

shepherds of Christ⁺

A SPIRITUALITY NEWSLETTER FOR PRIESTS



REV. EDWARD CARTER S.J., Editor

CONTENTS

Personal Uniqueness1

Jesus3

The Church and the Father4

The Holy Spirit in our Lives4

St. Bernard's Tribute to Mary ...4

The Eucharist4

Priesthood5

On Prayer5

The Christian and the Social Order5

Various Thoughts ...6

The Pierced Heart of Christ6

A Prayer for Priests .7

Act of Consecration .7

Letters7

Chief Shepherd of the Flock

Personal Uniqueness

I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd 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 as soon as he sees a wolf coming, and runs away, and then the wolf attacks and scatters the sheep; he runs away 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 10:11-15}'

Yes, the Good Shepherd has laid down His life for us. And He did so being aware of each of us in a most special way. Joseph Chorpensing, O.S.F., in commenting on the spirituality of St. Francis de Sales, doctor of the Church, says in one of his observations, "In human relationships one seeks to awaken in others

an awareness of their divine dignity by the respect and reverence one demonstrates for their person, individuality, and liberty. In Salesian thought each person is unique and unrepeatable. For example, Francis says that when Jesus accomplished our redemption on the day of His passion and death, he 'knew all of us by name and by surname' (*Treatise on the Love of God*, 2 vols., Tan Books. Vol. 2, p. 280)2"

This realization of how precious each of us is to Jesus as this special unique person should be deeply imbedded in our consciousness. Much of our growth in the spiritual life depends on this awareness.

St. Francis de Sales is not the only spiritual master who greatly stresses the uniqueness of each person. There are others, including John Henry Cardinal

Newman: "...Newman saw the need for a theology and philosophy of the individual person. We have seen individuals trampled on by totalitarian governments, and we have known educationalists who would lead us away from the field of personal responsibility into the realm of mass-psychology. Materialism, behaviorism, totalitarianism, Marxism -- these are a few of the 'isms' that have been attacking human personality in our time. No wonder there has been a crop of personalist and existentialist philosophies and theologies; and no wonder these aspects in Newman have become so deeply appreciated and studied...

"Put into the kind of definition we enjoy, Newman's contribution to thought could be called a theology and philosophy of human individuality.

Most of the aspects of his message could probably be included under these terms. Sometimes he was content to underline the divine and human importance of the individual, and the personal significance of the concrete circumstances in which his life was passed. The fact that each individual is so bound up with particular parents and

belongs to a particular town or village, in a particular country, is part of the loving design of a Providence that orders each one's life specially for His own special purpose and our special good..."3

Given Newman's concern for the individual, it is not surprising that he was attracted to the person of St. John Chrysostom. Newman says, "I consider St. Chrysostom's charm to be in his intimate sympathy and compassionateness for the whole world, not only in its strength, but in its weakness; in the lively regard with which he views everything that comes before him, taken in the concrete, whether as made after its own kind or as gifted with a nature higher than its own...{It is} the interest which he takes in all things, not so far as God has made them alike, but as He has made them different from each other. I speak of the discriminating affectionateness

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with which he accepts everyone for what is personal in him and unlike others. I speak of his versatile recognition of men, one by one, for the sake of that portion of good, be it more or less, of a lower order or a higher, which has severally been lodged in them."⁴

Given Newman's great interest in the individual person, it is no wonder that he has left us the following words: "Everyone who breathes, high and low, educated and ignorant, young and old, man and woman, has a mission, has a work. 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. He needs, He deigns to need, every one of us."⁵

Because of the uniqueness of each Christian's existence, he or she presents Christ with a unique opportunity. Each Christian has the vocation to offer Christ his or her humanity so that Jesus can live in that individual in a special way. To the extent that an individual Christian offers his or her humanity to Jesus, that person has an unique opportunity to help to continue the work of the redemption--an opportunity that no one else can fulfill. Likewise, to the extent that an individual fails to offer his or her humanity to Christ, Jesus loses the opportunity to continue His redemptive work according to that person's uniqueness.

