

shepherds of Christ⁺

A SPIRITUALITY NEWSLETTER FOR PRIESTS



REV. EDWARD CARTER S.J., Editor

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Chief Shepherd of the Flock

We Are Called to Imitate His Self-giving

“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 -15¹).

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

Truly, the Good Shepherd had laid down His life for His sheep. That magnificent Heart, overflowing with love for His Father and all of us, had beat its last in a complete and magnificent act of self-giving: “When they came to Jesus, they found He was already dead, and so instead of breaking His legs one of the soldiers pierced His side with a lance. And immediately there came out blood and water. (Jn 19: 33-34).

Indeed, from the pierced Heart of Christ the Church with her sacraments was born. Two of these sacraments, the Eucharist and Baptism, are symbolized by the blood and water flowing from Christ's side. The sacrament of Orders was, of course, also born from the pierced Heart of Christ. We who are priests can never adequately thank Jesus for allowing us to receive this great and most special sacrament. The best way we can try to thank Him, though, is to utilize our priesthood to the fullest.

Each day we are called to imitate Jesus in His act of Self-giving. We, too, are called to lay down our lives for the flock. Relatively few priests in the course of the Church's history have been called to lay down their lives in physical martyrdom. All priests, though, have been and are called to lay down their lives for the flock by giving themselves in loving service according to the Father's will.

Our act of self-giving occurs within the framework of common everydayness. We grow in Christian holiness within the framework of everyday life or we don't grow at all. This is such

See *We Are Called*, page 2

Thoughts on the Eucharist

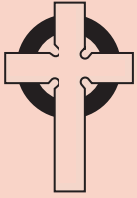
The Self-giving of Jesus on Calvary is perpetuated in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the chief source of our growth in self-giving. There follow various thoughts on the Eucharist which can deepen our appreciation of this magnificent gift of Jesus to us:

◆ “Then he took some bread, and when he had given thanks, broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body which will be given for you; do this as a memorial of me.’ He did the same with the cup after supper, and said, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood which will be poured out for you.’” (Lk 22: 19-20).

◆ The Catechism tells us: “The Eucharist is the ‘source and summit of the Christian life.’ The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical mysteries and work of the apostolate, are bound up with the Eucharist and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself, our Pasch.”²

◆ The *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* offers us this vivid reminder concerning the connection between the Eucharist and the priest's identity: “The sacramental memorial of the Death and Resurrection of Christ, the true and efficacious representative of the singular

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Editor's Corner

by Edward Carter S.J.

With this issue we begin our second year of publication of *Shepherds of Christ*. As with all new ventures, we've had our growing pains, and yet this first year has been a source of encouragement to us. We have had sufficient feedback from you our readers to allow us to realize that publishing the Newsletter is a very worthwhile endeavor. We feel that it is a great privilege to be able to provide an aid which can help priests grow in the spiritual life.

We live in very critical times for both the Church and the world. We priests, by our very vocation, are in a most advantageous position to make an extremely significant contribution to the betterment of both Church and world. And the more we grow spiritually, the more we are able to help the Church and the world.

We thank in a special way all those who have taken the time to write, encouraging us by telling us how the Newsletter is helping them and by offering suggestions which aid us in offering a better product. We also thank all those who have helped us financially through their thoughtful donations.

This particular issue, besides being the first one of our second year of publication, is also the first one published by Shepherds of Christ Ministries as an independent movement and tax-exempt organization. Until now we have been dependent upon Our Lady of Light Foundation. We wish to thank the Foundation for its indispensable assistance in our first year of existence. Shepherds of Christ Ministries, a movement dedicated to assisting in the renewal of the spiritual life, includes this newsletter for priests, other publications (including books and a spirituality newsletter for religious sisters and brothers), and a network of prayer chapters under the title, Shepherds of Christ Associates. The main purpose of the prayer chapters is to pray for all the needs of all priests the world over.

As we head into the second year of our existence, we fervently request your prayers for all aspects of Shepherds of Christ Ministries.

Ed Carter, S.J.

