

FORMATION
OF THE PRIEST

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KEY TO THE SPIRITUAL FORMATION
OF THE PEOPLE

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Introduction to the Conferences

These twelve conferences treat of the priests' spiritual formation as the key to the spiritual formation of the faithful. This subject is of crucial importance to the priest and to the faithful and to the resolution of society's dilemmas. The topic of the first conference is the importance of the proclamation of the Triune God in the present day situation.

This proclamation has been crucial for all epochs. The Triune God is the purpose of our existence, and the substance of the Christian faith. Like the Trinity, in whose image we are made, we are relational and exist in relation to others. This truth is of critical importance for all ages, but our present fast-changing times make the knowledge of the Trinity especially important. Walter Cardinal Kasper, formerly a theologian of Tübingen University, now President of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, said in *The God of Jesus Christ*¹ that the

1 Kasper, Walter. *The God of Jesus Christ*. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1984.

proclamation of the Trinity was important today to combat atheism. He believed that simply proving the existence of God was not an answer to atheism and tended to turn into atheism. It is necessary, he held, to open a discussion with the world on the Trinity, and to help the faithful to enter into its riches. We may say with St. John that if the faithful do so and become one in the unity of the Trinity, the world will accept the Trinity (John 17:20. See also the *Constitution on the Church*, Ch. 1, the last sentence of No.4).

With the fast pace of change while atheism is still with us, a new mind-set arising from the east is engulfing the western world: pantheism and pagan monism. Monism means non-duality and it expresses itself as the New Age religion. According to Monism there is only one reality, the universe. Its oneness is not homogeneous; its parts are inter-related. This universe is divine, and human beings, as parts of it, are divine. The New Age religion seeks to spawn a New World Order in control of all the affairs of human beings. The doctrine of the Trinity is opposed to this pantheism, even if this pantheism wears at times Christian clothes and worships at Christian temples. It affirms that God and the universe are not the same thing, that God is above the universe and has created it out of nothing. According to the Big Bang theory, the universe began with a gigantic explosion. Nothing material existed before this explosion. But since everything that exists has a cause, something spiritual must have preexisted, and this we call God. God alone is an uncaused cause. Instead of our being divine as parts of a divine universe and, as such, able to make our own laws for our behavior, we are subject to God and to His laws if we are to find our true humanity and happiness.

These are then two incompatible worldviews. According to the one, nothing exists except the material. This is an unexpressed philosophic presupposition which clothes itself as science. According to this viewpoint human beings are completely autonomous and owe allegiance to no one but themselves. Everything owes its existence to a purposeless process of evolution. According to the other viewpoint human beings, as all of nature, come from God who has implanted in each kind of thing a nature from which derive the laws by which it exists. In human beings this nature is intelligent, free, and directed to truth and goodness. If there is in fact an evolutionary process, it is purposeful and due to forces implanted by the intelligence which designed the universe, for everything that exists bears witness to intelligent design.

This latter philosophic viewpoint preceded Christianity; it was the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. Christianity adds that the disorder we witness in human beings and in human affairs has its origin in an original Fall, remedied by a Savior, by whose grace human nature is healed, elevated, and divinized. We are divinized by sharing the life of the Trinity as His adopted sons and daughters. Thus, we are not divine by our nature but by grace, given to us, accepted, and received (2 Peter 1:4). We are meant to grow in the life of the three divine persons, so that our entire being and life will be permeated by the divine life, a life-long process of divinization through which we become more human. Knowledge and skills perfect our intellect directly. Our humanity itself, however, is directly perfected by the ensemble of the theological and moral virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit given to us with sanctifying grace. A man or woman, through being prudent, just, courageous, and chaste is more fully human.

These conferences explain this process of divinization and Christ's and the Church's spiritual program by which it is brought about. They are an antidote to the destructive consequences of atheism and pagan monism, by which human beings are considered divine by their very nature as parts of a divine universe, which is all that is. It is urgent that the Church's spiritual program, explained in the documents of Vatican II, particularly in the dogmatic *Constitution on the Church* and in these conferences, be known and practiced so that the evils in which we are entangled, religiously, politically, and socially, may be overcome.

By knowing and following this spiritual formation program, the priest has at his disposal the means of directing and forming the lay people for whom he is responsible. Thus, the ordained priesthood forms the laity as the royal priesthood, which brings into existence a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9).

A kindred subject is the parallel between psychotherapy as an instrument of healing and the divine psychotherapy which promotes human and spiritual growth. Grace heals as well as elevates our nature. Related to this subject is the connection between different schools of psychotherapy and the seven capital sins operating on an unconscious level.

In addition to the spiritual formation of his people, the priest is also called to dialogue with non-Catholics, and this process will be distinguished from the mission of the priest to preach the Gospel to every creature. These conferences also treat of certain contemporary pastoral problems, such as homosexuality, feminism, and the hunger for the transcendent gone astray and needing redirection. The last conference discusses the pole of the transcendent life, the destination to which we are hastening, nowadays called eschatology, formerly the Four Last Things.

Our Incorporation into the Trinity

The Trinity of three divine persons is the inner life of God made known to us uniquely by Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity. We are baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. What the doctrine of the Trinity tells us, over and above the fact that God exists, is that God is a community of three persons, that God is relational, besides being a mystery. Moreover, the Trinity is the model for human existence. It tells us that we are relational, that we exist in community. Finally, as the three persons live in communion with each other, the Trinity shows us that our life must be in communion with other persons. This is not all. Our own happiness, our own purpose for existence, our own fulfillment resides in our incorporation into the life of the Trinity. How this is so is the subject of this conference. The priest is related to the persons of the Blessed Trinity and to Mary.

Undergirding the topic of spiritual formation are the facts that God has out of His superabundant love for us

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revealed Himself to us with the purpose of eliciting from us a response of love. That response is what we call spirituality. God's love has called us to be priests. This call informs our priesthood and makes it worthwhile. We pursue this call by our response of love. We are called to awaken and nourish a response of love in others. We mean by spirituality, not a dimension of the person independent from other dimensions, but that dimension of the person destined to vivify, animate, and include every other dimension of the person and of his activity.

In this conference I wish to set forth the principles underlying our incorporation into the Trinity. As we come to know Jesus, He reveals to us the Father. The Father is implicit in the knowledge of Jesus. The Jews knew from the Hebrew Bible, and from their biblical experience, that God was a father. He was the father of Israel, and the father of their kings. Now a father is a father only when he has a child. Hence, Israel did not, and does not now, know the Father as the Father of a divine Son. That is a truer fatherhood, because a father is truly a father through begetting a person with his own nature.

St. Paul says in Ephesians 3:14, "All fatherhood is named from God the Father." Jesus alone, living in the bosom of the Father as His Son, Image, and Word, knew that the Father had a divine Son, sharing His divine nature, and equal in majesty to Himself. The Father begets the Son eternally, loving Him and giving Him His divine nature. And the Father and the Son love each other eternally, and from their love proceeds the Holy Spirit, the twofold love of God, to whom they give the divine nature. All three have the one divine nature, and they are in each other. "The Father and I are one," and "The Father is in me and

I am in the Father.” In Latin this is called circumincession, in Greek, parachoresis. It is the wonderful mystery of the Trinity, a revelation of the inner life of God, revealed only through Jesus.

Their mutual indwelling is the model of our union with each other and with them. Jesus said, “If you keep my commandments, my Father and I will come and make our abode in you.” Jesus also said, “I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me because they belong to you. All I have is yours and all you have is mine, and in them I am glorified. . . . Holy Father keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us. . . . I pray not only for these but also for those who through their teaching will come to believe in me. May they all be one, just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me. I have made your name known to them and will continue to make it known so that the love with which you loved me may be in them and so that I may be in them.”

Jesus introduces us to His Father. Jesus says, “No one knows the Son but the Father and no one knows the Father but the Son and he to whom the Son reveals Him. “He who sees me sees the Father.” These words reveal who He is; they also reveal His Father. The Father and the Son are within each other, and from their love of each other proceeds the Holy Spirit who unites the Father and Son again – they are united by having the same unique nature, they are united by being the original and His image, and finally they are united in the love of the Holy Spirit.

This has many implications for us. We are called to live in the unity of the three Persons. We know that “In Him

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we live and move and have our being.” And we know the words of Jesus in His priestly prayer related by St. John, to which reference has already been made, “I will, Father, that where we are they also shall be. May they be one as we are one, may your love be in them, and I in them, may they be one in us.” This program the priest should live and teach. The three divine persons dwell in complete unity of nature, correspondence, and love. To be one with each other as the three persons are one, can be realized only by allowing ourselves to be taken into the unity of the three persons.

This can be accomplished only through Jesus. Jesus says, “Remain in me, as I remain in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself, unless it remains part of the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty.” Now how do we remain in Jesus? We are taken into the Trinity through the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. Insofar as we live by these virtues, we live in the Trinity. Living in these virtues is living in Jesus. Jesus has made this clear in His priestly prayer. The apostles are one because they have received the word of Jesus. They are one because they know He is the One sent by the Father, and that He and the Father are one. This word is transmitted to those who believe what the apostles and their successors teach. “I pray not for the world,” Jesus says, “but for these, and also for those who through their word will believe in me.” Faith, faith in Jesus, faith that He and the Father are one is a participation in the divine nature. It is seeing in a dark manner what we will see clearly in the beatific vision. And it is a faith that is not void and empty but that generates love. Jesus prayed

that His Father's love, with which He Himself is loved by the Father, might be in us.

This love is unitive. It unites us with Him and His Father, and it unites us with each other. We human beings have the same divine life if we have the same faith and the same charity. The spiritual life then is a matter of growing in faith, growing in love, and growing in union with the Trinity and with each other. We become less self-centered, and more other-centered. We experience this in the ministry where we serve others, not for our sake, but for theirs, and for the love of Jesus. The more we live by faith and love, the more we live in Jesus and Jesus in us, and the more we are incorporated into the inner life of the Trinity.

Another way of expressing spiritual growth is that it is a purification of our love. We recognize that our motives are mixed. We have more than one reason for doing what we do. Some of these motives may be mutually compatible and supportive. When we give up smoking we may be making a sacrifice for the love of Jesus, but we may also be safeguarding our health. Both are intentions pleasing to the Lord, and are mutually strengthening. The same may be said of motives for giving up saturated fat which clogs the arteries leading to coronary attacks and strokes.

On the other hand, some of our motives may be contradictory, and by purifying them, by rejecting the base alloy in our motivation we strengthen our union with Jesus in love. I may be moved to minister to a woman because she is in need and because she is attractive to me. Insofar as she is attractive to me, I may spend more time with her than ministering to her requires. I am seeking not only her welfare but also my self-centered gratification. In purifying my motives, in rejecting my attempt to gratify myself in this

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pastoral situation, I am increasing my union with Jesus and becoming a better instrument for the accomplishment of the will of Jesus.

Faith increases through prayer, and through activity in accordance with faith. The prayer of petition increases faith. "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief" is the petition to Jesus of the father who desires the cure of his son. Faith is exercised in all prayer because prayer puts us in the presence of God, which itself is an act of faith. Love and hope and all the virtues are exercised in prayer. As a muscle atrophies if it is not used, but grows stronger by use, so it is with faith and prayer. We will speak in more detail about prayer in another conference.

Faith is also exercised in the fulfillment of the duties of our state of life. The priest's priestly ministry increases his faith and spiritual growth, so long as the motive is one of faith and love. And it is his responsibility to purify his motives, as we have explained, so that he is truly acting in genuine other-centered charity. Purification of motives is important. This is also a source of joy to the priest. St. Paul quotes Jesus as saying that it is more blessed to give than to receive. This means that the priest has joy in giving and helping. It does not preclude the priest's receiving in his turn. But it is not a matter of mixing the two. When he is serving, he should serve. There are times when he should permit himself to receive, to be served, consoled, and helped. One way that this is done is by support groups, that is, by priests getting together at intervals, perhaps once a month, discussing their problems, going to a movie, having dinner, helping each other.

I do believe that some persons are on a journey to God during which they fall repeatedly into serious sin, at

least sin that is materially serious, if not fully culpable. But what endears them to Jesus is that they get up each time with a firm purpose of amendment and continue on their way. Eventually when they appear before Him, He will say, "My son, you always pleased me." The astonished person will say, "But what about all those sins?" and Jesus will reply, "Oh, I forget them." To the woman caught in adultery Jesus said, "Has no man condemned thee? Neither do I condemn thee. Go in peace and sin no more."

If we are to be one, there must be no exceptions of persons. Has not Jesus said that His disciples will love their enemies? We must overcome our grievances. Those who irritate us, who frustrate us, who are really not our enemies, shall we not forgive them? There is more to them than the aspect which annoys us. We must meditate on such a person, and consider that he or she has an immortal soul, loved by Jesus, for whom He died. If He can stand that person's behavior, shall not we? So we must forgive them from the bottom of our hearts for the annoyance they cause us, and use this annoyance to obtain graces for them and for ourselves and for others. Their presence is a spur to our fulfilling our redemptive role of suffering gladly for the love of souls. We must learn to cope with our frustrations and our anger, and to turn it to a blessing.

Every cloud, every affliction has a silver lining. The silver lining is the grace that Jesus gives us to accept and offer this annoyance to Him. This does not mean that we should be a doormat. We need not place ourselves in a position or situation in which we will be abused. But when our duty or accident brings such a convergence about, then we must make use of it as a spur to our journey to God, and put it on the paten when we offer Mass. Otherwise, how can we

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unite ourselves at Mass with the sacrifice of Christ? This is also letting Jesus live and act and suffer in us. We might say that it is our willingness to accept the sufferings that life brings us – not that we need seek them—that characterizes us as priests and Christians, and that fulfills our roles as co-victim with Christ in the Mass we offer. Everything good and evil, whatever befalls us, can speed us on our way to our destination, can help us become configured to Christ. St. Paul says, “This temporary tribulation works a weight of eternal glory.”

The other two monotheistic faiths, which stem from Abraham: Judaism and Islam, do not know the mystery of the inner life of God. For Islam, Jesus is a prophet, and this is the most that Judaism knows about Jesus. It is because Jesus is in the bosom of the Father, that He can call Him Abba, that is, Beloved Father, Dad, or Daddy, a term of shocking endearment and intimacy, and it is because we are in Jesus that we can also call the Father Abba, Daddy, or as the communion service of the Mass says, “We dare to say Our Father. . .”

What Jesus wants of us is that by sharing the one faith, the one hope and the same charity, we may be one with each other and one with Him and His Father. This is the union of hearts to which we are all called, all who believe in Jesus. It is by purity as well as by faith, hope, and charity that our hearts can be united, and this is the aim of the spiritual program that the Church proposes to us. This should have priority in our estimation and in our lives. It is by this that Jesus lives in us and acts through us. We are with Jesus one mystical person, each remaining an individual person, but united with each other and with Him in the mystical body of which He is the head. St. Augustine calls this unity “the whole Christ.”

The prayer of Jesus that we be one as He and the Father are one, that the love with which the Father has loved Him may be in us and He in us, gives us the whole program of the spiritual life. It tells us where we are going as well as how to get there. In these conferences I want to draw out what is contained in these words. To be one with each other as Jesus and the Father are one! What a vista! What a project! He and the Father are one in having one nature, not being simply of the same nature, as all of us human beings are, but of one singular nature, something like conjoined twins are physically one and inseparable, although two distinct persons. As we have seen above, this can only be accomplished through grace, and through the theological virtues. By them we share in the divine nature.

Blessed Columba Marmion, whose cause for canonization is under investigation, used to say that what Jesus is by nature, we are by adoption. We are partakers of the divine nature. And it is in sharing that divine nature that we become one. It is a question of our whole being, our life and activities, our thoughts, desires, longings, and actions being absorbed by that divine nature, being activated by the divine nature. That is Christ living in us and acting in us, He who is both God and man. That is being driven by the Holy Spirit as He was. This is what makes possible the fruition of the prayer of Jesus. We can be completely conformed to the divine will; we can be animated by the Holy Spirit, sharing as we do His sanctifying gifts of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord. St. Luke says that Jesus was driven by the Spirit into the desert, where He remained for forty days. The Heart of Jesus was animated by the Holy Spirit. That Spirit is given to us and with Him the virtues He gave to

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Christ are given to us. So much so, that Jesus says that the works He did, and greater works than He did, we will be able to do. Why? Because we will have His Spirit.

St. Paul emphasizes that peace is the bond of unity among us who are called to be one with each other and with Jesus. This peace is given to us by Jesus. "Peace I leave you," He says, "I do not give as the world gives." But we must maintain this peace in ourselves and with others. Our conversation may destroy this peace both within ourselves and with others: by gossip, detraction, backbiting, angry and strident words. We may destroy peace by angry looks and gestures, by our disdain of others, by abruptness with them. We may destroy our own peace by idle conversation, by too much watching of television, by giving way to fantasies and day dreams. We maintain this peace by an appropriate exterior and interior silence. To maintain peace among ourselves we must bear one another's burdens, burdens which may be physical, emotional, temperamental, psychological, behavioral, or spiritual. This somewhat overlapping list calls to mind the types of burdens people carry. If we are to be one, we must not harbor grievances; we must forgive one another. We covenant to do this each time we say the Our Father, at the risk of otherwise not being forgiven by the Father.

A priest I know desires to be a saint. He desires to transcend his temptations and defects. He asks God to take them away. Now ordinarily the way Jesus takes them away is by encouraging us to cope with them, by accepting our limitations humbly and peacefully, and by struggling against the inclinations of our temperaments to anger or illicit pleasure. After falling repeatedly, He desires that we obtain from Him the grace of patience, of long-suffering,

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of fortitude, so that we can live with our temptations without succumbing to them. Yes, Jesus has a better plan. He will diminish our faults and frailties by our cooperation in practicing virtue out of love for Him, and the persistence of our evil inclinations gives us the opportunity for persistent practice of virtue. Thus, our faith, trust, and love increase and with them our incorporation into the Trinity.

CONFERENCE **TWO**

The High Priesthood of Jesus Christ

The subject of this conference is the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ. In this priesthood the ordained priest participates in persona Christi and is called to form the laity as the royal priests summoned to generate a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9). The priest has a special relation to the three divine persons and to the Mother of God. Christ lives in the priest. His Mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, is very specially the mother of the priest. The priest is the son of the Father whom Jesus came to reveal. The priest is animated by the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, who is the master of the spiritual life. Thus the priest is related to the persons of the Blessed Trinity and to Mary.

There is a profound value in discussing the priesthood in relation to the three persons of the Trinity. The Trinity is all-inclusive. In the three persons and the processions, which constitute the second and third persons, we have the inner life of the Trinity. Its outer life results in creation, redemption, and sanctification: the mysteries of Christ, of which we are the ministers.

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There is no antecedent to the Father. The Father is the beginning of everything. One cannot go beyond Him. As we know and preach, of Him the Son is begotten, and the Father and Son breathe forth in their mutual love the Holy Spirit. The incarnate Son has the fullness of the divinity and works our salvation. The Holy Spirit proceeding from the son completes the work of Jesus, always with reference to Him, giving birth to and sustaining the development of the Church and of the disciples who comprise the Church. This, then, is the Trinitarian framework in which I wish to review with you the spirituality of the priest, his ministry and life.

The priest's spirituality, his holiness, renews the priesthood upon which rests the renewal of the Church, the salvation of the world, the healing of the wounds of society, and the spiritual and psychological health of persons. The first sentence of Vatican II's *Decree on the Training of Priests* states, "The council is fully aware that the desired renewal of the whole Church depends in great part upon a priestly ministry animated by the Spirit of Christ." A footnote adds, "It is clear . . . by the will of Christ Himself that the progress of the whole People of God depends in the highest degree on the ministry of priests. This is supported by the statements of the Fathers and of the saints and by a whole series of papal documents."

The priest is Jesus Christ in His salvific role present in the world here and now, at this time and in this place. Without the priest there is no Mass, the sacrifice of Calvary destined to be repeated throughout the world. "In every place a sweet offering is made to my Name" propitiating God for innumerable offenses, reconciling God to man and men to each other, making available the graces

of salvation to the congregation and the world for which it is offered. The Mass can only exist through the priest. Likewise, the assurance of forgiveness, made available in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, depends upon the priest. The world, society, and individuals need these graces for their salvation, healing, and psychological well-being, for grace increases the individual's psychological resources.

The priest makes Jesus Christ present in His passion, death, and Resurrection. He acts in persona Christi in administering the Sacraments, in proclaiming the Gospel, in preaching and teaching. The renewal of the Church depends upon the priest allowing Jesus Christ to live and speak and act through him. If he does this the Church and society will be renewed and there will be a continual flow of priestly vocations. We need holy priests. Holy priests are happy in the priesthood. Happy holy priests attract priestly vocations.

There are many factors working against vocations: single parent families, divorced and remarried parents, pedophilic priests casting a pall over the priesthood, lack of unity in the faith, poor liturgies, priests who are unaware of the desire that candidates for the priesthood have for orthodoxy without rigidity and with pastoral sensitivity. All these factors work against vocations, but are not insuperable if there are holy priests.

The new evangelization is the priest proclaiming and explaining the doctrine of Jesus Christ and persuading, counseling, and helping others and himself to live this doctrine. Both the priesthood of the faithful and the ordained priesthood, which differ in kind, are a participation in the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ and derive their power from His priesthood.

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The first step in placing the priesthood in its relation to the Trinity is taken when we consider who Jesus Christ our High Priest is. The priesthood is related to the Trinity through Jesus Christ and His priesthood. I will follow the teaching of the Church as it was developed through early Councils and as it is taught today, drawing especially on the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas, the common doctor of the Church, and on modern science.

Jesus Christ is High Priest from the moment of His conception. At that moment the Word took into union with Himself a human nature. I wish to pause to consider this very moment. The process of development of a human being begins when a spermatozoon enters an ovum, fertilizing it. This begins the cell divisions that lead to tissue and organ formation. An unfertilized female gamete in the absence of the male gamete may begin to develop, as happens in the case of a frog, because of chemical, electrical, or physical stimulation. In such a case a frog is formed without the benefit of a male principle. This is called parthenogenesis, a word composed of the Greek Parthenon, meaning virgin, and the Latin genesis.

In Mary the Holy Spirit provided this stimulation. The Holy Spirit also provided additional genetic material; otherwise, the result would have been a clone of Mary and a female. Recalling our zoology we remember that in the ovum-bearing cell there are two x-chromosomes. When this cell divides each generated cell has an x-chromosome. In the male gamete there are both x- and y-chromosomes. Spermatozoa formed by cell division carry either an x- or a y-chromosome. If the y-bearing spermatozoon unites with an ovum the result will be a male.

It was necessary then, when Mary's ovum, which was to form the body of Jesus, began dividing through the influence of the Holy Spirit, that a y-chromosome be contributed miraculously. Normally when an ovum is fertilized, having all the DNA necessary to form a human being, the soul is united to this fertilized cell and a human person results. At this point in the case of Jesus' conception, the second person of the Trinity, the Son assumed the conceptus, and the result was a divine person having both a human and a divine nature.

That there is no human person in Jesus, a human personality but not a human person, is defined doctrine. In other words, there are not two persons in Jesus, a human and a divine, contrary to the impression which scripture exegesis and modern Catholic thought sometimes seems to give. When we are in a state of grace we are human persons inhabited by a divine person. As partakers of the divine nature we have two natures, a human and divine. But they are not united in a single person as in the case of Jesus. And the participation we have in the divine nature depends on our being in a state of grace. It can be transient. In Jesus there is a permanent union of the divine and human natures in one person, a divine person.

According to our explanation of Jesus' conception, Jesus would resemble Mary closely since His genetic material came from her, with whatever additions, such as the y-chromosome provided by the Holy Spirit's miraculous action when he overshadowed Mary. We know the belief of both a human and divine person in Jesus as the Nestorian heresy.

