

shepherds of Christ⁺

A SPIRITUALITY NEWSLETTER FOR PRIESTS



REV. EDWARD CARTER S.J., Editor

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Chief Shepherd of the Flock

The Life of Prayer

"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).

Jesus was a man of deep prayer. The gospel of Luke tells us, "His reputation continued to grow, and large crowds would gather to hear him and to have their sickness cured, but he would always go off to some place where he could be alone and pray." (Lk 5:15-16).

And in those hours immediately preceding His laying down His life for His sheep on the cross, He also prayed, "'My Father,' he said, 'if it is possible, let this cup pass me by. Nevertheless, let it be as you, not I, would have it.'" (Mt 26:39).

We, as priests of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus, are also called to lay down our lives for the flock. Relatively few priests throughout the Church's history have been called to shed their blood for the flock through physical martyrdom. All, though, have been and are called to lay down

their lives in that spiritual martyrdom which is involved in giving oneself in loving service to the flock according to the Father's will.

To do this day after day as we should—pour out our lives in love of God and others—is impossible without a consistent prayer life.

We are effective shepherds to the extent we are united with Christ in love. And our growing union with Christ depends mightily on a life of consistent prayer.

Thoughts on Prayer

◆ **Monastic Prayer.** Fr. Basil Pennington, O.C.S.O., the well-known spiritual writer, speaks to us about monastic life and prayer. We who are not monks can appropriately adapt what he says to our own spiritual lives: "Those who embrace the monastic life want to follow Christ and to live the Christian life to the full. This they do with particular attention to the hidden life of Jesus, recognizing his own call to periods of solitude and mindful of his practice of going apart in order to pray. Jesus' years of growth were so hidden that we know little of them, but as a member of a devout Jewish family, it is likely that it was his practice to give time to prayer on a regular basis. After his baptism by John in the Jordan, he went into the desert for weeks of solitude, silence, and prayer (Mk 1:11-13). As the busy years of his healing ministry unfolded, he went apart again

See *Thoughts on Prayer*, page 2



Christmas Greetings

At this Christmastime we wish all our readers a season filled with God's most special blessings. This season offers us a special occasion to reflect on these words:

"Yes, God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not be lost but may have eternal life." (Jn 3:16).

May we who are priests respond to God's overwhelming love manifested in Christ Jesus Our Lord by feeding the Good Shepherd's flock with the food of love. Whether they sufficiently realize it or not, this is what they hunger for deep down—to realize how much Jesus loves them and to love Him in return.



Editor's Corner

by Edward Carter S.J.

Here in the U.S.A. we have recently celebrated Thanksgiving. Hopefully, at that time we all reminded ourselves that giving thanks to God is a daily duty.

A thankful person is a happy person. On occasions we experience sadness and unhappiness, perhaps one of the reasons is our failure to be properly thankful to God. Looking too much at what is wrong, we fail to be sufficiently aware of all that is right. We fail to realize sufficiently the many reasons we have to be joyful. Deficient in a spirit of thanksgiving, we also find ourselves deficient in a sense of joy.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have lavishly and lovingly given themselves to us—for this we need to be thankful. For the magnificent gift of the Eucharist—for this we need to be thankful. For Mary, for the Church, for our faith—these also call for our gratitude.

For life itself, for the opportunity to be and to become, to love and be loved, for the opportunity to accomplish the ordinary as well as the extraordinary, for the chance to grow and mature through both the painful and the exhilarating—for all this we need to be thankful.

For the preciousness of sight, for being able to hear the majestic symphonic sound as well as the gleeful laughter of children at play, for soundness of limb, for the general good health which accompanies us most of our days—for all this we owe perennial thanks.

For the wonderful people in our lives—for these we need to be thankful. Some of these have been very instrumental in helping us to be and to become what God destines us to be. Indeed, without them we may well not have grown in certain ways at all.

We should resolve to strive always to be appropriately thankful. We should endeavor consistently to be aware of the manifold and various gifts God abundantly bestows on us. We should resolve to maintain and develop that spirit of gratitude which will prevent Jesus from including us among the ungrateful, "As He entered one of the villages, ten lepers came to meet Him. They stood some way off and called to Him, 'Jesus! Master! Take pity on us.' When He saw them He said, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.' Now as they were going away they were cleansed. Finding himself cured, one of them turned back praising God at the top of his voice and threw himself at the feet of Jesus and thanked Him. The man was a Samaritan. This made Jesus say, 'Were not all ten made clean? The other nine, where are they? It seems that no one has come back to give praise to God, except this foreigner.' And He said to the man, 'Stand up and go on your way. Your faith has saved you.'" (Lk 17:11-19).