Chief Shepherd continued from page 1

an obvious statement. It is one of those self-evident truths, a truth which no logical person would begin to challenge. Isn't it strange, then, that we can rather often fail to live this truth? Inexplicably, we so often seem to think that our real opportunity for growth in holiness—for self-giving in love—is not the opportunity which is everyday, but that opportunity which is in a kind of no man's land, an ethereal kind of opportunity removed from the ordinary pains and struggles and joys of everyday living, a

nebulous opportunity which our hazy thinking really cannot pinpoint when we reflect upon the matter.

Our problem, then, is not that there is lacking ample opportunity for self-giving in love, for growth in holiness. Our problem rather is that we have a tendency to want different opportunities than everydayness presents.

Our task is to allow faith, hope, and love to be more vital, more operative, day-by-day, everyday. The more mature our Christian faith, hope, and love become, the more we will look upon each day as a renewed opportunity for self-giving in union with Jesus. We will increasingly come to see with a clearer vision that the opportunities for growth in priestly holiness, for growth in union with Jesus, Chief Shepherd of the Flock, are inserted deeply and firmly within the framework of everydayness. Yes, that's where they exist, and in bountiful measure.

Clarification on the Priestly Character

I wish to thank Fr. Valentine Young, O.F.M., for calling our attention to an ambiguous statement contained in the Jean Galot excerpt on the priestly character, which quotation appeared in the March-April, 1995 issue.

Taken by itself the passage in question can be confusing, leading one to ask whether Galot holds that the priestly character is distinct from those of Baptism and Confirmation. However, if the particular passage is taken within the context of the entire excerpt, I hope it is sufficiently clear—although perhaps not as clear as one would like—that Galot does hold the priestly character to be distinct from those of Baptism and Confirmation. This is certainly the explicit teaching of the Church—a teaching to which I firmly adhere. If I were doing that particular issue of the Newsletter here and now, I would omit the ambiguous passage. I apologize for any confusion I may have caused.

—Ed.

Reflections on Community

The Eucharist is our chief source of growth in community. Each time we grow through the Eucharist we grow in the capacity to relate more deeply in love with the members of the Christian community as well as all others. Here are some reflections and comments on community:

◆ “Now you together are Christ's body; but each of you is a different part of it.” (1 Cor 12: 27).

◆ I need you, you need me. Why at times do we pretend that it is otherwise?

◆ John Downe, the British writer, far back in the seventeenth century, wrote these perennially applicable words: “No man is an island, entire of itself: every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the maine.”⁷

“...I need you, you need me. Why at times do we pretend that it is otherwise?...”

◆ To expect the community which is the Church to be without sins and blemishes is to demand too much. On the other hand, to want the Church humbly to labor at a vigorous, ongoing conversion is to desire what the Spirit Himself wishes.

◆ Any form of Christian community must gaze inwardly upon itself in order to maintain and promote Spirit-inspired vitality. But if there is not a self-transcendence involved—a loving and concerned gaze outwardly toward the entire human family—then there is something tragically lacking.

◆ Fr. Ladislaus Orsy, S.J., says: “There are, there were, and there will be weaknesses in the Church. What should be the response of a Christian? It cannot be anything else than the Christian response that is compassion. Bitter criticism and aggressive accusation do not heal wounds. If anything, they aggravate the condition of the sick. Besides, those attitudes hardly proceed from faith, hope and love.”⁸

◆ The little black boy and the little white boy hug each other in playful glee. How often little children can teach us—if we’re not too stubborn and supercilious to listen.

◆ Needlessly to hurt another is simultaneously to hurt myself.

◆ St. Clement, Pope, writes to the Corinthians: “Why are there strife and passion, schisms and even war among you? Do we not possess the same spirit of grace which was given to us and the same calling in Christ? Why do we tear apart and divide the body of Christ? Why do we revolt against our own body? Why do we

reach such a degree of insanity that we forget that we are members one of another?...