In Jesus, His human nature is not immediately united with His divine nature. Such a fusion between the finite and

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infinite would obliterate the finite. Instead, Jesus' human nature is united to the second person of the Trinity, the Son of the Father. A person is the subject of its actions and sufferings. Thus, we do not say that my hand shook your hand, but I, a person, shook hands with you, a person. If we are struck in the face by a blow we say, I was struck in the face by the blow. The person suffered the blow. To repeat, the person is the subject of actions produced or suffered. Hence, since Jesus is a divine person, what He in His human nature did and suffered was done and suffered by the divine person who is God. Let me put it this way. If Jesus smiles at you it is God who is smiling at you. If Jesus appears and embraces you it is God embracing you. It would seem that a human person is smiling at you or embracing you. This is the quite understandable stumbling block of those who do not believe that Jesus is the Son of God. And if Jesus was struck, as He was in the passion, it is God who was struck. The person is the subject of what he does or suffers. This means that whatever Jesus did or suffered had an infinite value. It also excludes any inappropriate or sinful action on the part of Jesus, because God does not act inappropriately and does not sin.

St. Thomas explains that while Jesus is like us in all things but sin, as St. Paul affirmed, He is also exempt from certain defects that follow upon sin, while not exempt from others. He could and did experience cold, hunger, fatigue, and death. But He did not have a fallen human nature. He had the beatific vision from the moment of His conception. Karl Rahner admitted this but preferred not to call this vision beatific which implied for him that Jesus was not on the way but had arrived. For St. Thomas He both was on the way as a human being and, since His human

nature was the nature of a divine person, He had arrived. St. Thomas also holds that Jesus had infused knowledge. Both Rahner and Thomas agree that Jesus grew in experiential knowledge.

The importance of attributing infused knowledge to Jesus is that by this knowledge He knew particulars which were beyond the grasp of His senses and experience. He knew each of us. Scripture says that Jesus knew what is in man. Scripture again and again tells us that He knew what was transpiring in the minds of men, both His disciples and adversaries. He knew also what was to befall Him and warned the apostles about it. By infused knowledge He saw, during the agony of Gethsemane and on the cross at Calvary, all our sins, and made them His own. But He also saw our repentance and the amendment of our lives. About this Pius XII said, "He who loves will understand."

As Adam and Eve before the fall had original justice so also did Jesus, and also Mary, in virtue of her immaculate conception. This means that their imaginations, reminiscences, and emotions were subject to their intelligence and wills. In a human nature deprived of original justice, such as we all have, the imagination and emotions can rebel against the will bringing to mind thoughts and feelings that are unwanted. While Jesus' emotions had their proper role in His nature and could be moved by His experiences, they were not moved beyond His rational control. This is something that Martin Scorsese, dependent as he was on a scriptural exegesis unguided by systematic theology did not understand in producing his film "The Temptation of Jesus."

Dogma and systematic theology, theology from above, can help us to know the limits of what we can posit of Jesus

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in our speculations and meditations. Through Catholic dogma we know that while Jesus was like us in all things except sin, nevertheless, we cannot posit what contradicts His nature as God or His nature as man. It is through systematic theology that we know that Jesus had original justice and although He made himself sin and took upon Himself all our sins to annihilate them, He did not have certain defects that follow upon sin.

Since death is the separation of soul and body, Jesus' death was real. His soul and body were truly separated while He was in the tomb. But His soul was the soul of a divine person. His body was the body of a divine person, even the dead body of a divine person. In other words, when Jesus took a human nature it was breakable in one sense and unbreakably united to His divine person, and likewise His body was unbreakably united to His divine person. This is the astounding paradox: while Jesus lay dead in a tomb, God was both life itself and dead.

In this century, and especially since Vatican Council II, the importance of the laity and of women in particular and the essential role that they play in the Church and society has become increasingly evident. *Lumen Gentium* teaches that the apostolic role of the laity stems, not from the hierarchy, but from the sacraments of initiation: baptism, and confirmation. The initiative for this role proceeds from the laity themselves under the inspiration of grace. As Jeremiah said, "This is the covenant that I will make with the House of Israel when those days have come, Yahweh declares. Within them I shall plant my Law, writing it on their hearts. Then I shall be their God and they shall be my people. There will be no further need for everyone to teach neighbor or brother, crying 'Learn to know Yahweh!'

No, they shall all know me, from the least to the greatest" (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Nevertheless, it is the priest who must form the laity so that they may play this role as royal priests destined to form a holy nation (1 Peter 2:9-10) See also Apoc. 1:6, 5:9-10).

The renewal of the Church depends upon the priest being Jesus Christ, thinking like Jesus Christ, speaking like Jesus Christ, and acting like Jesus Christ. The priest must allow Jesus Christ to live and speak and act through him. If he does this the Church and society will be renewed and there will be no shortage of priestly vocations. We do not need married priests to overcome the shortage of vocations, we need holy priests. That is why we are here in this seminar, myself included. And what is the new evangelization but the priest proclaiming and explaining the doctrine of Jesus Christ and persuading, counseling, and helping others and himself to live this doctrine?

How will this come about in us? We do not need to invent this doctrine. "No, the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe" [Deuteronomy 30:14 NRSV]. The Church offers us this doctrine through its pastors, its saints and, in our day, particularly through the Catechism of the Catholic Church. What we must do is possess it. Possessing it and living it - that is spirituality. That is why the spirituality of the priest is so important. It is by his spirituality that the priest allows Christ to live in him, to speak in him, and to accomplish the Father's will which is the well-being of individuals, the Church, and society. Insofar as the priest is wanting in spirituality, in holiness, all that he is destined to be and to do is flawed, without prejudice however to the validity and sanctifying power of the sacraments which he administers.

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There is no substitute, no alternative to priestly holiness. The priest must become holy. If the salt loses its savor it is good for nothing but to be trampled upon by men. And women can do a very good job in trampling on the salt that has lost its savor – the priesthood that is not holy.

The dedication of the priest to Christ and his availability to the people is signified by his choice of celibacy. The priest freely chooses celibacy after mature deliberation extending over several years. It is chosen for the sake of the kingdom. “Let him who can take it, take it,” says Jesus. Celibacy would be next to impossible to maintain but for grace. It is a gift of God to the Latin Church.

For a time after the Council, which rightly extolled married life, it was held that celibacy even for the sake of the kingdom is not superior to the married state. The value of marriage in human development was appropriately promoted, but celibacy was inappropriately demoted. This came at a time of many destabilizing changes in the Church and in society and contributed to the loss of many priestly vocations. The supposed superiority of marriage to celibacy in human development, and the placing of marriage on a par with celibacy in the pursuit of holiness was not the teaching of the Council. In the *Decree on the Training of Priests* the traditional doctrine is clearly stated: celibacy for the kingdom is a special grace, exceeding the grace of marriage. This does not mean that married people may not be holier than celibate priests. All are called to the same holiness. The Latin priest is given a special means making him especially available to the people and witnessing to the life to come, but how well he uses this grace depends upon him. We all experience failures in putting ourselves at the disposal of others. We remain to a degree

self-centered, some of us more than others, some part of the time or all of the time, some decreasingly as we make spiritual progress. Similarly, a married person may fail to be centered on the spouse and children, at some times, or all of the time, or decreasingly as they make spiritual progress. A Catholic, having the fullest means for holiness available to him or her, may be inferior in grace to a non-Catholic who is more faithful in the use of the means available to him to love God and others.

The priest partakes of the ministry of bishops, who are the successors of the Apostles, and has an apostolic vocation. In this vocation, like the bishop, he is Teacher or Prophet, Priest, and Ruler or Leader. As a leader he is a minister putting his services at the disposal of his people, ordering all the ministerial activities available to him to their benefit. As a prophet or teacher he delivers the teaching of Christ as taught in the Church by his words and by his example. By preaching he gathers together the people of God and leads them to holiness. As a priest he administers the sacraments which are the keys to the kingdom, on a regular basis the sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist. All his activities are ordered to the Eucharist which the Council calls the summit and center of the Christian life. This order is expressed in the *Decree of Priestly Ministry and Life* in this way: "Through the ministry of priests, the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful is completed in union with the sacrifice of Christ, the only mediator, which in the Eucharist is offered through the priests' hands in the name of the whole Church in an unbloody and sacramental manner until the Lord comes. The ministry of the priest is directed to this and finds its consummation in it. For their ministration which begins in the announcement of the Gospel,

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draws its force and power from the sacrifice of Christ and tends towards this." Here we have the acknowledgment firstly, of the importance of preaching through which faith comes and through which the people of God are gathered and sanctified, and secondly, of the source of the power of this preaching, namely, the sacrifice of Christ and the Eucharist. This declares the subordination of preaching to the Eucharist. Preaching leads to the Eucharist where the unity of the people of God is perfected.

The priest remains a human person with all the frailty of a human being. This will be taken into account in these conferences. As a helpmate he is given in a special way the Blessed Virgin Mary. As we know, all the privileges and graces accorded the Blessed Virgin Mary were in view of God's choice of her to be His Mother. As His Mother she was His close collaborator. In fact, chapter 8 of *Lumen Gentium*, which is entirely devoted to Mary, points out that she was the associate of Christ. This means that she was His associate in the work of the redemption. As the Bride of the Holy Spirit, who overshadowed her at the moment of the Incarnation, she also is the collaborator of the Holy Spirit in the work of sanctification. *Lumen Gentium* refers to the patristic texts about Mary in which she is called the second Eve as Christ is the second Adam. As such, she is the mother of all humankind bringing them spiritual and eternal life, the life won for them by her Son. However much we glorify Mary, and she herself said that all generations would call her Blessed, a prophecy fulfilled in the Church, we know that she is a creature. We know that her graces were won for her by the foreseen passion and death of her Son, as the decree of the Immaculate Conception states. To the question why Jesus had to suffer and die,

we can say He did so that His Mother might be conceived immaculately and receive the graces to accompany Him in His life, work, death, and Resurrection. There is one Mediator between God and man and that is Jesus Christ. But by the wonderful condescension of the Father we are all called to participate in His work, and the first in doing so is the Blessed Virgin Mary. We are all co-redeemers, and Mary is the first.

Modern exegesis calls our attention to Mary's role also as Christ's disciple. As St. Luke says in his gospel, Mary kept all these things in her heart and pondered on them. They informed her life and activity. A mother has a special sensitivity to the child of her womb and this was especially true of Mary. The more so that Jesus' genes, his hereditary make-up as a human being, came from Mary with the exception of what was supplied miraculously by the Holy Spirit. The bond between them was especially close. There was nothing to prevent the Son of God, as He was being carried for nine months in Mary's womb, from conversing with her as she meditated on the Annunciation, His coming to be in her womb, and her carrying and nourishing Him. Moreover, Mary was a Jewish maiden with intelligence entirely purified of dullness by her Immaculate Conception. Hence, she was especially enlightened in the Jewish scriptures, particularly as it was her function as well as that of Joseph of introducing Jesus in His humanity to them. She would have known how to find her Son in the Hebrew Scriptures who is hidden there, as the fathers say.

Lumen Gentium tells us that Mary's faith, hope, and charity is an example for us, and that she is herself a type of the Church. Meditating on her we can advance in the knowledge of Christ. It is clear to us that Mary is not, as

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many Protestants think, an obstacle to union with Christ for Catholics. An astute Presbyterian minister who is also a professor of Philosophy at Princeton, Diogenes Allen, in his book *Temptation* says that for the orthodox Mary is the Mother of God, for Catholics she is the Blessed Virgin Mary, but for Protestants she is an embarrassment. They don't quite know what to do with her. They know that she is the Mother of Jesus, and they know the texts of St. Luke about her. But they have been derailed in their understanding of her by the polemic set up by Protestantism about her, and the supposed idolatry of Catholics in worshipping her. This opinion is not universal among Protestants. The father of a good friend of mine was the Anglican Rector of a church in Brooklyn titled Saint Mary. Other examples, including Protestant writings, will come to your minds.

The truth is, as Blessed Grignion de Montfort explains in his book *True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*, Mary was entirely devoted to Jesus as Jesus was to the Father. If one were to glance into Mary's heart at any moment, one would find it occupied with her divine Son. Devotion to Mary leads us to be centered on Jesus, and when we think of Jesus, Mary has done her work in us, and this is her entire desire.

When I became a Catholic in adulthood my first concentration was on Jesus, but very soon I was drawn to Mary, and within a couple of years of my baptism I made the consecration to her explained by de Montfort. This has in no way interfered with my being centered on Jesus. Similarly, when one is centered on Jesus one comes to recognize that Jesus' heart, aflame by the Holy Spirit, is centered on His Father, and this leads us to a filial devotion to the Father. This becomes a mystical cycle as the

Father directs us to the Holy Spirit who in turn has all that He is and has from the Son, and who directs us to understand the words and person of the Son.

Not everyone is swept up in this mystical cycle. But it has a work to do in completing the upbringing never completed by our parents. The natural defects in our devotion to our mother and father are overcome by our devotion to Mary, to Jesus, and to the Father.

We tend to view Mary according to our dispositions towards our mothers, and to the Father according to our dispositions towards our fathers. And these dispositions can be purified and healed by the recognition of Mary's motherhood of us and the Father's solicitous care of us. This occurs through prayer and reflection. These healing truths will be touched upon in these conferences

Now if Mary is the mother of Christ, and if the priest is another Christ, then Mary is in a special way the mother of the priest. Truly, she is the mother of everyone but especially of those who share the faith in her Son, those who are members of His body and particularly those who are his priests, and we may add among His priests, His bishops and the Pope. As the mother of the priest, she has a special affection for him even if he is wayward. True mothers never give up on their children, and Mary is close to her wayward priest sons, to draw them back to devotion to her Son and to their mission of being the light, love, and joy of her Son and of His people. Thus, in his darkest moments the priest can rely on Mary for her protection and help. This will help him to return to or remain in the solid doctrine of the Church, to abide in charity, and to dwell within, with the indwelling Jesus, the source of his apostolic activity.

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In this conference we have spoken of the necessity for the renewal of Church and society, of the renewal of the priesthood, such that the priest allows Jesus to live and act in and through Him and becomes his beloved and dear companion, the love of his heart. And we have spoken of the helpmate given the priest in the Mother of Jesus, who is especially the mother of the priest.

CONFERENCE **THREE**

The Sacrament as Participation in the Trinity

The subject of this conference is 1) the sacraments, particularly the sacrament of reconciliation and the Eucharist, and 2) Eucharistic spirituality, which is the key to priestly spirituality.

Our participation in the Trinity through the theological virtues and the sacraments is the work of the Holy Spirit. Its understanding is not only helpful for us priests, but also for the spiritual formation of the laity. In this conference we will consider how the sacraments give us a participation in the Trinity, and how this helps us to make spiritual progress, and to advance to contemplation.

Baptism introduces us to the life of the Trinity. Confirmation strengthens us in this life so that we can bear witness to the Trinity. Penance removes the obstacles to our dwelling in the Trinity, and through the Eucharist we are intimately united with the life of the Trinity. By ordination to the priesthood we are configured more completely to Christ, who is Himself the Image of the Father.

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The value of the Sacrament of Reconciliation is illustrated by the experience of Alcoholics Anonymous as related in the so-called Blue Book. In this program of holiness the spiritual experience does not come in the third step, in which, having recognized one's powerlessness to control one's addictions, and having recognized a power greater than oneself through which this control may be attained, one turns one's heart and life over to this power, namely to God. Nor does the spiritual experience normally occur when one makes a moral inventory of one's past, that is, an examination of conscience and resolves to make amends to the extent possible. Rather, it occurs when one tells another person the results of one's moral inventory which, in the case of a Catholic, is ordinarily done by confession to a priest. Here, then, one experiences God. For this spiritual experience it is not enough to turn one's life and will over to God, nor to make a moral inventory and regret one's failings. The experience of AA as expounded in the Blue Book reveals that it occurs in the one-to-one telling of one's faults and failings to another person. This helps us understand both the psychological basis for individual confession and its supernatural effectiveness.

A devout Catholic layman told me that Protestants had an advantage over Catholics. They could tell their sins to God and that was the end of them. The Catholic had, in addition, to tell his or her sins to a priest. It is really the Catholic who has the advantage. When we tell our sins to God in the privacy of our hearts, we may not be as careful in examining our conscience. We may not have true contrition or purpose of amendment. We may regret them for imperfect but good motives such as the fear of Hell or the desire for Heaven, but not because we have offended

a loving divine father whose Son has given His life and blood for love of us. On the contrary, in preparing to tell another person or a priest we must formulate with more care our confession, examine our conscience more carefully to do so, and even if our motives are imperfect our sins are absolved, and we have the assurance that they are absolved. True, if we have sorrow for our sins because they offend God who is so good, they are forgiven, but the obligation to tell them to a priest remains and gives us further assurance of forgiveness. This explains why the Church only allows general confession, where many are absolved without confessing their sins, in extraordinary circumstances. That is, circumstances where the penitents would be “deprived of sacramental grace or holy communion for a long time through no fault of their own” (c.961.2). In these cases the Church makes the validity of the confession depend on whether the persons “at the same time intend to confess individually the serious sins which at present cannot be confessed (c.962.1). Many lay people may be trapped in their sins by not understanding this, and by not being properly informed by priests who desire to make things easy for them. The conditions for validity of the absolution in general confession should be explained (c.962.2).

This desire to make things easy for the laity explains why in many parishes the whole congregation goes to receive but not many go to confession, even over a period of years. Father Hardon explained to a congregation that those who were cohabitating, those who were in a second marriage without the first being annulled, those who had committed adultery, those who missed Mass on Sundays, should not receive. Only half the congregation went to receive. Those

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who mistakenly go to receive in the conditions which Fr. Hardon explained, conditions that require abstinence from communion, do not grow through receiving the Eucharist. Their sin in receiving under those conditions may be mitigated or excused because of ignorance or improper and bad instruction, e.g., a failure of the priest to observe c.962.2 mentioned above.

Besides a better preparation for confession and a greater assurance of forgiveness when one goes to individual confession, such as the Church requires even when general absolution is rightly performed, there is the advice of the priest and the opportunity for him to explain what is required of the person. For example, a retreatant who was in an invalid second marriage and who abstained for this reason from going to communion asked what he had to do to go to communion and whether he could be absolved from his sins. It was explained to him that either he had to live with his wife as brother and sister, the internal forum solution, or else place his first marriage before a marriage tribunal to see if it had been valid. With a decree of nullity he could then have his second marriage blessed and receive communion. At a general absolution, this man would not have been given the advice he needed.

It is the great and unique privilege of the priest to confer the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In it he is acting in *persona Christi*, that is, Christ Himself is acting in and through the priest in giving the absolution, just as he is acting through the priest in the words of consecration of the Mass to bring about the transformation of the bread and wine. Moreover, in this sacrament the priest has the opportunity to give advice and guide the penitent into greater union with Jesus for the penitent's and the Church's

welfare. There is a ripple effect. Insofar as the penitent becomes a better person he is influencing others with whom he comes in contact to become better, as well as bringing grace down upon others of whom he is unaware. In hearing confessions, it is good for the priest to murmur the sacred name of Jesus or that of Mary, invoking their light, that he may see beyond the words of the penitent what his or her situation is and what he should say to help him or her, confident that Jesus and Mary are most desirous of responding. In fact, it is from them that the priest's desire to help the penitent comes.

As we know, sufficient matter for the absolution is any sin committed since baptism. Even current temptations which are not sins are fruitfully mentioned in the confession, since sometimes that is sufficient to rid the penitent of these temptations. This is not magic, but the operation of the grace of Christ who appreciates humility. The confession of past sins helps to heal and strengthen the penitent. The temptation of venial sins is sufficient matter for confession and these "confessions of devotion" have a healing power. As priests realize, scrupulous people profit by the confessor insisting on obedience, and also advising against general confessions where they arise out of scrupulosity. Holy priests like St. Philip Neri and the Cure of Ars have spent long hours hearing confessions. St. Philip Neri himself went to confession daily. They realized how beneficial this sacrament is. We priests can help not only persons, but society too by encouraging frequent confession.

There is an international Catholic woman preacher who knows how to do this, and at her services there may be as many as seven priests hearing confessions of almost the entire congregation, including people who have not

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gone to confession for decades, as well as people who are engaged in Church work. This is a gift from God, for which priests should pray, and be willing and eager to exercise.

Dr. Karl Menninger, founder of the famous Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas, wrote a book entitled *Whatever Became of Sin?* The loss of the sense of sin, the lack of confessors, of penitents, and of people who have the humility to go to one-on-one confession is the bane of our society. With the loss of the sense of sin goes the loss of any purpose of amendment for wrongful behavior. This is what Scripture calls hardness of heart. "Today if you hear the voice of God, harden not your heart," says the psalmist, and these words are addressed to the priest in the liturgy of the hours. He must put the welfare of others above his own convenience and be what he is called, a priest of God, and alter Christus, ready and glad to administer the sacraments which are the keys to Heaven but also to a fruitful life.

With the loss of the sense of sin and of amendment of life go all the sins which afflict families and society: fornication, adultery, abortion, illegitimacy, parental neglect-especially on the part of fathers, drug and alcohol addictions, abuse of children, and violence. Here we see why the renewal of the priesthood is needed for the renewal of society. A concerted effort on the part of holy priests united in the teaching, discipline, and service of the Church and of the faithful is what is necessary. It is up to each one of us to do our part in fulfilling our priestly calling.

The Father has sent Jesus to call us to a wedding feast. But for a wedding feast one must be suitably attired. That is the purpose of the Sacrament of Reconciliation – to clothe the invited guests with grace. First, Jesus calls His servants

whom He has washed clean with the water of Baptism and with His blood in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and has fortified by His word, His teaching. Thus, He has dressed them with faith, hope, and charity and the assemblage of virtues, held together in the bond of peace. Then He sends these servants, His priests, out to call others to this wedding banquet by their preaching and by the administration of the sacraments.

As priests we must teach the faithful that the banquet on earth, the Eucharist, is the prototype of the heavenly banquet which lasts forever. In the Eucharist we banquet on the flesh and blood of our Savior. He says to us, "Unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood you will not have life in you. But he who eats my body and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." This is the banquet that makes us one with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and that makes us one with each other forming the Christian community. As *Lumen Gentium* of Vatican II says, the people of God are called into the unity of the Trinity.

This banquet is a sacrifice whose victim is consumed. Christ Himself, the High Priest, offers the unbloody sacrifice using the instrumentality of a priest. The victim is the victim slain on Calvary. The death of Jesus is shown forth by the separate consecration of His Body and His Blood accomplished by Jesus' own words in the institution narrative. Body and Blood consecrated separately show forth sacramentally the death of Jesus. The second person of the Trinity is fully present under each species.

In the death which occurred on Calvary the dead body of Jesus was still hypostatically united with the person of the Word, indestructibly, as also the soul of Christ

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was indestructibly united with that same Word. Death was the separation of body and soul, but each remained the body and soul of the Word and their reunion was His Resurrection. And it is this resurrected Jesus who comes to merge His total being with the total being of the communicant in a feast of love. This is a true union in which the whole of Jesus in His humanity and divinity merges with the humanity of the communicant. This merging was shown forth in type in the Old Testament by Elijah who raised the dead son of the widow of Sareptha by lying upon him, his mouth pressed against the boy's mouth, his chest upon his chest, body upon body (1 Kings 17:21 NRSV). This is the image of Jesus endowing us with true life, His life, by merging His body with our body in communion.

While the persons of the Trinity are really distinct, they are not separable. When Jesus comes onto the altar at the words of consecration His Father and the Holy Spirit are also present. Jesus has said that He is in the Father and the Father is in Him. Where they are the whole court of Heaven is also present. That is why, even when the priest celebrates Mass privately, it is such a great event. Besides Heaven being present, the whole Church, the mystical body of Christ is present.

Jesus pours His whole life: His living, dying, and rising into the Mass. He does so not only because this is the greatest thanksgiving that can be given to His Father, but also to unite us with this thanksgiving so that it may become our thanksgiving, our prayer, our offering, and our communion with Him. That is why the priest should offer this sacrifice and enter into this communion daily, as the greatest act he can perform. And we must teach the faithful that they are members of the royal priesthood, called

to offer their entire life and all that they are and have together with the priest in the sacrifice of the Mass, and to receive the Jesus who comes to merge their lives with His, and them with each other, to form the unity of the Church. This is why Pope Benedict XVI can say that the Eucharist is the Church.

