

shepherds of Christ⁺

A SPIRITUALITY NEWSLETTER FOR PRIESTS



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Chief Shepherd of the Flock

The Gift of the Eucharist

"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)

A faithful shepherd takes care of his sheep in all their needs. This includes providing them with the proper food. Jesus, the perfect Shepherd, abundantly provides for the nourishment of His flock. In the Eucharist He gives Himself in His body, blood, soul and divinity for our spiritual growth. He also feeds us through His word, through His teaching. The gospel of John, in Chapter 6:35-59 combines both of these ways—Christ nourishing us through His teaching and through the Eucharist. This particular section of John's gospel gives us Jesus' great discourse on the Bread of Life. The first part, verses 35-50, speaks of the teaching of Jesus as nourishment, as the bread of life. This first part contains, therefore, the so-called sapiential theme. The second part, verses 51-59, speaks of the Eucharist as our heavenly nourishment. This part, therefore, contains the sacramental theme. The Mass, of course, contains both aspects of John's Bread of Life theme. In the Mass we have the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist—and they are profoundly connected.

Both aspects of the Bread of Life theme reveal God's tremendous love for us. The Eucharist is the sacrament of Jesus' great love for us, and His teach-

ing is summed up in terms of love—God's overwhelming love for us and our duty to love God and neighbor. Each day we should pray for an increased realization of how much God, in Christ Jesus Our Lord, loves each of us with a most special, unique love. Growing in this awareness and living according to this awareness are keys to growth in the spiritual life. The more we are convinced of how much Jesus loves us as unique individuals, the more able are we to enter into a deep love relationship with Jesus. And, if we have the proper love relationship with Jesus, everything else falls into place. Yes, as

our union with Jesus grows, He leads us, amid all the pain and all the joy, to an ever closer union with the Father in the Holy Spirit with Mary, our Mother, at our side.

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Thoughts on the Eucharist

◆ The document, *Instruction on Eucharistic Worship* tells us: "The mystery of the Eucharist is the true center of the sacred liturgy and indeed of the whole Christian life. Consequently the Church, guided by the Holy Spirit, continually seeks to understand and to live the Eucharist more fully."

Then, after referring to various Church documents, the *Instruction* continues:

"Among the doctrinal principles concerning the Eucharist formulated in these documents of the Church, the following should be noted as having a bearing upon the attitude of Christians toward this mystery, and, therefore, as falling within the scope of this instruction."

"a) The Son of God in the human nature which He united to Himself redeemed man and transformed him into a new creation by overcoming death through his own death and resurrection (cf. Gal.6:15; II Cor.5-17). For by giving His Spirit He mystically established as His body His brethren gathered from all nations. In that body the life of Christ

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is communicated to those who believe; for through the sacraments they are joined in a mysterious yet real way to the Christ who suffered and is glorified.

“Therefore ‘Our Saviour at the Last Supper on the night when He was betrayed instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of His Body and Blood so that He might perpetuate the Sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries till His coming. He thus entrusted to the Church, His beloved Spouse, a memorial of His death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal meal in which Christ is eaten, the mind filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory given to us.’

“Hence the Mass, the Lord’s Supper, is at the same time and inseparably:

“ - A sacrifice in which the Sacrifice of the Cross is perpetuated;

“ - A memorial of the death and resurrection of the Lord, who said ‘do this in memory of me’ (Luke 22:19);

“ - A sacred banquet in which,

through the communion of the Body and Blood of the Lord, the People of God share the benefits of the Paschal Sacrifice, renew the New Covenant which God has made with man once for all through the Blood of Christ, and in faith and hope foreshadow and anticipate the eschatological banquet in the kingdom of the Father, proclaiming the Lord’s death ‘till His coming.’

“b) In the Mass, therefore, the sacrifice and sacred meal belong to the same mystery—so much so that they are linked by the closest bond.

“For in the sacrifice of the Mass our Lord is immolated when ‘he begins to be present sacramentally as the spiritual food of the faithful under the appearances of bread and wine.’ It was for this purpose that Christ entrusted this sacrifice to the Church, that the faithful might share in it both spiritually, by faith and charity, and sacramentally, through the banquet of holy Communion. Participation in the Lord’s Supper is always communion with Christ offering Himself for us as a sacrifice to the Father.

