

**STIGMATINE LAITY - MORNINGS OF RECOLLECTION**  
AUTUMN 2014

**ELEMENTS of the STIGMATINE CHARISM**  
**in THE PRAYER TO THE IMMACULATE VIRGIN MARY**  
**by ST. GASPAR BERTONI**

Biblical & Theological Reflections



- A** I greet you, O my Mother;  
**B** give me your blessing;  
**C** bless me and all who are dear to me.  
**D** Please offer to God all I have to do and suffer today,  
in union with your merits,  
as well as those of your Blessed Son.  
**E** I offer you **F** and consecrate **G** to your service  
**H** all my being and whatever belongs to me,  
placing everything under your protection.  
**I** Obtain for me, my dear Lady,  
purity of soul and body,  
**J** and grant that I may not do anything today  
displeasing to God.  
**K** I entreat you through your Immaculate Conception  
and your perfect Virginity. Amen.

[FOR THE PRIVATE USE OF THE STIGMATINES]

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Electronic Edition: Tereza Lopes [Lay Stigmatine]

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## Introduction: Brief History of Prayer – other Founders A Contemplation of the Prayer

### Introduction:

[1] Fr. Bertoni died on a Sunday afternoon in his room [now a chapel] at the “Stimate” in Verona, Italy on June 12, 1853. At the time, there were only 10 or 12 Stigmatines – and they were all present in his room when he died. This is in sharp contrast with Founders like St. Francis of Assisi [perhaps thousands of professed Franciscans in the Founder’s life-time]; St. Ignatius of Loyola [at least a thousand brilliant young men in his room, already a real presence in the universities of Europe, and spiritual directors in the royal courts of kings. It is so remarkable that St. Ignatius would say the following in his rule: the Company of Jesus should be made up of men who are both intelligent and good – these are rare!]:

[CSJ 308] A. <sup>1</sup> *The aim and end of this Society is, by traveling through the various parts of the world at the order of the supreme vicar of Christ our Lord or of the superior of the Society itself, to preach, hear confessions, and use all the other means it can with the grace of God to help souls.* <sup>2</sup> *Consequently, it has seemed to us necessary, or at least highly expedient, that those who will enter the Society be persons of good life and sufficient learning for the aforementioned work.* <sup>3</sup> *However, those who are both good and learned are relatively few; and even among these few, most are already seeking rest from their labors.* <sup>4</sup> *We have thus found it a quite difficult matter to increase the numbers of this Society with such good and learned men, in view of the great labors and the great abnegation of self which are required in the Society.* <sup>5</sup> *Therefore all of us, desiring to preserve and increase the Society for the greater glory and service of God our Lord, have thought it wise to take another path,* <sup>6</sup> *that of admitting young men whose good habits of life and talent give hope that they will become both virtuous and learned in order to labor in the vineyard of Christ our Lord.* <sup>7</sup> *We shall likewise accept colleges under the conditions stated in the apostolic bull, whether these colleges are within universities or outside of them; and, if they are within universities, whether these universities are governed by the Society or not.* <sup>8</sup> *For we are convinced in our Lord that in this way greater service will be given to his Divine Majesty, with*

***those who will be employed in that service being multiplied in number and making progress in learning and virtues.***<sup>9</sup> ***Consequently, we shall treat first of what pertains to the colleges and then of what concerns the universities.***<sup>10</sup> ***With regard to the colleges, we shall discuss first what pertains to the founders [in chapter 1];***<sup>11</sup> ***second, what pertains to the colleges founded, in regard to their material or temporal aspects [chapter 2];***<sup>12</sup> ***third, what pertains to the scholastics who will study in them, in regard to their admission [chapter 3], preservation [chapter 4], progress in learning [chapters 5, 6, 7] and in other means of helping their fellowmen [chapter 8], and their removal from study [chapter 9];***<sup>13</sup> ***fourth, what pertains to the government of the colleges [chapter 10].***

**[2]** Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta had established perhaps 2000 Missionary of Charity communities which she founded, by her golden jubilee].

**[3]** At the time of St. Gaspar Bertoni's death, there was much discussion of the impending definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, which would be defined by Pius IXth 18 months after St. Gaspar's death.

□□□

This is his Prayer, a Commentary, phrase by Phrase:

**[A] I greet you, O my Mother ...!**

[Buon Glorno Madre Mia!]:

1. Fr. Stofella's Commentary from the *Memoriale Privato*, under the date of May 24, 1810, where St. Gaspar copied this prayer in his Spiritual Diary – this was the first spring-time following his own Mother's Death:

(A *Hail Mary* for the person who wrote this prayer.)

Following four texts [which St. Gaspar quoted under this same date] that are so closely linked, that we may call belonging to the reform of the Church, here – without any change in the date – we find a beautiful prayer. This is a real treasure for the understanding of Fr Bertoni's spirit. We think that this text became part of his own daily morning prayers. This will then be followed by a series of Patristic texts with other varied thoughts. And then lastly, two short lines from a Psalm. We have the suspicion that all these entries were placed on different days – but the Servant of God who had written this notebook for his own eyes only, does not indicate any change of date. These entries from May 24<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup>, just as they are, will round out the entries for this year 1810 in his personal Spiritual Diary.

We have already noted <sup>1</sup> that this prayer is a real gem, and it does not seem easy every to exaggerate its value. The last line *A Hail Mary...* seems to exclude the possibility that it was a personal composition. He took it from some source and, finding it very proper for himself, he added also the spiritual token for the demands of honesty, with regard for the unknown author. The Founder has handed this on to us through its inclusion in his *Journal*.

If we examine this prayer, we can easily see it as an expression of the *Treatise of the True Devotion to the Virgin by St Grignon Marie de Montfort (+ 1716)*. In Fr. Bertoni's time this Treatise was out of circulation for a while, and it remained "hidden" until 1842. Since that year it began to be spread very widely in the Church. The wording of Fr Bertoni's prayer is very close to the expressions of *Spiritual Slavery* of St de Montfort's doctrine.

This prayer is already in the spirit of a total dedication to Mary as the Mother and *Lady of the House*. We should greet her every day as such. Our offerings and prayers pass to God through her hands [DeMontfort], and similarly all our daily activities and suffering, in union with her merits and those of her Divine Son. The whole of ourselves and our world, every day, are placed at her service: all under her mantle... St Grignon de Montfort could not agree more!

<sup>1</sup> *Collectanea Stigmatina*, Vol. 1, p. 341.

In return for this service, we expect every day *purity of mind and body* and that *we should not do anything which can displease God*.

A strong foundation for our petition to Mary is her great privilege as the *Immaculate Conception*. Fr Berton supported the doctrine of Mary's *Immaculate Conception* long before the dogmatic definition of 1854.

In all the research, the original text of this prayer has not yet been uncovered. This is so despite having pondered the prayer manuals of many Marian Congregations. A partial text, though, perhaps even the substance of the second part of the text - one might be found in an invocation that was in use of the old *Preces Matutinae* [Latin, for Morning Prayers] often used by Priests and Seminarians. The title of one of these prayers was dedicating to that of commending the living of chastity, The text reads: *By your Immaculate Conception, and most pure Virginity, cleanse my heart and my body, a Mother and Virgin before the Birth, in the Birth and after the Birth.*<sup>2</sup>

With this in mind, does not this aspect of the deMontfort devotion pertain quite closely to Stigmatine Spirituality?]

2. While this is a very joyous salutation, saying it in an early morning - long before dawn [!] – in a cold Roman chapel some 60 years ago, was not always joyous [!!!] – however, the happiness of this prayer has always remained.

This is not unlike the salutation of the Angel, this respectful greeting was meant to call upon Mary, the Mother of God and the Church, that she listen to us, hear us out, heed our poor prayer – more and more she becomes the more the Church's Mother as we invoke her.

It is simultaneously, an appeal that our attention might indeed be riveted on Mary in her unique relationships: Daughter; Fraternal [Cousin; sister]; Spouse; Mother:

- Painless on Christmas;
- the Sorrowful Mother on Good Friday – with much pain – her *fiat* never taken back;
- *Mary the Mother of Jesus was there! ... You do whatever [quodcumque ] He tells you* [cf. Jn 2, Cana of Galilee].
- the Mother of the Church in the Cenacle room: *..together with some women, including Mary, the Mother of Jesus was there!* [Ac 1:14]

[This expression (quodcumque Verbi Dei Ministerium ) is close to the 'heart' of St. Gaspar's charism - throughout this prayer, St. Gaspar emphasises "all": all dear to me; all I have to do and suffer; everything under your protection; whatever belongs to me; not do anything displeasing...)] manifests a central ideal St. Gaspar set for his community:

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<sup>2</sup> *Veni mecum piorum Sacerdotum. Patavii 1753, p. 14.*

## GENERAL PLAN

### INTRODUCTORY REFLECTIONS to the ORIGINAL CONSTITUTIONS

#### Presentation:

#### A. Ignatian Influence

Throughout much of his life, St. Gaspar Bertoni developed a most effective devotion toward St. Ignatius of Loyola, Founder of the Society of Jesus<sup>3</sup>, and the Jesuit Saints who followed him. It is well documented, for example, that the young Jesuit Saint, Aloysius Gonzaga, served as the model of the infancy and childhood of Gaspar Bertoni<sup>4</sup> - thus, the knowledge of St. Ignatius and familiarity with the traditional forms of the spiritual doctrine proper to the Jesuit Founder go very far back in Fr. Bertoni's life - if not to his infancy - then at least to his early childhood. Saint Aloysius would then be chosen as the natural Patron of the Stigmatine Founder's Apostolic Mission in behalf of the Youth<sup>5</sup>.

It is well substantiated that Fr. Bertoni was much inspired throughout his adult and priestly life by St. Ignatius of Loyola - one of his "principles" was to chose a Saint of the same vocation as a kind of mirror<sup>6</sup>. As for the Jesuit Founder, there is another entry in this same Spiritual Diary by Fr. Bertoni just about six weeks later, when he was beginning his annual retreat with some of his companions<sup>7</sup>. They made a visit to the Saint's altar in these Autumnal Ember Days set aside for the Spiritual Exercises of the Veronese Clergy and the candidates for Ordination to the Priesthood that year. In Fr. Joseph Stofella's Commentary on the Stigmatine Founder's Diary, he remarked

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<sup>3</sup>cf. P. Gluseppe Stofella, CSS, "La divozione del Servo di Dio per il Fondatore della Compagnia di Gesu'", in *Collectanea Stigmatina*, Vol. IV, fasc. II, pp. 248-249. This "Ignatian" influence most likely was begun in Fr. Bertoni through the spiritual director of his own early school years, Fr. Louis Fortis, temporary teacher at St. Sebastian's, Verona. When the Jesuits were reinstated, perhaps around 1814, he rejoined the Company, was elected Provincial of Rome, and then, Fr. General in 1820 - he died in 1829. [cf. Fr. Joseph Stofella, in *Collectanea Stigmata*, Vol. 1, fasc. 2, note # 3, on p. 106].

<sup>4</sup>cf. Cause of Canonization, Doc. XXI, p. 204. cf. also Fr. Gluseppe Stofella, CS I, p. 101.

<sup>5</sup>cf. Fr. Bertoni's preached Sermons honoring the Patron of Youth at least on three occasions early in his priestly life: "Love for God", to be imitated as lived by St. Aloysius, for the 2nd Sunday of the Saint, the Illrd of Pentecost - June 27, 1802 - MssB ## 649-671 - cf. also *Pagine di Vita Cristiana*, Vicenza 1947, pp. 174-183; "St. Aloysius' Purity", proposed to be imitated on the Illrd of his Sunday's, June 5, 1803 - MssB ## 794-817; "Notes for a Panegyric in Honor of St. Aloysius Gonzaga" - MssB ## 1572-1708.

<sup>6</sup>cf. Fr. Bertoni's *Memoriale Privato*, July 30, 1808: *...Per fare l'esame bisogna pigliarsi un Santo della medesima vocazione come per ispecchio: allora si trova di che confessarsi ogni giorno: tutto che si manca da quella perfezione e' difetto...* [cf. Cause of Canonization, Doc. XXXV, n. II].

<sup>7</sup>cf. *Memoriale Privato*, September 15, 1808: *... 15. Introduzione agli Esercizi. In una visita coi compagni all'altare di S. Ignazio molta divozione e raccoglimento con gran soavita' interna, e qualche lagrima, benche' la visita fosse breve. Pereami che il Santo ne facesse buon accoglienza, e ne invitasse a promuovere la maggior gloria [di Dio], siccome egli fece, e per le stesse vie, benche' non in tutti que' modi ch'egli pote' usare. Parvemi che volesse dirci. 'Su, via soldati di Cristo, accingetevi di fortezza, pigliate lo scudo della fede, l'elmo della salute, la spada della parola divina, e pugnate con antiquo serpente. Fate rivivere il mio spirito in voi, e in altri per vostro mezzo.'*

that this day in St. Gaspar Bertoni's life was of prime importance. From this indication onward, it seems that on this date - September 15, 1808 - Fr. Bertoni looked on this as the date of his insertion into the adorable plans of the Lord<sup>8</sup>.

This Ignatian influence is noted again about two years later, when the former Benedictine Abbot, His Excellency, + Innocent Liruti, Bishop of Verona, summoned Fr. Bertoni to his office, perhaps in May or June. The Bishop assigned Fr. Bertoni to preach the fall retreat at the Seminary. Through a chance meeting with the Oratorian, Fr. Antonio Cesare, Fr. Bertoni received a copy of the Saint's great classic, *The Spiritual Exercises* - which he then very carefully copied, word for word<sup>9</sup>. This first course of this classic for a retreat to priests and seminarians was for the Stigmatine Founder a kind of investiture of a very special second aspect of his broad Apostolic Mission to the Clergy which in one form or another, would last as long as his life<sup>10</sup>.

It should be noted that still another member of the Company of Jesus exerted major influence on Fr. Bertoni's formative years. This would be the Jesuit Bishop, Gian Andrea Avogadro - from whom Fr. Bertoni received the Sacrament of Confirmation, the Sacred Tonsure, the four minor orders, in vogue in those years, and all three major orders of that time, Sub-diaconate, Diaconate and Priesthood<sup>11</sup>.

Among Fr. Bertoni's manuscripts, there has come down a copy of the *Exercise of Perfection*, of the Jesuit spiritual writer, Fr. Alphonsus Rodriguez. This unusual hand-written document manifests examples of Fr. Bertoni's own marvelous penmanship, along with that of two early companions, Fr. Matteo Farinati and Fr. Gaetano Allegri - three young priests who enjoyed an early close association also in their reflections on Ignatian spirituality<sup>12</sup>. Throughout other writings of Fr. Bertoni, there have been noted citations and extracts from no less than four different biographies of St. Ignatius. All of these indications in Fr. Bertoni's life are evidently the fruit of much study and spiritual reading accomplished with his pen in hand. His purpose seems to have been, according to Fr. Stofella, that of following as closely as possible in the footsteps of Saint Ignatius in the ways of the Lord<sup>13</sup>. The first biographer of the Stigmatine Founder, Fr. Gaetano Giacobbe, noted that the admiration and study that Fr. Bertoni dedicated to St. Ignatius' life and works resulted in his copying word for word, some of his writings<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup>cf. Fr. Giuseppe Stofella, "Il 'Memoriale Privato' del Ven. Gaspare Bertoni [1808-1813], in: *Collectanea Stigmatina*, Vol. IV, fasc. 1, p. 40.

<sup>9</sup>cf. Fr. Giuseppe Stofella, "Ven. Gaspare Bertoni. Esercizi Spirituali agli Ecclesiastici", Preface, in: CS I, p. 100, 102, 103.

<sup>10</sup>cf. Fr. Stofella, ib.

<sup>11</sup>ib, p. 101.

<sup>12</sup>ib. p. 106, note # 5

<sup>13</sup>ib. pp. 101, f.

<sup>14</sup>ib., p. 103.



Fr. Stofella goes on to say that St. Ignatius was indeed considered to have had the same vocation as Fr. Bertoni. The Stigmatine apostolate - Retreats [to priests and religious], Parish Missions [like “retreats” for the Laity], Marian Congregations, the instruction of youth, seminary formation, - all would be accomplished with the Ignatian imprint. The very design - and for the most part, the norms and the spirit of the Congregation that Fr. Bertoni founded, depend principally from the laws and the example of the Company of Jesus. From various practical notes that Fr. Bertoni wrote down in his own hand, it is clear that these were gleaned from the various biographies of the Saint written by Jesuit authors such as Fr. Bartoli and also Fr. Maffei. From these, certain defining spiritual characteristics of St. Ignatius became evident in the spirituality of Fr. Bertoni: his great assiduity in praying, studying reading and writing – it is interesting to note his expressly living that “study” needs to be understood as a great service of God. In the Stigmatine Founder, there developed the union of a most refined prudence, an extraordinary diligence with a total abandonment of himself to God: all bear the Ignatian imprint<sup>15</sup>. This would be an indication of St. Gaspar Bertoni’s Apostolic Mission of any ministry whatsoever of the Word of God.

One further note in this regard is that in the very serious illness that Fr Bertoni suffered in October of 1812, the daily prayer suggested to him word for word by Fr. Luigi Fortis was the well known Suscipe per manus... composed by St. Ignatius. One of the corner-stones of Fr. Bertoni’s entire spirituality is this one dear to St. Ignatius of Loyola: ‘very few are they who know what God would do with them if he were not impeded by them in His plan’<sup>16</sup>.

In his long correspondence with Mother Leopoldina Naudet [from 1812-1834], his letters were either that of practical counsels or authentic spiritual direction. This is an indication of his Apostolic Mission toward those in the Consecrated Life. In both of these areas, the mention of St. Ignatius of Loyola is fairly common. Fr. Bertoni states that he personally is reading the Biography of the Saint during an illness of May 1828<sup>17</sup>. Earlier he had noted that there was an edition of *The Spiritual Exercises* that had been published to which some alterations and additions had been appended<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup>cf. Fr. Giuseppe Stofella, “La divozione del Servo di Dio per il Fondatore della Compagnia di Gesu”, in: CS IV, p. 248.

<sup>16</sup>cf. P. Stofella, ib. - CS IV, p. 249. Fr. Fortis is cited as preaching the Triduum in honor of St. Ignatius, in Fr. Bertoni’s Letter 33, dated July 25, 1813 - p. 90.

<sup>17</sup>cf. *Epistolario del ven. Servo di Dio, D. Gaspare Bertoni*. Stigmatini: Verona 1954, Letter # 142, p. 240: *...La santita’ vien pian piano, ma intanto non si peggiora; e, io posso qualche poco alzarmi da letto, sebbene mi sia interdetto il muovermi dal sofa’...La ringrazio pure del Bartoli, ma avendo voluto leggere la vita di S. Ignazio...*

<sup>18</sup>ib., Letter # 35, of August 24, 1813, pp. 92, f. In one of his more important letters, # 25, the Saint speaks of the progress in the spiritual life made by L. Naudet and that she must adapt the *Spiritual Exercises* accordingly. This Letter speaks of the Love for Study and he reminds her of one of his favorite themes, she she has been favored with a special invitation to the Holy Nuptials - cf. o.c., p. 72. f.

Fr. Bertoni told Mother Naudet of the example of the great Saint, who would compare the weak flame of his own intelligence under the bright sunlight of Divine Wisdom<sup>19</sup>. As she composed the Rule for her community, Fr. Bertoni again cited the example of St. Ignatius, telling her of the supreme bond of charity<sup>20</sup>. The Saint reminds Mother Naudet regarding the long interval of time in the Ignatian Rule prior to the definitive admission of any candidate<sup>21</sup>. She became a type of 'pioneer' in the graduate education of women [cf. Adriana Valerio, *Domenica da Paradiso*, Spoleto 1993]. As Mother Naudet wrote her Rule, St. Gaspar offered her a brief synthesis of spiritual theology, emphasizing study, citing St. Ignatius<sup>22</sup>.

For Fr. Bertoni, St. Ignatius was the great teacher of prayer, and so very often he quotes the Jesuit Founder's teachings. Fr. Bertoni was called by his Bishop to another ministry at the seminary, and he asks Mother Naudet to accept this separation. He recalls the example of Fr. Fortis of praying with him the *Suscipe* of St. Ignatius, during Fr. Bertoni's earlier serious illness<sup>23</sup>. He would also quote to his spiritual directee the central principle of St. Ignatius of not anticipating the will of God, but of always following it<sup>24</sup>. In suggesting that Mother Naudet trust in God, Fr. Bertoni tells her that the Arch-priest, Fr. Nicholas Galvani [his former seminary professor in moral theology] has taken on the prayerful assistance of St. Ignatius<sup>25</sup>. St. Ignatius is the great example of surrendering the senses in sublime prayer<sup>26</sup>.

Of major interest, however, is Fr. Bertoni's Letter 54, written on August 17, 1816 in which he describes for Mother Naudet the kind of Congregation that he believes the Lord wants from him, and also its rule:

... The Archpriest Galvani is totally committed to the spirit of St. Ignatius. He has offered me the *Stimate* as an opportune place to establish a Congregation of Priests who would live under the rules of St. Ignatius...<sup>27</sup>

<sup>19</sup>cf. ib., Letter 39, pp. 100, f.:... *Questa e' pure la condotta che nel maneggio de' grandi affari, teneva il gran Servo di Dio, S. Ignazio Loyola, e, sotto gli occhi nostri, il Servo di Dio, Pio Settimo...*

<sup>20</sup>cf. ib., Letter 47, June 5, 1814: ... *Sicche' Vostra Signoria vegga, nell'atto che si svincola - com'e' volonta' del S. Padre e di S. Ignazio - di un legame inconveniente, di lasciare intatto, anzi di stringere al possibile piu' forte, quel vincolo di carita', il quale e' libero e non si deve mai sciogliere...*

<sup>21</sup>cf. ib., Letter 9, p. 42.

<sup>22</sup>ib., Letter 6, p. 35:... *Le virtu' teologali, ossia divine, sono appunto di quell'ordine: e quindi la cura, la sollecitudine di S. Ignazio che gli atti di queste virtu' non cessassero mai, e gli abiti non si minuissero...*

<sup>23</sup>ib., Letter 3, Nov. 26, 1812, p. 29.

<sup>24</sup>ib., Letter 25, March 6, 1813, p. 73 ... *Onde io avevo prevenuta Vostra Signoria a non porre le mani dinnanzi a Dio, se pure doveva prepararne le vie, second gli utillissimi detti di S. Ignazio...*

<sup>25</sup>ib., Letter 70, p. 151.

<sup>26</sup>ib., cf. Letter 126, p. 222.

<sup>27</sup>ib., p. 139.

However, it would be a long time before these Rules would actually be written down. From his 9th Letter to Fr. Luigi Bragato, dated May 11, 1841, it is evident that his task is underway:

... Also pray much for all of us, and for that which I am now writing, and for what I am writing bit by bit, that the Lord might will to turn this to His honor. We do our part, in accord with the grace that God gives for this, and God will certainly do His part - and I do not even want to know what it is that He wishes to do. I am at peace, believing firmly that God can do whatever He wills, and that He always accomplishes what is best, even though this is so often far removed from our very narrow point of view, and at times, even contrary to this. *I will bless the Lord at all time, His praise shall forever be in my mouth* [cf. Ps 33:2]. And please help me that I might praise and serve Him *day and night* [Rv 4:8; 7:15], dwelling together in His house through all eternity: *the figure of this world is passing away* [1 Co 7:31]. Farewell! ...<sup>28</sup>

The fact of this writing, “in little drops” [ *piccole goccioline* ], “bit by bit”, is clear to anyone who would analyze the Manuscripts Fr. Bertoni left behind - there are various copies of the Original Constitutions, composed by Fr. Bertoni that have survived - and many notes he worked assiduously over and re-worked again, with copious indications of changes, additions and omissions, on the earlier copy. His *Original Constitutions* were much pondered, prayed over and repeatedly perfected. However, in the end, they were still left incomplete. It should be noted here, that this work was accomplished by Fr. Bertoni in the 1840's – a particularly “low” period regarding Stigmatine “vocations”. IN this period, Fr. Bertoni was practically an “invalid” confined to his room, and more often that not, to his bed.

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## **B. St. Gaspar Bertoni: At Least Two Hand-written Copies**

The edition of the *Original Constitutions* was prepared for printing by the Stigmatines in the Holy Year of 1950, in the Founder's original Latin, with Fr. Joseph Stofella's Italian translation, and copious historical notes, published the April of the following year<sup>29</sup>. In his historical notes of Introduction, Fr. Stofella offers this comment:

...The Servant of God took for his own Ignatian *Formula of the Institute* from the Decree of the Propagation of the Faith, dated December 20, 1817, which conferred on Fr. Bertoni the title *Apostolic Missionary* - this then was completed with the addition, *in obsequium Episcoporum*.

<sup>28</sup>cf. *Epistolario*, o.c., p. 325.

<sup>29</sup>*Costituzioni del Ven. Servo di Dio, D. Gaspare Bertoni. Fondatore dei Preti delle Sacre Stimate di N.S.G.C. Testo originale latino con traduzione italiana, introduzione storica e note.* Verona: Scuola Tip. A.M.B. 1951

As far as the substance of this work is concerned, the Stigmatine Founder drew it generally from that excellent Model<sup>30</sup> which is the Company of Jesus, through the Commentary on the Jesuit Constitutions, entitled *De Religione Societatis Iesu* by the Jesuit theologian, Fr. Francesco Suarez.

To these sources, should be added a section of 4 chapters ordered toward the internal and external discipline of each individual. The source of these pages is the *Summa* of St. Thomas Aquinas [cf. CF ## 120-137] and other quotes from the Angelic Doctor. Thus, we can say that the entire Rule [of Fr. Bertoni], is for the most part from these sources, along with Scripture.

However, the work of the Servant of God in this code was the entire endeavor of selection, or the drawing up a *Compendium* [an “abridgment”, introductory synthesis?], or an adaptation of the Jesuit *Formula*, and the entire effort of ordering its parts. If he did indeed prefer the formulations of others, this was because of several reasons: he found them responding to his own personal conviction, and because he thought these were better accepted by the authorities of the Church - and also because they offered him a means of maintaining better his old slogan of remaining “humble and in the background”. This old adage [*busesta e taneta* ] eventually became for him an experienced need. In the mosaic which resulted from all this, it remains true nonetheless that the Servant of God recognized the plan just as he had envisioned it - and as he himself described it - he had received it through an inspiration from Heaven<sup>31</sup>.

