

shepherds of Christ⁺



A SPIRITUALITY NEWSLETTER FOR PRIESTS
AND OTHERS INTERESTED IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

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Chief Shepherd of the Flock

The Value of Work

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)¹

◆ In his encyclical, *On Human Work*, Pope John Paul II observes: "The Church is convinced that work is a fundamental dimension of man's existence on earth. She is confirmed in this conviction by considering the whole heritage of the many sciences devoted to man: anthropology, paleontology, history, sociology, psychology, and so on; they all seem to bear witness to this reality in an irrefutable way. But the source of the Church's conviction is above all the revealed word of God, and therefore what is a conviction of the intellect is also a conviction of faith. The reason is that the Church -- and it is worthwhile stating it at this point -- believes in man: she thinks of man and addresses herself to him not only in the light of scientific knowl-

edge, but in the first place in the light of the revealed word of the living God. Relating herself to man, she seeks to express the eternal designs and transcendent destiny which the living God, the creator and redeemer, has linked with him.

"The Church finds in the very first pages of the Book of Genesis the source of her conviction that work is a fundamental dimension of human existence on earth..."²

◆ Again, let us listen to the words of Pope John Paul II: "The Church considers it her duty to speak out on work from the viewpoint of its human value and of the moral order to which it belongs, and she sees this as one of her important tasks within the service that she renders to the evangelical message as a whole.

"At the same time she sees it as her particular duty to form a spirituality of work which will help all people to come closer, through work, to God, the creator and redeemer, to participate in his salvific plan for man and the world and to deepen their friendship with Christ in their lives by accepting, through faith, a living participation in his threefold mission as priest, prophet and king, as the Second Vatican Council so eloquently teaches."³

◆ Vatican II also speaks to us about human labor: "Human labor which is expended in the production and exchange of goods or in the performance of eco-

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CAN YOU HELP US?

As you know, we distribute the Newsletter free of charge. We have been publishing the Newsletter for six years. Although the fine print on the last page of each Newsletter says that donations are always welcome, we have, to this date, only made one major appeal for donations.

Now we come to you again and ask for your financial assistance. It is considerably expensive to print the Newsletter and to mail it here in the U.S.A. and to other countries around the world. With our English and Spanish editions, we send the Newsletter to readers in about 90 countries. We soon hope to add a French edition.

With the help of God's grace, the Newsletter seems to be accomplishing much good. The numerous letters we receive from around the world regarding the Newsletter's helpfulness are one indication of this.

If you share with us our belief that the Newsletter is a very worthwhile ministry, we urgently ask you to seriously consider sending us a donation. We are always struggling to obtain the funds to continue publication of the Newsletter.

If you are financially able, we would be extremely grateful to receive your donation -- whether it is small, large, or medium-sized! We thank all of you who have previously sent donations.

Some of you may know of possible benefactors who would be interested in helping a worthy cause. And we firmly believe that a ministry which offers an aid for spiritual growth to priests especially, but to others also, is a most worthy endeavor.

For your convenience, we have enclosed a self-addressed donation envelope.

Very importantly, we also ask for your prayers that we may obtain the funds necessary to continue publication of the Newsletter and that the Newsletter will be spiritually beneficial to its readers. We hope to continue to publish it four to six times a year. The number of issues will depend upon various factors. Thank you very much for your attention to our urgent plea.

conomic services is superior to the other elements of economic life. For the latter have only the nature of tools.

“Whether it is engaged in independently or paid for by someone else, this labor comes immediately from the person. In a sense, the person stamps the things of nature with his seal and subdues them to his will. It is ordinarily by his labor that a man supports himself and his family, is joined to his fellow men and serves them, and is enabled to exercise genuine charity and be a partner in the work of bringing God’s creation to perfection. Indeed, we hold that by offering his labor to God a man becomes associated with the redemptive work itself of Jesus Christ, who conferred an eminent dignity on labor when at Nazareth He worked with His own hands.