Each one of us, consequently, has both the great privilege and the great responsibility to properly utilize his or her life according to God's Christ-like design. No one else can fulfill your unique mission, and, in turn, you cannot accomplish the unique mission of another. At times we can become fearful and anxious concerning the task that God has entrusted to us as we more deeply realize what it demands. We can feel the same reluctance that Jeremiah the prophet voiced when Yahweh called him: *The word of Yahweh came to me, saying: Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you; I appointed you as prophet to the nations.*

I then said, 'Ah, ah, ah, Lord Yahweh; you see, I do not know how to speak: I am only a child!'

But Yahweh replied, 'Do not say, "I am only a child," for you must go to all to whom I send you and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of confronting them, for I am with you to rescue you, Yahweh declares.' {Jr 1:4-8}

Jeremiah initially shrank back from the mission that God was giving him. He complained that he was not capable of accomplishing it. God answered him, however, and told Jeremiah that he was perfectly capable of fulfilling his appointed role, for He, Yahweh, would be with Jeremiah. God would work through Jeremiah, and Jeremiah, for his part, was to be open to God, allowing Yahweh

to work through him according to the divine will.

We, too, can be guilty of reacting to God's call in the way that Jeremiah originally reacted. This can happen as God calls one to a basic state of life. Once a person is within a fundamental vocation, one can be tempted to resist God's call to higher things, to a greater accomplishment of one's mission, to a greater spiritual maturity.

When so tempted, we must control our fears and trustingly give ourselves to God's will. Only then will we become fully convinced that God never requests anything without granting abundant grace to accomplish His design, and that to answer God's call as consistently as possible is the only true path to peace, happiness, and fulfillment, despite the pain that is necessarily involved.

The realization of the greatness of our missions must be balanced with a realization of the limitations attached to that greatness. We are finite creatures who have various limitations which emanate from our finitude. A sense of limitations, then, should accompany the fulfillment of our missions in life.

What are some of these limitations? First, it is important to realize there are

*"Everyone who breathes, high
and low, educated and ignorant,
young and old, man and woman,
has a mission, has a work."*

Cardinal Newman

false limitations--limitations that need not be--as opposed to limitations that are inevitable, limitations that spring forth from the fact that we are finite creatures who are immersed in the human condition. An example of a false limitation is demonstrated by the person who succumbs to the

temptation of wanting to be someone else. This person looks at the physical and intellectual gifts of one person, the pleasing personality of another, and so forth and so on, and tells oneself that, if only he or she were endowed with such qualities, well, yes, then it would be possible to really accomplish something with one's life. In other words, such a person fails to accept the self which God has created. The person fails to accept his or her God-given uniqueness and wastes precious time looking at what one does not have, rather than appreciating that which God has given. Such a person must strive to accept the self in his or her fundamental uniqueness. Moreover, the person must develop the gifts, strengths, and capacities of one's uniqueness and strive to control as much as possible the weaknesses which hinder the development of this uniqueness. The person should realize that only by accepting one's uniqueness as coming forth from God's creative love and constantly striving to allow that same love to bring one's uniqueness to fulfillment, will one achieve real peace and happiness.

If there are limitations which should not be, there are also limitations which are inevitable as a person strives to fulfill one's unique mission in life. We possess certain special talents, for example, but present circumstances do not allow us to exercise these talents here and now. Even at those times when we can exercise our special talents, we often feel limited because we realize that there are only a certain number of concrete opportunities and a certain amount of time for us to use our special talents. At other times we feel limited because the very persons we are trying to serve are hostile to our efforts and shut themselves off from what we desire to so generously offer.

These, then, are some examples of limitations we can experience in our efforts to fulfill our unique missions. To balance the realization of the greatness of our call with the realization that we will be variously limited--sometimes painfully so--in our striving to carry out our mission in life is as necessary as it is challenging.

A Christian accomplishes his or her unique mission in proportion to one's realization of Christ's tremendous, unique love for him or her, and in propor-

tion to the person's surrender in love to Jesus. The more the person surrenders to Jesus, the more Jesus lives through that person's uniqueness. Let us always strive to live according to the words of St. Paul: *I have been crucified with Christ and yet I am alive; yet it is no longer I, but Christ living in me. The life that I am now living, subject to the limitation of human nature, I am living in faith, faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.* {Ga 2:19-20}

Jesus

◆ Romano Guardini observes: "People must have felt there was something very special about this Man. Their attention was aroused. They were held fast. They were agitated, upset, deeply stirred. They valued Him, and did Him honor. They also felt irritated, became mistrustful, hostile, grew to hate Him.

