

shepherds of Christ

A SPIRITUALITY NEWSLETTER FOR PRIESTS



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Chief Shepherd of the Flock

The Wisdom of the Saints

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 us. Through His life, his brutal and agonizing suffering and death on the cross, and His glorious resurrection, He has achieved new life for us.

As we well know, this life begins at Baptism. God intends that this life develop in the fullest possible manner. The saints are the ones who have admirably responded to God's call to develop this Christ-life in full measure. We are indeed truly wise, then, if we learn from the wisdom of the saints. Their teaching and example, rooted in the Gospel, are guides for us in developing the life Jesus came to give us.

There follow either excerpts from some of the saints' writings or commentaries of others:

♦ **St. Therese of Lisieux, doctor of the Church:** It is entirely fitting that our first entry contains remarks concerning St. Therese of Lisieux, whom Pope John Paul II has recently proclaimed to be a doctor of the Church. Within his remarks, the Pope tells us why we should listen to the wisdom of the saints: God Himself speaks to us through them.

Here are excerpts from the Pope's homily: "Therese Martin, a discalced Carmelite of Lisieux,

ardently desired to be a missionary. She was one, to the point that she could be proclaimed patroness of the missions. Jesus himself showed her how she could live this vocation: By fully practicing the commandment of love, she would be immersed in the very heart of the church's mission, supporting those who proclaim the Gospel with the mysterious power of prayer and communion. Thus she achieved what Vatican Council II emphasized in teaching that the Church is missionary by nature (cf. *ad Gentes*, No. 2). Not only those who choose the missionary life, but all the baptized are in some way sent *ad gentes*...

"This is why I chose this missionary Sunday to proclaim St. Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face a doctor of the universal church: a woman, a young person, a contemplative.

"Everyone thus realizes that today something surprising is happening. St. Therese of Lisieux was unable to attend a university or engage in systematic study. She died young. Nevertheless, from this day forward she will be honored as a doctor of the Church, an outstanding recognition which raises her in the esteem of the entire Christian community far beyond any academic title.

"Indeed, when the magisterium proclaims someone a

doctor of the Church, it intends to point out to all the faithful, particularly to those who perform in the Church the fundamental service of preaching or who undertake the delicate task of theological teaching and research, that the doctrine professed and proclaimed by a certain person can be a reference point, not only because it conforms to revealed truth but also because it sheds new light on the mysteries of the faith, a deeper understanding of Christ's mystery. The council reminded us that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, understanding of the *depositum fidei* continually grows in the Church, and not only does the richly contemplative study to which theologians are called, not only does the magisterium of pastors, endowed with the 'sure charism of truth', contribute to this growth process, but also that 'profound understanding of spir-

Our Apologies!

Because of various circumstances, we did not publish a November/December, 1997 issue of the newsletter. We apologize for any inconvenience this may have caused.

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The first 12 issues of this newsletter are now available in book form under the title, *Shepherds of Christ Newsletters: Selected Writings in Spirituality for All People—as Published in the Shepherds of Christ Newsletters for Priests.*

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The Wisdom of the Saints

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itual things' which is given through experience, with a wealth and diversity of gifts, to all those who let themselves be docilely led by God's Spirit (cf. *Dei Verbum* No. 8). *Lumen Gentium*, for its part, teaches that God himself 'speaks to us' (No. 50) in his saints. It is for this reason that the spiritual experience of the saints has a special value for deepening our knowledge of the divine mysteries, which remain ever greater than our thoughts, and not by chance does the Church choose only saints to be distinguished with the title of 'doctor'.

"Therese of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face is the youngest of all the doctors of the Church, but her ardent spiritual journey shows such maturity, and the insights of faith expressed in her writings are so vast and profound that they deserve a place among the great spiritual masters.

"In the apostolic letter I wrote for this occasion, I stressed several salient aspects of her doctrine. But how can we fail to recall here what can be considered its high point, starting with the account of the moving discovery of her special vocation in the Church? 'Charity', she wrote, 'gave me the key to my vocation. I understood that if the Church had a body composed of different members, the most necessary and most noble of all could not be lacking to it, and so I understood that the Church had a heart and that this heart was burning with love. I understood that it was love alone that made the Church's members act, that if love were ever extinguished, apostles would not proclaim the Gospel and martyrs would refuse to shed their blood. I understood that love includes all vocations... Then in the excess of my delirious joy, I cried out: 'O Jesus, my love... at last I have found my vocation, my vocation is love!' (Ms. B, 3 v)..."