“From all these considerations there arise every man’s duty to labor faithfully and also his right to work. It is the duty of society, moreover, according to the circumstances prevailing in it, and in keeping with its proper role, to help its citizens find opportunities for adequate employment. Finally, payment for labor must be such as to furnish a man with the means to cultivate his own material, social, cultural, and spiritual life worthily, and that of his dependents. What this payment should be will vary according to each man’s assignment and productivity, the conditions of his place of employment, and the common good.”⁴

◆ Fr. Edward Leen, C.S.Sp., speaks to us about Jesus and His work as a carpenter at Nazareth: “Not even after Joseph’s death did the existence of Our Lord undergo much change, unless that it became more laborious. For the support of the family and its care of the poor devolved, then, entirely on His shoulders. He had to work hard in order to keep Himself and His Mother and to have something to give to others less favoured than themselves. Unremitting toil became His lot, and the soft hands of the boy became roughened and hardened with the constant pressure of the tools of His trade. Work could not have been plentiful in the confines of that narrow village and it is likely that He had, often, to go abroad to look for employment. He had to face rebuffs from those who needed not His services, and discourtesy and rudeness from those who employed Him. The Nazarenes were not a polite people. As He handed over to His grumbling clients the accomplished tasks, He had to hold forth His hand to receive His wages...There is something inexpressibly touching in this picture of God receiving from His creatures the wages He earned in their employment!...

“A monotonous life, one would say, but this would be a very superficial judgment; monotony consists in the dull repetition of acts, uninteresting, devoid of significance and all

stamped with the character of sameness. But there is no monotony in the soul’s relations with God. Each act in which it expresses its love for its Creator is fresh with the freshness of novelty; each communication of the love of the Creator to the creature comes with all the charm of a new revelation. Each step forward in the knowledge of God makes it seem to us as if we had never known Him before. And the external material acts which proceed from the soul enjoying this intimacy with the Lord partake of this quality of freshness and novelty. Although to the senses each little task of the day resembles in all respects that of the day before, yet, in reality, these tasks that recur are not the same. The newness and freshness given by a greater love in the doing far surpasses the newness given by a material change in the occupation. The love of God is never stationary. It grows with each act done in the fullness of actual charity possessed by the soul. Hence for the saint the task of today, which materially resembles the task of yesterday, is clothed with all the charm of novelty, for it is transmuted and transfigured by a greater love. All men naturally desire to be great. To achieve greatness it is not necessary to seek it afar or to ascend into the heights in its pursuit. It lies at our door and is within the reach of all. It is found by bringing a great love of God to bear on the doing of the most ordinary of life’s tasks. Our Lord in His hidden life has shown how we may attain to greatness and perfection in the accomplishment of the humblest of life’s duties.”⁵

◆ As important as work is, it still is just a means to an end. In the Christian perspective, it is an expression of our love of God and neighbor.

Upon reflection, we can see the consequences of this. When work, for whatever reason, is interfering with our relationship with God and others, something is obviously wrong. For example, an upward-moving professional becomes so absorbed in his work, so taken with the idea of promotion and salary increase, that he becomes extremely narrow-minded. Concern for God and others is relegated to the far recesses of consciousness where it has little effect upon the person’s thoughts and activities.

Even though we claim such an extreme situation does not describe our own, we nevertheless can fall prey to lesser faults. For instance, we diminish the time we should rightfully be spending with family members and friends. Perhaps we become so absorbed with our work that we claim we have little time for prayer. If we find ourselves in such circumstances, we must make an effort to confront ourselves with this question, “What is the God-given purpose of work?” Surely, if we are honest, we must say that our work should first be done for the love of God. If we work from this proper motive, we are acting for our own benefit also, for what is done for God and others promotes our own good also. And work done for God must be accomplished according to His will.

Much of our contemporary society places great emphasis on external success, the recognition of one’s work, and the earning of more and more money -- and all of this, in a very secularistic manner with little regard for God and neighbor. In such an atmosphere, it is not easy to maintain the Christian perspective of work. In many ways we must go counter-culture. If we do so, we will be following One Who Himself was not afraid to go against certain cultural aspects of His own times. His name is Jesus.