In the ordination of a priest he is admonished to imitate what he performs. This is Eucharistic spirituality. To prepare to celebrate the Eucharist we must follow the example and teaching of Christ who said, "Take up your cross daily and follow me" (Luke).

The secret of advancing in the spiritual life – we either advance or go backward – is abandonment and detachment, two aspects of the same act. This is what the Eucharist teaches, for in it Jesus has placed His dying and His rising. We die by abandonment and detachment and arise to true peace of heart and a genuine love of Jesus and of people. Abandonment is a trusting delivering of ourselves into the hands of God, giving up to Him our life and our will. The third step of Alcoholics Anonymous is to turn one's life over to a power greater than oneself, recognizing one's own powerlessness (humility) and that there is a power greater than oneself (confidence). The Mass teaches us abandonment and detachment. This is the spirituality of the Eucharist.

CONFERENCE **FOUR**

Eucharistic Spirituality

The subject of this conference is Eucharistic spirituality. Eucharistic spirituality teaches us abandonment and detachment and the virtues dear to the Heart of Jesus. The Eucharist is more fruitful when we approach it with these dispositions. We receive from the Eucharist as much as we are open to receive. We offer it in union with Jesus Christ in the degree of our union with Him.

All the virtues work together and grow together, and each has its special role to play in the unfolding of our potentialities. The Eucharist teaches us the obedience of Jesus Christ, and it teaches us how to respond with the response that Jesus gave. He always did the will of His Father, and He was obedient unto death even the death of the Cross. Supernatural obedience is obedience to God and His will as perceived by a right judgment, that is, by prudence, and offered through the love of God. It is distinguished from an undue and unthinking dependence, from an indiscriminate desire to please, and from a wish to win someone's favor.

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Supernatural obedience and humility go together. One can be obedient only if one is humble, and if one is humble one will be obedient. The Old Testament tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Now this fear of the Lord is a filial reverence for Him. And this reverence is at the root of supernatural obedience.

The monk and the diocesan priest are in different situations. The monk is in a situation where his Abbot and the Rule govern the details of his life. St. Benedict says the monk wishes to live under a Rule and an Abbot. His response is obedience. On the other hand the diocesan priest is in a situation where he must exercise a great deal of independence. As a pastor, or as a pastor's associate, he is not only a teacher and dispenser of the sacraments, but also a leader. This is expressed in the documents of Vatican II by calling the priest a prophet, priest, and king. Of course as a ruler he is a Christian ruler, following the Lord's instructions, "The gentiles make their importance felt, but with you it shall not be so. He who is greater must be the least." The priest is a servant of his people, but he must exercise much judgment. St. Thomas compares the diocesan priest and the monastic priest by saying that the monastic priest is like a pilot on a ship in the harbor, whereas the diocesan priest is like a pilot in mid-ocean. There are storms in mid-ocean. The diocesan priest must exercise much more prudence and virtue than the monastic priest.

Nevertheless, the necessity of obedience and humility holds for all states of life. It is a Christian imperative and the bedrock of the Christian life. Ultimately it is always God that is being obeyed, and there is no lessening of human dignity in submitting to an infinitely wise, all-powerful, and all-good God. Faith shows God acting through the

Church, through superiors in the Church, and through the discipline of the Church.

The laity, in addition to obedience to the teaching and precepts of the Church, may consider as an obedience rendered to Jesus Christ their fidelity to the duties of their state of life, including the work they do in keeping with their contract with their employer. It is Christ's will that we be faithful to the duties of our state of life. St. Paul says that all authority is from above. Where this authority enjoins sin, then one obeys God rather than man. St. Peter and St. John said to the Sanhedrin when instructed not to preach in the name of Jesus, "Consider whether it is good for us to obey you or God."

In our obedience as priests we unite ourselves with Christ in His obedience and we offer this obedience to the Father in every Mass. We must teach the people to do likewise. Thus, we will have the humility of Christ.

Humility is not the first of the virtues, but it is a virtue especially enjoined upon us by Christ. "Learn of me," He tells us, "for I am meek and humble of heart." He adds, "and your hearts will have rest." St. Paul explains in his letter to the Philippians that Jesus, being in the form of God, humbled Himself taking on the form of a slave and was obedient, even to the death of the Cross. Now humility and obedience are found in true greatness of character in all cultures. In the ancient Greek high culture that produced Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle humility appears as the virtue that offsets hubris, which is pride. But I think you will agree that neither humility nor obedience has a good press today.

Jesus lived in a more pastoral setting than ours, but nevertheless He had a very sensitive nature and was keenly

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aware of resistance to grace, unjust opposition, the oppression of the poor, and the hardness of heart of those around Him, traits which are not absent from our contemporaries. His senses and emotions were assailed. The gift of integrity by which his emotions were obedient to his will did not mean that they were not aroused, and even at times aroused to a disturbing extent. It is my opinion that when He prayed "the prayer of God," sometimes all night, as the evangelists tell us, His consciousness was filled with the presence of His Father. Jesus realized that He and the Father were one, yet also that His human nature, like ours, was a gift. "What have you," St. Paul asks, "that you have not received?" Jesus knew that of Himself in His human nature He was nothing, and I believe that in the "prayer of God" He abided before the Father in His nothingness, like St. Francis who spent the night exclaiming, "My God and My All." Abiding in this prayer, there was nothing in His human emotions or imagination, nothing of the day's sensations and emotions, to hold Him back from being totally present to His Father. His emotions could subside, together with the memories, as clouded water standing still for some time becomes clear water.

Our imagination and emotions, as well as our sense of who we are, can place obstacles in the way of the presence of God. If we recognize that we are nothing before God, then there is nothing in the way of His being entirely present, invading every cranny of our consciousness. This is the prayer of humility. From it easily arises the prayer of Gethsemane, "Father not my will but Thine be done." So humility is the basis of obedience which allows the human will to become one with the divine will for the divinization of the human nature.

Such dispositions make it easier to see our attachments. We readily attach ourselves to persons, things, places, to what gives us pleasure and bolsters our self-esteem. Attachment unites its object to us in the same way that our limbs are united to our body. To detach ourselves it is like severing a limb. But detachment is not lovelessness, it is not indifference. The holy indifference of St. Ignatius is an ardent love of God which brooks no interference. Detachment is simply getting rid of the disorder of our love so that our love may be complete. We detach from that to which we are inordinately attached. Such attachments can be the love of sin or of occasions of sins – persons, places, or things that we know if we frequent we will fall into sin. Like the Irishman, and it happens to all races and peoples, who went by the tavern without so much as a glance. When he reached the bridge ahead of him he looked back and said, “Any man who can do that, deserves a drink.” Or like the panhandler who said to the passerby, “Have you got a quarter? I’m sober and it’s terrible!”

By detaching ourselves from the occasion of sin, hard as it is, we have more security of soul, more peace. It is hard, because to the attached person occasions of sin look like opportunities, and who wants to give up an opportunity? But this apparent opportunity leads us in the wrong direction and we will have to reverse our path.

Each daily Mass reminds us to join our lives with Christ and to teach the faithful to join their lives with Christ. He laid down His life for us that we might have the fullness of His peace and joy and an increase of eternal life. Our attachments provide us with the opportunity to offer something finite in exchange for the infinite – an increase of eternal life, of a life that begins now and, if we will, lasts forever.

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St. Thomas Aquinas prayed, “My God, grant me to ardently desire all that is pleasing to you, to prudently examine it, to truthfully acknowledge it, and to faithfully fulfill it.” There is no moral virtue, neither humility, nor fortitude, nor patience, nor justice without prudence. Humility empties us of all the obstacles to God’s grace, and prudence directs the use of God’s grace which fills us. It is because no one is a good judge in his own case that we lay out our attachments in confession or spiritual direction and receive advice. Scripture says do everything with counsel and you will not regret it. But first of all, let us seek advice in prayer and be open to the impulse of the Holy Spirit and the example of Christ. What good advice does is to second and support the instinct within us. This light and impulse within us to do what is right and pleasing to God often has to contend with opposing desires and thoughts. But it is strengthened and clarified by sound advice. St. Benedict repeats Scripture, “Do everything with counsel and you will not regret it.”

There is the prudence of the flesh, the prudence of the world, and the prudence of Christ. Christ exhorts us, “Be simple as doves and clever as serpents.” The prudence of Christ is not weakness, laxity, or compromise. Prudence is discernment, it discerns the origin of our impulses, whether they are from above, below, or just from human nature. Another name for prudence is discretion. Discretion chooses moderation but not a compromise. It chooses a restraint from going to unhealthy extremes. The beauty of human actions lies in their being done in accordance with right reason and faith. We should love God without measure, but we need to act with measure and with common sense. St. Benedict’s Rule is noted for its discretion and

moderation. He exhorts the Abbot to so do all things that the strong have something to strive for, and the weak are not discouraged by being overburdened. He also advises the Abbot to respect the difference in temperaments and capacities of his monks, and to treat them accordingly. The spiritual director must avoid imposing his own devotions and views on those he directs, but regard their attractions, capacities, and bent.

Detachment is a term that emphasizes the giving up of what hinders abandonment and conformity to the divine will. Disorder in our love depreciates it, and to some extent negates it or directs it wrongly, so that our love of God is impaired. This blinds us, weakens us, fatigues us, whereas detachment frees us, gives us new energies, opens our eyes to the truth, and puts our life in harmony with the will of God who wills our truest and longest lasting happiness.

Attachments often flow from the seven capital sins, which are tendencies rooted in our nature. But because of the fallen state of our human nature, they are disordered. But as unconscious tendencies they affect our thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Depth psychology has as its purpose to expose these unconscious tendencies. God's psychotherapy does this better.

These tendencies arise from human nature itself and are initially good. For example, nutrition is important to us and God has attached a pleasure to eating to facilitate our nourishing ourselves. Likewise, the propagation of the race is important to the survival and growth of the human race, and to it God has attached the pleasure of sex. It is important that we understand our worth as human beings, as persons, and so we have a natural esteem for ourselves. But because of our fallen human nature these tendencies

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are disordered inclining more or less to our detriment. When chosen they are sins, the capital sins.

As unconscious, these tendencies are the matter of depth psychiatry. For example, Karen Horney's *Neurosis and Human Growth* is an extended analysis of the pride system. Freud focused on the sexual and the aggressive instincts, anger as well as self-destruction which he considered anger turned against oneself. Other psychiatric systems have centered on the analysis of envy.

It is our experience that we are always discovering something new about ourselves as we pursue the spiritual life. Why does this process of self-discovery take so long? The Freudian concept of repression helps to answer this question. It is a concept which St. Thomas anticipated. St. Thomas taught that the intellect is ordered to know the truth and the will is ordered to seek the good. Is it possible, he asks, to hate the truth? He replies, Yes, if the truth is painful to us. Now pride makes our sins, shortcomings, and limitations painful to us. Furthermore, Thomas says that what is painful we perceive as evil, and we not only hate it but turn from it, we repel it. Now this is the concept of repression.

We might explain what takes place by the analogy of an armed camp with posted sentinels. The sentinels are outside the camp and their function is to alert the camp if the enemy is approaching. When an insight which is painful to us is seeking to gain entrance into our consciousness the camp, the sentinel, gives the alarm and the insight is repelled, that is, repressed. This takes place outside consciousness, or at the periphery of consciousness. We avert our gaze from the unpleasant.

The psychoanalytic method is aimed at gradually bringing to light these repressed insights, a process which has

lost its popularity. It is a therapy that requires a long period of time, is expensive, and in many cases is unproductive. God's psychotherapy is free and takes place alongside our normal activities. As we realize fully God's mercy we understand that our shortcomings or sins do not repel Him but rather, acknowledged, draw Him to us. Jesus said, "I came for sinners not for the just" and, "There is more joy in Heaven over one sinner doing penance than over ninety-nine just." If we are perfect and without blemish there is no opportunity for Jesus to show us mercy. And yet this is His desire. And for this He came. It is only when we acknowledge our defects that He can act through His mercy. A deepening realization of this takes the sting out of the awareness of our defects, limitations, and sins. They are more easily brought to mind, because they are less painful. Then, with the help of God's merciful grace, we can cope with them and allow God to heal them. In differing circumstances different attachments occur. Hence, throughout our lives we need to let go of attachments.

These attachments, as we have suggested, are the source of spiritual blindness since they cooperate with our pride and fear of the painful awareness of our limitations. And the worst of these attachments is attachment to our own judgment and will, which St. Francis de Sales calls the last stronghold of self-will. If we were willing to acknowledge and part with our attachments they would soon cease to be such. Our peace and happiness is in our conformity to God's will, and attachments prevent that conformity from being complete.

Abandonment expresses our loving confidence in God and His plan for us. The greater our confidence in God, the more active He is in intervening on our behalf. We

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see in the Gospels how our Lord desired this confidence, based on faith, as a condition for working a miracle. Jesus is honored by our confidence and responds to it. In order to have complete confidence in God, which leads to complete abandonment, we need to realize that He is concerned about everything that pertains to us. He is concerned about our friendships, our honor, our physical welfare, and our spiritual progress. Spirituality is not a separate plane of life; it is inclusive of all the dimensions of our life. We can see how detailed God's care for us is when we consider the way we are constructed. Imagine what life would be like without fingernails! Every detail of our being is carefully planned. Gray's *Anatomy* tells us that the femur, the leg bone, is made up of criss-crossing trabeculae of bone in such wise that it has the maximum of strength with the minimum of weight, a greater engineering feat than the San Francisco Golden Gate Bridge. Once we are fully convinced that God has care of us in all our needs in every sphere, we can trust Him and abandon ourselves to Him completely. Now even when we sin, instead of withdrawing from Him, which is so common, since it is only in Him and through Him that we can be forgiven and our sin repaired, we should throw ourselves upon His mercy confidently with true sorrow and purpose of amendment.

It is to our advantage that we don't use God's love for us to expect instant gratification of every desire and need. God wants to strengthen our resourcefulness, our patience, our ability to wait, and our acceptance of the suffering that comes into our lives as part of the plan of redemption – that is, as expiatory and redemptive. God wants us to love the God who cares for us more than the care that God gives us.

God's plan for us takes into account something to which we are apt, even we priests, not to give sufficient attention or priority, that our life has an eternal dimension. Our faith is already the knowledge of what we will see in the vision of God. Our charity will last forever, if we do not sin, and it is restored in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Besides this present life, there is a real life that extends forever in eternity. There the balance is established which explains the deficiencies that may continue to exist in our present life to our discomfort.

Detachment, confidence, and abandonment lead to a peace and serenity under all circumstances. What is wonderful about the Catholic faith is that it prepares us to profit by and endure whatever occurs. Every cloud has a silver lining in Catholic wisdom. The clouds are the sufferings that original and actual sin bring into this world, including the disturbances of nature. The silver lining is the grace that God has prepared for us to claim in the midst of the cloud, so that it makes our suffering a participation in the sufferings of Christ and prepares an increase in love and its attendant virtues such as longsuffering, patience, submission, humility, chastity, and gratitude.

Love works through all the moral virtues according to the circumstances in which we are placed. When we are allured by sensible pleasure, love works through chastity; when we are transacting business, love works through justice. It is love that gives great value to our acts, but love is not love without the attendant moral virtues, nor without detachment and abandonment to the divine will.

Lectio Divina and Prayer

To put these conferences in the context of the three divine persons we will consider them as follows: In speaking of the Father we mentioned the importance of fatherhood for the Church and society. In speaking of the priesthood we looked to the Son Incarnate, Jesus Christ, the High Priest, who continues His mission in His priests. In speaking of lectio divina and prayer we will be dealing with the work of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus, besides sending out His apostles and disciples, wanted to have intimate contact with them, to live with them, to form them. In the early Church this living together of disciples, as did Jesus with His apostles, was called the apostolic life. It is the basis for a fruitful apostolate. Hence, it is not dispensable. But now that Jesus is no longer on the earth in His historical presence, how is this companionship and association to include Jesus? In His last discourse as reported by John's Gospel, our Lord tells the apostles that they have received His word. He prays that through this

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word the Father's love will be in them, and He will be in them. And the Holy Spirit, whom He will send, will teach them all things, and remind them of all He has said.

Jesus tells His apostles that His word is addressed not only to them but also to those who through them will believe. He calls blessed those who have believed and have not seen – that is, have not been present with Him in His historical life, but have believed.

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended to inflame the apostles gathered around Mary and to start the Church on its preaching mission. The time after Pentecost is the time of the Church of which Jesus is the head and the Holy Spirit the animating principle, Spirit directing the Church by His inspirations and gifts. It is also the time of the invisible presence of Jesus in His faithful through the Holy Spirit.

This is illustrated by the encounter between the risen Jesus and Mary Magdalene in the garden beside the tomb on Easter Sunday. You recall that Jesus said to Mary Magdalene, "Do not cling to me, because I have not yet ascended to my Father." Now why will His ascending to the Father make a difference? Does this "until" mean simply "Do not cling to me" period? What happens when Jesus ascends to the Father? He has promised that if He goes He will send the Holy Spirit. Now when He sends the Holy Spirit, since the three persons are inseparable, He will come also. "If anyone keeps my commandments," Jesus said, "the Father and I will come to him and make our dwelling in him."

May it not be, then, that Jesus was saying to Mary Magdalene, "Do not cling to me now; when I return to make my abode in you, then you can cling to me all you wish." With the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost be-

gins the time that will last till the end of the world when Jesus abides in His faithful. "Behold I will be with you until the end of the world," In His sacramental presence, true, but also in His indwelling. In prayer we enter into ourselves to meet Jesus who dwells within us, then we are empowered to meet Him in others. If we do not meet Him within, we are apt to miss Him without.

The word which Jesus gave to His apostles, and through them to all who believe, has been transmitted to us through the Church which He established for that purpose. He endowed it with the teaching authority by which this word would remain inviolate despite its transmission to all generations. A wonderful institution!

Jesus has likened this word to a seed which grows and expands, and our spiritual life to a house which is built upon a rock. These analogies pertain both to His Church and to the individuals comprising it. The word is expansive, it grows and takes root in us, and it increases its influence in our minds, hearts, and behavior. It has led us to the priesthood and maintains us in this holy vocation

It is our part to continue to cultivate the soil so that the seed can continue to fructify and grow, so that weeds may not throttle the fruit of the seed, so that we may continue to move forward and not slip backward. That is why we are here – so that we may cultivate the soil and increase the fruitfulness of the seed. The same means of increasing the fruitfulness of the seed in our priestly souls are applicable to the laity. They are the royal priests called to form a holy nation.

Now we cultivate the soil by removing vices, through the practice of virtue, through confession and receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and through prayer. It is

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through prayer that we have come to love Jesus Christ. It is by prayer that we have become the companions of Jesus Christ and have been formed by Him. We have pondered His lovable qualities and wise teaching on which we have meditated and which we put into practice.

This is the stage of discursive meditation, and it is basic. It is through our fidelity to meditation that we obtained the grace to eliminate whatever was hostile to Jesus Christ and to our true welfare. But discursive meditation is not the final stage of prayer. The Jesuits for a few centuries emphasized the importance of discursive prayer, and this was a good protection against the tendency to try to jump prematurely into contemplative prayer. With the flight to the East and to eastern methods, and with certain prayer movements in the West, there has been a tendency to try to enter into contemplative prayer by ourselves without laying a foundation, sometimes by evoking an empty mind. But if with the help of discursive meditative prayer we put our life in order, God then draws us to simplified prayer, the beginning of contemplation.

In this conference I want to speak of *lectio divina*, spiritual reading – a great help to the life of prayer. St. Cyprian in a letter to his friend Donatus in 256 said that we speak to God in prayer and He speaks to us in *lectio divina*. This saying was taken up by St. Ambrose, St. Jerome, St. Augustine, and by the Church in the following centuries. *Lectio divina* is primarily the reading of the Scriptures. Jesus did not condemn the scribes for seeking for eternal life in the Scriptures; they were right in doing so. He condemned them for not recognizing that the Scriptures pointed to Him as the Messiah as did the testimony of John the Baptist and His own works (John 5). The great fathers, doctors, and

saints of the Church have meditated on the Scriptures for twenty centuries.

In reading books of solid doctrine or biographies of saints we are also doing sacred reading. Since the same solid doctrine is available in various works besides the Scriptures, it is well to choose what is according to our taste, what is agreeable to our mentality. I do not mean that our worldly mentality should lead us to choose what is not solid doctrine, but that this solid doctrine is available in many forms.

Lectio is not theological study. To put oneself in the frame of mind to do lectio divina one can pray to the Holy Spirit to indicate through our reading what Christ wants to say to us. Then when something strikes us as important for our spiritual life, we can stop and reflect on it. In the terms lectio, meditatio, oratio, and contemplatio, which from the third to the sixteenth century were used to describe spiritual reading and mental prayer, meditation is reflection on what we are reading. It can take place at the time of reading or later. In lectio we read slowly, not out of curiosity on how the development is going to take place, but out of a desire to hear what Christ wants to say to us. There is a time and place for rapid reading, but it is not in doing our lectio.

An article in Readers Digest told of Samuel Piddleton who was under house arrest under the Japanese in China for three years and had only one book. To make it last, he did what he called superslow reading. He would stop on phrases, reread them, savor them, and pause to reflect. In our case, doing sacred reading in this fashion, our reflection tends to turn into prayer. After reflecting, we may realize the importance of assimilating the insights we are receiving and this leads us to converse with our Lord about

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it, or to pray over it. This is oratio. The contemplatio comes from God when we are ready to receive it and He is ready to give it. It cannot be forced or produced by a method, if what we mean by contemplation is what is meant in this series of terms, a contemplation that comes from above, that is infused into our souls.

Our Lord speaks of those who build their house on sand, and when the tempest comes the house falls. He advises us to build on rock and then our house will stand. Now He is the rock, and He means that we should build on His words. That is why Scripture is so important for our spiritual reading. On the other hand, there is much controversy in the sciences of exegesis and in theology on the meaning of His words. Different interpretations define different religious traditions, Protestant and Catholic. And these controversies now exist in the Catholic Church. Among those who wish to give an interpretation which is accommodated to our times and culture, a necessary enterprise if tradition is to be living and to be passed on, there are various degrees of accommodation. Then there is the conflict between the teaching of our Holy Father the Pope, and that of theologians and officials of the Church who disagree with him on many matters of doctrine and practice. Our decision about the doctrine we will accept as that of Jesus Christ is therefore very urgent today. And so is the choice of books we use for our spiritual reading, and the discernment we are called upon to exercise in listening to the various voices in today's Church.

It is a question of on what we will build our house, our spirituality, and what will be the message we transmit to others and the advice we give them. What is the truth, and how can we know it? Do we base ourselves on opinion,

the opinion of certain exegetes and theologians who are in dissent from the teaching authority of the Church? If we do, are we not basing our lives on opinion rather than the certitude of authentic Catholic faith?

If we priests are representatives, not of the people, but of Jesus Christ and of His Church, we must teach the message He has confided to the Church. St. Paul says there are a diversity of gifts and services. Jesus said to Peter who had just declared that He was the Messiah, "Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church." Peter, *petra*, the name given to Simon by Jesus, as we know, means rock. And lest there be any misunderstanding, Jesus says to Peter that once being converted he will strengthen his brethren. Finally, He gives to Peter the keys to the kingdom of Heaven, saying, "Whatsoever you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven." Jesus says this also to all of His apostles as a group, but He singles out only one apostle to whom He says this. The Church interprets this to mean that Peter and his successors are protected by a divine charism in the teaching of the faith, and that a Council of all the bishops, united with Peter, shares this charism as does the Church as a whole. *Lumen Gentium*, Vatican II's *Constitution on the Church*, repeats this teaching saying that the people of God, from the Pope and bishops to the least of the faithful, corporately possess this charism, but that there is a teaching authority in the Church.

It is to the Church's Magisterium that we must look for the doctrine on which to build our spiritual lives and to teach the faithful for the upbuilding of their lives – on solid rock. *Lectio* then, besides Scripture, should include works of solid doctrine that interpret the Scriptures in accordance with the Church's teaching.

