

shepherds of Christ⁺

A SPIRITUALITY NEWSLETTER FOR PRIESTS



REV. EDWARD CARTER S.J., Editor

CONTENTS

Christ and His Church	1
Thoughts on the Church Today	1
Editor's Corner	2
The Father: Origin of the Church's Life	4
The Spirit Is Present	4
The Heart of Christ	5
This Friend Jesus	6
An Appeal for the Church in Ukraine	7
Prayer	7
Rosary Reflections	7
Act of Consecration	7
Letters	7

Chief Shepherd of the Flock

Christ and His Church

"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)

Yes, the Good Shepherd has laid down His life for His sheep. The Good Shepherd's magnificent Heart, overflowing with love for the Father and all of us, was pierced so that the waters of our salvation might flow forth: "It was Preparation Day, and to prevent the bodies remaining on the cross during the sabbath—since that sabbath was a day of special solemnity—the Jews asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken away. Consequently the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with him and then of the other. 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 19:31-34)

Bonaventure, the Franciscan saint and doctor of the Church, comments on the pierced Heart of the Good Shepherd: "Then, in order that the Church might be formed out of the side of Christ sleeping on the cross...the divine plan permitted that one of the soldiers pierce open His sacred side with a lance. While blood mixed with water flowed, the price of our salvation was poured forth, which gushing forth from the sacred fountain of the heart, gave power to the sacraments of the Church..."²

And very importantly, the Second Vatican itself tells us: "The wonders wrought by God among the people of the Old Testament were but a prelude to the work of Christ the lord in redeeming mankind and giving perfect glory to

God. He achieved His task principally by the paschal mystery of His blessed passion, resurrection from the dead, and glorious ascension, whereby 'dying, he destroyed our death, and, rising, he restored our life.' For it was from the side of Christ, as He slept the sleep of death upon the cross that there came forth the wonderful sacrament which is the whole Church."³

Yes, the Church was born from the pierced side of the Good Shepherd. The Church today is existing in very critical times. The world is experiencing a great multitude of problems, some of these most critical ones. The Church herself, which is a God-given source of light to the world, is herself beset with numerous challenges and problems. One of these problems is the numerous types of divisions existent in the Church. These are hampering her ability to be a light to this troubled world.

We priests, through the sacrament of orders, have been brought into a very special union with Christ. The interests of Christ must, consequently, be the interests of the priest in a most special manner. Consequently, since Christ has a most passionate love for His Church, the priest must strive to imitate this love. The priest must have a deep desire to help heal the wounds of the Church. He must have a burning desire to help her be more what God destines her to be. We must help her become a brighter light to lead a troubled world back to God.

Thoughts on the Church Today

◆ "Now you together are Christ's body; but each of you is a different part of it. In the Church, God has given the first place to apostles, the second to prophets, the third to teachers; after them, miracles, and after them the gift of healing; helpers, good leaders, those with many languages. Are all of them apostles, or all of them prophets, or all of them teachers? Do they all have this gift of miracles, or all have the gift of healing? Do all speak strange languages, and all

See *Thoughts on the Church*, page 2



Editor's Corner

by Edward Carter S.J.

One of the main themes of this issue of the newsletter is that of Church. In our editor's column, we wish to add a few more ideas about the Church.

We must all strive to grow in a sense of corporateness. We have to always strive to stretch our vision and be aware that we are members of the universal Church, as, at the same time, we are members of a particular parish and diocese. We must think in terms of what is good for the entire Church, and through the Church of what is good for the entire human race. We must be selfless, working for the good of the whole. Even when we disagree, we do so not that we may appear to have the upper hand, but because we believe that to disagree here and now is necessary so that the truth may better emerge. St. Paul speaks to us about the sense of corporateness:

"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. In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus." (Phil 2:1-5)

Ed Carter, S.J.