◆ Thomas Merton observes: “All Christian life is meant to be at the same time profoundly contemplative and rich in active work. This must not be mistaken for a kind of semipelagian productivism which is obsessed with visible results and enamoured of technological prowess. It is true that we are called to create a better world. But we are first of all called to a more exalted task: that of creating our own lives. In doing this, we act as co-workers with God. We take our place in the great work of mankind, since in effect the creation of our own destiny, in God, is impos-

WE ARE EXPANDING OUR READERSHIP!

We are expanding our circulation by explicitly inviting to our readership those who are not priests, but who are interested in the spiritual life.

The Newsletter will still be written for priests in a special way. Yet we feel much of the material will also be of interest to those who are not priests.

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sible in pure isolation. Each one of us works out his own destiny in inseparable union with all those others with whom God has willed us to live. We share with one another the creative work of living in the world. And it is through our struggle with material reality, with nature, that we help one another create at the same time our own destiny and a new world for our descendants. This work of man, which is his peculiar and inescapable vocation, is a prolongation of the creative work of God Himself. Failure to measure up to this challenge and to meet this creative responsibility is to fail in that response to life which is required of us by the will of our Father and Creator.”⁶

◆ *His answer to them was, 'My Father still goes on working, and I am at work, too.'* (Jn 5: 17)

◆ Here are words of St. Paul: *We urged you when we were with you not to let anyone eat who refused to work. Now we hear that there are some of you who are living lives without any discipline, doing no work themselves but interfering with other people's. In the Lord Jesus Christ, we urge and call on people of this kind to go on quietly working and earning the food that they eat.* (2 Th. 3: 10-11)

◆ St. Paul himself was no stranger to hard work: *You remember, brothers, with what unsparing energy we used to work, slaving night and day so as not to be a burden on any one of you while we were proclaiming the gospel of God to you.* (1 Th 2: 9)

Jesus

◆ Cardinal Newman tells us: “Christ Himself vouchsafes to repeat in each of us in figure and mystery all that He did and suffered in the flesh.

He is formed in us, born in us, suffers in us, rises again in us, lives in us; and this not by a succession of events, but all at once.”⁷

◆ The following words emphasize the profound union that is meant to exist between Jesus and the Christian: “The mysteries of the life of Jesus are not dead, static, historical happenings that have been. They are living and dynamic. They have been lived for the members of Christ. All the states that the Saviour traversed, all the human experiences that He willed to go through, have for their purpose the sanctification of all that enters into a man's deliberate life. These mysteries of His have accumulated vast reservoirs of merit in order to communicate this human-divine quality to the Christian's doings and sufferings...The events of the New Testament give us life. Into these latter has passed the vitality of the Incarnation. That vitality is ever ready to communicate itself to all parts of the Mystical Body, vivifying them with the divine life of Christ.

“That this divinizing process take place, there is

required a willed contact between the individual and Christ. This contact is effected by the activity of the virtue of faith. It is perfected by sympathy and love. The Christian who wills to have the life of Christ develop in himself, must consent to 'steep' mind, imagination and heart in the earthly career of Jesus. He must aim at a *sympathy* with the Saviour in all that He went through. He must strive to identify himself with the Divine Master, to think with Him, to feel with Him, to judge with Him, to see with His eyes and to speak with His tongue. He must will to be as the Saviour was in all these incidents.”⁸

◆ Romano Guardini speaks about Jesus. “Love proceeded from Him everywhere. We encounter love all about Him. But we want to seek it out in the flaming, radiant center. Love is what He shows toward the delicate blossoming of His Father's creation, when He speaks of the lilies of the field, and how God has clothed them more magnificently than Solomon in all his glory. He shows love toward all things...

“...Love is what seizes Our Lord when He sees the obscure, abandoned masses of the people, and takes pity on them...There is something heroic, strong, in this love for people forsaken, in distress... It is love again when He receives the sick; when He lets that great sea of misery wash up to Him; when He lifts up, strengthens, heals... Oh, this tremendous Lover and the might and majesty of His heart taking up arms against the massive world-force of sorrow, magnificently sure of His inexhaustible power to comfort, to strengthen, to bless!”⁹



The Father's Love for Us

St. Alphonsus Liguori, Doctor of the Church, speaks to us concerning the Father's love for us manifested in the gift of His Son to us: “All holiness and perfection of soul lies in our love for Jesus Christ our God, who is our redeemer and our supreme good. It is part of the love of God to acquire and to nurture all the virtues which make a man perfect.