Ed Carter, S.J.

Thoughts on Prayer continued from page 1 and again, alone or with his chosen friends, to pray (Mt 14:13; 14:23; 17:1; 20:17; Mk 6:30)."²

◆ **Prayer and Self-Identity.** There is a connection between prayer and growth in self-identity.

In prayer, there is a greater grasp of who I am—this unique person that God has created and redeemed—and how God wants me to act.

In the quiet of prayer, we have the opportunity to gather up what would otherwise become the fragmented, disintegrated pieces of our lives. Prayer is meant to be a constructive and integrative force that will help us delineate more clearly our self-identity. Through the light of prayer, we see how the pieces fit together, how the Christic self in its uniqueness is meant to give shape and meaning to all facets of our existence.

During prayer, the Spirit gives not only the light that allows us to grow in awareness of the Christic self, but also the determination to act upon this awareness. The Spirit gives us the strength to allow the Christic self to increasingly unfold in and through all dimensions of our existence. We thus grow in union with Christ, this Christ who desires to lead us ever closer to the Father in the Holy Spirit.

◆ At times, we suffer during prayer because God seems far away. We long for a closer union with Him, but there almost seems to be a wall between God and us. When this happens, we should examine ourselves to see if there is an obvious and significant deficiency in our present Christian existence. Is there something that we are doing and should not be doing, or something that we should be doing and are not? If such an examination uncovers no significant deficiency, we can be reasonably assured that this seeming absence of God is one of the pains that we can sometimes encounter during prayer's positive, evolving journey. We must also remember, as the lives of mystics remind us, that God can be very close to us precisely at those times when He seems far away.

◆ There is a definite pain experienced during prayer's transformation of consciousness as one goes from an awareness of the false self to a growing awareness of the true, Christic self. To cut through the layers of pride, selfishness, greed, laziness, hedonism, and so on, that blemish the pristine image of the Christic self is no painless task. Cooperating with prayer's illumination, which points out those ugly manifestations of the false self, carries with it its own kind of pain. Likewise, cooperating with prayer's strength in order to correct these manifestations of the false self requires a willingness to suffer.

As we cut through the layers of the false self and descend more and more to the vibrant and refreshing realms of the Christic self, we are also open to the pain that accompanies a certain type of fear. During prayer, as we become more aware of both the Christic self and what the Christic self demands, we can become afraid. We know this

Christic self longs for a greater love union with God, but we fear what this will demand of us. We hesitate. We want to say a full yes to God's love, but we may find this very difficult to do.

We waver, torn between the inexorable desire to come closer to God and the dread which is born of the realization of the cost that is involved.

This suspended state can, indeed, be very painful. We must come to realize that the pain of the wavering, the pain of the suspended condition, is greater than is the suffering involved in giving God what He wants.

◆ Some say that prayer is a risk, that the one who prays is opening himself or herself to what God asks during prayer, and what God asks might be difficult and contrary to one's own plans and ideas. If prayer is a risk, it is a risk for happiness. Sometimes we try to pursue happiness apart from God's design. If we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that such a path is strewn with frustration and disappointment, and is dead-ended. True happiness is never possible apart from God's will for us, and we know this. Why, then, do we not live this truth with the fullness of our being? Giving God what He asks in prayer always results in greater happiness.

◆ At times we can feel we are engaged in superficial living, that we are, in a sense, merely gliding along on the surface of life. We may not be terribly unhappy, but we tell ourselves in moments of honesty that there must be more to life than what we are experiencing. Such whisperings of conscience are a cry for the deep, meaningful, and fulfilling type of existence that God intends for us. One of the reasons we can become mired in the mediocrity of superficial living is our failure to pray as we should.