Thoughts on the Church Today continued from page 1

interpret them?" (1 Cor 12:27-30)

◆ The Church as Body of Christ is the earthly, visible continuation of the Incarnation. Christ is the Head of the Body, we are His members. Since the Church is the terrestrial manifestation of the mystery of Christ, her life is patterned after His. The various mysteries or events of Christ, especially the central ones of death and resurrection, are to be relived by the Church's members. Indeed, the image of the Church is a Christic one.

For the Church to be constituted in the image of Christ is both a great privilege and a great responsibility. The more the Church can project the image of Christ, the more she is capable of being an instrument of continued redemption. Jesus led a life of material simplicity. Is this characteristic sufficiently manifest in the life of the Church? Jesus came to minister, not to be served.

Do we as members of the Church properly project to one another and to the world an attitude of loving service? Jesus manifested a special concern for the poor, the lowly, the helpless. Do we do likewise? Jesus hungered and thirsted for justice's sake. Do the many flagrant violations of justice in our own day really bother us? Jesus loved each individual and forgave His enemies. Do we love everybody and do we forgive? Jesus was ridiculed, rejected, spat upon, beaten, crowned with thorns, abandoned by His friends, lifted up on a cross. This was all a proof of how much He loved His Church and the world. How much are we willing to suffer for the Church and the world?

◆ Vatican II speaks concerning the Church and its relationship with the world: "Though mankind today is struck with wonder at its own discoveries and its power, it often raises anxious questions about the current trend of the world, about the place and role of man in the universe, about the meaning of the universe, about the meaning of his individual and collective strivings, and about the ultimate destiny of reality and of humanity. Hence, giving witness and voice to the faith of the whole People of God gathered together by Christ, this Council can provide no more eloquent proof of its solidarity with the entire human family with which it is bound up, as well as its respect and love for that family, than by engaging with it in conversation about the various problems.

"The Council brings to mankind light kindled from the gospel, and puts at its disposal those saving resources which the Church herself, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, receives from her Founder. For the human person deserves to be preserved; human society deserves to be renewed. Hence the pivotal point of our total presentation will be man himself, whole and entire, body and soul, heart and conscience, mind and will.

"Therefore this sacred Synod proclaims the highest destiny of man and champions the god-like seed which has been sown in him. It offers to mankind the honest assistance of the Church in fostering that brotherhood of all men which corresponds to this destiny of theirs. Inspired by no earthly ambition, the Church seeks but a solitary goal: to carry forward the work of Christ Himself under the lead of the befriending Spirit. And Christ entered this world to give witness to the truth, to rescue and not to sit in judgment, to serve and not be served."⁴

◆ There is an errant philosophy of individualism rampant in today's world that can certainly influence the contemporary Christian. This philosophy is patently false. It provides a type of individualism that is inimical to community

because it teaches that one must look out for oneself regardless of the consequences to others. Do your own thing, in other words, whenever and wherever you please, and let the chips fall where they may. This type of individualism is obviously wrong and pernicious.

There is, on the other hand, a kind of individualism that is positive and in perfect harmony with the tenets of community, and, in our present context, with life within the Church: "An absolutely individual Christianity in the most personal experience of grace and ecclesial Christianity are no more radically opposed than are body and soul, than are man's transcendental essence and his historical constitution, or than are individuality and inter-communication. The two condition each other mutually. The very thing which we are from God is mediated in the concreteness of history by what we call church. And it is only in and through this mediation that it becomes our own reality and our salvation in full measure. For this reason church exists and has to exist."⁵

◆ The above remarks easily lead us to a quotation of John Henry Cardinal Newman. Newman's words remind us that each of us has a God-given role to fulfill in the Church, and that no one else can accomplish this mission. This is a great privilege, and a great responsibility: "Everyone who breathes, high and low, educated and ignorant, young and old, man and woman, has a mission, has a work. We are not sent into this world for nothing, we are not born at random...God sees every one of us. He creates every soul, He lodges it in a body, one by one, for a purpose."⁶