“c) The celebration of the Eucharist, which takes place at Mass, is the action not only of Christ, but also of the Church. For in it Christ perpetuates in an unbloody manner the sacrifice offered on the cross, offering Himself to the Father for the world’s salvation through the ministry of priests. The Church, the spouse and minister of Christ, performs together with Him the role of priest and victim, offers Him to the Father and at the same time makes a total offering of herself together with Him.

“Thus the Church, especially in the great Eucharistic prayer, together with Christ, gives thanks to the Father in the Holy Spirit for all the blessings which He gives to men in creation and especially in the Paschal Mystery, and prays to Him for the coming of His kingdom.

“d) Hence no Mass, indeed no liturgical action, is a purely private action, but rather a celebration of the Church as a society composed of different orders and ministries, in which each member acts according to his own order and role.

“e) The celebration of the Eucharist in the sacrifice of the Mass is the origin and consummation of the worship shown to the Eucharist outside Mass. Not only are the sacred species which remain after Mass derived from the Mass, but they are preserved so that those of the faithful who cannot come to Mass may be united to Christ and His Sacrifice celebrated in the Mass, through sacramental Communion received with the right dispositions.

“Consequently the Eucharistic sacrifice is the source and the summit of the whole of the Church’s worship and of the Christian life. The faithful participate more fully in this sacrament of thanksgiving, propitiation, petition, and praise, not only when they wholeheartedly offer the Sacred Victim, and in it themselves, to the Father with the priest, but also when they receive this same Victim sacramentally.

“f) There should be no doubt in anyone’s mind ‘that all the faithful ought to show to this most holy sacrament the worship which is due to the true God, as has always been the custom of the Catholic Church. Nor is it to be adored any the less because it was instituted by Christ to be eaten.’ For even in the reserved sacrament He is to be adored because He is

substantially present there through that conversion of bread and wine which, as the Council of Trent tells us, is most aptly named transubstantiation.

“g) The mystery of the Eucharist should therefore be considered in all its fullness, not only in the celebration of Mass, but also in devotion to the sacred species which remain after Mass and are reserved to extend the grace of the sacrifice.

“These are the principles from which practical rules are to be drawn to govern devotion due to the sacrament outside Mass and its proper relation to the right ordering of the sacrifice of the Mass according to the mind of the Second Vatican Council and the other documents of the Apostolic See on this subject.”²

◆ **Father Edward Leen gives us these inspiring words on the Eucharist:** “Again Our Lord raised His hands over the apostles, His lips moved in prayer, and He then said: ‘Do this in commemoration of Me’; and the great mystery that He had just accomplished is perpetuated, is made possible to the end of time. The Catholic Priesthood was inaugurated. By this act Our Lord made possible for all time His stay on earth amongst men, whom He loved to such an excess. And yet He knew with His Divine foresight what that meant for Him. Though He saw that His Body and Blood would be treated with reverence by a multitude of devout souls, yet He realized full well that in many and many an instance in the course of ages He would be placing Himself at the mercy of unworthy and sinful priests who would treat Him with irreverence and sacrilege. He saw in vision all the profanations, outrages and, what was more painful still to His loving heart, the cold indifference that He was to endure from tepid and careless Christians. Nothing of that was unknown to Him, but He willed to submit Himself to all in the interests of those who were to profit by His Divine Condescension and meet His advances of love. Love, especially Divine Love, does not halt to calculate and weigh advantage and disadvantage in the balance. He risked all to serve some, whom He aimed at drawing into close intimacy with Himself.

“This love of His for us compels Him to enter into ever closer union with human souls, to be ever nearer to them than He was when He moved on earth and conversed with those about Him. During His mortal life He spoke and His words sank into His hearers’ hearts and stirred them strangely. But in Holy

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

Communion His contact with us is much more intimate and vital than it then was with those who thronged His footsteps along the Galilean highways. It is also much more active and life-giving.

