

shepherds of Christ



A SPIRITUALITY NEWSLETTER FOR PRIESTS
AND OTHERS INTERESTED IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

REV. EDWARD CARTER S.J., Editor

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Chief Shepherd of the Flock

Christ is Our Strength

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

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

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

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

One of the main purposes of the dark night is to make a person keenly aware of his or her helplessness without God. This is a most necessary point that mystics must pass through if the spiritual marriage, or transforming union with God in Christ, is to occur. In this transforming union,

there is a profound exchange between God and the mystic. God's self-communication to the mystic is most profound, and the mystic makes a profound gift of self to God. In this state the mystic is supremely aware of living by the life of God, and

WE ARE EXPANDING OUR READERSHIP!

With this current issue we are expanding our circulation by explicitly inviting to our readership those who are not priests, but who are interested in the spiritual life.

The Newsletter will still be written for priests in a special way. Yet we feel much of the material will also be of interest to those who are not priests.

To reflect the fact that we are now expanding our readership to include all interested parties, we think it is appropriate to offer a new act of consecration which is not worded for priests only, but one suitable for all.

without experiencing one's helplessness without God, this lived awareness does not occur.

If not all on the spiritual journey experience the classic dark night, all must undergo a proportionate purification which includes increased awareness of personal weakness. In this process one more and more

abandons the self to Christ and increasingly lives by His life, by His strength. Again St. Paul speaks to us: *I have been crucified with Christ and yet I am alive; yet it is no longer I, but Christ living in me. The life that I am now living, subject to the limitation of human nature, I am living in faith, faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:19-20)*

Our sense of weakness is not a paralyzing one. It

does not hinder our performance of duty. On occasion, athletes and other performers may, for various reasons, feel very inadequate regarding the exercise of their particular skill. The sense of inadequacy, in turn, can detract from performance. In the spiritual

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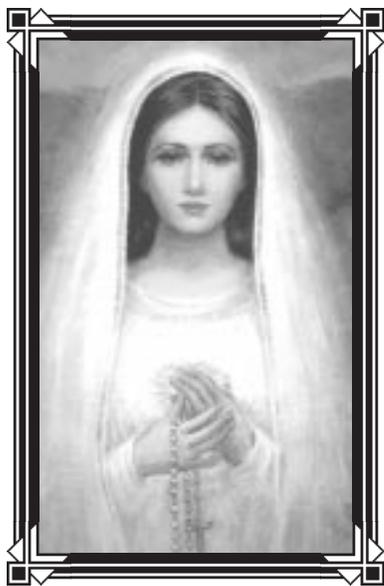
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life, however, our sense of weakness does not impair our capacity to function as Christians. On the contrary. If, sensing our helplessness, we increasingly abandon ourselves to Christ, we act with greater spiritual vitality. We do this with a basic peace of which the world knows not. St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, one of the greatest apostles of devotion to the Heart of Christ, speaks about this peace and its connection with surrender to Christ and His strength. In one of her letters she says: “Try especially to preserve peace of heart... The way to preserve this peace is not to have a will of our own any more,

but to put the will of the Sacred Heart in the place of ours, and let Him will for us whatever gives Him the most glory, being content to submit and abandon ourselves. In a word, this loving Heart will supply whatever is wanting in you. He will love God for you, and you will love God in Him and through Him.”²



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

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

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

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

The more we place our trust in Jesus, the more we experience His peace. Again, let us refuse to

worry. Let us place all cares in the hands of Jesus and trust that He will tend to them. He is present to us, loving us, guarding us, asking for our love, asking for our surrender.

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

The Father and Mary

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

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

The Holy Spirit in Our Lives

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

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

The Eucharist

◆ *At the Last Supper, on the night He was betrayed, our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of His Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until He should come again, and so to entrust to His beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us.* (Vatican II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, No. 17)⁵

◆ *The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ’s faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators. On the contrary, through a proper appreciation of the rites and prayers they should participate knowingly, devoutly, and actively. They should be instructed by God’s word and be refreshed at the table of the Lord’s body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also*

with him, they should learn to offer themselves too. Through Christ the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever closer union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all. (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, No. 48) ⁶