◆ Here are words of Pope John Paul II to a group of seminarians: "As you know, I have just had a long working session with your bishops. It was a particularly important conversation, in the course of which we were able, we who are jointly in charge of all the churches, to face up to our responsibilities in order to assume them according to what pleases God. And now, it seems quite natural to continue this conversation, in a way, with those who are preparing to become collaborators of the episcopal order, and to be associated in this way, in the Person of Christ, with the preaching of the Gospel and the guidance of the People of God. You are still young, certainly, but already you divine a great many things. You understand that your gift must be complete and

that, the further you go, the more you will discover the necessity of making it—if I may venture to say so—even more complete. It is at this level, therefore, that I will take up my position with you, taking into account, of course, the fact that a way such as yours takes time, and a long spiritual, intellectual and pastoral maturation, and that the mere desire to become a priest is not enough in itself to meet the requirements of the priesthood.

"One of these requirements, the most fundamental one, is that you should be deeply rooted in Jesus Christ. I invite you to this with all my heart. If you could learn, through prayer and contemplation, to live, preach, love and suffer like Christ, it seems that the main lines of your mission

would gradually take shape clearly, and that you would also feel a vital need to join men and bring them what they really need. In such a proceeding, there is already the soul of the apostolate, so that 'action' is indissolubly linked with 'being', and vice versa. Here it is not useful to pursue vain discussions, nor is it good to prefer one to the detriment of the other. The Church intends to form you in complete interior unity, in which the mission requires intimacy with God, and in which the latter calls for the former.

"Do you want to be yourselves, 'good shepherds'? The good shepherd gives his life, and he gives his life for his sheep. Very well, then! It is necessary to discover the sense of self-sacrifice, linked with the sacrifice of Christ, and offer yourselves for others, who expect this witness from you. That can be said of all the faithful, but with all the more reason and in a very special way of priests and future priests. May your daily participation in the Eucharist, and the efforts you make to increase Eucharistic devotion within you, keep you along this way!"⁷

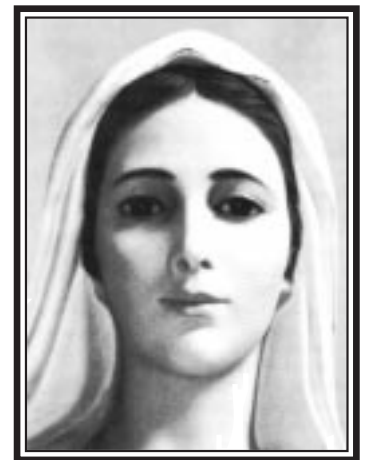
◆ The People of God are just that, people, and this implies that they are subject to imperfections and sinfulness like the rest of the human race. The Church is a pilgrim Church, made up of people struggling to be good, but at times failing, sinning, neglecting to live the Gospel ideal as well as they ought. But a pilgrim Church must endure this darker side of human nature. The pilgrim Church is still on its way, having much of the journey yet to travel. The pilgrim Church is in need of constant conversion of heart as it keeps reaching out to assimilate the Gospel of Jesus in deeper faith, hope and love.

Despite the imperfections and sinfulness of the Church, we should always be striving to love more loyally this organization which is the Body of Christ. We are to love the Church, not with a blind loyalty which covers over her faults and blemishes and sinfulness, but with a loyalty that strives to help the Church become more what she should be. We are also to love the Church in a way which allows us not only to look at what is wrong with her, but which also permits us to see all that is right with her. We are to love the Church as a gift coming forth from the pierced Heart of Jesus. To fail to love this Church, then, is to fail to love this precious gift which Jesus has left us in the shedding of His blood. Christ and His Church are inseparably connected. To grow in love of Christ is to grow in love of His Church.

