

# shepherds of Christ<sup>+</sup>

A SPIRITUALITY NEWSLETTER FOR PRIESTS



REV. EDWARD CARTER S.J., Editor

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### Chief Shepherd of the Flock

## Love for One Another

**“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd is one who lays down his life for his sheep. The hired man, since he is not the shepherd and the sheep do not belong to him, abandons the sheep and runs away as soon as he sees a wolf coming, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep. This is because he is only a hired man and has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for my sheep.”** (Jn 10:11-15<sup>1</sup>).

Yes, Christ, in the great love of His Heart for us, has laid down His life for us. In the giving up of His life for us He gave us new life in Him. And at the heart of our life in Him—our life of grace—is the infused virtue of love. In Jesus we have a new power to love God and others.

In the First Letter of John, we read:

“My dear people, let us love one another since love comes from God and everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.” (1 Jn 4:7)

“Anyone who says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, is a liar, since a man who does not love the brother that he can see cannot love God, whom he has never seen.” (1 Jn 4:20)

Yes, in Christ we are called to love one another in a special way. What are some of the characteristics of our love for neighbor? There follow some reflections on our love-relationship with others.

◆ Our love of neighbor should exclude no one. It should embrace every single person the world over. As Christ’s love for the human family is universal, so must ours be. In our universal love for others we must be willing to act to help promote their good. One way we can do this is in our prayer for their various material and spiritual needs. This constitutes no slight contribution of love, for prayer is one of the great means of

channeling God’s gifts to the world.

◆ The true Christian is imbued with consciousness of 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 a proper relating to others. Indeed, the Christian imperative reminds us that we are to walk life’s path, not in isolation, but hand in hand with our kindred human beings.

◆ To authentically relate with others we must be properly aware of who they really are. We must be able to penetrate beyond surface appearances, which may nor 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 simultaneously aware of their awesome dignity. We are conscious that these persons

are created and redeemed by God in His love. Fortified with this proper awareness, we are thus in a position to relate to them as we should.

◆ In order to be in touch with the inner self of others, I must be

aware of, or in touch with, my own inner or true self. This awareness, in turn, is an awareness that I too am made in the image of God, that I have been divinized in Christ and that my life has meaning in proportion to my union with Jesus. I am made for Jesus. Through and with Him, I, in love, go to the Father, in the Holy Spirit, with Mary, My Mother, at my side. Through and with Him I relate in love to all my brothers and sisters in the human family.

◆ The contemporary Christian has a special responsibility and privilege as a bearer of love for one’s brothers and sisters. A Christian of any age certainly has a duty of love towards the human family, but our present-day world has special need of people who love their brothers and sisters, and love them deeply. The human family is faced with enormous problems, and many of

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these are caused because there is not enough love in the hearts of many. Not only is there not enough love, but in certain cases there is deep hatred.

We do not want to look only at the darker side of today's world. As Christians who believe that Christ has victoriously redeemed the world through His death and resurrection, we should always be aware that Christ's redemption has let loose a torrent of grace which is meant to permeate the human family more and more. The grace of Christ works to make us persons who more and more love God and others. This grace of Christ has accomplished marvels of love. The example of love for one's brothers and sisters in the human family is being multiplied countless each day the world over. Because good can be so hidden, and because it does not usually make headlines, we can be unaware of the vast good which does exist in many persons' hearts.

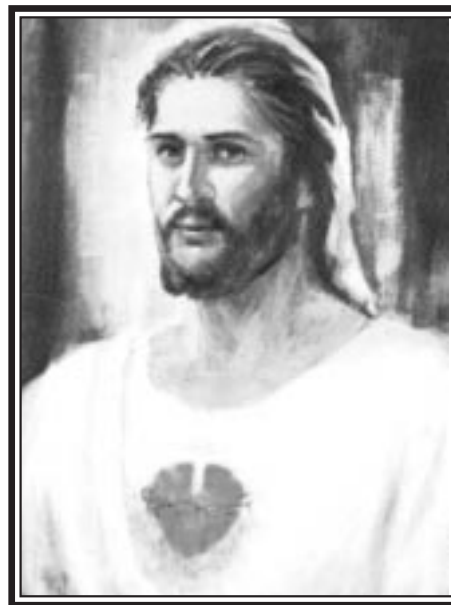
But there is a darker side. War is still with us. Great poverty, with its concomitant scourge of disease and other ills, mars much of the face of the earth. Much of this poverty is caused by the selfishness in the hearts of some, a selfishness which manifests a callous lack of love for one's neighbor. In our own United States we have enormous social challenges. We have gigantic racial problems. We have peddlers of drugs and pornographic literature who are selfishly becoming rich off the physical and moral ruin of those to whom they cater. We have an enormous deterioration of the family unit. These are examples of some of the decay which eats away at our society. As our gaze sweeps out over our own United States and the rest of the world, and we see what happens when people fail to love as they should, we have to be aware of our special responsibilities as Christians to give witness to love of neighbor.