◆ Pope John Paul II observes: "Much has been written about prayer, and further, prayer has been widely experienced in the history of humankind, especially in the history of Israel and Christianity. Man achieves *the fullness of prayer...when he lets God be most fully present in prayer. The history of mystical prayer* in the East and West attests to this: Saint Francis, Saint Teresa of Avila, Saint John of the Cross, Saint Ignatius of Loyola, and in the East, for example, Saint Serafim of Sarov and many others."³

◆ Pope Paul VI on the rosary: "As a Gospel prayer, centered in the mystery of the redemptive Incarnation, the Rosary is therefore a prayer with a clearly Christological orientation—the Jesus

that each Hail Mary recalls is the same Jesus Whom the succession of the mysteries proposes to us...By its nature the recitation of the Rosary calls for a quiet rhythm and a lingering pace, helping the individual to meditate on the mysteries of the Lord's life as seen through the eyes of her who was closest to the Lord. In this way the unfathomable riches of these mysteries are unfolded."⁴

◆ A well-known spiritual writer of our times, Dom Hubert Van Zeller, offers us thoughts concerning prayer and the burden of everydayness: "When asked what he considered to be the most exacting aspect of the religious life, a certain experienced superior replied without a moment's hesitation: 'Staying on the job.' This can be taken to apply to the spiritual as well as to the monastic life. It signifies more than the determination not to bolt. Though it bears

first upon obedience and perseverance, staying on the job knows such refinements as patience in the face of panic, endurance of doubt, silent submission when misjudged, suppression of criticism and ambition, continuance in the drudgery of uncongenial and unrewarding work...the fight against resentment and self-pity...If staying on the job demands a measure of heroism, it certainly demands a resolute unselfishness. Even in those who are not (for want of a better term) imaginative, and to whom routine occupa-

tions are no great burden, the spirit of rebellion will assert itself occasionally, and there will be a longing for rest, change...

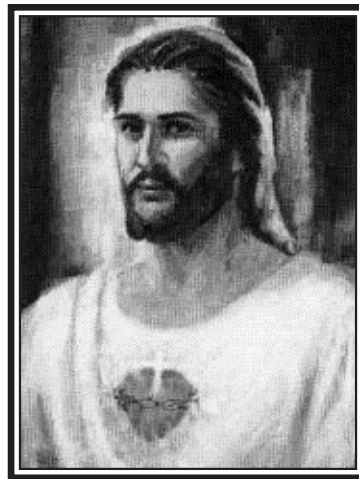
"There must be very few people in the world who positively like monotony. Yet because so much of life is drearily monotonous, those who were looking to serve God with their lives must accustom themselves to dull, steady daily labors, and make of them an acceptable sacrifice. This can be done effectively only by staying with the interior job of prayer. It is stability in prayer which brings order and stability to outward occupations."⁵

◆ The Curé of Ars, St. John Vianney, has some very direct words for us priests concerning prayer: "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."⁶

◆ A modern master on prayer, Thomas Merton, offers us some sobering thoughts: "And so, many contemplatives never become great saints, never enter into close friendship with God, never find a deep participation in His immense joys, because they cling to the miserable little consolations that are given to beginners in the contemplative way.

"How many there are who are in a worse state still: they never even get as far as contemplation because they are attached to activities and enterprises that seem to them to be important. Blinded by their desire for ceaseless motion, for a constant sense of achievement, famished with a crude hunger for results, for visible and tangible success, they work themselves into a state in which they cannot believe they are pleasing God unless they are busy with a dozen jobs at the same time. Sometimes they fill the air with lamentations and complain that they no longer have any time for prayer, but they

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



Thoughts on Prayer, continued from page 3 have become such experts in deceiving themselves that they do not realize how insincere their lamentations are. They not only allow themselves to be involved in more and more work, they actually go looking for new jobs. And the busier they become the more mistakes they make. Accidents and errors pile up all around them. They will not be warned. They go further and further from the shore—and then perhaps God allows their mistakes to catch up with them. Then they wake up and discover that their carelessness has involved them in some gross and obvious sin against justice, for instance, or against the obligations of their state.”⁷

◆ Our proper Eucharistic participation demands a thorough preparation. It is preparation which we must be willing to achieve all day, every day. This preparation includes the practice of prayer, especially that based on the mysteries of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection. This prayer helps one to approach the Mass with the mind of Christ, enabling one to more vitally assimilate the mysteries of Christ which the liturgy makes sacramentally present.

And as we participate in the Mass, we should be aware, of course, that the Eucharist itself is the greatest prayer.

◆ One of the most eminent theologians of our times, Hans Urs Von Balthasar, says: “Those who consider Christian contemplation outdated and turn to the values of the world to give them fresh force are victims of an illusion. Only ‘in Christ’ do things attain their ultimate meaning and end...”⁸

◆ The Father, in the Holy Spirit, speaks to the Christian in prayer through Christ. The Father, under the delicate touches of the Spirit, enlightens the Christian as to life’s meaning. Just as all creation must seek its ultimate meaning in Christ, so the individual Christian can only really understand his or her existence in the light of Christ.