◆ In so many different ways we receive support from this organization

See *Thoughts on the Church*, page 4

*Immaculate
Heart
of Mary,
Pray for us.*



Thoughts on the Church, continued from page 3 called Church. Certain disillusioned members of the Church think they could better go it alone in trying to live the Gospel and in trying to influence social structures with Christian principles. They forget how much support they have received from the institutional Church. Donald Thorman, when he was editor of *The National Catholic Reporter* (a publication which has not hesitated to point out the faults of the institutional Church) observed: "Of course, there are many...cases in which the individual carries the burden of witnessing for Christ and the Christian message through his presence in the civic and social community. But without the 'support system' of an organized Church, which preached to him, helped prepare and motivate him, and which now continues to support him liturgically and educationally, his chances of maintaining himself without such support are negligible."⁸

◆ Vatican II clearly reminds us that the Church's life is centered in her liturgy: "...the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which all her power flows. For the goal of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in her sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's supper.

"The liturgy in its turn inspires the faithful to become 'of one heart in love' when they have tasted to their full of the paschal mysteries; it prays that 'they may grasp by deed what they hold by creed.' The renewal in the Eucharist of the covenant between the Lord and man draws the faithful into the compelling love of Christ and sets them afire. From the liturgy, therefore, and especially from the Eucharist, as from a fountain, grace is channeled into us; and the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God, to which all the other activities of the Church are directed as toward their goal, are most powerfully achieved."⁹

The *Catechism* states: "'Christ is the light of humanity; and it is, accordingly, the heart-felt desire of this sacred Council, being gathered together in the Holy Spirit, that, by proclaiming his Gospel to every creature, it may bring to all men that light of Christ which shines out visibly from the Church'. These words open the Second Vatican Council's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*. By choosing this starting point, the

Council demonstrates that the article of faith about the Church depends entirely on the articles concerning Christ Jesus. The Church has no other light than Christ's; according to a favorite image of the Church Fathers, the Church is like the moon, all its light reflected from the sun".¹⁰

The Father: Origin of the Church's Life

Archbishop Joseph Raya of the Byzantine Rite states: "The Father is the source of all life and love. In our liturgical life no action of Christ or of the Holy Spirit is ever mentioned without mentioning the Father as its source and origin. He is the principle and essence of being and movement. he is the very source of everything, first of all within the Trinity itself, and then in all of creation."¹¹

The life of the Church flows from the bosom of the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. Mary, as Mother of the Church, intercedes regarding all aspects of the Church's life.

The Spirit Is Present

We have just celebrated the great Feast of Pentecost. It is appropriate, then, for us to reflect upon this great Gift to the Church, the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit is present. He is present in our midst—present to the world,

to the Church, to each of us individually. He is among us to deepen the Christic design upon the world, that Christic image which Christ has imprinted through His life, death and resurrection. The Spirit is present to make us more alive, to stir up deep desires which make us thirst for God, desires which also make us more aware of what it means to love our neighbor. In the fourth Eucharistic prayer we say:

"Father, you so loved the world that in the fullness of time you sent your only Son to be our Savior...In fulfillment of your will he gave himself up to death, but by rising from the dead, he destroyed death and restored life. And that we might live no longer for ourselves but for him, he sent the Holy Spirit from you, Father, as his first

gift to those who believe, to complete his work on earth and bring us the fullness of grace".¹²

God is a God of life. The Spirit is present to us in order that we may have life and have it more abundantly. The Spirit does not in any way destroy or lessen anything which is authentically human. His grace rather elevates human nature to a new life, perfects it, gives it a new dynamism.

At times we tend to shy away from the action of the Spirit, erroneously thinking that if we abandon ourselves to His touch, life will be less than we want it to be, different than we want it to be. We mistakenly think that a life in the Spirit will somehow diminish our zest for living, that it will lessen our capacity for human happiness and fulfillment. If we succumb to such thinking, our self-made images of what happiness is, or what contributes to it, become mirages. These mirages delude us, as the mirages on the horizon delude the desert traveler. They never give us the happiness they seem to promise.

The truth is that life in the Spirit, the Christ-life, gives us an increased capacity to be alive, vital, happy. Our life in Christ, under the Spirit's touch, permeates our total existence, infuses our being with a newness, which, if we give ourselves to it, brings a happiness and fullness of life impossible to the person who refuses the Spirit's gift.