◆ In dealing with others, we must strive to maintain the balance, so delicate at times, between independence from others and dependence on them. We must, on the one hand, humbly realize that in so many varied ways, we consistently depend on others.

If, however, we must, on the one hand, strive to maintain a sense of proper need for others, we must, on the other hand, couple this with a thrust toward independence. To have an attitude of healthy dependence on others is a main ingredient for Christian growth. To maintain a morbid need for others, however, is a serious obstacle in becoming the persons God destines us to be. We should never become slavishly dependent on the company of others, their love, the attention they give us, the approval they give to us, our ideas, or our work. It is, of course, always very pleasant to

receive love, attention and approval. All this, however, must occur within the framework of God's will for us. We must constantly strive to lovingly do His will at all times and in all circumstances. This is the all-embracing and all-necessary imperative that permeates every facet of our being. When we live according to this imperative, we gladly and gratefully receive love, attention, and affirmation from others when it is forthcoming. We realize that to be offered this is a part of God's plan for us. If, however, such is not forthcoming at any one time, we courageously continue to live as we think God intends, aware that God in His loving faithfulness will compensate for what currently appears to be a lack of human support.

◆ Whether one is a married person, a single person living in the world, a religious, a priest—we all have to be aware lest we be more concerned with receiving love from our neighbor than in giving it. God wants us to receive love from others, and we need this. However, we must not allow this legitimate desire to degenerate into a morbid preoccupation whereby we always enumerate all the different ways that others should be manifesting love toward us while, at the same time, we ourselves might be guilty of neglecting numerous opportunities for loving them. If our main concern is to love others rather than to be loved by them, I think we will more often than not be surprised at the love others show us over a lifetime.



Nonetheless, even in the event we might feel slighted in

this regard, our vocation as Christians is eminently clear. We ourselves must continue to love even when it is extremely difficult to do so, thus following the example of Jesus who loved even those who nailed him to the cross.

◆ We should strive to be evocative persons. By what we are and say and do, we should evoke, or call forth for further development, the truth, the goodness, and the beauty that is inherent in each human person. When we deal with others, we should want to aid, not hinder, them in their quest for personal growth. We are evocative persons in various ways: by offering appropriately affirming words of encouragement and commendation; by simply being kind to others; by wanting to sincerely share other's joys and sorrows; and by helping others realize that they are unique individuals with a unique mission to fulfill. These and other ways—which, again, should be infused with appropriate love—are constantly available to us. Collectively, these ways are a constant reminder to us that we can be evocative personalities not only on rather rare and so-called special occasions, but also on the special occasion of every day. For, indeed, each day is a precious gift from God.

◆ Communication is obviously a very important element as we deal with one another. Authentic communication requires a willingness on the part of the parties involved to appropriately share ideas, problems, ideals, joys, and sorrows. Words are obviously involved, but not all words are helpful. We must strive to discern which words are helpful and which are not—a task that is not always easy. Further, the increasing quantity of words is not always the measure of healthy communication. Sometimes the more the words are increased, the more the communication suffers. What matters most is the quality of the words that are spoken, the motivation that prompts them. Also, not all those who are involved have to speak and listen equally. If we attentively

try to evaluate all the circumstances—including the different personalities involved—we will tend to contribute our appropriate share of listening and speaking. Furthermore, we must always remember that communication occurs in ways that go beyond the spoken word. Finally, we should realize that authentic communication must be rooted in the mutual respect and love that should guide our dealings with one another.

◆ The true Christian realizes that a special love and concern for a few should proportionately and appropriately deepen love and concern for all others. Do my special relationships with a few expand my horizons, my concerns, my love? Do they help me be more sensitive to the fact that God has created all of us brothers and sisters to one another—whether we are black, white, brown, or whatever? Or, on the other hand, do these special relationships narrow my love and attention almost exclusively to the special few involved? If the former description characterizes us, we have cause for rejoicing. If the latter, then we should be concerned and attempt to correct the situation.

