & Media, p. 48
12. *The Documents of Vatican II*, “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy”, America Press edition, No. 17.
13. *Ibid.*, No. 48
14. Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter, *Mystici Corporis*, AAS, XXXV, 232-233.
15. Rita Ring, *Rosary Meditations for Parents and Children*, Shepherds of Christ Ministries, p. 189.
16. Rita Ring, *Mass Book - A Journey Into the Heart of Jesus*, Shepherds of Christ Ministries, p. 103.
17. *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, as in special supplement, *Inside the Vatican*, November 1994, No. 14.
18. Pope John Paul II, *Holy Thursday Letters to My Brother Priests*, edited by James P. Socias, Scepter Publishers and Midwest Theological Forum, pp. 147-148.
19. Jean Galot, S.J., *Theology of the Priesthood*, Ignatius Press, p. 137.
20. Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out*, Doubleday, pp. 89-90.
21. Henri Nouwen, *Genesee Diary*, Doubleday, p. 361.
22. Mother Teresa, *In My Own Words*, Liguori Publications, p. 19.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
24. Avery Dulles, S.J., *The Splendor of Faith: The Theological Vision of Pope John Paul II*, Crossroad Publishing Company, pp. 1-2.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
26. Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum*, St. Paul Books & Media, No. 58.

## *Introduction to the Shepherds of Christ Prayers*

Here are the prayers that so many pray every day at 6:30, especially for the priests. Prayer chapters have helped many priests in parishes and people in these parishes to grow in greater holiness.

Will you form a prayer chapter in your parish and pray with us at 6:30?

One priest praying the prayers can tremendously boost the prayer power.

These are the prayers Father Carter gave us to pray in the Shepherds of Christ Prayer Manual.

# *Shepherds of Christ Prayers*

Written by Fr. Edward Carter, S.J.

Father Carter requested  
that these be prayed in prayer chapters  
all over the world.

These prayers are available on tapes  
and discs as prayed by Fr. Carter.  
Fr. Carter prayed them every day at 6:20, the Holy  
Spirit Novena, Prayer Manual and Rosary

# Shepherds of Christ Associates

## PRAYER MANUAL



Shepherds of Christ Publications  
China, Indiana

Imprimi Potest: Rev. Bradley M. Schaeffer, S.J.  
Provincial  
Chicago Province, The Society of Jesus

Imprimatur: Most Rev. Carl K. Moeddel  
Auxiliary Bishop  
Archdiocese of Cincinnati

© 1998 Shepherds of Christ Publications

The Shepherds of Christ Associates Prayer Manual is published by  
Shepherds of Christ Publications, an arm of Shepherds of Christ Ministries,  
P.O. Box 627 China, Indiana 47250 USA.

Founder, Shepherds of Christ Ministries:  
Father Edward J. Carter, S.J.

For more information contact:  
Shepherds of Christ Associates  
P.O. Box 627  
China, Indiana 47250- USA  
Tel. 812-273-8405  
Toll Free: 1-888-211-3041  
Fax 812-273-3182

Permission for non-commercial reproduction granted but with no retyping  
or editing



# Chapter Meeting Prayer Format

The prayer format below should be followed at chapter meetings of Shepherds of Christ Associates. All prayers, not just those said specifically for priests, should include the intention of praying for all the needs of priests the world over.