“We should put an end to this division immediately. Let us fall down before our master and implore his mercy with our tears. Then he will be reconciled to us and restore us to the practice of brotherly love that befits us...A person may be faithful; he may have the power to utter hidden mysteries; he may be discriminating in the evaluation of what is said and pure in his actions. But the greater he seems to be, the more humbly he ought to act, and the more zealous he should be for the common good rather than his own interest.”⁹

◆ God has created each person as marvelously unique. He has also made us social beings. Each one’s uniqueness, therefore, is meant to unfold within the framework of community.

◆ Fr. Avery Dulles, S.J., says, “The Church is a sign. It must signify in a historically tangible form the redeeming grace of Christ. It signifies that grace as relevantly given to...every age, race, kind, and condition. Hence the Church must incarnate itself in every human culture.”¹⁰

◆ Community is often built through pain-demanding and time-demanding effort. How quickly, though, one can harm community through the uncharitable, cutting, and divisive word.

◆ To walk the path of life hand in hand with my brothers and sisters is Spirit-inspired wisdom. To want to walk alone is childish and pain-inflicting folly.

◆ Some are guilty because they unjustly use the structures and institutions of society variously to harm their fellowmen. Others are guilty because they neglect their responsibility to aid in reforming and strengthening these same social structures.

◆ Do I sincerely rejoice in the good others do? If not, why not? Community thrives on such rejoicing.

◆ The Christian community is intended to be a terrestrial reflection of that ultimate and perfect community—the Trinitarian life of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

◆ “If our life in Christ means anything to you, if love can persuade at all, or the Spirit that we have in common, or any tenderness and sympathy, then be united in your convictions and united in your love, with a common purpose and a common mind. That is the one thing which would make me completely happy. There must be no competition among you, no conceit; but everybody is to be self-effacing. Always consider the other person to be better than yourself, so that nobody thinks of his own interests first but everybody thinks of other people’s interests instead.” (Phil 2: 1-4).

Pope John Paul II and Human Rights

From his recently published and best selling book, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, John Paul II gives us these insightful words which continue our theme on self-giving in union with Jesus:

“Therefore, these two aspects—the affirmation of the person as a person and the sincere gift of self do not exclude each other—they mutually confirm and complete each other. *Man affirms himself most completely by giving of himself.* This is the fulfillment of the commandment of love. This is also the full truth about man, a truth that Christ taught us by His life, and that the tradition of Christian morality, no less than the tradition of saints and of the many heroes of love of neighbor, took up and lived out in the course

See *Pope John Paul II*, page 4

Pope John Paul II, continued from page 3
of history.

“If we deprive *human freedom* of this possibility, if man does not commit himself to becoming a gift for others, then this freedom can become dangerous. It will become freedom to do what I myself consider as good, what brings me a profit or pleasure, even a sublimated pleasure. *If we cannot accept the prospect of giving ourselves as a gift, then the danger of a selfish freedom will always be present.* Kant fought against this danger, and along the same line so did Max Scheler and so many after him who shared his ethics of values. But a complete expression of all this is already found in the Gospel. For this very reason, *we can find* in the Gospel a consistent declaration of all human rights, even those that for various reasons can make us feel uneasy.”¹¹

Wisdom of the Saints

The Saints are ones who have achieved a self-giving in love to an outstanding degree. Their teaching is given to us as an aid in our own quest for the highest self-giving in union with Christ.

St. Ignatius of Antioch:

“At last I am well on the way to being a disciple. May nothing, seen or unseen, fascinate me, so that I may happily make my way to Jesus Christ! Fire, cross, struggles with wild beasts, wrenching of bones, mangling of limbs, crunching of the whole body, cruel tortures inflicted by the devil—let them come upon me, provided only I make my way to Jesus Christ.”¹²

St. John of the Cross: “What does it profit you to give God one thing if He asks for another? Consider what it is God wants and then do it.”¹³

St. Teresa of Avila. In the following words from her classic work, *The Interior Castle*, Teresa is speaking of those who seek to bypass the humanity of Jesus in their prayer: “How much more is it necessary not to withdraw through one’s own efforts from all our good and help which is the most sacred humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot believe that these souls do so, but they just don’t understand; and they will do harm to themselves and to others.”¹⁴