The Christian life is human life in the spirit—divinized human life. Life in the Spirit is a man deeply and tenderly loving his wife, a friend sharing with friend. Life in the Spirit is our work life. It is being a nurse, a mother and wife, a pastor, a teacher, a laborer, a scientist, a business man. Life in the Spirit is a person at play. Life in the Spirit is laughing, rejoicing, being thrilled by nature's beauty, being eager for life's possibilities. Life in the Spirit is believing, trusting loving. It is also weeping, being crushed by sorrow, losing a loved one, experiencing failure.

The above described human experiences, and all others, too, comprise life in the Spirit as long as they come under His guidance. If these experiences are regulated by the divine will, they are expressions of our Christ-life. This is the biblical sense of life in the Spirit. It is the redeemed person living as he or she should. It does not matter what the action or experience happens to be at the moment, as long as the touch of the Spirit is present.

The spiritual person, then, is the one who is careful to submit one's life to the guidance of the Spirit.

The unspiritual person, on the other hand, is one who lives not according to the Spirit, but according to the flesh. This biblical concept of living according to the flesh refers to sins of one's total person, both spirit and body, not only those involving the flesh. Living according to the flesh includes everything which is not directed by the Spirit. If it includes sexual sins and other failings of the flesh, it also embraces all failings of the spirit. Life according to the flesh is intellectual pride. It is working at one's profession for selfish motives. It is jealousy, sloth, and unjust anger. It is thinking too much about oneself. It is a lack of concern for the human dignity of the other. Life in the flesh is cheating in business; it is a greed for power; it is racial hatred; it is a callous unconcern about social injustice. Life in the flesh, then, is life outside God's redemptive plan. It is those actions and attitudes which are against God's will. It is life which refuses to be Spirit-guided.

Life lived according to the Spirit rather than according to the flesh obviously is not always easy. The opposition between the two forces within us is brought out by St. Paul: "When selfish indulgence is at work the results are obvious: fornication, gross indecency and sexual irresponsibility; idolatry and sorcery; feuds and wrangling; jealousy, bad temper and quarrels; disagreements, factions, envy; drunkenness, orgies and similar things. I warn you now, as I warned you before: those who behave like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. What the Spirit brings is very different: love, joy, peace, patience,

kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control... You cannot belong to Christ Jesus unless you crucify all self-indulgent passions and desires.

"Since the Spirit is our life, let us be directed by the Spirit. We must stop being conceited, provocative and envious." (Gal 5:19-26)

The new life which God gives us in the Spirit is patterned after the teaching and example of Jesus. The task of the Spirit is to lead us along the way of Jesus to the Father. His task is to deepen the image of Christ upon us. Because the Spirit knows we cannot closely follow Christ unless we deeply love Him, the Spirit is always inspiring us to a closer love-union with Jesus. We can resist the Spirit's inspiration, as we too well know, and when we do, we are tarnishing the name "Christian" which we profess. The word "Christian" should ideally mean a person completely dedicated to Jesus Christ, one on fire with love of Him, one eager to promote His cause. The committed Christian, in his or her own way, has to imitate the Christic enthusiasm of St. Paul: "Life to me, of course, is Christ, but then death would bring me something more; but then again, if living in this body means doing work which is having good results—I do not know what I should choose. I am caught in this dilemma: I want to be gone and be with Christ, which would be very much the better, but for me to stay alive in this body is a more urgent need for your sake." (Phil 1:21-24)

The Spirit is present. He is with us to fashion us more and more according to the image of Christ as He deepens our incorporation into the life, death and resurrection of Christ. And as the Spirit first gave us Christ through Mary, He continues to use Mary's cooperation as He causes our growth in Christ. As we open ourselves to the touch of the Spirit, we are fulfilling the Father's plan for us: "We knew that by turning everything to their good God cooperates with all those who love him, with all those that he has called according to his purpose. They are the ones he chose specially long ago and intended to become true images of his Son..." (Rom 8: 28-29)