1. **Hymns.** Hymns may be sung at any point of the prayer part of the meeting.
2. **Holy Spirit Prayer.** Come, Holy Spirit, almighty Sanctifier, God of love, who filled the Virgin Mary with grace, who wonderfully changed the hearts of the apostles, who endowed all Your martyrs with miraculous courage, come and sanctify us. Enlighten our minds, strengthen our wills, purify our consciences, rectify our judgment, set our hearts on fire, and preserve us from the misfortunes of resisting Your inspirations. Amen.
3. **The Rosary.**
4. **Salve Regina.** “Hail Holy Queen, Mother of mercy, 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, our mourning, our weeping in this vale of tears. Turn, then, most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy toward us and after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of your womb, Jesus, O clement, O loving, O sweet Virgin Mary. Amen.”
5. **The Memorare.** “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. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto you, O Virgin of virgins, my Mother. To you I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but, in your mercy, hear and answer me. Amen.”
6. **Seven Hail Marys in honor of the Seven Sorrows of Mary.** Mary has promised very special graces to those who do this on a daily basis. Included in the promises of Our Lady for those who practice this devotion is her pledge to give special assistance at the hour of death, including the sight of her face. The seven sorrows are:
  - (1) The first sorrow: the prophecy of Simeon (Hail Mary).
  - (2) The second sorrow: the flight into Egypt (Hail Mary).
  - (3) The third sorrow: the loss of the Child Jesus in the temple (Hail Mary).
  - (4) The fourth sorrow: Jesus and Mary meet on the way to the cross

(Hail Mary).

- (5) The fifth sorrow: Jesus dies on the cross (Hail Mary).  
 (6) The sixth sorrow: Jesus is taken down from the cross and laid in Mary's arms (Hail Mary).  
 (7) The seventh sorrow: the burial of Jesus (Hail Mary).

### 7. Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us. Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

God, the Father of heaven, have mercy on us.

God, the Son, Redeemer of the world,

have mercy on us.

God, the Holy Spirit, have mercy on us.

Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy on us.

Holy Mary, pray for us (repeat after each invocation).

Holy Mother of God,

Holy Virgin of virgins,

Mother of Christ,

Mother of the Church,

Mother of divine grace,

Mother most pure,

Mother most chaste,

Mother inviolate,

Mother undefiled,

Mother most amiable,

Mother most admirable,

Mother of good counsel,

Mother of our Creator,

Mother of our Savior,

Virgin most prudent,

Virgin most venerable,

Virgin most renowned,

Virgin most powerful,

Virgin most merciful,

Virgin most faithful,

Mirror of justice,

Seat of wisdom,

Cause of our joy,

Spiritual vessel,

Vessel of honor,

Singular vessel of devotion,

Mystical rose,

Tower of David,  
 Tower of ivory,  
 House of gold,  
 Ark of the Covenant,  
 Gate of heaven,  
 Morning star,  
 Health of the sick,  
 Refuge of sinners,  
 Comforter of the afflicted,  
 Help of Christians,  
 Queen of angels,  
 Queen of patriarchs,  
 Queen of prophets,  
 Queen of apostles,  
 Queen of martyrs,  
 Queen of confessors,  
 Queen of virgins,  
 Queen of all saints,  
 Queen conceived without original sin,  
 Queen assumed into heaven,  
 Queen of the most holy rosary,  
 Queen of families,  
 Queen of peace,  
 Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,  
 spare us, O Lord.  
 Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,  
 graciously hear us, O Lord.  
 Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world,  
 have mercy on us.  
 Pray for us, O holy Mother of God,  
 that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.

Let us pray: Grant, we beseech You, O Lord God, that we Your servants may enjoy perpetual health of mind and body and, by the glorious intercession of the blessed Mary, ever virgin, be delivered from present sorrow, and obtain eternal joy. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

We fly to your patronage, O holy Mother of God. Despise not our petitions in our necessities, but deliver us always from all dangers, O glorious and blessed Virgin. Amen.

8. **Prayer to St. Joseph.** St. Joseph, guardian of Jesus and chaste spouse of Mary, you passed your life in perfect fulfillment of duty. You supported the Holy Family of Nazareth with the work of your hands. Kindly protect those who trustingly turn to you. You know their aspirations, their hardships, their hopes; and they turn to you because they know you will

understand and protect them. You too have known trial, labor, and weariness. But, even amid the worries of material life, your soul was filled with deep peace and sang out in true joy through intimacy with the Son of God entrusted to you, and with Mary, His tender Mother. Amen. —(Pope John XXIII)

**9. Litany of the Sacred Heart, promises of the Sacred Heart.**

Lord, have mercy on us.