## Spiritual Freedom

Growth in the spiritual life requires that we grow in spiritual freedom. This freedom consists in striving to relate to all reality according to God's will. The following excerpt addresses itself to this important issue of spiritual freedom: "The apostles who experienced the transfiguration were obviously not expected to close their eyes to the beauty of the experience. (To do so would be to turn their backs on a wonderful gift of God; more than that, it could be an act of ingratitude.) But, on the other hand, neither were they called to set up tents there. Instead, they were expected through this experience of God to be free to carry the experience with them and go out into the unknown future, even to Jerusalem. So, other questions we are asked to grapple with by our spiritual guides are: Are we truly grateful for the people and things God has given to us to enjoy in our lives? Are we also willing to let go of them rather than to try to possess, control, or idolize them?"<sup>2</sup>

## Life Means Christ

The writings of St. Paul are often vividly self-revelatory. More than once the reader is allowed to see inside the person Paul. In one such passage the deep, enthusiastic love of Paul for Jesus is amply evident: "Life to me, of course, is Christ, but then death would bring me something more; but then again, if living in the body means doing

work which is having good results—I do not know what I should choose. I am caught in this dilemma: I want to be gone and be with Christ, which would be very much the better, but for me to stay alive in this body is a more urgent need for your sake." (Phil: 1:21-24).

We should all be inspired by these words of Paul to stimulate our own personal enthusiasm for Jesus. After all, for us, too, to live should mean Christ. What else does the word "Christian" mean? If we reflect on the meaning of the word "Christian", we realize that it ideally means a follower of Christ, one totally committed to Christ, one for whom life has no real meaning without Jesus, one who is willing to live and die for Jesus and His cause.

Jesus calls us to share in the work of ongoing redemption. He invites, but He does not coerce. He promises us that it is an enterprise which immensely satisfies. He does not say there will be no suffering, no hardships, no weariness. He challenges us to a great work, but He does so with complete honesty — He tells us what to expect.

This Jesus who invites us is a leader who Himself has suffered greatly for His cause. There were, of course, numerous sufferings throughout His life, but His passion challenged to the utmost His capacity for pain and anguish. He had been deprived of food and sleep. He had been spat upon, made fun of, scourged, and crowned with thorns. Then there was the terrible, brutal suffering of the crucifixion itself. But, despite this great suffering brought on by the physical brutalities He endured, the greatest suffering was His immense anguish of spirit.

And what are we willing to endure for Jesus? As we labor with Him in the work of ongoing redemption, is there a limit beyond which we refuse to go in bearing suffering? Can insults separate us from the work of Christ? Can weariness? Can misunderstandings? Can the failure of others to show us love and appreciation? Can the opposition of others? We pray and hope that nothing—absolutely nothing—will ever separate us from Jesus and His cause. St. Paul offers us eloquent words in this regard: "Nothing therefore can come between us and the love of Christ, even if we are troubled or worried, or being persecuted, or lacking food or clothes, or being threatened or even attacked. As scripture promised: **For your sake we are being massacred daily, and reckoned as sheep for the slaughter.** These are the trials through which we triumph, by the power of him who loved us.

"For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Rm 8:35-39)

## Scriptural Reflections

◆ **Strength in Weakness.** "So I shall be very happy to make my weakness my special boast so that the power of Christ may stay over me, and that is why I am quite content with my weaknesses, and with insults, hardships, persecutions, and the agonies I go through 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.

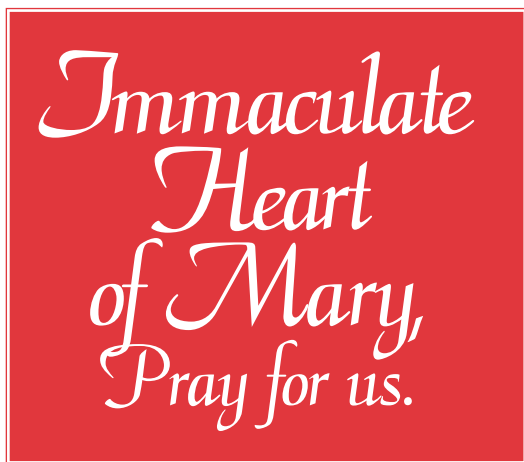
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According to the wisdom of Christ, it is of paramount importance that one admits weakness and powerlessness and builds upon this realization.