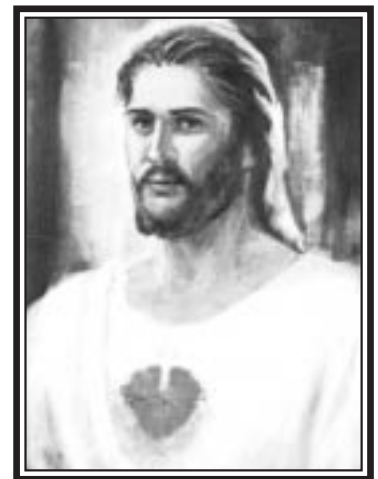
The Heart of Christ

We have just reflected on how the Holy Spirit labors within us to deepen our love for Christ, how He wishes to give us a burning desire to give our all for our magnificent Savior, this Jesus Who died a brutal and agonizing death for you and for me, this Jesus from Whose pierced Heart the Church was born.

Oh, how glorious would be the Church's existence if many more of her members would be on fire with love for Christ! They would have a burning and all-consuming desire to help spread Christ's magnificent love in ever greater measure to the whole world.

Our task as priests is to help lead the members of the Church to this kind of deep love for Jesus Christ. Obviously, the deeper our own love for Jesus, the more able we are to help others grow in an enthusiastic love for Him, a love which helps to renew the Church and the world.

One of the great ways God has given us to aid us in developing a deep love relationship with Jesus is devotion to the Heart of Christ. In the preface of the Mass for the Feast of the Sacred Heart, a Feast which we have recently celebrated, the Church invites all her members to come to the pierced Heart



See *The Heart of Christ*, page 6

The Heart of Christ, continued from page 5
of Jesus for life-giving graces:

“Lifted high on the cross,
Christ gave his life for us,
so much did he love us.
From his wounded side flowed blood and water,
the fountain of sacramental life in the Church.
To his open heart the Savior invites all men,
to draw water in joy from the springs of salvation.”¹³

St. Peter Canisius, doctor of the Church, is an outstanding example of one who drank deeply from the Heart of Christ. In doing so, this man of brilliant intellect, became a great saint. In the office for his feast, April 27, we are told:

“St. Peter Canisius is rightly known as the second apostle of Germany. On receiving the apostolic blessing before setting out for that country, he was favored with a mystical experience which he described as follows:

‘Eternal High Priest, in your great goodness it pleases you that I should seek from your Apostles confirmation and success for the apostolic blessing I had received.

“For pilgrims come to pray to them in the Vatican, and there, by your power, they work miracles. I experienced there a great consolation and the same sense of the presence of your grace which was being offered to me through their intercession. They gave me their blessing too, confirmed my mission to Germany and seemed to be promising me their goodwill as apostle of Germany. You know, Lord, how urgently and how often that day you entrusted Germany to me, telling me ever after to have her good at heart, and to wish to live and die on her behalf.

“Finally, my Saviour, I seemed to be gazing at the Heart of your Sacred Body with my own eyes. It was as if you opened to me and told me to drink from it as from a spring, inviting me to draw the waters of salvation from these springs of yours. I was filled with longing that the waters of faith, hope and charity should flow from your Heart into me. I thirsted for poverty, chastity and obedience; I begged you to wash me all over and dress me in fine clothing. Then I dared to touch your beloved Heart and bury my thirst in it; and you promised me a robe woven in three parts to cover my naked soul and help me greatly in my undertaking. Those three parts were peace, love and perseverance. Secure in the protection of this garment, I was confident that I would lack nothing, and that everything would turn out for your glory.”¹⁴

This Friend Jesus

“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)

What graciousness on the part of Jesus! Our God, our Savior, invites us to be His friends! Indeed, he calls us to the closest friendship with Himself. Here are some thoughts on friendship with Jesus:

“Friendship is a process of self-liberation. As I give myself to another in friendship, I am aided in the process of escape from my false self. I am aided in the process of achieving true self-identity. The facade of the false self more and more recedes through the dynamics of friendship. Why is this? When another receives me in friendship that other receives me as I am. The friend loves me in my good points, loves me despite my bad points. In the

warmth of this receptive love, I am encouraged to be and to become my authentic self. I do not have to project a false self, since I know the other will not reject me. Actually, my true self is more attractive to the friend and to others precisely because it is my authentic self—the self God destines me to be, possess-



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

ing the personal uniqueness with which He has permeated my being.