"All this has great meaning--most of all because none of the positions people took concerning Him originated in the intelligence alone, but all derived from a direct motion of the heart. There was something particular about Him which gripped people, radiating from Him, a force that made itself felt all around Him. This meant that all who saw Him were involved in a special way, passionately aroused to love or hate, to a very special love, and very special hate... ..Now the scribes were well-instructed people. They reflected a lot, and worked hard. Their sayings were learned and to the point. But their words were cold and hard, rigid, oppressive. And now here stood One Whose words were warm, full of power. This power derived from what He said, from the depth and the truth of the spoken word--but not from that alone. More than anything, it came from the vitality sounding through His speech, from the vital energy of Him Who spoke. Everything about Him was genuine, strong, straight from the mind and heart. It was candid, rang true, had radiance, contained an effective principle of life. It sent out a call, it wakened, lifted up, cleared the mind, clutched at the heart. And there was warranty behind it, an assurance of salvation."⁶

◆ Walter Farrell, O.P., speaks of our Saviour: "In the quiet of an evening, Jesus left Capernaum,

walking to the nearby mountain; and there, St. Luke tells us, he passed the night in prayer. His sinless, grace-filled soul needed that converse with its Maker, as every man's soul does; at this moment, particularly, He gave us an example of a strong man advancing to crucial choices and bold truths, but not alone. When the day had dawned, He saw that His disciples had followed Him. Calling them closer, He chose twelve whom He named apostles; men chosen to be with Him and to be given the power to preach, to cast out devils, to heal the sick."⁷

◆ In St. John's Gospel, we read, *Jesus said: I am the Way; I am Truth and Life...*{Jn 14:6}

The entire effort, then, of one who has entered upon the spiritual quest, is to put on Christ more and more. All authentic efforts in the spiritual life have as their goal the increased emergence of the Christ-like self. We are called to grow in the knowledge and love and imitation of Jesus Christ. Our task is to become closer companions of Jesus, this Jesus Who, with Mary our Mother at our side, leads us to the Father in the Holy Spirit.

The spiritual quest, then, consists in allowing Jesus to increasingly take us over-- in allowing Him more and more to live in and through us. Allowing Jesus to enter our lives has tremendous ramifications. Not only do we achieve our own salvation by committing ourselves to Jesus, but we also assist in the salvation of others.

Some two thousand years ago Jesus walked this earth, teaching, healing the sick, extending His mercy and love, forming His Church. These and all His other actions entered into the work of what theologians call objective redemption. We had no part in this redemptive effort of Jesus.



We are now in the phase of what is called subjective redemption, a phase in which the fruits of Christ's objective redemption are distributed over the face of the earth. Each individual is called to salvation. This salvation is Christic; it is the only salvation which exists; it is the one Jesus lived, died, and rose from the dead to accomplish.

According to God's plan, we are called to assist in the works of subjective redemption. According to this plan, Jesus still walks this earth teaching, healing the sick, administering the sacraments, extending His mercy, His love, His concern. He still walks this earth as an irrevocable sign of salvation, as an irrevocable sign that God overwhelmingly loves the world and everlastingly so. Yes, Jesus still walks the earth accomplishing His redemptive work; but now He is so present, not through His own humanity, but through our humanities.

We see, then, our great privilege and our great responsibility. Jesus asks for our humanities, for our human lives, so that in a certain sense, He can re-incarnate Himself in us and through us. Of course, it is that type of re-incarnation which preserves Jesus' identity as well as our own. As a matter of fact, the more we allow Jesus to live in us and through us, the more we become our true selves. The ongoing Christianization of our persons includes the deepened development of our uniqueness.