“On two distinct occasions God His Father in Heaven proclaimed that the Child of Mary was His beloved Son in Whom He was well pleased. The significance of this testimony lies in this: there is no being in whom God can find His pleasure, and to whom therefore He can extend His love, unless it be Jesus Christ or one who bears a

resemblance to Him. No other form of human life can please God except His, or one that takes its pattern from His... Unless we are pleasing to God we cannot be saved, we cannot realize the purpose of our divine adoption. We cannot please God unless we resemble Jesus Christ, and the Blessed Sacrament is instituted for the very object of perfecting in us this likeness. Bodily food is transformed into the flesh of him that receives it; this heavenly food, the food of our souls, which is the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, has the directly opposite effect: it changes him who receives it into Himself. It must not be forgotten that the presence in us which follows the reception of Holy Communion is a living active presence. Our Lord is more present with us than is a person with whom we are speaking. As He influenced whilst on earth those who allowed themselves to fall under the charm of His Personality, so He exercises a profound effect on the soul of the communicant, if that soul wishes to submit to His action. We cannot be in the society of one who is good without being incited to goodness; we cannot be with Our Lord—and we are as close to Him as our desires extend—without receiving the effects of His virtue and without being stirred to become as he was, without being drawn, in a mystical sense to become one with Him, to become ‘Christified.’”³

◆ **Saint Thomas Aquinas tells us:** “Since it was the will of God’s only-begotten Son that men should share in his divinity, he assumed our nature in order that by becoming man he might make men gods. Moreover, when he took our flesh he dedicated the whole of its substance to our salvation. He offered his body to God the Father on the altar of the cross as a sacrifice for our reconciliation. He shed his blood for our ransom and purification, so that we might be redeemed from our wretched state of bondage and cleansed from

all sin. But to ensure that the memory of so great a gift would abide with us forever, he left his body as food and his blood as drink for the faithful to consume in the form of bread and wine.

“O precious and wonderful banquet, that brings us salvation and contains all sweetness! Could anything be of more intrinsic value? Under the old law it was the flesh of calves and goats that was offered, but here Christ himself, the true God, is set before us as our food. What could be more wonderful than this? No other sacrament has greater healing power; through it sins are purged away, virtues are increased, and the soul is enriched with an abundance of every spiritual gift. It is offered in the Church for the living and the dead, so that what was instituted for the salvation of all may be for the benefit of all. Yet, in the end, no one can fully express the sweetness of this sacrament, in which spiritual delight is tasted at its very source, and in which we renew the memory of that surpassing love for us which Christ revealed in his passion.

“It was to impress the vastness of this love more firmly upon the hearts of the faithful that our Lord instituted this sacrament at the Last Supper. As he was on the point of leaving the world to go to the Father, after celebrating the Passover with his disciples, he left it as a perpetual memorial of his passion. It was the fulfillment of ancient figures and the greatest of all his miracles, while for those who were to experience the sorrow of his departure, it was destined to be a unique and abiding consolation.”⁴

◆ **Here is an Eucharistic song:** “Oh Burning Heart, Oh love divine, how sweet you are to me. I see the Host, I know you’re here to love and care for me. I know your love a little now, so dear you are to me. Come give me life, abundant life, I thirst to be with Thee. I cannot say.

There are not words to say what my heart feels. I love you so, I scarce can breathe when you come to me. I know your love a little now, so dear you are to me. Come give me life, abundant life, I thirst to be with Thee. Your tender Heart, Oh how it beats for love of each this day. I want to give You all my love, surrender totally. I know your love a little now, so dear you are to me. Come give me life, abundant life, I thirst to be with Thee.”

◆ **Here is an Eucharistic prayer:** “O Jesus I do love you so much! Help me grow in love for you. Help me to grow in the realization of the great love with which Your Heart beat for me upon Calvary, a love which is present in Your glorified Heart. Let me grasp, with deeper knowledge, that Your Heart was pierced on Calvary with a soldier’s lance for love of me. Take me, Jesus, ever more closely to Your Heart. And there, let me draw forth from this burning furnace of charity. Thus, strengthened, refreshed, and encouraged, let me go forth to live the Mass all day, every day.”

◆ **Fulton Sheen gives us this dramatic account:** “There was a priest who had a high office in one diocese. He was removed from office principally because of alcoholism. He went to another diocese but continued to give scandal. He happened to come into a retreat when I was talking about the holy hour, and he made the holy hour from that time on. He died in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament a month or two later. He had been battling drunkenness for years. But he overcame it in the end because of the power of the new affection. He fell in love with the Lord.