St. Bernard: “I said in the beginning: the reason for our loving God is God. I spoke the truth, for He is both prime mover of our love and final end. He is Himself our human love’s occasion; He also gives the power to love, and brings desire to its consummation. He is Himself the Lovable...and gives Himself to be the object of

our love...How kindly does He lead us in love’s way, how generously He returns the love we give, how sweet He is to those who wait for Him!”¹⁵

St. Francis of Assisi: “Our Lord says in the Gospel, *Love your enemies.* A man really loves his enemy when he is not offended by the injury done to himself, but for love of God feels burning sorrow for the sin his enemy has brought on his own soul.”¹⁶

“We can never tell how patient or humble a person is when everything is going well with him. But when those who should cooperate with him do the exact opposite, then we can tell. A man has as much patience and humility as he has then, and no more.”¹⁷

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. They are truly peacemakers who are able to preserve their peace of mind and heart for love of our Lord Jesus Christ, despite all that they suffer in this world.”¹⁸

St. Ignatius of Loyola. “It is characteristic of God and His Angels, when they act upon the soul, to give true happiness and spiritual joy, and to banish all the sadness and disturbances which are caused by the enemy.

“It is characteristic of the evil one to fight against such happiness and consolation by proposing fallacious reasonings, subtleties, and continual deceptions.

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

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

“In souls that are going from bad to worse, the action of the spirits mentioned above is just the reverse. The reason for this is to be sought in the opposition or similarity of these souls to the different kinds of spirits. When the disposition is contrary to that of the spirits, they enter with noise and commotion

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

that are easily perceived. When the disposition is similar to that of the spirits, they enter silently, as one coming into his own house when the doors are open.”¹⁹

St. Benedict. The following words are from the Rule of St. Benedict. Although they directly pertain to life in the monastery, they are profitable for all, for they breathe the spirit of peace so central to Benedictine spirituality: “...and so we are going to establish a school for the service of the Lord. In founding it we hope to introduce nothing harsh or burdensome. But if a certain strictness results from the dictates of equity for the amendment of vices or the preservation of charity, do not be at once dismayed and fly from the way of salvation, whose entrance cannot but be narrow, for as we advance in the religious life and in faith, our hearts expand and we run the way of God’s commandments with unspeakable sweetness of love. Thus, never departing from His school, but persevering in the monastery according to His teaching until death, we may by patience share in the sufferings of Christ and deserve to have a share also in His kingdom.”²⁰

St. Dominic. From *Various Writings on the History of the Order of Preachers* we have these words concerning St. Dominic: “Dominic possessed such great integrity and was so strongly motivated by divine love, that without a doubt he proved to be a bearer of honor and grace. He was a man of great equanimity, except when moved to compassion and mercy. And since a joyful heart animates the face, he displayed the peaceful composure of a spiritual man in the kindness he manifested outwardly and by the cheerfulness of his countenance.”²¹

St. Jean Vianney. “What keeps us priests back from the attainment of holiness is lack of consideration. It displeases us to withdraw our minds from outside things. We do not know what we rightly do. We have need of intimate reflection, continuous prayer and intimate union with God.”²²

A Priest Holds His Ground

The gift of self in Christ demands holding true to one’s principles even though this is at times an unpopular stance. Fr. Phil Hamilton, a former college professor and Air Force Chaplain, and now a Pastor, has spoken to us in previous newsletters. Here are further words of his from his book, *Padre’s Point*. They remind us of the necessity of holding one’s ground: “I as a priest have at times been accused of ‘coming on too strong,’ and thus ‘turning people off.’ Some students have accused me of this, and have, therefore, not registered for any of my classes. In parish life I have experienced people getting up and walking out of my office in the middle of a discussion. This is a very infrequent happening, but still it causes me to think.