We can respond to Jesus' request that we allow Him to continue His redemptive work in us in various ways. For instance, we can respond with less than full enthusiasm and live only mediocre Christian existences. We can respond wholeheartedly and tell Jesus that we are completely His, that He can do

with us what He wishes. This last response is the one we should expect of ourselves--and we know this deep down where we really live. To give ourselves completely to Jesus is what He deserves, this Jesus Who gave Himself completely for us--even to the brutal death on the cross. We should always strive to live according to the words of St. Paul: *I have been crucified with Christ and yet I am alive; yet it is no longer I, but Christ living in me. The life that I am now living, subject to the limitation of human nature, I am living in faith, faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.* {Ga 2:19-20}

The Church And The Father

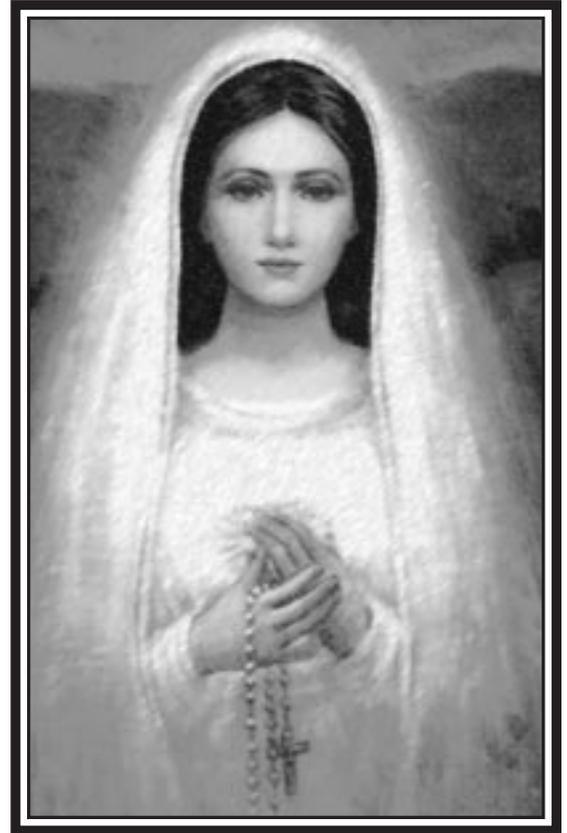
Pope John Paul II tells us: "In continuing the great task of implementing the Second Vatican Council, in which we can rightly see a new phase of the self-realization of the Church--in keeping with the epoch in which it has been our destiny to live--the Church herself must be constantly guided by the full consciousness that in this work it is not permissible for her, for any reason, to withdraw into herself. The reason for her existence is, in fact, to reveal God, that Father who allows us to 'see' him in Christ. {cf Jn14:9} No matter how strong the resistance of human history may be, no matter how marked the diversity of contemporary civilization, no matter how great the denial of God in the human world, so much the greater must be the Church's closeness to that mystery which, hidden for centuries in God, was then truly shared with man, in time, through Jesus Christ."8

The Holy Spirit In Our Lives

Archbishop Luis M. Martinez tells us: "The true Director of souls, the intimate Master, the soul of the spiritual life is the Holy Spirit. Without Him, as we have already said, there is no sanctity. The perfection of a soul is measured by its docility to the movement of the Spirit, by the promptitude and fidelity with which its strings produce the divine notes of the song of love. A soul is perfectly holy when the Spirit of love has taken full possession of it, when the divine Artist finds no resistance or dissonance in the strings of that living lyre, but only celestial strains coming forth from it, limpid, ardent, and delightfully harmonized."9

St. Bernard's Tribute To Mary

St. Bernard, 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 disturbed 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."10



The Eucharist

◆ *At the Last Supper, on the night He was betrayed, our Saviour instituted the Eucharistic Sacrifice of His Body and Blood. He did this in order to perpetuate the sacrifice of the Cross throughout the centuries until He should come again, and so to entrust to His beloved spouse, the Church, a memorial of His death and resurrection: a sacrament of love, a sign of unity, a bond of charity, a paschal banquet in which Christ is consumed, the mind is filled with grace, and a pledge of future glory is given to us. (Vatican II, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, No. 17)11*

◆ *The Church, therefore, earnestly desires that Christ's faithful, when present at this mystery of faith, should not be there as strangers or silent spectators. On the contrary, through a proper appreciation of the rites and prayers they should participate knowingly, devoutly, and actively. They should be instructed by God's word and be refreshed at the table of the Lord's body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn to offer themselves too. Through Christ the Mediator, they should be drawn day by day into ever closer union with God and with each other, so that finally God may be all in all. (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, No. 48)12*