Because of the central role of Christ in the act of prayer, certain corollaries follow. Our prayer should be rooted in Christ and His Gospel. We should make no deliberate attempts on our own in prayer to withdraw from the thought of Christ in His humanity, as if the thought of this sacred humanity is an obstacle to higher prayer. This was an error in the quietism of Molinos. This error, in various degrees, has also been found in the teachings of others besides Molinos, although

perhaps not as boldly. St. Teresa of Avila, an outstanding teacher on prayer, was exposed to this error and has pointed out its dangers: “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.”⁹

Thoughts on the Eucharist

Our greatest prayer is the Eucharist. Here are some thoughts on this great Gift of Jesus to us:

◆ The Catechism tells us: “The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ’s Passover, that is, of the work of salvation accomplished by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, a work made present by the liturgical action.”¹⁰

It is within the Mass, the heart of the liturgy, that the Christian meets Christ and His mysteries in a most special way. In faith, hope, and love the Christian is in union with Jesus in the most intimate fashion, and receives

the graces necessary for growth into an ever greater likeness to Christ. Through the graces of the Eucharist, the Christian is enabled to relive the mysteries of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection in his or her own life. How true it is to say that the liturgy, centered in the Mass, is aimed at transformation in Christ.

◆ Henri Nouwen observes, “The tragedy is that much resentment is hidden within the Church. It is one of the most paralyzing aspects of the Christian community.

“Still, the Eucharist presents another option. It is the possibility to choose not resentment, but gratitude. Mourning our losses is

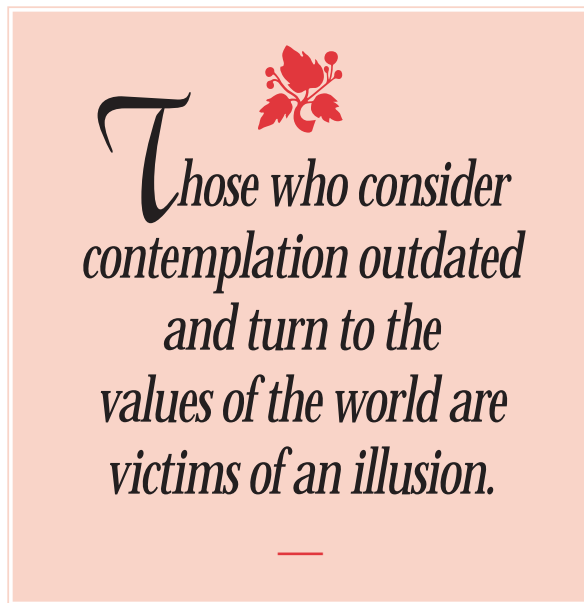
the first step away from resentment and toward gratitude. The tears of our own grief can soften our hardened hearts and open us to the possibility to say ‘thanks’.

“The word ‘Eucharist’ means literally ‘act of thanksgiving’. To celebrate the Eucharist and to live a Eucharistic life has everything to do with gratitude. Living Eucharistically is living life as a gift, a gift for which one is grateful.”¹¹

Mary and Prayer

One of the first things a good mother does is to teach her child to pray. Mary, the best of mothers, the most caring and loving of mothers, has a deep and consistent desire to help us to grow in prayer. One of her favorite forms of prayer is the rosary. She gave a remarkable set of promises regarding the rosary to St. Dominic and Blessed Alan. Included in those promises are the following:

1. Whoever shall faithfully serve me by the recitation of the Rosary shall receive signal graces.
2. I promise my special protection and the greatest graces to all those who shall recite the Rosary.
3. The Rosary shall be a powerful armor against hell. It will destroy vice,



decrease sin, and defeat heresies.