“Has not God in fact won for himself a claim on all of our love? From all eternity he has loved us. And it is in this vein that he speaks to us: ‘Oh man, consider carefully that I first loved you. You had not yet appeared in the light of day, nor did the world yet exist, but already I loved you. From all eternity I have loved you.’

“Since God knew that man is enticed by favors, he wished to bind him to his love by means of his gifts: ‘I want to catch men with the snares, those chains of love in which they allow themselves to be entrapped, so that they will

love me.’ And all the gifts which he bestowed on man were given to this end. He gave him a soul, made in his likeness, and endowed with memory, intellect and will; he gave him a body equipped with the senses; it was for him that he created heaven and earth and such an abundance of things. He made all these things out of love for man, so that all creation might serve man, and man in turn might love God out of gratitude for so many gifts.

“But he did not wish to give us only beautiful creatures; the truth is that to win for himself our love, he went so far as to bestow upon us the fullness of himself. The eternal Father went so far as to give us his only Son. When he saw that we were all dead through sin and deprived of his grace, what did he do? Compelled, as the apostle says, by the superabundance of his love for us, he sent his beloved Son to make reparation for us and to call us back to a sinless life.

“By giving us his Son, whom he did not spare precisely so that he might spare us, he bestowed on us at once every good...”¹⁰

Devotion to the Holy Spirit

Archbishop Luis M. Martinez instructs us: “Consecration to the Holy Spirit must be total: nothing must draw us away from His loving possession.

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Undoubtedly vacillations and deficiencies are part of our imperfection, but even so, our love must not be extinguished. Rather, it must lift its divine flame toward infinite love in the midst of all human vicissitudes.

“True devotion to the Holy Spirit, therefore, is not something superficial and intermittent, but something profound and constant, like Christian life itself; it is the love of the soul that corresponds to the love of God, the gift of the creature who tries to be grateful for the divine Gift, the human cooperation that receives the loving and efficacious action of God. As divine love is eternal, its gift without repentance and its action constant, it is our part to have our heart always open to love, ready to receive the unspeakable gift, and to keep all our powers docile to the divine movement.”¹¹

Mary

Here are inspiring words concerning Mary from Fr. Joseph Dean, SCJ:

Blessed Virgin Mary,
by faith and the power of the Spirit,
you bore God for our salvation.
In your days on earth,
you pointed to Jesus, your Son, and said:
“Do whatever he tells you.”
With your Son’s beloved disciple,
you stood at the foot of the cross.
You believed in the midst of the night.
You loved with a pierced soul.

Mary, my mother,
pray for me today.
May I follow Jesus as you did,
welcoming the Holy Spirit,
responding to your Son’s love,
living in communion with his love for the Father,
cooperating with his work of redemption in the
midst of the world.
In this way, may my heart be joined with yours.
May I follow your example of faith and love
bringing the Heart of your Son to the
heart of the world.
Amen.

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)*¹²

◆ *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)*¹³

◆ *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)*¹⁴

◆ The Sacrifice of Calvary is sacramentally made present in the Mass. When we pray the Morning Offering Prayer, united to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we act as intercessors, pleading to God that great graces be released all day through our prayerful actions as we act in love according to the Father’s will. Whether we are eating, taking care of a sick parent, enjoying time spent with a friend, working at our job, we can help bring down great graces for the world.

When we pray the Morning Offering Prayer we offer our lives to the Father, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit, with the prayerful assistance of Mary, our Mother. Let us pray together united in our hearts in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. There follows a Morning Offering Prayer.

“My dear Father, I offer You this day all my prayers, works, joys, and sufferings in union with Jesus in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in the Holy Spirit.

“I unite with our Mother, Mary, all the angels and saints, and all the souls in purgatory to pray to the Father for myself, for each member of my family, for my friends, for all the people throughout the world, for all the souls in purgatory, and for all other intentions of the Sacred Heart.