Precisely in the very act in which he handed over to his followers the code of that Rule, the moral authority of the Founder remains in its entirety in no less a manner than if the whole code had exclusively flowed from his own thought...<sup>32</sup>.

While Fr. Bertoni characteristically copied many of his texts, it is good to call to mind here also this other comment of Fr. Stofella regarding the Stigmatine Founder’s *Spiritual Exercises* preached in the autumn of 1810 to the Clergy of Verona:

... Regarding the fonts that Fr. Bertoni used in compiling his retreat notes, could anyone wonder: ‘But, these notes of the Founder, are they not just a copy of someone else’s work?’ The answer is a resounding ‘no’: and even if they were, they always present the teaching that Fr. Gaspar made his own. None of the authors indicated by him as sources were in their original setting ever directed specifically for seminarians, or priests. And speaking generally, the same derivations - very often but few in number and presented as a kind of compendium - were then nourished by new scriptural and patristic texts [taken often, and thus with an entirely new doctrine adapted to his special audience. In the citation of the sources, perhaps more than anything else, there is evidence of

<sup>30</sup>Gaspar Bertoni, Letter 51, dated December 21, 1814, in: *Epistolario*, o.c., p. 122.

<sup>31</sup>cf. *Original Constitutions*, # 185; cf. Fr. Giovanni Maria Marani, *Cenni intorno alla Congregazione* [1855]

<sup>32</sup>cf. P. Giuseppe Stofella, “Introduzione. 3.] Fonti delle Costituzioni”, in: *Costituzioni del Ven. Servo di Dio, D. Gaspare Bertoni... Testo originale latino con traduzione italiana...*, o.c., pp. 18-19.

the delicate scruples of conscience of St. Gaspar. As for their originality, perhaps there is here a bit less than would be found in other works of this type... The retreat is truly a compilation of texts: some from the Jesuit writer, Bartoli, taken directly; some from the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius, quoted either directly or as presented by other authors, such as explicitly noted by the Servant of God himself. However, there is always permeating throughout his characteristic scruple of attending to the authentic norms established and recommended by Saint Ignatius...<sup>33</sup> .



The booklet of the *Original Constitutions* printed in 1951 is based upon the *Manoscritti Bertoni*<sup>34</sup> . Here the reader finds evidence of how the final Code is preceded by another one - laboriously worked over, and much emended - proof-positive of Fr. Gaspar having written his beloved booklet little by little [a *piccole gocciole*] - and how many of these closely hand-written pages were accomplished in his bed of pain! These early documents have been entitled as follows:

“Notes for the Constitutions”<sup>35</sup> - these have come down to us, much worked over by the Founder, in preparation for the definitive text;

“Autograph Copy of the Constitutions”<sup>36</sup> . This latter is the definitive text which the Stigmatine Community has accepted as the *Original Constitutions of the Founder*. It is readily admitted that this “official text” of the *Original Constitutions* were left “imperfect, incomplete” at the death of the Founder, June 12, 1853. [The Stigmatine Devotions are not mentioned at all in this Original incomplete work].

In this initial study on the sources of the texts, the interest is on the over-all plan of the *Original Constitutions* of St. Gaspar Bertoni, Founder of the Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The effort here will be to present a kind of introductory reflection on the *Original Constitutions*, compiled by Fr. Bertoni, and to compare them with the sources that he used. Later there will be further reflections comparing the *Notes* with the *Autograph Copy* - and, as far as possible, the sources for their content, in so far as these can be traced with the resources presently known.




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<sup>33</sup>cf. P. Giuseppe Stofella, Preface, *Esercizi Spirituali agli Ecclesiastici...* in: CS I, fasc. II, p. 104.

<sup>34</sup>cf. Vol. V, ## 9846-9970.

<sup>35</sup>*Appunti per le Costituzioni* [MssB ## 9846-9907

<sup>36</sup>*Autographum Constitutionum* [Mss B ## 9908-9970].

## Summary

The over-all juridical picture - [historical needs might emphasize one or more to these varying aspects of the apostolic mission at different times according to the ever changing needs of the Church] - derived from this study seems to be a description of St. Gaspar as:

The Apostolic Missionary to the Youth

The Apostolic Missionary to the Priesthood, Consecrated Life – either to promote vocation, to assist those already in preparation or as presently lived

The Apostolic Missionary in Every Ministry of the Word of God Whatsoever - Pulpit, Podium, Professor's Chair, Catechetics, Private Conversations.

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The twelve Parts of the Original Constitutions might be described as follows, in the quest of a simple mnemonic device :

Chapter	Description	Constitutions ##
	<i>Compendium Rude</i>	1 - 8
1	<b>Presentation</b>	9 - 26
2	<b>Admission</b>	27 - 39
3	<b>Probation</b>	40 - 46
4	<b>Progression</b>	47 - 68
5	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Promotion</b>	69 - 82
6	<b>Profession</b>	83 - 89
7	<b>Conformation</b>	90 - 151
8	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Promotion</b>	152 - 157
9	<b>Mission</b>	158 - 186
10	<b>Com-Mission</b>	187 - 266
11	<b>Communication</b>	267 - 297
12	<b>Submission</b>	298 - 314

□□□

### C. The Compendium Rude [CF ## 1-8]

#### Presentation:

The Title: Both of these words have been studied more in detail. As an introduction here, it might simply be stated that these terms are well known to theologians. St. Thomas Aquinas has a much studied work, entitled the Compendium Theologiae <sup>37</sup>. The object and plan of that work are described in its Prologue: as the Apostle taught the Corinthians that the entire perfection of the present life consists in faith, hope and charity, as though in certain chapters summarizing [ *compendiosis* ] our salvation, saying, *Now there are three things that remain, faith hope and charity* [cf. 1 Co 13:13]. Hence, as the blessed Augustine has taught these three are those by which God is worshipped.

Thus, St. Thomas intended to offer a compendious doctrine regarding the Christian religion. Fr. Bertoni intends here to offer a kind of summary of what the Constitutions that follow will contain. St. Thomas wrote a doctrinal resume' on faith, hope and charity, taking much inspiration from St. Augustine's Enchiridion de Fide, Spe et Caritate <sup>38</sup> - intending by this to offer an abrege' [*abbreviation*], a brief synthesis of the faith. St. Augustine wrote a seminal work entitled De Catechizandis Rudibus not to be literally translated as to the rude – but, the unlettered.

Fr. Bertoni has offered a synthesis of his intended Rule in his Compendium : a kind of "Preview of Coming Attractions!"

A classical Latin Dictionary <sup>39</sup> offers some insights that might be helpful. The word comes from the language of economy and finances and offers insights that will be studied later, such as that which is weighed together, kept together, saved. It is the sparing, the saving in anything done, a shortening, an abbreviation, an abridgment.

The same dictionary would translate Rude as rough raw, unripe, unpolished, early [outline, abridgment]. St. Augustine also has a classical work found in the same volume as his Enchiridion, entitled: De Catechizandis Rudibus, meaning the unlettered, the unschooled.

The word is often found in the Ignatian Constitutions [cf. nn. 20; 195; 196; 199; 404; 407]. Fr. Bertoni mentions it also in his Constitution for the Formation of Novices: a Compendium of the General and Particular Laws of the Congregation, its Constitutions [cf. CF # 33].

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<sup>37</sup>Sancti Thomae de Aquino, *Opera Omnia. Tomus XLII.* Cura et Studio Fratrum Praedicatorum. Editori di SanTommaso. ROMA 1979.

<sup>38</sup>Sancti Aurelii Augustini *Opera.* Tomus XLVI, Pars XIII, 2. Turnholti Typographi Brepols Editores Pontificii 1969.

<sup>39</sup> Charlton T. Lewis, Ph.D. , *A Latin Dictionary Founded on Andrew's Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary. Revised, Enlarged, and in Great Part Rewritten.* Oxford at Clarendon Press, compendium.

[B] ... *give me your blessing* ...

**Give me Your blessing and all who are dear to me!**

**1. Sacramentals in the CCC**

The Church clearly distinguishes those 'sacramentals' instituted by herself, as is noted in the CCC [## 1667-1679]:

**CHAPTER FOUR  
OTHER LITURGICAL CELEBRATIONS**

**Article 1  
SACRAMENTALS<sup>40</sup>**

**1667 "Holy Mother Church has, moreover, instituted sacramentals. These are sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments. They signify effects, particularly of a spiritual nature, which are obtained through the intercession of the Church. By them men are disposed to receive the chief effect of the sacraments, and various occasions in life are rendered holy."171**

**The characteristics of sacramentals**

**1668 Sacramentals are instituted for the sanctification of certain ministries of the Church, certain states of life, a great variety of circumstances in Christian life, and the use of many things helpful to man. In accordance with bishops' pastoral decisions, they can also respond to the needs, culture, and special history of the Christian people of a particular region or time. They always include a prayer, often accompanied by a specific sign, such as the laying on of hands, the sign of the cross, or the sprinkling of holy water (which recalls Baptism).**

**1669 Sacramentals derive from the baptismal priesthood: every baptized person is called to be a "blessing," and to bless.172 Hence lay people may preside at certain blessings; the more a blessing concerns ecclesial and sacramental life, the more is its administration reserved to the ordained ministry (bishops, priests, or deacons).173**

<sup>40</sup> In this one footnote may be found the Catechism footnotes for this section:

<sup>171</sup> SC 60; Cf. ⇒ CIC, can. 1166; CCEO, can. 867.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. ⇒ Gen 12:2; ⇒ Lk 6:28; ⇒ Rom 12:14; ⇒ 1 Pet 3:9.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. SC 79; ⇒ CIC, can. 1168; De Ben 16, 18.

<sup>174</sup> SC 61.

<sup>175</sup> ⇒ Eph 1:3.

<sup>176</sup> Cf. ⇒ Mk 1:25-26; ⇒ 3:15; ⇒ 6:7, ⇒ 13; ⇒ 16:17.

<sup>177</sup> Cf. ⇒ CIC, can. 1172.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. Council of Nicaea II: DS 601; 603; Council of Trent: DS 1822.

<sup>179</sup> SC 13 # 3.

<sup>180</sup> Cf. John Paul II, CT 54.

<sup>181</sup> CELAM, Third General Conference (Puebla, 1979), Final Document # 448 (tr. NCCB, 1979); cf. Paul VI, EN 48.



**1670 Sacramentals do not confer the grace of the Holy Spirit in the way that the sacraments do, but by the Church's prayer, they prepare us to receive grace and dispose us to cooperate with it. "For well-disposed members of the faithful, the liturgy of the sacraments and sacramentals sanctifies almost every event of their lives with the divine grace which flows from the Paschal mystery of the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. From this source all sacraments and sacramentals draw their power. There is scarcely any proper use of material things which cannot be thus directed toward the sanctification of men and the praise of God."<sup>17</sup>**

#### Various forms of sacramental

**1671 Among sacramentals  blessings (of persons, meals, objects, and places) come first. Every blessing praises God and prays for his gifts. In Christ, Christians are blessed by God the Father "with every spiritual blessing."<sup>175</sup> This is why the Church imparts blessings by invoking the name of Jesus, usually while making the holy sign of the cross of Christ.**

**1672 Certain blessings have a lasting importance because they consecrate persons to God, or reserve objects and places for liturgical use. Among those blessings which are intended for persons - not to be confused with sacramental ordination - are the blessing of the abbot or abbess of a monastery, the consecration of virgins, the rite of religious profession and the blessing of certain ministries of the Church (readers, acolytes, catechists, etc.). the dedication or blessing of a church or an altar, the blessing of holy oils, vessels, and vestments, bells, etc., can be mentioned as examples of blessings that concern objects.**

**1673 When the Church asks publicly and authoritatively in the name of Jesus Christ that a person or object be protected against the power of the Evil One and withdrawn from his dominion, it is called exorcism. Jesus performed exorcisms and from him the Church has received the power and office of exorcizing.<sup>176</sup> In a simple form, exorcism is performed at the celebration of Baptism. the solemn exorcism, called "a major exorcism," can be performed only by a priest and with the permission of the bishop. The priest must proceed with prudence, strictly observing the rules established by the Church. Exorcism is directed at the expulsion of demons or to the liberation from demonic possession through the spiritual authority which Jesus entrusted to his Church. Illness, especially psychological illness, is a very different matter; treating this is the concern of medical science. Therefore, before an exorcism is performed, it is important to ascertain that one is dealing with the presence of the Evil One, and not an illness.<sup>177</sup>**

#### Popular piety

**1674 Besides sacramental liturgy and sacramentals, catechesis must take into account the forms of piety and popular devotions among the faithful. The religious sense of the Christian people has always found expression in various forms of piety surrounding the Church's sacramental life, such as the veneration of relics, visits to sanctuaries, pilgrimages, processions, the stations of the cross, religious dances, the rosary, medals,<sup>178</sup> etc.**

1675 These expressions of piety extend the liturgical life of the Church, but do not replace it. They "should be so drawn up that they harmonize with the liturgical seasons, accord with the sacred liturgy, are in some way derived from it and lead the people to it, since in fact the liturgy by its very nature is far superior to any of them."<sup>179</sup>

1676 Pastoral discernment is needed to sustain and support popular piety and, if necessary, to purify and correct the religious sense which underlies these devotions so that the faithful may advance in knowledge of the mystery of Christ.<sup>180</sup> Their exercise is subject to the care and judgment of the bishops and to the general norms of the Church.

At its core the piety of the people is a storehouse of values that offers answers of Christian wisdom to the great questions of life. The Catholic wisdom of the people is capable of fashioning a vital synthesis.... It creatively combines the divine and the human, Christ and Mary, spirit and body, communion and institution, person and community, faith and homeland, intelligence and emotion. This wisdom is a Christian humanism that radically affirms the dignity of every person as a child of God, establishes a basic fraternity, teaches people to encounter nature and understand work, provides reasons for joy and humor even in the midst of a very hard life. For the people this wisdom is also a principle of discernment and an evangelical instinct through which they spontaneously sense when the Gospel is served in the Church and when it is emptied of its content and stifled by other interests.<sup>181</sup>

Along with all this it is good to emphasize the following:

1669 Sacramentals derive from the baptismal priesthood: every baptized person is called to be a "blessing," and to bless.<sup>172</sup> Hence lay people may preside at certain blessings; the more a blessing concerns ecclesial and sacramental life, the more a blessing concerns ecclesial and sacramental life, the more is its administration reserved to the ordained ministry (bishops, priests, or deacons).

## 2. Family Blessings

Among the old Polish customs, a number of family events warrant the blessing of the parents, family members, as one member makes a decisive choice: priesthood, religious life, marriage, military, college, etc. In these and other instances, the family asks for a blessing.

[C] ... (blessing) Me and all dear to me...

This is basic Christian Piety – which as the catechism teaches, is two-fold:

1. A Gift of the Holy Spirit [CCC ## 1303;1831]:

1831 The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. They belong in their fullness to Christ, Son of David.<sup>109</sup> They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them. They make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspirations. Let your good spirit lead me on a level path.<sup>110</sup>  
For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God . . . If children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.<sup>111</sup>

2. Filial Piety:

The Duties of Family Members  
The duties of children

2214 The divine fatherhood is the source of human fatherhood;<sup>16</sup> this is the foundation of the honor owed to parents. the respect of children, whether minors or adults, for their father and mother <sup>17</sup> is nourished by the natural affection born of the bond uniting them. It is required by God's commandment. <sup>18</sup>

2215 Respect for parents (filial piety) derives from gratitude toward those who, by the gift of life, their love and their work, have brought their children into the world and enabled them to grow in stature, wisdom, and grace. "With all your heart honor your father, and do not forget the birth pangs of your mother. Remember that through your parents you were born; what can you give back to them that equals their gift to you?" <sup>19</sup>

2216 Filial respect is shown by true docility and obedience. "My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching.... When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you."<sup>20</sup> "A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke."<sup>21</sup>

2217 As long as a child lives at home with his parents, the child should obey his parents in all that they ask of him when it is for his good or that of the family. "Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord."<sup>22</sup> Children should also obey the reasonable directions of their teachers and all to whom their parents have entrusted them. But if a child is convinced in conscience that it would be morally wrong to obey a particular order, he must not do so. □As they grow up, children should continue to respect their parents. They should anticipate their wishes, willingly seek their advice, and accept their just admonitions. Obedience toward parents ceases with the emancipation of the children; not so respect, which is always owed to them. This respect has its roots in the fear of God, one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

**2218 The fourth commandment reminds grown children of their responsibilities toward their parents. As much as they can, they must give them material and moral support in old age and in times of illness, loneliness, or distress. Jesus recalls this duty of gratitude. 23**

For the Lord honored the father above the children, and he confirmed the right of the mother over her sons. Whoever honors his father atones for sins, and whoever glorifies his mother is like one who lays up treasure. Whoever honors his father will be gladdened by his own children, and when he prays he will be heard. Whoever glorifies his father will have long life, and whoever obeys the Lord will refresh his mother. **24** "O son, help your father in his old age, and do not grieve him as long as he lives; even if he is lacking in understanding, show forbearance; in all your strength do not despise him.... Whoever forsakes his father is like a blasphemer, and whoever angers his mother is cursed by the Lord. **25**

**2219 Filial respect promotes harmony in all of family life; it also concerns relationships between brothers and sisters. Respect toward parents fills the home with light and warmth. "Grandchildren are the crown of the aged."26 "With all humility and meekness, with patience, [support] one another in charity." 27**

**2220** For Christians a special gratitude is due to those from whom they have received the gift of faith, the grace of Baptism, and life in the Church. These may include parents, grandparents, other members of the family, pastors, catechists, and other teachers or friends. "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you." **28**

**3. St. Thomas Aquinas** in his beautiful treatise on Charity - [for which he demands three qualities: likeness of nature, communication, benevolence] - speaks of its "order" – the following principles are deduced from this study<sup>41</sup> :

- a. In the exercise of charity, a certain order is to be observed.
- b. In the first place, God must be loved in the absolute, and above all other things, including even more than we love ourselves [this is the measure of fraternal love].
- c. In the second place, we must love out of God the spiritual well being of our own souls, even more than we love the spiritual well being of our neighbors.
- d. We must love the spiritual well being of our neighbor even more than we love our own corporal good.
- e. Among the many neighbors that we love, a certain order and hierarchy here must be maintained in the love called "Charity".

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<sup>41</sup> P. Antonio Royo Marin, OP, *Teología de la Caridad*. Madrid: BAC # 192, 1963 pp. 130, ff.

- f. Among all our relatives and family members, the objective order demands in the first place that we love objectively our own parents. However, this in no way prohibits a believer for loving with greater subjective intensity his/her own spouse, and their children.
- g. Objectively we are called to love more our benefactors than those to whom we have been benefactors – even though subjectively the opposite might occur.
- h. This order of Charity observed on earth will remain substantially in heaven, but will be purified from all imperfection.

□□□

**[To be continued next Meeting: October 4, 2014 – Yom Kippur!]**

**October 4, 2014:**

[D] ... Please offer to God ... all...

[St. Grignon de Montfort and St. Ignatius' *Suscipe* (Sp. Ex # 234)]

*Please offer to God all I have to do and suffer today in union with your merits...  
I offer to you and consecrate to your service all my being  
and whatever belongs to me...*

These phrases are much reminiscent of **St. Louis Grignon de Montfort** and his ***True Devotion*** to Mary.

However, there is also a hint here of **St. Ignatius' *Suscipe***...: a classic prayer inserted between paragraphs in the composition of his *Spiritual Exercises* :



Our Lady inspires St. Ignatius in writing his  
Spiritual Exercises

“Take, Lord, and receive all my  
liberty,

my memory, my understanding  
and all my will –

all that I have and possess. <sup>5</sup>

You, Lord, have given all that to  
me.

I now give it back to you, O Lord.

All of it is yours. Dispose of it  
according to your will.

Give me love of yourself [122]  
along with your grace,

for that is enough for me.” [123]

## EXCURSUS I:

### Brief Commentary on the *Suscipe* of St. Ignatius:

#### Indifference / Availability / Abandonment – Discernment of God’s Will

[cf. Jacques Servais, *Theologie des Exercices spirituels. H. U. von Balthasar interprete saint Ignace*. Paris/Turnholt, Belgium culture et verite’ 1995, pp. 215- 266; 323-329, passim].

**Take, Lord, and accept all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all that I have and possess. You have given all to me. Take, O Lord, I return it. All is Yours, dispose of it wholly according to Your Will. Give me Your love, and Your grace, for this is sufficient for me.**

[SpEx # 234, Fourth Week, in: *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*. Louis Puhl, SJ. Westminster MD: The Newman Press 1963,p. 102

#### Presentation:

#### The Election of the Divine Will - through a Personal Discovery of Jesus Christ:

[1] From the beginning of his SE, St. Ignatius explained the purpose of them:

**For just as taking a walk, journeying on foot, and running are bodily exercises, so we call Spiritual Exercises every way of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all inordinate attachments, and, after their removal, of seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life for the salvation of our soul. [cf. SE 1.3-4].**

At the core of this method there is situated *election*, i.e., the choice of specific service that one should and would like to accomplish. On this point, the late Cardinal-elect Balthasar ponders in logical manner these premises.

[2] This is the decisive and ultimate factor in the decision regarding the manner according to which each one ought to live his/her service of praise and reverence, regarding God in the unfolding of one’s intensifying understanding of His Divine Will. Consequently, St. Ignatius develops his entire spirituality on the notion of **election**: the divine election, fruit of eternal freedom, is revealed and offered to believers so that each one might choose this in a free manner. However, in order to render possible the unity of the divine will and the will of the believer in the choice that each one is called to accomplish - this new “identity”, or “union” somewhat replaces the ancient ideal of “mystical identification” of our nature with God. This is what the Eastern Fathers call **divinization** - a supreme life-long effort is needed in order to reject whatever could serve as an obstacle, impediment. The SE prepare the pure disposition to welcome the divine will, and lead the fervent believer to be “content” with one’s situation, to exercise **indifference** in free will and every personal choice. This is worked out solely in order to welcome nothing else by God Himself.

[3] By *election* is understood in the strict sense that recognition and acceptance on the part of the believer, of the *particular* elective Will of God for one's entire life. In that they are essentially orientated toward the deliberate choice of one's state in life, and progress in it, the SE were not intended for each and every one. Their intended audience is somewhat limited [ *de poco subycto* ] - kept perhaps from those who do not exercise fully their natural abilities.. For most, a good retreat - and the one often given for a week, would be the Exercises of the First Week, the elimination of sin, all the way to a reflection on the Kingdom of Christ. The committed quest for the positive will of God which is the plan of the last three weeks, needs to be situated into that **"more special" following of Christ** noted in VC [cf. ## 12; 15; 16; 18; 35]:

**... As a way of showing forth the Church's holiness, it is to be recognized that the consecrated life, which mirrors Christ's own way of life, has an objective superiority. Precisely for this reason, it is an especially rich manifestation of Gospel values and a more complete expression of the Church's purpose, which is the sanctification of humanity... [cf. VC # 32 b].**

Ignatius clearly had in mind for the last three weeks in particular that distinction between the general vocation of the Christian life, and the more specific following of Christ, both different ways of following **the one universal call to holiness**. In the saint's "mind", the complete Exercises would last 30 days [cf. SE 4, 8] - and these are specifically orientated toward *the definitive election of a particular state in life*. Each one is called by God, and would be qualified by God through grace so that this way of life would be chosen <sup>42</sup>.

[4] In order that such an *election* is possible, the retreatant needs to be led toward a **truly personal discovery of Jesus Christ**. This is the task of anyone assuming the role of Guide in the SE - during the all-important First Week, each one is meant to be brought face-to-face with the **Crucified Lord**, Who Alone can enable one to see his/her **real culpability**, as well as the **infinite mercy** of God in each one's regard. Then, when the judgment is made to go on to follow this itinerary that has been proposed, one needs to be introduced to a more profound contemplation of the **Word made flesh**.

[5] The SE offer a thorough initiation into **mental prayer**, in which he suggests as well the **application of the senses**. Prayer can only acquire its authenticity in the common human experience of **sin and pardon**. The more the retreatant becomes capable of becoming more detached from self, the more does each one fervently become more open to the Incarnate Word, Who comes to find each one wherever he/she may be, through the words of the Gospel, and the teaching of the Church.

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. SE 135, Introduction to the Consideration of the Different States of life; ## 169, ff.: Introduction to Making a Choice of a way of life.



