

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

A SPIRITUALITY NEWSLETTER FOR PRIESTS



JANUARY/FEBRUARY 1995

REV. EDWARD CARTER S.J., Editor

## CONTENTS

Chief Shepherd of the Flock . . . . .	1
Reflections on Love . . . . .	1
Editor's Corner . . . . .	2
The Priest and Friendship . . . . .	2
Pope John Paul II On Faithfulness . . . . .	3
The Source of Our Faithfulness . . . . .	3
Merton on Prayer . . . . .	4
Making the Most of Life's Opportunities . . . . .	4
Mary and the Priest . . . . .	4
Act of Consecration . . . . .	5
The Holy Spirit In Our Lives . . . . .	5
St. Therese and the Heart of Christ . . . . .	5
International Retreat For Priests . . . . .	5
Letters . . . . .	6
Apostleship of Prayer Anniversary . . . . .	6

## Chief Shepherd of the Flock

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

Yes, out of His great love for us, the Good Shepherd laid down His life for us. Love for His Father and for us led the Good Shepherd to the brutal death on the cross. The Incarnation is, indeed, centered in love. Our insight into the Christ-event deepens as we consider it in the light of love. The Father has given us a sign of His love for us in Jesus. Jesus Himself is this sign of the Father's love—a lavish sign, an unmistakable sign, an irrevocable sign, a perfect sign. We are meant, then, to understand the meaning of the Son's becoming man in terms of love. We are to draw from the riches contained in the Christ-event in terms of love. We live Jesus, we live the Christ-event, in proportion to our acceptance of God's love and our own return of love. As we grow in love of God and neighbor, we give greater witness to the Incarnation, which is a work of God's love. Jesus reveals His Heart to remind us of all this. His pierced Heart, symbol of God's overwhelming love for us, calls for our love of God and neighbor in return.

## Reflections on Love

The above thoughts give us an occasion to offer various reflections on love:

◆ He was consistently motivated by love. In the end He was literally consumed by love, for it led Him to a place called Calvary. He was brutally nailed to a cross and raised up midst the laughter and ridicule of enemies. He hung there, bruised and beaten, His body

smearred with blood. There was the flush of fever mixed with the chill of approaching death. The greatest physical suffering was surpassed only by an unfathomable anguish of spirit. It was a terrible scene, yet one permeated with a haunting beauty which came forth from the magnificent love of His Heart. His crucified figure, silhouetted against a darkening sky, is the everlasting reminder that to live is to love, and that to love involves not only joy, but also suffering.

◆ We are great because of what we are, and we are to the extent that we love God and neighbor.

◆ Love is sensitive. It is delicately aware of the loved one's needs. Moreover, love's sensitivity is blended with a strength and durability which allows it to endure pain, hardship, and difficulty for the beloved.

◆ Love is sensitive, not only regarding those few especially loved in close personal relationships. Love is sensitive also regarding all others, especially the poor and underprivileged and those whom the world passes by as unimportant, the sick and the lame also, and likewise all those who seem especially weighed down by the burden of life.

◆ When love fails, it does not remain mired in discouragement. It resolves to learn from past mistakes and henceforth to love more selflessly, more deeply, more tenderly.

◆ Why are we sometimes afraid of God's love? We shy away from the white heat of His love, foolishly thinking He will ask too much of us. When has He ever asked for something too difficult? When has He ever asked anything without giving us abundant grace to accomplish His desire? When has His love ever asked that which has not brought us closer to Him, thus enhancing our happiness?

◆ Jesus loves us with an overwhelming love. Why do we at times find it difficult to love ourselves? Jesus sees our failings, but also all the good we do with the help of His grace. He also sees our capacity for achieving ever greater good. Why do we at times become depressed at what we are not, rather than being encouraged at what God has helped us to be?

◆ A number of years ago an educator wrote the following. Perhaps what he said then is even more applicable today: "I could not even begin to count the men



# Editor's Corner

by Edward Carter S.J.

The New Year, with its connotations of newness, is an occasion to remind ourselves that Christ has come to give us newness of life. Indeed, in Christ, we are new creatures: "And for anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old creation has gone, and now the new one is here." (2Cor 5:17).