“Friendships, therefore, increase my freedom—the freedom to be my real self. The deeper an authentic friendship, the more I am encouraged by the other’s love to be and to become. I am encouraged to exercise my talents and to develop them to ever greater heights in the loving service of God and others.

“If friendship with a human person increases my growth potential, what are we to say about friendship with Jesus? There is no comparison. Jesus offers me such magnificent opportunities for growth. The more I am aware of Jesus’ tremendous and personal love for me, the more secure I feel in developing my real self.

“Being accepted by Jesus as a friend should radically change my life. As Jesus has given Himself entirely to me, so I should give myself entirely to Him. This deep and intense friendship accomplishes my ongoing transformation. This friend, Jesus, through the strength and tenderness of His love, gradually and increasingly draws me out of my selfish traits. He gradually makes me more free to really be. He increasingly assists me in allowing my Christic-Trinitarian self to emerge more and more in expressions of love for God and neighbor.

“As I share the pleasant experiences of life with this friend, Jesus, He enhances my joy. Being loved and accepted by others, enjoying the challenges and success of work, experiencing simple joys as well as moments of overwhelming happiness, drinking in the breathless beauties of nature—these and all such experiences take on deeper meaning in the presence of Jesus.

“As I share the difficult aspects of human life with Jesus, He lessens their burden. If Jesus is my friend, should I ever capitulate to discouragement? If Jesus is my friend, should a sense of failure ever extinguish my determination to struggle on? If Jesus is my friend, can I ever allow suffering to make me bitter?

“As I strive to grow into a mature Christian, this friend Jesus is profoundly present to me. He is strong, tender, understanding, gentle, loving. He sympathizes, encourages, challenges, inspires. He leads, but does not force. He admonishes us when we are wrong, but He does not reject us. He is overjoyed at our good deeds, yet gently but firmly reminds us that there is

still much to accomplish as He guides us in the Spirit to the Father. Jesus is the perfect friend. He is your friend and my friend.”¹⁵

An Appeal for the Church in Ukraine

Recently I had the great privilege of visiting Slovakia and Ukraine and of witnessing how the Church in these countries is courageously struggling to rebuild itself after years of communist domination. The Church in these areas suffered greatly under communism, and now suffers in a different way as her people face enormous problems in establishing a post-communism existence. These people desperately need our prayers and material assistance.

I made my visit in connection with a wonderful group of people from St. Thomas More parish in Englewood, Colorado. A few years ago this parish, under the leadership of the pastor, Fr. Mike Walsh, instituted a mission organization called Queen of the Apostles Missionary Association—QAMA—to help the struggling Church in the former Soviet Union countries. This organization has truly accomplished marvels within a very short period. Within this issue of the newsletter there is an insert describing QAMA and its activities. Here is the opening paragraph of the insert: “Answering the Gospel command to teach the good news, the call of Vatican II that the laity do their part in evangelizing, mindful of the Holy Father’s exhortation on evangelization for the third millennium, recalling the Fatima messages for the conversion of Russia and influenced by past and present-day mystics, a group of Catholic lay men and women met a few years ago to pray at St. Thomas More Church in Englewood, Colorado, and decided to answer the call. Their special challenge would be helping the struggling Church in the former Soviet Union countries.” I urge you to take the time to read the entire insert. —*Editor*

Prayer

Pope Paul VI has left us these words concerning 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.” And then the Pope emphasizes the need of contemplation as we pray the rosary: “Without this (the Rosary) is a body without a soul, and the recitation is in danger of becoming a mechanical

repetition of formulas...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.”¹⁶

Rosary Reflections

Here are some reflections on the Glorious Mystery of The Resurrection:

“See vividly before your eyes the body of Jesus as He hung on the cross, covered with blood and withered. Picture this in your mind so clear, see His body so battered and so bruised, and next to this picture see the Almighty God as He rose victorious on the third day. See Him adorned in the brightest light beyond comprehension—a light that we cannot even imagine or describe. The Almighty God comes forth from the tomb. The Son of God rose victorious from the dead!