4. It will cause virtue and good works to flourish; it will obtain for souls the abundant mercy of God; it will lift them to the desire of eternal things. Oh, that souls would sanctify themselves by this means!
5. The soul which recommends itself to me by the recitation of the Rosary shall not perish.
6. Whoever shall recite the Rosary devoutly, applying himself to the consideration of its sacred mysteries, shall never be conquered by misfortune. God will not chastise him in His justice; he shall not perish by an unprovided death. If he be just he shall remain in the grace of God, and become worthy of eternal life.
7. Whoever shall have a true devotion for the Rosary shall not die without the sacraments of the Church.
8. Those who are faithful to recite the Rosary shall have during their life and at their death the light of God and the plenitude of His graces. At the moment of death they shall participate in the merits of the saints in paradise.
9. I shall deliver from purgatory those who have been devoted to the Rosary.
10. The faithful children of the Rosary shall merit a high degree of glory in heaven.
11. You shall obtain all you ask of me by the recitation of the Rosary.
12. All those who propagate the Holy Rosary shall be aided by me in their necessities.
13. I have obtained from my Son that all the advocates of the Rosary shall have for intercessors the entire celestial court during their life and at the hour of death.¹²

Three Great Teachers on Prayer

St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa of Avila, and St. Ignatius Loyola have all three spoken eloquently on the subject of prayer. Fr. Thomas McKenna, C.M., offers some insightful observations concerning their spiritual doctrine: “Confessing that the approach to God happens only on God’s terms, Teresa nonetheless painted the way there in warm and welcoming colors. Her chronicle of the journey through a series of successively enclosed chambers (mansions) is classic among the descriptions of the mystical path. Sparkling as it does with images of emerging butterflies and bubbling artesian wells, it depicts her move from active to passive contemplation. Hardly a passive personality, Teresa initiated a prodigious reform within the Carmelites and thus also testified to the synergy between

genuine interior life and effective apostolic action.

“If Teresa sketched resting points along the spiritual ascent, her protégé, John of the Cross, fixed his gaze on the summit. Compactly in his poetry but also in interpretive prose, John detailed the melting-down and recasting of human desire as it draws near the Divine. His is a shadowy passage through a twilight of the senses and spirit, an intensely dark nocturne, and out into a dawn streaked with the divine light. Over the course of that night, the darkness that blinded the traveler is revealed as the radiance of God, which at the earlier stage could not be recognized for the light it was...



“Ignatius of Loyola took a different tack as he found intimacy with God in the press of active service. As he interacted with his times and circumstances, he discovered certain patterns of divine guidance embedded within his experience and subse-

quently constructed an imaginatively rich method to help others appropriate theirs. Basic to his logic was a conviction that the Spirit of Jesus is ‘afoot in the universe,’ particularly within each individual, and that therefore the Spirit-filled person is able to know by both interior and exterior signs which activities are the genuine works of Christ. Such a mystical perception of the world ties the closest of bonds between prayer and ministry, prodding the apostle to view all activities in their relation to their divine ground, and conversely to find that source in all things.”¹³

Prayer to the Good Shepherd

St. Gregory of Nyssa has left us this inspiring prayer to the Good Shepherd:

“Where do you pasture your sheep, O Good Shepherd, you who carry on your shoulders the whole flock? For it is but one sheep, this entire human race whom you lift onto your shoulders. Show me the place where there are green pastures, let me know restful waters, lead me out to nourishing grass and call me by name so that I can hear your voice, for I am your sheep. And through that voice calling me, give me eternal life.

“Tell me, you whom my soul loves. This is how I address you, because your true name is above all other names; it is unutterable and incomprehensible to all rational creatures. And so the name I use for you is simply the statement of my soul’s love for you, and this is an apt name for making your goodness known. Very dark though I am, how could I not love you who so loved me that you laid down your life for the sheep you tend? No greater love can be conceived than this, that you should purchase my salvation at the cost of your life.”¹⁴

On Suffering

In God’s plan, suffering is meant to lead to greater life. God tells us this with absolute clarity as we look at Jesus, the Suffering Servant. The cross of Jesus was not an end in itself, but a means to greater life for the whole human race. Our own sufferings can either be wasted or used to achieve greater life for ourselves and others. Dom Hubert Van Zeller observes: “Men and women who might be turning their afflictions over to God, who have only to unite themselves in spirit with Christ’s passion, are found so often to

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On Suffering, continued from page 5

stop short, and even to make of their trial further matter for selfishness. Even if we do not rebel positively against God's providential will, we can become so preoccupied with our troubles as to leave God out of account.

"Instead of making us compassionate for others we can squander compassion on ourselves. Suffering is meant to enlarge our hearts, not shrink them. With suffering goes the grace of patience, peace, fortitude, penitence and love. All this can be missed if we make the mistake of turning in upon ourselves as the result of our trials.