As we begin the New Year, we have an appropriate opportunity to resolve to live this newness of life Jesus has given us at a deeper level. Another way of putting this is to say that the inception of the New Year gives us an opportunity to resolve to avoid spiritual mediocrity. Let's resolve to live each day of the New Year—and all the days of the rest of our lives—at the deepest spiritual level possible. Jesus comes to us anew each day with the invitation to enter into His life ever more deeply. Let's resolve not to waste these daily invitations of Our Lord. If we respond each day to Jesus' call to come closer to Him that day, we will avoid spiritual mediocrity. We will be gradually opening ourselves more and more to the immense, personal love which Jesus has for each one of us. We will be giving ourselves to Christ with an ever greater love. We will be experiencing peace and joy in ever greater measure—for peace and joy are the two chief fruits of love.

*Ed Carter, S.J.*

Reflections on Love continued from page 1

and women whom I have met in my work who testify, with great sadness, that their formation/education both at home and at school was almost completely in terms of achievement, of doing, of performing according to standards, of accomplishing certain narrow goals, but hardly ever in terms of being, of growing, of loving."<sup>2</sup>

◆ When loving God and neighbor becomes difficult and painful, there is a temptation to turn in a non-love direction which deceptively appears to be free of pain and suffering. Pursuing such a path, however, is a dead-end street where one painfully suffocates in selfish self-enclosurement.

◆ Although love must be firm when necessary, it is also gentle. Love does not further crush the bruised personality, but helps the other to heal and grow through tenderness and affirmation.

◆ Love can cause one to weep. Sometimes the tears are caused by joy, at other times by pain.

◆ Love helps a person to be enthusiastic about life,

sometimes ecstatically so, more often quietly so.

◆ Jesus has told us to focus on love. Is it not strange that we Christians, who call ourselves His followers, can at times so easily allow other concerns to dominate our consciousness?

◆ The bloated stomachs of starving children, the tragedies of broken homes, the rat-infected ghettos, the drug scene with its dreadful number of ruined lives, city streets engraved with an alarmingly increasing list of murders, rapes, and muggings—when love sees all of this, it weeps. Love not only weeps, however. It also acts.

◆ **"If I have all the eloquence of men or of angels, but speak without love, I am simply a gong booming or a cymbal clashing. If I have the gift of prophecy, understanding all the mysteries there are, and knowing everything, and if I have faith in all its fullness, to move mountains, but without love, then I am nothing at all. If I give away all that I possess, piece by piece, and if I even let them take my body to burn it, but am without love, it will do me no good whatever."** (1 Cor 13: 1-3).

## The Priest and Friendship

One of the ways all of us experience love—both giving and receiving love—is through friendship. The *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* offers some thoughts on the priest and friendship: "The capacity to develop and profoundly live priestly friendship is a source of serenity and joy in the exercise of the ministry, a decisive support in difficulties and a valuable help in the growth of pastoral charity. Priests must exercise this friendship in a particular way precisely towards those brothers most in need of understanding, help and support."<sup>3</sup>

Friendship is one of God's greatest gifts. It is a type of personal relationship that befits any age and any vocation. One of the beauties of friendship is the special type of love that is involved. Two people become friends and remain friends because they mutually want to do so. In friendship, there are no juridical bonds as there are in marriage and family life. In real friendship, this special freedom that both parties possess regarding the initiation and maintenance of the relationship does not instigate insecure feelings, but rather enhances the relationship with a special kind of splendor.

One of the beauties of friendship is the obvious fact that a person may have more than one friend. A person should not view multiple friendships as being in competition with one another. A person's various authentic friendships, all providing their own opportunities for growth, clothe the person with a maturing richness of personality that increasingly contributes to the health of each of the friendships in particular.

Close friends stand side by side and together walk the path of life. Secure in each other's acceptance and love, each feels a sense of relief that one does not need to maintain any kind of facade. Each is encouraged to be and to become according to the real, true self. Far from hampering the proper unfolding and developing of each one's personality, the friendship offers many diverse opportunities for the maturing of each other's uniqueness. Indeed, each person feels that without the other he or she may not have grown in certain ways at all.

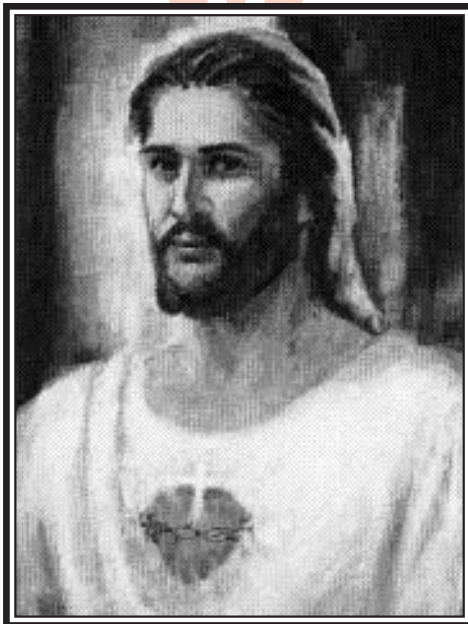
Close friends share many things. They share life's ideals and goals, for example, and in this sharing feel encouraged to achieve a greater realization of these ideals and goals. Close friends share each other's sorrows, and in this sharing the sorrows become more bearable. Close friends share each other's failures, and in this sharing they gain the strength to rise and try again. Close friends also share each other's successes, and in this sharing are encouraged to fulfill more and more their mission, their work in life.