“My general philosophy that I have expressed to my students and in counseling through the years is ‘people can be tilted, but not shoved.’ In all my years in the priesthood I have never claimed that I have really changed anyone. I only tilt someone occasionally toward what I think is the true course to be pursued in life. It is, therefore, a traumatic experience for me to be accused of being a ‘shover.’ The more literate would say I am too doctrinaire.

“My mother, Aggie Murphy Hamilton, brought us kids up on the principle that ‘God and one constitute a majority.’ I unreservedly believe in the teaching of Christ as presented to me through an infallible Church. I suppose such a background would influence one in presenting a rather, ‘he always thinks he is right,’ doctrinaire image to the modern world where everything is up for grabs, where no one is sure of anything morally or doctrinally.

“And so I have a problem relating. But so likewise does the Church, and so likewise the family. Business does not have such a problem. You can’t individually fight the boss except through the courts. The state does not have the problem, because its courts can always say ‘this is the law,’ and if you violate their decision, they can throw you in the slammer.

“But the rest of us have the problem. How to react? When we know we are right from Church

teaching, experience, or common sense, we must be true to our principles. We must have the courage and strength to say both what is true and false. To do anything else is to prostitute one’s integrity for the sake of acceptance.”²³

On Being Relevant

These thoughts on relevancy easily follow the ideas of Fr. Hamilton.

◆ That which is relevant is appropriate or germane, fitting for the matter at hand. We see, then, that Jesus lived the perfectly relevant life, since he always did the perfectly appropriate thing according to His Father’s will. We see a paradox, then. Many reject Jesus as being irrelevant, and yet He is the supremely relevant One. The relevancy of His life and message is perennial.

◆ Despite what others may think, when we act in accord with the Christic-self, we are being relevant.

◆ Christian relevancy does indeed mean that we must read the signs of the times as we preach and live the Gospel message. In doing so, however, we must be careful not to engage in the Gospel’s betrayal.

◆ Sometimes that which is most traditional is the most relevant; at other times, that which is most new. We must have the courage to choose accordingly.

◆ St. Paul had something to say about Christian relevancy: “For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News, and not to preach that in the terms of philosophy in which the crucifixion of Christ cannot be expressed. The language of the cross may be illogical to those who are not on the way to salvation, but those of us who are on the way see it as God’s power to save...And so, while the Jews demand miracles and the Greeks look for wisdom, here are we preaching a crucified Christ; to the Jews an obstacle that they cannot get over, to the pagans madness, but to those who have been called, whether they are Jews or Greeks, a Christ who is the power and the wisdom of God...” (1 Cor 1: 17-24).

On Prayer

Prayer is a most necessary means for growth in the gift of self. Here are some thoughts on prayer:

◆ Fr. Henri Nouwen, one of the best known spiritual writers of our times, offers us the following:

“For a man of prayer is, in the final analysis, the man who is able to recognize in others the face of the Messiah and make visible what was hidden, make touchable what was unreachable. The man of prayer is a leader precisely because through his articulation of God’s work within himself he can lead others out of confusion to clarification; through his compassion he can guide them out of the closed circuits of their ingroups to the wide world of humanity, and through his critical contemplation he can convert their convulsive destructiveness into creative work for the new world to come.”²⁴

And elsewhere Nouwen gives us this interesting story: “Not long ago I



See *On Prayer*, page 6

On Prayer, continued from page 5 met a parish priest. After describing his hectic schedule—religious services, classroom teaching, luncheon and dinner engagement, and organizational meetings—he said apologetically, ‘Yes, but there are so many problems.’ When I asked, ‘Whose problem?’, he was silent for a few minutes, and then more or less reluctantly said, ‘I guess my own.’ Indeed, his incredible activities seemed in large part motivated by fear of what he would discover when he came to a standstill. He actually said, ‘I guess I am busy in order to avoid a painful self-concentration.’”²⁵

◆ We should not be afraid to look at ourselves, as the above described priest apparently was. Prayerful reflection upon myself in union with Jesus will give me a growing sense of peace and security, resulting from an increased prayerful awareness of how much Jesus loves me as this unique priest-companion. If there is pain involved in prayerful self-reflection, the pain soon fades to the background. In prayer Jesus shows us how lovable we are. He loved us unto His brutal death. Redeemed by the love of God, how can we be unlovable? We have been salvifically touched by His redemptive blood. We are thus beautiful in His sight. His love for us continues, and the more we surrender to the boundless love of His magnificent Heart, the more the truth, the goodness, and the beauty of our person shine forth.