## 1. Prayer in its Different Forms

a. Every human being is created with a capacity of self-expression, a being capable of acquiring a language. **Prayer is the orientation of one's attention towards God**, the Creator and Lord, in the view of Whom, for Whom, each one is created: *Each man is created to praise, reverence and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul* [cf. SE 23]. This principle and foundation indicates a direction that is both "ontological" [rooted in the very being of a human] and "conscious" - one that is freely pondered and chosen by the believer. Anyone who keeps alive the thought of his/her transcendent origin, almost tends to think about God in one's daily existence and travail. In order that one might not atrophy, this attitude of prayer has an inherent need of a rhythm of certain determined times and explicit expressions.

b. To anyone who is the more **disposed, disengaged** [nn. 18; 20] - as each one should be given those exercises that would be more helpful and profitable according to his willingness to dispose himself for them - the SE foresee as a general rule that one commit **an entire hour** to the five exercises, or contemplations. [cf.nn. 12.1, f.] - these are: ***the examen of conscience; meditation; contemplation, oral and mental prayer; consideration*** [of sin]. Of these, **contemplation** often receives the most emphasis. The over-riding principle of all this is the appeal of Jesus Christ: ... ***You did not choose Me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last; and then the Father will give you anything you ask Him in My Name...*** [cf. Jn 15:16].

c. The Christian spirit is characterized by the fact that it can learn through prayer to **listen to the Word of God** and to **obey Him**. Unaided, human beings through history have shown a woeful inability to direct through their own efforts toward the grasping of the Word of God. The **concordance** of the divine will and the human will never result merely by chance. The Truth of God only presents itself to human beings by their changing their ways: this inversion of one's usual manner of procedure, is called **meta-noia**, a life-long requirement: most necessary from the point of view of the theory of knowledge, and the absolutely required condition in order to hear the Word of God and to follow it. It is only through dedicated prayer that one comes to 'hear' the call, and where one is provided with the Christian Mission to last as long as one's human life does.

d. Of oneself, no human person is ever capable of finding a language, adapted to God. If one does connect with Him, in the view of Whom each one is created, it is only with Him that one will discover the authentic Mission toward which each is called. One has to speak "the language of God", by listening in silence. If one learns to 'speak' this language, this is solely because God has taught His disciples, so that He might be personally addressed:

***Everyone moved by the Spirit is a child of God The Spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bringing fear into your lives again; it is the spirit of sons, and it makes us cry out, Abba, Father! The spirit Himself and our spirit bear united witness that we are children of God...*** [cf. Rm 8:14, ff]

In His Inspired, Revealed, Incarnate Word, God speaks for us. The *Logos* of God is the language, the Self-Expression of God within us:

**... How rich are the depths of God - how deep His wisdom and knowledge - and how impossible to penetrate the motives, or understand his methods! Who could ever know the mind of God? Who could ever be His counselor?... [cf. Rm 8:34, f.; Is 40:13].**

It is the Spirit of God Who gives us some understanding of the Plans of God: *...As Scripture says: Who can know the mind of God, so who can teach Him? **But we are those who have the mind of Christ!*** [cf. 1 Co 2:16]. Christian prayer, the *Colloquy* with God - this is essentially a response of the spiritual person" [cf. 1 Co 2:15] to the Word contained, registered in Sacred Scripture. The Holy Spirit has given us the Scriptures, and He offers the possibility to the one disposed at one and the same time to **understand** it, and then to **conform** one's life to it:

**... But when the Spirit of truth comes, He will lead you to the complete truth, since He will not be speaking as from himself, but will say only what He has learnt; and He will tell you of the things to come. He will glorify Me, since all He tells you will be taken from what is mine Everything the father has is mine; that is why I said: All He tells you will be taken from what is mine... [cf. Jn 16:12-15].**

e. Holy Scripture is above all **the Word of God** addressed to human beings - as may so easily be noted in the Call of Abraham; the Ten Commandments communicated to Moses, the promises made to the Prophets, and the wisdom shared with the Sages. It is the expression of **Love, Truth, Fidelity**, the **Divine Attentions** lovingly bestowed on those who will be open toward it. At the same time, however, Sacred Scripture also contains the human response. The **Book of Psalms**, in particular, shows the many and varied possible modalities of this correspondence. The vocal prayers that St. Ignatius most recommends are the classics, the **Pater, Ave, Credo, Salve** - along with the **Anima Christi** - and all of these are firmly based on the divine word. As for personal prayer, this has to be a **heart to heart colloquy** [E 54] which possesses its own proper formulations. In his instructions on prayer, Ignatius offers some proper instructions.

f. A **first** means is that of preparing oneself fittingly for prayer. There is a *preparatory* prayer for this: "**In the preparatory prayer, I will beg God our Lord for grace that all my intentions, actions and operations may be directed purely to the service and praise of His Divine Majesty**" [cf. E 46; 55.2]. The "preparation" of a child is sometimes being compared to being picked up into the hands of a loving **Father** [e.g. Ho 11], or being weaned by a tender **Mother** [cf. Ps 131]. This is a gesture expressing parental love and concern, indicating the love of the Father, i.e., the will and desire of God Himself, and taking aside for Himself, inviting one to lay aside all his/her own personal concerns, just everything. All is already known to God and are "taken under advisement" by him, and all that is in our life has some role to play in His plan. We offer the Preparatory Prayer noted above which is made, as it were, at a distance, almost as though we were strangers. Yet, there needs to be a kind of **innate**

**thrust of the child** toward the loving Father's heart, which is always concerned with His beloved - and this is the natural substrate for all the deeds and gestures of the trusting child. This implies at the same time, that the preparation of our hearts should never be inspired with our own calculations, in order to work out *our own* ease, *our own* advantage in the meditation. Rather, the preparatory prayer is better and act of abandonment of our whole will in burying oneself in the Self-less love of God.

g. **Secondly**, the step following the *Preparatory Prayer* is normally the **Petition** for the particular grace that is needed, and which St. Ignatius places in the *Second Preamble* : **The Second Prelude. I will ask God our Lord for what I want and desire. The petition made in this prelude must be made according to the subject matter. Thus, in a contemplation on the Resurrection, I will ask for joy with Christ in joy. In one on the Passion, I will ask for sorrow, tears, and anguish with Christ in anguish** [E 48; 55.4]. This act by which I submit myself to God in allowing Him to dispose of me, especially at the beginning of the Meditation, includes naturally enough the Petition that the gift the Lord bestows on me allows me to enter into that which the Word of God addressed to me wants to say, and wants me to understand.

- The Word of God is comparable to a sacrament: this, of course, acts on its own power and grace, achieving that which it expresses and signifies [ *ex opere operato* -cf. D-S 1608, the sacrament acts in that it has within it **the salvific power of Jesus Christ**. Yet, with SC 7 there is needed the complementary aspect of the proper dispositions of the recipient. Origen compared the real presence of the Eucharist and the spiritual reception of the *Logos*, and thus there is no intention to confuse Word and sacrament] - but, even here, it is necessary that the seed of the sacrament/the Word should fall on **terrain that is prepared, malleable, receptive**.
- In the Petition there needs to be to seize those truths intended for me. For the simple believer, there is no tension between the action of God and human cooperation which does not pretend that the believer unaided could ever have access to the depths of God. However, this does not prevent the comprehension for the believer that in following Jesus Christ, each is challenged to try to discern the will of God.
- - All are reminded of Ps 127: if Yahweh does not build the house, guard the city, in vain the **masons** toil, the **sentries** watch! Thus, the Petition is not addressed to a void - one needs to be striving to penetrate the designs of the will of God. The basic intention here is that in this Meditation, God indeed does wish to confer a particular gift - and all that the believer would want of God in this context, is only that which He has in mind to show and offer me.

h. **Thirdly**, in that which then concerns the development of the meditation, the supreme law is simply this: the **freedom** that the children of God enjoy. This is the absolute pre-requisite that St. Ignatius considers and exposes in some detail. Yet, it must always be kept in mind, that the essence of prayer never resides in the means

used. There is simply no “methodology” that can impose itself as necessary, nor even as ‘normal’. One might suggest at the very most one or more mere suggestions. And these cannot be presented as serving for some usefulness, unless long-time experience for one might have found them helpful. The over-all rule is that the freedom of the Divine Spirit taps into the corresponding free spirit with which each individual is gifted. It is only in this sense that St. Ignatius “offers his services”.

While offering himself, the great Saint of Prayer also makes very clear that his method - and all methods - have some severe restrictions, limitations: “...Usually three points are given in order to make it easier to meditate and to contemplate on the mysteries...” [cf. n. 261.3]. The three points into which the matter to be contemplated is divided has no other purpose than to help the one who is praying to fathom the text. If it is submerged, or not clear, it needs to be clarified. It should not stand in front of the one meditating as something enormous, impossible to manage. The depth of meaning ought to become clear as day before the one praying, as a manageable journey, undertaking. And, because this is **God’s Word**, it extends the standing invitation to repose in it, and to remain with it. Ignatius himself will remove all scaffolding from the text and place to the forefront the law of spiritual freedom. Never should prayer be confused with executing some kind of complicated program, like finishing off an execution! From the clear fact that the Word of God has an innate capacity of touching each sincere believer deeply, all else should be left behind and one would follow the inspiration when it is forthcoming. It is as though the “eagle’s wings” are provided to lift the fervent believer from the ground and that one’s spirit exercises its vigorous leadership. From the part of the believer, he/she is invited to bring all the resources of intellect and will, mind and heart, to this important “audience”, meeting with a very dear and important friend.

i. For all **Meditation**, Ignatius expects the use of three faculties, the *memory, intellect* and *will* [cf. nn. 50-52]. The one praying needs to be rendered present through the memory of objective facts, in going over bit by bit the content of the matter by the intelligence, and finally, embracing the entire undertaking with free will and the sentiments. This enables what is being discovered to be assimilated in making the Sacred Page enter into one’s own life. For St. Augustine, these three faculties qualify, in the Augustinian school, the three-fold essence of the created spirit, the image of the Eternal Trinity. In proceeding according to this order, the one making the **Meditation** - in whatever measure he/she is turned toward God and open to Him [cf. n. 46], in the final analysis, does nothing more than obey the fundamental law of one’s own human being. This is simply the reality of anthropology whereby ontologically, there is a tendency issuing from the First Cause, to lead inexorably back to the identical Final Cause - and spiritually, or theologically, this is simply the teaching of the ages. There is a natural yearning for Beatitude, for Truth - realized only fully in God. When **Meditation** is thus the more comprehensively understood, this consumes the mind and heart of the one striving to make this much needed exercise, and where the spiritual activity of the fervent believer is much committed, this spontaneously privileges the eventual coming of **Contemplation**. In this higher exercise, the fervent believer is elevated further, and allows him/herself to be **given over** to all that God will offer.

j. Regarding **Contemplation**, Ignatius makes these proposals: for the Second Week, First Day, he suggests a **Contemplation** on the Incarnation - preparatory prayer, three preludes, three points - finally, the colloquy. St. Ignatius suggests seeing the Gospel scene and the persons who appear in it - then, he suggests that we listen to their words, and finally, they were observe what they are doing [nn. 106-108]. To-see-listen-and- to act correspond to the three essential modalities of grasping from revelation which is apparition [ob-jective image]; word [a sound that diffuses itself] and finally, action [the transforming activity] of God. By this succession one arrives progressively at bringing to life the Divine Revelation itself, in so far as this presents itself to the fervent believer engaged in the prayer. There is presented to one's view the image, or "ob-ject", situated at a distance from the eye of faith; then, there is the listening, a sound that comes toward the one praying from the image being contemplated. This is a sound that is not so much touched by the believer, nor embraced by him/her, but which holds one in its power. This sound finally leads to some action, an activity of God Himself, one that is full of demands and grace in behalf of the one praying. This takes hold of one, and can transform the believer.

2. All this being said, this entire "method" does nothing more than offer a **provisory help**, in the measure that, in the last analysis, it is the function of the freedom of the children of God: all methods are good, as the Lord is trying to reach us. If one would like to fathom more deeply into the genuine nature of Ignatian "**Contemplation**", there are many indications throughout his *Spiritual Exercises*, that should be noted. In this regard, there is already a preliminary indication that is contained in the fact that in the schema of the three faculties proper to **Meditation**, the exercise of the will comes in the last place. Prayer cannot remain in the intellect, but needs to be transformed into an act of **reverence**. This is a kind of **bowing down in love**. This is how the Second Week opens: thus, prayer does not remain merely "mental" prayer, as an exercise of the mind. One indeed does need to fathom what has been presented, and needs to seek to extract the hidden meaning from the Sacred Page, for *knowledge inflates, whereas it is love that edifies* [cf. 1 Co 8:1; 13:2]. Hence, for all that is "seen" and "heard", this is meant to lead to touching with one's own hand [cf. 1 Jn 1:2], to having contact with God: "... the more the soul is in solitude and seclusion, the more fit it renders itself to approach and be united with its Creator and Lord; and the more closely it is united with Him, the more it disposes itself to receive graces and gifts from the infinite goodness of its God." [cf E 20.9].

a. The soul in prayer thus allows itself to be taken over by the Divine Persons who act: "...the third point will be to consider what the Divine Persons do, namely, work the most holy Incarnation, etc..." [E 108]. Assuredly, the flame of love will normally flicker out from the wood of knowledge, and often it will flicker the more strongly in that one's knowledge is the more profound and existential. However, this process should not provide the pretext of delaying for a long time on the intellectual side, so that love would only find its place, squeezed in under the subtle smoke of spiritual gnosis!

b. From the transcendental point of view, the task of the intellect is seen here as reflection, and not to be excessively employed as the **ratio discursiva ab uno**

*in aliud!* Of course, as St. Thomas notes, it is necessary for the human intellect to proceed by comparison and division, to unite the common elements, or to separate them, and then from this composition or division to passage to another activity, which is to reason. Far from de-emphasizing reflection, the Exercises bring out its importance [E 3. 1]. However, this is not the only form of rationality that is known. Along with “reflection proper”, Ignatius mentions the role of “intelligence” in so far that in certain moments this is clarified by divine grace [cf. E 2.3]. “To understand” means to grasp *simply*, the intelligible truth. *To reason* means to go from one object of intelligence to another, with a view to coming to know the intelligible truth. Thus, the angels, who in virtue of their spiritual nature, possess perfectly this knowledge of intelligible truth, they do not have to go from one intelligible element to another, but they seize the truth of things *simply*, and beyond all discursive reasoning.

c. On the transcendental level, this other type of knowledge proceeds from the receptive reason, open and adapted to being as to a mystery. The language that is utilized is not that of “abstraction”, or “ordering and dividing discourse” - but, only concrete expressions, that of **love**. It is to this form of rationality that Ignatian contemplation leads the retreatant. In this regard, there is a precious indication furnished at the end of the *Second Annotation*, where Ignatius explains in the language of St. Bonaventure, that it is not so much a quantitative sapiential research, but much more **Internal Wisdom**. This is not so much as knowing various realities, or something that satisfies the soul, but rather an exercise of feeling and tasting these matters in an interior manner: there is produced a certain spiritual relish [cf. E.4]. It is necessary to keep in mind that *sap-ientia*, comes from *sapere*, which means primarily **to savor**, with the Ignatian nuance of “feeling”, and “tasting”. This is not a purely terrestrial exercise, but is of the sort of a sensing on the supernatural level, the perception of the divine reality through the human potentialities of the imagination.

d. Among the forms of prayer that the Exercises recommend, Ignatius provides a special place for the *application of the senses*. Perhaps better than anywhere else this finds a ready application in the **Contemplation on the Incarnate Word**. The method in question makes an explicit appeal to the ability of the retreatant to allow him/herself to be reached through corporal sensibility, by the Eternal Word of God rendered visible, audible, palpable, to one’s senses:

*...Something which has existed from the beginning, that we have heard, and we have seen with our own eyes; that we have watched and touched with our hands: this is the Word Who is Life - this is our subject. That life was made visible; we saw it and we are giving our testimony, telling you of the eternal life which was with the Father and has been made visible to us, What we have seen and heard, we are telling you so that you, too, may be in union with us, as we are in union with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. We are writing this to you to make our joy complete... [cf. 1 Jn1:1-3].*

e. Thus, in the course of the Second Week, the retreatant is invited to feel his/her away along by smelling and tasting, savoring and testing the flavor, of the infinite sweetness and goodness of the divinity: “...This is to smell the infinite

fragrance, and taste the infinite sweetness of the divinity. Likewise to apply these senses to the soul and its virtues, and to all according to the person we are contemplating, and to draw fruit from this..." [cf. E 124]. To be lived out authentically, this type of exercise presupposes, however, that the one making the prayer has been delivered from that sensibility of sin and death. Without the existential experience of damnation as possible - as also is the experience of the totally unmerited mercy of the Lord, the one making the prayer would only with great difficulty find the means of allow him/herself to be in-formed, even in and through one's corporal reality, by the mystery of piety, one comes to have contact with Christ in and through the flesh: **...Without doubt, the Mystery of our Religion is very deep indeed: He was made visible in the flesh, attested by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed to the pagans, believed in by the world, taken up in glory...!** [cf. 1 Tm3:16]. This is why before taking on this *application of the senses*, that method that is the most proper to the last three weeks of the Exercises, it is necessary to see how the discovery of Christ takes place in the "purgative way, which corresponds to the exercises of the *first week* [cf. E 10.3].

### Summary

[from the CCC]

**Prayer is both a gift of grace and a determined response on our part. It always presupposes effort. The great figures of prayer of the Old Covenant before Christ, as well as the Mother of God, the saints, and He Himself - all teach us this: Prayer is a battle. Against whom? Against ourselves and against the wiles of the tempter who does all he can to turn man away from prayer, away from union with God. We pray as we live, because we live as we pray. If we do not want to act habitually according to the Spirit of Christ, neither can we pray habitually in His name. The Spiritual Battle of the Christian's new life is inseparable from the battle of prayer...[cf. ## 2725, and ff.]**

§§§

### **3. The Experience of Sin and God's Mercy**

a. In the presentation of the First Week, Fr. Balthasar indicates right away that which he believes is the core of the first Ignatian meditations: **the Cross** and the **Judgment** which follow upon sins: personal sins, as well as those of the world. He will bring critically to the fore every undue attempt of 'psychologizing' authentic holiness. He is very careful to clearly mark the area of Christian culpability, in relationship to all subjective anguish and despair. Perhaps even more than the good conscience, the troubled conscience is not always a clear indication of the malice of sin, since the very essence of sin is a lie [cf. Jn 8:44] - and its effect can be precisely that of obscuring interior knowledge. The author does not mean by this to obliterate the function of moral conscience, but he places one on guard against possible deceptions. Some may be too ready to take for the 'voice of God' that which is only the judgment of this 'world'. Furthermore, if this voice may likewise be the voice of one's own sinful

condition, the torment experienced by the sinner facing the abyss of his/her faults, may not always be that Christian contrition pleasing to the Lord. Despairing sorrow, any "guilt complex" are not sorrow for sin - but, maybe nothing other than wounded pride, despair.

b. The sinner does not hold within the determining criterion of his/her culpability before God. Only the **Cross** of Jesus Christ can provide this criterion: it is the Cross which confers on the sinner the just **objectivity**, the authentic measure, willed by God, of the true recognition of sin. The Cross also provides the just **subjectivity**, that measure also willed by God of authentic contrition, on-going and continuing conversion, the experience of genuine repentance. It is the Cross, and only the Cross, which confers the just measure and the truly Christiansentiments of filial fear of the judgment.

c. It is only in the light of the Cross of Jesus Christ that the sinner can comprehend and weigh in some manner that which one's own sin really is. In this light, there are granted to the sinner at one and the same time the objective understanding of the fault committed and the subjective sentiments regarding this, which correspond to the specific will of God. Once more the concept of **indifference** serves here as the key of interpretation for the *Spiritual exercises*. This reflection on oneself - *mirando a mi mismo* - to which the retreatant, the believer, is invited in the First Week, is from the outset interpreted as that **availability** of allowing oneself to be judged by the Cross. The sinner does not possess within the just measure of weighing his/her own sinfulness, nor the first salutary act of breaking with the multiple entwinement of oneself, all involved in self-interest. This first step consists in placing oneself unconditionally before a judgment on which, unaided, one would not have the swiftest concept.

d. A similar abandonment of oneself to the Judgment of the Cross normally conducts one to sacramental confession, which is a fruit of the First Week. **For the General Confession**, to which St. Ignatius invites all [E 44 - its three advantages: greater sorrow each year; deeper insight during retreat; better Confession], other theologians offer their own motivations: this total manifestation is the fulfillment of Ep 5:13-14: **... The things which are done in secret are things that people are ashamed even to speak of; but anything exposed by the light will be illuminated, and anything illuminated turns into light...** The opening up of one's conscience such as this is envisioned by St. Ignatius and the Jesuit tradition is re-read within theology as having its basis in Johannine revelation, as confronting the opposition between the "Light" [grace] and the darkness of sin. Rather than just being the counting of one's defects, the sinner ought to place before the Confessor that which within the sinner strives to keep hidden. A General Confession allows oneself to be enveloped in the divine light which judges all human darkness: *... The Word was the true light which enlightens all men...* [cf. Jn1:9]. In penetrating into the space of the darkness, the light forces the darkness to cede heir place [cf. Jn 1:5]. Judgment delivers the sinner from obscurity, but on the condition that he/she opens up to this light - otherwise, it becomes a judgment of condemnation [cf. Jn 3:19, f.]:**...even though light has come into the world, men have shown that they prefer**



***darkness to the light because their deeds were evil. And indeed everyone who does wrong, hates the light and avoids it, for fear his actions should be exposed - but, the man who lives by the truth, comes out into the light, so that it might be plainly seen ...***

e. With this attitude, one is able simultaneously to contemplate the Redeemer. Fr. Balthasar insists on this **soteriological** expression of the Ignatian meditations of the First Week. It is before the Crucified Christ that the Spiritual Exercises situate the meditation on personal sins, and on the universal sin His love has one discover, "what I have done for Christ ... What I am doing for Christ ... What ought I do for Christ??? As I ponder Christ in this plight, nailed to the cross, I shall ponder upon what this presents to my mind [cf. E 53.2]. Before the Cross, the sinner comprehends for the first time that which one really has done and becomes conscious to what point one merits eternal punishment: in recalling to mind the gravity and the malice of sin against our Creator and Lord [cf. E 52.2]. The sinner comes to discover a fullness of confusion, to which the first exercise tends: ...how many times I have deserved eternal damnation, because of the many grievous sins that I have committed...[cf. E 48.5]. This conviction to which Ignatius would like to lead the sinner, has been variously described: in the presence of this redemptive love, a terror without name might pierce one's thought from the mere fact that from my own sins, I may have merited eternal condemnation. But, even more than this one is also the object of God's eternal love - and this has often been rejected. In contemplating the work of that extreme love that the Trinity has offered in my behalf, a being almost incapable of love, I can see clearly that I am a stranger, that I do not have a love with which to respond to that God has for me - and this makes me still worthy of eternal wrath. Even from my own base nothingness, I have often rejected the totality which is God.

f. The **Judgment** is not often pondered in its revealed reality. Fr. Balthasar made a meditation on each one's own possible demanation: all that is brought forward to ponder the absolute norm, which is the Son of Man has transpierced [cf. Rv 1:7], present in truth in all His followers. All are invited to **contemplate** the immolated Lamb, sacrificed form the foundation of the world [cf. 1 P 1:20; Rv 13:8]. He is seen in the height of His Unique dignity, and in His abject lowliness, leading to His rejection.

- The simple spectacle of this norm of **the "Pierced One"**, the Immolated Lamb, is the measure of our **judgment**, revealing the true weight of our sins. Each one can profitably place him/herself before this spectacle - in other words, on the one hand for any mortal sin, there is always the just possibility of eternal damnation. In some way each believer is invited to think of this as possible for him/her.
- This is one of the purposes of the First Week of the Exercises - provided that one also thinks of the real possibility that he/she will be the object of **the infinite mercy of God**. This is not something that might be all that effective coming through a solemn sermon to over-flowing crowds: this is

something each believer needs to **ponder in personal contemplation**, made before an image of the Crucified, pondering one's own sin:

**"Imagine Christ our Lord present before you on the Cross, and begin to speak with Him, asking Him how it is that though He is the Creator, He has stooped to become a man, and to pass from eternal life to death here in time, that He might die for our sins..." [cf. E 53] –**

**"...I will conclude with a colloquy, extolling the mercy of God our Lord, pouring out my thoughts to Him, and giving thanks to Him that up to this very moment He has granted me life. I will resolve with His grace to amend for the future..." [cf. E 61].**

**I recognize myself in that sterile tree that has not produced any fruit for the Lord who hungers for it, and because of this, has decreed its malediction of definitive dying up [cf. Mt 21:18-20, par.].**

g. In sinning and in acting against the infinite Goodness [cf. E 52.3] of merciful love, I have incurred upon myself, by a just title, the sort of all those who, despite their faith, have not lived according to the commandments [cf. E 71.1] - and being challenged to think of those who may have gone to hell for fewer sins than I have committed [cf. E 52.1]. However, in these disturbing and challenging thoughts, it is necessary at the same time to realize that in the gravity of serious sin, the sinner who is still alive is asked to keep in mind that the just sentence of the Lord has not been leveled as yet against him/her. "How is it that I am permitted to live...Why have the angels, though they are the sword of God's justice, tolerated me, guarded me, prayed for me! Why have the saints interceded for me, and asked favors for me!..."[cf. E 60]. The sinner can only express wonder and marvel in the face of His wondrous mercy, that in one's own case might be thought of to be absolutely incomprehensible. This gives another twist to the oft-made question: **Why me ???** Jesus Christ has died for my sins and He has thus far spared me the lot of rejection. The prayers of the First Week all flow forward into a single *Colloquy*, one that is made by speaking exactly as one friend speaks to another, or as a servant speaks to a master, asking him a favor. [cf. E 54]. This is so reminiscent of the beautiful eulogy of Moses: **...If any man among you is a prophet I make myself known to him in a vision, I speak to him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses, he is at home in my house; I speak with him plainly and not in riddles, and he sees the form of Yahweh...** [cf. Nb 12:6,f.] Thus Ignatius writes: "I will conclude with a colloquy, **extolling the mercy of God our Lord**, pouring out my thoughts to Him, and giving thanks to Him that up to this very moment He has granted me life. I will resolve with His grace to make amend for the future. Close with an *Our Father*. [cf. E 61] - This is a colloquy burning with the interior passion, aroused by the infinite mercy of God, a passion which in the sight of this infinite Divine Mercy, forms the essential resolution of plunging one's entire life that remains into the very heart of Christology: **With Christ, I am crucified and I live now not I but with the life of Christ who lives in me. ...** [cf. Ga 2:20]. The lowly servant, the insignificant friend is overwhelmed by sentiments of thanksgiving in the face of **the mystery of mercy**, a recognition of His mercy. This always comes late - because the **oblation of oneself to Christ** has always been preceded with our assumption by His mercy.

h. This heart-to-heart encounter with the Crucified, leading to a deeper realization in the interior knowledge of the gravity of sin - but always with a deeper appreciation of the infinite and unforeseeable **mercy of God**, manifested in the One Who has become identified with sin [cf. 2 Co 5:21: ***For our sake, God made the sinless one into sin, so that in Him we might become the goodness of God... - ...Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by being cursed for our sake...*** [cf. Ga 3:13]: these are the presuppositions of a just intelligence of the fifth and last exercise of a typical day proposed for the First Week: as in the Meditation on Hell [cf. E n. 65, ff. ]. The scope of this meditation is to provide one with some personal experience of hell: one needs to understand existentially that this happens to the sinner, not in some hypothetical manner, but with full justice. However, such an experience cannot become even a little concrete unless in the measure where this is practiced, not in some unreal sphere of our own mental imaginings, but rather standing before the manifestation of **Crucified Love**. Thoughts concerning hell may be made salutary, provided they do not remain fantastic and imaginary. If this is approached in prayer in a serious manner, and this needs to be done beginning with how far this is from the ultimate desires of **Redemptive Love**. It is here only that the sinner finds that his mouth is closed: *...it is meant to silence everyone and to lay the whole world open to God's judgment...* [cf. Rm 3:19]. There is today much in vogue the thought that so many have something to object against the real possibility that God could ever abandon a single human being over to justice. However, thoughts on hell need to be pondered in the presence of the divine dereliction of the Son, and of His Descent *ad inferos*, into the Lower Regions. Some understanding of this great mystery regarding the Father's Judgment regarding sin as we strive to ponder the depths of Christ's words: ***My God, My God, why have You abandoned Me...?*** [cf. Ps 22:1, f.; Mt 27:46, p.]. The divine judgment might be somewhat grasped in theology's efforts to fathom the terms of this mystery. The Son of God did not suffer for His sins, but for ours! In His "descent", the fervent believer might come to some understanding that He has redeemed us from condemnation to the realm of darkness and death. Eternal love, the Loving God, the Beloved Son, has experienced this for our salvation.

i. Meditated upon from a **Christological** perspective, this reflection on Hell [cf. CCC ## 631-635; 1033-1037] possesses a certain "dialectic" aspect. It is in the depths of the theological life of faith, hope and charity that the believer has to admit the judgment of the Father's condemnation of serious sin. We are called to believe that sin merits hell, and that the Lord Jesus has redeemed the world through His entire Paschal Mystery. We all carry before us the reality of our own sins. Anyone who pre-submits him/herself to this judgment in this meditation is a believer who has faith, hope and love. The fervent believer awaits good from the Father's hand, and in particular **the grace of redemption**. At the same time, each is called to **believe in the correct Justice of God, tempered always by his Mercy**. In the theological virtues, the fervent faithful maintains that if God indeed did have to condemn, this would be out of Divine Reason. For His own kind purposes, He also 'abandoned' His only begotten Son into the night of sin in the Garden, on Calvary. However, it is only through the deep exercise of the theological life that one could fruitfully make this meditation on

Hell. It is this that recognizes the justice of any condemnation, and gratefully sings of the infinite mercies of God who wills that all be saved.

j. The theological virtues oblige us to admit that we have indeed merited our own condemnation - but, the extraordinary paradox of God's Mercy is that He has redeemed us from it by His own **Merciful Redemption**. In contemplating the Crucified, it is always helpful with St. Ignatius, to **extoll the mercy of God**, our Lord, pouring out our thoughts to him, and giving thanks to Him at this very moment for He has granted me life. I will resolve with His grace to amend for the future. [cf. E 61]. And if the Son assumes on the Cross, the condemnation that should have been mine, I have the vivid hope that He has spared me. And this hope assumes the form of a dialogue. In the colloquy with Christ Our Lord, thanking Him for sparing me up to the present all eternal punishments He has always exercised in my regard, for His own kind purposes.

k. Modern theology has grappled in recent decades with the Article of the Faith of **Jesus' *descensus ad inferos***. Fr. Balthasar speaks of this mystery with the Scriptures as part of our **Redemption**, as others consider it **as the beginning of the Triumphant Procession of Ascension Thursday**. In His "descent", Jesus has taken on the penalties due to sin - not only the death of the body, but also that terrible pain afflicting the souls of all. Among those who has descended are the "OT Saints"<sup>43</sup>:

***... These are the heroes of faith, but they did not receive what was promised, since God had made provision for us to have something better, and they were not to reach perfection except with us...*** [cf. Heb 11:39, f]<sup>44</sup>.

l. Prior to Holy Saturday, the Patriarchs, Matriarchs, Prophets & Sages did not have free access to the life beyond in heaven. The penalty which weighed upon "pre-Christian" humanity by reason of original sin, was by its nature, definitive: it was the penalty of damnation, as a privation of the vision of God. On the one hand, there already existed before Christ - manifested among the Israelites, and more hidden among the other nations - a certain inexorable orientation toward Jesus Christ, deep within human nature, totally passive, that would only respond to the First Cause. In the best of circumstances, corresponding with the grace offered in the foreseen merits of Jesus Christ, they were called to expect, await from the Lord a Redemption.

m. In ways known only to God, these OT Just lived to some extent a theological life of grace, with a certain level of faith, hope and love. Thus the "hell" to which they were committed, this life in the "underworld", had a conditional character, for some medieval theologians. This concept of a "temporary penalty of damnation", which then leads to a better grasp of the revelation concerning OT ***Sheol***, suggests also the **barrier of holy Saturday**. This is a most mysterious area of our Catholic faith, and there is only some hesitating reflections concerning it.