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, 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 feel overwhelmed, for various reasons, with the burden of life. We feel adrift upon the turbulent waters of worry and anxiety. Fear grad-



ually strengthens its 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 that, realizing very acutely 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 deep peace, and love, and security—because Jesus is very near. And the nearer He is, the more we participate in His strength, His might.

♦ **The Human Condition.** “The Word was made flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (Jn 1:14).

Sometimes we are tempted to think that the best way to be a good Christian would be to withdraw as much as possible from earthly concerns. We think how peaceful it would be to be alone with God in our own kind of hermitage, as it were, and let the world with all its worries, anxieties, and temptations pass us by. In moments of clearer thinking, however, we realize this is a dreamy kind of thinking, unrealistic thinking, thinking which does not correspond to the plan of redemption.

Jesus, as man, redeemed us within the framework of the human condition. Jesus’ human enfleshment placed Him within the world, and He accepted the full implications of His being human. He did not deny His humanity. He rather lived it to the full. He lived a full human life, not only when it was pleasant to do so. He also lived human existence perfectly when this meant being rejected, laughed at, spat upon, scourged, crowned with thorns, nailed to a cross in excruciating agony.

All His human acts helped redeem us. His preaching, His relationships with Mary and Joseph and others, His taking meals with friends, His gathering the little children in warm embrace, His healing of the sick, His thrilling to nature’s beauty, the sufferings of His passion—all these human acts contributed to our redemption.

As Jesus objectively redeemed us within the framework of the human condition, so in like manner we subjectively participate in redemption. We receive the life Jesus came to give, and mature in this life, by living the human condition according to God’s will. We are saved, not by fleeing the human, but by embracing it according to God’s plan. Whether one is a lay person involved most intensely with the secular city, or a Trappist monk within monastery walls, that person is Christian by living the human in a graced manner, or he or she is not Christian at all.

As Jesus did before us, we also have to accept the bitter with the sweet. We cannot accept the human condition only at those times when life rewards us with intense joy and success and enthusiasm. When we experience failure or misunderstanding, when we taste the bitterness of human existence, when life seems all too much for us, at these times we also have to affirm our being human. In this way we are saved. In this way we help others be saved. In this way we follow Jesus, who always accepted His state of being human in the fullest possible manner.

## Words of Death-Resurrection

Here are appropriate words for our Easter Season from St. Melito of Sardis, bishop: “There was much proclaimed by the prophets about the mystery of the Passover; that mystery is Christ, and to him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

“For the sake of suffering humanity he came down from heaven to earth, clothed himself in that humanity in the Virgin’s womb, and was born a man. Having then a body capable of suffering, he took the pain of fallen man upon himself; he triumphed over the diseases of soul and body that were its cause, and by his Spirit, which was incapable of dying, he dealt man’s destroyer, death, a fatal blow.

“He was led forth like a lamb; he was slaughtered like a sheep. He ransomed us from our servitude to the world, as he had ransomed Israel from the land of Egypt; he freed us from our slavery to the devil, as he had freed Israel from the hand of Pharaoh. He sealed our souls with his own Spirit, and the members of our body with his own blood.

“He is the One who covered death with shame and cast the devil into mourning, as Moses cast Pharaoh into mourning. He is the One who smote

sin and robbed iniquity of offspring, as Moses robbed the Egyptians of their offspring. He is the One who brought us out of slavery into freedom, out of darkness into light, out of death into life, out of tyranny into an eternal kingdom; who made us a new priesthood, a people chosen to be his own forever. He is the Passover that is our salvation.

“It is he who was made man of the Virgin, he who was hung on the tree; it is he who was buried in the earth, raised from the dead, and taken up to the heights of heaven. He is the mute lamb, the slain lamb, the lamb born of Mary, the fair ewe. He was seized from the flock, dragged off to be slaughtered, sacrificed in the evening, and buried at night. On the tree no bone of his was broken; in the earth his body knew no decay. He is the One who rose from the dead, and who raised man from the depths of the tomb.”<sup>3</sup>

## Thoughts on the Mass

◆ Vatican II tells us: “At the Last Supper, on the night when He was betrayed, our Savior 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.