"To the Jews the cross was a stumbling-block, and to the gentiles foolishness. What is it to us? Often it can be an emblem merely, the significance of the symbol forgotten. The cross is something in which we are, by reason of our Christian inheritance, inextricably involved. Do we yield to it or harden ourselves against it? The cross is not just two planks fitted together on a certain day in the history of the world, and of all the relics which we venerate the most sacred, but a fact of our human experience which may or may not be sacred according to what we do about it."¹⁵

To suffer properly, to use suffering according to God's will and thereby grow through it, demands that we be persons of prayer. The light which God gives us in prayer helps us to see the purpose of suffering in His plan. The strength given to us in prayer helps us to live accordingly.

The Priest as Shepherd

Vatican II tells us: "By their vocations and ordination, priests of the New Testament are indeed set apart in a certain sense within the midst of God's people. But this is so, not that they may be separated from the people or from any man, but that they may be totally dedicated to the work for which the Lord has raised them up. They cannot be ministers of Christ unless they are witnesses and dispensers of a life other than this earthly one. But they cannot be of service to men if they remain strangers to the life and conditions of men. Their ministry itself by a special title forbids them to be conformed to this world. Yet at the same time this ministry requires that they live in this world among men, and that as good shepherds they know their sheep. It

requires that they seek to lead those who are not of this sheepfold so that they too may hear the voice of Christ and that there may be one fold and one Shepherd."¹⁶

Pope John Paul II in the USA

Here are some excerpts from the many remarks made by the Holy Father during his recent visit to the United States:

◆ "The right to life is the first of all rights. It is the foundation of democratic liberties and the keystone of the edifice of civil society. Both as Americans and as followers of Christ, American Catholics must be committed to the defense of life in all its stages and in every condition."

◆ "America's sometimes extravagant affluence often conceals much hardship and poverty. We must therefore ask a very basic question: have the people living in this huge metropolis lost sight of the blessings which belong to the poor in spirit?"

◆ "You are called to stand up for life! To respect and defend the mystery of life always and everywhere... Stand up for the life of the aged and handicapped, against attempts to promote assisted suicide and euthanasia! Stand up for marriage and family life! Stand up for purity!"

◆ "The family is placed at the center of the great struggle between life and death, between love and all that is opposed to love. The family therefore is at the heart of the

Church's mission and of her concern for humanity."

◆ "Every generation of Americans needs to know that freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought."

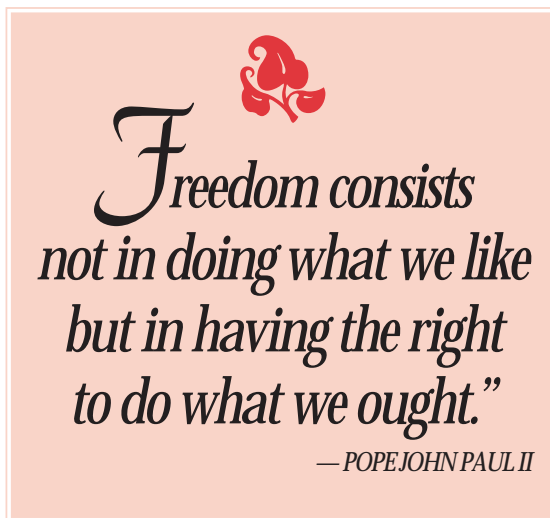
◆ "I speak of your founding documents: the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights—and I say to you again, America, in the light of your own traditions: love life, cherish life, defend life, from conception to natural grave."¹⁷

The Christian and the Social Order

Vatican II tells us: "Coming down to practical and particularly urgent consequences, this council lays stress on reverence for man; everyone must consider his every neighbor without exception as another self, taking into account first of all his life and the means necessary to living it with dignity, so as not to imitate the rich man who had no concern for the poor man Lazarus.

"In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbor of absolutely every person, and of actively helping him when he comes across our path, whether he be an old person abandoned by all, a foreign laborer unjustly looked down upon, a refugee, a child born of an unlawful union and wrongfully suffering for a sin he did not commit, or a hungry person...