<sup>43</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas. Part III, q. 52, a. 5- *Whether Christ descending into Hell delivered the Holy Fathers from Thence?*

<sup>44</sup> Cf. William J. Dalton, SJ, *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits. A Study of 1 P 3:18-4:6*. Roma: PIB 1989.

n. Only Jesus, in substitution, taking our places, would experience integrally the reality of death in its deepest sense Jesus Who is of the divine condition, **empties Himself** [ the **kenosis** : Ph 2:5, ff.] - the OT experienced that being "hurled into the sea...hurled down, never to be seen again..." [cf. Rv 18:21,f.] - ...*the Prince of this world was overthrown...* [cf. Jn 12:31] - ...*bind him hand and foot* [the man without the wedding garment] *and throw him out into the dark, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth...* [cf. Mt 22:13]. However, the Paschal Lamb, Who allowed Himself to be immolated, pierced [cf. 1 Co 5:7] without opening His mouth [cf. Is 53:7] - and by His wounds, all ours will be healed [cf. Is 53:5; 1 P 2: 21, ff.].

o. In His Paschal Mystery, Jesus took on the "sin of the world" [cf. Jn 1:29] and with this, He assumed all the furor, wrath of God [cf. Rv 14:10: ...*all who worship the beast... will be made to drink the wine of God's fury...*] From Jesus' Intra-trinitarian origin, the Incarnation did not have any other finality than the Cross and this awful "descent" - these are simply the ultimate and extreme consequences of the Redemptive Mission He received from the Father - and of which He has committed a share to each of us: ...**As the Father sent Me, now I send you !** [cf. Jn 20: 21, ff.]

p. The **loving obedience** of the Divine Son, even to the complete surrendering of His own "interests", other than the unifying will of the Father, is for Jesus a full exercise of the "power" of laying down His life, only to take it up again [cf. Jn 10:18]. The "grand silence" of Holy Saturday is the depths of these dregs, the definitive death - from which by His own power, in the Father and Holy Spirit, He will rise up again. Jesus experienced the ultimate distancing, following from afar, alienation of sinners from God His free obedience, lived through to the depths out of the most sublime love, led to this total death - only this unique obedience of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, fully merits the title, **obediens usque ad mortem** . Thanks to this ultimate human experience, Jesus is able to redeem from all human degradation and pain. His solidarity with humanity even to these definitive extremes is the act of the most sublime love of God.

q. Fr. Balthasar believes that the Church has come to understand the article of the Faith, largely from the Document to the **Hebrews**:

***... As for those people who were once brought into the light, and tasted the gift from heaven, and received a share of the Holy Spirit, and appreciated the good message of God and the powers of the world to come, and yet in spite of this have fallen away - it is impossible for them to be renewed a second time. They cannot be repentant if they have willfully crucified the Son of God and openly mocked Him. A field that has been well watered by frequent rain, and gives the crops that are wanted by the owners who grew them, is given God's blessing; but one that grows brambles and thistles is abandoned, and practically cursed. It will end by being burnt... Heb. 6:4-8] -***

***... If after If, after we have been given the knowledge of the truth, we should deliberately commit any sin, then there is no longer any sacrifice***

***for them. There will be left only the dreadful prospect of judgment and the raging fire that is to burn rebels. Anyone who discards the Law of Moses is ruthlessly put to death on the word of two witnesses, or three; and you may be sure that anyone who tramples on the Son of God, and who treats the Blood of the Covenant which sanctified him as if it were not holy, and who insults the Spirit of grace, will be condemned to a far severer punishment. We are all aware of who it was who said: Vengeance is mine; I will repay. And again: The Lord will judge His people. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God! [cf. Heb 10:26-31]***

***...And be careful that there is no immorality, or that any of you does not degrade religion like Esau, who sold his birthright for one single meal. As you know, when he wanted to obtain the blessing afterwards, he was rejected, and, though he pleaded for it with tears, he was unable to elicit a change of heart...That time the Lord's voice made the earth shake, but now He has given us the promise: I shall make the earth shake once more and not only the earth, but heaven as well. The words 'once more' show that since the things being shaken are created things, they are going to be changed, so that the unshakable things will be left. We have been given a possession of an unshakeable kingdom. Let us therefore hold on to the grace that we have been given and use it to worship God in the way that he finds acceptable, in reverence and fear. For our God is a consuming fire.... [cf. Heb 12:16ff., 25-29]***

r. It is interesting to note that Fr. Balthasar makes no statement whether or not there are actually souls in hell - st. Ignatius, however, comes right out with his view: [cf. E 71; 52]: "recall to memory those who are in hell... even for one mortal sin ... before Christ...during His lifetime...after His life here on earth..." Fr. Balthasar does not go this far: he has as his point of departure the love within God, and within us, that "hopes for everything" [cf. 1 Co 13:7]. Such hope springs from an authentic life of faith and love, and can lead to some courageous hopes and reflections.

s. In the light of the Resurrection loving faith cannot experience at one and the same time, the fear of Hell. However, one is challenged in contemplation to enter into reflections on the depths of the Mystery of the Cross, even to see it extended all the way through to the Resurrection. Nonetheless, the existence of Hell is a matter of faith. There is some semblance of this in the suffering of a sinner, experiencing distance from the Lord and His love. One does need "tears for his/her sins", in the words of st. Ignatius [cf. E 55]. Each mortal sin does merit eternal condemnation - yet, the reflection on the attributes of God may be accompanied by a cry of wonder accompanied by the surging emotion - how is it that God has permitted me to live! [cf. E 60]

§§§

### Summary from the CCC

[1] The first meaning given to the apostolic preaching to Christ's descent into hell: that Jesus, like all men, experienced death and in his soul joined the others in the realm of the dead. But, He ascended from there as savior proclaiming the good new to the spirits imprisoned there... [cf. # 632].

[2] to die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God's merciful love means remaining separated from Him forever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called 'hell' [ # 1033].

[3] The affirmations of Scripture and the teachings of the Church on the subject of hell are at the same time an urgent call to conversion: '**Enter by the narrow gate...**' [cf. Mt 7:13-14] [# 1036].

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#### 4. The Contemplation of the Word made Flesh

a. The *application of the senses* is exposed in detail in the Fifth Exercise of the Second Week [cf. E 121-126]. It is a method of **Contemplation** that the Exercises employ then to the very end, but which in reality this had already been implicitly presented in the Meditation on Hell [cf. E 65-71]. In truth, many particular indications prepare the retreatant for this form of prayer. One preliminary indication, which often passes unnoticed, and which Fr. Balthasar did comment on, is contained in the First Manner of Prayer [cf. E 238-248] where Ignatius suggests their usage to anyone who desires to imitate Christ our Lord - to take among the possible objects of 'Exercises', the five bodily senses [cf. E 248.1]. Thus, in the Saint's teaching it is a matter less of a form of prayer properly so called, as it is aiming to be of assistance to the soul in making progress and of rendering its prayer agreeable to God. This exercise is significant from **the incarnate character of the Ignatian conception of prayer**. It is the entire human organism, body and soul, which ought to be put to grasping God and the things of God. And for this the earthly senses ought to allow themselves in some way to be converted, to pass over through a kind of death and resurrection which transform them into authentic spiritual senses. Or, far from seeing the privileged status of just a few of "specially chosen souls", called to the summit of mystical union with God, Ignatius considers fully natural this conversion of one's affectivity as a common good of the faith-experience of every-day Christians. As a notable witness to this fact, the saint does not hesitate to propose this exercise even to the most common of persons, without any culture: "...This method is more appropriate for those who have little natural ability or are illiterate...If the one giving the Exercises sees that the exercitant has little aptitude or little physical strength, that he is one from whom little fruit is expected, it is more suitable to give him some of the easier exercises, as a preparation for confession..." [cf. E 18.7, f.].

b. Two other indications are already noted for this First Week:

- **composition of place:** this constitutes the First Preamble of each prayer. By this expression, Ignatius intends the sensible visualization - to see with the eyes of the imagination [cf. E 47] the mystery that is to be meditated upon and contemplated - whether it is a matter of a concrete scene from the earthly life of Jesus, or of some general and more abstract truth, as for example, my own personal condition as a sinner [cf. E 47]. One is encouraged to make a presentation in almost theatrical style, bring forward the episode upon which one intends to pray, so much so that it might the better be committed to memory, to take a good look at the personalities involved, listening to them speaking and observing them in their actions, according to the schema of the three faculties.

- **the effort of memory, intelligence and will** brought to bear on the scene which will also be sustained by the imagination. Here some fantasy, imagination, is needed, as imagining one's soul imprisoned in a corruptible body - and the entire human being in this valley of tears, exiled among animals deprived of reason [cf. E 47].

In both these cases, the scope is the same: to regulate as much as will be possible the imagination on the object of salvation, so that the subject might welcome this according to the intentions of God Himself.

c. To this control over the imagination, Fr. Von Balthasar joins the indications contained in the second series of *Additions* for the First Week [cf. E 78-82] These *additions* will be adapted week by week [cf. E 130-131; 206; 229]. **These involve also the "consideration of one's sins" [E 42], and the following counsels: after retiring, just before falling asleep, for the space of a *Hail Mary*, I will think of the hour when I have to rise and why...[cf. E 73] - When I wake up, I will not permit my thoughts to roam at random, but will turn my mind at once to the subject I am about to contemplate...I will seek to rouse myself to shame... [cf. E 74] - I should not think of things that bring joy...for I wish to feel pain, sorrow, and tears for my sins...[cf. E 78] - I should deprive myself of light.. [cf. E 79] - I should not laugh, nor cause laughter...[E 80].** This control over the soul, by making use of all the means of its sensibility, even to the particular affective tonality of the object to be considered requires a conscious and energetic effort on the part of the one praying, corresponding to that which is present in conjuring up a *composition of place*. Yet, in this, St. Ignatius takes very seriously the voluntary and free action of human beings going forward confidently, and ever more decisively, in the grace of God. This gives rise to the old Ignatian maxim:

***...sic Deus fide, quasi rerum successus omnis a te, nihil a Deo penderet; ita tamen iis operam omnem admove, quasi tu nihil. Deus omnia solus sit facturus...***

***...pray as though all depended on God and work as though it all depended on yourself...***



d. The principle is: trusting [praying] as though all depended on God [to avoid Pelagianism] - and working as though it all depended on you [to avoid Quietism]. The essential of this doctrine is to be seen in the intimate bond that marks finite freedom of the believer and the infinite Liberty of God. The Saint is careful to note that the believer must always ask the Lord for that which is needed and desired - i.e., the particular grace to obtain for the prayer to be offered and for which one readies him/herself to offer. The Christian experience is also essentially composed of “spiritual motions” [cf. E 6; 227], the origin of which are “outside” the subject, within God Himself, Who has the power to move from within, and to draw one to do His Will [E 175], by bringing about a certain joy [cf. E 329], and even some consolation without any preceding cause [cf. E 330]. In the last analysis, it is God Who could place one into the proper dispositions in conformity with the object upon which one meditates, contemplates. And this is why beyond all personal efforts, the believer needs to ask for the grace that is most needed without any pretension of being able to achieve this by one’s own strength: “...**Thus, in contemplation on the Resurrection, I will ask for joy with Christ in joy. In one on the Passion, I will ask for sorrow, tears and anguish with Christ in anguish...**” [cf. E 48].

e. The retreatant needs to ‘harmonize’ him/herself to the mystery of salvation that is being contemplated. This “affective concordance”, which required **indifference**, is a **grace** that must be requested in prayer, but which also in some measure also be produced and with which one needs to cooperate. Thus, in the course of the Third Week, one reads: “Fourth Point. This will be to consider what Christ our Lord suffers in His human nature... Then, I will begin with great effort to strive to grieve, be sad, and weep. In this way, I will labor through all the points that follow...” [cf. E 195]. Certain expressions of Ignatius lead one to think perhaps of some superficial form, purely imaginary, or sentimental, with regard to the bringing to mind certain presences, or interacting with them in prayer. Thus, we read with regard to the Nativity: “... I will make myself a poor little unworthy slave, and as though present, look upon them, contemplate them, and serve them in their needs, with all possible homage and reverence.” [cf. E 114].

f. However, for Ignatius, these activities are all the expression of an **interior knowledge** [cf. E 104: “...Here I will ask for an **intimate knowledge** of our Lord, Who has become man for me, that I may love Him more and follow Him more closely]. For this **grace**, the believer needs to ask in prayer. This might seem to be a rather ‘exterior’ contemplation: but, it is an interior participation, to the point of entering into the affective tonality of the objective mystery of salvation, which has its subjective tonality in the sacred persons and, above all, in the Son of God and His Mother. And this interiority sometimes even leads to tears, that are so frequently mentioned in the Exercises [cf. nn.4; 48; 55; 69; 78; 89; 203; 282; 315; 316; 322]. The retreatant may experience these with regard to the sorrowful Christ, the One Who is weighed down, especially during the Third Week. In this regard von Balthasar remarks that the Saint did possess this specifically Christian sensibility which is inseparably both natural and supernatural. Far from suggesting a religion of sentimentality, or even more, a species of religious rationalism, Ignatius’ Christianity is that which might be called today an **existential Christianity**. There should be no wonder at the place provided for the

state of affectivity that will play such an important role in the Exercises. If Ignatius recommends with such insistence the suggestion of not placing only imagination to work in prayer, but one's entire affectivity at the service of the mystery to be contemplated, this is because he begins spontaneously with the presupposition that wherever grace reaches, the Christian is capable of feeling it and of tasting interiorly this sensible experience. The Christian experience of the mysteries which envelops one's entire being, which is Christian, all is **inseparably spiritual and sensible**.

g. This is the theological background provided by the Ignatian *application of the senses*. In the Exercises, this is often recommended as the last exercise of a day [cf. E 101; 132; 134; 158, etc.]. This began with two more discursive contemplations, and continues then with two *repetitions*, where the one offering the prayer is invited to choose, in order to rest upon them, certain points. It is upon these that one should pay attention to and dwell on those points in which one will have experienced greater consolation, or desolation, or greater spiritual appreciation. [cf. E 62]. The purpose of this is to broaden the sensible affectivity to the dimensions of what could truly be classified as a properly spiritual affectivity. Thanks to this method, **the scene contemplated** becomes the place of **as a concrete experience of the Divinity, Who hands Himself over, so to speak, in flesh and blood**. In the synthetic presentation made of this, vonBalthasar places in evidence the manner of experience aimed at by Ignatius: the scope of all this is to "**realize**" these realities, and that means to take hold objectively, in some concrete manner, of another-world figure in some corporal manner. This can only be accomplished by the "whole" human being, in his/her encounter with the incarnate spirit in a human body. As an example, in the First Week, that which must be 'seized' concretely with the five senses is the presence of sin, Hell, that becomes a reality enveloping the believer in his/her entirety. This is "to see the vast fires, and the souls enclosed, in bodies of fire...to hear the wailing, howling...to smell the smoke ... to taste the bitterness...to feel the flame..." [cf. E 66-70]. In like manner at the end of the First Day of the Second Week which has for its object, the reflection on the Incarnation, we read: "...seeing in imagination the persons, in contemplating and meditating in detail on the circumstances in which they ate... to hear what they are saying...to smell the infinite fragrance ... to touch with embraces and kisses the place where the persons are..." [cf. E 122-125].

h. The Exercises themselves do not offer any *apologia*, or theoretical justification. The Saint of Prayer is content simply to present this system as one fact, a truth that one is invited to accept. The "sensibility" to which this method of the *application of the senses* holds sway ought to be extended from the domain of the concrete reality of the gospel events that are simply recounted, **to the concretization of the experience of the Divinity**: the challenge is to apply these senses of the soul and its virtues, and to all according to the person we are contemplating, and to draw fruit from this" [cf. E 124] - this is done even to the details of gnawing rodents, and a kind of interior worm in negative matters - as well as with sweetness and gentleness in the more pleasant truths. If Ignatius could present this very unsophisticated method of contemplation with the simplicity of a man of the Middle Ages, which is at one and the same time **a spiritual and sensible experience of Divine Revelation**, it goes almost without saying this will not be the case after him. As later history will show, his

posterity will have a real challenge to maintain the genuinely Christian balance that Ignatius maintained.

i. Some of the subsequent extensions of this method might be noted:

- **the first** would extend the *application of the senses* in conformity with the doctrine of the mystics, and of St. Bonaventure in particular, for whom the spiritual senses are the expression of an almost intuitive knowledge of God, **reserved to a very small number**. Beyond the corporal senses, and the imaginative senses, there are, according to this theory, inherited from the Middle Ages, the **"spiritual senses of the soul"**. More than separate faculties as such, these have been described as "special operations of the soul attaining objects superior to the senses, but which cannot be hardly designated unless when making use of metaphors from the sensible world." In the Jesuit family, these views were espoused by John Polanco and Jerome Nadal. If one can admit that beginners can practice prayer with the ordinary senses of the imagination, Polanco would reserve the *application of the senses* to those making progress, capable of using the "spiritual senses of the superior reason." The commentaries of Nadal tend in this direction as well in this *application of the senses*, there is a certain primer of mystical intuition. This author believed that the spiritual senses confer on those to whom they have been granted by a special grace of the Lord, a kind of 'prolongation' of the three theological virtues.

A further variation of this extension also appeared, but one with even less doctrinal support. This interpretation considered this form of prayer making use of the *application of the senses* as a qualitatively superior form with regard to the traditional "discursive meditation". The human spirit, after being exercised for some time in discoursing on a given matter, generally obtains 'by a **sort of intuition**' which renders it present, instantaneously, without making any movement oneself, or being agitated in any way, and it comes to perceive the matter in its totality, as if it were actually under one's eyes. This *almost intuitive* aspect of knowledge is more elevated and more difficult than any discursive consideration. There were envisioned many degrees of this contemplation, of which the first is the most lowly and consists in the application of the imagination, or of the five senses called 'imaginary'. This manner of prayer is much more efficacious than is discursive meditation, in order to excite the affections of the will. For an object to become, as it were '**re-presented**', and placed before one's view, moves the human being much more strongly. However, this manner of presence presupposes the discursive consideration and above all, love. With various nuances and accentuations, names such as Suarez, Puente and Surin espoused this style.

- **the second current** of interpretation would be found in the *Official Directory* of 1599, published by the "Prepositus General", Fr. Claudio Aquaviva. He saw this aspect of Ignatius' method to be a kind of temporary *détente*, an unwinding, relaxation, pause - particularly suited for those devotees endowed with imagination. He saw a two-fold utility: when the soul reaches the point when it simply cannot speculate further, in the application of the senses, little by little it might be disposed to go to higher matters. Secondly, when the soul has been much nourished and made fervent in devotion by the knowledge of those higher mysteries, and is then able to descend to

these more sensible realms, will find that it discovers nourishment and consolation in them all, and much fruit is derived from the abundance of love.

A later Superior General, Fr. Roothan, wrote about the *application of the senses* which requires less involvement of the head. And this is why Ignatius places it always in the last place among these exercises of the day, just before supper, at a moment when the spirit of the exercitant is unwinding, and perhaps already somewhat fatigued by the labor of the day. With the passing of time, less and less debate was had concerning the spiritual affectivity of the soul, and authors avoided any discussion of the “spiritual senses.” There is no specific reference here to the classic by St. Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, [cf. c. 4, n. 3].

j. To Fr. vonBalthasar’s credit, it must be said that he places this whole question on another base. In so doing, he seems to go back the more to what Ignatius’ original idea in all this really was. Fr. vonBalthasar has been able to harmonize the legitimate requests of the opposite currents of interpretation. According to him, the *application of the senses* has little to do with the radical mystique of union with any immediate “contact” with the divine essence, a sort of thought beyond all senses, beyond concepts, zeroing in on the very presence of God. The Exercises have for their purpose that of leading the subject to an encounter with the “pure” truth, corresponding to a large degree with abstraction from the sensible - beginning with the external senses, but then even to the internal images of the imagination - and then ultimately even from those finite notions, always confined within this world. If such is the mystical conception that one might believe can be drawn from St. Bonaventure, St. Ignatius seems much more orientated toward **the concrete figure of Revelation**. There is no doubt that he did have some dependence on the Franciscan Mystic - but, the Bonaventure that Ignatius knew, reflects more a manner of contemplation that was habitual in the Middle Ages, and more and more current after St. Bernard and St. Francis of Assisi.

k. Fr. von Balthasar believes he can find a “proof text” in the work which more directly inspired St. Ignatius. Method of the *application of the senses* : the *Vita Christi* of Ludolph of Saxony, from whom one might find an eloquent passage: without penetrating into the domain of mysticism properly so called, this popular work introduces in a rather naïve but profound manner **a certain spiritual intelligence of Scripture**. Ludolph wrote very simply that one exercises here with the corporal senses and the imagination a spiritual activity that aims clearly at **rendering the mystery present**, even though to a more modest degree than the properly mystical experience would achieve”. Like Ludolph, St. Ignatius places himself spontaneously, perhaps inversely from his interpreters, beyond the alternative according to which one would have to choose: either the corporal sense, or the mystical sense. For him, these two dimensions mutually include one another without compromising either one.

l. The question is often asked: whether the *application of the senses* is a method for beginners. Some would hold that the exercise of this particular usage of the senses to achieve contact with the supernatural and the divine is the pathway of authentic ‘wisdom’. For the Saint, far from exercising a purely terrestrial activity, the five senses reflect the divine reality such as God gives Himself to be experienced also

through the 'carnal' potentialities of human nature. Significant in this regard is the fact that vonBalthasar does not speak of any *spiritual senses*, as if these 'senses' awaken in the soul once the corporal senses have been taken over. In his view, the corporal senses already possess a spiritual dimension and even a supernatural dimension - for, in that it is in harmony with the authentically Christian experience, these have been exercised under the influence of grace and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. Here, vonBalthasar comes astonishingly close to the original doctrine of Origen regarding the 'spiritual senses.' For Origen, these senses which by their nature, are terrestrial, become celestial by the infusion of grace. This is a matter of a 'change of state' [ *katastasis* ] through the *following of Christ* - and this seems to be precisely the point on which Ignatius touched without perhaps knowing much about Origen.

m. To grasp precisely von Balthasar's thought is helped by the fact that he often returns to this concept. Quite far removed from any 'neo-Platonic theory of mysticism', that would attribute a superior value to purely spiritual visions, the concept that Ignatius achieves concerning contemplation is close to what Origen held. This is in the realm not so much of discursive reason, but still the senses, through those representations and images - to which the human being is the more naturally attached - in which God speaks to the believer. The Christian experience finds its unsurpassable objective reference in **the revelation of the Son, the unique expression of the divine being** [cf. Heb 1:3: ... He is the **radiant light** of God's glory, and **the perfect copy** of His nature... ]. The Word made flesh allows Himself to be found in his historical unicity and as such, beckons, **calls the believer to follow Him**. Ignatian Prayer has no other scope than of leading to this personal encounter with the Incarnate Word. Completing the rational method of *seeing-understanding-acting*, the Ignatian *application of the senses*, far from being an exercise for beginners, **is the way "to smell the infinite fragrance, and taste the infinite sweetness of the divinity"** [cf. E 124]. The divine reality is one that allows His Presence to be perceived through earthly powers of the sensibility. Ignatius willed that the **mystery contemplated should be 'experienced'** by the believer in his/her spiritual and sensible totality. Fr. vonBalthasar explains this further, probably in making allusion to the episode that took place during the Saint's pilgrimage to Jerusalem and his visit to the Mount of Olives: all contemplation is first of all invited to place itself in the historical place where the Father's Word comes to us and speaks to us - and, speaks, of course, to us sinners! - in an accessible and comprehensible language. This is the language of the humiliated flesh and it is not wrong that it seeks to take flight towards the pure divine spirituality. Anyone who prays shares in this humiliation in passing necessarily through the **contemplation of the Word made flesh**, and in exercising itself in striving to comprehend **that this divine Lord Himself wishes to speak in extremely clear language**. This aspect of the Incarnation as a **concession to our spiritual deafness** cannot be avoided. In Jesus' life, the language of God has become a reality that it is impossible not to understand.

n. These diverse notations concerning the Ignatian method of prayer are still far from exhausting the material. To grasp Fr. vonBalthasar's idea more fully, it would be necessary, calling upon still other texts, to take up the question of the mysticism of St. Ignatius. However, that would be a study apart: here the intention is

more limited. The effort here will be to show how, through prayer, but also with the experience of sin and of God's Mercy, **through the contemplation of the Word made flesh**, there is noted in the fervent retreatant the **existential discovery of Christ** calling out for each to follow Him. This discovery, which requires training in personal prayer, develops normally into the recognition of God's will upon one. The process of election which is undertaken as the term of the Meditations on the Childhood of Jesus, when He begins His public life, this allows the retreatant to discern more exactly this Will of God. This is the contemplation of the Lord, this is the listening to His Word which will be granted, with the grace of God, through the revelation which the retreatant prays. Before moving into the election properly so called, the one making the prayer should, however, exercise him/herself in **indifference**, without which the vocation would not be received in all its purity and clarity of its Divine origin. Thus, St. Ignatius proposes, on the margin of the evangelical contemplations, three meditations the scope of which is precisely that of inculcating on the retreatant once and for all, an **unconditional availability**.