“I love You, Jesus, and I give You my heart. I love you, Mary, and I give you my heart. Amen.”

◆ From a spiritual journal we are given these words: “When a priest is filled with the love of Jesus, he unites more deeply with Christ in the great sacrifice being offered to the Father. The faithful more easily see Jesus, through the priest, offering sacrifice to the Father. They more easily experience, at this great sacrifice, the presence of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

“At the Mass we unite in offering sacrifice to the Father. We all unite as one and give ourselves in such oneness with Jesus, in such love to the Father, in the Holy Spirit. We desire to die to all the things that are not of God and join in the great miracle taking place. The Father looks down

*Mary, Queen of Peace,
Pray for us.*



and He sees the sacrifice of His Son being offered through His priest. Heaven unites to earth. Earth cries out in such jubilation at the great gift of the Almighty God, and we unite as creatures giving ourselves as a sacrifice to our beloved Creator. Do we experience the presence of God as His power flows through His priest, who takes bread and wine, and changes them into the Body and Blood of our Lord? Do we hear Jesus speak, as He did at the Last Supper, with the intensity in His voice reflecting the knowledge of the upcoming events of His passion and death?

“Do we hear the priest say the words of consecration with the emotion of Jesus about to give His life for His beloved ones? And the earth stands still. There is, at that moment, the sacrifice of

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

Calvary sacramentally made present through the words of the priest. Oh, that God so loved the world to give His only Son as a sacrifice, and that God wants us in this deep oneness with Him! I give You myself, my Savior, my beloved Jesus, as You so willingly gave Yourself to me on Calvary. I want to die and rise more and more with You in the deepest possible love for You and for those for whom You died a brutal, bloody death on the cross, and for whom You rose gloriously from the dead!”

Priesthood

◆ The *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* tells us: “The command of the Lord: go to all the nations (Mt 28: 18-20) definitively expresses the place of the priest *in front of* the Church. Sent -- missus -- by the Father by means of Christ, the priest pertains in ‘an immediate’ way to the universal Church...”

“The spiritual gift received by priests in Ordination prepares them for a wide and universal mission of salvation. In fact, through Orders and the ministry received, all priests are associated with the Episcopal Body and, in hierarchical communion with it, according to their vocation and grace, they serve the good of the entire Church. Therefore, the membership to a particular church, through incardination, must not enclose the priest in a restricted and particularistic mentality, but rather should open him to the service of other churches, because each church is the particular realization of the only Church of Jesus Christ, such that the universal Church lives and fulfills her mission in and from the particular churches in effective communion with her. Thus, all the priests must have a missionary heart and mind and be open to the needs of the Church and the world.”¹⁵

◆ Pope John Paul II speaks to his brother priests: “The priest always, and in an unchangeable way, finds the source of his identity in Christ the Priest. It is not the world which determines his status, as though it depended on changing needs or ideas

about social roles. The priest is marked with the seal of the Priesthood of Christ, in order to share in his function as the one Mediator and Redeemer.

“So, because of this fundamental bond, there opens before the priest the immense field of the service of souls, for their salvation in Christ and in the Church.

“This service must be completely inspired by love of souls in imitation of Christ who gives his life for them. It is God’s wish that all people should be saved, and that none of the little ones should be lost...”

“The priest is for the laity: he animates them and supports them in the exercise of the common Priesthood of the baptized -- so well illustrated by the Second Vatican Council -- which consists in their making their lives a spiritual offering, in witnessing to the Christian spirit in the family, in taking charge of the temporal sphere and sharing in the evangelization of their brethren. But the service of the priest belongs to another order. He is ordained to act in the name of Christ the Head, to bring people into the new life made accessible by Christ, to dispense to them -- the Word, forgiveness, the Bread of Life -- to gather them into his Body, to help them to form themselves from within, to live and to act according to the saving plan of God. In a word, our identity as priests is manifested in the ‘creative’ exercise of the love for souls communicated by Christ Jesus.