"Furthermore, whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia, or willful self-destruction; whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere



tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are a supreme dishonor to the Creator.”¹⁸

On Non-Violence

Martin Luther King, Jr., has left us these words: “The nonviolent approach does not immediately change the heart of the oppressor. It first does something to the hearts and souls of those committed to it. It gives them a new self-respect; it calls up resources of strength and courage that they did not know they had. Finally, it reaches the opponent and so stirs his conscience that reconciliation becomes a reality.”¹⁹

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 in Our Lives

As the closing words of the act of consecration remind us, Jesus leads us to the Father in the Holy Spirit with Mary at our side. The Holy Spirit desires to fashion us into an ever greater likeness of Christ according to Jesus’ pattern of death-resurrection. Mary our Mother cooperates with the Spirit, Whose spouse she is, in this process. Obviously, we should pray to the Holy Spirit each day. There are many ways we can do this. We can do this by simply turning our attention to the Spirit at various times during the day as we ask for His guidance. This method can also be complemented by saying certain established prayers. Here is one of these: “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 marvelous courage, come and sanctify us. Enlighten our minds, rectify our judgment, set our hearts on fire, and preserve us from the misfortunes of resisting Your inspirations. Amen.”

*Immaculate
Heart
of Mary,
Pray for us.*

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,

Thanks for the Shepherds of Christ newsletter. I enjoyed the July-August one. ’Twas very good and uplifting. May the Holy Spirit pierce your mind with ways to encourage your brother priests.

Fraternally in Christ,
Rev. John Turk
Warren, Ohio

Dear Father Ed,

With all the misquotes and the twisted interpretations of the Catholic Teachings in our daily Press, it is enjoyable to pick up Shepherds of Christ and read some solid Catholic Teaching. Keep up the good work.

Thank you for the Newsletter.

Fr. Werner Verhoff, C.P.P.S.

Dear Fr. Carter,

I appreciated very much that you wrote to me. I can imagine the amount of work you have in publishing a newsletter for 45,000 priests and preparing to send it to priests in other countries. I congratulate you that you send it free of

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charge...

I received only two issues. I would love to get every issue. Your newsletter is a mine of thoughts and inspirations...

...in my humble opinion, encouragement is what priests need the most today. Everybody should show them their appreciation...for bearing the burdens of those who left or are not coming. I admire the great majority of young priests for their beautiful spirituality.

Yours respectfully in the Sacred Hearts of
Jesus and Mary,
Fr. Leonard Currier, M.S.S.C.C.
Linwood, New Jersey

Dear Ed,

In the true spirit of St. Ignio you have captured the essence of some very great saints in the Church. I found your selections truly inspiring and reinforcing of the beliefs that must be at the center of every priest's life. Thank you and keep up this long needed newsletter.

Father Jim Wysocki,
Marine City, Michigan

NOTES:

1. Scriptural quotations are taken from *The Jerusalem Bible*, Doubleday & Co.
2. Basil Pennington, O.C.S.O., as in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, The Liturgical Press, pp. 665-666.
3. Pope John Paul II, *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Alfred A. Knopp, p. 18.
4. Pope Paul VI, *Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary (Marialis Cultus)*, United States Catholic Conference, Nos. 46-47.
5. Dom Hubert Van Zeller, *More Ideas for Prayer*, Templegate, p. 112.
6. Pope John XXIII, *The Curè of Ars and the Priesthood*, Encyclical Letter, Paulist Press, p. 16.
7. Thomas Merton, *Seeds of Contemplation*, New Directions, pp. 127-128.
8. Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Prayer*, Sheed & Ward, p. 53.
9. St. Teresa of Avila, "The Interior Castle," Bk. VI, Ch. 7, as in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, tr., Kiernan Kavanaugh, O.C.D., and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D., ICS Publications, Vol II, p. 399.
10. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #1409, p. 355.
11. Henri Nouwen, *With Burning Hearts*, Orbis, p. 30.
12. As in *The Fatima Crusader*, Summer 1992, p. 30.
13. Thomas McKenna, C.M., as in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, The Liturgical Press, p. 662.
14. St. Gregory of Nyssa, as in *The Liturgy of the Hours*, Catholic Book Publishing Co., Vol. IV, p. 555.
15. Dom Hubert Van Zeller, op. cit., p. 91.
16. "Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests," *The Documents of Vatican II*, America Press, No. 3.
17. Pope John Paul II, as in *Inside the Vatican*, November, 1995.
18. "The Church in the Modern World," Vatican II, op. cit., #27.
19. Martin Luther King, Jr. as in *The Mystic Vision*, compiled by Andrew Harvey and Anne Baring, Harper, p. 168.

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