### §§§

## 5. The School of Unconditional Availability

a. The entire First Week is spent in carrying out through the spiritual experience of one's own possible damnation - but, at the same time, the realization of **the super-abundant merciful prevenient grace of the Lord** - the disorder that comes from sins, or from past faults, and of opening up space for spiritual freedom. With the Second Week, the retreatant seeks to orientate in a positive manner, his/her life, i.e., by allowing God to "**dispose**" of the fervent believer according to His particular designs. The retreatant prays "for the grace not to be deaf to His call" [cf. E 91], and to choose the state of perfection which has been pre-destined for us from all eternity [cf. E 135]. In order to work out forthwith this **election**, it is insisted upon many times by Ignatius, that one must present him/herself as totally **indifferent**: '... I must be **indifferent**, without any inordinate attachment, so that I am not more inclined or disposed to accept the object in question than to relinquish it, nor to give it up rather than to accept it. I should be like a balance at an equilibrium, without leaning to either side, that I might be ready to follow whatever I perceive is more for the glory and praise of God our Lord and for the salvation of my soul." [cf. E 179].

b. Beginning with the *preamble in order to make the election*, the cautions simply multiply. Against the danger of over-turning the hierarchy of values and of submitting the "end" for a "means" "...I must not **subject and fit the end to the means, but the means to the end. Many first choose marriage, which is a means, and secondarily the service of God our Lord in marriage, though the service of God is the end...Such persons do not go directly to God, but want God to conform wholly to their inordinate attachments. Consequently, they make of the end a means, and of the means an end. As a result, what they ought to seek first, they seek last...**" [cf. E 169]. Nothing should move one to use such means, or to deprive myself of them, save only the service and praise of God our Lord, and the salvation of my soul [E 169]. This the mark of authentic **indifference**. Should one ever

have made a mistake regarding a state in life, he/she should be sorry for this, and then take care to live well in the life he has chosen. Since such a choice was inordinate and awry, it does not seem to be a vocation from God...for every vocation that comes from God is always pure and undefiled, uninfluenced by the flesh or by any inordinate attachment [cf. E 172]. There should be no yielding to the flesh in the important matter of vocation [cf. E 173].

c. It has been repeatedly noted that the more Ignatius' Exercises approach their specific end and their culminating point [which is always **election**], the more intensive does the struggle become for the acquisition of **authentic indifference**. It is this indifference that should lead to the offering to enter the *Kingdom* [cf. E 98]. The great generosity that ought to stimulate in the retreatant the parable of the Christian King [cf. E 94] is first of all **a grace to be asked for from the Lord**: here it will be to ask for the grace I desire - of not being deaf to His call, but prompt and diligent to accomplish His most holy will [cf. E 91] - even should this demand of me a challenging effort [cf. E 95; 93]. This is not just for the natural availability that all persons who have judgment and reason who will offer themselves entirely for this undertaking [cf. E 96], as would anyone be ready to commit the fatigue that would normally be required. In the *principle and foundation*, the **indifference** Ignatius intends in this context should not be understood only on this ordinary level. That would mean the willingness of accepting certain negative values, should they come along, such as illness, poverty, a short life [cf. E 23]. But, in this connection the Exercises speak beyond this regular abandonment demanded of all believers - expressed also in the Lord's Prayer, **Thy Will be done!** St. Ignatius is making a further challenge here, that of being attached and distinguishing oneself in everything in the service of the Eternal King [cf. E 97] - also described as acting against one's own sensuality - against one's own carnal and worldly love [cf. E 97]. No one would naturally choose for him/herself the Cross - it is rather the Lord who bestows it, to anyone who would be open to His will on this level. If the Lord wishes my service and for His own kind purposes chooses me, I am ready to follow Him and to walk along the particular pathway that He has laid out for me. I will not set any limits on how far I would go other than the goals **He** sets for me. I will be **disposed** to do my part, to suffer all poverty - and not only "spiritual" poverty, but effective, material, actual poverty [cf. E 98]. For this may indeed be the specific path to which the Lord is beckoning to me.

d. This is the level of **indifference** which the contemplation on the *Incarnation* tends to lead. For the outlook regarding the world that Ignatius teaches is it not that of the real distance, both Christian and Catholic, of a committed believer capable of contemplating anything in order to follow the Lord: "...I will see and consider the Three Divine Persons seated on the royal dais or throne of the Divine Majesty. They look down upon the whole surface of the earth, and behold all nations in great blindness, going down to death and descending into hell .. there is such diversity here on earth, in dress and manner of acting. Some are white, some black; some at peace, and some at war; some weeping, some laughing; some well, some sick; some coming into the world, some dying, etc..." [cf. E 106]. To be able to see the

world in this fashion [cf. Qo 3:1, ff.] means to be capable of assuming the negative moment from the distance of viewing it from within the very positive reality that looks out upon **authentic indifference**.

e. However, this proper position regarding this 'world', is already the condition of a choice of an ordered life - and this cannot be accomplished without a real struggle. In order to place the believer in the state of achieving a **healthy and good election** [cf. E 175], Ignatius proposes **Three Meditations** which constitute a kind of trilogy: **the Two Standards** [cf. E 136-148]; **the Three Classes of Men** [cf. E 149-157] and **the Three Kinds of Humility** [cf. E 164-168]. The three central Meditations, as has been noted repeatedly have precisely as their scope that of placing the retreatant really in the desirable attitude of an absolute openness to that which Christ is asking. This is the avowed purpose of the **Meditation on the Two Standards**, clearly tied into the active quest of the divine will leading toward **election**. So it is that Ignatius explains in the *preamble to consider the states*, this meditation ought to **in-struct** the suitable **disposition, being disposed [disponibile]**: "...While contemplating His life, let us begin to investigate and ask in what kind of life or in what state His Divine Majesty wishes to make use of us..." [cf. E 135]. This is also the purpose of the Meditation that follows immediately, that of **the Three Classes of Men** which the Saint expressly places in relationship with that **indifference** to be obtained. Thus in the final *remark*, explaining the manner of offering the *three colloquies*, [cf. E 156], he shows with implicit reference to the **oblation** [cf. E 98], the specific utility of this prayer [cf. E 157]. It is lastly, from the third meditation, **the Three Kinds of Humility**, which are presented as a "consideration" which is very profitable to make before entering into the **elections** and to attach oneself to the genuine doctrine of Christ our Lord [cf. E 164].

f. Just a word to begin on the first of the Meditations - **the spiritual combat in the following of Christ** - of which the believer is intimately bound not only to the *call of the Eternal King* [cf. E 91-98], but also to the *rules of discernment of spirits* [cf. E 313-336]. It is not without purpose to note here that the Exercises take up again this Augustinian theme of the encounter of two contrary mentalities: that of the demonic realm of Babylon on the one hand - and that of **the heavenly Kingdom of Jesus Christ** on the other. Fr. vonBalthasar notes in the Meditation on the **Two Standards** that Ignatius is inscribed in the most particular tradition which sees in the ascetic, in the spiritual person [Origen], and then in the monk [the Fathers of the desert, Evagrius, Pseudo-Macarius] and every believer living the evangelical vows, **the combatant for Christ par excellence**. At the center of his attention, there is not only the matter of the **interior attitude of the disciple** before Jesus Christ, but there is the challenge of the choice in His behalf of the consecrated life. To be **ready to follow Christ in the Spiritual Combat** against the powers of darkness [cf. E 142], means to be **disposed, available**, under the tile of His Divine Majesty, Who ought to be served and loved by choosing to follow Him in this challenging way. There is included in this the willingness to accept these three steps: poverty opposed to riches; insults, or contempt as opposed to the honor of this world; humility as opposed to pride [cf. E 146]. The lack of **indifference** would lead to repugnance [cf. E 157] - the



opposite of this is the prayer for the grace to wish to *imitate the more* Jesus Christ by these means, under the condition anew that this is the divine good pleasure of the Lord Himself.

g. This does not mean that such a Meditation does not have a social dimension. As Ignatius is careful to point out, this is a **life-long Spiritual Combat in the bosom of the Church**: "...It is necessary that all matters of which we wish to make a choice be either indifferent or good in themselves, and such that they are lawful within Holy Mother Church, and not bad or opposed to her..." [cf. E 170] - "We must put aside all judgment of our own, **and keep the mind ever ready and prompt to obey in all things the true Spouse of Christ our Lord, our holy Mother, the Hierarchical Church..**"[cf. E 353]. This is where the Lord wants to establish His Kingdom within this world: "...Consider how the Lord of all the world chooses so many persons, apostles, disciples, etc., and sends them **throughout the whole world to spread His sacred doctrine** among all men, no matter what their state or condition.." [cf. E 145] - "...To all His summons goes forth and to each one in particular He addresses the words: It is My Will to conquer the whole world and all My enemies and thus enter into the glory of My Father..." [cf. E 95]. Fr. vonBalthasar qualifies this battle as "dramatic", and he brings vividly the social and objective aspect, along with the challenge for the interior spiritual life of the believer. For Ignatius, the Founder of a Missionary Society, these are two aspects intimately connected, as with Augustine, whose fundamental vision he takes up, even though Ignatius concentrates the more on the interior attitude of Jesus Christ Himself: since the spiritual combat of Jesus Christ took place for the reconciliation of the world with God, it is also necessary that the spiritual combat of everyone who accepts to follow after Him, should have an eminently social, ecclesial aspect. In Corinthians, this was against **flesh and blood** [cf. 1 Co 10:13] - in Ephesians, it is against **the powers of the underworld** [cf. Ep 6:12].

Origen [who often referred to the terrible struggle of Moses, holding his arms up all through the battle, defying his own exhaustion -cf. Ex 17:8-16] - was already fully aware of this. However, it is Augustine who places this relationship in the boldest relief, and he does so for a two-fold reason:

- first of all, as in his Commentary on the Psalms, he never separates the drama of Jesus Christ, as Head, from the struggles of the Church, His Body;
- and secondly, in this manner [especially in his City of God ], Augustine situates this spiritual combat of the history of the world in the setting of the comparison of the Two Cities - that of God, and that of the world.

These two Bodies, since they are both combattants in the arena totally absorbed in the ardor of the combat, are so often so intertwined that it is difficult to distinguish any more between them. This will only be in the Judgment when there will be the clear distinction between them. If it is true that Augustine, as those who went before him, and as those who follow him, treated frequently of the **Christian Agony** on the individual level - for the frontiers of the two Cities pass through the hearts of

each of them - he never loses from view the soteriological and universal bearing of this engagement.

h. **Unreserved availability**, the condition for following Jesus Christ in His Combat [cf. Rv 19:11-16-the First Battle of the End, with the white horse appearing, his Rider being Faithful and True...Behind Him dressed in linnen of dazzling white, rode the armies of heaven, on white horses...I saw an angel standing on the sun...and then I saw the **Beast...**] - is equally a fruit that the meditation, subtle and almost casuistic, on **the three kinds of men**, ought to bring to the fervent believer. The First Class would like to be rid of attachment they have to the sum aquired in order to find God our Lord in peace and assure their salvation, but the hour of death comes, and they have not made use of any means [cf.E 153]. The Second Class want to rid themselves of the attachment, but they wish to do so in such a way that they retain what they have acquired, so that God is to come to what they desire and they do not decide to give up the sum of money in order to go to God, though this would be the better way for them [cf.E 154]. The Third Class want to rid themselves of the attachment, but they wish to do so in such a way that they desire neither to retain nor to relinquish the sum acquired. **They seek only to will and not to will as God our Lord inspires them**, and as seems better for the service and the praise of the Divine Majesty...As a result, the desire to be better able to serve God our Lord will be the cause of their accepting anything and relinquishing it [cf. E 155].

i. There thus appears here the precise point of the difficulty which the Meditation seeks to place in evidence: it is the lack of an actual, *hic et nunc*, **indifference**, in the presence of a good legitimately poossed, but one that is not purely in accord with the divine will. The lack of **indifference** falls into the unregulated affection in this regard. Different from this first kind of men, the second group is **disposed** to employ some means in order to despoil themselves of the affection, but they do not consent to do away with the object of their affection. To wait for authentic **indifference**, one has to ask God to be despoiled, even if that goes against the flesh [cf. E 157]:"... It should be noted that when we feel an attachment opposed to actual poverty, or a repugnance to it, when we are not indifferent to poverty and riches, it will be very helpful in order to overcome the inordinate attachment, even though corrupt nature rebel against it, to beg our Lord in the colluques to choose us **to serve Him in actual poverty**. We should insist that we desire it, beg for it, plead for it, provided, of course, that it be for the service and praise of the Divine Goodness. The Contemplation on the *Kingdom*, already proposed that this should go against the desires of the flesh [cf. E 97]. As such, detachment will always be repugnant to the natural man. Now, only that believer who is resolved to supress this natural and spontaneous aversion, as St. Ignatius invites one to do, will be achieved in the measure that one **offers him/herself to follow Jesus Christ in His Passion**, if such as the vocation that one receives [cf. E 150; 152-155].

j. Before considering the process of **election**, St. Ignatius proposes an ultimate stage in the "**struggle to achieve indifference**" under the form of "consideration" [cf. E 164] on the three kinds of Humility [cf. E 165-168]: to subject

and humble oneself as to obey the Law of God in all things; the second kind is more perfect: I neither desire nor am I inclined to have riches rather than poverty, to seek honor rather than dishonor, to desire a long life rather than a short one...; the third kind is the most perfect: when the first and second have been attained, then whenever the praise and glory of the Divine Majesty would be equally served, in order **to imitate and be in reality more like Christ our Lord**, I desire and choose poverty with Christ poor rather than riches; insults with Christ loaded with them, rather than honors; I desire to be accounted as worthless and a fool for Christ rather than to be esteemed as wise and prudent in this world. Fr. von Balthasar considers these to be the **degrees of availability**, of the renunciation of the right to dispose of oneself and one's daily life, and the on-going adjustment to the **divine dispositions**. [In the Latin languages, **availability** as **dispose, disposition and disponibilita'** are all from the same root]. With much originality, the Swiss theologian seeks to comprehend these differing degrees as **successive levels of the response to the particular grace of God** rendering the believer capable of **conforming his/her love** progressively and always more completely to the unfolding of Salvation History.

- **the First Degree** - represents the most undetermined form of **abasement** before God, corresponding to the OT sphere of **obeying the commandments** [cf. E 165]. It consists in obeying in full the Law of God our Lord, which obliges the believer under pain of mortal sin. In the OT the Law is that which spells out the global relationship of God with those who accept Him, and which confers on His **election** of His People its form and content. The Covenant of Mercy is due solely to the initiative of Yahweh and in no way was any reward bestowed on Israel [cf. Dt 7:6-7; 8:17]. And since this at the same time has a bilateral character, it is therefore moral. It only achieves its purpose when the People respond out of and obedience and fidelity [cf. Dt 7:7-10]. The Principle of **Election** is that free and gratuitous love of God, but precisely because it is such, this love requires from the Elect a response of love that is also free. The solicited response rests however, on a most general level. The alternatives are clear : either "for" God, or "against" Him, as can be noted in Dt itself [cf. Dt 30:15]: You see, I propose to you today life and happiness, **or** death and misfortune!

- **the Second Degree**: is more perfect than the first. This is marked with a more refined **availability, disposition** toward the divine will. The danger one must guard against here does not only concern mortal sin, but wilful venial sin: "... this **indifference**, this second kind of humility supposes that not for all creation , nor to save my life, would I consent to commit a venial sin..."[cf. E 166]. Such a decision requires of me, the grace for which I should petition the Lord, is in **conformity** with what is already asked in the *principle and foundation* [cf. E 23]:

"... [The First Foundation and Principle]:...Therefore, we must make ourselves **indifferent** to all created things, as far as we are allowed free choice and are not under any prohibition. Consequently, as far as we are concerned, we should not prefer health to sickness, riches to poverty, honor to dishonor, a long life to a short one. This same holds for all other things. Our one desire and choice should be what is more conducive to the end for which we were created." [cf. E 23]. This is the point, and it is

truly the **only point** - that of **indifference** properly so-called: I await all from the good will of God, with a **total availability** which does not allow any interior disorder to hinder it.

Since the First Degree applies more to the OT world, Fr. vonBalthasar comments: that it is situated on the threshold of the OT and the NT, since God appears as a Personal God, and therefore, endowed with a Personal will and and plan. Before ever exposing His Kind Plan, He asks of His "own" a certain level of obedience.

The author does not offer here much of an explanation, but His thought is clear, above all if one thinks of the person of **Mary**, the Mother of Jesus. The humility in question - that of the **BVM** - is that of the "lowly handmaid" [cf. Lk 1:48]. Even before hearing the voice of the Angel, Mary lived in an **attitude of total docility**, refusing to prejudge anything. The Annunciation [cf. Lk 1:26-38] and Simeon's Oracle [cf. Lk 2:34-35], as well as the following ordeals that came to her as the Passion of her Divine Son approached [cf. Lk 2:48-50; 8:19-21] - these will always discover in her that **radical availability**. The profound motivation of this in her is a **fundamental indifference**, that no other 'difference' could ever substantially change. This Second Degree of Humility invites every fervent believer, in an analogous manner, to step beyond the threshold of the OT and the NT, and to open oneself up into **indifference** toward personal revelation of God Himself and His Son, even before His Kind Plan of Mercy in my regard has become manifest to me. Added on to the **indifference** of the First Degree of Humility, that requires the keeping of the Commandments, the response of the believer is not resolved in the simple alternative "for God", or "against Him" - but, there is need more an attitude of **active availability** and **expectancy**, awaiting upon His particular will in my regard. This means purifying oneself from every interior disorder. The believer thus tends toward a perfect equilibrium of values, even good ones [such as wealth, or a long life] of a natural human existence. The believer on this level is resolved to avoid even at the risk of losing one's life, even the minimum departure from the good will of God, under whatever form this is manifested.

- **the Third Degree of Humility**: if the Second Degree is the the place properly suited for **perfect indifference**, it is hard to see from the surface why the Saint would want to go further. However, the first two Degrees of Humility lead to a Third Kind, qualified as "the most perfect" [cf. E 167]: "... I desire and choose poverty with Christ poor...insults with Christ loaded with them; ...a fool for Christ.." In opening up this perspective of a choice which goes beyond even **pure indifference**, Fr. von Balthasar asks whether Ignatius provides something of a shock. The Swiss theologian wishes to keep Ignatius from any accusation of spiritual voluntarism. Thus, this Third Degree is clearly within the challenges of the NT. The specific difference is the fact that the form provided for the choice of God's will is **based on the Person of Jesus Christ**: the choice of poverty, shame, the folly of the Cross. However, Ignatius avoids making, *by this very fact*, out of this determined background and support, a particular specification of the Divine Will for the follower of Christ, thinking of oneself in any prideful manner. In this view, even though the retreatant might have believed that he/she was perfectly at

ease with the first two Kinds of Humility, there is within the observance of the commandments an invitation to go even beyond the **indifference** of the threshold of the inter-testamental mentality. The choice of the Cross is subjected to a clear condition: that the first two degrees of humility are included within the third one. Therefore, it is not enough to be satisfied in a general manner, with the habitual observance of the precepts - but there is also expressly **an habitual attitude of indifference**, and further, provided that the choice of the Cross does not proceed from some personal preference and an "enthusiast's" offering of self - but, that such a choice be made with the realistic conviction of an objective **election** on the part of God for us.

k. In playing with the words [in German] on *difference/indifference*, Fr. von Balthasar wishes to show how the practice, or the attitude of **indifference**, consists not so much in making one's own the choice between different possibilities that appear equal in one's faith, as though this could never be surpassed by the further subjective option of anything else that could appear better. As has been made abundantly clear, it is not a matter of rendering choices indifferent, but of **rendering oneself indifferent**. That which characterizes created reality is precisely the inherent differences among different manifestations of it - the fact that they are not purely and simply the only choice, but that each one of them is something that the others are not. If it is true that this is what actually differentiates the created world from the Creator, their ontological difference, recognized according to their value, and accepted as such - this is the decisive criterion of the choice, since this can only be the positive will of God Himself.

l. A similar attitude is the only unequivocal basis upon which one can build an entire Christian life called the **sequela Christi**. In desiring powerfully the grace to be **conformed to the Lord**, this will include the acceptance **even of His shame and suffering**. The disciple who is authentically **indifferent**, commits him/herself to the plans of God, from Whom the committed believer is willing to accept those graces which are fundamentally Christological, emanating from His **Paschal Mystery**: "...this is the **offering of myself** which I make with Your favor and help. I protest that this is my earnest desire and my deliberate choice, provided that it is for Your greater service and praise, **to imitate You in bearing all wrongs and all abuse and all poverty, both actual and spiritual**, should Your most holy majesty deign to choose and admit me to such a state and way of life..." [cf. E 98; 147; 167]. The Third Kind of Humility which has the figure of **the abasement of the Cross**, corresponds to a special invitation which is not addressed to all in the same manner. To wish to commit oneself on this way of life would mean to make a judgment regarding the divine plan in one's own life. This implies in an eminent manner the avoidance of anticipating the divine election by a choice of one's own personal will, choosing a specific way of a personal program of perfection. The Third Kind of Humility can only be chosen in a response that is **totally indifferent**, under the free initiative of the Lord Himself. And the guarantee that the choice of this Third Kind of Humility does not go against **the fundamental disposition of indifference**, is simply this: that such a willing acceptance is accomplished in the observance of the indications contained in the First and Second Kind of Humility, which only responds to a particular objective appeal

originating in the grace of God Himself. Under these conditions, the Third Degree of Humility escapes the risk to which it could easily be exposed: to reduce surreptitiously the *sequla Christi* to a kind of general *ethical imitation of Christ*.

m. This deeper manner of interpreting the Third Kind of Humility, beginning with the dialectic of the two Testaments at work in Salvation History, projects into the notion of **availability** a singular clarification, that is **authentically Christological**. No longer the First Degree of Humility, the “bits and scraps” that made up the Old Covenant, which, though, are not done away with by the New Covenant. In entering into this world, the Son of God accomplished the Law [cf. Mt 5:17]: He realizes in an unforeseeable and superabundant manner the prescriptions and the prophecies of the OT. On the other hand, the Old Covenant does not lead to the New Covenant, just on its own - but, does so by reason of the elective intervention of God in history. In Jesus Christ, God has taken a step beyond the usual indifference, and resolutely has chosen that ‘difference’ under the form of poverty, shame, humiliation and the like [cf. E 167]. **For the Son of God the humiliation of the Incarnation and the Cross signify an act of abasement and obedience before the Father**. In his/her folly, the fervent Christian, who has lowered him/herself even to the complete obedience of the precepts, obliging oneself not only under pain of mortal sin, but even to the avoidance of venial sin - can then be invited to chose this higher “difference” of the Third Kind of Humility. If the committed believer agrees to live in **indifference**, one comes to know then that this is received as **a gift from on high**, totally disproportionate in relation to one’s own forces. It is through **personal contemplation** that the believer needs to **discover the particular indication for him/her of the divine will for the rest of one’s life**. One can come to see that the Revelation of the Old and New Covenant does not constitute only the general background within which there is manifested the divine plan of salvation. Rather, this Revelation fixes the general form that ought to challenge the human disposition of carrying out the will of God. The interior attitude of **availability** is the First Degree of Humility, which at the threshold of the NT is radicalized by a clear **indifference** - and this is the Second Degree. And for those to whom it may be given [cf. Mt 9:11], the **indifference** will lead to the humiliation of the Cross, according to the free choice worked out by God in Jesus Christ - and this is the Third Degree of Humility, or **availability to the Paschal Mystery** [cf. E 165-167].

§§§

### Summary

[1] Ignatius' great Prayer: [***Take, Lord, and accept all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will...***] [cf. E 234] springs from a heart which has allowed itself to be taken over by the breadth of the divine love and leads to the intra-Trinitarian depths. This is the offering of one's entire being - this is the **oblation** that is the most conformable possible to the **Lord's condescendence**, Who has decided to **have given all to me...** This ***Take, Lord, and Receive*** ... presents the imperative verb form which marks the ardent decision of the gift, is tempered by the humble reserve of the second verb, marking the receptivity which is at the base of every genuine decision to serve Jesus Christ. Fr. vonBalthasar seems to shift slightly the emphasis, from the one offering the prayer, and puts it on the **One to Whom the oblation is addressed**: this is the Lord Who in His sovereign liberty, can, should He so choose, **welcome the sacrifice of His faithful believer**. As for this latter, the basic attitude depicted here is that he/she is allowing this to take place, permitting him/herself to be taken over and transformed, in so far as this is possible for a creature to do so, to the depths of the intra-divine love expressed among the three Persons.