“Attempts to make the priest more like the laity are damaging to the Church. This does not mean in any way that the priest can remain remote from the human concerns of the laity: he must be very near to them, as John Mary Vianney was, but as a priest, always in a perspective which is that of their salvation and of the progress of the Kingdom of God. He is the witness and dispenser of a life other than earthly life. It is essential to the Church that the identity of the priest be safeguarded, with its vertical dimension. The life and personality of the Curé of Ars are a particularly enlightening and vigorous illustration of this.”¹⁶

◆ Fr. Jean Galot, S.J., gives us these words: “By tracing our steps back to the origin of the priestly ministry, we can find in the very words of Christ a principle of unity by reference to which all the priestly functions can be grasped as a unity. This is the quality of the shepherd. Jesus defines himself as a shepherd, thus suggesting what constitutes the ministry of his own priesthood. Since his priesthood is a new and original creation, and loftier than the Jewish priesthood, it is the shepherd’s quality that best epitomizes the priestly functions.

“Christ the shepherd leads the flock by the word he speaks and guarantees the truth of his teaching by the supreme testimony which is the gift of his own self. He offers himself in sacrifice in order to impart to his sheep a bountiful life, especially through the Eucharist. By leading the flock, he makes it one. The three functions -- preaching, worship, and leadership -- become the expression of the shepherd’s love, and from that love they draw their inspiration.”¹⁷

Henri Nouwen on Prayer

◆ Henri Nouwen, one of the most popular spiritual writers of our times, observes: “Prayer is often considered a weakness, a support system, which is used when we can no longer help ourselves. But this is only true when the God of our prayers is created in our image and adapted to our own needs and concerns. When, however, prayer makes us reach out to God, not on our own but on his terms, then prayer pulls us away from self-preoccupation, encourages us to enter into a new world which cannot be contained within the narrow boundaries of our mind and heart. Prayer, therefore, is a great adventure because the God with whom we enter into a new relationship is greater than we are and defies all our calculations and predictions. The movement from illusion to prayer is hard to make since it leads from false certainties to true uncertainties, from an easy support system to ... surrender, and from the many ‘safe’ gods to the God whose love has no limits.”¹⁸

◆ Nouwen spent a number of months in a Trappist monastery. During his stay in the monastery, he derived this insight concerning the life of contemplation, a life all are called to share according to their state of life and particular occupation:

“Contemplative life is a human response to the fundamental fact that the central things in life, although spiritually perceptible, remain invisible in large measure and can easily be overlooked by the inattentive, busy, distracted person that each of us can so readily become. The contemplative looks, not so much around things, but through them into their center.”¹⁹

Words from Mother Teresa

◆ Mother Teresa tells us a story which warms the heart: “One day a young couple came to our house and asked for me. They gave me a large amount of money.

“I asked them, ‘Where did you get so much money?’

“They answered, ‘We got married two days ago. Before we got married we had decided not to celebrate the wedding, not to buy wedding clothes, not to have a reception or a honeymoon. We wanted to give you the money we saved.’

“I know what such a decision meant, especially for a Hindu family.

“That is why I asked them, ‘But how did you think of such a thing?’

“‘We love each other so much,’ they answered, ‘that we wanted to share the joy of our love with those you serve.’

“To share: what a beautiful thing!”²⁰

◆ And here are further words from Mother Teresa: “To die in peace with God is the culmination of any human life.

“Of those who have died in our houses, I have never seen anyone die in despair or cursing. They have all died serenely.

“I took a man I had picked up from the street to our House for the Dying in Calcutta.

“When I was leaving, he told me, ‘I have lived like an animal on the streets, but I am going to die like an angel. I will die smiling.’

“He did die smiling, because he felt loved and surrounded by care.