◆ *Through the Eucharistic Sacrifice Christ the Lord desired to set before us in a very special way this remarkable union whereby we are united one with another and with our divine Head, a union that no word of praise can ever sufficiently express. For in this sacrifice the sacred ministers act not only as the representative of our Saviour, but as the representative of the whole Mystical Body and of each one of the faithful. Again, in this act of sacrifice, the faithful of Christ, united by the common bond of devotion and prayer, offer to the eternal Father through the hands of the priest, whose prayer alone has made it present on the altar, the Immaculate Lamb, the most acceptable victim of praise and propitiation for the Church's universal need. Moreover, just as the divine Redeemer, while dying on the Cross, offered Himself to the eternal Father as Head of the whole human race, so now, 'in this clean oblation' He not only offers Himself as Head of the Church to His heavenly Father but in Himself His mystical members as well. He embraces them all, yes, even the weaker and more ailing members, with the deepest love of His Heart. (Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis AAS*, XXXV, 232-233) ⁷*

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

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

"And now He who died for us lives again, within us." ⁸

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

do. O my God, who shall be able to comprehend...

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

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

◆ How much do we appreciate the great opportunity of participating in the Eucharistic Sacrifice? Here is a story which should inspire us all: "A priest who was in the German prison camp Dachau describes the Mass after all the German guards were in bed. He said, 'Our lives were in danger if we were ever discovered. A young priest had to memorize the names of all of those who had received Communion. After night call and bed check, we would set our guards, darken the windows, and the lucky one to be chosen to celebrate for this momentous occasion would carefully brush his pathetic garb, put the stole over his shoulders, and by the small light of his smuggled candle begin the commemoration of that great passion... We could understand the Mass. All that could crowd into the room were there, tears of joy running down our cheeks. Christ the Lord, who knew what suffering was, was coming... to bring us strength and consolation. The small hosts were broken into as many particles as possible so that the greatest number could communicate. We had to keep a secret roster of those who received. We missed some of the liturgy perhaps, but I think that God looked down into that prison room and found a particularly refreshing response to his cry of love from the cross, 'I thirst.' There was nothing that could keep us from doing all in our power to be closer to God.'" ¹⁰

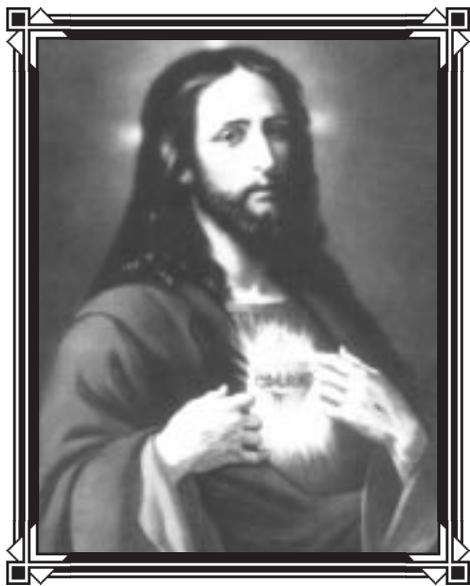
◆ From a spiritual journal: "I struggle intently to do His work, and I am weary from running the race. I am tired, I am truly human, but the unquenchable love I have for Him in my heart is at the core of my existence. It is in Him I exist and in Him I love. I love Him so intently and yet I am so unworthy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

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

The Church

◆ Avery Dulles, S.J., the well-known theologian who has written much about the Church, observes: “The Church, as I have already contended, is essentially a mystery of grace, a wonderful encounter between the divine and the human. Even in its visible structures, the Church is not a mere organization to be judged on grounds of efficiency, but a sacrament of God’s saving deed in Jesus Christ. From this it follows, in my judgment, that the Church’s forms of speech and life, and indeed its entire corporate existence, must be such as to mediate a vital communion with Christ the Lord. The Church must be a place of prayer and worship, praise and witness. Any institutional change in the Church must be carefully assessed for its effect on the spiritual life of the members. Does it intensify their faith, their hope, their charity? Does it help them to center their lives on Christ and to ground their existence in the God who raised him from the dead?”¹¹