“Why do we not have zeal? Simply because we’re not in love. Once we’re on fire we’ll do anything. When we love the Lord, we want to be with him. That is love’s first effect.”⁵

◆ **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.”⁶

◆ **St. Peter Julian Eymard, founder of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers, tells us:** “It is true also that the world does all in its power to prevent us from loving Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament with a real and practical love, to prevent us from visiting Him, and to cripple the effects of this love.

“The world engrosses the attention of souls; it finds and enslaves them with external occupations in order to deter them from dwelling too long on the love of Jesus.

“It even fights directly against this practical love and represents it as optional, as practicable at most only in a convent.

“And the devil wages incessant warfare on our love for Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

“He knows that Jesus is there, living and substantially present; that by Himself He is drawing souls and taking direct possession of them. The devil tries to efface the thought of the Eucharist in us, and the good impression made by it; for in his mind, that should decide the issue of the struggle.

“And yet God is all love.

“This gentle Savior pleads with us from the Host: ‘Love Me as I have loved you; abide in My love! I came to cast the fire of love on the earth and My most ardent desire is that it should set your hearts on fire.’”⁷

Scriptural Reflections

◆ **Why Should We Be Afraid?** “Can you not buy five sparrows for two pennies? And yet not one is forgotten in God’s sight. Why, every hair on your head has been counted. There is no need to be afraid: you are worth more than hundreds of sparrows”. (Lk 12:6-7)

The fear of financial insecurity, the fear of not being accepted by others, the fear of professional failure, anxiety concerning whether one is capable of handling an inevitable crisis, the spectre of academic failure, the fear of being rejected in love—these are a few of the myriad worries and anxieties which can burden people along the varied path of life which now twists and turns, now stretches out

straight, now descends into the valley, now ascends where the horizon can be clearly seen. To encounter circumstances during the course of life which can give rise to worry and anxiety is to be expected. To allow various fears to conquer us and rob us of basic peace of mind is to react incorrectly. To face fears and worries with Christian courage and trust, and thus fundamentally control them, is to live by the words of Jesus.

To react incorrectly to fear-causing occasions can give rise to all sorts of problems. It can obviously detract considerably from one’s joy. It can stunt personality growth, lessening our attractiveness to others. It can disturb mental and physical health. It can prevent us from being proper witnesses to the fact that we are the bearers of the Good News, of the fact that Jesus’ truth is meant to make us free from all sorts of enslavements, including morbid fear and worry.

Why, then, don’t we decide once and for all to take Jesus at His word? He tells us not to worry. He tells us to flee from anxiety. He loves us. His Father loves us. The Holy Spirit loves us. They love us much more than we love ourselves. Their love can cut through the bonds of any fear, any worry, any anxiety. Yes, Their love can do this, if we so permit.

◆ **His Will Is Our Happiness.** “Three days later, they found him in the Temple, sitting among the doctors, listening to them, and asking them questions; and all those who heard him were astounded at his intelligence and his replies. They were overcome when they saw him, and his mother said to him, ‘My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you.’ ‘Why were you looking for me?’ he replied ‘Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father’s affairs?’ But they did not understand what he meant.” (Lk 2:46-50)

The above scene describes how Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the temple after having been separated from him. On the way home after the Passover celebration, they finally realized Jesus was not with them, and returned to Jerusalem to search for him. The scene has various lessons for us concerning God’s will.

The scene reminds us of the guiding principle of Jesus’ life—loving conformity to His heavenly Father’s will. In some way Jesus knew He was supposed to remain in the temple at this particular time although Mary and Joseph were returning home. His course of action was no different in this instance than it had been in the past and would be in the future. His Father’s will was made manifest and He obeyed. His Father showed the way and He followed. The Father’s way was always Jesus’ way, all day, every day, in all matters.

This event in Christ’s life also demonstrates that conformity to God’s will sometimes occasions hurt regarding loved ones. Jesus knew that His remaining behind would cause suffering for Mary and Joseph—we can well imagine their anxiety. Jesus was sorry this had to be. He certainly was not insensitive to His parents’ feelings, yet He had to do what He did. There can be similar situations in our own lives. Precisely because we are striving to seek out and do God’s will, we know we are causing hurt to loved ones. Yet we know there is no other course of action if we are to be open to God’s designs.