[2] One of the first applications of the Grain of Wheat has placed very powerfully the emphasis on the sacrificial dimension of the unconditional oblation of one's entire self: the face of God is a visage which shines out of the intense darkness. In order to see it, we need to throw ourselves and all that we possess, into the fire: the world, our friends, our hopes. The flame flickers, consumes what we have placed in it, and in the brilliance of this fire the clarity of the Beloved Face is illumined. But, the flame then flickers down - we need now to bring to the fire those last attachments that we hold dear: honor, success, our own will, our own intelligence, our heart, and finally, ourself: ***absolve et suscipe!*** This is not some gift, but is more and more the consciousness of having been taken over, the duty that is felt of committing oneself so completely. **All is grace**: the appearance of God - the grace and every sacrifice which intensifies the flame. **All is grace** - the conclusion of the *Diary of a Country Priest*. The sentiment is also attributed to the Little Flower, in her *Last Conversations*, June 5, 1897. St. Francis of Assisi wrote something like it in his letter to a certain Minister: ***omnes debes habere pro gratia***. The ideal is also Ignatian: "... it is not within our power to acquire and attain great devotion, intense love, tears, or any other spiritual consolation; but ***that all this is the gift and grace of God, our Lord...***" [E 322].

[3] Such is the Burning Bush that appeared to Moses [cf. Ex 3:1-6] - God is a Devouring Fire Who takes and consumes all that the believer possesses even to the gift of each and every believer. ***Sume...absolve...*** include even more than the **active gift** of the believer. The believer responds to the divine initiative - the **oblation** of each is an acceptance on the part of God of a **sacrifice** already **offered** and accomplished. The fervent believer stands before the Devouring Flame in a passive [in that God has taken the initiative], but most willing abandonment to God. Fr. von Balthasar is said to push this Ignatian prayer to the extreme in making of it a Petition to be consumed in the Living Flame, wherein the face of the Divine Beloved shines. Hesitancy regarding self-giving presents an obstacle to the movement of love, which is

meant to be an intense, but ‘**indifferent**’ **abandonment of self** - with all one’s spiritual powers: ***my memory, my intelligence and all my will and all that I have an possess...*** The fervent believer commits him/herself to God so that He might dispose fully one one’s entire being. However, the ***absume [ receive]*** does not mean a gift for destruction. Finite freedom which hands oneself over to infinite Liberty is not actually destroyed, or purely and simply absorbed in His fire. The **sacrifices** which feed this Devouring Flame have been moved by grace also for the benefit of the fervent believer. While this is indeed a **holocaust, a destruction of the gift** offered in one sense - in the Plan of God, **self-giving** is the supreme realization of the believer.

[4] The question arises: then, in what sense is the abandonment of limited freedom into the hands of absolute Liberty a grace; and does it have a positive character for the believer making this **oblation of self**? Some see this all as “negative”. However, a worthy response would take us far beyond these pages. The **handing over of self into the hands of God** and His **elective will** implies for the personal liberty of the committed believer the renunciation of actualizing the possibility of rendering oneself independent, autonomous, and of separating oneself from God. Before the absolute positive nature of God, the creature necessarily appears in his/her negativity. However, sinful human nature might be the vehicle of one’s vindicating sinful autonomy from the Creator. However, this attitude of rebellion is hollow, vain and empty. Ancient philosophers were already aware of this: the realization of oneself passes necessarily through the acceptance of **the Divine Absolute** as the absolute norm of creaturely existence. Every secondary cause created free does possess the authentic positive aspects of liberty and proper dignity. These two qualities find their most positive fulfillment in the participation in the freedom that God offers, in Himself, to His free creatures. If one emphasizes solely the ‘negative’ aspects of **oblation**, including the handing over of all that the most represents us as creatures who are free, or should human beings ever come to think of their personal freedom as equal, or along-side the divine freedom, one eventually is called to see that **autonomy for a free creature is only ultimately fulfilled in submission to Divine Liberty**. In restoring an elevated, purified and ‘bettered’ human freedom back to the creature, after it has ***re-capitulated*** in and through the Divine Freedom, this truly ennobles free creation. Divine Grace which enables one **to share in God** is the authentic Liberation for creation. In “**dispossessing oneself**”, the creature finds access to its deepest and most enriching self: ***in the depths of one’s nothingness, there God is found!*** This is the only path open for one to grasp this paradox: “...the more the soul is in solitude and seclusion, the more fit it renders itself to approach and be united with its Creator and Lord; and the more closely it is united with Him, the more it **disposes** itself to receive graces and gifts from the infinite goodness of its God...” [cf. E 20]. Only to one who accepts being detached from self in order to **hand over his/her heart and all one’s being** is there ever given the possibility of grasping hold of the One Who by essence is beyond every grasp.

[5] Fr. vonBalthasar rediscovers the fundamental idea that he has developed elsewhere: **authentic indifference is the active handing of oneself over to God**. Passivity and activity are integrated in a unique attitude of **oblation** before God: death to every earthly inclination that is disordered, and in this the Christian comes to love



the Creator in all His creatures and loves all of them in Him. The fervent believer does not cease to be a believer who is independent and free, but this creaturely independence and liberty are lived out in an act of **voluntary and total receptivity** in the presence of the sovereign will of God. The believer yearns for nothing other than to be committed to the **transparent service of the Master** Who has entrusted each with the same Mission that He received personally from His Father [cf. Jn 20:21, ff.]. The pious faithful effaces him/herself before the One Who sends each one and Whom each one is called to **re-present**, in the same manner in which the viceroy, or the “vicar” as perfectly as is possible, commits his/her total personal, intellectual and creative powers to the service of the thought and the will of the sovereign. In metaphysical terms, this means the sacrifice of self, the **self-effacement, self-emptying** [cf. Ph 2:5,ff.] of the free believer. This is not any self-destruction, or annihilation, but adds in each one’s unique manner to the **ever greater glory of God**, Whom each wants to serve in this manner. According to vonBalthasar, the unique merit of St. Ignatius has been to have taken most seriously the traditional teaching on the **analogia entis**, and therefore, has taken seriously into consideration has will the consistency and the constancy willed by God, of all the secondary causes, instrumental causes and their proper contribution to the divine plan of Mercy and Wisdom. The **Suscipe** of Ignatius does not imply for any believer the ‘destruction, or annihilation’ of one’s nature. This prayer is simply a very fervent and willing **self-emptying** of one’s spirit. In this prayer each one chooses freely the choices of God and hands over all to His supreme rights in a manner that allows God greater freedom to work within the free wills of all by His grace.

[6] In the effort to explain all this, Fr. vonBalthasar takes up again and synthesizes a number of ideas which are now familiar to anyone who has some grasp of the Ignatian manner: when the believer becomes despoiled of every self-aggrandizement, and is **indifferent and abandoned** to the totality of the Divine Will, he/she does not fall headlong into some formless abyss, or void, of the divinity. Rather, this **con-forms, re-forms, trans-forms** one through the infinite will of the Father in accord with the image of His Only Son, and obtains thereby a well defined form which is the Being of Jesus Christ Himself, or that of Christ in the believer. It is for the sake of being able to welcome this form that the Spiritual Exercises aim. Their scope is precisely that of continuing to contemplate His life, in order to begin to investigate and ask what kind of life, or in what state His Divine Majesty wishes to make use of us...” [cf. E 135]. This is the process of discerning this particular form of life that the Lord is offering to us, **of totally following Jesus Christ**. This “way” has a very clear form and embraces the entire human existence of the believer as is presented to all in the call of the disciples in the Gospels. This also implies that for anyone who would respond, it is necessary to “leave all” in the philosophical sense - and this includes oneself, all self-interests, all autonomous disposition of oneself and one’s own life. This becomes a “theological” leaving behind in allowing **the service of Jesus Christ** to have full reign within oneself and to maintain this particular **disposition** with regard to all else. Finite Liberty sees itself ‘mobilized’ in an unconditional manner by Infinite Freedom in order then to be **co-engaged** by this divine freedom in the infinite engagement of God in behalf of the world, the Church. And even this commitment to being engaged by God in His Son is definitive and unconditional, living out the total commitment of Jesus Christ. He

beckons to each one to follow Him for the rest of one's life: ***Totum exigit te qui te fecit!*** Is the expression of St. Augustine. And this is possible only through the grace that is bestowed under the form of elevated, purified human freedom. It is only divine grace that empowers finite freedom to be inserted ever more fully into the infinite Freedom.

[7] In the order of sin, out of which each Christian proceeds [cf. Rm 3:9; 5:8], this makes it all the more difficult to leave behind one's finite freedom and to be authentically, totally opened to infinite Liberty. The entire itinerary traced out by Ignatius' Exercises, beginning with the First Week, has the scope of preparing the ground for God. Each is challenged to pass through the unconditional renunciation of all one's personal good. The **handing over of human freedom** which Ignatius pursues, cannot be understood in any pantheistic sense of an absorption into an indefinite infinite. And to echo an even more radical philosophy: the "non-being" of the creature with relation to God cannot find its resolution in the Buddhist ideal of Nirvanah. On the one hand, even with the abstraction made of sinful human nature, it is still necessary to maintain the ontological difference that is intended when speaking of the occurrence of any project that a finite freedom can work out for itself - nor, could this ever correspond of itself to the Kind and Merciful Plan that infinite Liberty proposes. If finally, silence imposes itself, this is not as in "negative theology", by reason of the insufficiency of every concept and every word to even remotely touch the ultimate reality, but simply because **the gift offered** to the creature is without any common measure in relation to everyone's natural capacities. This is the **Silence of Adoration**, which is at the same time a positive response, aroused by the same gift of grace.

[8] To express the properly Christian specificity of this graced accomplishment of finite Liberty within the Infinite Freedom, Fr. vonBalthasar introduces the term "Over-Word", which he opposes to the "Non-word" of the extra biblical mystics. The ***sume et suscipe*** of St. Ignatius is basically the supreme acceptance of the Love of God offering itself in the uniquely "Over-Word" of His own Son, and the response which the believer is **graced** to give to this, by his/her own 'over-word' offered in response. It is here finally that "negative theology" becomes the place of a perfect encounter, not so much in a dialogue on the level of equality, but in a **transformation** of the entire creature into a **behold the hand-maid/servant** of God, as one who disemburses him/herself and fills the empty regions in the divine unfathomable mystery of God and His service.

[9] The **total sacrifice of oneself** and the complete **handing over** of one's freedom into the hands of God have for their underlying motive the graced encounter with the Word made flesh. The ultimate expression of this Word shines out from the darkness of Calvary, from the pulpit of the Cross in its eloquent silence. The **Silence of the Cross** is the "Over-Word" of love which goes to the very limit in the **abandonment of self** pcf. Jn 15:13]. Beyond its necessarily negative character, this **oblation, offertory** assumes a totally positive dimension. Outside of Christianity, any process that comes anywhere near to this one, ends fatally in a kind of absorption of temporal existence in the divine life. In Jesus, however, this **abandonment** opens out

through His mediation into a **participation** in the sublime interior movement of the divine relationships, such as these are manifested in the **submission** of the human will of Jesus Christ to the will of His Father: **...not as I will, but as You will!** [cf. Lk 22:42]. In Jesus Christ, accomplishing on the Cross, in an absolutely free choice, the Trinitarian design of Mercy, one perceives how human freedom can and should, in renouncing its own free will, deploys itself totally within the divine Liberty. However, one discovers likewise how this preference of the divine will is at the same time a manner of allowing this to act through His human will. The **sume et suscipe** thus appears in its positive nature, as always intended by Ignatius: this is a “yes”, like that of Mary of the believer to **God’s love abandoning Himself in His Incarnate Son**. There is needed the human graced effort to respond, through the ‘over-word’ offered to each one, in that mystery of grace which always is to **share the divine nature** [cf. 2 P 1:4]. Thus, far from being enveloped, absorbed in God’s Will, the free believer accedes, gives in to the authentic freedom. However, as Liberation is achieved by **obedience to the truth** [cf. 1` P 1:22], the emphasis is placed on the consistency that is proper to freedom, which is acquired. This inspired the pious and fervent faithful to efface oneself, much like the Servant of the Lord, the Handmaid of the Lord, for whom the Almighty has done great things through His mercy [cf. 1:49].

[10] This is the aspect of **self-effacement** which doubtlessly characterizes the rather ‘free translation’ that Fr. von Balthasar gives to the Ignatian Prayer. Without being ‘abolished”, the believer ‘disappears’ discreetly behind the Divine Persons, Who more and more take over the central place of one’s mind and heart and being. One could not better end this reflection than in pondering a version, a paraphrasing of the prayer in which Ignatius might be seen as being read in the Johannine spirit of Fr. vonBalthasar:

[The *Suscipe* of St. Ignatius – free translation from Fr. von Balthasar]

**All that I can be and have, liberty, memory, intelligence,  
will, body and good, belong to You, all comes from you,  
and to You, I had it all over.**

**Administer them, beyond my interests, in Your own way,  
and, in exchange, allow to live in me only Your love and grace,  
and these are enough for me...**

**AMEN!”**

□□□

## EXCURSUS II:

### A Theological Reflection on St. Ignatius' *Suscipe*

#### Biblical and Eucharistic Fonts

#### [Trinitarian Dimensions of Divine Self-Giving]

This much prayed prayer manifests possibly two central sources:

[Outline]

- **The Biblical Source** for this prayer seems to be Christ's own Personal relationship to His Father – it presents a Eucharistic Application:
  - Trinitarian Dimensions
  - Eucharistic Dimensions: Oblation
- **The Teaching of Two Great Saints**
  - St. Thomas and St. Ignatius [from his Military back- ground].
  - Ignatius' famous Letter on Obedience.

□

### 1. An apparent Biblical, Christological and Eucharistic Source for Ignatius' *Suscipe*

#### Divine Self-Giving [The Self-Giving of the Trinity]

*... Since God did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up to benefit us all, we may be certain, after such a gift, that He will not refuse anything He can give... [cf. Rm 8:32].*

*Yes, God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not be lost, but may have eternal life... [cf. Jn 3:16].*

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### 2. **Obsequium Patris: The Father's Role in the Passion of His Son** <sup>45</sup>

a. There is no doubt that this reflection is a challenge. It has provoked to indignation some non-believers, and given anguish to generations of fervent Christians: how could the all-loving Father hand over His innocent Son? A century and a half before St. Thomas, St. Anselm had stated with much power this general sentiment: under what title of 'justice' could He have handed over to death the most just man who ever lived, in the place of sinful humanity? Who, then, even among

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Jean-Pierre Torrell, OP, *Le Christ en ses mysteres. La vie et l'oeuvre de Jesus selon saint Thomas d'Aquin*. Tome 1. Jesus et Jesus-Christ. 78. Paris: Desclée 1999, pp. 361-368, passim.

human beings, could ever condemn an innocent person to liberate one who was culpable, without incurring a judgment which would condemn such a person?<sup>46</sup>

b. This is still an aspect of the mystery that is hard to understand, even in our own times. It seems that most theologians by-pass this matter completely as it is one of those “uncomfortable” aspects of this mystery. Even the most precise and integral theologians who do treat of it show themselves to be somewhat ill-at-ease regarding it. However, it does not seem fitting simply to neglect it - it has biblical support, and does indicate something of the enormous mystery of God’s **Self-giving** for us, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. St. Thomas did grapple with it and his words still beckon out to us today. As the great Angelic Doctor learned and wrote well of the Crucified and Risen Lord - and he had a sublime sense of the sacred page. He takes up this most difficult aspect of the mystery with that ease and calm that is characteristic of the Angelic Doctor.

### 3. Handed over by His Own Father!

a. It is a revealed fact that God is faithful, and is without iniquity [cf. Dt 32:4] - and yet, for all apparent purposes, it would be most cruel to hand over an innocent man to a terrible Passion and Death - this would seem to be something that is both “impious and cruel”<sup>47</sup> St. Thomas offers this objection<sup>48</sup> and answers it by saying that **out of charity Jesus handed Himself** over out of love for us, citing St. Paul [cf. Ep 5:2] - in this sense, the Father did not “force” anything. Many others handed Jesus over, such as Judas who sold Him out [cf. Jn 6:71] - some of the Jews contemporary with Jesus [cf. Jn 18:35]; Pilate did so out of his own weakness and human respect [cf. Jn 19:16]. In this way, the loving Father did not hand over His only Begotten and most beloved Son.

b. Nonetheless, we have the biblical texts cited above [cf. Rm 8:32; Jn 3:16]. There is in no way any conflict between these inspired texts. The balancing act between all these texts shows the old Scholasticism in its pure state: the apparent contradictions of the inspired word of God provoke the theologian to profound contemplation. Some see in this the forerunner of Hegelian thought processes: **thesis/antithesis/synthesis**. For this, too, is a manner of fathoming to the depths of sublime truth.

c. The synthesis of St. Thomas Aquinas: in his “jargon”, he would call this a **magisterial determination**: Christ suffered voluntarily out of obedience to the Father. Hence, in three aspects God the Father did deliver up Christ to the Passion:

- in the first way, because by **His eternal Will** He preordained Christ’s Passion for the deliverance of the human race, according to the words of Isaiah [53:6]: *The Lord laid on Him the iniquities of us all*; and again, verse 10: *The Lord was pleased to bruise Him in infirmity*;

<sup>46</sup> St. Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo?*, in: SC 91. Paris 1963, pp. 241,261.

<sup>47</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, III Sent. D. 20, a. 5, qc. 1, obj. 1

<sup>48</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, SCG IV 55, obj. 16 et ad 16 um ##3910; 3949.

- secondly, inasmuch as by the **infusion of charity**, the Father inspired Jesus with the will to suffer for us; hence, we read in the same passage: *He was offered because it was His own will* [v. 7];
- thirdly, by not shielding Him from the Passion,, but **abandoning** Him to His persecutors: thus, we read in Mt 27:40 that Christ, while hanging upon the Cross cried out: *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* Because, He left Him in the power of His persecutors, as Augustine says<sup>49</sup>.

In any superficial reading, this response is still somewhat startling - one has to conclude that in some mysterious way, sublimely hidden in the unfathomable reality of Divine Mercy, the Father is “responsible” for Christ’s death. But, is this really the thought of the Angelic Doctor? One will note here that Thomas has already used some of these reflections in other contexts. The divine pre-ordination in no manner puts into play the positive divine will that could ever be the cause of evil. Thus, God in no way is the cause of the cruel murder of Jesus Christ - the end result of a series of grave sins. God foreknew these, permitted them - but did not positively will them. It cannot be forgotten that St. Thomas is the cautious theologian here: in striving to recognize the relationship that exists between events, it is difficult in not expressing this multi-faceted mystery in terms that would be a record of a kind of “before and after... then what happened”, as in detective novels. With consummate care, St. Thomas avoids the risk of even suggesting any idea of a direct causality on the part of God in any evil what so ever, which is abhorrent to the Thomistic system. He takes great care to avoid any such consideration.

The second reason alleged above - that of **the Son’s free will of choice** because the Father infused charity within His Son that moved Him **to hand Himself** over to death. It was infinite divine love which changed capital punishment - which has nothing to do with religious **oblation** - into an **offertory** of His precious life for the redemption of the world. St. Thomas clarifies his position quite well: ...yes, it is very true that God **the Father handed over** Jesus Christ. This would have been “impious and cruel” had this been against the Will of the innocent Christ. However, **in handing the Son over**, the Father inspired into Him the **free will to suffer for us**. Much like a mother giving birth suffers the pangs of birth - but, when she sees new life, she rejoices mightily! In like manner, Jesus is compared to a Mother giving birth [cf. Jn 16:21]. Some would see in this the “severity” of God [: ... *do not forget: that God can be severe, as well as kind...* [cf. Rm 11:22]. He has chosen freely not to remit sin without some drastic penalty - while the central divine relative attribute is His **hesed**, that He is a God, rich in Mercy [cf. Ep 2:4]. This is supremely evident: no human being could ever satisfy for sin - the gravity of which is measured by the dignity of the Person offended. Since “satisfaction” was beyond human capacity, each human being was condemned to eternal death. The Heavenly Father sent His only Son. It is for us that He has handed over His own Son: ... *both Jew and pagan are justified by the free gift of His grace by being redeemed in Christ Jesus Who was **appointed by God to sacrifice His life** so as to win reconciliation through faith. In this way, God makes His*

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<sup>49</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 47, a. 3.

*justice known; first, for the past, when sins went unpunished because He held His hand; then, for the present age, by showing positively that He is just and that He justifies everyone who believes in Jesus...* [cf. Rm 3:24, ff.]. God established propitiation by faith in the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ.

The phrase underlined here could be badly understood and seen as a kind of subterfuge on the part of God in order to “exonerate” Himself from all responsibility in this mysterious issue. This is not an uncommon “human manner” of conducting oneself whenever a person strives to persuade someone else something that the persuader finds distasteful. Nonetheless, the mystery remains, because God’s ways of acting are not ours [cf. Ho 11:9]. However, such a procedure would indeed be unworthy of God - it is sufficient to recall the conditions of divine concourse in human activity in order to comprehend how this mystery unfolds in the situation of the Redeemer of the world. Acting within us, God never brings violence to bear within us, nor any deception, when He moves us to act selflessly. The illumination of the Holy Spirit permits us to see the ultimate, and authentic good, as wisdom enables us to judge reality in charity from the ultimate causes. Then the **Gift of Fortitude** gives us the courage to work it all out. But God never moves a free will from within toward what would not be in the best ultimate interests of a human being. This is all the more so in the case of His only Begotten, most beloved Son. In His quality of divine Word, Jesus Christ shares with the Father in one and the same Divine Will and Plan for the salvation of the world. Thus, the human will of Jesus freely accepts the Father’s will - not My [human] Will, but the one divine will is to be accomplished in the loving obedience of Jesus Christ.

All this effort to penetrate what is total mystery, handed Jesus Christ over and that He hands Himself over [ad 2um]. St. Thomas makes this observation: in so far as He is God, Jesus Christ has **handed Himself over** to death by one and the same will and action as that of the **Father in handing Him over**. In His humanity, Jesus Christ has **handed Himself over** in a “con-joined” free will inspired by His Father. There is, therefore, no opposition in the fact that the Father **had handed Jesus over**, nor in the fact that **Jesus handed Himself over**. This doctrine is not something new to St. Thomas - from the centuries that preceded him, the Angelic Doctor simply presented the common belief that all the divine actions *ad extra* is common to all three divine Persons<sup>50</sup>: **God the Father - rather, the entire Trinity, handed Jesus Christ over**. Hence, not only is there no opposition among the Persons of the Trinity and the human nature of Jesus Christ, but there is a sublime harmony between the Will of the Incarnate Son and that of the Heavenly Father. Thus, any limitation of this mystery to the unilateral Will of the Father simply has never been the teaching of the Church. All of this is lost in the enormous mystery of Divine love of infinite **Self-giving**.

There is little doubt that to “**hand one [self] over**” is a strong term. It is the Latin term *tradere*, as in *contemplata tradere*. It means to hand on, hand down; to transmit - and might even mean “to betray”. It comes from the Greek term, *paradidomai*:

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<sup>50</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, III Sent. D. 20, a. 5, qc 1.

- it is used to describe the Father's action, out of love for humanity;
- it is used to describe Jesus' action, out of loving obedience to the Father's Plan of universal redemption;
- it is used to Judas, who "betrayed" Jesus out of treason and cupidity;
- some of the Jews "handed Jesus" over to Pilate out of their violated sense of "justice" - and Pilate "handed Him over" to the executioners, out of weakness, human respect.

In using one and the same word to describe actions of a widely spread motivation draws attention to this act and the reasoning behind it. The same action is judged for the good and for evil, following the diverse root out of which it proceeds. The Father acts out of love; and Jesus in loving obedience **offers Himself** in union with the Father's Will and Plan. They are eternally praised - Judas out of cupidity; while some of the Jews out of hostility; and Pilate out of weakness before the threat of Julius Caesar. They are all to be blamed [cf. ad 3 um]. This *paradidomai* makes one think of **making a Eucharistic Oblation of one's entire life.**

This is St. Thomas' contemplation on the mysterious manner in which the Father has "**handed over**" His only Begotten, Most Beloved Son - as that which is the most precious to Himself. In pondering the careful manner in which theology handles this mystery, there is nothing that appears beyond our praise. The reflections have unfolded, riveted to the texts of Sacred Scripture and theology's development is little more than a paraphrasing of the biblical statements. St. Thomas is able to penetrate the profound sense of God's word and bringing out **the infinite love of God** which alone could inspire such **Self-giving**. It is much like the situation in which theological reflection can assign to the initial creation no other motivation other than the superabundance of Divine Love and Mercy, which "moved" God from deep within to will to **share His own life, happiness and joy**. In like manner, when we reflect after the fact on that which we can grasp of salvation History, we can arrive at no other conclusion: all the divine actions *ad extra* are what unites the Persons among themselves: their Infinite Love, which in our regard, assumes the nature of Mercy. While the possibilities of the divine motivation for action are all elevated to His infinite Charity, this is the best expression here. ***God so loved the world that He gave up, handed over, His only Son!*** Thus, this is the only option theology has in seeking to grasp the divine "motivation" on all that we observe and contemplate. It is simply the love of God [cf. Jn 3:16]. Thus, Jesus was incarnate out of love; lived His mysteries out of love; and died for the same motive How incomprehensible is that love of Charity, exclaimed St. Gregory the Great!<sup>51</sup>

Every now and then, a theologian will unilaterally emphasize one aspect of this complex mystery, and bring much confusion into the entire Mystery of Salvation. It is still difficult to understand the **Slaughter of the Innocents**, in the many and diverse ways this still happens through the centuries. Why is the divine response so often so muted? Certainly, the "forfeit" of the life of the most innocent of all victims, leaves

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<sup>51</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, In Ep 3, 19, lect. 5 - # 178.



ample space for reflection, contemplation and wonder. This became the contemplation of Dennis, the Carthusian, and then of Luther and Calvin. In our own day, this theme is pondered by Karl Barth and Wolfhart Pannenberg. The reflection is that the divine justice in the Father has been “irritated” by persistent human sin and this has demanded reparation for all this. For some theologians of “substitution”, the Son of God has “substituted” for us to appease by His death the vindictive anger of God. One of the risks of the theory of “substitution” is that once the “substitute” takes the stage [as in opera] - or, the field, in the area of sports: then, the “prima donna”, or the “regular” would have nothing to do. In our situation, this cannot be true: God has created us without us, but will not redeem us without us.