◆ There has been much written about the Church in these our times. Regarding those writings which have dealt with reform in the Church, some of these, even while pointing out shortcomings in the life of the Church, have been put forth in a positive, constructive way. Others, sad to say, have done more harm than good and have contributed considerably to polarization in the Church. We again refer to Avery Dulles, S.J., in reference to this polarization: “Polarization, in my opinion, is more deleterious to the Church than any external opposition. When the Church suffers persecution from hostile powers, it often reacts with heroism and energy. Polarization, however, produces lethargy and disgust.”¹²



◆ One person who could never be accused of contributing to polarization in the Church is the eminent theologian Henri de Lubac. This man, possessing a profound knowledge and love of the Church, has left us these words: “The Church is at once human and divine, at once a gift from above and a product of this earth... She is orientated

towards the past, which contains a memorial she well knows is never past; she tends toward the future, elated by the hope of an ineffable consummation of whose nature no sensible sign gives a hint. Destined in her present form to leave all behind as ‘the image of this world’, she is destined in her innermost nature to remain intact for the day when what she is will be manifested. Multiple or multiform, she is nonetheless *one*, of a most active and demanding unity. She is a people, the great anonymous crowd and still — there is no other word — the most personal of beings. Catholic, that is universal, she wishes her members to be open to everything and yet she herself is never fully open but when she is withdrawn into the intimacy of her interior life and in the silence of adoration. She is humble and she is majestic. She professes capacity to absorb every culture, to raise up their highest values; at the same time we see her claim for her own the homes and hearts of the poor, the undistinguished, the simple and destitute masses. Not for an instant does she cease — and her immortality assures continuity — to contemplate him who is at once crucified and resurrected, the man of sorrows and lord of glory, vanquished by, but saviour of, the world. He is her bloodied spouse and her triumphant master. From his generous heart, ever open and yet always infinitely secret, she has received her existence and the life it is her wish to communicate to all..

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

“Happy those who from childhood have learnt to look on the Church as a mother! Happier still those whose experience, in whatever walk of life, has confirmed its truth! Happy those who one day were gripped by (and whose appreciation of it ever grew) the astonishing newness, richness and depth of the life communicated to them by this mother!”¹³

Priesthood

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

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

And here are further words of John Paul II to priests: “Dear brothers: ...you who have put your hand to the plough and do not turn back, and perhaps even more those of you who are doubtful of the meaning of your vocation or of the value of your service: think of the places where people anxiously await a priest, and where for many years, feeling the lack of such a priest, they do not cease to hope for his presence. And sometimes it happens that they meet in an abandoned shrine, and place on the altar a stole which they still keep, and recite all the prayers of the Eucharistic Liturgy; and then, at the moment that corresponds to the transubstantiation a deep silence comes down upon them, a silence sometimes broken by a sob... so ardently do they desire to hear the words

that only the lips of a priest can efficaciously utter... So deeply do they feel the absence of a priest among them!... Such places are not lacking in the world. So if one of you doubts the meaning of his Priesthood, if he thinks it is 'socially' fruitless or useless, reflect on this! ¹⁴

Prayer and Self Identity

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

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

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

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

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

"Confronting properly, then, the haunting ques-

tion 'Is this all there is to life?', will lead to this deeper Christian existence which will manifest that, yes, indeed, there is more to life than one had previously known. If one follows the lead of grace, if one grows in the life of prayer and consistently lives on the level where the Christ-like self is dynamically operative, one will never again be haunted by the feeling that life is not yielding a sufficient sense of fulfillment." ¹⁵

Various Thoughts

♦ John Henry Cardinal Neuman observes: "Be our mind as heavenly as it may be, most loving, most holy, most zealous, most energetic, most peaceful, yet if we look off from Him for a moment, and look towards ourselves, at once these excellent tempers fall into some extreme or mistake. Charity becomes over-easiness, holiness is tainted with spiritual pride, zeal degenerates into fierceness, activity eats up the spirit of prayer, hope is heightened into presumption. We cannot guide ourselves. God's revealed word is our sovereign rule of conduct; and therefore, among other reasons, is faith so principal a grace, for it is the directing power which receives the commands of Christ, and applies them to the heart." ¹⁶