The finding of the Child Jesus in the temple illustrates still a further point regarding conformity to God’s will. Mary and Joseph knew that somehow it was God’s will that Jesus remain in Jerusalem as they themselves headed back to Nazareth. Yet they did not comprehend why this all happened. They recognized God’s will, but they did not understand it. Yet they accepted this will, along with the pain it had occasioned in their lives, and the unknowing which remained. The application of this lesson to our own Christian lives is vividly manifest. Often there occurs a happening we do not understand. We realize that somehow this is God’s will, at least His permissive will, yet we do not understand why, and our unknowing is part of our pain.

It is obvious from all the above that loving conformity to God’s will is the only way, although not always an easy way. Some are tempted at times to be

resentful and even rebellious when confronted with the unpleasant aspects of embracing God's will. If one gives in to the temptation, such resentment and rebellion only become a dead-end street, a path leading to bitterness and unhappiness. We know this. We know that the only sure guide we have in the quest for happiness is God's will. We know, despite what our feelings may otherwise suggest, that the only way to true happiness is God's way. We know that God wants our happiness much more than we do ourselves. We know that if He permits suffering to befall us in doing His will, He likewise grants us the grace to encounter this pain properly and profitably as a step toward greater fulfillment. We know, then, deep down at the center of our existence, that God's will is our happiness.

◆ **To Be God-like.** "God created man in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them." (Gen 1:27)

We have a great and noble vocation. We are called to be God-like. We are called to reflect God. We are called to realize our true destiny by being aware that it is a God-like destiny.

One can betray one's destiny. A person can defile the divine image in which one has been made. A person can hideously blemish the divine likeness which is one's glory. When one lies and cheats, or commits adultery, or callously turns away from the hungry and the sick, when one hedonistically pursues pleasure, when one tortures and murders—when a person does these things, one betrays one's destiny, rejects one's great privilege and responsibility to act in a God-like fashion.

On the other hand, we can variously reflect the divine goodness. When we love, when we serve others, when we are kind and merciful, when the needs of others cry out for assistance and we respond, when we smile at a child's glee and innocence, when we continue to give although we ourselves do not receive, when we deeply sympathize with one crushed by an agonizing sorrow, when we wipe away the other's tears—when we do all these things, then we are living according to our destiny, then we are implementing our great privilege and responsibility to act in a God-like fashion.

Each day is a challenge to live in a God-like fashion. Each day is an opportunity to reject those obstacles which hinder a mirroring forth of the divine. Each day is an invitation from God to be like Him, as we pursue the true, the good, and the beautiful.



Priests' Need for Spirituality

The following words are from a paper prepared by Fr. Stephen J. Rossetti for the National Conference of Catholic Bishop's Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry. This paper was later published in the quarterly *Human Development*, from which we quote. Fr. Rossetti is president and chief executive officer of Saint Luke Institute in Silver Spring, Maryland. We here quote from various sections of his paper:

◆ "Each day I spend much time working on the psychological health of our priests. More and more, I believe that much of our current need is in the area of spirituality."

◆ "At our Institute, we recently ran a study that found that the average intelligence quotient of our priest patients is 122, which is well above the societal norm of 100. This places our men in the upper 7 percent of their peers. Priests, as a group, are very bright men.

"Also in their education and training, they have developed their intellectual skills well. Catholic priests are verbal men who engage regularly in public speaking. They can debate ideas and abstract concepts easily. Indeed, these qualities are important to the successful ministry of a priest.

"Nevertheless, having a personal relationship with Jesus also means praying from the heart, the place within which he dwells. Yet so many of the men who wither in priesthood cannot find the 'heart' because they are stuck in their 'heads'...

"Developing a personal relationship with God, or anyone else, involves the important task of moving our prayer and dialogue out of the head and into the heart. In this case, the term *heart*, used in a metaphorical sense, does not refer only to one's affective life; it primarily indicates 'the locus of vital forces in a person, to quote from Xavier Leon-Dufour in the *Dictionary of the New Testament*. It is one's most 'hidden place', the place where 'the spirit of the Son dwells.'