There are two very challenging texts that are perennially pondered: ***For our sake, God made the sinless one into sin, so that in Him we might become the goodness of God...*** [cf. 2 Co 5:21] - ***... Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law by being cursed for our sake- since Scripture says, Cursed be everyone hanged on a tree...*** [cf. Ga 3:13]<sup>52</sup>.

The “necessity” of Christ’s Passion does not stem from any whimsical divine will. The “necessity” is called “historical” which is produced **by a concatenation of contingent causes** which could have all unfolded in a different manner. The authentic will of God was that of reconciling to Himself the whole cosmos in His Son. However, this could have been realized by His simple preaching and testimony of love. This same love, rejected by the ill will of certain creatures, moved Jesus to bring His witness to the ultimate extreme in human terms, even unto bleeding to death through His Sacred Stigmata on the Cross. This tragic death, by capital punishment, had been the consequence only indirectly willed through that unique love for humanity which Jesus Christ shares with His Father. Because of the hardness of the human heart, God chose the most sublime example to teach the horror of even one sin, and the infinity of His love. It makes no sense now in the light of a completed divine revelation to wonder if God “might” have done this some other way. St. Thomas has the penchant to take revelation as it is - the name “Jesus” means “Yahweh saves” - therefore, He has come as Redeemer. Theology explains what indeed did happen - and would waste much time wondering what might have happened, under some other Divine Economy - that if liberation from sin for divine service is the only one we have. Jesus accomplished this, by being handed over to death by His Father’s love, with which He is eternally in union [cf. Jn 3:16, f.]<sup>53</sup>.

In all this contemplation, St. Thomas’ sole language is that of the Scriptures, the theologians who preceded him, and his own uncanny ability to synthesize. Rather than inventing any hardy texts, *a priori*, the Angelic Doctor phrased his arguments in terms taken from both the OT and NT. Hence, it is the Bible that one must take up to comprehend what is meant by the language of redemption: sacrifice, to hand over, to

<sup>52</sup> For a study of these texts, cf. S. Lyonnet, SJ - L. Sabourin, *Sin, Redemption and Sacrifice. A Biblical Patristic Study*. Roma: PIB. Analecta Biblica 48. 1998, re-print.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Jo.* 3, 16-17, lect. 3, ## 476-480.

offer, to ransom, and the like<sup>54</sup>. It goes without saying that this biblical language is simply posited by the Divine Author without any accompanying theological explanation. Secondary causes are often passed over in silence and the sacred text often attributes to God all that happens. It is God Who saves, “hardens” peoples’ hearts - it is He who hands Christ over - and here it can also be said that it is the sinner who is entrenched in his/her perversity and it is sinners of all time who have condemned Christ, as they also put Him to death. There is no doubt that Jesus Christ willed His own Passion and Death, as a remedy for sin - as God Himself also willed it, but He did not will the sin that made it “necessary.” Those who put Christ to death are not excused from their injustice<sup>55</sup>. In the final analysis, it is not God Who is the “cause” of Christ’s death - but human sin. Where this has abounded, God’s grace has super-abounded:

***... Adam prefigured the One to come, but the gift itself considerably outweighed the fall. It is certain that through one man’s fall so many died, it is even more certain that divine grace, coming through the one man, Jesus Christ, came to many as an abundant free gift. The results of this gift far outweigh the results of one man’s sin: for after one single fall came judgment with a verdict of condemnation, now after many falls comes grace with its verdict of acquittal. If it is certain that death reigned over everyone as the consequence of one man’s fall, it is even more certain that one man, Jesus Christ will cause everyone to reign in life who receives the free gift he does not deserve, as being made righteous. Again, as one man’s fall brought condemnation on everyone, so the good act of one man brings everyone’s life and makes them justified. As by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience many will be made righteous...*** [cf. Rm 5:15-20].

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#### 4. ***Obsequium Filii : The Self-Surrender of the Son***

***... Try then to imitate God, as children of His that He loves, and follow Christ, by loving as He loved you, giving Himself up in our place as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God...*** [cf. Ep 5:1] - ***... now I can live for God. I have been crucified with Christ, and live now not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me. The life I now live in this body, I live in faith- faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and sacrificed Himself for my sake. I cannot bring myself to give up God’s gift...*** [cf. Ga 2: 20, f.].

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. F. W. Dillistone, *Atonement*.

<sup>55</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 47, a. 6 ad 3 um.

### a. The Son's Role in the Passion<sup>56</sup>

1]. There are two challenging biblical texts to be considered here: ...*The Father loves Me; because I lay down My life, in order to take it up again. No one takes it from Me; I lay it down of My own free will, and it is in My power to lay it down, and so it is in My power to take it up again; and this is the command that I have been given by My Father...* [cf. Jn 10:17, ff.] - ...*and when they have scourged Him, they will put Him to death...* [cf. Lk 18:33]. In the first case, the initiative for His death comes from Him - but, in the second case, it is the role of His executioners. St. Thomas commits himself to explaining this apparent difference:

2.] "A thing may cause an effect in two ways: in the first instance by acting directly so as to produce the effect; and in this manner, Christ's persecutors slew Him because they inflicted on Him what was a sufficient cause of death, and with the intention of slaying him, and the effect followed, since death resulted from that cause. In another way someone causes an effect indirectly - that is, by not preventing it when he can do so; just as one person is said to drench another by not closing the window through which the shower is entering; and in this way Christ was the cause of His own Passion and Death.

3.] For Christ could have prevented His Passion and Death:

- firstly by holding His enemies in check, so that they would not have been able to slay Him, or would have been powerless to do so.
- secondly, because His spirit had the power of preserving His fleshy nature from the infliction of any injury; and Christ's soul had this power because it was united in unity and person with the Divine Word.

Therefore, since Christ's soul did not repel the injury inflicted on His body, but willed His corporeal nature to succumb to such injury, He is said to have laid down His life, or to have died voluntarily.

4.] The finale of this text takes up only one of the two conclusions that he presents here, since it seems to have simply overlooked the direct cause of the death of Christ. In fact, St. Thomas will take this up a bit further on in delineating quite clearly the two aspects, but it is not the intervention of the persecutors that interest him on the first level. Christ suffered violence and hence, He did willingly - if violence had been heaped upon His body, this could only have prevailed in the measure that He chose. The responses to the two objections go in this same direction. Christ did say: no one can take My life from Me - what needs to be implied here would be the sense, unless He willed it. Violence is only that which cannot be resisted. Following Augustine, Thomas attaches great importance to the fact that Christ died so rapidly - since crucifixion is a slow and agonizing form of death. The Angelic Doctor also

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. Jean-Pierre Torrell, OP, *Le Christ en ses mysteres. La vie et l'oeuvre de Jesus selon saint Thomas d'Aquin*. Tome I. Jesus et Jesus Christ. 78. Paris: Desclée 1999, pp. 350-361; 310-316, passim

emphasizes the fact that He died uttering a loud cry and the implication here is that usually the dying are too weak to be capable of such an utterance. These two circumstances reported by the Evangelists are interpreted as so many indications of proving the voluntary character of the death of Jesus Christ. His by His own will His bodily nature kept its vigor until the end, so likewise, when He willed, He suddenly succumbed to the horrendous injuries inflicted [cf. ad 2 um].

5.] St. Thomas would return to this reflection several times in his works<sup>57</sup> - for the modern mind, it does not always settle well. There is some astonishment in the fact that as some theologians strive to keep the accusation of "suicide" from Christ. Some revert to the specious reasoning that is thought to be questionable in our time: if the soul had it in its own power to take leave of the body, or to return to it when it chose, there would be no real fault when one decide to take such leave than it would be for one to leave the home where he was dwelling<sup>58</sup>. St. Thomas clung faithfully to his Johannine inspiration already brought forth: Jesus Christ continues to appear as the Lord Who conducts sovereignly the events of the last days of His earthly sojourn. Despite that revealed fact, this considerations seem commanded by a "voluntarism", unusual for St. Thomas - one has the impression that some of this obtuse reasoning stays just on this side of Docetism.

6.] He seems to give the assurance not only that Christ could have resisted for a longer time under the torture inflicted upon Him, but that He could have avoided them without their causing Him the least harm. In all of this speculation, however, we cannot lose sight of the general laws that would command the capacity of suffering in the human flesh of the Lord. Indeed, there was no inherent, intrinsic necessity of the thorns, the scourges, the arduous carrying of the Cross: had no need of any "permission" on the spot from His Will that would render them all "**adorable**" due to their unique connection to the Son of God, **to the Sacred Stigmata** and His Precious Blood, the Price of our Redemption. The fact is that the Christ "had" to suffer the Passion. However, from the instant that the Lord "emptied Himself", and assumed our human nature, He assumed at that instant a flesh capable of suffering and a soul subjected to emotions, to suffering pain. If it is true that the Incarnate Word remained in sovereign possession of mastery over His lower passions, this gives theology no opening to think that His human flesh would only suffer if He chose to allow it to suffer: the thirst, the blows, the loss of blood. Thomas could never have permitted such thoughts to creep in while he was striving to offer some human explanation to the terms of this mystery. Acting in any other way, he would run the real risk of compromising the age-old faith of the whole Church in the reality of the Passion and the Death of Jesus Christ. It would be necessary for him even to avoid the appearance of this, and to remain attentive to the context which permits the exact interpretation of these difficult expressions.

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<sup>57</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas *Comp. Theol.* 1230; *In Jo* 10, 18, lect. 4, ## 1424-1425.

<sup>58</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Quodlib.* I, q. 2. Aristotole found such reasoning absurd - as did St. Thomas elsewhere.

7.] It is true that the Lord had suffered the Passion and that He died cruelly in His humanity, in a manner that was **fully voluntary** - however, this “will” is expressed in a fundamental fashion and once and for all at the moment of His Incarnation: On entering this world, Jesus said: Here I am, I am coming to do Your will, o God! [cf. Heb 10:5-7; Ps 40 - the “Disciples’ Prayer”]. Thomas interprets this very correctly in his commentary <sup>59</sup>, in emphasizing that this is applied even better on His entrance into this world than at His conception and that the Will of God of which it is a discussion here means that “pre-ordained plan” according to which the Christ would have the grace to offer Himself for the salvation of the world. It is clear from St. Thomas that we see the Incarnate Word submitted Himself to this initial and permanent “will” in the free acceptance of all the events which ruled the course of His earthly life even to the final acceptance: ***Not My Will be done, but YOURS!***

8.] The commentators [such as Cajetan] often explain that if the glory resulting from the beatific vision had not been retained at the highpoint of Christ’s soul, His body would have been naturally unable to suffer, simply as a natural corollary to such rejoicing. However, this would have been contrary to the divine plan of the redemption of the world and to the order of the Incarnation which correctly foresaw this capacity of suffering inherent in the human body of Jesus Christ. There remains, then, only one solution to explain that which St. Thomas truly held: it is by the instrumental power to perform miracles [which Christ possessed in an habitual manner in virtue of His hypostatic union] that He would have been able to change the will of His persecutors, impeded their power over Him, to place His body to the crucible of suffering and the penetration of the nails, and the other wounds - as He once kept Peter from sinking into the sea. This is all true enough - and this divine capacity was in the human nature of Jesus Christ, hypostatically united to the divinity. However, this would also seem to involve the possibility of modifying the initial economy under the array of miracles, but this would no longer resemble the pre-ordained divine plan in all wisdom and understanding [cf. Ep 1:8]. This initial economy had as its purpose also that of not tapping into this over-flow of joy. In any case, something of a grasp of the terms of this deep mystery is also helped by the subsequent discussion.

## b. Obedience and Love

1. Without renouncing in the least the instrumental power of the humanity of Jesus Christ, this would not seem to be the place to introduce it. It seems preferable to explain the word of Jesus Christ in Jn expressions His **free and total adherence to the Will of His heavenly Father**. This is what St. Thomas does when he posits the question: “Did Jesus die out of obedience?”. The Epistle to the Ph [cf. 2:8] is formally explicit on this matter: He made Himself obedient to the Father, even unto death - without ever fully responding in the affirmative, the Angelic Doctor writes:

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<sup>59</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Heb.* 10, 7, lect. 1, # 489.

2. It was befitting that Christ should suffer out of obedience:

- first of all, because it was in keeping with human justification, that *as by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners; so also by the obedience of one, many shall be made just*, just as is written in Rm 5:19.
- secondly it was suitable for reconciling man with God: hence, it is written [Rm 5:10] *we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son*, in so far as Christ's death was a most acceptable sacrifice to God, according to Ep 5:2: *He delivered Himself for us as an oblation and a sacrifice for an odor of sweetness*. Now obedience is preferred to all sacrifices; according to 1 K 15:22: *Obedience is better than sacrifices*. Therefore, it was fitting that the sacrifice of Christ's Passion and Death should proceed from obedience;
- thirdly, it was in keeping with His victory whereby He triumphed over death and its author; because a soldier cannot conquer unless he obey his captain. And being obedient to God, according to Pr 21:28: *An obedient man shall speak of victory*.

3. In the perspective retained, which always aims at keeping in mind that which really took place according to what the Bible says. Even though that this seems similar to so many others, this enumeration is at one and the same time beautiful and convincing. The situation becomes a bit complicated with the objections which doubt that anyone could speak here of "obedience", for there is no obedience other than when a precept is given and there is no text given to us which says that the Christ had received the precept of suffering. However, Thomas does not doubt that the Christ had received from His Father the precept of suffering and that the proof of this may be derived from Jn 10:18: I have the power of giving up My life and the power of taking it up again, for such is the commandment that I have received from My Father. Nonetheless, it is necessary to remark that a broader interpretation has been given here, largely due to the influence of St. John Chrysostom: it is not required to comprehend that He needed to understand this command in order to carry it out - but, rather in showing that it is a matter of His total free will. Thus, He has removed all suspicion that there was any opposition between Himself and His Father.

4. In pondering the **preceptum** of the objection and the **mandatum** of the Gospel, St. Thomas rests his response on juridical soil - from where the objection seems to have been moved. Yet, the remainder of his response is given over to the motivation of love. Nonetheless, he is far from being evasive with regard to the precept and he proposes a long explanation of the last word of Jesus: **All is consummated!** This can be understood simply as an expression of fact that the old law had found in Jesus its fulfillment, since by His Passion He had accomplished all its precepts:

[1.] the moral precepts, first of all, which are based on the commandment of charity, for He suffered out of love for His Father, as He noted: it is necessary that the world know that I love the Father and that I am acting as He has ordered Me to do [cf. Jn 14:13] He also suffered out of love

for His fellow human beings: He has loved me, and has handed Himself over for me [cf. Ga 2:20].

[2.] the ceremonial precepts: which regulate the exercise of a cult ordered to sacrifices and to oblations, ' Christ has fulfilled these through His Passion, for all the ancient sacrifices were figures of that authentic sacrifice which Christ offered in dying for us.

[3.] the judiciary precepts: of the Law, finally, ordained principally to satisfy for the wrongs suffered, Jesus also carried these out by His Passion, as in accord with Ps 68:5, *He paid what He took away!* He allowed Himself to be nailed to the tree because of the fruit that Adam took contrary to the commandment of God.

5. The ample nature of Thomas' response shows clearly that he has taken seriously the objection that was posed. If other theologians choose to follow it, it is comprehensible that the entire life of Jesus is found situated in between two major actions of free submission to the Law of God. His declaration that ***all is consummated*** is the response of the first public declaration of Jesus Christ: ***It is fitting that that we should in this way do all that righteousness demands...*** [cf. Mt 3:15].

- The use of the word "precept" in this context has however, sharpened the later Thomistic position in an unfortunate direction. According to the second objection, the obedience necessary that is due to a precept would exclude for some interpreters, the fact that the Christ had **voluntarily** suffered. This merely apparent opposition is not evident in St. Thomas: "Although obedience implies necessity with regard to the thing commanded, nevertheless, it implies **free-will** with regard to the fulfilling of the precept. And indeed, such was Christ's obedience for, although His Passion and Death, considered in themselves, were repugnant to the natural will, yet Christ resolved to fulfill God's will with respect to the same, according to Ps 39:9, *that I should do Thy will, o my God, I have desired it.* Hence, He said [Mt 26:42]: *If this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, Thy will be done!*

- The progression accomplished between the objection and the response is marked: the subsequent step will be effected in the solution of another argument which pretends that If Christ has suffered out of love as all the texts make clear, He could not have suffered also "out of obedience". However, St. Thomas can only respond anew by rejecting any logic of opposition between the two virtues: "For the same reason, Jesus suffered out of charity and out of obedience; because He fulfilled even the precepts of charity out of obedience only; and was obedience out of love, to the Father's command."

6. In reading, and re-reading these texts one cannot help but be struck by the "obstinacy" that the Angelic Doctor never gave regarding the idea of Christ's obedience - but, it was always His love that inspired this act. The reason for this might be grasped better in reviewing Ph 2:8, which seems to have been at the basis of so

much of his Christology: **...He was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross...** In his commentary <sup>60</sup>, the Angelic Doctor is not content with simply repeating that Christ made Himself obedient to his Father, even unto the death on the Cross - but, he tried to comprehend the secret bond that brought Jesus' **obedience** and His **Passion unto death**, to be **linked through His love**:

- When Paul says that Jesus humbled Himself, he gives as his example the humility of Christ in the mystery of His Passion. He shows in the first place the humility of Jesus Christ, and in the second place, its modality, in saying: He made Himself obedient. This obedience of His is at one and the same time a means of humbling Himself and a sign of His humility. For, it is the characteristic of the proud to follow their own will...So, wishing to show the perfection of humility and of the Passion of Jesus, Paul said that He made Himself obedient, for if He had not suffered out of obedience, it would not have been so worthy of praise: **it is this obedience which gives merit to His suffering.**

- But, how did He render Himself obedient? Not in accord with His divine will, since this is the very same rule, but it is according to His human will which is ruled in all according to the will of the Father, Mt 26:29: **But, not as I will, but as You will...** And it is in a fitting manner that he introduces obedience into His Passion, since the first sin came about by disobedience, as we read in Rm 5:19.

- The commandments of God to believers bear on the works of virtue. That is why that the more an act of virtue is accomplished perfectly, the more does one 'obey' God. Now, among all the virtues, the principal of course, is charity to which all the others lead. Since Christ accomplished the act of charity to perfection, He has supremely obeyed God. There is in effect no act of charity more perfect for a believer than that of undergoing death out of love for another, as the Lord himself has said [cf. Jn 15:13]: there is no greater love than to give up one's life for one's friends. Therefore, it is clear that Jesus Christ, in suffering death for the salvation of human beings and for the glory of God the father, has been sovereignly in obeying, by carrying out an act of perfect charity <sup>61</sup>

7. There may be found in the "finale" of this commentary on the verse from Ph 2:8 the first argument of the body of III, q. 47, a. 2. With the affirmation, then, from the Christological Hymn in Ph, there is no doubt that this situates us at the most intimate core of all the reasons that might be brought forward in order to attempt to clarify **even a little**, that which otherwise would be left in total darkness That love with which humanity has been loved by God in Jesus Christ is simply beyond our grasp - unless in some way, its terms are explained. The element that is somewhat new in this context is the bond of humility and obedience, serving as the proper modality of the Passion - and above all, the statement that obedience out of love has a particular

<sup>60</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *In Ph* 2, 8, lect. 2, ## 63-66; *In Rm* 5, 19, lect. 5, ## 445-447.

<sup>61</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *SCG* IV 55, ad 13 um; *In Jo.* 14, 31, lect. 8, # 1976



meritorious quality. Without insisting any more than is his custom, it is clear the Angelic Doctor never loses from sight the intimate bond between the dogmatic affirmation and the moral exhortation: **at the peak of His saving act, Jesus Christ is more than ever the Model, the Paradigm, the Mirror for the Christian.**

8. And yet, **the mystery of the obedience of Jesus Christ** has not been exhausted: the theme truly fascinated St. Thomas Aquinas. Considered in itself, he wrote, the Passion of Jesus Christ, culminating in His death, was repugnant to the natural human will of Jesus Christ. However, Christ wished to accomplish on this point the will of God. If those initiated into sacred theology have thought here of the grand distinction between “**the will as nature**” and “**the will as reason**”, then all readers would perhaps not know what this means. Nonetheless, it is useful to have it present before one’s mind in reflecting on the mystery of Christ’s redemptive Passion and Death. St. Thomas has put in place this data, given the elaboration of rational psychology as he understood it. This goes back to his general anthropology, but by the fact itself this finds a specific application in Christology.

9. The particular necessities of sublime Christological reflection were of great assistance to St. Thomas in building up his anthropology. For a long time, the older theologians reflected on the episode of Gethsemane and Christ’s agonized cry: **Not My will be done, but Yours!** If there is little difficulty here admitting that there are two wills in Christ - the Incarnate Christ had a human and a divine will. Yet, it remained a challenge across many generations to see how this human will would not have been “absorbed”, “overwhelmed” by His divine will - the mystery requires that theology present His human will fully free. This supplication of Jesus on the vigil of His death has always represent a solid anchor for Christology for all those who, like Maximus the Confessor, had struggled for the full recognition of a **free human will** in Jesus Christ, the inalienable property of human nature assumed by the Word.

- However, with this acquisition it still remained important to pay attention to the **ultimate movement** of Christ’s **total openness** before His approaching death. His **final acceptance** was not able to suppress this **supreme willingness** before the imminent ordeal. Behind, above, within the obedience, there is that **infinite love** for the heavenly Father and His **Plan of salvation**.

- Thus, St. Thomas would make use of a distinction received from the Fathers, through St. John Damascene, between **thelesis**, which means the simple power of **willing** - and the **boulesis**, that deliberative will. St. Thomas, following the Masters, translated this **voluntas ut natura** [“the will of nature”] and **voluntas ut ratio** [“the will of reason”].

- The former takes into consideration the fundamental movement of the being towards good, and its spontaneous repugnance toward that which is evil, contrary by nature to it, the appetite of good. Whereas the “will as reason” explains that this will can make the objection of acceptance, after serious reflection, prayer, in the light of ultimate data that are not noted at first glance, on the primary level. This needs to be pondered further.

10. Despite this two-fold designation, St. Thomas recognized, of course, only one **appetitive power**, the free will, an essential faculty of the rational being. However, as has been known long in theological circles in the Church, when by “will” there is intended the actions of this power, it is necessary to distinguish these:

- the “**will of nature**” indicates the natural movement by which this power bears itself toward the good - not just this, or that good - but that which is good in itself before any and every diversification.

- however, one knows by experience that there exists in the world different kinds of particular goods, according to a certain hierarchy of importance, with some relationship toward one another and the will seeking goodness. In the **last resort**, however, all of these are subordinated the **last end**, and these are what immediately motivate the acting subject.

- it is therefore, necessary that the free subject should rationally compare these goods among themselves, and so that from among them, one would choose those which would conduct better towards the **ultimate goal** that one would seek. This act, by which the will chooses between finite and limited goods, is evidently different from all that is anterior and irrepressible and which bears the will toward that which is the very **final purpose**.

- thus, it is in this work of reflection, contemplation that one can speak of the “**will of reason**”<sup>62</sup>, and even further, of the **will of free and ultimate choice**. In order to understand better St. Thomas willingly uses a comparison with the other great power of the human being: intelligence has two actions, that of “seizing, taking hold” [*intellegere*] of a given truth, and then to reason, i.e. to pass from one truth to another. And yet, this is all one faculty which makes an act of intelligence, and which also **discourses**. In like manner, the will has two actions: the pure and simple willing of good, prior to all other qualification - and the choice in view of a precise good. And this two-fold reality in both faculties does not leave anything expected to the fact that intellect is one and the same faculty of truth - and the will is one and the same faculty of good.

11. These distinctions may easily be applied to Jesus Christ - and yet, with Him, it is necessary to keep in mind an important element: as the Incarnate Word of God, He shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit one and the same divine will and He does not lose, nor surrender this by the Incarnation. It is in His quality of Incarnate Word that He has become the subject of a complete human nature and therefore, of a human will, which has two characteristics detailed above, **the will of nature** and **the will of reason**. However, the term **natural will** utilized in the text of the *Summa* of St. Thomas here is not perfectly to be identified with the “will of nature”. The **natural will** includes both the “will as nature” and the “will as reason”. There is implied here what might also be called the **sensible will**. Just like in our own situation, Jesus Christ also has a sensitive appetite, i.e. a spontaneous will, tied to the animal nature of

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<sup>62</sup> cf. St. Maximus tge Confessore, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*. Crestwood NY: St. Vladimir 2003

the human body. This turns toward what suits it, and arouses a repugnance which is no less spontaneous, with regard to all that is contrary, repugnant to human nature. In the measure that this spontaneous tendency remains in submission to the rational appetite which is the will, this can assume in its turn a certain rational character by participation - and this is why one may speak occasionally of the **sensible will** <sup>63</sup>. Thus, when the Angelic Doctor states that the Passion and Death are **repugnant** to the **natural will** of Jesus Christ, it is necessary to understand that these were perceived as naturally contrary to the spontaneous tendency toward good and the human expansion which characterize the will **both as a sensible and intellectual appetite**.

12. Nonetheless, even though it might be qualified as a **will by participation**, the sensible appetite has only for its object those particular and sensible goods it immediately seeks. His **sensible will** cannot make its "own" the will of God other than by the mediation of **the will of reason**, to which it was always submitted in Jesus Christ. Despite this, its natural tendencies are not eliminated: it continued to draw back naturally from horrendous suffering inherent in the death on Calvary, bring to an end all its powers.

- The submission of this natural movement to the regulation of reason has not, then, kept Jesus from feeling fully the natural abhorrence of any human being before that which menaces His flesh and life. This holds as well for His **will as nature**. Its spontaneous and natural reaction and movement bears the will towards good as such, and not towards that "good" only considered as such in its relationship with the Divine Will.

- This was proper to the Will as Reason. The anguish of Gethsemane and the duality of wills which is expressed manifestly there, explains somewhat then the natural and normal repugnance and sensible will and of the **will of nature** toward the Passion and Death which they can only perceive as a natural evil. It is only **the will of reason**, fully clarified by the supernatural light which flooded the soul of Jesus Christ, and comforted by grace, could accept these evils as a good, by considering them as part of the over-all Divine Plan of the Father's Love and Mercy.