"...Therese had one ideal, as she herself says: 'What we ask of him is to work for his glory, to love him and to make him loved' (Letter 220).

"The way she took to reach this ideal of life is not that of the great undertakings reserved for the few, but on the contrary, a way within everyone's reach, the 'little way', a path of trust and total self-abandonment to the Lord's grace. It is not a prosaic way, as if it were less demanding. It is in fact a demanding reality, as the Gospel always is. But it is a way in which one is imbued with a sense of trusting abandonment to divine mercy, which makes even the most rigorous spiritual commitment light.

"Because of this way in which she receives everything as 'grace', because she put her relationship with Christ and her choice of love at the center of everything, because of the place she gives to the ardent impulses of the heart on her spiritual journey, Therese of Lisieux is a saint who remains young despite the passing years, and she is held up as an eminent model and guide on the path of Christians as we approach the third millennium."²

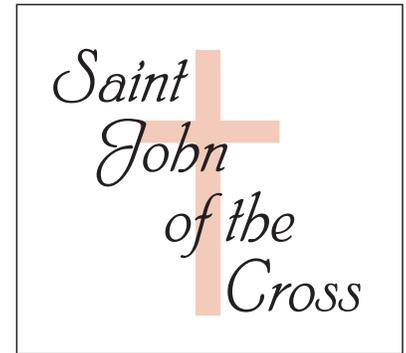
◆ **Bishop Patrick V. Ahern, Auxiliary Bishop of New York, gives us these thoughts concerning St. Therese:** "Therese dreamed of the day when everyone in the world might be holy, so that God might have from every human heart the love for which He longs.

"Therese took God's call to holiness seriously and knew it was for everyone, for ordinary people like us whom she called 'the army of little souls.' Holiness of life and ardent love for God is not for the elite but for the rank and file. She is the democrat of mysticism. Every one of us is called by God to His intimate friendship, to receive the love He pours out upon us in a torrent, and to give back to Him the love for which He begs... We need to hear the Church's universal call to holiness... from a person, from one who lived God's love to a degree unheard of in our modern world, from a saint, who is universally attractive, even charming, from a popular saint with a joyous smile and a ready wit who loved to amuse people, who had the most radiant blue eyes—her cousin Marie Guerin used to tease her when they were young about her beautiful eyes to make her blush—from a saint who is so easy to love and who, with all that, is still in dead earnest about the mission God gave her to lead the army of little souls."³

◆ **St. John of the Cross:** "What does it profit you to give God one thing if He wishes for another? Consider what it is God wants and then do it."⁴

◆ **St. Teresa of Avila:** In the following words from her classic work, *The Interior Castle*, Teresa is speaking of those who seek to bypass the humanity of Jesus in their prayer: "How much more is it necessary not to withdraw through one's own efforts from all our good and help which is the most sacred humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot believe that these souls do so, but they just don't understand; and they will do harm to themselves and others..."⁵

◆ **St. Peter Julian Eymard:** "Our Lord Jesus Christ is our inheritance. He wants to give Himself to everybody, but not everybody wants Him. There are some who want Him, but they will not submit to the condition of good and pure living which He has laid down; and their malice has the power to render God's bequest null and void."⁶



Scriptural Reflections

◆ **The Uncertain Path.** *Yahweh said to Abram, "Leave your country, your family and your father's house, for the land I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name so famous that it will be used as a blessing."* (Gn. 12:1-2).

God spoke to Abraham. He told him to leave his homeland, as He called him from the security emanating from the known to a type of insecurity rooted in the unknown. Abraham had known a particular type of existence and this carried with it a specific type of security. Now God was asking him to relinquish this security or certainty and to launch out into the relatively unknown with its attendant insecurity. Abraham responded to the word of God and departed his homeland. He accepted the forthcoming uncertainty, confident that the certainty of God's love for him would allow him to cope properly with the uncertainty of his exodus.

Abraham is an example for all of us, since we all obviously must confront numerous and diversified uncertainties along the path of life.