“The church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ’s faithful, when present at the 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 each other, so that finally God may be all in all.”<sup>4</sup>

◆ Here are thoughts from one woman’s spiritual journal on the Mass:

“The priest needs to feed the people with the love of God. When people come to the Mass and the sacraments, they are spiritually fed.

“The world cries out to be fed. The Church is the body of Christ. Jesus has chosen each priest and anointed him as Christ alive in this world today. The greatest calling is to be called to be a holy priest by our Lord Himself. How dearly He loves His beloved priests and longs for their love.

As He suffered so during His bitter Passion for the lack of love of some of His chosen priests betrothed to Him, He was comforted by His holy priests. Jesus truly loves His sacred priests.

“Jesus must live in the priest. The priest’s every action must be one with Jesus. He is a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

“When a priest is filled with the love of Jesus, He will unite more deeply with Christ in the great sacrifice being offered to the Father. In the holy sacrifice of the Mass, the faithful will see Jesus through the priest offering sacrifice to the Father. We will lift our eyes and we will feel, at this great sacrifice, the presence of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. 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 die to all those things that are not of Him and join in this great miracle taking place. The Father looks down and He sees the sacrifice of His beautiful Son through the consecrated hands of His holy priests. Heaven unites to earth. Earth cries out in such jubilation at the great gift given from 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 the hands of a man, the priest who takes ordinary bread and wine and changes them into the Body and Blood of our Lord? Do we hear Jesus cry out, as He did at the last supper, with the intensity in His voice reflecting all 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 souls? And the earth stands still. There is, at that moment, the sacrifice of Calvary sacramentally made present through the hands of the priest. Oh, that God so loved this 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 beautiful God, as You so willingly gave Yourself to me on Calvary. I want to die with You.

“Love between two persons is mutual giving. It is interaction between two people. It is intimacy. It is dependent on how much we give. We receive intimacy, interaction, according to how much we put into it. God gives His all. We see Him hanging, covered with blood, crowned with thorns, hands and feet pierced. We see His precious heart, font of life and love and mercy, pierced. This is freedom. He shows us the way. We give ourselves. We sacrifice and beg to be made holy, beg to be like Him in this holy sacrifice. The most important aspect of our offering sacrifice is how we are in our heart. Are we one with Jesus, giving ourselves to our beloved Father Who is all worthy of our love? Who are we that God loves us creatures so much that He, Almighty God, becomes present, no less present than the day He walked this earth, through the hands of a man, and we take it so lightly. Think of Jesus calling out. Raise the Host high, beloved priests. This is the Son of God and you have been given the greatest honor on this earth.

“God comes to us. He gives Himself to us. Let us see ourselves as one in Him. Let us unite. Let us look at ourselves, all creatures of our beloved God, God, all Holy, all Magnificent, Almighty, all Powerful, and see what He gives us. Let us see ourselves as His creatures and Him as the Creator, and look at ourselves and see how we, and all men, are offending our precious God. As we unite, we beg, beg, with this holy sacrifice of His Son, for mercy. We watch it flow from the Father, in the Holy Spirit, through the font of grace

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and mercy, the pierced Heart of Jesus, through the heart of Mary, by the hands of the priest, who is one with Jesus, to us. We are so joined in such oneness with the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. We have given ourselves to Them. It is here, united to Christ in such oneness, that my sacrifice is received by the loving hands of the Father. It is in this oneness that He pours out His grace. We unite through Him, with Him, and in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, and we beg for mercy as His creatures who have offended our beloved God. This is our gift to You, our beloved Father. As Vatican II says, in union with the priest, we offer the Son to the Father. We give Him the greatest thanks for this holy and living sacrifice. We unite with the whole Church. We ask to be nourished by His Body and Blood, to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and increasingly become one body in Him. We join with Mary and all the saints and constantly plead for help through this sacrifice.

Through this sacrifice may we make peace with You and peace for the salvation of the whole world. We pray in love and faith for your pilgrim Church, for the Pope,

our bishop and all bishops, all clergy and all people. We ask the Father to hear the prayers of His family and ask Him in mercy and love to unite all children the world over. We ask the Father to take all our brothers and sisters that have died, that were good, into heaven. And we pray that we will have the vision of Your glory, through Christ, Our Lord, and we pray through Him, with Him and in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. All glory and honor is Yours, Almighty Father, forever and ever.