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It is the office of exegetes and theologians to help in the development of the implications of this doctrine. In the process of doing so, and in accord with new cultural situations which give rise to new problems needing to be addressed, theologians may develop new teachings. It is the office of the bishops and the Pope to decide whether these new teachings are in accord with the faith of the Church or are deviations from it. New teachings may be of great assistance to the pastoral work of the Church. On the other hand, deviations corrupt the faith. "Hold fast to sound doctrine," St. Paul says, and "If any man teaches you a Gospel other than the one I taught you, let him be anathema." Often "new" teachings are teachings which have been overlooked or neglected and are brought back into focus. That's the case with regard to the recognition that not only does the Passion justify us, but the Resurrection saves us also. Durwell brought this teaching after the Council, but it was already the teaching of St. Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century, as he noted. Likewise, the teaching of the Council on the role of the priest in building community and leading the community corporately to sanctification was already taught by Pius XII in his encyclical "Corporis Mystici." St. Paul also taught that the faithful corporately are the body of Christ, from which the doctrine of the Church as a mystical body of Christ flows.

Certainly it is wise to base one's spiritual life and one's priestly teaching on doctrines that are already proven and tested. Temperaments differ. Some temperaments are strongly drawn to what is new, some just as strongly to what is traditional. The best solution is to avoid being dominated by one's temperament. If the Church changes,

one should change with it. On the other hand, it is wise to wait for the judgment of the Church.

As for the many conflicting voices in the Church today, the following comments may be helpful. Father Stanley Marrow is a Jesuit professor of New Testament at the Weston School of Theology in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He holds a Licentiate in Sacred Scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, a doctorate in Sacred Theology from the Gregorian University, and is also the associate editor of "New Testament Abstracts." In his book, *The Gospel of John. A Reading*,² he comments:

You search the scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that bear witness to me: yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life (John 5:39-40).

Here Father Marrow notes that the real purpose of the Scriptures is to transmit the eternal life by being a witness to Jesus Christ, the Word of God. However, he notes that there are many controversies over the meaning of the words of Scripture, and these unfortunately are often a result of not seeking the eternal life that is in the Scriptures as witnesses of Jesus Christ. On the text that men are seeking glory from one another and therefore are unable to discover the glory that comes from God, he notes that it is evident that many of these diverse opinions stem from scholars seeking the glory that comes from each other. Hence they use certain slogans and catch words that indicate that they are in tune with each other.

2 Marrow, Stanley B. *The Gospel of John: A Reading*. New York: Paulist Press, 1995.

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No one would want to deny the assiduity of this search of the scriptures down the ages, but especially in our times. Thousands upon thousands of writings, sermons, methodologies, and theories of interpretation attest to it. The ultimate reason for this search can only be the quest for “eternal life.” Nor does John deny that in these scriptures is life. But that life is there only because the scriptures bear witness to the Word. What many of us search for in the scriptures, however, is not that life at all. Our quest for scriptural slogans, our endless squabbles over interpretations, our mindless opposition to everything old, and our unseemly haste to espouse the new in interpretations, and our outrageous claims not just for the infallibility of the text but even the impeccability of its authors, all bear witness to that.

The fact of the matter remains very simply this: for the Christian, the scriptures “bear witness to” Jesus Christ. What life these scriptures possess, they possess because they speak of the Word in every word they speak. All the efforts of exegetes and critics, of theologians, preachers, and commentators are, for the Christian, directed to this one end: to proclaim the revelation of the Word which was in the beginning with God, was God, and became flesh and dwelt among us.

This is in no way a plea to abandon the search of the scriptures in all its rich and enriching aspects. It is a needed reminder that to believe that God has spoken to us, however you may wish to describe the subject, the verb, and the object – is to believe that, at least within the Johannine context, all the scriptures bear

witness to him whom the Father sent, and in whom alone we have “life.”

Father Marrow goes on to reflect on the crisis of the Church while commenting on the words of the Gospel of St. John, “I have come in my Father’s name, and you do not receive me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive.” Incomprehensible though it is to refuse to receive him who alone brings eternal life, it is far more so to contemplate the scramble after those who offer it counterfeits. We are eager to follow anyone except Him who came in the Father’s name. The others who come in their own name are received with an avidity and eagerness that is matched only by their transitoriness.

Fr. Marrow extends his reflections while commenting on the words: “How can you believe, who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?” (5:44).

We so readily flock to others, not because of our love for them, but simply because of our insatiable desire to receive glory from one another. Our search for “glory from one another” is not merely a distraction from the essential purpose of our existence which is to seek “the glory that comes from the only God” (5:44). Were it only that, one might be tempted to dismiss it as just another theological discussion. But it is far more than that. Our search for “glory from one another” is, inevitably, a foredoomed traffic in mutual enslavement. Those who provide me with such transient “glory” are

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no less aware of my avidity for it than I am of theirs. My dependence on them is no less than theirs on me; and so “deep calls unto deep.”

. . . The glory I seek from others can, of course, be had in shoals. The way to obtaining it is not only broad, but well-charted. The elenchus of acceptability, in brief, slogans, attitudes, religious practices, and moral tenets is all too available to be refused and all too costly to ignore. Embracing it is my surest means of obtaining the “glory” I seek from others. However unpalatable it be, it is in this barter for “glory” that I render myself incapable of believing in him whom the Father sent into the world.

The crisis of the Church today is not just that individual believers have set their hearts on receiving this “glory from men,” but that the whole Church has directed its efforts towards it as well. To that end, nothing is too dear and surely nothing is too sacred to barter or alter, to attenuate or dilute, in order to win the approval of the world, to gain admission to its counsels, and to win the indulgence of its rulers and the complacency of its arbiters of taste.

In summary then, while it is incumbent upon a priest to be acquainted with diverse theological opinions, we priests need to draw our convictions and strength from the Church’s teaching. We have that expressed today in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, as well as in many doctrinal books that are in agreement with this Catechism. I might recommend the books published by Ignatius Press as exemplary in this regard.

Prayer: A Participation in the Divine Life

The breathing we did yesterday will not help us today. We have to breathe every day. And so, too, we need to pray every day. We priests know this. We also know that the greatest prayer is the Eucharist by which we give thanksgiving to the Father through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and in which we pray for all the needs of the Church, of society, and of those who are dear to us. The celebration of Mass is our tremendous privilege. Next to the Mass and prolonging it, is the divine office. By spreading this through our day we sanctify our day and move towards the unceasing prayer that St. Paul urges every Christian to make.

Now admittedly, the divine office may at times seem like drudgery. We are not always in the same state. Our pastoral duties can fray our emotions, and we may not be in a condition conducive to prayer. But prayer is all the more needed then to help us to pull ourselves together in recollection and attention to the Beloved. The divine office may at such times be truly a sacrifice of praise, with

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the emphasis on sacrifice. We must remember that we are not praying to gratify ourselves but to please Jesus, our Beloved. Praying in dryness and distractedness may not be pleasant for us, but may be delightful to the Lord.

St. Paul says that the priest is a mediator between God and man in the things that pertain to God. The priest must, before all else, be an example of a human being, a man. The moral virtues with the theological virtues, as we have said, are what perfect a human person as a human being. Therefore, the priest must above all else practice these virtues, and also teach them. This is what renews the priesthood and what renews society. This is what attracts vocations and makes for a serene, happy, attractive person in whom and through whom Christ lives. Now human beings owe God, their supreme Benefactor, praise, thanksgiving, adoration, supplication, and repentance. And the priest, above all as the mediator between God and man in the things that pertain to God, discharges lovingly and joyfully this office. He does so with his entire life, lived in fellowship with the Holy Spirit and with his fellow human beings, including his friends and those whom he is serving. But he does so in a special manner, through the Eucharist and the divine office. These give God the praise and thanksgiving due Him, the supplication for the needs of humanity, and the repentance for sins. The priest prays especially for those dear to him, for those whom he serves, but he also prays as a representative of the human family for all its members till the end of time. The psalms are uniquely expressive of the sentiments that the priest is called to have and of the acts he is called to make. The priest is a representative in his prayer, including his private prayer, of not only the human family but also of the Church, the bride of Christ.

Prayer is life. It is a participation in the divine life. Prayer infuses in us the strength to practice all the virtues, theological and moral, which perfect us as men, and it infuses in us the strength to avoid all sins. If we persevere in prayer we will persevere in our vocation. Falling away from the priesthood begins with the neglect of prayer and of spiritual reading. If we find this is happening to us, we must return to prayer and spiritual reading. Spiritual reading done regularly is sweet. Neglected, it becomes difficult. Not every book will bring about a breakthrough in our spiritual life. But if we do spiritual reading regularly, we will from time to time come to a book that does.

The fervor with which we celebrate Mass and the divine office will depend on the dispositions which we bring to these acts through the prayer we make privately, when we enter our own room and shut the door as Jesus advises us to do. Not that the place of prayer has to be in our room – other things being equal it is best made before the Blessed Sacrament.

Our private prayer is powerful for the Church and for the public. The dispositions that flow from our prayer make us more devoted in our activities as priests. Our love is deepened, and we proceed in our daily duties more faithfully and in unison with Jesus Christ.

Just as the divine persons are within each other, so prayer united to the other parts of the spiritual program, leads our hearts to be one with each other and one with the heart of Jesus. That is because the more we are united with Jesus the more we are united with others and vice versa. The spiritual program frees us from what hinders this union. This is the union that Jesus prayed for in His priestly prayer, “That they may be one, Father, as we are one, that they may be one

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in us." It is by our purified faith, hope, and love which lead us to conform our wills with the divine will, that we are one, joint partakers of the divinity (2Peter 1:4).

The divine office itself contains beautiful prayers which nourish us, prayers of praise, thanksgiving, supplication, contrition, a-c-t-s: adoration, contrition, thanksgiving, and supplication. These acts can help us in the dry and distracted moments of our mental prayer. They join our souls to God. Reflection that does not elicit acts of the will is not yet prayer. By reflection we can think of the majesty of Jesus Christ, sitting at the right hand of the Father, we can thereby provide our wills with motives for adoring Jesus Christ, for loving Him, for submitting to Him, for belonging wholly and entirely to Him. But it is the act of the will which unites us to Him, just as in sewing, it is the thread which unites two pieces of cloth. We need to use a needle to pass thread through the cloth, and in this case, the needle is our reflections. They make it possible for us to elicit acts of the will.

In mental prayer, we can remain in one act as long as we wish, and then make reflections on our needs, which allow us then to make acts of supplication, or on our sins which lead us into contrition, or on the benefits we daily receive which incite acts of thanksgiving. It might be that we remain in one or two of these acts throughout our prayer time. These acts reflect our various relationships to God. Adoration reflects our condition as His creatures, contrition our relation to Him as our Redeemer, thanksgiving our relation to Him as our Benefactor, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. The interaction of the intellect enlightened by faith and the will produce prayer.

This is a way of praying in dryness in the desert. In times when we are on the mountaintop, we may simply

remain absorbed in God without any discrete or discursive acts. When this absorption wanes, we can simply pick up a prayer word, like “Jesus,” or an invocation like “Jesus, I love you,” putting fuel on the fire as St. Teresa advises. In fact, we may feel drawn to this type of prayer of just being in the presence of the Beloved without words and without experiencing anything at other times.

St. Teresa of Avila defines prayer as conversation with God. Those who love each other desire to be in the other’s presence, and they desire to converse. By conversing they come to know each other better. If we are doing solid spiritual reading, it will lead us into a better knowledge of Christ and then we will desire to return to His presence during the course of our activities, and to speak with Him about them. We draw from Him strength in our weariness, light in our perplexities, assurance in our doubts, and we offer Him our activities and words in praise of Him, just as a lover will praise the Beloved. Striking examples are the *Song of Songs* and the *Psalms*. Dom John Chapman, the English Benedictine scripture scholar, gave us an important instruction on prayer, “Pray as you can, and not as you can’t.”

While kneeling can be a great help to prayer, sitting may help us too. A chair, in which we sit erect, supported by the back, and sitting evenly on our haunches, avoids discomfort from being a distraction to our prayer or causing us to shorten it. Harried as we are in our complex society, less than half an hour may not be enough to clear the commotion from our hearts. Longer prayer when circumstances permit becomes more fruitful. But a half-hour twice a day or half an hour in the morning and twenty minutes later in the day is very helpful. Once a month having a day of recollection in which we relax and spend our time

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with God may be very refreshing and renew our perspective and orientation. This will help us to know what is going on in our hearts and lives and give the Holy Spirit an opportunity to guide us. Actually much may be going on that we are not willing to admit or to evaluate in the light of our conscience. Without an effort our consciences can become clogged by rationalizations, justifications, excuses. Sin can enter our lives stealthily and be unrecognized.

If we look back over our lives and vocation, we may identify an early period of conversion leading to our vocation, to the call to the priesthood, when we were always thinking of God and when prayer was easy and satisfying. This is the honeymoon stage. Then the bottom seemed to drop out. We found it difficult to pray, to make discursive acts, yet we were drawn to think of God and to continue to order our days to please Him. In the honeymoon stage we felt that another push and we would be in Heaven, we would be saints. In the stage where the bottom has dropped out, we feel another push and we will be in Hell. This is a new stage of prayer, and in it we are now in touch with the native tendencies of our temperament – our tendencies to anger, sadness, lust, whatever. Now if this is not the result of waywardness on our part, a search for unhealthy outlets, or due to a depression, it is a new stage which leads to a more simple form of prayer, which we may still be experiencing. Then the saying of the Old Testament applies: Be still and see that I am God. It is a prayer of quiet and the peace increases as we pursue this inner quietness. Here we remain in His presence without experiencing anything. When this prayer is genuine, it imparts secretly to our will a readiness to fulfill all the duties of our state of life promptly and conscientiously.

Because of our activities, when we enter into ourselves we may find a disaster area. And the longer we remain in this prayer of quiet the more the commotion may increase. But this is good. We are entering more deeply into ourselves. And while we experience increasing commotion, really the commotion is quieting down. We may appreciate this after we emerge from prayer.

The early period of discursive meditative prayer lays a foundation of convictions about Jesus and His teachings which help us to put our life in order, eliminating what hinders our union with Him. When we are drawn from this discursive meditation to simplified prayer, centering prayer may be helpful. Centering prayer, based on *The Cloud of Unknowing* by an anonymous fourteenth century author, is the use of a prayer word that expresses our faith and love in response to the presence of Jesus. We use this prayer word which may be the name of Jesus, as much as necessary to keep in His presence. When we realize that our mind has wandered, we quietly bring it back by picking up our prayer word.

Simplified prayer, because it does not give room for the emotions, leads to a deep refreshment, of which we may not be conscious because it leads us more deeply within where there may be some commotion, and also because it may be riddled with distractions. We let these distracting thoughts pass without becoming involved with them. There is no other aim in simplified prayer than to remain in the presence of God, and the only way we can discern whether our prayer is genuine and fruitful is by noting whether our behavior over time is changing for the better.

Simplified prayer may continue for years, sometimes relieved by sensible consolations which encourage us, sometimes burdened by deepening feelings of alienation from

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God. This is the experience that made the Cure of Ars run away from his very fruitful apostolate as a parish priest twice to attempt to become a Trappist. Drawing 80,000 people a year to his little confessional in out-of-the-way rural Ars, he was asked if he was not tempted to pride. He replied, "No, I am tempted to despair." This simple type of prayer does not puff us up as might apparitions, locutions, or visions.

We might remark that extraordinary phenomena such as locutions, visions, and revelations do not necessarily sanctify, and are not to be sought. Seeking them might open the soul to the delusions of Satan. While these are called mystical phenomena, simplified prayer and infused prayer are a mysticism that is in the ordinary way of sanctification. This mysticism, an experience of God in faith, comes through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the sanctifying gifts of wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, etc. which are much more important and desirable than the charismatic gifts such as revelations, prophecy, locutions and tongues. In fact, the charismatic gifts cannot be used in a way profitable for the soul without the sanctifying gifts. Prophecy, revelation, and locutions are to be authenticated by a priest or bishop, and are not to be despised. The Vatican Council warns that the charismatic gifts of the Holy Spirit are not to be quenched. This means that there should neither be a bias in favor or against these gifts. The verification of charismatic gifts requires discernment, prayer, and careful consideration.

Our secular mentality and the mentality of our modern sciences, including psychology and psychiatry, are biased against the charismatic gifts which are outside their ken and competence. But this does not stop these professionals from offering opinions. Now of course, in the case of these ex-

traordinary phenomena, the opinions of psychologists and psychiatrists on the presence or absence of pathology is of primary importance. But beyond that psychologists and psychiatrists cannot go without going outside their field of expertise.

It is important in judging these matters to see whether there is a correspondence between these phenomena on the one hand, and Scripture and the teaching of the Church on the other. God is not a contradiction, and does not contradict Himself. It is important to see if the persons having these experiences are well-balanced psychologically and emotionally and of good character. Deception, conscious or unconscious, can lurk in these matters. St. Paul speaks of seeking the better of the charismatic gifts, particularly prophecy, but then adds he will show a better way, namely the way of charity.

Charismatic prayer is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Charismatic prayer groups may be helpful, but charismatic prayer should lead to times of entering into oneself to find God within in quietness. Those involved in the charismatic prayer movement should remember that charity is the highest gift and pray above all else for this gift, and practice it, together with obedience to the Church and integration into the life of the Church. The "Life in the Spirit" seminars should emphasize above all else prayer for charity. Cardinal Suenens, who was the liaison between the charismatic movement and the Church, commended my book *Hammer and Fire*³ in a prefatory note, particularly for its reminder that charity is the highest gift.

3 Simon, Raphael. *Hammer and Fire: Way to Contemplative Happiness and Mental Health in Accordance with the Judeo-Christian Tradition*. Bethesda: Zaccheus Press, 2006. [This is a revised edition of the Saint Bede's publication of 1987. Ed.]

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It is helpful to identify the stages of prayer in our own life and in the lives of those who come to us for help and direction. It is only by being a man of prayer that we will be equipped to understand souls and give them direction. Such understanding and direction may be the source of priestly or religious vocations. But in other cases, the Holy Spirit is drawing a lay person, married or single, to holiness in their present state of life, and they need the encouragement of a priest. Our spiritual reading, through which we absorb and interiorize in prayer the principles of the spiritual life, is important too in equipping us for understanding souls. Our spiritual reading should, however, not be directed to this, but to our own union with Christ. Just as a prism will concentrate the rays of the sun on a piece of paper to make it burst into flames, so if we direct our spiritual reading to our own sanctification, our soul will catch fire, and when we give guidance to others, it will come not from the head alone, but from the heart. Hearers are moved when the priest speaks from the heart. What he derives from theological study may go right over the heads of the people. We must direct our word with simplicity from hearts that are in love with the Lord, if we wish to move our hearers to union with Him.

CONFERENCE **SEVEN**

“Unless You Deny Yourself and Take Up Your Cross, You Cannot Be My Disciple.”

“All other spiritual exercises are beating around the bush without self-denial” says St. John of the Cross. Self-denial is a cardinal part of the spiritual program. But it must be properly understood. We must understand what self-denial is and what it is not. In this conference I will treat of self-denial, first putting it in the context of the spiritual program of which it is a part. Then I will treat of stages of prayer, and finally of how the spiritual life applies to priests in various types of assignments.

Jesus Christ, His incarnation, life, death, and Resurrection is the way to eternal life, human fulfillment, and happiness. The priest by word and sacrament makes known this way and connects people with Jesus Christ. Just as white light put through a prism yields a rainbow of colors, so Jesus Christ understood in the Church yields a manifold way to follow Jesus and be united with Him.

We can be in His actual presence by frequenting the Eucharist and by visiting the Blessed Sacrament. We can

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receive His grace through the sacraments, and on a regular basis the Sacraments of Reconciliation and the Eucharist where we receive Him into ourselves. We can keep in touch with Him by prayer and by good works which fulfill His will for example, by fulfilling the duties of our state of life and following His inspirations and practicing fraternal charity. We can avoid evil that leads us away from Him by self-denial. We can foster the practice of these means by reading the Scriptures and books commenting on the Scriptures, so that the word may dwell in us. This then is the five-fold spiritual program, which makes Jesus available to us and us available to Him. It is based on Scripture and the teaching of the Church. Thus, the *Constitution on the Church* of Vatican II says, "Each must share frequently in the sacraments, the Eucharist especially, and in liturgical rites. Each must apply himself constantly to prayer, self-denial, active brotherly service, and the exercise of all the virtues" (No. 42).

In previous conferences we have spoken about these practices. Through them we practice all the virtues, first of all the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, and then the moral virtues. And we are aided by the gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord.

The priest who pursues the spiritual program earnestly will continue to advance in virtue and will go on increasing from grace to grace. He will also be able to teach those committed to his care how to advance in the love of Jesus and of the brethren. Thereby he will form associates who will assist him in his pastoral endeavors, or have vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Well-formed associates from his parishioners, whom the priest has helped to advance in union with Christ, can

assist him in many of the parish ministries. Examples are visiting shut-ins, nursing homes, non-practicing Catholics, and the unchurched in the parish, conducting youth activities, CCD, being sponsors for RCIA, assisting the poor, the marginal, fulfilling the requirements of social justice, which is a constituent of the Gospel. The possibilities and needs are multiple.

One might invite those interested in prayer to form a prayer and study group devoted to spiritual advancement. Guidelines for such a group are daily Mass, daily mental prayer, daily spiritual reading, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and attendance at a monthly group meeting, all adapted to their time-table and their state of life. A helpful book may be read at the meeting. The material given in these conferences, absorbed and interiorized by the priest, can be adapted to their needs. They can be helped to realize that they have the royal priesthood, and that all they do and suffer can be done and suffered for and with Jesus in love, patience, and meekness, and offered daily on the paten with the offering of the priest. They offer the sacrifice with the priest as the priest says: "Pray brothers and sisters that our sacrifice may be acceptable to God the Almighty Father." Not only are they co-offerers with Jesus the priest, but also co-victims.

The important outcome of such a group is their sanctification. A by-product will be the service of some of them to the parish and to the Church, and vocations to religious life and to the priesthood. They need to be taught how to render service so as to make it contribute to, and not detract from, their spiritual progress.

As a layman and psychiatrist, I belonged to such a group. It was called *Sedes Sapientia*. Members were expected to

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participate in Mass daily and to confess frequently, to do daily spiritual reading, and a half-hour of mental prayer. Meetings were held once a month. Besides the nourishment that it provided for my vocation, a young man of this group became a diocesan priest, and a young woman a religious. Two of the lay women were exceptional in their holiness. Both died of cancer in the Dominican Hawthorne Home and in both cases, they gave no sign of pain, and preferred to suffer for the Lord without narcotics. I think I owe my perseverance in my vocation as a Trappist and priest in part, and perhaps largely, to them.

One of the elements of the spiritual program remains for our consideration in this conference: self-denial. Our Lord frequently singles this out. He says, "Unless you deny yourself and take up your cross, you cannot be my disciple."

After Vatican Council II there was a great swing on the part of the theologians to the recognition of the importance of the Resurrection of Jesus for our salvation. F.X. Durrwell, C.S.S.R. wrote two excellent books on this subject: *The Resurrection* (more theological) and *In the Redeeming Christ* (an excellent book for spiritual reading). He pointed out that for centuries the emphasis in spirituality was on the Passion, with the neglect of the Resurrection. He noted that an exception to this was St. Thomas Aquinas who taught that we were justified both by the Passion and by the Resurrection, and that the Resurrection is the cause of our newness of life, which comes from grace (S.T. III, A2, RO3). In this St. Thomas echoed (and quoted) St. Paul: "He was delivered up for our sins and rose for our justification" (Romans 4:26).

Under the impetus of this rediscovery, as often happens, the pendulum swung, and the Passion and everything "negative" like penance, mortification, self-denial was put

on the backburner. This fit in with the spirit of the times: the sexual revolution, the downgrading of authority, the putting aside of tradition and the past in favor of the present and its insights and discoveries, which of course need to be fully appreciated but not with neglect of the truth. Until about 1973, Catholic publishing and Catholic classics went down the drain, including for awhile my own book, *The Glory of Thy People: The Story of a Conversion*,⁴ first published in 1948, and hence pre-Vatican II. I was in good company, because all the classics were out of favor, including the works of Therese of Lisieux, John of the Cross, and Teresa of Avila.