For example, uncertainty confronts us when there seems to be various manifestations of God's will, but we are not yet certain which option He intends for us. There are signs indicating He wants us to make this particular choice, but there are other signs which point in a different direction. We must bear with the pain of the uncertainty until the issue becomes reasonably clarified.

There are other occasions when God indicates He wishes a person to depart in certain respects from the patterned way he or she had been doing things. It is not that the person's way was wrong, but rather that God now has certain new designs for the individual. The person is somewhat apprehensive concerning the newly-charted path God seems to be unfolding before him or her. There thus enters into one's life an uncertain-

ty born of the realization that to some extent one must leave go of the previous ways together with the certainty and security these ways provided.

When God permits uncertainty to enter our lives, He is presenting us with an occasion for growth. If we confront uncertainty properly, we become more mature Christians. We grow in the realization of the need for trust. We comprehend that our uncertainty is an opportunity to come closer to our loving God. The state of uncertainty, then, paradoxically leads to a greater certainty—to a deepened realization, a deepened certitude, that God loves us and cares for us.

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

A selfless person is a beautiful person. A person who is consistently thinking of others reinforces one's belief in the inherent goodness of human nature. The Christian community needs this kind of person. He or she is a community-forming person. Such a person looks to the building up of the entire body. Such a person looks for ways to promote union and avoid divisiveness.

A community-forming person is one who rejoices in the gifts and accomplishments of others. He or she does not jealously brood over these successes, but thanks God, happy that the Church has been so blessed. One's joy is thus being constantly multiplied, for the person easily and sincerely shares in the success of others. One's own joy, consequently, is not enslaved to what happens only to oneself, but rather is a joy linked to the growth, interests, and accomplishment of community.

A community-forming person is also one who responsibly uses his or her talents and opportunities for the good of all. The person realizes that one's own Christian growth contributes to the Church's progress, while one's mediocrity or regression is a burden to all. The person realizes that the exercise of one's God-given capabilities is beneficial to the community as well as oneself, while abuse or neglect of talents likewise affects not only oneself, but others also.

We can, then, consider a community-forming person from many different perspectives. We see that such a person has a rich and diversified capacity to promote the Christian Community's ongoing conversion, growth, and sense of solidarity. But from whatever perspective we consider the community-forming person, we always observe a person who is thinking and acting as guided by a sense of "we", not just "I".

◆ **The Good Life.** *I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full.* (Jn 10:10).

We often hear the phrase, "the good life". As used within the context of contemporary American cul-

ture—and perhaps other cultures too—the phrase means being able to afford such things as a very nice home in the suburbs, a very expensive car, a jet flight to Paris, expensive ski-vacations, and the finest scotch whiskey. "The good life", then, means being able to enjoy the more expensive comforts of an affluent society...

The good life for the committed Christian has to mean something else. The good life means living according to the teaching

and example of Jesus. The good life means exercising this way of life not only when it is extremely pleasant to do so. It also means living the life of Christian love when sorrow, suffering, and anxiety are with us in plentiful measure.

Jesus does not use glamorous advertising techniques as do those who variously try to persuade us to join the ranks of those who are living this world's "good life". He does not demonstrate His way by telling us that happiness can easily be bought or had. He promises us happiness and fulfillment—the true good life—but He very candidly tells us that there is hardship involved.

Enjoying the material pleasures and comforts of life can certainly be compatible with the life Jesus came to give us. But these must be used according to God's will. They are means and not ends in themselves. How evident this is, yet how often we can be tempted to think otherwise, even though we be committed Christians. A considerable portion of the human race has always operated according to the principle that wealth and the things money can buy are really the key to human happiness. Jesus has emphatically told us that this is a false philosophy.

We can at times be dull of mind and dull of heart, so slow to understand what Jesus came to teach and to give. By the way Jesus spoke and lived we know for certain in which direction true happiness—the true good life—actually lies. His way is the way to true peace, to true happiness, to the true fulfillment of life which the human heart so much desires.