◆ *Through the Eucharistic Sacrifice Christ the Lord desired to set before us*

*in a very special way this remarkable union whereby we are united one with another and with our divine Head, a union that no word of praise can ever sufficiently express. For in this sacrifice the sacred ministers act not only as the representative of our Saviour, but as the representative of the whole Mystical Body and of each one of the faithful. Again, in this act of sacrifice, the faithful of Christ, united by the common bond of devotion and prayer, offer to the eternal Father through the hands of the priest, whose prayer alone has made it present on the altar, the Immaculate Lamb, the most acceptable victim of praise and propitiation for the Church's universal need. Moreover, just as the divine Redeemer, while dying on the Cross, offered Himself to the eternal Father as Head of the whole human race, so now, 'in this clean oblation' He not only offers Himself as Head of the Church to His heavenly Father but in Himself His mystical members as well. He embraces them all, yes, even the weaker and more ailing members, with the deepest love of His Heart. (Pope Pius XII, *Mystici Corporis AAS. XXXV, 232-233*)13*

◆ Fr. Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R., gives us these thoughts concerning the revival of Eucharistic devotion: "Eucharistic devotions of all kinds are coming back. A legitimate question is why... There is, I think, a historical reason that needs to be considered--especially by those interested in the pastoral life of the Church. We live in very lonely times..."

"It should be no surprise then that the mysterious and personal presence of Christ should have a profound human appeal. Nor need there be any fear that this devotion could lead to any kind of spiritual isolation, so long as we carefully keep the Eucharistic Presence linked with the Paschal mystery which encompasses all men and women, and with Holy Communion, which draws together all the faithful disciples of Christ."14

◆ Mother Teresa of Calcutta shares these thoughts with us: "I make a holy hour each day in the presence of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. All my sisters of the Missionaries of Charity make a daily holy hour, as well, because we find that through our daily holy hour our love for Jesus becomes more intimate, our love for each other more understanding, and our love for the poor more compassionate. Our holy hour is our daily family prayer where we get together and pray the Rosary before the exposed Blessed Sacrament for the first half hour, and the second half hour we pray in silence. Our adoration has doubled our vocations. In 1963, we were making a weekly hour together, but it was not until 1973, when we began our daily holy hour that our community started to grow and blossom."15

◆ St. Peter Julian Eymard, founder of the Blessed Sacrament Fathers, tells us: "The Eucharist, behold the Christian's treasure, his delight on earth. Since Jesus is in the Eucharist for him personally, his whole life ought to be drawn to it like a magnet to its center."16

◆ Here is a Eucharistic prayer: "Lord Jesus. I 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. 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 pierced, glorified, Eucharistic Heart. And there, let me draw faith from this burning furnace of charity. Thus, strengthened, refreshed, and encouraged, let me go forth to live the Mass all day, every day."

Priesthood

◆ The theologian, Jean Galot, S.J. reminds the priest of his special conformity to Christ: "What distinguishes the priestly character from the characters impressed by baptism and confirmation is that man's being is conformed to Christ the Shepherd. The image of the good shepherd is impressed on the soul of the ordained person as a principle and basic blueprint of the ministry to be carried out.

"In consequence, there emerges from the priestly character the capacity to make the Lord present. If the priest is 'another Christ' in a special way, this is not due to a merely juridical delegation but to the figure of Christ Priest and Shepherd impressed on the soul..."

"The basic resemblance impressed by the priestly character requires of the priest an effort at imitating Christ the Shepherd. The character itself, together with the conformity it entails, is a reality of the objective order. It lasts independently of the subjective dispositions of the persons involved but strives to promote in the dispositions of the subject a conformity with the Savior's own dispositions. Since it is impressed on one's being, the 'figure' of Christ is expected to reveal itself in what the priest does.