“He walked with the disciples on the way to Emmaus and they did not recognize Him and He recounted for them Holy Scripture from the time of Moses that pertained to Him. When they got to Emmaus He broke the bread, and they recognized Him. Later the disciples said, “Did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the scriptures to us?” (Lk 24:32). Are not our hearts burning within us? For He is alive! In every word of the Scriptures and in every word of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, He is present to us. God gives Himself as a gift to us. Are not our hearts burning within us that God gives Himself to us? The all powerful God loves us so much that He came to this earth and He rose on the third day so that we could share in His life. He gives Himself to us this day in the Holy Eucharist. Are not our hearts burning within us? This is reality! The unseen is really real. He no longer walks this earth, but He lives in each of us.”¹⁷

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.

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:

See *Letters*, page 8

Dear Fr. Carter,

I just received my first newsletter, *Shepherds of Christ*. I am very grateful for this publication. It provides some wonderful reflections and it is possible to read them even with a busy parish schedule.

Thank you for providing this wonderful service. Please accept the enclosed donation as a token of my appreciation.

Gratefully,
Rev. Gregory F. Hoppough, C.S.S.
Sacred Heart Church
Waltham, Massachusetts

As we are establishing the newsletter in an increasing number of countries, we are beginning to receive letters from our brother priests in different parts of the world. This helps all of us to be more aware of our fraternal union with all priests throughout the Universal Church. Here is a letter from a priest in Uganda, Africa:

Dear Father,

I am writing you to thank you for a well-done job for the renewal and growth of priests through the spirituality newsletter, *Shepherds of Christ*. I am also grateful for the copy I received recently, the Nov/Dec 1995 issue. How I wish I had

received all issues. The articles are nourishing, supportive, informative and challenging. Thank you very much for your work and generosity.

I am wondering whether it is possible for me to continue receiving a copy of *Shepherds of Christ* regularly. As a person involved in giving renewal courses for priests, seminarians, and religious men and women, I have found it helpful.

Fr. Albert Gavamukulyo
Kisubi, Uganda

NOTES:

1. Scriptural quotations are taken from *The Jerusalem Bible*, Doubleday & Co.
2. *Bonaventure*, tr. by E. Cousins, Paulist Press, pp. 134-135.
3. *The Documents of Vatican II*, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," American Press Edition, No. 5.
4. *Ibid.*, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," No. 3.
5. Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith*, Seabury Press, p. 389.
6. John Cardinal Henry Newman, *Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations*, Longmans, Green and Co., pp. 111-112.
7. Pope John Paul II, as in *Set Apart for Service*, St. Paul Editions, pp. 197-199.
8. Donald Thorman, as in *The National Catholic Reporter*, February 9, 1973.
9. *The Documents of Vatican II*, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," op. cit., No. 10.
10. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 748.
11. Archbishop Joseph M. Raya, *The Face of God*, God With Us Publications, p. 40.
12. "Eucharistic Prayer IV," as in *The Vatican II Weekday Missal*, St. Paul Edition, p. 866.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 891.
14. *Supplement to the Divine Office for the Society of Jesus*, published by the English Province of the Society of Jesus, pp. 21-22.
15. Fr. Edward Carter, S.J., *The Pain and the Joy*, Faith Publishing, pp. 5-7.
16. Pope Paul VI, *Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary*, United States Catholic Conference, Nos. 46 and 47.
17. Rita Ring, *Rosaries from the Hearts of Jesus and Mary*, to be published by Shepherds of Christ Publications.

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.



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MAY/JUNE 1996 ISSUE

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