Everyday and Its Possibilities

We grow in Christian holiness within the framework of everyday life. This is such an obvious statement. It is one of those self-evident truths, a truth which no logical person would begin to challenge. Isn't it strange, then, that we can rather often seem to think that our real opportunity for growth in Christian holiness somehow is not the opportunity which is everyday, but that opportunity which is in a kind of no man's land, an ethereal kind of opportunity removed from the ordinary pains and struggles and joys of everyday living, a nebulous opportunity which our hazy thinking really cannot pinpoint when we reflect upon the matter. When we tend to think our opportunity for really being and becoming Christian has not yet really arrived, then we are guilty, whether we like to admit it or not, of such unrealistic thinking.

Our problem, then, is not that there is lacking ample opportunity for being and becoming Christian. Our problem rather is that we have a tendency to want different opportunities than everydayness presents. We know, for instance, that a Christian should be kind and considerate but we tend to sit back and play a waiting game, as if the proper opportunities for being considerate and kind have not yet really arrived.

See *Everyday and Its Possibilities*, page 4



"There must be no competition among you, no conceit; but everybody is to be self-effacing. Always consider the other person to be better than yourself, so that nobody thinks of his own interests first but everybody thinks of other people's interests instead."

—Phil. 2: 3-4



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

Life in Its Tenderness

Life can be hard. Sometimes the harshness of life seems all too much for us. We would like to withdraw from the mainstream of the human condition, and hide, curled up, in a far away corner of human existence where this harshness of life cannot touch us. There, we think, we can feel so peaceful, and warm, and secure. But we know this is unrealistic thinking. We know such thoughts, pleasant as they may seem at times, are, in reality, flights of fantasy.

And yet we do need alleviation from the harshness of life. We need means whereby its blows are softened, or compensated for. One of these means is to allow the tenderness of life to exercise its proper role. God intends this. He has planted the touch of tenderness in the work of His creation. We see many examples of this in the animal kingdom. A mother dog, for instance, playfully and tenderly paws her little pups.

God has also made the human heart for tenderness. The human heart of Jesus is the perfect example of this. More than once Jesus displayed a sense of manly tenderness. We can picture Jesus saying: *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets and stone those who are sent to you! How often have I longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you refused!* (Mt. 23:37)

God has made us, then, to experience touches of tenderness. We need to open ourselves to this tenderness of life. If we do not, can we long endure the painful and brutal dimension of life? If there were not touches of tenderness, who could properly endure the death of loved ones, or sickness, or emotional distress, or loneliness?

The tenderness of life assumes many diverse forms. There is the tenderness which unites man and wife—the touch and the look and the kiss of tenderness. There is the maternal touch of tenderness—and because of it the baby feels secure, wanted, loved. There is the warm, receptive smile of a friend. The

gentle, encouraging word is also a form of tenderness. Husky athletes visiting a hospital for crippled children offer a touching scene also. Perhaps clumsily, yet very sincerely and tenderly, these hulking men stroke a young brow or caress the blond hair of a little disabled child. Food baskets delivered to the poor at Christmas are other reminders to us that the tender, loving concern of the human heart, in some degree at least, still looks out for the world's disinherited. A mother, tearfully and joyfully embracing her son returned from war's battlefields, offers a classic scene ranking high on the list of manifestations of life's tenderness. Two little boys, one black and one white, hugging one another in their gleeful playfulness—a tender scene like this can do much to diminish the harsh blemish of prejudice.

Nature also offers us signs of tenderness. There is the delicate touch of snowflakes against the cheek, or the gentle fall of a steady rain. Rolling meadows offer their soft bed of greenness for springtime picnics. And the soft breeze lies tender against the brow made warm by the summer's sun.

We can act falsely grown-up, and tell ourselves we don't need the tenderness of life, saying that to be very much concerned with it is a sign of childishness or weakness. We can say all this—but that will not change the fact that God has delicately woven the touch of tenderness into the tapestry of human life. To be open properly to the tenderness of life is simply to recognize one of the dimensions of our humanity. It is to be more human and happier than we would otherwise be.



Farewell, Mother Teresa

In these our times there have been few people who have touched millions of hearts the world over as much as has Mother Teresa. Truly, she has left us a lasting legacy teaching us how love of God and neighbor must always be present together. Here are excerpts from the homily given by Cardinal Angelo Sodano, Vatican Secretary of State, at Mother Teresa's funeral Mass: "Our brothers and sisters in the Lord, distinguished authorities from India and from around the world, bereaved Missionaries of Charity: The hour has arrived for us to say a final farewell to the late Mother Teresa..."