“That is the greatness of our poor!”²¹

Avery Dulles and the Theological Thought of John Paul II

The well-known and respected theologian, Avery Dulles, S.J., has rendered a distinct service to us all in summarizing much of Pope John Paul II’s theological thought in his book, *The Splendor of Faith: The Theological Vision of Pope John Paul II*. Dulles points out the great importance for our times of John Paul II as theologian: “Among the Catholic

theologians of the second half of this century, John Paul II holds a place of special eminence. Perhaps more than any other single individual he has succeeded in comprehensively restating the contours of Catholic faith in the light of Vatican II and in relation to post-conciliar developments in the Church and in the world. With his keen interest in contemporary culture, philosophy, economics, and international affairs, he has been able to give fresh relevance to the Catholic tradition. Avoiding the pitfalls of compromise and polemics, he has offered a serene and balanced presentation of what Catholics may and should believe on a multitude of questions. No private theologian, however brilliant, speaks with comparable authority.”²²

In his concluding words to the book, Dulles says: “This final summary, which restates themes more fully explained in the preceding chapters, may be warranted because of the breadth and complexity of the teaching of John Paul II. He has written so voluminously on so many topics that it is easy to lose sight of the unity and coherence of his thought. His theological vision reaches back to the origins of revealed religion and outward to the furthest reaches of human communication. While making himself the faithful guardian of the deposit of faith, this pope shows an astonishing openness to dialogue with other churches, other religions, and the secular worlds of science and technology. Guided by his philosophical studies and his experience of the Second Vatican Council, he has forged a Christocentric humanism and a dynamic personalism capable of encountering and respectfully challenging all opposing ideologies and spiritual movements. The Catholic Church and, I submit, the world at large have been greatly blessed by the intellectual leadership of this brilliant, energetic, and prayerful successor of Peter.”²³

The Christian and the World

Pope John Paul II tells us: “Love for others, and in the first place love for the poor, in whom the Church sees Christ himself, is made concrete in the *promotion of justice*. Justice will never be fully attained unless people see in the poor person, who is asking for help in order to survive, not an annoyance or a burden, but an opportunity for showing kindness and a chance for greater enrichment. Only such an awareness can give the courage needed to face the risk and the change involved in every authentic attempt to come to the aid of another. It is not merely a matter of ‘giving from one’s surplus,’ but of helping entire peoples which are presently excluded or marginalized to enter into the sphere of economic and human development. For this to happen, it is not enough to draw on the surplus goods which in fact our world abundantly produces; it requires above all a change of lifestyles, of models of production and consumption, and of the established structures of power which today govern societies. Nor is it a matter of eliminating instruments of social organization which have proved useful, but rather of orienting them according to an adequate notion of the common good in relation to the whole human family.”²⁴

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”.

*Immaculate
Heart of Mary,
Pray for us.*

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:

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Act of Consecration

“Jesus, You show us Your Heart as symbol of Your life of love in all its aspects, including Your most special love for each of us as unique individuals. Out of Your great love for us, You died a brutal death, nailed to the wood of the cross. Out of Your great love for us, You rose gloriously from the dead.

“From Your pierced Heart the Church with her life-giving Sacraments was born. In the Eucharist, Crown and Center of the Church's life, You continue to give Yourself to us with the deepest, most tender, most on-fire, most complete love.

“Jesus, since in Your great love You give Yourself so completely to us, it is only fitting that we make a gift to You in return. It is entirely fitting that we give ourselves completely to You. Yes, we consecrate ourselves to Your most loving Heart. Each of us says to You, O Lord, our Savior and our Friend: ‘Jesus, take me wholly, take me completely to Your magnificent Heart. Out of love I give myself to You. Live in and through me. In love You give Yourself completely to me. In love and in a spirit of reparation, I want to give myself, with the help of Your grace, entirely to You. Take me, Jesus, to an ever closer union with the Father, in the Holy Spirit, with Mary my Mother at my side. Pierced, Glorified, Eucharistic 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, including your most special love for me as this unique individual. You are the Mother of my Savior. You are also my Mother. 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, Glorified, Eucharistic Heart of Jesus, Chief Shepherd of the flock.”

Letters

◆ Dear Ed,

The latest special issue of Shepherds of Christ is very good (Issue 3, 2000). I like the idea that you are expanding it so that although aimed for the needs of priests it is an available resource for lay people as well. It will keep it more viable in the long run. But the choice of articles and topics in the issue are an excellent thematic list of the major spiritual topics of today.