Each of us, then, has many reasons to thank God for the wonderful gift of friendship, for, indeed, friendship in so many diverse ways has helped us to be and to become. In so many diverse ways, the gift of friendship has helped us to live the paschal mystery of death and resurrection. Truly, it has helped us bear the dark, the difficult, the worrisome aspect of life with greater equanimity. Likewise, it has helped us experience the bright, the pleasant, the exuberant side of life with greater joy.

We should always remember that all of our friendships should be rooted in Christ. To put it another way, our very friendship with Jesus is the source for our ability to be true friends with others. And, of course, our friendship with Jesus is centered in love. This friend Jesus shows each of us His Heart as a reminder of how much He loves each one of us with the most unique and special love. And He longs for our love in return. What a privilege! Yes, what a privilege it is to be invited by the Incarnate Son of God to have the deepest friendship with Himself. Jesus has left us these beautiful and awe-inspiring words: **"I shall not call you servants any more, because a servant does not know his master's business; I call you friends, because I have made known to you everything I have learned from My Father."** (Jn 15:15).

## Pope John Paul II on Faithfulness

The Holy Father offers us some very meaningful words on the subject of faithfulness. Faithfulness, of course, is one of the chief characteristics of love: "Virgo fidelis, the faithful Virgin.



What does this faithfulness of Mary mean? What are the dimensions of this faithfulness? The first dimension is called search. Mary was faithful first of all when she began, lovingly, to seek the deep sense of God's plan in her and for the world. 'Quomodo fiet? How shall this be?', she asked the Angel of the Annunciation.

"The second dimension of faithfulness is called reception, acceptance. The quomodo fiet is changed, on Mary's lips, to a fiat, 'Let it be done, I am ready, I accept.' This is the moment in which man perceives that he will never completely understand the 'how'; that there are in God's plan more areas of mystery than of clarity; that, however he may try, he will never succeed in understanding it completely...

"The third dimension of faithfulness is consistency to live in accordance with what one believes; to adapt one's life to the object of one's adherence. To accept misunderstanding, persecutions, rather than a break between what one practices and what one believes; this is consistency...

"But all faithfulness must pass the most exacting test, that of duration. Therefore, the fourth dimension of faithfulness is constancy. It is easy to be consistent for a day or two. It is difficult and important to be consistent for one's whole life. It is easy to be consistent in the hour of enthusiasm. It is difficult to be so in the hour of tribulation."<sup>4</sup>

## The Source of Our Faithfulness

It is impossible to incorporate into our lives the dimensions of faithfulness about which the Pope speaks without a meaningful and evolving union with Jesus. Mary was Jesus' most faithful follower because she had the greatest, the deepest love-union with Him.

Our love-union with Jesus is centered in our Eucharistic devotion. The more we take the means to draw from the infinite source of grace which is the pierced, Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, the more we are united with Him, and, consequently, the more one's faithfulness grows. Our union with the Eucharistic Christ, in turn, depends greatly on our spirit of prayer. A consistent prayer life is necessary for the proper assimilation of the graces which flow from the Eucharist. Here, then, are our great means for our growth in union with Jesus: the Eucharist and prayer. And, again, increased union with Jesus means increased faithfulness. Let us ask Mary, the faithful Virgin, and our faithful Mother, to obtain for us the grace to grow in our appreciation of the Eucharist and the life of prayer. If we grow in this appreciation, and live accordingly, we come ever closer to Jesus, who desires to lead us to an ever deeper union with the



Father in the Holy Spirit.

Some of the above thoughts are contained in the following passage from the *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*:

“To remain faithful to the obligation of ‘being with Christ’, it is necessary that the priest know how to imitate the Church in prayer...

“Strengthened by the special bond with the Lord the priest will know how to confront those moments in which he could feel alone among men; effectively renewing his being with Christ who in the Eucharist is his refuge and best repose.