"At the close of a century which has known terrible extremes of darkness, the light of conscience has not been altogether extinguished. Holiness, goodness, kindness, love are still recognized when they appear on history's stage. The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, has given voice to what so many people of every condition have seen in the woman of unshakeable faith: her extraordinary spiritual vision, her attentive and self-sacrificing love of God in each person she met, her absolute respect for the value of every human life and her courage in facing so many challenges. His Holiness, who knew Mother Teresa so well, wishes this funeral ceremony to be a great prayer of gratitude to God for having given her to the Church and to the world..."

"It has been said that Mother Teresa might have done more to fight the causes of poverty in the world. Mother Teresa was aware of this criticism. She would shrug as if saying: 'While you go on discussing causes and explanations I will kneel beside the poorest of the poor and attend to their needs.' The beggar, the leper, the victim of Aids do not need discussions and theories; they need love. The hungry cannot wait for the rest of the world to come up with the perfect

answer; they need effective solidarity. The dying, the handicapped and the defenseless unborn, who are without a constituency in the Utopian ideologies which, especially in the last 200 years, have been trying to model the perfect world, need a living human presence and a caring hand...

"In silence and contemplation, in prayerful adoration before the tabernacle, she learned to see the true face of God in every suffering human being. In prayer she discovered the essential truth which underlies the Church's social teaching and her religious and humanitarian work in every age and in every part of the world: Jesus Christ, the eternal Word made flesh, the redeemer of mankind, has wished to identify himself with every person—especially the poor, the sick and the needy...

"Speaking at the Angelus prayer on Sunday last, the Holy Father recalled these other words of Mother Teresa: 'The fruit of prayer is faith, the fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service and the fruit of service is peace.' Let us begin to change the world for the better by turning in humble prayer to God, the creator of all that exists. Let us be renewed in faith. Let our hearts be filled with genuine love. Let each person do something useful and demanding for those in need. Only when we learn to see others, no matter how different and removed from us, as our beloved brothers and sisters will humanity learn the ways of peace...

"Dear Mother Teresa, the consoling dogma of the communion of saints allows us to feel close to you. The entire Church thanks you for your luminous example and promises to make it our heritage.

"Today on behalf of Pope John Paul II, who sent me here, I offer you a final earthly farewell, and in his name I thank you for all that you have done for the poor of the world. They are favorites of Jesus. They are also favorites of our Holy Father, his vicar on earth. It is in his name that I place on your coffin the flower of our deepest gratitude.

"Dear Mother Teresa, rest in peace."⁷

Thoughts on the Priesthood

♦ Fr. Robert Schwartz, a theologian and a past president of the National Organization for Continuing Education of Roman Catholic clergy, reminds us that the priest must always strive for awareness of the proper relationship between time and eternity: "As teachers, priests are to articulate the relationship between the temporal and the eschatological, presenting them as modes of existence which must be embraced simultaneously by

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

Christians, inasmuch as the earthly mediates the heavenly and in turn the future exerts its power within the temporal sphere. The tendency of some to choose an overly transcendent and disembodied spirituality, and the preference of others for an extremely

utilitarian and materialistic approach, must be balanced by the incarnational vision which lies at the heart of an appropriate priestly spirituality. Because the temporal and the eschatological are intimately linked in the vision of Vatican II, the heavenly kingdom is not an excuse for abandoning the world, but an invitation to a paschal journey which leads through earthly life to the perfect realization of humanity in the reign of God which lies beyond it."⁸

♦ The theologian, Jean Galot, S.J., has some insightful thoughts on the priest as shepherd: "As a mediator, the priest is a shepherd in the name of God, or more precisely in the name of Christ, and through Christ, in the name of the Father. In the priest is realized the prophetic oracle of Ezechiel in which Yahweh promises to be the Shepherd of his people. (Ezek 34).

"Some implications of this principle must be underlined. The priest does not draw the inspiration for his pastoral zeal from his own feelings, from his own personal resolve to create a better world. He is shepherd on the strength of God's pastoral intention and represents specifically Christ the shepherd. Consequently he is called upon to fulfill his pastoral mission not according to ideas of his own and his own personal ambitions, but in keeping with God's own dispensation and the design of salvation devised by the Father and carried out by Christ. Like Jesus himself, the priest is at the service of the Father."