"Moving out of the head and into the heart can be very difficult for a man who may have little idea how to deal with

his affective side, much less the deeper dimensions of his self. In touching his inner heart, he makes himself vulnerable to God and to others. This can be a terrifying prospect.

"Yet it is so important to open ourselves to the other. We have a great desire to be known and to be loved. It is in the heart that we experience both...

"It is important to note that the Spirit helps us in our weakness. Praying from the heart means being vulnerable before God."

◆ "In 1993 the National Federation of Priests' Councils (NFPC) surveyed 1,186 priests in the United States. Part of the survey asked about the overall satisfaction and morale of priests. The NEPC found that 91 percent of priests said they were 'utilizing their important skills and abilities in their ministry'... When asked what aspects of the priesthood they found most fulfilling, the respondents said the greatest source of satisfaction was administering the sacraments and presiding over the liturgy. The next greatest source was preaching the Word and the opportunity to work with many people and be a part of their lives...

"The NEPC survey results confirm my own impressions that priests are faithful ministers who find much satisfaction in their daily work. They sit with the dying. They visit the sick. They celebrate the sacraments. They preach the Word. In short, when 'crunch' time comes, they are there. And priests find much gratification in this work...

"Nevertheless, upon delving into the spiritual lives of our priests, we find many who are not personally thriving. To find out what is going wrong with the spirituality of these men, it might be instructive to look at the life of a priest who is doing well...

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"Father Jim, a priest friend and Cathedral rector celebrated his twenty-fifth anniversary of priesthood a few months ago...

"At his anniversary liturgy, he told of a parishioner who asked him how he had remained in the priesthood for so many years and yet kept his sense of humor. First, he spoke of the love, faith, and support of his parents and family... Second, he spoke about the support of his friends, especially his priest friends... Finally, in front of the crowd gathered in the cathedral, Jim spoke about having a personal relationship with Jesus.

"We always knew Father Jim as a man of faith and dedication to the people. What we had not seen so publicly was the inner depth of this priest's spirituality. It must be this inner depth that has fueled his faith and dedication for twenty-five years.

"It has been said that priests have a difficult time speaking openly about their sexuality. This is true. But there is another subject that is almost never discussed in public and that is more intimate to a priest than his sexuality: his inner relationship with God. Each of us sitting in the Cathedral that day was struck by this man's witness to having a 'personal relationship with Jesus'"⁸

Words of St. Augustine

Augustine, one of the greatest intellects in the history of the Church, was also a man of deep feeling, of deep passion. After his conversion, his passionate nature was turned from a life of sin to a life of marvelous dedication to Christ. He is an outstanding example of how the human emotions, human feelings, are to be used in the service of God. There follow excerpts from some of Augustine's writings.

◆ **From *The Confessions*, we read the moving words of Augustine:** "Who am I and what kind of man am I? What evil has there not been in my deeds, or if not in my deeds, in my words, or if not in my words, then in my will? But

You, Lord, are good and merciful, and your right hand had regard to the profundity of my death and drew out the abyss of corruption that was in the bottom of my heart. By Your gift I had come totally not to will what I willed but to will what you willed. But

where in all that long time was my free will, and from what deep sunken hiding-place was it suddenly summoned forth in the moment in which I bowed my neck to Your easy yoke and my shoulders to your light burden, Christ Jesus, my Helper and my Redeemer? How lovely I suddenly found it to be free from the loveliness of those vanities, so that now it was a joy to renounce what I had been so afraid to lose. For You cast them out of me, O true and supreme Loveliness, You cast them out of me and took their place in me. You who are sweeter than all pleasure, yet not to flesh and blood; brighter than all light, yet deeper within than any secret; loftier than all honour, but not to those who are lofty to themselves. Now my mind was free from the cares that had gnawed it, from aspiring and getting and weltering in filth and rubbing the scab of lust. And I talked with You as friends talk, my glory and my riches and my salvation, my Lord God."⁹

◆ **The sensitive heart of Augustine is again made manifest in these poetic words:**

Question the beauty of the earth,
the beauty of the sea,
the beauty of the wide air around you,
the beauty of the sky;
question the order of the stars,
the sun whose brightness lights the day,
the moon whose splendor softens the gloom of night;
question the living creatures that move in the waters,
that roam upon the earth,
that fly through the air;
the spirit that lies hidden,
the matter that is manifest;
the visible things that are ruled,
the invisible that rule them;
question all these.
They will all answer you:
"Behold and see, we are beautiful."
Their beauty is their confession of God.
Who made these beautiful changing things,
if not one who is beautiful and changeth not?¹⁰