“We pray to the Father, with all our hearts and all our love, the ‘Our Father.’ We say every word. We say with such love, ‘Our Father,’ we pray that Thy kingdom comes on earth as it is in heaven. We want this kingdom here, we are all brothers and sisters and God is our Father and we want all men doing His will. We ask to be fed both spiritually and physically every day. We beg to be free from evil and have peace. We ask Him to keep us free from sin and anxiety and hope for His coming. We pray that the kingdom and power and the glory are God’s now and forever. We give to each other peace and we beg for forgiveness and mercy. We are sinful, but we want mercy. We stand. We should shout out to the Father, “Look how sinful we are!” We beg for mercy for our sins and those of all men.

“I experience the action of the Holy Spirit in a special way from the Consecration of the Mass. It fills me with such anticipation to receive Jesus, and I want to be holy. From the Consecration, I give myself to the Father, united in the Holy Spirit, in a special way. Consecrated to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, I experience God. I love the Mass so much. The rest of this book that follows are my experiences during Mass, after Communion, and other times. Many are experiences at Holy Cross-Immaculata Catholic Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. For four months straight I experienced special moments with my beloved Jesus there daily.”<sup>5</sup>

## Thoughts On Prayer

◆ 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 priest-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 surren-

der 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>6</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>7</sup>

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

# New Congregation of Nuns Prays for Priests

There has recently been formed a new congregation of nuns whose purpose is to pray—indeed, live their entire lives—for priests and for vocations to the priesthood. The name of this new congregation is *The Hermits of Jesus the Eternal Priest*.

Here are words from the foundress, Mother Elias, H.J.E.P., concerning their life and purpose: “It has recently come to our attention that many people, priests included, do not truly understand our life as hermits—in a religious community—contemplative—living a radical witness to God’s Presence in the world. One other question that so often has arisen is that of our wearing a color and style of religious habit that people are unaccustomed to seeing. We hope that the following explanation will clarify these points.

“Very simply, we stand as a *sign of contradiction* to the world and its spirit. We cannot follow the values of the world and accommodate to them. We must stand as a constant sign *silently proclaiming the presence of God*. We are set aside, called apart, to a very special vocation as hermit, and for us in particular, *in immolation for the priesthood*.

“In order to understand where we are coming from we ask you to keep in mind Our Holy Father’s words during his last visit to the United States at Giants’ Stadium, ‘I do not speak in words of the world but from the Spirit; not in human terms of human values, but *in spiritual terms of spiritual values*.’

“*The Hermits of Jesus the Eternal Priest* have their origin in the eremitic tradition of monastery life begun by the prophet St. Elias on Mt. Carmel and St. Sharbel, patron of our hermitage. This tradition was revitalized by the life, death and resurrection of the Lord and by the many Christian nuns and monks through the centuries who, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, have followed Christ in solitude, prayer and penance.

“We are an institute wholly ordered to heavenly contemplation and joyful penitence, in a special way for the spiritual welfare of all priests and for vocations to the priesthood. The hermits dedicate themselves to the worship of God in a hidden life within the monastery, a life totally separated from people and the world by the practice of solitude and silence as defined in the Constitution. Our purpose is to live in intimate union with the Most Holy Trinity, talk to Him whom we love, intercede continually for His priests and help them, in their needs, insofar as

this is compatible with our eremitic way of life.

“We do not leave our monastic grounds unless there is a special need to do so. We have the permission of our Archbishop to go to Holy Mass, Confession, Ordinations and First Mass of a new priest and other spiritual functions pertaining to the prayerful support of the priesthood. It is most important in these days, where religious vocations are not encouraged, that the laity see that there do exist in the church today young consecrated souls totally on fire with God’s love and joy.”

For further information, write:

The Hermits of Jesus the Eternal Priest  
P.O. Box 216, North Brookfield MA 01535  
(508) 867-0134

## Spirituality Program for Priests

The Institute for Priestly Formation Announces a Mini-Sabbatical Program for Diocesan Priests, January 5-30, 1998 at the Oratory Center for Spirituality, Rock Hill, S.C. The Institute for Priestly Formation, founded to assist in the spiritual formation of diocesan priests in the Roman Catholic Church, invites diocesan priests to a time of spiritual renewal. Inspired by the biblical-evangelical spirituality of Ignatius Loyola, this program seeks to give diocesan priests a time and place in which they can allow the Holy Spirit to touch their hearts with a deeper experience of his love.