"This means that, more so than the ordinary Christian, the priest is called to take Christ as his model in all his behavior. The priestly character is the gospel imprinted on personal being, the gospel striving to achieve revelation of itself. The priest cannot act consistently with what he is unless he lets himself be permeated ever more deeply by the spirit of the gospel. He must carry in his own self the genuine traits of the Savior, and he must let them radiate."17

◆ Christopher O'Donnell, O. Carm., tells this concerning St. Therese of Lisieux: "Given Therese's deep appreciation of the priestly vocation it clearly pained her to see priests who did not seek God with undivided love... Her ministry of intercession was above all concerned with priests. Therese is very taken up with a specific Carmelite charism of prayer for priests (and theologians), which is derived from Teresa of Avila."18

On Prayer

Henri Nouwen observes: "For a man of prayer is, in the final analysis, the man who is able to recognize in others the face of the Messiah and make visible what was hidden, make touchable what was unreachable. The man of prayer is a leader precisely because through his articulation of God's work within himself he can lead others out of confusion to clarification; through his compassion he can guide them out of the closed circuits of their ingroups to the wide world of humanity, and through his critical contemplation he can convert their convulsive destructiveness into creative work for the new world to come."19

The Christian And The Social Order

In his encyclical, *On Social Concern*, commemorating Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, Pope John Paul II tells us: "The Church's social doctrine is not a 'third way' between *liberal capitalism* and *Marxist collectivism*, nor even

a possible alternative to other solutions less radically opposed to one another: rather it constitutes a *category of its own*. Nor is it an *ideology*, but rather the *accurate formulation* of the results of a careful reflection on the complex realities of human existence, in society and in the international order, in the light of faith and of the Church's tradition. Its main aim is to *interpret* these realities, determining their conformity with or divergence from the lines of the Gospel teaching on man and his vocation, a vocation which is at once earthly and transcendent; its aim is thus to *guide* Christian behavior. It therefore belongs to the field, not of *ideology*, but of theology and particularly of moral theology.

"The teaching and spreading of her social doctrine are part of the Church's evangelizing mission. And since it is a doctrine aimed at guiding *people's behavior*, it consequently gives rise to a 'commitment to justice', according to each individual's role, vocation and circumstances.

"The *condemnation* of evils and injustices is also part of that *ministry of evangelization* in the social field which is an aspect of the Church's *prophetic role*. But it should be made clear that *proclamation* is always more important than *condemnation*, and the latter cannot ignore the former, which gives it true solidity and the force of higher motivation.

"Today more than in the past, the Church's social doctrine must be open to an *international outlook*, in line with the Second Vatican Council, the most recent Encyclicals, and particularly in line with the Encyclical which we are commemorating. It will not be superfluous therefore to re-examine and further clarify in this light the characteristic themes and guidelines dealt with by the Magisterium in recent years.

"Here I would like to indicate one of them: the *option, or love of preference* for the poor. This is an option, or a *special form* of primacy in the exercise of Christian charity, to which the whole tradition of the Church bears witness. It affects the life of each Christian inasmuch as he or she seeks to imitate the life of Christ, but it applies equally to our *social responsibilities* and hence to our manner of living, and to the logical decisions to be made concerning the ownership and use of goods.

"Today, furthermore, given the worldwide dimension which the social question has assumed, this love of preference for the poor, and the decisions which it inspires in us, cannot but embrace the immense multitudes of the hungry, the needy, the homeless, those without medical care and, above all, those

without hope of a better future. It is impossible not to take account of the existence of these realities. To ignore them would mean becoming like the 'rich man' who pretended not to know the beggar Lazarus lying at his gate (cf. Lk 16:19-31)...

"It is necessary to state once more the characteristic principle of Christian social doctrine: the goods of this world are *originally meant for all*. The right to private property is *valid and necessary*, but it does not nullify the value of this principle. Private property, in fact, is under a 'social mortgage', which means that it has an intrinsically social function, based upon and justified precisely by the principle of the universal destination of goods. Likewise, in this concern for the poor, one must not overlook that *special form of poverty* which consists in being deprived of fundamental human rights..."²⁰

Various Thoughts

◆ Here are words from a spiritual journal: "Time stands still and I behold my Lord. His kingdom is not of this world. I behold the Son of God, truly present in our midst. In the silence we know His presence. The closer I get to Him, the more I become one in Him and the more He becomes one in me. Oh, such oneness, to be united to God this way! Is anything of any more importance than being one in God? Jesus, make me one in You and let me know Your Father, my Father, through this loving union with You.

"How blessed we are with this life of divine love! How blessed we are with the love of Mary for us. My

heart longs for this love of God. That we can achieve such union with God, that we can be one in Him and He one in us is such a marvelous reality. This is how we share in love with one another. There is a special oneness between us when we ardently love Jesus. We are close to others because of His love in us. The more we love God, the more we can love each other."