We are still recovering from the devastation wrought at that heady and exciting time. While the tide had turned a few years earlier, in 1978 Father Joseph Fessio, SJ spoke to the Dominicans of the Far Western province telling them that no good Catholic books were being published, and he was starting a company to publish them. This is the very successful Ignatius Press.

We recognize now that both the Passion and the Resurrection are the basis of our spiritual life. We include them both in the term, the Paschal Mystery. Negatives like mortification, penance, and self-denial have an essential and necessary positive effect. To live the spiritual life without mortification and self-denial is like a prizefighter entering the ring with one hand tied behind his back.

Little sacrifices that we make in relinquishing useless and curious glances, idle words, restless motion, hedonistic self-seeking, rash judgments, nourishing grievances, all these

4 Simon, Raphael. *The Glory of Thy People: The Story of a Conversion*. Preface by Fulton J. Sheen, D.D. New Hope: Remnant of Israel, 1986.

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cut out the superfluous from our lives and concentrate our energies on the essential: the fulfillment of our duties, works of charity and service to others, and the retention of the spirit of devotion which comes to us especially through the sacraments and prayer. Then we are disposed to the more important mortification, which is accepting the reality of our being, our life, our situation – in short accepting reality.

By His permissive will, God accepts the action of the free will of men even when they disobey His manifest will. Having given free will, not as a token but in reality, God accepts the consequences, and we must also. It is through sin and the consequent disorders of nature, that evil and suffering come into the world, and we must accept that. We should not approve of what is evil, and when we can legitimately remove it we should. But when we cannot then there is the grace that comes with the evil to offer it in union with the redemption of Christ. We priests understand this well and in our daily Mass we offer our afflictions and sufferings, the evils we cannot remove. We must teach the laity to do likewise so that they truly participate in the Mass. To say the words is one thing, but to accept lovingly our afflictions and offer them in the Mass is another, and this pertains to participation in the Mass. Understanding this is good; putting it into practice is better.

We are ready to accept the cross and offer to do so, but often we don't recognize the affliction besetting us as a cross. We are prone to be frustrated, and frustration easily leads to anger and rebellion. The acceptance of reality and of our own reality, which is one of our greatest crosses, is a penance and mortification which should have priority in our life. It is the best of mortifications because it is not self-chosen.

The wonder of the Catholic religion is that it teaches us to profit by everything that happens. Everything has a value, a purpose. Every cloud has a silver lining, the grace to offer this adversity in union with the offering Jesus makes of His adversities in His passion and at Mass. The words of St. Paul are worth frequent repetition: "This momentary tribulation works a weight of eternal glory," and likewise the words of Scripture, "The anger of man does not work the justice of God."

But what is the first and foremost object of self-denial? Self-denial removes the obstacles to union with Christ, and the first of these is sin. Our Lord's first teaching in the Gospels, taking up the teaching of St. John the Baptist, is "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." Repentance removes sin which is the first object of self-denial. Quick on the heels of this obstacle are the occasions of sin: those persons, places, or things that, if we frequent them, will cause us to fall into sin. These occasions must also be removed by self-denial in order to give security in the possession of God and the life of grace.

Self-denial also removes legitimate pleasures which touch on our weaknesses in such a way as to weaken us. Finally, self-denial leads to patience in the acceptance of all that befalls us and is contrary to our will. Everything that is contrary to our will is a penance. We see then that while self-denial is negative, removing obstacles, its effect is positive giving us the fullness of the life of grace and security in pursuing it. Just as an automobile needs all its wheels in order to move, so we need all these means of the spiritual life to go forward in union with Christ and to abide in union with Him.

Besides the conscious obstacles to God's will which self-denial removes there are also unconscious obstacles.

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These unconscious obstacles are the objects which depth psychiatry seeks to remove. Freud's program was to make the unconscious conscious, so that it would no longer exercise an unhealthy influence on thought, emotions and behavior, and so that the person could make a reasonable decision with regard to the issues involved. St. Thomas also understood repression. He pointed out that the intellect is ordered to knowing the truth, which all desire, and the will is ordered to the good. Then he asked, "Is it possible to hate the truth?" Yes, he replied, if the truth is painful to us. What we hate we also turn from, and this turning from painful truth is repression. But what makes the truth painful to us? Is it not our pride? Christ then has a divine psychotherapy which we have all experienced, for we have all profited by progressive insights into ourselves. And what has permitted these painful and humiliating insights to surface in our consciousness? It is humility, the willingness to know the truth about ourselves, both good and bad. And humility in overcoming pride lessens our resistance to the truth.

But more than that -- by the revelation of Jesus Christ we recognize His unbounded mercy. His mercy led Him to create the world out of nothing and then, when the world turned against Him, led Him to redeem it and send His Spirit. Jesus said, "I came to call sinners, not the just." And to the woman caught in adultery He said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and sin no more." And also, "There is more joy in Heaven over one sinner doing penance (that is, repenting), than over ninety-nine just." Hence, we understand that Jesus loves to exercise His mercy, and He can only do so insofar as we provide the matter of our sins. Our sins and defects acknowledged then, do not

turn Him away from us, but draw Him to us. They are our drawing cards, and therefore are no longer so humiliating and painful. Hence, they become more accessible to consciousness. The spiritual life is a life in which we gain increasing self-knowledge.

The circumstances in which we are placed are not under our control in the same way that our faults and defects are. Instead of projecting blame onto others, we can recognize the extent to which our own behavior is responsible for the negative attitude and behavior of others towards us. While we cannot directly influence their thoughts of us and their behavior towards us, by removing what is obnoxious in ourselves, we can indirectly do so.

A person may have a very keen intelligence, and yet not apply that to an understanding of the extent to which he or she is responsible for the adverse behavior of others, or to the extent that he himself is responsible for the unfriendliness of his environment. This occurs because this person does not take into consideration the nature and effect of his behavior on others. Other people are acutely aware of the tendencies in themselves which, when expressed, create difficulties for themselves. This awareness has been called social intelligence. The advantage of social intelligence, which can be learned, is that it can change the climate in which one lives for the better. If we remove what is obnoxious to others in our behavior, we may remove the frustrations and unfriendliness which we meet. While we do not have control over the actions of others, we do have control over our behavior. By changing our behavior we can change the climate in which we live.

Now such a change in our behavior may not have an immediate effect. Others may not recognize it at first. It may

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take time for them to realize that we are no longer troublesome to them. This then is not our problem. But eventually this recognition will come in all probability. Thus, we learn to have interpersonal relationships in which we neither try to dominate or depend unduly on others, nor withdraw from them, but respond maturely and interact appropriately. This then completes the divine psychotherapy.

While there is an increasing interest in mysticism, there is still a carryover from the Sixties in wanting to jump into contemplation without having gone through the purgative way. Discursive meditation has an important basic place in setting a sound foundation for prayer life and spiritual life. Through it, as we have noted, we incorporate and interiorize the teaching of Christ, forming solid convictions and putting our life in order in accordance with faith and morals. This purgative way leads to the illuminative and unitive ways.

Some of the phenomena characterizing each of these ways are found in the others. For example, in the unitive way the gifts of the Holy Spirit operate more frequently. Through them the Holy Spirit moves the person. It is somewhat like a rowboat with sails. When the wind is not blowing the sails are furled, and the boat is propelled by rowing. This is the practice of the virtues, principal in the purgative and illuminative way. When the wind blows, the sail is unfurled, and the boat is propelled without the effort of the occupants. This wind is the Holy Spirit. The sails are the gifts of the Holy Spirit, by which the wind is caught.

On the other hand the purgative way is characterized by fight against vices. But still at times the wind of the Holy Spirit may blow, for the gifts are present to all souls in a state of grace. Indeed Leo XIII in his encyclical on the Holy

Spirit states that they are necessary for salvation. There are circumstances when the soul would be endangered if it were not for the inspiration and the strength given the person by the Holy Spirit through the gifts.

So also, during the illuminative way, characterized by the practice of the virtues rather than by fighting temptations to mortal sin, it is necessary to be ready to fight against serious temptation. The fathers likened this to the Israelites who returning from captivity, began to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (the practice of the virtues) while they kept their weapons on hand should the strangers in the land attack (readiness to fight temptation to serious sin).

The transition from the purgative way to the illuminative way is, according to St. John of the Cross, the night of the senses. At this transition point discursive meditation has accomplished its work of forming deep conviction about the teaching of Christ, and the person has put his daily life in order in accordance with faith. This is where simplified prayer begins. And secretly, contemplation has started although the person is not aware of it. He receives an unfelt energy in his will to continue doing the things pleasing to God, such as fidelity in his religious practices and in his daily duties, although no longer sustained in prayer by sensible consolations. As the illuminative way unfolds, at times the person becomes aware of this contemplation as a drawing of all that he is into the presence of God.

In the unitive way, which St. John of the Cross identifies with spiritual marriage, the wills of the person and of God are in harmony and are united, the person willing what is pleasing to God in a sustained way. He is supported by a more evident contemplation, that is, by sensing that the divine love is moving him in his prayer.

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St. Bernard says that a soul may be immersed in an ocean of sin and yet has reason to hope for the highest graces, the spiritual marriage, because it has a soul. We add because Jesus has won all the graces necessary, and they need only be claimed and used. In this unitive way the soul continues to make progress in love, but still practices the virtues as he did in the illuminative way, and may be subject to the temptations that he resisted in the purgative way. But it is more likely that if he falls, it will be little by little, almost imperceptibly. In the book of Revelation Jesus gives St. John a message to the people of Ephesus:

“I know your activities, your hard work, and your perseverance. I know too that you have . . . suffered in my name without growing tired. Nevertheless, I have this complaint to make: you have less love now than formerly. Think where you were before you fell; repent, and behave as you did at first, or else, if you will not repent, I shall come to you and take your lamp-stand from its place. . . . Let anyone who can hear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches” (Rev. 2:1-6).

Hence, we must return to the fervor that we first had at our conversion, and continue growing in the love of the Lord.

Asceticism must prepare the way for and go hand and hand with mysticism. We should distinguish mystical phenomena such as visions, locutions, and revelations from mysticism per se, which is simply the experience of God in faith, and the summit of the ordinary way to God. Vatican Council II has spoken of contemplation as the embrace in faith of God. The height of mysticism is the spiritual marriage, which takes place, as we have just indicated, when

the human will is completely conformed to the divine will. It is a union of wills.

The spiritual marriage is not just the acme of the spiritual life. It is itself a superior way of love to increasing union with Christ. The spiritual life is not over when the tried soul has reached the spiritual marriage. In this way, the person continues to make progress and still needs to be ready to fight temptations. Father Faber in his book *Growth in Holiness* says that he is not going to speak of the unitive way, because he has seen so many who have fallen from the sky. St. Thomas says that a person falls little by little. This is particularly true of advanced souls, who may little by little yield to pride or other temptation. St. John of the Cross says, "Some call the Bridegroom beloved, whereas he is not really their beloved, because their heart is not wholly set on Him." He also says, "A person can truthfully call God Beloved when he or she is wholly with him, does not allow his heart attachment to anything outside of him, and thereby ordinarily centers his or her mind on him." It is important to note, that in the *Ascent of Mt. Carmel* St. John explains in the first thirteen chapters, that the kind of attachment that hinders a soul from advancing, and also from belonging wholly to Christ is a voluntary habitual fault. The above two quotations of St. John of the Cross are taken from an article by Fr. Paul Hinnebusch, OP in the *Homiletic & Pastoral Review* of April 1999 entitled "Calling God 'Beloved.'" He adds, "Perhaps some are thinking, 'How can I dare call Him Beloved, since my heart is not wholly given to him. I am still so full of failings and weakness. I am still so self-centered and offend him too much.' If this is your thought reach out to him in contrition for your sins and dare to call him Beloved anyway, in the hope that

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He will purify your love for Him and fulfill this desire which He himself inspires. Your Beloved was nailed to a cross for your sins, and from His pierced heart He pours out His love as purifying blood."

I will speak briefly of the different positions priests may have. The parish associate or curate, while having a certain necessary independence in the fulfillment of the duties assigned him by the pastor, should gladly exercise a filial supernatural obedience to the pastor, readily and promptly, with the conviction that in doing so he is obeying Christ. St. Paul says that all authority comes from above, and Jesus says, "He who hears you, hears me." At the same time, in matters in which his contacts give him knowledge he may frankly say to the pastor, "I will be glad to do this, however if I do this, I foresee that such and such will happen." If the pastor then changes his instructions, fine. If he does not, the curate should follow his pastor's wishes, so long as in doing so there is no sin.

The pastor should give a Christ-like example to his curates, and particularly if they are fresh from the seminary. In that case, he should realize that they are assigned to him for ongoing training and the best training is through his priestly example. The pastor should remember the words of Christ, "The pagans make their importance felt, but it shall not be so with you. He who wishes to be the greatest should be the least." That is, the pastor should cultivate fraternal relations with his associates and listen to them with patience and understanding and help them in the fulfillment of their duties while giving them the freedom necessary to properly accomplish them.

Priests who are in retirement should realize the opportunity that this has given them to contribute to the Church's

welfare by their prayer and self-sacrifice and by the daily offering of their Mass and the divine office, helping out with parish activities as their condition permits and the pastor's desires indicate. Their usefulness may be even greater in retirement than when they were more actively engaged in the ministry.

Priests who are specialized in scholarship or service, such as psychological counseling or teaching, should realize that their spiritual progress is their most important activity, one which will give enlightenment to their specialized activities and serve the welfare of the Church and its people. They should cultivate thinking with the Church and should uphold and explain the Church's teaching. Those who are engaged in works of social justice should keep in mind that neglect of the spiritual program of prayer, spiritual reading, self-denial, and the sacraments will lead to burn-out, as experience shows. Their ability to contribute in this necessary service will depend on their fidelity to the spiritual program as well as to their competence in their work. If they remain companions to Jesus during their days and nights, He will help them in their endeavors.

For all priests, no matter in what occupation they are engaged, fidelity is of paramount importance. All are chosen servants of Jesus Christ who says, "Without me you can do nothing." Therefore, abiding in Christ is our first calling, and the key to perseverance. This is true for all but especially for us priests.

CONFERENCE **EIGHT**

Pastoral Considerations: Identity and Spiritual Union

We have completed the consideration of the spiritual program offered by the Church and found repeatedly in the document of Vatican II, *The Constitution of the Church*. This and the following conferences will treat of related, principally pastoral, considerations. In this conference I will discuss our identity, and the identity we should find in others. This is necessary for our own balance and for our practice of charity. Through this exercise we can practice the spiritual ecumenism that Vatican II declared was the most important element in ecumenism. This conference will be completed in Conference Ten which will treat of dialogue as distinct from the evangelizing mission of the Church.

We are stabilized by knowing who Jesus is and who we are, by knowing Him and knowing ourselves. Even after receiving all the sacraments, and studying theology, and becoming priests, it is not easy to really believe that “Jesus loves me.” Nor is it easy to know oneself. It is one thing to

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know the revelations made by Christ; it is another to assimilate them. We believe that Jesus has laid down His life to prove His love for us, that He has given Himself to us in Holy Communion to merge His being with ours, and to unite us with each other. But do we really believe that we are loved by Him and by the Father? Now what makes this assimilation so difficult for most of us? First of all there are our sins, then our weaknesses, then our experience of our limitations. We are aware of straying from Him at times, even perhaps most of the time.

Among our limitations is the fact that we have a fallen human nature. That means that our imaginations and emotions may rebel against our will and reason. They may bring thoughts and feelings to us that we may find objectionable. For example, we might have an obscene thought just as we are receiving Holy Communion. We have the sense that if other people knew what we thought and what we feel, they would not love us. And we know that God does know our thoughts and our emotions. So we feel unlovable. We may have been absolved by our sins, yet they stain our memory. Because of absolution and expiation our sins may not stain our souls, but our memory is stained, and despite our regained innocence the sense of having sinned may burden us.

As priests we know the answers to these difficulties. But do these answers sink in? It is only through ongoing prayer and reflection that we can offset this sense of not being loved, by the mystery of Christ's love for us.

Our balance requires a double knowledge of ourselves – what we are of ourselves, and what we are by grace. St. Paul said, "By the grace of God I am what I am." So what are we by grace? By grace we are partakers of the divine

nature, heirs of Heaven, other Christs, His priests and prolongations, by which He mixes with His people here and now. And what are we of ourselves? The Father said to Catherine of Siena, "I Am Who Am and you are who are not." St. Paul asks us, "What have you that you have not received?" We have received our human nature, salvation and sanctification, the priesthood, our education, the beneficent circumstances of family, friends, and so on. These are gifts in the natural and supernatural order. So what are we of ourselves? Nothing. The Old Testament says, "All nations are as nothing before God." So also are all individuals, of themselves. Of ourselves we are nothing. Moreover, the only things we can claim as exclusively our own, as originating from us, are our sins. The disorder of sin has its first beginning in my will, in nothing else. So the fallen human nature, the rebellion of emotions and imagination against the will, the weaknesses and limitations, they are mine. To reflect only on these leads to discouragement, timidity, and worse. While the reflection on our participation in the divine nature, on our being other Christs may lead us to self-satisfaction and pride. Therefore, we must know both these things about ourselves in order to have a balanced view. Our sins may stain our memory, they may haunt us, but they do not stain the soul – since they have been forgiven and absolved.

The negative remarks made to us in our childhood, especially by parents, are usually engraved in the cognitive sense which replays them on occasion. This is not our intelligence or our conscience. But it accuses us. "You are bad, bad, bad," it may say. Besides our external senses of sight, hearing, touch, and smell, we have interior senses, and the cognitive sense is one of these. The imagination

imagines a rose. The memory says, "I saw it at such a place and at such a time." The cognitive sense says,

"It is good." The cognitive sense gives a value judgment and the emotions follow upon this judgment. If it is a negative judgment, then a negative emotion follows. Upon the judgment, "You are bad," follow the emotions of shame, guilt, and sadness. The cognitive sense corresponds in humans to the instinct or estimative sense in animals. A lamb knows by its instinct that a wolf is dangerous. The cognitive sense has something of the aspect of reason, but it is a sense. It cannot take circumstances into account. Those words it repeats may have been said when we were five, and referred to a prank of ours, and elicited an exasperated remark, but all these circumstances are not taken into account by the cognitive sense. A mother may miss Mass because she is at home taking care of a sick child, and the cognitive sense not being able to take this into account says, "You missed Mass, that's a mortal sin. You committed a mortal sin."

We must learn to identify this broken record as not our conscience, our intelligence, and we must counteract it by sound judgment. Then we will be less afflicted by negative thoughts about ourselves and by lowered self-esteem. On the other hand the cognitive sense may repeat what was told it in an early childhood moment, "You are wonderful, you are precious." Here too we must disconnect from this cognitive evaluation, which pats us on the back.

Christ came not to call the just but sinners. Our weaknesses and limitations do not turn the love of Jesus and His Father from us, but draw them to us, since they love to act through mercy, and mercy can exist only in response to need. We are needy, and that is why Jesus is attracted to

us. There is nothing else in us that draws Him to us but our misery. Our Lady expressed this in her Magnificat, "He has looked with favor on his lowly servant." Mary was destined to be conceived in original sin. There was nothing there for God to love outside of His own design to make this nothingness, destined to be born in sin, to be His Mother. All else, her immaculate conception, her perfections, were His gift. They did not exist as that which drew His love. Rather, it was His love that brought her and her perfections into existence. St. Thomas says that even creation is an act of God's mercy. He looks upon the nothingness outside of Himself, and in mercy He creates, and fills the void with something, something in which then He is well pleased. We must understand that our faults and sins do not turn us away from Him. Rather we, because of them, turn further from Him, withdrawing. St. Therese on the other hand gives us the only true response to sin: She tells us that if she were covered with sin she would throw herself broken heartedly into His arms and His flaming love would burn away her sins. This is also David's response to his sin as given in Psalm 50 (in some numerations 51) the Miserere. We have nowhere to go after sinning but to Him who can heal us and desires to do so. It is He who gives us repentance.

Jesus, knowing us as we are and loving us as we are, sees our potentialities for improvement and desires that these potentialities be actualized. A father accepts his infant son exactly as he is, without the capacity to talk, walk, reason, and play baseball. But he does not want the infant to remain an infant all his life. He is content to have the infant go through the stages of development, with reverses and progression. His love urges Him to help this process, so that his infant son may become a mature individual. We must accept ourselves

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as we are, with our failures and regressions, but we need also to accept our potentialities to grow and the means by which this growth occurs – socially, emotionally, intellectually, and above all, spiritually. Above all spiritually because spirituality purifies our motivation, clarifies and strengthens it, and promotes our growth and well being.

Our knowledge, artistic and productive talents, our skills in thinking and working are perfections of our faculties, i.e. of our intelligence. But the moral virtues perfect us as human beings. In technical terms, the former are perfections *secundum quid*, and the latter perfections *per se* – of our humanity. We need both sets of perfections, but it is the moral virtues, our perfections as human beings, that are the most important and indispensable. We obtain them through grace, prayer, the sacraments, and the practice of the virtues. We all have this potentiality to grow in these moral virtues and that is what God expects of us.

Unfortunately, the universities neglect the growth of these virtues, and that is why, unless students take other means to grow humanly, they tend to produce lop-sided individuals. Teachers who give a good example of moral virtue, and who are truly concerned about the moral development of their students can counteract this tendency of the universities, and this is attested by students who have had the good fortune of meeting such a teacher along the way of his or her education.

Newman clubs and campus ministry should redress the one-sided development promoted by universities. They should promote the spiritual, religious, and moral life of students. For this they should introduce them to the Church's spiritual program and help students to grow spiritually as well as intellectually.

Professor Jerome Kerwin, who was the Dean of the Social Science Division of the University of Chicago and a professor of sociology in the thirties, had a student who told him she intended to commit suicide. He explained the Gospel to her and she found in it a reason for living. Now this would be against the law today. However, if he had introduced her to a satanic cult, the law would find no objection. Something is drastically wrong here.

When we remember what we are by grace, we say with St. Paul, "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me." When we remember what we are of ourselves, we give thanks to God for His gifts, and are vigilant against the erring inclinations within us, that we may avoid acting them out.

As St. Paul says, we are body, soul, and spirit. But we tend to take our identity from our body image. We are white, yellow, black, or red skinned. We are male or female. We have heterosexual or homosexual inclinations. As a Jew I think of myself as first of all a Jew, and then as a human person. Persons with a homosexual inclination think of themselves as first of all a homosexual and then as a human being. The body and its tendencies and qualities divide us. But we are first of all human beings, then male or female, white or black, homosexual or heterosexually oriented. That unites us. The soul, which animates the body, is a spiritual substance, without parts, without division, without anything in it that can wear out, age, or be destroyed. It is specifically the same in each of us, making us human beings. That is what unites us. Moreover, we are all of the same race, descended from Adam and Eve, brothers and sisters. This is even being discovered scientifically by microbiologists who find this written in the DNA.

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These scientists, who usually are evolutionists, nevertheless call this one woman from whom they trace the DNA of all living human beings, Eve!

But since our soul is spiritual it does not make the same sensible impression on us as do our senses, emotions, and sensible inclinations. That is why we think of ourselves in terms of the body. But the prayer of Jesus, that we may be one, that we may be one as He and the Father are one, is realized by a union in spirit – by our having the same faith, the same hope, and the same charity. “The love of God is poured forth in our souls by the Holy Spirit who is given to us.” That is what makes us one – we are one in soul by nature, one in soul by grace.

The meditation on these fundamental truths should help us to discover and overcome our biases, prejudices, and discrimination. This meditation can help us to have the charity of Christ, which extends not only to our friends but also to our enemies. We should apply this meditation to those who frustrate us, irritate, and annoy us. This enlarges our hearts, mellows them, overcomes our severity and haughtiness, and unites us to the Hearts of Christ and Mary, which are open to all human beings, and respect all beings in accord with their place in the universe.