◆ St. Cyprien gives us these reflections on the Lord’s Prayer:

“My dear friends, the Lord’s Prayer contains many great mysteries of our faith. In these few words there is great spiritual strength, for this summary of divine teaching contains all of our prayers and petitions. And so, the Lord commands us: *Pray then like this: ‘Our Father, who art in heaven.’*”

“We are new men; we have been reborn and restored to God by his grace. We have already begun to be his sons and we can say ‘Father.’ John reminds us of this: *He came to his own home, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who received him, who believe in his name, he gave the power to become children of God.* Profess your belief that you are sons of God by giving thanks. Call upon God who is your Father in heaven.”²⁶

◆ Rosary Reflections:

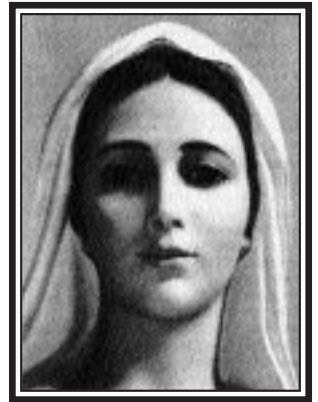
Joyful Mysteries: The Annunciation: “The Father has a plan. Jesus was incarnate in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Jesus came to this earth in quietness. This was part of the Father’s plan. Mary always complied with the Father’s will. When she said, ‘*Be it done to me according to thy word,*’ she was showing her willingness to do whatever the Father was asking her to do.”

Sorrowful Mysteries: The Scourging at the Pillar: “They took Jesus, tied Him to a pillar and whipped Him with harsh instruments that tore His skin and made Him bleed. This is your friend, Jesus. He is God! He came to earth so that we might be with Him forever in heaven. See Him covered with wounds, deep wounds, His marks of love covering His entire body!”

Glorious Mysteries: The Resurrection: “Jesus walked with two disciples on the way to Emmaus and recounted for them all the scriptures in the Old Testament from the time of Moses that referred to Him. They did not understand that Jesus would die and then rise again. They did not recognize Him after He rose. You might think, ‘oh, so blind were they! How could they not recognize Jesus?’ But Jesus is in our midst this day. He is present right here with us. He is present in the tabernacle. He is present in us and in our world and the world continues to go on its way in blindness.”²⁷

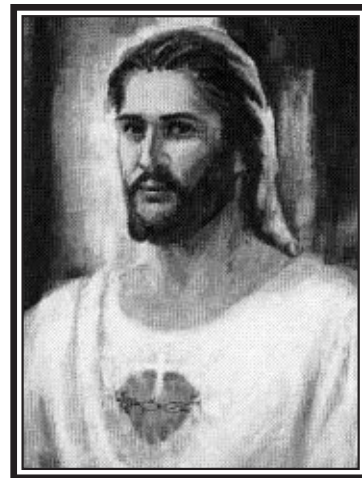
Laurentin and Mary

Fr. René Laurentin, one of the world’s foremost Mariologists, offers us these meaningful words concerning Mary: “She was present physically throughout the life of Christ—both by her mother’s love and by her commitment to him. It was a communion of faith, of hope and of charity. Mary’s presence to her son is a model for us, since, through this mother, God becomes our brother and has given her to us as mother in order to identify us with himself...We are humble children of this mother who has so profoundly adopted us in him...Mary has the mission of aiding the work of our divinization in Jesus Christ. She cooperates with him in this work of God.”²⁸



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 of 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 and the Priest