Going beyond programs of continuing education, this program offers a time of spiritual formation intended to help foster the spirituality of diocesan priests. The twenty-six day program features:

- an atmosphere of rest and leisure
- an eight day silent directed retreat
- ongoing spiritual direction
- seminars on: prayer and finding God in everyday busyness, sexuality, celibacy and priestly life; discernment and everyday decisions; the spirituality of diocesan priesthood, personal prayer and liturgical prayer.

Presenters/directors: Rev. George Aschenbrenner, S.J., S.T.L., Rev. Richard Gabuzda, S.T.D., Rev. John Horn, S.J., D. Min., Miss Kathleen Kanavy, M.A., Margaret Schlientz, Ph.D.

The program will be conducted at the Oratory Center for Spirituality, Rock Hill, South Carolina, located just south of Charlotte, N.C. With its cultural and athletic opportunities for leisure, the center is situated on six acres in a residential area of Rock Hill. The grounds, the neighborhood and two nearby parks offer opportunities for meditation, prayer and relaxation. Pool facilities of the local Y.M.C.A., located next door to the Center, are available.

Rooms are single occupancy with private bath. The sabbatical program begins Monday, January 5, 1998 and concludes Friday, January 30, 1998. Cost: \$2,435. Limited financial assistance is available.

For further information, please contact:

Rev. Richard J. Gabuzda, Director  
The Institute for Priestly Formation  
320 N. 20th Street, #1208  
Omaha, NE 68178

Tel 402-449-6384 • Fax 402-280-2423 • E-mail: rgabuzda@creighton.edu

## Act of Consecration

Lord Jesus, Chief Shepherd of the Flock, I consecrate my priestly life to Your Heart, pierced on Calvary for love of us. From Your pierced Heart the Church was born, the Church You have called me as a priest to serve in a most special way. You reveal Your Heart as symbol of Your love in all its aspects,

See *Act of Consecration*, page 8



website: <http://www.shepherds-of-christ.org>  
E-Mail: [info@shepherds-of-christ.org](mailto:info@shepherds-of-christ.org)

MARCH/APRIL 1997 ISSUE

# shepherds of Christ

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## *Act of Consecration*, continued from page 7

including Your most special love for me, whom You have chosen as Your priest-companion. Help me always to pour out my life in love of God and neighbor. Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in You!

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

## Letters

We thank all those who have taken the time to write to us. We very much appreciate your letters. Space limitations permit us to publish only a few of them.

Dear Fr. Carter,

I want to thank you for sending me a copy of *Shepherds of Christ*. This Spirituality Newsletter for Priests contains very nourishing food for priests. Reading through it lifted up my "drooping spirit." May you be blessed in this ministry.

And I have a request: There are 78 Diocesan priests in the Diocese of Darjeeling, India, in the foothills of the Himalayas, working in the remote missions. A copy of *Shepherds of Christ* to each one of them would be very enriching. May I request you to send to me about 80 copies of *Shepherds of*

*Christ* regularly so that I can send each priest in the Diocese a copy.

Thanking you in advance,  
Yours fraternally in the Lord,  
Fr. Thomas DiSouza  
Diocesan Administrator  
Darjeeling, India

My dear Fr. Carter:

Just a short note and a small donation to support the wonderful work you are doing for the Lord. May He bless you and your spiritual ministry to His priests throughout the world. I read all that you have been writing with care and prayer.

In your charity, please remember me and the Church in China.

Fr. Bernard Hwang  
Oregon City, Oregon

## NOTES:

1. Scriptural quotations are taken from *The Jerusalem Bible*, Doubleday & Co.
2. Robert J. Wicks and Robert M. Hanna, *A Circle of Friends*, Ave Maria Press, p. 97.
3. St. Melito of Sardis, as found in *The Liturgy of the Hours*, Catholic Book Publishing Co., Vol II, pp. 458-459.
4. Documents of Vatican II, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, Nos. 47-48, America Press edition.
5. Rita Ring, *The Mass: A Journey Into His Heart*, to be published by Shepherds of Christ Publications.
6. Fr. John Wright, S.J., *A Theology of Christian Prayer*, Pueblo Pub., p. 101.
7. Thomas Merton, *A Thomas Merton Reader*, Thomas P. McDonnell, editor, Doubleday, p. 325.