◆ A Poor Clare nun offers us these words of wisdom: "The interior yearning in the human heart for that great and final going forth and abroad into eternity finds both a satisfaction and a dissatisfaction with earth. So satisfying is earth in its multiple beauties and its heart-shaking portents of the eternal life to come, so disappointing in its inability to sustain or quiet the aching outreach of the human spirit for that permanent home we have never seen but for which we suffer such an all-pervasive nostalgia. Earth is best earth when it touches most closely on eternity. It is a stunning paradox that it is those who are most appreciative of and intrigued by the beauties of earth who are least rooted in it, who are just 'passing through'. It is only when we strive to set up a lasting city on earth that we begin demanding of earth what it cannot give, that we become inimical to earth, angry at its inability to afford us permanent joy, to be a lasting city. One thinks of St. Francis of Assisi singing out his 'Canticle of the Creatures' in sheer, joyous, grateful wonder for his mother earth, his sister the moon, his brother wind, and all the rest, while burning out his small person in yearning for eternity."²¹

The Pierced Heart Of Christ

Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., former Superior General of the Society of Jesus, speaks of the pierced Heart of Jesus: "The figure of the Crucified over the earth, with his side wide open, has its roots in the Old Testament and is a compendium, as it were, of the theology of John's Gospel. It could be said that it is a summary of the whole of Christianity. More than any other symbol, this is a sign in St. John of the redeeming fecundity of the death of Christ. The open side, from which blood and water gush forth, responds to a Semitic symbolism: the

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

wound, a sign of death (the slain lamb); and the blood and water, a sign of life and fecundity. Thus the pierced heart is the symbol of the Paschal Lamb of the New Covenant."²²

Fr. Arrupe also offers us these ideas concerning the love of Christ's Heart: "...another wound that afflicts the world today is instability...In Europe and outside Europe, in the East and in the West, instability is the bane of many governments and political parties, fluctuation is the law in the money exchange and in the market. Changeable is the rhythm of demand and supply.

"But that is not all. The world today is afraid of the instability of its own ideas and beliefs. Many people who are at the helm of human activities and trends feel uncertain about the validity of principles, rights and duties, particularly in the field of social justice. Even the philosophical structure of thought is tottering and becomes skeptical and agnostic. Repercussions of this instability are felt in the Catholic field as well where one can perceive much vacillation and uncertainty even in private and professional life...

"Isn't this a sign that we need Jesus more than at any time in the past? Only he stands firm, indestructible upon the rock, while everything around him wavers in constant restlessness. Our Saviour has ever remained constant in his statements of yes or no. Through Peter he continues today to impart a feeling of security to the poor human mind, a fragile little barque tossed in the stormy ocean. We must give our minds a sure criterion. We need a

source of knowledge which is ever fresh and young, today and tomorrow as it was in the days of St. Paul--the science of the love of Christ.

"Paul wanted to communicate to his Christians a re-assuring certitude that will never lose sight of the love of Jesus for us. Some of the faithful in the church at Ephesus were attracted to some strange ideas and mysterious concepts. Paul tells them forcefully that there is one knowledge that transcends all others--the knowledge of the love of Christ, on which the stability of human thought depends. "This is a love without bounds, because the love of the Heart of Christ is infinite in depth, in its height and breadth; there are no boundaries of time or place, or limitation of persons.

"This is, my brothers, where I invite you to fix your minds and especially our hearts; in the love of Christ we shall find stability in life, the happiness of feeling ourselves loved, security on the way. These blessings will surely be ours if in following Jesus we are led by her who is the Mother of the eternal Wisdom, the Daughter of Love and the Lady of the Way"²³

*Immaculate
Heart
of Mary,
Pray for us.*

A Prayer for Priests

Many of the laity pray for us priests, and consistently so. Is it not also fitting that we priests pray for all our brothers in the priesthood, and consistently so? There follows a prayer that can aid us in this endeavor.