The *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* reminds us of how closely the priest is united to the Holy Spirit, of how the Holy Spirit is given to priests to lead us along the path of total self-giving: “In Priestly Ordination, the priest has received the seal of the Holy Spirit which has marked him by the sacramental character in order to always be the minister of Christ and the Church. Assured of the promise that the Consoler will abide ‘with him forever’ (Jn 14: 16-17), the priest knows that he will never lose the presence and the effective power of the Holy Spirit in order to exercise his ministry and live with charity his pastoral office as a total gift of self for the salvation of his own brothers.”²⁹

Thoughts on the Eucharist, continued from page 1 redemptive sacrifice, source and apex of Christian life in the whole of evangelization, the Eucharist is the beginning, means, and end of the priestly ministry, since all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate are bound up with the Eucharist and are directed towards it. Consecrated in order to perpetuate the Holy Sacrifice, the priest thus manifests, in the most evident manner, his identity.”³

◆ One of our readers, Fr. Maynard Kolodziej, O.F.M., in his booklet, *Understanding the Mass*, reminds us of the connection between the Eucharist and the Old Testament Passover. “As the Israelites belonged to the People of God through circumcision, so we belong to the People of God through baptism. As the Israelites shared in the benefits of the old covenant by participating in the Passover celebration, so we share in the benefits of the new covenant by participating in the new Passover celebration, the Eucharist.”⁴

◆ St. Peter Julian Eymard, founder of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers, gives us these bold words concerning Eucharistic devotion: “How is it that our Lord is so little loved in the Eucharist?”

“One reason is that we do not speak enough of it and that we insist only on faith in the presence of Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament instead of speaking about His life and His love therein...in a word, instead of showing Jesus Eucharistic with the personal and special love He has for each one of us.

“Another reason is our behavior, which denotes little love in us. From the way we pray, adore, and visit Him, no one would suspect the presence of Jesus Christ in our churches.

“How many among the best Catholics never pay a visit of devotion to the Most Blessed

Sacrament to speak with Him from the Heart, to tell Him their love! They do not love our Lord in the Eucharist because they do not know Him well enough.

“But if, in spite of knowing Him and His love and the sacrifices and desires of His Heart, they still do not love Him, what an insult! Yes, an insult!

“For it amounts to telling Jesus Christ that He is not beautiful enough, not good enough, not lovable enough to be preferred to what they love.

“What ingratitude!



“After having received so many graces from this good Savior, made so many promises to love Him, and offered themselves so often to His service, such a treatment of Him is a mockery of His love.

“What cowardice!

“For if they do not want to know Him too well, to see Him at close quarters, to receive Him, to have a heart-to-heart talk with Him, the reason is they are afraid of being caught by His love. They fear being unable to resist His kindness; they

fear being obliged to give in, to sacrifice their heart unreservedly, and their mind and life unconditionally.

“They are afraid of the love of Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament, and they avoid Him.

“They are disturbed in His presence; they are afraid of yielding. Like Pilate and Herod they avoid His presence.”⁵

◆ The Eucharist is not only a very special contact with God in Christ. In Christ we also relate to the other members of the Church. In receiving the Eucharist we pledge ourselves to deepen our love-union with all members of the Body which is the Church. We pledge to use these means which foster union. We determine to avoid that which causes selfish divisiveness.

The Eucharist also reminds us of our relationship with the entire human family. Jesus died and rose for all. The Eucharistic making-present of this paschal mystery nourishes our determination to assist in the work of ongoing redemption. The light of the Eucharist points to what we should be doing. The strength of the Eucharist assists us to so act in behalf of all.

The Eucharist, then, possesses the richest capacity to help us maintain and develop our personal relationship with God, the members of the Church, and all other members of the human family. And it will do just this if we surrender to its love, its power, its beauty.

◆ Henri Nouwen observes: “Jesus is God-for-us. Jesus is God giving himself completely, pouring himself out for us without reserve. Jesus doesn’t hold back or cling to his own possessions...He gives all this to us...‘Eat, drink, this is My body, this is My blood...this is Me for you!’”⁶

Letters

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

Dear Fr. Ed,

From nowhere I received a copy of your newsletter. Reading it was a source of simple

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delight as is anything buoying up our priesthood these days. The folksy "Joys of Being a Priest" (by Fr. Philip Hamilton, March-April issue) brought a smile. I think of these fifty-one years with their ups and downs as something very special. As life moves quickly and relentlessly on I am sure of this: *It Is Great To Be a Priest*. To have spent this one life on anything less would appear to this simple soul as a great waste. Please keep the newsletter coming—and thank you for the lift!