◆ **And, again, the deep emotion of Augustine speaks to us from the *Confessions*:**

"Where did I find you, that I came to know you? You were not within my memory before I learned of you. Where, then, did I find you before I came to know you, if not within Yourself, far above me? We come to you and go from you, but no place is involved in this process. In every place, O Truth, You are present to those who seek Your help, and at one and the same time you answer all, though they seek Your counsel on different matters.

You respond clearly, but not everyone hears clearly. All ask what they wish, but do not always hear the answer they wish. Your best servant is he who is intent not so much on hearing his petition answered, as rather on willing whatever he hears from you.

Late have I loved you, O Beauty ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you! You were within me, but I was outside, and it was there that I searched for you. In my unloveliness I plunged into the lovely things which you created. You were with me, but I was not with you. Created things

kept me from you; yet if they had not been in you they would not have been at all. You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness. You flashed, you shone, and you dispelled my blindness. I drew in breath and now I pant for you. I have tasted you; now I hunger and thirst for more. You touched me, and I burned for your peace."¹¹



This Friend Jesus

Here are words from St. Claude de la Columbiere, one of the great apostles of devotion to the Heart of Christ. Speaking to Jesus, Claude says:

You share my burdens,
You take them upon yourself.
You listen to me fondly when I tell you my troubles.
You never fail to lighten them.

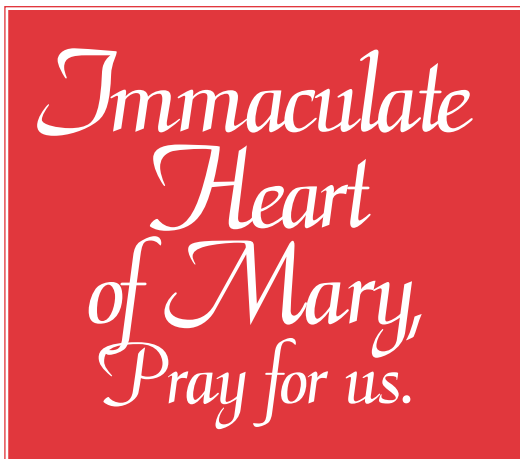
I find You at all times and in all places.
You never leave me.
I will always find You wherever I go.

Old age or misfortune will not cause You to abandon me.

You will never be closer to me than
When all seems to go against me.
No matter how miserable I may be,
You will never cease to be my friend.

You tolerate my faults with admirable patience.
You are always ready to come to me, if I so desire it.

Jesus, may I die praising you!
May I die loving you!
May I die for the love of you.¹²



St. Bernard's Tribute To Mary

Bernard, saint and doctor of the Church, and one greatly devoted to Mary, offers us these inspiring words:

“If you will not be submerged by tempests, do not turn away your eyes from the splendor of this star. If the storms of temptation arise, if you crash against the rocks of tribulation, look to the star, call upon Mary. If you are tossed about on the waves of pride, of ambition, of slander, of hostility, look to the star, call upon Mary. If wrath or avarice or the enticements of the flesh upset the boat of your mind, look to Mary. If you are dis-

turbed by the immensity of your crimes...if you begin to be swallowed up by the abyss of depression and despair, think of Mary! In danger, in anxieties, in doubt, think of Mary, call upon Mary. Let her name not leave your lips, nor your heart, and that you may receive the help of her prayer, do not cease to follow the example of her conduct...If she holds you, you will not fall, if she protects you, you need not fear.”¹³

Prayer

Our growth according to Jesus' pattern of death-resurrection is impossible without a life of prayer. Growth in prayer not only increases our love of God, but also enhances our loving concern for others.

A great example of this is seen in the study of the prayer life of Catherine of Sienna, saint and doctor of the Church. Sr. Mary O'Driscoll, O.P., tells us:

“Twenty-six of Catherine of Sienna's prayers have been preserved for us. With one possible exception, they are not prayers that she herself wrote or even dictated to others. Rather, they were transcribed by her followers who were present as she prayed aloud. All of these prayers belong to the last four years of her life. They impress us by their simplicity, their intense concentration on God, who is repeatedly praised and thanked, and their constant desire for the salvation of others...