Christ, have mercy on us.

Lord, have mercy on us. Christ, hear us.

Christ, graciously hear us.

God the Father of heaven,

have mercy on us (repeat after each invocation).

God the Son, Redeemer of the world,

God the Holy Spirit,

Holy Trinity, one God,

Heart of Jesus, Son of the eternal Father,

Heart of Jesus, formed by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mother,

Heart of Jesus, substantially united to the Word of God,

Heart of Jesus, of infinite majesty,

Heart of Jesus, sacred temple of God,

Heart of Jesus, tabernacle of the Most High,

Heart of Jesus, house of God and gate of heaven,

Heart of Jesus, burning furnace of charity,

Heart of Jesus, abode of justice and love,

Heart of Jesus, full of goodness and love,

Heart of Jesus, abyss of all virtues,

Heart of Jesus, most worthy of all praise,

Heart of Jesus, king and center of all hearts,

Heart of Jesus, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,

Heart of Jesus, in whom dwells the fullness of divinity,

Heart of Jesus, in whom the Father is well pleased,

Heart of Jesus, of whose fullness we have all received,

Heart of Jesus, desire of the everlasting hills,

Heart of Jesus, patient and most merciful,

Heart of Jesus, enriching all who invoke You,

Heart of Jesus, fountain of life and holiness,

Heart of Jesus, propitiation for our sins,

Heart of Jesus, loaded down with opprobrium,

Heart of Jesus, bruised for our offenses,

Heart of Jesus, obedient even to death,

Heart of Jesus, pierced with a lance,

Heart of Jesus, source of all consolation,

Heart of Jesus, our life and reconciliation,  
 Heart of Jesus, victim of sin,  
 Heart of Jesus, salvation of those who hope in You,  
 Heart of Jesus, hope of those who die in You,  
 Heart of Jesus, delight of all the saints,  
 Lamb of God, Who take away the sins of the world,  
     spare us, O Lord.  
 Lamb of God, Who take away the sins of the world,  
     graciously hear us, O Lord.  
 Lamb of God, Who take away the sins of the world,  
     have mercy on us.  
 Jesus, meek and humble of heart,  
     make our hearts like unto Yours.

Let us pray: O almighty and eternal God, look upon the Heart of Your dearly beloved Son and upon the praise and satisfaction He offers You in behalf of sinners and, being appeased, grant pardon to those who seek Your mercy, in the name of the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

**Promises of Our Lord to those devoted to His Sacred Heart** (these should be read by the prayer leader):

- (1) I will give them all the graces necessary in their state of life.
  - (2) I will establish peace in their homes.
  - (3) I will comfort them in all their afflictions.
  - (4) I will be their refuge during life and above all in death.
  - (5) I will bestow a large blessing on all their undertakings.
  - (6) Sinners shall find in My Heart the source and the infinite ocean of mercy.
  - (7) Tepid souls shall grow fervent.
  - (8) Fervent souls shall quickly mount to high perfection.
  - (9) I will bless every place where a picture of My Heart shall be set up and honored.
  - (10) I will give to priests the gift of touching the most hardened hearts.
  - (11) Those who promote this devotion shall have their names written in My Heart, never to be blotted out.
  - (12) I promise you in the excessive mercy of My Heart that My all-powerful love will grant to all those who communicate on the first Friday in nine consecutive months the grace of final penitence; they shall not die in My disgrace nor without receiving their sacraments; My divine Heart shall be their safe refuge in this last moment.
10. **Prayer for Priests.** “Lord Jesus, Chief Shepherd of the Flock, we pray that in the great love and mercy of Your Sacred Heart 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."