Our Lord says of the pagans that they love those who love them. Now love does beget love; that is natural. More is expected of us as Christians and as priests. Christ explicitly says that we must love our enemies. He tells us that the Father sheds His sunshine upon the good and the bad, and that our love must be perfect as is His. Enemies are those who harm us, who delight in tripping us up, who rejoice in our misfortunes and try to bring them about. Certainly most, if not all of those who frustrate and irritate us do not

fall in this category. Therefore all the more should we accept and love them.

The priest is called to be all things to all men and women. It is unbecoming of him to harbor discrimination, bias, and prejudice. Moreover, it is his role to help his people to overcome these incursions into their charity. With this in mind and with our call to ecumenism, I will review some of the prejudices common among us.

With regard to religions, we recall that all Christians, whether evangelicals, fundamentalists, main line, who are baptized validly, are brothers and sisters in Christ by virtue of the sacrament of baptism. The divisions do not come from God, but from man. Vatican Council II says that in these separated churches and groups there are rays of truth and means of sanctification. Some of their adherents may cultivate the truth and means of sanctification available to them more assiduously than do our Catholic people cultivate theirs.

Then there are the Jews, which Pope John Paul II reminded us are our elder brothers. He said that there is an intrinsic connection between the Catholic religion and the Jewish religion. With regard to the sensitivity of Jews, we must remember that Catholics and Christians have subjected them to centuries of mistreatment and discrimination. Father Edward Flannery of Providence, RI, a diocesan priest recently deceased, opened my eyes to the extent of this persecution by his book *Twenty-three Centuries of Anguish of the Jews*. In view of this persecution Jews must overlook a great deal to look favorably upon Christians and the Church. As a teenager, boarding a bus, I was called by the driver, without any provocation, a Christ-killer. A very saintly Trappist priest-monk told of how as a boy, he and a

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few other Catholic boys had thrown manure into a synagogue. Actually my own contacts as a Jew with Catholics were very pleasant. I did not feel as much discrimination from Catholics as I experienced from Protestants. Indeed I felt a certain warmth from them. I remember how a grammar school Irish Catholic boy, Tom Heaney, would send me a Christmas card each year. Nevertheless, for many Jews, the cross is the symbol of the Russian pogroms in which Jews were tortured and killed, and women raped.

Nostra Aetate has pointed out that not all the Jews of Christ's time were involved in his death, and certainly not the Jews of succeeding generations. The charge of deicide is also refuted. Legends of Jews drinking Christian children's blood at their sacred feasts were calumnies that began persecutions in the Middle Ages, and even during modern times. If the Orthodox still remember the barbarous sacking of Constantinople by the Crusaders, and the Muslims remember how the same Crusaders waded in Muslim blood, is it surprising that Jews are wary of churchmen who have been persecutors up to Vatican Council II's *Nostra Aetate* which some of them opposed?

Caiphas, who with the Sanhedrin, was responsible for Christ's death, was known in the Talmud to have been a corrupt person. The *Catechism of the Council of Trent* states that it is our sins which crucified Jesus.

The Muslims are apt to be stereotyped according to the belief and behavior of the fanatical fundamentalists among them who are a vociferous minority. Because of the declining population in Europe, Arabs are migrating there in significant numbers. There is an active dialogue going on between Muslims and Catholics. The international association of Muslims condemned the fanatical GIA

of Algeria for putting to death several peaceful Trappist monks at Timberline in 1997, monks who had the best relationships with their Muslim neighbors. At the moment⁵ five monks have returned to this monastery, and an official of the Trappist Order, Dom Augustine Roberts, the Procurator General, stated that their return was an evidence of their forgiveness of the GIA, a forgiveness testified by the murdered monks, before they were kidnapped and killed, for they had been forewarned by previous visits of the GIA. However, these monks are being prevented by the government from reoccupying their monastery. They did return there to celebrate the anniversary of the death of their comrades. Two hundred Arab Muslims surrounded the monastery with rifles to protect them and to show their solidarity. This was at the risk of their lives, for this made them marked men in the eyes of the GIA.

In a similar manner, we must avoid harboring prejudices against Hindus, and Buddhists, and those of Native American religions. Among races, prejudice against blacks receives much deserved attention. Asian immigrants have been showing a great deal of seriousness in their study and work, and advance rapidly in American society. Our Prior at St. Joseph's Abbey is a Vietnamese who was elected abbot for two six-year terms at the Trappist Philippine monastery at Guimaras. He accomplished immense benefits for that monastery building permanent structures and developing industries for its self-support. He also oversaw the foundation of a monastery of Trappistine nuns and established a school for the aborigines of the place. Returning to Spencer, he was appointed Prior.

5 Refers to 1999 when these conferences were given. Ed.

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Sexual orientation should not be a matter of prejudice. The Church teaches that a homosexual orientation is disordered, but so is the promiscuous orientation of many heterosexuals. Homosexuals can be very considerate, cultivated, and refined persons. They may attain a high degree of holiness. On the other hand those who proclaim themselves gay and are aggressive in seeking to legitimize homosexual behavior are quite different. But discrimination against their orientation is sinful.

Gender likewise should not be a basis of prejudice. Women who do the same work as men should in justice receive the same wage. Discrimination against women because they are women, or against men because they are men is a disorder. At present some members of the feminist movement exhibit a prejudice against men, their so-called patriarchal oppressors.

We do not have to approve of wrongful behavior. Nor do we have to carry on a relationship with one who is abusive to us. Our Lord wants us to accept humiliations, but He does not want us to be doormats. Abused children usually consider that there is something wrong with them, rather than with the perpetrator of the abuse, especially if it is a parent. This leads to repression of their anger and a lowered self-esteem. In therapy in an adult who had been abused as a child the anger surfaces as self-respect begins to assert itself, and the adult now realizes that the perpetrator's activity was injurious and wrongful. When this adult has advanced sufficiently in treatment, the psychiatrist may carefully set up a confrontation with the parents. Often besides the perpetrator, the other parent has not protected the child but has allowed the abuse to continue without an intervention. In this confrontation, the first ob-

ject is to overcome the denial on the part of the parents of the abuse, then to make the parents realize the harm that has been done, and finally, if an abusive pattern has continued, to lay out the conditions on which an ongoing relationship is possible. Now this is the point. The victim of this abuse does not have to continue in an abusive relationship as an adult. He or she can lay down conditions which eliminate the abuse, and which have been carefully worked out between the patient and the doctor before the confrontation. This plan then becomes the condition for a continuing relationship. The victim can forgive the parents, but not continue to expose him or herself to the pattern of abuse. Restricting in this way a relationship which is abusive is compatible with forgiveness and love.

In this conference I have pointed out that while we tend to base our identity on our body image, our soul is the more important part of our human nature and that which makes us human. Since all human beings have a soul which is specifically the same, that is human and that makes us members of the human sapiens species, considering our identity from the point of view of our soul, of our being human, unites us. This pertains to race, religion, gender, and our inclinations. This is a basis, but not the only basis for our charity reaching out to everyone. That we are all children of God, and that grace is available to all, and that Jesus died for all, are further bases for an all-extensive charity.

Morality in Society

There are many issues of morality, especially those concerning sexuality and gender, with which the priest today must cope. To do so, I think one must step back and consider these issues in the context of the Gospel and anthropology. The Gospel is a revelation of the Father through His Son, Jesus Christ, addressed to sinners, to those who have a fallen human nature. A fallen human nature is one in which there is some disorder. Jesus has come to remedy this situation, and He has called His priests to assist Him. As the Creator, the Word knows what we need, and He supplies it at His own cost.

We are made for happiness, and grace is offered us to strengthen our reason and will so that we may pursue the appropriate means for obtaining happiness. These means are proportionate to their end, and also to us, to our nature, both of which are unchanging. I will deal with the possibility of our nature evolving shortly. This being so, these means do not vary essentially in time or place. They

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may indeed be adapted to cultural situations, but they themselves are the judges of whether cultural situations are healthy or harmful.

It is for these reasons that St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century could adopt in his *Summa Theologica* the analysis made by Aristotle in the fourth century BC of these means, which are the virtues, in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle explains that to act well and humanly we must act in accordance with right reason. The virtues are those habits by which we do so. St. Thomas enriched Aristotle's analysis by the Gospel, which teaches us that the greatest virtues are faith, hope, and charity. As previously remarked these virtues unite us immediately with God – they have God as their object: by faith we believe Him, by hope we trust Him, and by charity we love Him.

But these virtues, of which the greatest is charity, work in the various situations in our lives through the moral virtues. Thus in danger charity is brave, in facing the allurements of illicit sense, charity is chaste, in the presence of evils, charity is meek, and in all things charity is prudent – that is, it chooses the means appropriate to union with God. This is not the prudence of the flesh nor of the world, but it is the prudence of Christ who overcame the flesh and the world.

A culture which facilitates action in accordance with faith and reason is a good culture, and a culture which opposes such action is an evil culture. Hence, we have John Paul II's distinction between the culture of life and the culture of death. In this understanding of things, human nature is essentially unchanged in history, while culture changes in history. Human nature is constituted of 1) a human soul, created directly by God and infused in the

zygote formed by the fertilization of the ovum by the sperm and 2) a body, developed from that zygote in accordance with the DNA it contains, which governs the process of growth. Even for those who believe that human nature is in the process of evolution, several thousands of years, the time of recorded history, is simply an instant as far as evolutionary time is concerned, even ten million years is a blink of the eye in geological time and not sufficient to enable a change in our nature itself.

I say even for those who believe in evolution, because evolution is a belief. This was acknowledged by Donceel in his *Anthropology*, where he said that even though the scientific evidence for evolution is not convincing, we should have faith and believe in evolution. This is harder to do after the recent studies and analyses, such as those of Phillip E. Johnson, retired law professor at the University of California, Berkeley. Johnson has shown that the basic assumption underlying evolution is an unproven philosophic premise, namely that only material things exist. On the basis of this philosophic premise, what other explanation of the existence of the gradation of plants and animals and human beings is possible?

Darwin believed that the fossil record would eventually show intermediate gradations between species. But the prominent evolutionists, Stephen Jay Gould of Harvard, and Niles Eldridge of the Natural Museum of History in New York have convincingly declared that after over a hundred years of study of the fossil record, the intermediate species have not been found, not in the case of the horse, nor man, nor any other species. They explain that all the record shows is the stability of species. One species begins and exists for a period of time and then ceases to

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exist while another begins, another that is totally different. Hence, they can only explain evolution, not as a gradual change, but as a sudden change from one species to a totally different one, and they call this punctuated equilibrium. Gould also rejects natural selection as inadequate to explain such a sudden evolutionary change.

Michael Behe, the microbiologist, in his book, *Darwin's Black Box*⁶ has shown that the simplest one-cell organism is so irreducibly complex that it could not have come into existence by evolution. It has numerous organs, nucleoli, nucleus, cytoplasm, a semi-permeable membrane as its circumference, and an extremely complex information system, the DNA. Like a watch whose parts work together and which won't work unless all the parts are present and interact, so the simplest cell.

Finally, David Foster, a computer expert, in his book *The Philosophical Scientists*⁷ has shown that the number of seconds in ten billion years, the time the universe is supposed to have existed, is 10 to the 18 power, (that is eighteen zeros after ten. Nine zeros after ten is a billion) whereas the complexity of the haemoglobin protein in a red blood cell is ten to the 650 power, while a T4 bacteriophage cell (which occurs in human blood) is ten to the 78,000 power.

Thomas H. Huxley, an avid promoter of Darwin's evolutionary ideas, declared that if six monkeys strummed at random on typewriters for millions of millions of years they would type all the books in the British Museum. Huxley did

6 Behe, Michael. *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*. New York: The Free Press, 1996.

7 Foster, David. *The Philosophical Scientists*. New York: Dorset Press, 1985.

not do the mathematics, which he could have done with a logarithm. If we assume that “millions of millions of years” is the life of the universe at ten billion years, then a modern computer will tell us that these monkeys would only type one half line of sense, with the choice of matching any line in those 700,000 books in the British Museum. In other words evolution appears to be a statistical impossibility. Hence I say for those who believe in evolution, the human species as known in recorded history, which is a sliver of history from the evolutionary point of view is unchanged.

Opposed to this is a theory that cultures undergo evolutionary change, and that morals change with them and with changing situations. Karl Rahner has stated that the projection of biological evolution to an evolution of culture is a false step. Moreover, as I have just said, from the point of evolutionary theory, the few thousand years of recorded history of human life are but the blink of an eye in evolutionary time, and do not support the idea of evolutionary change. This whole nineteenth century idea of inevitable progress, incorporated also in Marxism, has been shattered by the behavior of human beings in the 20th century, with genocides, world wars, criminal activities of all kinds on a vast scale, and a general deterioration of morals. We have no reason to accept evolving moral norms or moral relativism, or approaches to happiness, which belie the Gospel and reason.

At the same time we can affirm a kind of progress in history, such as in the development of doctrine, in certain refinements, in technical progression. Technical progression is an obvious fact and accelerates exponentially. This is because technological progress is brought about by invention of instruments, and new instruments permit the

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invention of further instruments. This is notable in regard to computers and the technological progress of the information age which has ensued as a consequence. While the world is becoming more united in possibility, this possibility is not being realized because of the waywardness of ethnic, national and other rivalries, and instead of a culture of life which technological progress makes possible, we have a culture of death.

This is a preface to the understanding of the Church's teaching on morality as the following of Christ and the way to human happiness. John Paul II has explained that human sexuality is relational. Inscribed in the body is this capacity of man and woman to give themselves as gift to each other in a union from which new life springs. This gift is a gift of persons through their bodies to one another in a lifetime commitment, a covenant. As such it manifests the union of Christ with His Church. The union of Christ and His Church is also an enduring and life-giving union, and one that is made through the body. The body of Christ is given through Calvary and the Eucharist to His Church which receives Him and offers itself in exchange. Christ's sacrifice is an example which the members of the Church are exhorted to follow by giving their bodies as instruments of good works and love of the neighbor for the salvation of all. If realized, this would portray on earth the nuptial banquet of Heaven, where all will be one in submission to the will of the Father.

Jesus said, "I will that they may be one as we, Father, are one, that they may be one in us, your love in them and I in them." The persons of the Trinity dwell within each other; as Jesus declared, "The Father and I are one" and "I am in the Father and the Father is in me." So we who

make one body are united in a union of hearts, by having the same faith, the same hope, and the same love. This union is fed by obedience to the Father and by our increasing union with Him through our union with His Son.

St. Paul says, "Render to God your bodies as a reasonable service." And "Do you not know that you are temples of the Holy Spirit?" Hence our bodies are sacred and are not to be profaned by sin. Every other sin is outside the body but the sexual sin defiles the body. Hence the Church understands the commandment not to commit adultery to prohibit all sins of the use of the sexual faculty outside of marriage.

Sexual control is necessary not only for the single person but also for the married. A happy marriage depends upon it. If married persons make a gift of their bodies to each other, then they must be in control of their bodies in order to make that gift. Experience confirms this truth. Where there is a want of self control, there is a demand placed on the other partner (usually the wife) which eventually leads to a repugnance for intercourse, and it is not unusual for wives after a time of being treated as instruments for the gratification of an unbridled passion, to refuse to have further intercourse with their husbands, leading often to infidelity and the breakup of the marriage.

But this control is needed in single persons so that they do not seek illicit gratification. This applies equally to those with hetero- and homosexual orientations. The homosexual orientation, however, being unsatisfactory to the persons concerned leads to multiplicity of casual partners, which surveys indicate often run into a thousand for a single homosexual. To offset this, and the danger of venereal disease, particularly AIDS, many homosexuals attempt

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to live in a bonded two-some. They wish this relationship to be sanctioned by the Church and society, with all the benefits and privileges of married persons.

Those with homosexual orientation may be very considerate, conscientious, and gifted persons, and if they are chaste may attain a high degree of holiness. My approach to homosexuals is to explain to them that their orientation is an invitation from Christ to intimate union, a union that is necessary if they are to remain chaste, as Jesus desires. In order to respond to this invitation, they need to know and practice the spiritual program which these conferences explain. Homosexual persons can be just as chaste as heterosexual persons, and achieve just as high a degree of holiness

The Church's sexual morality is necessary for the happiness of persons and society and for the safeguarding of family life and the upbringing of children. Children need a full-time mother for the first three to five years of life, and they need a father who is affectionately devoted to the mother and to them. The parents are the pillars of the child's temperament and are needed that this temperament develop normally. The father is very important to the child. He gives guidance, discipline, security, and stability to the child and to the mother in her role of forming the child's personality.

While the absence of a stable home with mother and father as outlined above is injurious to the child, these injuries, like others suffered during early development, can be remedied to some extent by life's experiences, and some children come through tragic circumstances more intact than others. Their religiosity is one of the factors that make for this resilience. I remember a terribly deprived four-year-old child in Bellevue Hospital who kept saying that no one

loved her except Jesus. The therapy was for a nurse to hold her continually throughout her term of duty. It is through bodily contact that the infant knows that it is loved. Even the separation of a newly-born infant from its mother is traumatic to an infant, who for nine months has been in intimate contact with the mother, is adjusted to her voice, to her smell, and who, when held by another, knows that this other is a stranger and not her mother. The adopted child suffers what has been called a primal wound.

Children need to be loved for their own sakes and not as prolongations of the parents serving the parents needs for example, in fulfillment of the unmet desires of the parent. Parent-centered parents, parents who are not child-centered cause the same damage in their children, whether this parent-centering is due to alcohol, mental disease, or an abusive temperament, or to absence from the child for such reasons as a prolonged hospitalization. The child feels rejected, has a low self-esteem, and may be always trying to please the parent and never succeeding or knowing its own identity and feelings.

A whole slew of wreckage of persons has followed upon the divorce of sexuality from its anchorage in marriage and in bringing forth new life. This anchorage matures parents who lovingly undertake their responsibilities. Its absence leads to self-centeredness, single parent families, divorce, contraception, and contraceptive mentality, abortion, euthanasia, child abuse, murder by children of their parents, cohabitation, AIDS, and many other misfortunes, many foreseen by Paul VI and enumerated in his encyclical *Humanae Vitae*. This wreckage has followed in the wake of its rejection. Ecclesially this rejection has led to the movement of dissent, which divides the Church.

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The way back is fidelity to the marriage covenant, esteem for marriage and for child-bearing and child-raising. It entails fidelity to the sexual ethics of the Church, abstinence before marriage and in the single life, and the recognition of the complementarity of the sexes, each person being equally precious and deserving of respect.

The feminist movement, insofar as it upholds the rights of women to be treated equally as persons in marriage, in business, in the Church, is of great importance. But this movement should not be dishonored by inappropriate power lust. Similarly, the homosexual movement rightly seeks to overcome discrimination because of homosexual orientation, but it needs to be purged of its lust for power, and of its justification of immoral practices, whether performed by men or women, just as celibate or married heterosexual persons should refrain from immorality. In other words neither movement should become an ideology and seek a primacy. Men, women, homo- and heterosexually oriented persons should all realize that first of all they are human beings, which realization brings unity, and then secondarily they are distinguished as homo- and heterosexually oriented, men and women, etc.

The family as an institution, under attack today especially in the West, will survive. But it is not so clear that a society that downgrades the family will survive. To save our society a renewal of the priesthood is necessary which will bring about a renewal of the Church and a renewal of society. And this renewal of the priesthood starts in an appreciation of the centrality of the Eucharist, our Lord's presence among us. A renewed priesthood will confirm the laity in their vocation as a royal priesthood, offering their daily lives in fulfillment of their calling. From this will flour-

ish the family and vocations to the priesthood and religious life. Instead of dissent, we need loyalty to the teaching of the Church and of our Pope. For those entering marriage, a deep realization of the married state is necessary, as a life-time covenant, in which each makes the festive gift of their bodies to the other for their mutual unity and for the bringing forth of new life. Contraception, which leads to self-centeredness and to abortion is inferior in every way to natural family planning, in which self-control is exercised, mutual communication and co-responsibility is encouraged, and in which all the side-effects and artificiality of contraception, with its expense, is eliminated.

Society should not penalize married people by the so-called marriage tax, but rather should encourage marriage and the raising of children by a full-time mother and by a steadfast father. Fatherhood needs to be more appreciated and practiced in the guidance and nurture of children. All this for the Christian should flow from a supernatural love which aims at God and the spouse and children, and through which patience, gentleness, chivalry and devotedness is practiced. This sounds ideal because we have drifted so far from what is normal. Other means of curtailing violence, killing, incivility, and disorders of every kind may have a value, but without the transformation of persons and culture they will not avail. Children must learn from their parents that all human life, including the unborn, the aged, the disabled, the terminally ill, is precious, and is not dispensable. Aberrations in civil society such as pornography, TV violence, and obscenity should be curbed. This is not an abridgment of free speech, but is a responsibility to avoid license which destroys the value of communication, or uses communication for evil and

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socially destructive ways. If human life is valued, then experimentation with human embryos, with the discard of those which are unwanted, human cloning, fertilization in a tube, all these practices which denigrate the divine plan for the bringing forth of human life in the living embrace of mutually-committed married partners must be eliminated.

Do Christians have a right to act publicly, to speak and vote in accordance with a Christian conscience? Or must they suppress their consciences and allow the public square to be occupied by those whose opinions and practices are destructive to society? In the previous conference I mentioned the case of Dean Jerome Kerwin of the University of Chicago who saved a student from suicide by relating the story of the Gospel. He would have been in trouble today for speaking of religion. But had he directed her to satanic worship, or to self-destruction, that would have been legal. Is this not the culture of death?

Our century has proven that morality without religion cannot be sustained. The consequence of a morality without religion is the deterioration of society and democracy. This was already stated by that acute observer of the American scene, de Tocqueville, as well as by the founding fathers of this country. The degeneration of society is the grand result of the great experiment of secularism. The remedy for secularism is not a theocratic state, or the establishment of a particular religion, but the upholding of religion and morality. It is the church and its Magisterium, which upholds religion and morality and which is called to train the citizens of nations so that they become upright citizens capable of playing their rightful role in society for its benefit. And it is the priests and their pastors, the bishops who must accomplish this task if society is to be healthy. This

is not to deny the role and participation of other Christian and non-Christian religions, and particularly the Jewish, in upholding religion and morality. For as Vatican II says, there are in other religions elements of truth and sanctification. Nevertheless, the mainline Christian denominations have allowed their allegiance to moral principles and the Ten Commandments to waver, while in Judaism, Orthodox Judaism has alone been uncompromising in its adherence to moral standards. But the strongest bastion of morality has been the teaching authority of the Roman Catholic Church, and for that reason it is the most attacked by secular humanism.

The Church must uphold religion and morality in society. The priests must teach the laity to play their part in the forming a holy nation. The welfare of the Church, its people and of the nations depends on the renewal of the priesthood.

Mission and Dialogue

As we stand at the beginning of the third millennium, we find a variegated, changing, kaleidoscopic picture. In this conference I will speak of a twofold response to this situation on the part of the Church: mission and dialogue. The contemporary Church since Vatican Council II is committed to these two processes which are very different. It is of first importance to distinguish them. With regard to the mission of the Church, Jesus said in His priestly prayer reported by St. John, "May they be one just as, Father, you are in me and I am in you, so that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe it was you who sent me" (John 17:21 NJB). I will speak most especially of the Church's mission to Catholics. The Church must in this new millennium address the faithful. If the prayer of Jesus is to be heard, Catholics must change their outlook and attitudes. If the world is to believe in Jesus and His Church, as Jesus Himself declares, the faithful must be one as the Father and the Son are one. This is not the case at present.

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Now we know well what the mission of the Church to preach the gospel is. This has been its mission since Jesus said to His apostles and disciples just before he ascended into Heaven, "Go and teach all nations to observe all that I have taught you, and I will be with you until the end of the world." This mission was fulfilled beautifully by St. Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, as we know from his letters and from the Acts of the Apostles. By tradition we know that all the Apostles worked assiduously to spread the faith; and all died witnessing to it. We know that at every age of the Church, its mission was fulfilled. We may think of St. Augustine of Canterbury, apostle of the English, St. Boniface, apostle of the Germans, Sts. Cyril and Methodius, apostles to the Slavs, the apostles to India like de Nobili, to China like Ricci, to Japan like St. Francis Xavier, the Franciscan, Dominican and Jesuit missionaries to the Americas, and the vast expansion of missionary activity and of missionary congregations of religious in the nineteenth century. Since Vatican Council II there has been a slowing, but not cessation of the Church's mission, with the dissemination of the idea that members of each culture and religion have their own way to go to God, a slowing not authorized by Vatican Council II or by the recent Pontiffs.