“Like Christ, who was often alone with the Father (cf Lk 3:21; Mk 1:35), the priest also must be the man who finds communion with God in solitude, so he can say with St. Ambrose: ‘I am never less alone than as when I am alone...’<sup>5</sup>

## Merton on Prayer

I think it is safe to say that no spiritual writer of our times has written more prolifically on prayer than has Thomas Merton. His following words help us to continue what has been said above concerning the importance of prayer:

“Meditation is a twofold discipline that has a twofold function. First it is supposed to give you sufficient control over your mind and memory and will to enable you to recollect yourself and withdraw from exterior things and the business and activities and thoughts and concerns of temporal existence, and second—this is the real end of meditation—it teaches you how to become aware of the presence of God; and most of all it aims at bringing you to a state of almost constant loving attention to God and dependence on Him.”<sup>6</sup>

## Making the Most of Life’s Opportunities

Love—together with its faithfulness—bids us to make the most of life’s opportunities. Fr. Philip Hamilton, currently a pastor and formerly an Air Force chaplain and college professor, encourages us to seize the God-given opportunities for contributing to the life of God’s kingdom:

“Tucked away on the back pages of most of the Catholic newspapers that I read was an article about a great man’s death. The man has certainly been one of the most influential priests in the history of our country. He was Father Patrick Peyton.

“Father Peyton was born in County Mayo in Ireland. He came to the United States in 1928 with his brother Thomas. The two brothers entered the seminary joining the priests at Notre Dame in the Society of the Holy Cross. As a seminarian he contracted tuberculosis. He prayed to our Blessed

Mother that he might be cured and be able to be ordained a priest. He was, and lived to the age of eighty-three...

“Father Peyton, Irish immigrant that he was, moved hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, to a renewed appreciation of the rosary. He is said to be the author of the phrase, ‘the family that prays together stays together’. And the rosary was the prayer that he offered the family. He traveled the world preaching the rosary. People came by the thousands.

“Father had a dream as a young priest. His faith and optimism made that dream a reality. How many young priests, perhaps much more talented than he, had such a dream? Perhaps even I. Yet instead of lacking confidence in self and others, he boldly went forward and with the grace of God deeply affected the lives of millions while the rest of us, in our cautionary security, continued in our little ways free of fear because we never tried. We were always satisfied with small success. How many thousands of young men and women, probably dozens even on Hilton Head, could touch people as Father Peyton; but they never will because they have become satisfied with the living without fear or rejection through not having tried.

“I am seventy-four years old; but as I think of Father Peyton while writing this little essay at five a.m. here in my office, I am filled with the eagerness in the years left me to shout loud and publicly, ‘Look out world, here I come to bring you the Good News of Christ! You and your children are going to know that I have been here telling you, showing you Who Christ is and what He can do in your lives.’

“That is how thinking about a man like Father Peyton affects me. What does he do for you?”<sup>7</sup>

## Mary and the Priest

Our friendship with Jesus as His priest-companions, our faithfulness to Him because we love Him, very much involves Mary. She, under God, is the Mother of our Christ-life. She cooperates with the Holy Spirit in our ongoing transformation in Christ. Fr. Arthur Calkins, a contemporary Marian scholar, offers us these words on Mary and the priest:

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

See *Mary and the Priest*, page 5

Heart of Jesus,  
We place our trust in You.

the Church!’

“No doubt there are any number of priests today who would say that such reasoning represents a certain ‘snob appeal’, a ‘clerical culture’ that should have disappeared after the Council. The emphasis now, they would maintain, is on equality: we all share the common priesthood of the faithful and priestly ordination does not make us better than lay people.

“Surely, it is true that the hierarchical priesthood which is received by the imposition of the bishop’s hands is conferred on the basis of the royal priesthood which all the faithful share. It is also true that of itself priestly ordination does not make one morally better than the laity...

“But the fact is that the Sacrament of Holy Orders configures the priest more closely to Christ the Eternal Priest to the extent that his soul receives an indelible spiritual character and his very being is transformed in a way that allows him to function *in persona Christi*, in the very person of Christ, as he celebrates the sacraments and intercedes as a member of and on behalf of the whole Church. Hence this scriptural injunction surely holds true for the priest: **‘When much has been given a man, much will be required of him. More will be asked of a man to whom more has been entrusted’** (Lk 12:48). Saint Thomas Aquinas puts it this way: ‘Those who have been chosen for a superior position through the bestowal of Holy Orders also have been called to a similar height of holiness’ (Summa Theologica, suppl., q. 35, a. 1, ad 3)...