My best,

Lawrence Boadt, CSP
Paulist Press
Mahwah, NJ

◆ Dear Father Carter,

Please let me tell you how much I am grateful for your “Shepherds of Christ” newsletter. I received the Issue 3, 2000, manual from a long-time family friend and monk who handed it along to my family. The articles are interesting and inspirational!

I am a 20-year old college student and I attend a private, secular school. The prayers and articles in “Shepherds of Christ” help me understand the Eucharist and live a life focused on Jesus. I especially like the Act of Consecration prayer. It is so beautiful! I say it daily.

Thank you again and may God bless all those involved in the “Shepherds of Christ” ministry.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Deignan
Farmingdale, New Jersey

◆ Dear Fr. Carter,

I just finished reading the Special Issue “Overview of the Spiritual Life” Excellent! Please send me the book form of the 1st 12 issues.

Thank you.

In Christ

Fr. Gerald Sherer
Hermosa, SD

◆ Reverend and dear Fr. Ed,

Mabuhay! Greetings from the Philippines! Please allow me to congratulate you for the expansion of your readership. It is indeed true that even the laity would benefit from your spiritual publication. As for my case, I am not yet a priest yet I found your notes to be helpful in my personal spiritual journey. Thus, I am asking for a personal copy of Shepherds of Christ. The ones that I had been reading were given by a fellow seminarian. May I also request the audio cassette recording of your previous issues. Thank you very much for your dedication. May Mary's protection never leave you in your life.

In Christ

Sem. Nono Acompanado
Holy Rosary Major Seminary
Concepcion Heights, Naga City
Philippines

◆ Dear Father Carter,

Greetings in the name of the Risen Lord! I hope you had a good Lent and a joyful celebration of Easter. Here at St. Anne the Vigil and the Easter Sunday celebrations were memorable.

Father, since the time I started receiving these spiritual newsletters through my Vicar General Mons. Joseph Kimu of St. John the Baptist Major Seminary in the diocese of Mangochi here in Malawi, I feel my spiritual life has been enriched tremendously.



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Letters...

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On the other side, I would like to welcome most gratefully the idea of extending the readership to the laity. I think there could be some food for them too. We as priests, and they as the flock need each other's assistance.

Sincerely in the Risen Christ

Rev. Fr. Lucious Kamwana
St. Anne Catholic Parish
Balaka - Malawi - AFRICA

◆ Dear Father Ed,

I have been receiving your newsletters for over a year now and have enjoyed it immensely. Every issue I read from front to back. I am now 48 years ordained and each newsletter renews me spiritually.

Enclosed is a little donation. I enjoy each issue very much.

Yours in Christ and Mary,

Father John Graham, C. SS. R
St. Cecilia's Rectory
New York, NY

NOTES:

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4. *The Documents of Vatican II*, "The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World", No. 68. America Press edition.
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6. Thomas Merton, *Love and Living*, Harcourt Brace and Company, pp. 177-178.
7. John Henry Cardinal Newman, "Parochial and Plain Sermons", v, pp 139-40, as in *The Heart of Newman*, A Synthesis Arranged by Erich Przywara, S.J., Ignatius Press, pp.

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11. Archbishop Luis M. Martinez, *The Sanctifier*, Pauline Books & Media, p. 48
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13. *Ibid.*, No. 48
14. Pope Pius XII, Encyclical Letter, *Mystici Corporis*, AAS, XXXV, 232-233.
15. *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, as in special supplement, *Inside the Vatican*, November 1994, No. 14.
16. Pope John Paul II, *Holy Thursday Letters to My Brother Priests*, edited by James P. Socias, Scepter Publishers and Midwest Theological Forum, pp. 147-148.
17. Jean Galot, S.J., *Theology of the Priesthood*, Ignatius Press, p. 137.
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20. Mother Teresa, *In My Own Words*, Liguori Publications, p. 19.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
22. Avery Dulles, S.J., *The Splendor of Faith: The Theological Vision of Pope John Paul II*, Crossroad Publishing Company, pp. 1-2.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 196.
24. Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *On the Hundredth Anniversary of Rerum Novarum*, St. Paul Books & Media, No. 58.