Mary in Our Life

Here are words of Fr. Angelo Amato, S.D.B., professor of theology at the Salesian Pontifical University in Rome: "The maternal presence of Mary in our life is not a Catholic invention or an exaggeration of the popular piety, but a biblical reality found in the heart of the Trinitarian mystery of salvation...Mary is the creature chosen by God to become the Mother of His beloved Son. The presence of Mary in the mystery of Christ and of the Church is not therefore optional or cosmetic, but theological and soteriological..."

"For this reason among Protestants, too, there exist today representative figures who are trying to recover the biblical figure of Mary, as well as the ecclesial tradition condensed, for example, in the four Marian dogmas. We mention, among others, authors like Henry Chavannes, John Macquarry with his recent book, 'Mary for all Christians', Ulrich Wickert..."

"And today, more than ever, is valid the affirmation made by John H. Newman (1801-1890) in 1865: 'Exactly those nations and lands that got rid of the devotion to the Mother of God, have lost faith in Christ's divinity; while those lands which were faithful to Mary, have conserved Orthodoxy'."¹⁰

The Eucharist

♦ In his homily at the World Youth Day Mass in Paris, Pope John Paul II put forth these words on the Eucharist: "Rabbi, where are you staying?" Each day the Church responds: Christ is present in the eucharist, in the sacrament of his death and resurrection. In and through the eucharist you acknowledge the dwelling place of the living God in human history. For the eucharist is the sacrament of the love which conquers death. It is the sacrament of the covenant, pure gift of love for the reconciliation of all humanity. It is the gift of the real presence of Jesus the redeemer...Thanks to the eucharist, con-

stantly renewed among all the peoples of the world, Christ continues to build his church: He brings us together in praise and thanksgiving for salvation, in the communion which only infinite love can forge. Our worldwide gathering now takes on its fullest meaning, through the celebration of the Mass. For Christ is now answering your own question and the questions of all those who seek the living God. He answers by offering an invitation: This is my body, take it and eat. To the Father he entrusts his supreme desire: that all those whom he loves may be one in the same communion.”¹¹

◆ The Holy Father offers us further words on the Eucharist. Speaking of Mary, he tells us: “Her motherhood is particularly noted and experienced by the Christian people at the *Sacred Banquet*—the liturgical celebration of the mystery of the Redemption—at which Christ, his *true body born of the Virgin Mary*, becomes present.

“The piety of the Christian people has always rightly sensed a *profound link* between devotion to the Blessed Virgin and worship of the Eucharist: this is the fact that can be seen in the liturgy of both the West and the East, in the traditions of the Religious Families, in the modern movements of spirituality, including those for youth, and in the pastoral practice of the Marian Shrines. *Mary guides the faithful to the Eucharist.*”¹²

Suffering

To follow Jesus entails a willingness to suffer for Him and His cause. The furthering of any worthwhile cause demands a spirit of sacrifice, a willingness to endure a variety of hardships and difficulties. We cannot expect it to be otherwise regarding the cause of Christ. To help further the process of ongoing redemption demands a price.

There is an almost endless variety of pains, sufferings, and difficulties which can arise in following Jesus and promoting His cause. At times seeing few, if any, visible results of our labors, feeling unappreciated, experiencing opposition, sometimes comprehending that we are being hated precisely by some of those whom we are striving to help, at times being laughed at and ridiculed—these are some of the ways we experience the sufferings of an apostle.

The suffering involved in contributing to the process of ongoing redemption is not, however, the complete picture. The happiness resulting from commitment to Christ and His mission far outweighs the hardships. To be aware that one is so intimately loved by Jesus, to experience the satisfaction that one is contributing to a cause that cannot fail, to play a role in helping to bring to others the love and peace of Jesus—all of this makes for a life that has no equal. The committed follower of Christ, experiencing what it means to be closely associated with Jesus, realizes why St. Peter said, *Lord, . . . it is wonderful for us to be here.* (Mt. 17:4).