“Although Jesus had already entrusted every priest to his Mother from the height of the cross and the Pope has done it even hundreds of times, it is still necessary for the priest to do so himself if he would truly experience the power and the protection of the Mother of God in his life as her Divine Son intends it. Priests who have done so know the difference it makes.<sup>8</sup>

## Act of Consecration

Lord Jesus, Chief Shepherd of the Flock, I consecrate my priestly life to Your Heart, pierced on Calvary for love of us. From Your pierced Heart the Church was born, the Church You have called me, as a priest, to serve in a most special way. You reveal Your Heart as symbol of Your love in all its aspects, including Your most special love for me, whom You have chosen as Your priest-companion. Help me always to pour out my life in love of God and neighbor. Heart of Jesus, I place my trust in You!

Dear Blessed Virgin Mary, I consecrate myself to your maternal and Immaculate Heart, this Heart which is symbol of your life and love. You are the Mother of my Savior. You are also my Mother. You love me with the most special love as

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

## The Holy Spirit in Our Lives

As the closing words of the act of consecration remind us, Jesus leads us to the Father in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is given to us to transform us more and more according to the likeness of Christ. Mary our Mother cooperates with the Spirit, Whose spouse she is, in this process. Obviously, we should pray to the Holy Spirit each day. Here is one of the available prayers: “Come, Holy Spirit, almighty Sanctifier. God of love, Who filled the Virgin Mary with grace, Who wonderfully changed the hearts of the apostles, Who endowed all your martyrs with miraculous courage, come and sanctify us. Enlighten our minds, strengthen our wills, purify our consciences, rectify our judgment, set our hearts on fire, and preserve us from the misfortunes of resisting Your inspirations. Amen.”

## St. Therese and the Heart of Christ

The following words of St. Therese of Lisieux, contained in a letter to one of her sisters, have an obvious connection with the above act of consecration to the Heart of Christ: “I myself find it very easy to practice perfection, for I know that all one has to do is to take Jesus by His Heart. Even if I had on my conscience every sin it is possible to commit, I should fling myself, my heart broken with sorrow, into the arms of Jesus, for I know He loves the prodigal child who returns to Him.”<sup>9</sup>

## International Retreat for Priests

There will be a retreat for English-speaking priests at San Giovanni Rotondi, Italy (Padre Pio Center), April 24 through May 4, 1995. Fr. James Dressman, S.J., will be retreat master. He will be assisted by Fr. Joseph Pius Martin, O.F.Cap., of the Friary of Padre Pio, and by Kathleen Keefe. Write or call for information: Retreat, 25 Cambridge Avenue, Yonkers, N.Y. 10707. Tel (914) 337-0773. Fax (914) 337-7028.

Immaculate Heart of Mary,  
Pray for us.

# Letters

We wish to thank most sincerely all those who have taken the time to write us letters. Because of rather stringent space limitations, we can print only a very few of these. The ones we print are, for the most part, picked at random.

I read with deep interest your edition of *Shepherds of Christ*. It is spiritually based, neatly organized, and very readable. Again, congratulations on a beautiful ministry.

Rev. Joseph F. Brennan  
Pastor, St. Genevieve Church  
LaFayette, Louisiana

Thank you for sending me the newsletter, *Shepherds of Christ*. I loved it. I need all the help you can give during these confusing times.

I must not lose sight of my objective—a true salesman for Our Lord. I must be sold first to love Him before I bring others to Him.

Fr. Sabbas R.  
Christ the King Rectory  
Commack, L.I., New York

## Apostleship of Prayer Anniversary

December 3, 1994, marked the 150th anniversary of the Apostleship of Prayer. The Apostleship has done much over the years to promote devotion to the Heart of Jesus and to the Heart of Mary within the context of the Morning Offering.

### NOTES:

1. Scriptural quotations are taken from *The Jerusalem Bible*, Doubleday & Company.
2. Michael Lawrence, C.S.S.P., *You Have to Love to Teach*, Ligourian, September 1974, p.4.
3. *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, as in special supplement of *Inside the Vatican*, p. 11.
4. Pope John Paul II, *Inside the Vatican*, December, 1994, pp. 29-39.
5. *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, op. cit., p.15.
6. Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation*, Dell Books, p.129.
7. Fr. Philip Hamilton, *Padre's Point*, Alt Pub. Co., pp. 151-152.
8. Fr. Arthur Calkins, *Soul Magazine*, January-February 1995, p. 30.
9. J. Beevers, *St. Therese, The Little Flower, The Making of a Saint*, Tan Publishers, p. 136.

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 graphic design are by Larry Memering. 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.



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 934