What is new is the emphasis on dialogue which began with Vatican Council II and Paul VI's first encyclical on this subject which has been promoted by the Church since then. Now dialogue is not a substitute for missionary activity. The Church of the new millennium faces widespread hostility, bias, and ignorance. The purpose of dialogue is not the conversion of dialogical partners. The purpose of dialogue is to overcome ignorance, bias, and prejudice. The

Catholic partner must explain the teaching and discipline of the Church. But the object is not to bring his dialogical partner into the Church. Besides explaining the doctrine and practice of the Church, he is to listen to his partner and to sympathetically learn his position. The Catholic needs to understand other religions and secularism, and to overcome his ignorance, bias, and prejudices.

As mentioned, the first encyclical that Paul VI wrote after Vatican Council II was on dialogue. Dialogue is important because non-Catholics should not remain in ignorance of the Church and in their bias against it. Nor is it right for Catholics to ignore others, to be biased against them or to be hostile to them. This is not why Jesus Christ came. This is not the charity that He taught. This is not the action of the Holy Spirit, which He gave us. Rather, we must love each other, even our enemies. Do we love others by ignoring them or by being hostile to them? And perhaps without realizing it, we misrepresent and wound them. This has been the history, I will not say of the Church, but of Churchmen with regard to the Jews, as recounted by the diocesan priest of Providence, RI, recently deceased, Father Edward Flannery in his book *The Anguish of the Jews, Twenty-three Centuries of Antisemitism*.

Dialogue leads to the discovery of what religions have in common and in what they differ. Vatican Council II, speaking of the various Christian churches says that they contain rays of the truth and means of sanctification. They are united with us Catholics in having the sacrament of baptism which makes us a new creation. And John Paul II has repeatedly said that baptized or not, we human beings are all children of God. As such we are all brothers and sisters. To participate in dialogue with those of other religions

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one must understand his/her own religion. Only then can we make our beliefs and practices understandable and clear to others, answer their questions, and overcome their ignorance, prejudices, and biases. A fruit of this process is friendship between those with differing allegiances and cooperation in common enterprises.

The Church is committed to dialogue. The Anglican-Catholic Theological Commission met for decades. We have had a report from this Commission II which agreed on the importance of the primacy of the Pope and noted that his authority could be exercised differently with regard to the Anglican community if it were united to Rome, upholding those Anglican traditions that are legitimate from a Roman viewpoint.

Also in progress is the Jewish-Catholic dialogue. Leading Jewish rabbis have noted that the estrangement of the two faiths has been overcome, and now it is important to address the theological issues separating them. Moslem-Catholic dialogue is also in process, and the Catholic theologians are urging Moslem states to allow the free exercise of religion. Dialogue between Catholic monks and Hindu and Buddhist monks has been promoted by the Vatican's Secretariat of Religious Unity. Monks from different traditions recognize that they have much in common. Buddhist and Hindu monks are visiting Catholic monasteries, and Catholic monks are visiting Hindu and Buddhist monasteries.

How can the Catholic faithful profit by these dialogues? They can do so by reading the reports that give the results of the dialogues. But it seems to me that before all else Catholics need to be re-evangelized. So this brings me again to the mission of the Church to preach the Gospel

to Catholics. Catholics need to be taught the spiritual program that is presented to them by Vatican Council II. Catholics need to be fed not only milk, but also stronger food. They need to be led into a real developing relationship with Christ, and if they are they will seek truth in earnest and accept all that the Church teaches. The conscious limitations that we put to our relationship with the Church place limitations on our relationship with Jesus. These limitations must be removed, and that can only be done by instruction in solid doctrine and by a life of prayer to which all are called. All are called to the same holiness whether monks, priests, the married, or single. As we enter more deeply into the mysteries of Christ through the Church's spiritual program, we will move towards each other, towards becoming one.

Recently I was consulted by a priest about a parishioner who had very severe temptations which he was resisting. I inquired about his spiritual practices and recommended the spiritual program that is proposed by Vatican Council II in its *Constitution on the Church*. The priest objected, "He is a layman. How will a layman get the time in his busy life to spend half an hour a day in mental prayer, go to daily Mass, make a thanksgiving after Mass, and do spiritual reading?" Now this is typical. I asked how much time lay people spend watching television, six or eight hours a week? He replied, "Some spend four hours a day." Yes, the spiritual program takes time. To get to know and love Jesus takes time. But the spiritual program of the Church is for the People of God, whether they are lay or not. All are called to the same holiness. One gets to be a lover of Jesus by spending time with Him, by getting to know Him through meditation on His person, His teaching, and His

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parables. And the lover spends time with the Beloved.

Priests are busy too, busy working in the Lord's vineyard. They, especially, need to take time to following the spiritual program of the Church. Then they will teach this Catholic spirituality to the faithful. As the faithful pursue a deepening relation with Christ their hunger for truth and solid doctrine will increase. They will become one with each other and one with Jesus and His Father. Jesus declares in His priestly prayer that this unity is necessary if the world is to receive the faith. In the absence of this unity it is not to be wondered that the world does not believe. Moreover, Catholics who take the means to pursue union with Jesus will become more open to dialogue with other religions. They will become capable of participating in this dialogue, and they will begin to shed their ignorance, prejudices, and biases. As they do, the Catholic Church will become more attractive to non-Catholics and to non-Christians.

The Church constantly renews itself. It has in Vatican Council II a program for renewal that Pope Paul VI and John Paul II have assiduously pursued in the spirit of that Council. John Paul II's teaching will be a legacy to guide the Church in its renewal in the new millennium. What is needed is the renewal of the priesthood so that Christ is free to act in and through His priests. Then lay people will be instructed in their mission as the royal priesthood called to form a holy nation. The mission of the laity does not come from the hierarchy but from the sacraments of initiation: baptism and confirmation, but it is to be exercised in harmony with the teaching and discipline of the Church. For this, the instruction of priests is helpful. Both priests and people need an ongoing conversion which is promoted by the spiritual program.

Before discussing this spiritual program, let me situate it in the context of today's world. It is not surprising that the Catholic faithful are affected with the dominant movements in our society. The Enlightenment, emphasizing reason as the only way of arriving at truth, rejected revelation, faith, the Church, priesthood, and the sacraments. Many of the faithful as a result of this influence have a watered down faith. The Romantic Movement stressed affectivity, joy, beauty, and also rejected the sacraments, the Church, and the priesthood. This led in the Sixties to the sexual revolution and hedonism, the unlimited search for pleasure. We see this influence in cohabitation, sexual intercourse without love, adultery, abortion, euthanasia and in general, a rejection of the Cross of Christ, asceticism, discipline, and an easing up of moral standards. Accordingly, it is not surprising that many Catholics reject the moral teaching of the Church, finding that it places restrictions on the freedom they seek in the pursuit of their goals. Feminism and the gay movements claim many adherents who do not wish to accept the teaching and moral standards of the Church, preferring the laxity promoted by the world and by Hollywood. The Internet offers easy access to pornography and to casual sexual relationships. Children now stumble upon pornography on the Internet. Many good Catholic women spend a great deal of time watching soap operas which glorify adultery and illicit sexual gratification. Movies and videos do likewise.

Given this situation, it requires a profound conversion brought about by the grace of God to break loose from the bonds that these attitudes and practices produce. A program putting into practice what Christ and the Church teach is not going to be very appealing except to those

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who have hit bottom, those who have been disillusioned by the tragedy and meaninglessness of modern life, the futility of its practices, and who decide to get off the merry-go-round and turn their lives over to God and His Christ, and seek happiness where it truly can be found – the pearl of great price for which the merchant sold all he had (Matt. 13:45).

What makes this situation worse is that since Vatican Council II, through no fault of the Council, the faith has not been handed on. The catechetical movement has been experimenting with things other than teaching the faith – with feeling and experiencing, but not with the teaching of Christ and of His Church. Youngsters who do attend CCD are just waiting for Confirmation and then they are through with the Church until they marry, if they do marry, and have children to baptize. Many uninstructed Catholics learn about matters of faith from the newspapers. Now the teaching of the Church is not news, but every theologian who disagrees with the Church makes news, and many faithful get their instruction from the news. Finally, the Eucharistic liturgy, the Mass, as it is performed in too many parishes, fails to convey the faith to those who participate in it. It is too often an attempt at entertainment and fails to bring the participants into the mystery of faith which the Eucharist is. Parishioners who have not gone to confession for years receive communion blithely, whether they are committing adultery, or are in second marriages, or are practicing contraception, or attend Sunday Mass only occasionally. Hence many, perhaps most Catholics do not understand that the Sacred Heart of Jesus wishes His love to reign in their hearts.

A baby who is not in the middle of the bed but on the edge is apt to fall off. That is what happens to many of the

faithful. They are leaving the Church in droves. And many that remain have left the Church without leaving it. This is not a severe judgment. Father Stanley Marrow, SJ in his *Gospel of John. A Reading* says, "In every age there are those who seek to pick and choose in the revelation, who try to make it fit their predetermined parameters, who want desperately to make it acceptable to 'the modern world,' whether the world of the first or twentieth century. This is why the fourth gospel does not hesitate to call all such responses to the revelation by their proper name: refusal to believe" (6:64-65).

Now given this situation, what Catholics need to do is to fall in love with Jesus. Should this be so hard? Is there anyone else who loves us as He does? Is there anyone else as beautiful as He? Is there anyone else upon whom our happiness depends as it does on Him who is our salvation?

Now to fall in love with Jesus requires faith. We have to know the story of Jesus, of His coming into the world, of His teaching and deeds and fellowship in this world, of His passing to the Father, of His coming back in life after death to talk with His disciples and continue His fellowship with them, of His going to the Father and sending into our hearts the Holy Spirit and His love. This is the greatest story in the world, the greatest romance, and we are called to the greatest adventure. Is this something that deserves just a half-hour on a Sunday, or should we turn over our entire life and will to Him? The recovering alcoholics of Alcoholics Anonymous do that in their third step, and they are then on their way to wholeness and physical and spiritual health. Can we do less, who eat the flesh and drink the blood of our God?

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Granted this is something that is done in faith. Faith means that we do not see, but believe. And to nurture faith to the point of really knowing Jesus and coming to a full love of Him requires use of the means that the Church supplies us – the spiritual program which the *Constitution of the Church* teaches us.

Prayer is life, it is a participation in the divine life, and from it flow hope and confidence in facing all the trials and adversities of this life. We must nurture our faith and our prayer life by solid spiritual reading through which Jesus will speak to us and guide us and teach us. In the Eucharist we unite our lives our activities and sufferings with His putting them on the paten so that they can be offered in union with Christ's sacrifice by the priest who says, "May our sacrifice be acceptable to God the Almighty Father." Then Jesus comes to merge Himself with us in communion.

A youngster on his first communion said to Jesus, "I have waited all my life for this." Jesus answered, "I have waited all your life for this. Now we can both be happy." Jesus wants to make us happy. We have to get rid of sin and the occasions of sin, the persons, places, and things that if we frequent we know that we will fall into sin. And we must be faithful to the duties of our state of life, as good husbands, wives, parents, children, workers, employers, Christian and Catholics, for that is doing God's will. It does not stop there, but it does begin with these duties. As we pursue these means we will be lifted closer and closer to Jesus little by little, with a progress that will be invisible to us until we think back to what we were. And ahead of us is eternal life – a joy without end, without sorrow, with recompense for all the afflictions we have suffered and for

all the good we have done. That is the beautiful prospect that our faith holds out to us. The best part of it is that this is all true.

To recapitulate, the spiritual program that leads us to Jesus to Heaven and to wholeness consists in prayer supported by sound spiritual reading, regular participation in Mass, frequent receiving of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and by fidelity to the duties of our state of life, including our duties as Christians; and finally by self-denial, the repentance for sin, the avoidance of the occasions of sin and the rejection of whatever would impair our union with Jesus Christ, including lack of charity towards other people, first of all the household of the faith, but without exception, and with the elimination of prejudices and biases against others and the forgiveness of injuries.

Such a program will lead to the fulfillment of the priestly prayer of Jesus. "May they be one, Father, as we are one, may they be one in us, your love in them and I in them. That they may be where I am and may see the glory that you have given me before the creation of the world."

Before we are equipped to participate in ecumenical dialogue we need to become more deeply rooted in our faith and understand it well enough to give a reason for the faith that is in us, as St. Peter advises. Then in ecumenical dialogue we can come to understand other religions. Three of these are monotheistic, that is, belief in one God who is different from creatures and is the cause of creation. These are: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Judaism is the parent religion of the three, all of which descend from the patriarch Abraham. Judaism and Christianity descend through Abraham's Isaac, and the Muslims through Abraham's son Ishmael. All three recognize the moral code given in the

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Ten Commandments. With so much in common, there is a strong basis for dialogue and mutual understanding.

Judaism has a particularistic component. That is, one people has been chosen by God, formed into a nation, and given the land of Palestine in order to transmit the true faith to all nations. The mission to transmit the truth of the one God to all peoples is Judaism's universalistic component. Genesis says that all nations will be blessed in Abraham's descendants.

Christianity believes that by baptism and faith its followers become the children of Abraham in faith, those to whom the faith of the one God is transmitted. Together with the Jews it believes that the promised Messiah will come at the end of the world, but it also believes that this will be His second coming, that He has already come as Jesus Christ who died and was buried and rose again. It believes that Jesus being God could extend the Jewish religion through a fuller revelation and new rites and sacraments which have their roots in the Covenant, including Baptism, Penance, and the Eucharist (the Mass) to all peoples.

Christians themselves are in dialogue. They are united in the belief in Jesus, who is both God and man, in baptism in His name, in the name of His Father the Son and the Holy Spirit. Eastern Orthodoxy, the heir of many of the original apostolic Churches founded by St. Paul in the Near East, and Roman Catholicism, heir to Christian Rome and the West, retain beliefs and structures in common. There is little that separates them. They believe in bishops, priests, and the Eucharist as the Real Presence of Jesus remaining with us. Protestant Churches on the other hand vary in their beliefs, but are united in the belief in Jesus the Savior, the redemption from sin through His sacrifice on Calvary,

and of the existence of an afterlife in Heaven for the saved and Hell for the condemned. A principal doctrinal difficulty for all the non-Roman Christian Churches is the existence of a central unity in the Pope with jurisdiction over all the churches.

But besides the doctrinal and traditional differences of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity are the emotional blocks placed by historical antagonisms which are difficult to overcome. Jews rightly remember the centuries of Christian discrimination, contempt, and persecution, the Orthodox remember the sack of Constantinople by the Catholic Crusaders, and the Mohammedans remember the slaughter by these same Crusaders of Muslims in the Near East in their temporarily successful attempt to rescue the Christian Holy Places in Jerusalem and in the land holy to all three of these religions. Dialogue intends to remove these emotional resistances that solidify the prejudices, biases, and ignorance of each other.

We might mention one other inflammatory issue that divides Catholics from many Christians: the pro-life, pro-choice issue, the question of reproductive freedom, the freedom to engage in sexuality with the choice of removing the consequences if conception takes place. Besides this question of taking of the unborn life or the freedom of women to control the consequences of sexual activity, there is the question of racial and national preponderance. The West, having engaged in abortion for many decades is dwindling in population and unable to reproduce itself, while the peoples of Africa, the peoples of Asia, and the Latin Americans are increasing in population. While it is a known fact that with economic development population rates decrease, and that therefore the effort should be on

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helping them to develop and attain the freedom enjoyed by the West, meanwhile their numbers tend to overwhelm. The Catholic Church is accused of wanting to impose its values on others, while the powers of the West, especially the American government, wishes to bring about contraception and abortion in the developing countries, including by tying foreign aid to the acceptance of abortion and contraception. To this end, the foundations of billionaires like Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, the Packard Foundation, etc. are pouring millions and billions into Planned Parenthood and other providers of abortion for these countries.

These issues are difficult to resolve. The need for divine help to resolve them reminds us of the importance of prayer and the spiritual program. Meanwhile there are many social needs which the religions can work together to solve.

CONFERENCE **ELEVEN**

Transcendent and Transforming Union

The subject of this conference is the transcendent and transforming union. I will compare the divinity of human beings in a pantheistic universe with the deification of human beings according to Christian revelation. Connected with this subject, as we shall see, is the revival of pagan monism, that is, pantheism, and Gnosticism, a heresy of the early Church.

The human person is open to the transcendent. This is a dimension which cannot be successfully repressed forever. Man is by nature social, but he is also by nature religious, that is seeking something beyond, something ultimate, something that gives meaning to everything else.

The transcendent can be repressed, as it is by atheistic secular humanism, it can be misdirected to entities other than its proper object, the true God, or it may seek Him who is the ultimate source of all being, and the true transcendent.

While the restricting of one's worldview to the secular to the exclusion of the sacred and spiritual, seems triumphant

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in our culture, nevertheless a hunger for the transcendent is breaking through the hard crust of secular humanism.

Two great movements of the past help to explain some of the modern and postmodern attitudes that we find in society at the dawn of the new millennium. They are the Enlightenment, and the Romantic Movement. The Enlightenment looked to reason and science to explain the phenomena of the world, and fostered science and technology. But technology, and science as conceived by the Enlightenment and as practiced today, are value-free enterprises. This means that science can produce nuclear material, but as science it is indifferent to whether it is used to generate electricity or to produce bombs. I do not say that scientists are indifferent, because besides being scientists they are human, and human beings have values. But science itself is value-free. Science can produce animals, and perhaps human beings, by cloning, but as science it is indifferent to whether cloning produces animals or human beings.

The Enlightenment installed Reason as its goddess, as the highest form of knowledge, and rejected revelation, the supernatural, the Church, the sacraments, and the priesthood. This rejection was taken over by the Romantic Movement, which attempted to supply what was lacking in the Enlightenment, namely affectivity, emotions, the spirit, beauty, and joy, but stopped short of the supernatural. The Romantic Movement emphasized individual lived experience, the subjective, affectivity, and led to the linking of like-minded persons. The emphasis was on communality of race, language, culture, and in our time gender. This movement also looked to the pre-Christian religion of the peoples as natural to them. From this came the Nazi movement in Germany and other ethnic and communality-

oriented movements such as have flared up in the former Soviet Union and in the Balkans, and in the gay movement. The Romantic Movement issued in the Sixties into the sexual revolution, which was a rejection of tradition, authority, institutions, and a movement for free heterosexual love. The Sixties turned into the Nineties in which revolution became the Establishment, and spawned the gay agenda and pantheism (pagan monism or non-dualism).

Pagan monism is a return to the primitive pagan pre-Christian religious roots, and is the religiosity of the New Age. The New Age is anti-Christian, but may have a Christian window-dressing. Its religion, monism, is the belief that everything is one, everything in the universe is related and one, but not homogeneous, and that this oneness is God. God is not outside the universe but *is* the universe. Therefore, we humans are part of the divinity and divine. Therefore, we are free to make our own norms for our behavior. Monism is pagan and it is in deadly opposition to the belief system of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, all of which believe in a personal transcendent God over and above the universe to whom we are subject. Pagan monism may adopt Christian terms or practices as the icing on its pantheistic cake. It lends force to the ecological movement, a movement that has merit when not pushed too far.

Monism, in the time of the hippies of the Sixties, who were on the fringes of society, came from India and the East. Hence its non-dualism. Coming to the West it acquired a Christian coating. It now occupies the seats of power in government, academia, and the media. Gnosticism was a second century heresy which is now rehabilitated and combines many strands including a Christian strand among its many faces. It also enters into the New Age pantheon.

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In assessing the cultural tides from the viewpoint of Christ's teaching, we find the establishment of a new mind-set. There has been a shift in values and they affect behavior and account for the deterioration of Western society. In America this deterioration has accelerated but co-exists with a good deal of generosity and some solid values, hence we hear of a "cultural war."

Stephen Covey, the author of the best-selling book, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective Leaders*, made a study of success literature of the last 200 years. He found that until the last fifty years leaders were sought who were men of character, who inspired trust. During the last fifty years leaders have been sought who have an image and use techniques to gain acceptance. He came to the conclusion that these techniques, not bad in themselves, were in the long run self-defeating unless the person using them had a basic goodness of character. Otherwise they were eventually seen as manipulative. What we need is a political leader of character. And we need a renewal of the priesthood to help in generating character, which is the theme of these conferences. The priesthood disinfected from the current mind-set, needs to preach the Gospel and provide the basis for a truly Christian mind-set.

The New Age now penetrates religious consciousness. It has tolerance for everything except Catholicism, which is Christianity in its pure form, in a form that is irreducibly opposed to non-dualism, since Christianity advocates a duality – a transcendent God outside the universe which He created and which is subject to Him and to His laws. The transcendent and religious dimension of the human personality has been derailed from its proper object, which is the transcendent God. While this presentation schematic

and oversimplified, I think it explains many features of today's West, particularly of contemporary USA.

Rejecting Christ and His teaching, the movements we have described exclude what can provide a synthesis of the various values they seek. For Christ and His teaching includes the values of truth in science, philosophy, and revelation. It includes the value of the human dignity of the person, as well as that of society, affectivity as well as rationality. All these values are contained in Christ and with the certainty that comes from their being of divine origin, something that the goddess and other transcendental movements outside of traditional religion do not have. Christ brought us truth, goodness, beauty, and the abundance of life.

Now as opposed to the pantheistic-pagan monistic conception of a universe which is God, and of which we, as part, are divine, Christ has revealed to us His Father. According to the Judeo-Christian revelation God is not part of the universe but is its Creator. From all eternity the Father gave His divine nature to His Son and the Father and Son gave it to the Holy Spirit, three persons equal in majesty in one divine nature, dwelling within each other. Not being able to give the divine nature divinely again, the divine persons decided to create intelligent beings who they could introduce into their divine life making them partakers of their divinity if they accepted the divine invitation. The eastern churches call this process divinization.

We do not have the divine nature naturally, but by adoption. We do not have it of necessity, but as a free gift. Once given, it is ours so long as we remain in the state of grace with which this divine gift endows us. It is up to us to recognize the divine bounty which has brought us

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into existence and which invites us to share the divine life. We do so by returning love for love and living in accordance with the divine commandments. This preserves us in our humanity. The suffering and injustice in the world with which we are all afflicted does not have its source in God. Rather its source is in the rejection of God's will through disobedience, first of all in the sin of Adam and Eve, and then in our personal sins and those of others. Eternal life is offered us by divine mercy, restoring the balance of justice. Each is rewarded according to what he has lovingly suffered and done. Plato realized that there must be a life after death in which the injustice of this life finds its balance, and so it is.

It is this divine life which we priests must possess, teach, and make available to others, so that the laity value it above everything else and take the means of advancing in its possession. These means are the spiritual program which these conferences have discussed. They lead to life everlasting, which is the subject of the final conference.

In psychiatry the transcendental dimension of the human personality is taken into account by Carl Jung's opinion that adjustment problems are not finally successfully treated until the person's religious problem is resolved. It is taken into account by Viktor Frankl's logotherapy which considers the repression of the religious instinct in man to be harmful, and that the resolution of human problems requires finding the work for which God has destined one. It is accounted for in transcendental psychology which like Jungian analysis does not undeviatingly aim at true transcendence, the one true God.