♦ Mother Mary Francis, P.C.C., writes: "The foundress of the Poor Clare nuns, St. Clare of Assisi, was a woman who quite noticeably and even notably used her mind. Just the fact of her being the first woman in history herself to write a Rule of Life for nuns indicates a mind well occupied with the proper business of a mind. The complementary fact that she trailed beauty after her, shed loveliness about her, took ladyhood as a continual manner of living gives evidence that her heart was in good partnership with her mind. It was the same with...her mentor, St. Francis of Assisi, whose great mind was enlightened by God and used by himself to initiate a whole new way of religious life in the Church, while his heart made of him a poet, a singer, and sometimes a dancer, on occasion, while delivering his sermons." ¹⁷

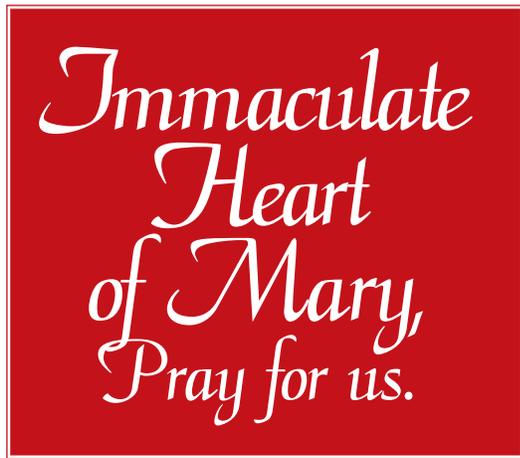
Pope John Paul II and Fatima

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

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

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

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



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

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



The Christian and the World

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

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

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

“It is thus that we have you, the people of Rome, at this moment before our eyes and in our heart. It is the same for the entire Church and the entire world. And our glance is turned especially to those places where there is still war, hunger, suffering and distress — wherever the coming of justice and peace is still awaited.”¹⁸

A Prayer for Priests

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

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

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

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Act of Consecration (new)

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

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

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

“Dear Blessed Virgin Mary, I consecrate myself to your maternal and Immaculate Heart, this Heart which is symbol of your life of love, including your most special love for me as this unique individual. You are the Mother of my Savior. You are also my Mother. In a return of love, I give myself entirely to your motherly love and protection. You followed Jesus perfectly. You are His first and perfect disciple. Teach me to imitate you in the putting on of Christ. Be my motherly intercessor so that, through your Immaculate Heart, I may be guided to an ever closer union with the Pierced, Glorified, Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, Chief Shepherd of the flock.”

Letters

◆ Dear Father Carter,

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

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

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

Please keep our faculty and seminarians in your prayers.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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

◆ Dear Rev. Father,

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

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

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

◆ Dear Father Carter,

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

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

If possible kindly send us some audio cassettes.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Fr. V. Savarimuthu
Tamilnadu, India

◆ Dear Fr. Carter,

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

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

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

Rev. S. A. Aruliah D.D.
Bishop Emeritus of Cuddapah
India

◆ Dear Father Carter,

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

Sincerely in Him,

Rev. Salvatore Piazza
Ransomville, NY

◆ Dear Revd. Edward,

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

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

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

Sincerely yours in Christ,

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

◆ Dear Fr. Edward J. Carter,

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

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

May Christ the Good Shepherd invigorate you.

Prayerfully yours,

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

◆ Dear Father,

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

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

With best wishes for your apostolate, I remain,

Yours sincerely in the Lord,

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



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2000, ISSUE 1

shepherds of Christ

Shepherds of Christ Ministries
P.O. Box 193
Morrow, Ohio 45152-0193
U.S.A.

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Cincinnati, OH
Permit 4251

Shepherds of Christ, a spirituality newsletter for priests, is published bi-monthly by Shepherds of Christ Ministries, P.O. Box 193, Morrow, Ohio 45152-0193. While distribution is free of charge to all priests in the U.S., and growing internationally, donations are still very much appreciated. Inquiries and comments are welcome, as are address changes and addresses of the newly ordained. Permission to reproduce intact is granted for non-commercial use. Editor Father Edward Carter S.J. is Professor of Theology at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. John Weickert is President. Good Shepherd illustration is by Brother Jerome Pryor, S.J. Layout and design are by Joan Royce. Also dedicated to the spiritual advancement of priests is a worldwide network of lay/religious prayer chapters, Shepherds of Christ Associates, headquartered at 2919 Shawhan Road, Morrow, Ohio 45152, U.S.A., telephone toll free 1-888-211-3041, fax 513-932-6791.

NOTES

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