A Priest Needs More Than Theology

Fr. William Barry, S.J. observes: “For too long divinity schools, seminaries, and formation programs seemed to operate on the assumption that sound theology was all that a minister needed. Again, just as I do not wish to disparage sound psychology, so too, I am not disparaging sound theology. After all, this book is based on the premise that a sound theology is helpful for ministry. Reading a good book about marriage may help a couple, but it does not spare them the pains and joys of actually relating. Likewise, a sound course on God . . . helps a minister, but it cannot take the place of engaging God in relationship. Thus, if I am to help others with their relationship with God, I must have developed my own relationship. Else I will deserve the epithet, ‘Hypocrite!’ . . .”¹³

Thoughts from a Spiritual Journal

Here are certain reflections from a spiritual journal. Notice how Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and Mary enter into the person’s experience:

“Well, the night was black, as black as black could be and the cold pierced my bones. I felt its chill go through my entire body and I wanted to scream and it happened—He gave me an outpouring of His life in my soul and my darkness was truly turned to light, another light, not the light of the eyes, a light of knowing God, the joy of beholding His heavenly embrace, the great illumination of another mystery. Oh such sweet gifts He gives when, in an instant, I pray my rosary and the Holy Spirit fills my heart with lights and the mystery lights up and I know, I just know, and I experience a great insight into God.



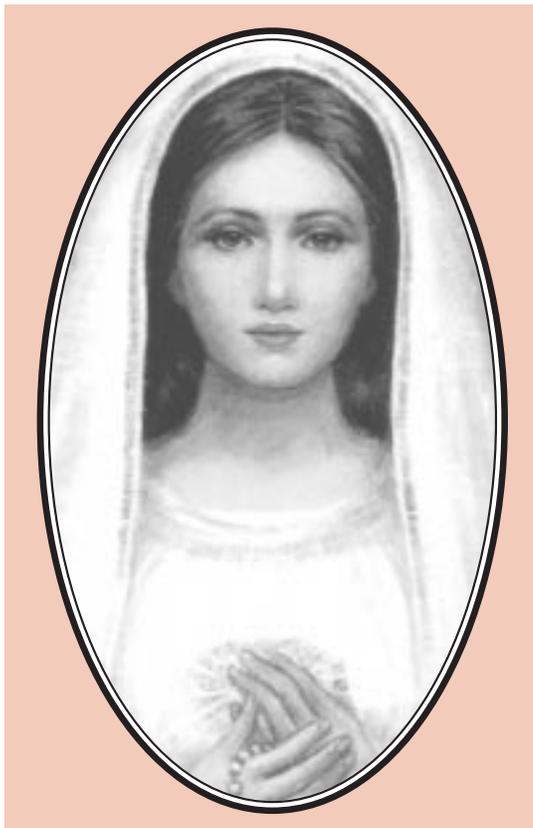
“This is the reason for this letter, for I laid on my bed and I wanted to cry and I was deeply afraid for the demons pressed in as rocks poking at me and hurting my precious skin. I laid in bed and I went into the womb of my Mother Mary and I asked for the Holy Spirit to flood me with His light and it came: death-resurrection, darkness-light, sorrow-joy, suffering and pain, but oh, the joy of His light, the joy of His glory. It is in the death there is the resurrection.

“So, I walk the road to Calvary. I mount the cross and I die. I offer sacri-

fice and in the morning when the night is done I see the glory of the resurrection. I experience His joy in my heart.

“So I went to bed and went into the womb of my Mother Mary and the Holy Spirit flooded me with light and I united deeply to my precious Jesus on the cross. I know Him and His love. I reminisced on all the places of deepest intimacy I had shared with Him and my heart burned. I wanted Him to be so close to me, and I loved Him so much. I cried out, ‘I love you, I love you, I love you.’ In that moment I knew Him. He had removed my bonds and set me free. I then knew Jesus as never before.

“I felt my great love for God the Father. I have been experiencing my littleness as a child and knowing my Father, seeing myself very little and knowing my Father and wanting as a little child to please Him. Then tonight I realized more His Fatherly love. I saw myself depending on Him, needing Him, crying to Him, loving Him and then I realized His might and love coming to me.



“So I knew in an instant. He gives you a light and you know. I experienced the Trinity. My heart was consumed. I was engulfed in the love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I stopped to be in the embrace, wanting it to never end, for in this embrace I felt peace, a peace I had not felt before, so different from the days that had proceeded this moment, the days of suffering and trial.