"Lord Jesus, Chief Shepherd of the Flock, we pray that in the great love and mercy of Your Sacred Heart that you attend to all the needs of Your priest-shepherds throughout the world. We ask that You draw back to Your Heart all those priests who have seriously strayed from Your path, that You rekindle the desire for holiness in the hearts of those priests who have become lukewarm, and that You continue to give Your fervent priests the desire for the highest holiness. United with Your Heart and Mary's Heart, we ask that You take this petition to Your heavenly Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen".

The above prayer is taken from the prayer manual of Shepherds of Christ Associates, a facet of Shepherds of Christ Ministries. The associates are members of prayer groups which meet regularly to pray for all the needs of the entire human family, but most especially for priests. If you would like a copy, or copies, of this prayer manual, and further, if you would like information on how to begin a Shepherds of Christ prayer chapter, contact us at:

Shepherds of Christ

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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 a 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 a 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. Carter,

I am writing to ask you to please send me ten copies of the Spiritual Newsletter for Priests, *Shepherds of Christ*, and a copy of the book which includes the first 12 issues of your newsletter.

I have received two issues of 1998, and I have found them very useful to enhance our priestly on-going formation, and I wish to give one to my nine diocesan priests and keep one for myself.

Sincerely yours in Christ
Bishop Ambrose Ravasi, IMC
Diocese of Marsabit, Kenya



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shepherds of Christ

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Mary,
Queen of
Peace,
Pray for us.

Dear Ed,

Thank you for sending us copies of the Shepherds of Christ Newsletter. We appreciate your good efforts to support the clergy in their vocations--an excellent apostolate, especially in these "difficult" days for the clergy. Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,
Tom Radloff, S.J.
North American College, Rome

Dear Father,
Pax Christi! Recently a colleague placed a copy of your newsletter on my desk in order that I may partake of its richness. I was very pleased

at the various articles found within. On occasion I find myself looking for just the right article that will spark my attention, but one short enough to not require much time. I am pleased to say that your newsletter is a very good source that falls under my guidelines. If you would please place me on your mailing list, I would be most appreciative.

In Christ,
Rev. Mark A. Mc Anally
St. Mary's Seminary & University
Baltimore, Maryland

NOTES:

1. Scripture quotations are taken from *The New Jerusalem Bible*, Doubleday.
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3. *The Heart of Newman*, A Synthesis arranged by Erich Przwara, S.J., Ignatius Press, pp. 11-14.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 276-277
5. John Henry Cardinal Newman, *Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations*, Longmans, Green

and Co., pp. 111-112.

6. Romano Guardini, *Jesus Christ*, Henry Regnery Publ., as in *Daily Readings in Christian Classics*, ed. Randy Meyers, Ignatius Press, p. 83.

7. Walter Farrell, O.P., *Only Son*, Sheed & Ward, as in *Daily Readings in Christian Classics*, ed., Randy Meyers, Ignatius Press, p. 81.

8. Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Rich in Mercy*, United States Catholic Conference, No. 15.

9. Archbishop Luis M. Martinez, *The Sanctifier*, Pauline Books and Media, p. 18.

10. St. Bernard, as in Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, Christian Classics, Vol. I, p. 237.

11. *The Documents of Vatican II*, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy", America Press Edition, No. 47.

12. *Ibid.*, No. 48.

13. Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter, *Mystici Corporis*, AAS, XXXV, pp. 232-233.

14. Benedict Groeschel, C.F.R., "In the Presence of Our Lord", as in *Living Faith*, Creative Communications for the Parish, April-May-June, 1999 Issue.

15. Mother Teresa, *Rosary Meditations from Mother Teresa*, contact Missionaries of the Blessed Sacrament, PO Box 1701, Plattsburgh, New York.

16. Peter Julian Eymard, *Eucharistic Handbook*, Emmanuel Publications, as in *Adoration*, Ignatius Press, p.97.

17. Jean Galot, S.J., *Theology of the Priesthood*, Ignatius Press, p. 207.

18. Christopher O'Donnell, O. Carm., *Love in the Heart of the Church*, Veritas, p. 129.

19. Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer*, Doubleday, p. 47.

20. Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *On Social Concern*, St. Paul Books and Media, Nos. 41-42.

21. Mother Mary Frances, P.C.C., *Forth and Abroad*, Ignatius Press, p. 113.

22. Pedro Arrupe, S.J., *In Him Alone Is Our Hope*, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, p. 120.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.