In Western culture this hunger for spirituality has taken various forms, as has already been mentioned, namely the

revival of second century Gnosticism and pagan monism. This is carefully documented in the book *Star Wars* by Peter Jones, a scripture scholar who has a Ph.D. from Princeton and a Master's degree in theology (Th.M.) from Harvard. Today there flourish witches, wiccans, earth and creation spirituality and Reiki, whose practitioners in their Reiki II formation connect with spirit guides, and whose results are completely out of proportion to the means used:

Moreover, this desire for the transcendent without formal religion is characteristic of feminist Catholic religious sisters institutes in which the Church's rituals, faith, morals, scripture are changed, discarded, or ignored. This situation is aptly described by feminist Sister Sandra Schneider, a professor of New Testament studies and spirituality at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, California. Sister Sandra lectures at seminaries. In a conference to the Leadership of Women Religious, reported in the *Review for Religious*, she said:

For many the God of Christianity seems too small, too violent, and too male; the focus to Jesus Christ seems narrow and exclusive; the Resurrection seems mythological, hopelessly if not incredible, and in any case irrelevant to a world in anguish; the institutional church seems medieval, sexist, and clerical; liturgy is alienating; morality is out of touch with reality; and church ministry is a continual battle with male hostility and power dynamics.

So what does Sister Sandra see as the result of this for religious institutes? She says, "It can no longer be taken for granted that the members share the same faith; a serious

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situation for a life form which is based not only on faith but specifically on Christian faith.” She adds:

This ‘God-quest’ caused many to ‘question whether Catholic Christianity offers an adequate, much less a preferable, access to Holy Mystery or compelling motivation for ministry.’ This is the point at which the disjunctive between spirituality which is a matter of a passionate concern and religion which is a locus of struggles and alienation is apparent, and in my opinion, this may be the bifurcation point at which the choice between death and transformation [of religious life] is going to be made.

This is an eloquent statement of where the spiritual hunger and the search for the transcendent outside of an authentic tradition lead. It leads, Sister Sandra says, to a choice between death and transformation.

Actually, it is clear that the feminist religious institutes are dying for lack of vocations. The dissenting institutes do not attract the young, whereas the institutes are flourishing which are in full harmony with the Church, its teaching authority, and its tradition, and are up-dated according to the mind and documents of the Council. What is it that attracts young people who are seeking a religious or priestly vocation? The vocations are going to what are called conservative institutes. That is, ones which do not reject the scriptures, that do not worship the goddess or creation, but accept the doctrine and discipline of the Church. Likewise, bishops who are outstandingly and manifestly devoted to the teaching authority of the Church and its discipline have seminarians applying for the diocesan priesthood. In the

North American College in Rome, as well as in the Catholic University of America, the seminarians are attracted to the teaching of John Paul II. These young seminarians accept the teaching authority of the Church, and find in the documents of Vatican Council II a rich treasure. They are pastoral and want to help the people with their current problems.

It seems that Catholic youth drawn to Christ do not have the problems that their older brothers and sisters have. No doubt, as the media like to declare, the enthusiasm of youth for John Paul II does not extend to his teachings in all cases. Yet those among the youth who are drawn to a religious or priestly vocation are attracted exactly by the Pope's teaching and example, as are many who convert to the Catholic Church.

The Pope influences even hardened non-Catholic journalists who attend the gatherings of youth at papal events. When John Paul II was in New York, one of the journalists said, "Who else is there?" Who else loves people, loves the truth as he sees it and has the courage to declare it without considering the polls. This can afford each of us matter for an examination of conscience.

From his vantage point, the Pope saw hope for the future in what he named "the new movements." He called for a meeting of members of these movements in Rome on Pentecost Sunday 1998. Five hundred thousand responded. So an element of hope in the contemporary situation is the influx of vocations to priestly and religious life of young convinced and committed Catholics who are loyal to the Church and its program. On the other hand, what is dying are the institutes and areas of the Church where this is not the case.

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These “new movements” which extend the mighty influence of John Paul II are not necessarily born since Vatican II. They already embodied the spirit of Vatican II before it met. Such movements include the Legionaries of Christ, founded in 1948 which has two thousand seminarians, St. Peter’s Fraternity and St. John the Evangelist, both receiving many priestly vocations, Opus Dei, Communion and Liberation, Focolare, and St. Egedius community in Rome which has mediated international conflicts. They are the seeds of the future, the promise of a new springtime in the winter of the Church.

Then there are the journals which support these movements, like *Communio*, founded by von Balthasar, *Crisis*, *30 Days*, *Inside the Vatican*, *The National Catholic*

Register published by the Legionaries of Christ, and many others. Among publishing houses there is the Ignatius Press, Sophia, and several others. Among educational institutions there is Steubenville’s Franciscan University, Christendom in Front Royal, Virginia, St. Thomas Aquinas in Santa Barbara, California and the University of Dallas in Texas staffed by the Cistercians of the Common Observance. Among movements for the laity are *Legatus* founded by Tom Gallagher, *Cor Christi Trinitatis Institute*, founded by Msgr. George E. Tracy, and the *Catholic Alliance*.

Seeds are not obvious. They are planted in the ground, and it is only when they have sprouted that they become visible. So I want to speak now, not of seeds, but what I have called the winter of the Church, the face the Church now presents to its members and to the world. I will put this in the context of the changes that society and the world are undergoing. It is in this setting that the present state of the Church can be best understood. Then I will recall how

the Church has renewed itself in the past, as described by two of the greatest of non-Catholic historians. Finally I will relate the Church's development to the stages in the life of Christ, which it follows.

The flourishing of the Church in the Christendom of the Middle Ages was a time when the universities grew out of the Church, such as Oxford, Paris, Bologna, when drama started by the plays performed in Churches to dramatize the Gospel, when the languages of nations began to grow out of the universally spoken and written Latin of the educated classes, when faith flourished, and when, if not observed, at least the charity of Christ and the Ten Commandments formed the conscience of Europe. The brilliance of St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Bonaventure, and their colleagues was eclipsed by a gradual deterioration of scholasticism, and the unity of Christendom was shattered by the rise of nation states. Finally, at the French revolution the apogee of Enlightenment swept the educated classes and filtered to the peoples, rejecting the Trinity, the Church, the supernatural, the priesthood, and the sacraments. This was the age of deism and of reason and of a belief in the goodness of humanity which through the development of science would bring mankind to a paradisaal state.

The world awoke from this dream with two world wars, several genocides, still in progress, of which the outstanding example was the Holocaust. And instead of a faith in reason and inevitable progress, reason is now dethroned by lived experience, relativism, deconstruction, and ideologies. A post-modern attitude, like Pilate, asks scornfully, What is Truth?

We have emerged from a period when the state was omnipotent: in Communist Soviet Union, in Nazi Germany,

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and Fascist Italy to various special interests and ideologies: ecological, homosexual, feminist, New Age, and One World Order. Generosity and good will abound, side by side with increasing incivility, rudeness, selfishness, hedonism, violence and the autonomy of the individual conscience, subject not to a solid formation but to ideologies and emotions. The sexual revolution, single parent families, illegitimacy, teenage pregnancy, and epidemic venereal disease exist side by side with advances in health, technology and the search for the transcendent.

There is rapidity of change and of inventions. There is the deterioration of the family with the failure to properly provide for the nurture of infants and children, and zero population growth leading to the decrease in native populations in countries of the West, and the influx of immigrants from Asian and Moslem countries. This is resulting in a changing racial mixture which is less open to being absorbed to form a homogenous population. Ethics are deeply affected and scientific invention tends to escape humanitarian guidance.

Now this contemporary situation deeply affects the Church. Harmonious with it is the movement of dissent against the teaching of the Church and of the Pope. Just as the hippie revolutionaries of the Sixties are now the establishment, so this aberrant movement is now established in the Church, in the Catholic universities, and among the faithful. An experienced pastor said, no doubt with some exaggeration, "The bishops do not obey the Pope, the priests do not obey the bishops, and the laity do not obey the priests. We have a Church of disobedience." Now of course this dissent is not uniform throughout the Church. There are courageous bishops as well as courageous priests but they suffer

persecution, persecution from within the Church and from the media which has an anti-Catholic and anti-Christian bias. The entertainment industry is an example of this bias. Meanwhile many Catholic universities invited abortion advocates, pornographic advocates (Larry Flynt at Georgetown) at their universities and at graduation services. The Cardinal Newman Society based in Falls Church, Virginia called on ten Catholic colleges and universities to cancel invitations to commencement speakers who have publicly disagreed with the Church's position on abortion. Paul VI already in his time said that the smoke of Satan had entered the Church. The smoke of Satan is disobedience. Hence, we might say that this is the winter of the Church.

About the survival of the Church which has shown an amazing capacity for renewal, the great English Protestant historian, Lord Macaulay, reviewing a work of a great German historian, von Ranke, wrote:

There is not, and there never was on earth, a work of human policy so well deserving of examination as the Roman Catholic Church She saw the commencement of all the governments and of all the ecclesiastical establishments that now exist in the world, and we feel no assurance that she is not destined to see the end of them all. She was great and respected before the Saxon had set foot on Britain, when Grecian eloquence still flourished in Antioch, when idols were still worshipped in the temple of Mecca. And she may still exist in undiminished vigour when some traveler from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on the broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's.

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The Church follows the life of Christ. In his infancy Herod sought His life, and the holy family had to flee to Egypt. So in the early Church there were the bloody persecutions. As the Church advanced in age, in the high Middle Ages, there was a flourishing of the faith that corresponded to Christ's public life and His drawing of his disciples and of the crowds. Then came His Passion and the desertion of disciples and the crowds. That is where the Church is now. Catholics are leaving the Church in droves, and there is an internal hemorrhage. But when things were at their apparent worst for Jesus at His crucifixion, His Resurrection, undreamed of by His followers, was only three days away. So it is my belief that despite the winter of the Church, its spring is just around the corner and will come suddenly, confounding all the dire projections based on present trends. The ever-renewed vigor of the Church, seen by Lord Macaulay from the viewpoint of its history, belies the expectations of those who foresee an increasing decline of the Church.

The basis of the renewed springtime of the Church is laid in the documents of Vatican Council II, and in the new movements, and in the loyalty of those now entering the priesthood and religious life. The future will be characterized by dialogue and by the revitalized mission of the Church, the new evangelism, first of all to those in the household of the faith. Prominent in this movement will be the spiritual program which the Constitution of the Church of Vatican II has delineated.

In conclusion allow me to reiterate that the primary task of priests is to live and teach the divine life which is offered us in word and sacrament, and most particularly in the Eucharist. We must teach the laity to value, above

everything, this divine life, into which they are incorporated by baptism, by faith and charity and by the sacraments, and which is sustained through prayer, fortified by spiritual reading, and exercised by good works. Both priests and laity need to take the means which God offers through His Church of advancing in the possession of eternal life. These means are the spiritual program, which these conferences have discussed, and they lead to life everlasting which is the subject of the final conference.

CONFERENCE **TWELVE**

Our Destination

The Gospel which priests preach is the most profound, lofty, comforting, and practical of messages. It is not intended to take the place of counsel, reason, deliberations, and decision-making for which it does not provide the answers. But what it does provide is a basis for deliberations, counsel, and decision-making. And it provides a way for human beings, whose formation to human life through parental and educational influences is never complete, to be healed, matured, strengthened, and to become more fully human. This is an enterprise that should have priority and which deserves an energetic and sustained pursuit.

The maker of systems gives the best directions on how to use them, whether these are computer programs, automobiles, furnaces, or sewing machines. The divine Creator has given us the instructions on how human beings should operate if they are to be truly human, and these instructions are contained in the Old and New Testaments and in the teaching of the Church.

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We are rightly concerned about our future. Indeed we are living longer. The National Health Service of Great Britain, on the basis of its database which includes all citizens, has arrived at the conclusion that men reach old age today at the age of eighty and women at eighty-five. This is a bell curve; some reach this level earlier and some later, but most at the peak-plateau of the bell, which are the ages of eighty and eighty-five respectively.

We make certain provisions for our future: Social Security, IRAs, pension plans, investments. This foresight is good. God has created us with the power of providing for ourselves. The Old Testament tells us that we are placed in the hands of our own counsel. God's providence over us includes our providence over ourselves in such wise that if we fail to provide for ourselves we are hindering divine providence from providing for us. Jesus' injunctions such as, "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof" and, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid, you are of more value than many sparrows" (Matt. 10:29-31 NRSV). Again Jesus says, "And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow, they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you that even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these." These teachings are to help us to eliminate worry and undue concern about the future and failure to live in the present. They promote generosity in serving others here and now and total dependence upon the goodness of the Father. They are not meant to make us improvident, but on the other hand they do not exclude heroic trust in God and voluntary impoverishment, such as that of St. Francis of Assisi and his first followers,

and that of the first Jerusalem Community described by Acts; everyone sold what they had and laid it at the feet of the Apostles and the proceeds were distributed according to need. But when a famine came St. Paul made a collection from the Gentiles to help the impoverished Jerusalem community, which is how the Father provided for them in their need and in response to their complete dependence upon Him. Nevertheless, ordinarily each needs to provide for him or herself. St. Paul, to give an example to his followers, worked with his hands to provide for himself and his companions (Acts 20:34). It is not against the Gospel but in accordance with divine providence that we provide for our future.

Now if this is the case with regard to our older years, which we may never reach since we do not know when we will die, how much more should be our preparation for an eternity which is certain? For those who continue in and die in a state of grace, recovered or uninterrupted, eternity has already begun. It has begun in the sense that we already live by faith and by a love that is destined to live forever. Once created, our souls will never cease to be. They are simple, spiritual, without parts, and have spiritual faculties of intellect and will capable of existing in the absence of the body, and their life is the life of grace.

It is true that in our natural life, ideas in the intellect depend for their actuation upon the brain to supply an image. Thus, if we wish to think of a dog, we need an image, even if one that is generalized and without particular features.

Empirical knowledge of the activity of the intellect in the absence of brain activity is given in near-death cases where is a negative EEG and yet intellectual activity. It has

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long been well known that drowning persons often have a flashback of their entire life in a very short span of time. This is a characteristic of the near-death experience. The speed of this panoramic review is due to the fact that the memory is not dependent on the brain.

A young psychiatrist, Dr. Moody, reported these near-death experiences. A skeptical cardiologist, Dr. Michael Saboam, was induced to interview patients whom he resuscitated. He found that forty to sixty percent had near-death experiences. These follow a pattern which is widely known. As distinct from so-called astral out-of-the-body flights where the experiences of surroundings are not verified, near-death experiences relate details which their body cannot be aware of, details of the room in which the near-death experience occurs or nearby rooms where their soul travels. After leaving the body, ostensibly the soul passes through a dark tunnel. At the end of this tunnel the soul meets a being of light with which it feels completely at home. William Blake (1757-1825) painted such a tunnel being traversed by a soul towards an opening filled with light. This being of light, recognized by Christians as Christ, persuades the person to return to the body and resume life. After doing so, these persons are changed, they become other-centered and loving and devoted. These empirical facts manifest the reality of the spiritual realm, and of the soul and its capacity to function apart from the body. It also vividly reminds us that consciousness is centered in the soul and can continue through coma and death. This also warns us that we cannot make a judgment on the state of any dead person no matter how obstinately they refused the sacraments or continued in their selfishness and denial of the divine.

Jesus speaks of the second death. He tells us not to fear the first death, but the second. The first death is the death of the body. The second death is the death of the soul. The death of the soul is its separation from God, and all that is united with God. This is the loss of beatific, eternal life.

“The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us.” This charity is already the beginning of eternal life, and as it grows our participation in eternal life increases. The spiritual program, which has been outlined in these conferences, of good works, self-denial, the sacraments, prayer, and spiritual reading increase our faith, hope, charity, and our share of eternal life. Hence, among those provisions we make for our future the spiritual means should have a primary place. In the order of intention the end comes first, whereas in the order of execution, of activity here and now, material activities may be first: working, eating, sleeping, etc. They are done for the sake of the end.

St. Benedict exhorts his monks to have a longing for Heaven during Lent. A longing for Heaven is appropriate in every season. But there are a few obstacles that prevent us from having such a desire. One of these is that to get to Heaven one must die. Then there is the question of Purgatory; shall we have to spend time there? Then there is the long period between our death and the Second Coming of Christ. During this interval our souls will be unclad of our bodies. This is not an attractive prospect.

It is true that death is the entrance to real life. Dying means leaving behind everything we value now, including our bodily life and all that is familiar to us, our present world with all its beauty and attractiveness. And for what? For the

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vision of God. Once we enter into this vision we possess God altogether simultaneously and for eternity. Our present life is in dribblets, there is a past, which is gone, and a future that has not yet come, and we have only the present moment. But in eternity, all of eternity is present at once. In God we see the prototype of everything we value on earth. All the beauty of men and women and children, all their excellences are present in God in whose image they are made. And present in an infinitely supernal degree. All the joys and pleasure we have ever experienced are in God infinitely enhanced. All the vistas of sea, mountains, lakes, and forests are present in God in a ravishing beauty unknown to us. We will be at home; we will feel at home. And this will be without end, without sorrow, without fear. The riches of this life cannot be possessed without fear of loss, without anxiety and concern. But the riches of God are possessed securely and forever. Then there are the human delights of seeing Jesus, Mary, relatives, and friends, and seeing them in their beauty and in their happiness.

St. John of the Cross says, "In the evening of our life we will be judged by love alone." One's place in Heaven is not determined by our state in life, whether priest, monk, married, or single. It is determined by the degree of love one has at one's death. It is like a baseball game at which all in the ballpark are present and see the action. But those in the boxes and grandstands see more of the action than those in the bleachers. What determines whether one is in the grandstand or the bleachers is the price of the ticket. So those who have more love will see more of God for all eternity.

Our Lord said, "In my Father's house there are many mansions." Are these mansions arranged like ranch hous-

es along a street? I think they are one above the other, according to the different degrees of love of their residents. In other words there are plateaus in Heaven. If your friend has more love at the time of his death than you, he will be able in charity to come down to visit you, but you have reached your limit and cannot go up to visit him. So let us strive for the highest places in Heaven and we will be able to visit all the lower places. Those who are there are eager to help us; there is plenty of room at the top.

But it is common among Catholics to say, "I just want to get in." Since we usually fall short of our mark, what if we fall short here? So let us seek as high a place in Heaven as we are destined by God to occupy and act accordingly.

On earth there is a gradation of being. There is the inanimate sphere: mountains, lakes, oceans, and earth. Then there is the animate sphere, vegetation including flowers, which grow and reproduce, but lack sensation and motility. Then there is the animal sphere, which has motility, sensation, and emotions. Then there is the human, which combines a spiritual soul with a material body. Finally, there is the angelic sphere of pure spirits. Now on each of the inanimate, plant, and animal levels there are more possibilities than exist on this earth. But the various possibilities of gradation are all represented: inanimate and animate, plant and animal, man and angel.

Scripture says that there will be a new Heaven and a new earth. Heaven may indeed contain all the gradations existing here, and with different species too. Father O'Connor, a former professor at St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers, NY, in his book *Land of the Living*, for which Cardinal O'Connor wrote the preface, reports the saying of St. Augustine, "Put in Heaven whatever you wish so long

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as it has no imperfection.” St. Thomas adopted this saying but restricted the speculation on Heaven by his thesis that motion was an imperfection. Contemporary theologians are again speculating about what is in Heaven with the freedom that characterized the early Christians. We might say that God would put in Heaven whatever will make His children happy. If this is so, there will be many surprises in Heaven, much that will be appropriate to our human nature. For example, eating is a social event as well as a means of nourishing the body. There will be no need to nourish the body in Heaven, but the social event may remain. Consider that Jesus, after His Resurrection, asked the disciples if they had anything to eat, and ate some fish.

Now the attractiveness of Heaven from this point of view may be dampened by the two thoughts. One is that we will not have our body until the General Judgment. But once we see God our concept of time will be altered by our experience of eternity. Plato had already said that time compared with eternity is like the snap of a finger. The early Christians thought in terms of laying down their body at death to sleep and picking it up in the morning at the Resurrection. Once we see eternity the time before we pick up our body will by comparison seem short.

Still, the concern about a stay in Purgatory before reaching Heaven remains. It is God’s plan that we do our purgatory in this life. Our spiritual program should lead to that if seriously and earnestly embraced. If we lovingly accept the frustration, difficulties, humiliations, and diminishments of this life, they will be our purgatory. Purgatory is simply an emergency station for those who do not follow God’s plan.

The pains in Purgatory are more intense than the sufferings in this life, and they are not meritorious. The pains in this life are not so severe, and lovingly accepted they expiate our sins, increase our virtues, and lead to a greater love and greater possession of God for all eternity. St. Paul says, "These momentary tribulations work a weight of eternal glory." We should repeat this to ourselves when we are faced with unavoidable suffering. This is what makes Catholicism such an all-embracing philosophy – whatever happens has a meaning, or we can give it a meaning. Whatever happens can be turned to our good. We need to use it while we have it. As St. Paul says, "For those who love God, all things work together unto good." St. Augustine adds, "Etiam peccata" – even sins – that is past sins. We do not sin that good may come out of it; this is the additional sin of presumption.

Immediately after our death comes the particular judgment. Facing Jesus we will see at once what our life deserves. With this in prospect St. Therese said, "At the moment of death I will not ask you to take into account my good works, for I know that all are tarnished, but I will come to you with empty hands and throw myself upon your mercy." We should indeed let our light shine through our good works upon men that they may glorify our heavenly Father. But we need not depend upon them, but on the mercy of Jesus at the particular judgment.

He has promised that when He comes at the General Judgment at the end of time He will separate the sheep and the goats. All will see what each has done, good and evil, but also the repentance and expiation. To the goats He will say, "Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels"

✧ FORMATION OF THE PRIEST

(Matt. 25:33-34). Jesus has said He Himself is the way, the truth, and the life. This is the way that we take in pursuing the spiritual program set before us by the Church. It is the way of the heart of Jesus, of His truth and of His life.

About the Author

Father Raphael Simon, OCSO, MD

- *(August 6, 1909 -- November 12, 2006)*
- *Entered religious life December 10, 1940*
- *Professed November 1, 1943*
- *Ordained a Priest, May 31st, 1947*

The following notes have been provided by St. Joseph's Abbey.

KENNETH ALWYN SIMON was born to Reformed Jewish parents in New York City on August, 6th, 1909, the Feast of the Transfiguration.

A graduate of the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, he spent his study year abroad devouring Aristotelian philosophy at the University of Berlin. Post graduate work followed at the University of Chicago. In 1934, he earned a medical degree from the University of Michigan, with recognition in the field of clinical psychiatry.

His years in Chicago, under the tutelage of Dr. Mortimer Adler, the force behind the Great Books program, immersed him in brilliant interactions with intellectual titans. His probing mind, once introduced to the philosophical thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, reasoned that philosophy could lead him to the knowledge of God and consequently to an ordered understanding of the universe and of man. Indeed, at Chicago he [developed] a deeper thirst for the mystery of God. So it was that in 1936 he received baptism in the Roman Catholic Church. Internships at Oak Park Hospital in Chicago and Bellevue Hospital in New York, and a psychiatric residency at a boys' school, only served as distractions from this thirst for the transcendent and by the end of 1940 he had entered the Trappist Monastery of Our Lady of the Valley in Lonsdale, Rhode Island.

Over the years his monastic commitment deepened. He pronounced temporary vows on November 1, 1943, and solemn vows on November 6, 1946. In 1947 he was ordained a priest. That same year he published his memoirs, *The Glory of Thy People*, which was followed in 1987 by *Hammer and Fire*, a lengthy treatise on contemplative prayer, ministry and mental health. He served by turns as father master to the brothers, both professed and novices, and once the community had transferred to Spencer, as director of vocations, director of Trappist Preserves, dean of the junior professed and editor of the *St. Joseph Abbey Newsletter*. He is also numbered among the founders of Spencer's foundation at Holy Cross Abbey in Berryville, Virginia. But it was his enduring prowess as a councilor to Abbots and superiors, confessors, retreat master and spiritual director for which he is most remembered and loved, having enriched the lives of his Spencer brothers

...as well as many devoted friends and followers, among them Eileen George whom he helped with the "Meet the Father" ministry.,.,,

With the passage of years Father Raphael's health... grew increasingly grave, though he remained resolutely undaunted, even becoming more cheerful and productive. In his late nineties, he was better versed in the latest computer technology than many people half his age. Moreover, a child-like simplicity grew in him that, while not supplanting the mechanics of his intellect, overlay it with an innocent sweetness, palpable, obedient, quietly assured, framing the living illustration of his own words written years earlier: .