Fraternally in Christ,
Rev. Charles Mallen, C.Ss.R.
Venice, Florida

Dear Ed,

It is slow in coming, but I want to add my voice to the praise your newsletter for priests must be getting. I find the material good for reflective, meditative reading and praying. Heaven knows we priests need that.

In the Heart of Christ,
Bob Harvanek, S.J.
Loyola University, Chicago

Dear Fr. Ed,

Of all the stuff that comes cascading into my mailbox every day, "Shepherds of Christ" really stands out. To me it exemplifies one of the great strengths of Catholicism—its spirituality. I use

the newsletter for my prayer after Mass. It has brought me closer to God through Christ by focusing on the basics of Catholic-Christian spirituality in a way that enlightens and inspires.

Fr. Bill Zimmer
Chicago, Illinois

NOTES:

1. Scriptural quotations are taken from *The Jerusalem Bible*, Doubleday & Co.
2. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, p. 397.
3. *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, as in special supplement, *Inside the Vatican*, p. 181.
4. Maynard Kolodziej, O.F.M., *Understanding the Mass*, Franciscan Publishers, p. 31.
5. *The Treasury of Catholic Wisdom*, ed., John Hardon, S.J., Ignatius Press, p. 582.
6. Henri Nouwen, *With Burning Hearts*, Orbis Books, p. 67.
7. John Donne, "Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions," XVII, as in *John Donne, Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, ed., John Hayward, The Nonesuch Press, p. 538.
8. Ladislaus Orsy, S.J., "On Being One with the Church Today," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, Vol. VII, January.
9. St. Clement, Pope, from a letter to the Corinthians, as in *The Liturgy of the Hours*, Catholic Book Publishing Co., Vol. III, pp. 455-456.
10. Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, Doubleday, p. 63.
11. Pope John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Alfred A. Knopf, p. 202.
12. St. Ignatius of Antioch, "Ignatius to the Romans," as in *The Treasury of Catholic Wisdom*, op.cit., p. 14.
13. St. John of the Cross, "Sayings of Light and Love," No. 70, as in *The Treasury of Catholic Wisdom*, op. cit., p. 495.
14. St. Teresa of Avila, "The Interior Castle," Bk. VI, Ch. 7, as in *The Collectible Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, tr., Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D., ICS Publications, Vol. II, p. 399.
15. St. Bernard, "On the Love of God," as in *The Treasury of Catholic Wisdom*, op. cit., p. 193.
16. St. Francis of Assisi, "The Admonitions," No. IX, as in *The Treasury of Catholic Wisdom*, op. cit., p.217.
17. *Ibid.*, No. XIII, p. 218.
18. *Ibid.*, No. XV, p. 219.
19. *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, Newman Press, Nos. 329, 335.
20. "The Rules of St. Benedict," Prologue, as in *The Treasury of Catholic Wisdom*, p. 165.
21. "From the Various Writings of the History of the Order of Preachers," as in *The Liturgy of the Hours*, Catholic Book Publishing Co., Vol. IV, p. 1302.
22. Pope John XXIII, *The Curé of Ars and the Priesthood*, Encyclical Letter, Paulist Press, p. 16.
23. Philip Hamilton, *Padre's Point*, Alt Publishing Co., pp. 117-118.
24. Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, Doubleday, p. 47.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
26. St. Cyprien, as in *The Liturgy of the Hours*, Catholic Book Publishing Co., Vol. III, p. 359.
27. *God's Blue Book, Rosary Meditations*, Rita Ring, to be published by Shepherds of Christ Publications.
28. René Laurentin, *A Year of Grace with Mary*, Veritas Publications, pp. 113-114.
29. *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, op. cit., p. 61.

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