“I mounted the cross. I felt the nails press deeply into my hands and feet. I felt the crown of thorns on my head. I said to Him, “Oh, why, my God, if you love me, do you make it so hard?”

“And then I pictured Jesus on the cross. I saw His mouth with blood running from the corner of it. I saw the body of one close to death. I saw His wounds, blistery and red, pouring out His precious blood. I saw the hollowness of His cheeks and the exhaustion of one ready to expire in death. I saw the anguishing Lord Who came to show us His way. His way is death and resurrection. His way is pain and glory. His way is the way to eternal life!”

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 a 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

Dear Fr. Ed Carter,

Thank you very much for your kind letter and for the enclosures. Congratulations for the wonderful work that is being done to animate the Shepherds. I believe such material is very essential these days to nourish and strengthen the Ministers of the Word and the Sacraments.

I would like to give a copy each to every Priest working in the diocese and to the seminarians in their final stages of formation. I will be happy to receive 100 copies of *Shepherds of Christ* for that purpose.

Yours in Christ Jesus,
Robert Kerkerketla, SDB DD
Bishop of Tezpur, India

Dear Fr. Ed Carter,

Peace be with you!

My name is Joseph Grima and I am a seminarian studying theology at the Sacred Heart Seminary in Victoria, Gozo-Malta. I was handed a copy of your Newsletter not long ago and was very impressed with the spiritual information you provide for priests.

I would like to ask you, if it is not too much trouble, if you could send some copies for us here at the seminary. At the moment we are 15. Also, in that issue there was a note for those interested in obtaining the first 12 issues in book form. I am very interested in your spirituality and would like very much to have it.

Continue the good work. The modern world is in much need of spiritually prepared priests.

God Bless and may the New Year be for you a year full of joy, blessings and service in the Lord.

Yours in Christ,
Sem. Joseph Grima

Dear Fr. Ed Carter,

Thank you very much for your kind letter. Sorry for the long delay in answering. I was always on the move.

I found the Newsletter very much spiritually enriching. Congratulations for this very meaningful apostolate. I have some 80 priests and 60 Major Seminarians. I would like to give to all, so kindly send 150 copies.

Once again I congratulate you for this noble effort and the trouble you take for the Church.

Yours in Our Lord,
Bishop Gregory Karotemprel, CMI
Gujarat, India



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NOTES:

1. Scriptural quotations are taken from *The Jerusalem Bible*, Doubleday & Co.
2. Pope John Paul II, "Homily", *L'Osservatore Romano*, as in *Origins, CNS Documentary Service*, Nov. 6, 1997, Vol 27, No. 21, Washington, D.C.
3. Bishop Patrick V. Alern, as in *The Catholic Faith*, Vol. 3, No. 6.
4. St. John of the Cross, "Sayings of Light and Love," No. 70, as in *The Collected Works of Saint John of the Cross*, tr. by Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D., ICS Publications.
5. St. Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*, Bk. VI, Ch. 7, as in *The Collected Works of St. Teresa*, tr. by Kieran Kavanaugh, O.C.D., and Otilio Rodriguez, O.C.D., ICS Publications, Vol II, p. 399.
6. St. Peter Julian Eymard, *The Real Presence: Eucharistic Meditations and Holy Communion*, published by Eymard League, as in *The Treasury of Catholic Wisdom*, ed., by John Hardon, S.J., Ignatius Press, p. 573.
7. Cardinal Angelo Sodano, "Homily" as in *Origins, CNS Documentary Service*, Sept. 25, 1997, Vol 27, No. 15.
8. Fr. Robert M. Schwartz, *Servant Teachers of the People of God*, Paulist Press, p. 106.
9. Fr. Jean Galot, S.J. *Theology of the Priesthood*, Ignatius Press, p. 144.
10. Fr. Angelo Amato, SDB, as in *Alliance of the Two Hearts*, Two Hearts Media Organization, pp. 141-142.
11. Pope John Paul II, "Homily", as in *Origins, CNS Documentary Service*, Sep. 4, 1997, Vol 27, No. 12, p. 190.
12. Pope John Paul II, *The Mother of the Redeemer*, United States Catholic Conference, No. 44.
13. Fr. William Barry, S.J. *Spiritual Direction and the Encounter with God*, Paulist Press, p. 96.

*Immaculate
Heart
of Mary,
Pray for us.*