“As her prayers make evident, Catherine of Sienna was a great intercessor. In them we find her pleading with God persistently and urgently for mercy for all the world, the Church, the pope, her friends and followers, all in need. It is obvious that she does not regard intercession as merely a passing prayer to God on behalf of one or other persons in time of crisis, but rather as an expression of her deep, loving, permanent commitment both to God and to her neighbors. In Catherine's own life, the importance and intensity of her intercession increased according as her union with God and her concern for others increased. This observation tells us something very significant about the prayer of intercession in the Christian life, namely, that it is not, as is sometimes thought, a type of prayer which one passes on the way to the heights of mystical prayer, as though intercession were for beginners and mysticism for those who are advanced in the spiritual life, but as a type of prayer which belongs most particularly to the life of contemplative union with God.”¹⁴

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.



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shepherds of Christ

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Letters

We thank all those who have taken time to write to us. We very much appreciate your letters. Space limitations permit us to publish only a restricted number of these. In this issue we are publishing only letters from foreign countries to help emphasize the international aspect of the Newsletter ministry:

Dear Rev. Fr. Ed Carter, S.J.,

Thank you very much for providing us with rich spiritual literature.

The Shepherds of Christ Newsletter has been very useful to us and I have received positive response from a good number of priests. Thank you for the good work and we shall be happy if you continue sending them to us.

Fr. John Bazimenyera, St. Augustine's Institute, Kampala, Uganda.

Dear Fr. Carter,

It took me such a long time to answer your letter of over a month ago. I am sorry for this delay. I have just received your issue of SHEPHERDS OF CHRIST for March/April 1997 for which I heartily thank you. I have already distributed quite a lot to our Gozitan priests, and they want to thank you as they find your newsletter very enriching spiritually. I am sending some copies to the Seminarians in Malta and to other priests there.

By the way, I have some good news for you, I think. A little over a month ago His Lordship, the bishop of Baton Rouge was our guest at Manresa Retreat House. He came over to visit the families of three Gozitan priests who work in his diocese. I have introduced the SHEPHERDS OF CHRIST newsletter to him, which he appreciated greatly. I also passed over some copies to the Spiritual Father of the American College in Rome who was accompanying His Lordship.

God bless you with His love and peace. Rev. Joseph M. Galdes, S.J., Gozo, Malta.

NOTES:

1. Scriptural quotations are taken from *The Jerusalem Bible*, Doubleday & Co.
2. *The Liturgy Documents*, "The 1967 Instruction on Eucharistic Worship", Liturgy Training Program, Archdiocese of Chicago, pp 37-41.
3. Fr. Edward Leen, C.S.Sp., *In the Likeness of Christ*, Sheed and Ward, pp. 250-252.
4. St. Thomas Aquinas, as in *The Liturgy of the Hours*, Catholic Book Publishing Co., Vol III, pp. 610-611.
5. *Through the Year with Fulton Sheen*, compiled by Henry Dietrich, Servant Books, p. 15.
6. Henri Nouwen, *With Burning Hearts*, Orbis, p. 30.
7. St. Peter Julian Eymard, *The Real Presence: Eucharistic Meditations*, published by Eymard League, as in *The Treasury of Catholic Wisdom*, Fr. John Hardin, S.J. ed., Ignatius Press, p. 584.
8. Fr. Stephen J. Rossetti, "Spirituality of the Priesthood" as in *Human Development*, Vol 18. No. 1, Spring, 1997, pp. 26-32.
9. *Confessions of St. Augustine*, translated by John K. Ryan, Doubleday & Co., as found in *The Treasury of Catholic Wisdom*, op. cit., p. 128
10. St. Augustine, as in the *Liturgy of the Hours*, op. cit., Vol III, p. 1967.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 273.
12. *St. Claude de la Columbiere*, as published by Apostleship of Prayer, Detroit Province of the Society of Jesus.
13. St. Bernard, as in Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, Christian Classics, Vol I., p. 237.
14. *Catherine of Sienna. Selective Writings*, ed, Mary O'Driscoll, O.P., New City Press, p. 50.