11. **Prayer for all members of the Shepherds of Christ Associates.** "Dear Jesus, we ask Your special blessings on all members of Shepherds of Christ Associates. Continue to enlighten them regarding the very special privilege and responsibility you have given them as members of Your movement, Shepherds of Christ Associates. Draw them ever closer to Your Heart and to Your Mother's Heart. Allow them to more and more realize the great and special love of Your Hearts for each of them as unique individuals. Give them the grace to respond to Your love and Mary's love with an increased love of their own. As they dwell in Your Heart and Mary's Heart, abundantly care for all their needs and those of their loved ones. We make our prayer through You to the Father, in the Holy Spirit, with Mary our Mother at our side. Amen."
12. **Prayer for the spiritual and financial success of the priestly newsletter.** "Father, we ask Your special blessings upon the priestly newsletter, Shepherds of Christ. We ask that You open the priest-readers to the graces You wish to give them through this chosen instrument of Your Son. We also ask that You provide for the financial needs of the newsletter and the Shepherds of Christ Associates. We make our prayer through Jesus, in the Holy Spirit, with Mary at our side. Amen."
13. **Prayer for all members of the human family.** "Heavenly Father, we ask Your blessings on all Your children the world over. Attend to all their needs. We ask Your special assistance for all those marginalized people, all those who are so neglected and forgotten. United with our Mother Mary, we make this petition to You through Jesus and in the Holy Spirit. Amen."
14. **Prayer to St. Michael and our Guardian Angels:** "St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our safeguard against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the other evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen."  
 "Angel of God, my guardian dear, to whom God's love commits me here, ever this day be at my side, to light and guard, to rule and guide. Amen."

15. **Pause for silent, personal prayer.** This should last at least five minutes.

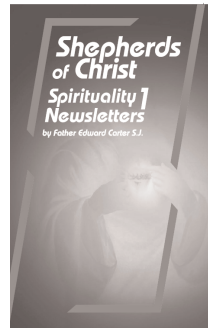
16. **Act of consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary.**

“Lord Jesus, Chief Shepherd of the flock, I consecrate myself to Your most Sacred Heart. From Your pierced Heart the Church was born, the Church You have called me, as a member of Shepherds of Christ Associates, 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 companion in this most important work. Help me to always love You in return. Help me to give myself entirely to You. Help me always to pour out my life in love of God and neighbor! Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in You!

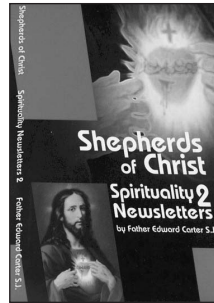
“Dear Blessed Virgin Mary, I consecrate myself to your maternal and Immaculate Heart, this Heart which is symbol of your life of love. You are the Mother of my Savior. You are also my Mother. You love me with a most special love as a member of Shepherds of Christ Associates, a movement created by your Son as a powerful instrument for the renewal of the Church and the world. 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.”

17. **Daily Prayers.** All members should say the Holy Spirit prayer daily and make the act of consecration daily. They should also pray the rosary each day. They are encouraged to use the other above prayers as time allows.

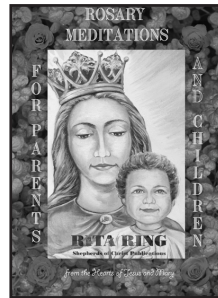
- BN1. *Shepherds of Christ - Selected Writings on Spirituality for all People as Published in Shepherds of Christ Newsletter for Priests.* Contains 12 issues of the newsletter from July/August 1994 to May/June 1996. \$15



- BN2. *Shepherds of Christ - Volume 2:* Contains issues 13-29 of the newsletter (September/October 1996 - Issue 5, 1999) \$15



- B7. *Rosary Meditations for Parents and Children*, by Rita Ring, Short Meditations for both parents and children to be used when praying the rosary. These meditations will help all to know the lives of Jesus and Mary alive in their Hearts. This book has the Imprimatur. \$10



- B8. *Mass Book*, by Rita Ring: Many of the entries in the Priestly Newsletter Volume II from a spiritual journal came from this book. These entries are to help people to be more deeply united to God in the Mass. This book has the Imprimatur. \$12