- If one could remember these points, one might succeed in grasping better that St. Thomas does not lose from view the full humanity of Jesus Christ. Those expressions that have come down to us, troubling at first sight, for they seem to be in contradiction with the totality of the Saint's theology, ought therefore be interpreted in the light of these basic anthropological data.

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<sup>63</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, I, q. 18, a. 2.

### c. The Necessity and Fittingness of the Passion of the Lord<sup>64</sup>

1. This question takes up directly Jesus' question to the disciples of Emmaus, to whom He unfolds the sense of all that has just happened in Jerusalem on the Feast of the Passover of the year 30: **...was it not ordained that Christ should suffer and so enter into His Glory?** [cf. Lk 24:26]. This has presented challenges to theologians through the years: in what sense was the oblation of Jesus Christ **necessary**? Therefore, this discussion of St. Thomas is not sheer speculation - some response is imposed by the revealed data of faith and this attracts the believer's attention on this matter by the application with which it has received these passages which maintain a certain "**necessity**" for the Passion of Christ, which He has freely chosen. In addition to this text, this first article cites other verses of this last chapter of Lk: **...This is what I meant when I said, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets, in the Psalms, has to be fulfilled...** [cf. Lk 24:44] - **...So you see it is written that the Christ would suffer, and on the third day rise from the dead...** [v. 46]. The Gospel of John is also brought to bear in the argument, *Sed, contra* : **... and the Son of Man must be lifted up...** [Jn 3:14].

2. The list of these biblical allusions could be much longer - the expression of the prophetic, apocalyptic "**must**", "**had to**" is most familiar to the NT student. It expresses that internal coherence to the divine plan. In Mk, there are 6 usages; in Mt, there are 8; in Lk, 18; 10 in Jn - and 24 in Ac. Each of these is translated differently as there is a variety of interpretations possible. Foreseen and prophesied by the Prophets, the Divine Plan had to be fulfilled, and its actors had to be in conformity to what which had been written, or announced. It is Lk who offers an explanation - and it is one of the texts noted by St. Thomas: **...The Son of Man does indeed go to His fate even as it has been decreed...** [cf. Lk 22:22]. One might further note the state of Jesus to John the Baptist: **... Leave it like this for the time being; it is fitting that we would in this way do all that righteousness demands...** [cf. Mt 3:15].

3. A theologian cannot invent this data, but is called to contemplate it beginning with the global reading of God's Word - and hence, it cannot be rejected as doubtful. Both predicted and then accomplished, the Passion of Jesus Christ assumes in His own eyes a certain **character of necessity**. It is the task of theology to take this into account, and without going too far from the texts in question, it is necessary to ponder the biblical data that we have. Basic wisdom means to take words as they are. Very often, misunderstandings do result when there is a poor comprehension of the words utilized in discussions. The word "necessity", of course, has several meanings.

- there is first of all, **absolute necessity**: in this first sense, it is necessary that which by its nature, it could not be in any other way. Bound to the very nature of a reality, to its formal cause, this necessity is **intrinsic** glass breaks, wood burns. Let us clear from the outset that the Passion of Jesus Christ did not obey any necessity of this sort: nothing in the nature of God, or in

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<sup>64</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 46.

that of humanity, could ever demand that Jesus Christ should suffer in this fashion;

- then, there is a **relative necessity**: this is not bound to any intrinsic cause as is that just described, but it flows from factors that are attributable to extrinsic causes. A prime possibility presents itself: if this necessity coming from the exterior is the fact of an **efficient cause**, or a motivating factor, it is a matter then of a certain violence, or of a constraint which is imposed upon it. This is a **necessitas coactionis** : as when one has to remain immobilized in a cave, held by captors, who keep one as a hostage. This again, is not the type of necessity that the Passion of Christ imposed on Him. Nor is this the necessity imposed by the Father on His Son, who offered Himself freely to His Passion. If there would be eventually a physical constraint with regard to Jesus Christ, as to the type of death He suffered, by being bound, then nailed to a Cross, all of this was still within the general realm of His willing and loving acceptance. The “necessity” occurred only after His free acceptance - nature then, took its course.

- when it is imposed from an external cause, as the final cause, from the “end” in view, this is called a **hypothetical necessity**: in this instance, theology speaks of a necessity from the supposition of the end in view. One would then say that such an act is necessary in view of the end to be achieved. However, this affirmation is still quite general, for the human mind can think of two separate situations:

- on the one hand, the “means” is necessary to obtain the end: to “go” somewhere, it is necessary to “leave”. Movement from *terminus a quo* to the *terminus ad quem* is indispensable - the **media sine qua non**, required in order to obtain the end. We would almost find in this case the absolute necessity noted in the first situation above - so, this does not enter here.

- then, the means chosen might simply be more useful, or advantageous in order to obtain the result more readily: if one has to undertake a long journey, one would choose several means, such as walking, but the use of some mechanized means would facilitate considerably the trip. This particular means is used in order to obtain better the goal [ **propter melius** ]. For St. Thomas Aquinas, the Passion and Death of the Lord is of this **hypothetical necessity, in order to obtain the end willed more easily**. However, as this is such a sublime mystery, neither does this category perfectly satisfy the matter, and we are left with many questions.

4. St. Thomas explains it this way: ...The Passion of Jesus was necessary from **necessity of the end proposed**, and this can be accepted in three ways:

1. ] First of all, on our part, who have been delivered by His Passion, according to Jn 3:14: *the Son of Man must be lifted up, that whosoever believes in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting...*

2.] Secondly, on Christ's part, Who merited glory of being exalted through the lowliness of His Passion; and to this must be referred Lk 24:26: *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?*

3.] Thirdly, on God's part, whose determination regarding the Passion of Christ, foretold in the Scriptures and prefigured in the observances of the OT had to be fulfilled. And this is what St. Lk says [22:22]: *The Son of Man indeed goes, according to that which is determined...* [and 24:44, 46: *These are the words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning Me; for it is thus written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead...*

5. It would suffice to read this text carefully to conclude that we are 'hundreds of miles' from any absolute necessity noted at the beginning of the article. Without renouncing the use of the term, since this was not left to the Saint's choice, but attentive to the contexts of its use. Thomas perceived and leads us to understand that this necessity which is drawn from the end is in reality a **fitting [conveniens]** development. What is "fitting" means, in the sense already defined, an attempt to render humanly, the account of that which revelation teaches us in a manner that is worthy of God and of that which we know of His Plan of Salvation. Since Jesus Christ has suffered and that He has died, can these be called "reasons"? This explanation cannot be sought anywhere else other than in the revealed text itself, and this return to the revealed text deprives the word *necessity* of its unavoidable character that it would imply in philosophical language when it is used in its strong sense. The gain, however, is not inconsiderable, but if one would fear that this interpretation would be a mitigation that would be introduced into this text of St. Thomas, bring about an intention foreign to him, it would suffice to pursue the reading in order to perceive that what he wishes to say is correct. If the two first objections which comprehend "necessity" in terms of violence are expedited with very few words, the third response gives way to an important position. To the objection which invokes the divine mercy and justice against the "necessity" of Christ's Passion, Thomas replies justly in placing his response on the level of what is "fitting."

6. These are Thomas' words: 'That man should be delivered by Christ's Passion was in keeping with both His mercy and His justice. With His justice, because by his Passion Christ made satisfaction for the sin of the human race; and so man was set free by Christ's justice: and with His mercy, for since man of himself could not satisfy for the sin of all human nature, as was said above, God gave him His Son to satisfy for him, according to Rm 3:24, 25: *Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God has proposed to be a propitiation, through faith in His blood.* And this came of more copious mercy than if He had forgiven sins without satisfaction. Hence, it is said [Ep 2-4]: *God, who is rich in mercy, for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, both quickened us together in Christ.* "

#### d. Could God have done otherwise?

1. Establishing the different categories of “necessity” is only the first step for the Medieval theologians - they were fascinated also by the question did the Lord have other options. He very clearly rejected in this question on the Passion of the Lord any **intrinsic necessity**, as well as a **necessity by violence**. It is the third level, whether this particular manner of the Lord’s redemption was a ***conditio sine qua non*** - one that could not have been accomplished in any other manner, to obtain the results willed by the loving mercy of the Heavenly Father. He takes up this question next. With the end in view: that **of revealing the evil of sin, as well as giving stark proof of the heights of divine mercy**, the horrendous passion seems to have been the only way to speak to the heart of captive humanity. We do believe that this particular Passion was worthy of the divine dignity, as it is the path he himself chose. Yet in His infinite power, other avenues could have been opened to Him - since all things are subject to Him. St. Thomas puts it this way:

2. “A thing may be said to be ‘possible’, or ‘impossible’ in two ways: first of all, **simply** and **absolutely**; and secondly, **from supposition**.

[a] Therefore, speaking simply and absolutely, it was possible for God to deliver mankind otherwise than by the Passion of Jesus Christ, because *no word shall be impossible with God* [cf. Lk 1:37].

[b] Yet, it was impossible if some supposition is made. For since it is impossible for God’s foreknowledge to be deceived and His will or ordinance to be frustrated, then, supposing God’s foreknowledge and ordinance regarding Christ’s Passion, it was not possible at the same time for Christ not to suffer, and for mankind to be delivered otherwise than by Christ’s Passion. And the same holds good for all things foreknown and preordained by God, as was laid down in I, q. 14, a. 13.

[c] The precision of St. Thomas’ response is not only apparent, it is quite real. However, in order to be exactly understood, this precision needs its own reflection, as the Saint himself shows that he is doing by quoting what he had already written in the First Part. **Supposition** might also be rendered by ***hypothesis*** in English - but, the danger of this word is that when something is “hypothetical” it might also “smack” of being more or less gratuitous, not proven, not solid, somewhat imaginary. However, in this matter, nothing could be further from the truth. In the sense of St. Thomas, ***hypothesis*** is reality. The Passion does not pertain to a hypothetical order which the theologian would be free to imagine to be different - in this sense, ‘hypothesis’ also pertains to the history that has already occurred which imposes on one’s reflection a “necessity” that can not be denied, that of reality.

[d] So, it is most helpful not to blur these distinctions: the “necessity” with which we deal in this mystery is that which has already occurred. This problem is also known in other questions, and particularly in this one, as St. Anselm reflected: the wisdom of God chose a human nature that could suffer

and die, and a divine Person of infinite value - and the philosophy in the background is that of Aristotle. This is a certain paradox in this new 'necessity' as when one writes and another reads what has been written. There is no necessity that motivates either the writer or the reader - however, once this happens, it is 'necessary' for one to write so that the other might read what he/she has written

[e] Sometimes this **hypothetical necessity** is also called **consequent, subsequent necessity**. Others refer to it as **historical necessity**. Inversely, **absolute necessity** is sometimes called **antecedent necessity**, to signify that it already exists anterior to the effect that would result from it. Since, such 'necessity' is intrinsic to the very nature of things, it precedes the event and this intrinsic necessity is their cause of the consequences: once the cause is brought forward, the effect happens of necessity: dropping glass against a hard floor, will result in its breaking. St. Anselm does point out that the relationship between two types of necessity is not inter-changeable. Wherever there is an **antecedent necessity** there is a corresponding **subsequent necessity** - on the contrary, wherever there is a **consequent necessity**, there is not always an **antecedent necessity**.

[f] This distinction is only difficult in appearance and a moment of reflection usually suffices to clarify it. The entire effort of St. Thomas at this level of his reflection is precisely that of clarifying **historical, subsequent necessity** of the Passion of Jesus Christ from any and all **metaphysical, antecedent necessity**. The event of salvation has now for us a **concrete necessity** with which it has vested the Passion and Death of the Lord - however, this event in itself was **contingent** - it does not respond to any **anterior necessity**. One might establish further in an empirical manner very simply in this way: the death of Jesus would have been a violent death even without it being through Crucifixion. If he had been condemned by the Jews instead of by the Romans, He might have died through stoning, as Stephen did, since that is what Jewish Law allowed. This stoning, then, would have assumed the same type of "necessity" that the Crucifixion now has in our faith - it is the **necessity of an even that has already taken place**. This reasoning shows clearly that in itself, the Passion of the Lord was **contingent**..

#### e. "Surrender" of Holy Thursday Night - being handed over<sup>65</sup>

1. The principal concept, **tradere** [ **paradidomai** ] - this is the scene as Judas, the betrayer, and the soldiers appear: **It is enough, the hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go. My betrayer is at hand...** [cf. Mk 14:41, f., Mt 26:45, f.]. - ... **But this is your hour, and the power of darkness...** [cf. Lk 22:53]. This "handing over" is frequent in the predictions of the Passion [cf. Mk 9:31, par.; 10:33, par.; 10:45, par.] The verb is so often in the passive

<sup>65</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale. The Mystery of Easter*. Tr.by Aidan Nichols, OP. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, pp. 107-119, passim.



voice and the subject is Jesus. He is delivered up to the hands of evil men, sinners, non-believers, Satan.

2. This is a continuation of an OT theme where God delivers His beloved People **from** their enemies, **from** captivity, and **from** so many other evils [c.f. Lv 26:25; Dt 1:27] This divine activity in each case is an act of judgment whoever is “handed over” seems abandoned by God ceases to protect, it seems, and the enemies move in to dispose of whomsoever is handed over. Paul makes a three-fold use of this theme: ... *that is why God left [the non-believers]...since they have given up divine truth for a lie... and have worshipped creatures rather than the Creator... God abandoned them to degrading passions... God has left them to their own irrational ideas...* [cf. Rm 1:22,24, 26]. Eventually, notions of “expiation” and merit become more central here. In the OT, the **Servant of God** is handed over [cf. Is 53:6,12] - this exerts its influence in the NT when applied to Jesus.

3. From Dn and 1 & 2 M onward, more and more it is the martyrs who **are handed over**. This is thought of as the **voluntary self-giving** of a just person, on behalf of God, the people with a mysterious expiating effect. The ever increasing numbers of martyrs lived out their **self-oblation** in such a way that the divine will of “handing over” and the human acceptance of this simply coincided. The martyr is the cheerful giver. This handing over is a total existential commitment that risks dying as a consequence of a totally obedient service to God. Eventually, the Sages also have their impact -not directly, nor always faced with the threat of death, they observe from a lofty view of divine wisdom that there is a “beyond” - all is passing. The wisdom writers began to ponder that God indeed is a “Remunerator.”

4. The drama of the Passion of Jesus is the heir of all these frames of reference - it receives a kind of objective frame that is an **event of great promise**. To be “handed over” in some way, means that God is present in this **oblation** - God acts throughout as a kind of inexorable judgment. There is in all this a definite plan and foreknowledge of God [cf. Ac 2:23]. In the end, all of this is done “out of love, mercy”, for indeed He did not spare His own Son, but offered Him up [cf. Rm 8:32] The later NT texts express this ever more clearly as the **Self-gift** that Jesus made of Himself. This is what the Church is asked to imitate, initially through the **obedience of faith** [cf. DV 5], and then to wherever this will lead. One of the most mysterious of texts is one that has helped elevate the theology of the last 50 or more years: ... **Jesus was put to death for our sins, and was raised up for our justification...**[cf. Rm 4:25]. Jesus gives His life as a **ransom** for the many [cf. Mk 10:45] [cf. also 1 Co 11:24; Lk 22:19 with a kind of Eucharistic reference: 1 P 2:21; Rm 8:3]. Jesus gives Himself [cf. Ga 2:20, and now we are to live His life in faith. The Son’s cry of abandonment on the Cross is enacted then by his handing over His Spirit to His heavenly Father [cf. Lk 23:46; Ps 31:6; Jn 19:30]. Christ entrusted Himself to the one Who judges in justice [cf. 1 P 2:23].

5. The Father hands over, the Son is handed over, betrayed by one of the 12. The traitor thus becomes the re-presentation of unbelieving and faithless Israel rejecting the Son of God - and thus, sinners will be given up in a different way. The inter-play between the Father who **hands over** His Son, and the sinners involved in

the physical handing over, is extremely mysterious. Thus, the multiple **handing over** of Jesus in the Passion remains a mystery - the con-currently operative elements cannot be neatly placed in any clearly comprehensible system. There stands at the summit the inexorable - and unfathomable - judgment of God - Jesus is His **Servant** [cf. Ac 3:13, 26; 4:27] - He is the "Just One" **delivered up** by God as so many Just in the OT. This handing over was not only by sinners - but, the entire mystery is being dramatized **for** sinners, in their behalf - and, in some way, in their place. There arises here the three-fold Trinitarian form:

- the Father hands over His Son;, out of love for us [cf. Rm 8:32; Jn 3:16];
- All of this is due to Christ's love for us, willingly allowing Himself to be hand over [cf. Rm 8:35; Ga 2:20; Ep 5:1;
- in Jesus' total gratuitous self-gift [cf. Jn 10:18] the Father's unconditional love becomes plain.

6. Jesus' **Gift of self** is the fulfillment of the late Jewish **theology of martyrdom** - Christ's **self-giving** remains loving obedience [cf. Ph 2; Jn 5] to a totally mysterious, inexorable divine judgment: sin is this evil! - His is obedience of the most harsh variety, a bitter obedience - and the enemy to which Christ is delivered remains the "Power of Darkness" [cf. Lk 22:53] Christ's being led away by a band of soldiers show this in a poignant image. This theology of **delivering up** needs to be maintained with sublime Trinitarian roots. That God **hands over** His only begotten son forms part of the 'unheard of' affirmations of the NT. To **hand over** cannot be made to sound easy - it is a stark expressions of Jesus **Mission** received from the Father - and what it means that the Holy Spirit has been handed over as **Gift**. God made Jesus to be sin [cf. 2 Co 5:21] - He was cursed on the Tree [cf. Ga 3:13, f.]. **Here the *theologia crucis* comes to expression in a way which none more radical can be conceived.**

7. The contradiction of the Cross is not simple martyrdom - but, the height of it Christ is God and places Himself at the disposal of the event of love which flows from the Father. In His mercy, by this stark means, He wills to reconcile the world to Himself. In order to do this total darkness resides in Him, takes Him over. The active handing over by human beings plays a subordinate role. The **contradiction of the Cross** is the total surpassing of the human understanding in this mystery - a totally unjust capital punishment of a young man has been transformed out of love into the means of redeeming the world. The Church is called to imitate this in her following of Christ

#### f. **The Attitude of the Church**

1. The Church understood early that as Jesus is the Son of God and infinitely beyond reach - there is no perfect "imitation" of Him. In fact, those closest to Him were outstanding also for their infidelity, and their inconstancy. Yet, they are welcomed back, and invited to follow after Him once more. Even Peter, the prince of the Apostles, stands out in his rather total misunderstanding of what was happening: he did not want His beloved Master to suffer, and thinks only as "men" do [cf. Mt

16:23; Lk 22:31] - He solemnly promises that he would never betray his beloved Lord, and then ends up as the principal author of denial [cf. Mt 26:34, par.] - in the Garden, he draws a sword, so far from the heart of the Master's message [cf. Jn 18:11; Mt 26:52] - he repeatedly falls lamentably [cf. Mk 14:66, par.]

2. But, Peter is outstanding in repentance - he seems to exercise a certain primacy here, too - he weeps bitterly. The Lord will welcome him - and all disciples - back into the fold to offer themselves anew to the Life and Person of Jesus Christ. One "unsung" example here, is the group of women who followed him and ministered to him. They will be present at the burial and make up the first Easter witnesses. They almost seem contemplative in their sense, pondering the Calvary scene. There is present here the "**Church of Love**", led by the Sorrowful Mother herself, at standing at the foot of the Cross. She is with the Disciple Jesus loves, who makes for her a place in his home and heart. This is the nucleus of new beginnings: Peter will come back with his three-fold profession of love. His penance is to be a good Pope!

3. The **availability** of Jesus is brought through to the end, with His declaration, ***it is consummated!*** [cf. Mk 14:41]. The voluntary character of **Jesus' self-giving** is strongly emphasized. This is ultimate love and obedience toward His Heavenly Father - His surrender of the "12 legions of angels" [cf. Mt 26:53] - all show His total **Self-giving** to the Plan of His Father out of infinite love. This is the **Paradigm of the Church**, the **Exemplary Cause** drawing inexorably to His real Presence - as an on-going **Christological Constellation**, drawing worshippers in truth and spirit into the gravity field of this Most Blessed Sacrament. It is here that religious consecration is consummated, pronounced and renewed.

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## 5. **Obsequium Spiritus Sancti - The Spirit as Gift**

*...the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us...* [cf. Rm 5:5]

*...If you only knew what God is offering and who it is that is saying to you: Give me a drink, you would have been the one to ask, and He would have given you the living water...* [cf. Jn 4:10,ff.]

§§§

**EXCURSUS III:  
A SHARE IN THE TOTAL GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:  
THE CONSECRATED LIFE**

**[An Oblation to the Father, of the Kenosis of the Son,  
in the Total Gift of the Holy Spirit - in the Recent Magisterial Teaching]**

**Introduction:**

In the universal call to holiness addressed to the entire Church, the central Model of it all is the Most Blessed Trinity, made known to us through the exclusive Self-giving of Jesus Christ:

**"... The Church, whose mystery is set forth by this Sacred Council, is held, as a matter of faith, to be unfailingly holy. This is because Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is hailed as 'alone holy'. loved the Church as His Bride, giving himself up for her so as to sanctify her [cf. Ep 5:25-26]..." [LG 39].**

The "nuptial theme", epitomized by Mary and Joseph, is recalled repeatedly in the Apostolic Exhortation, *Redemptoris Custos* [August 15, 1989]:

**"... Thus, before Joseph lived with Mary, he was already her 'husband'. Mary, however, preserved her deep desire to give herself exclusively to God. One may well ask how this desire of Mary's could be reconciled with a 'wedding.' The answer can come only from the saving events as they unfold, from the special action of God Himself. From the moment of the Annunciation, Mary knew that she was to fulfill her virginal desire to give herself exclusively and fully to God, precisely by becoming the Mother of God's Son. Becoming a Mother by the power of the Holy Spirit was the form taken by her gift of self: a form which God Himself expected of the Virgin Mary who was 'betrothed' to Joseph. Mary uttered her Fiat... [RC 18].**

**"...One may say that what Joseph did united him in an altogether special way to the Faith of Mary. He accepted as truth coming from God the very thing she had already accepted at the Annunciation. The Council teaches: 'The obedience of faith must be given to God as he reveals himself. By this obedience of faith, man freely commits himself entirely to God, making the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals and willingly assenting to the revelation given by him.' [cf. DV 5]. This statement, which touches the very existence of faith, is perfectly applicable to Joseph of Nazareth..." [RC # 4]..."The total sacrifice, whereby Joseph surrendered his whole existence to the demands of the Messiah's**

coming into his home becomes understandable only in the light of his profound interior life..." [RC 26]..."Through his complete self-sacrifice, Joseph expressed his generous love for the Mother of God and gave her a husband's gift of self...Joseph obeyed the explicit command of the angel and took Mary into his home, while respecting the fact that she belonged exclusively to God..." [RC 28]

When Pope Paul VI pondered the mystery of Christian Marriage thirty years ago this summer [*Humanae Vitae*, July 25, 1968], he emphasized its total and exclusive self-giving in order for it to succeed. Repeatedly, he spoke of the "totality" of the mystery, in the line of his "name-sake", St. Paul: "... this mystery has many implications; but I am saying that it applies to Christ and the Church." [Ep 5:32]:

"...It is the whole man and the whole complex of his responsibilities that must be considered, not only what is natural and limited to this earth, but also what is supernatural and eternal [HV # 7]..."As a consequence, husband and wife, through that mutual gift of themselves, which is specific and exclusive to them alone, seek to develop that kind of personal union in which they complement one another in order to cooperate with God in the generous education of new lives..." [HV # 8]. "... Then, it is a love which is total...that very special form of personal friendship in which husband and wife generously share everything, allowing no unreasonable exceptions or thinking just of their own interests. Whoever really loves his partner and loves not only for what he receives, but loves that partner for her own sake, content to be able to enrich the other with the gift of himself...' [HV # 9].

"... Consequently, if the mission of generating life is not to be exposed to the arbitrary will of men, one must necessarily recognize insurmountable limits to the possibility of man's domination over his own body and its functions; limits which no man, whether a private individual, or one invested with authority, may licitly surpass. And such limits cannot be determined otherwise than by the respect due to the integrity of the human organism and its functions, according to the principles recalled earlier, and also according to the correct understanding of the Principle of Totality, illustrated by our predecessor Pope Pius XII..." HV 17].

Pope Pius XII employed this "**Principle of Totality**" in a discussion on moral theology he held on October 8, 1953 - regarding two questions: one was on the amputation of an organ for the general well being of one's health - and the other pertained to marriage. Regarding the first matter, any and every amputation also has to be decided in the light of the "**Principle of Totality**", a right regarding one's body bestowed by the Creator (1). A second time Pius XII returned to this theme was on May 14, 1956, regarding cornea transplants. The Holy Father quotes his own Encyclical, *Mystici Corporis* [of June 29, 1943] in which he made clear that it is

necessary to keep in mind the totality of the physical organism even in speaking of the moral organism (2). The "Principle of Totality" is very important in any consideration of the living of the baptismal commitment, marriage, as in the living of the consecrated life.

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Reflecting on this "spousal nature" of total self-giving, it is small wonder that the Code of Canon Law defines Religious Life as "a wonderful marriage":

**"Religious Life, as a consecration of the whole person, manifests in the Church a wonderful marriage brought about by God, a sign of the future age. Thus, religious bring to perfection their full gift as a sacrifice offered to God, by which their whole existence becomes a continuous worship offered to God in love" [Code of Canon Law 1983, Can. 607, § 1].**

Among the special effects of a definition of such a nature, the following may be noted:

**"... The title on religious is introduced by this short theological description of religious life. The canon focuses on some of the important characteristics of religious life, namely, consecration, public vows, life in common and bearing witness to Christ. Paragraph one which is based on *Lumen Gentium* 44 understands consecration in terms of living the fullness of the gospel life, by means of the evangelical counsels. There is a greater accent on the worship element of the consecration so that religious life has a value in itself aside from the various means of apostolic service. The thrust of this paragraph can have importance when religious institutes develop a ritual of consecration. Thus, each institute may express in its own way its particular concept of consecration, in view of the intimate union between God and the consecrated person, and the manner in which the institute manifests that it is a sign of the risen life. (3)**

In a recent reflection on "The Holy Spirit and the Consecrated Life" (4), the author points out that the Holy Spirit is particularly present in the matter of relationships, especially where existence opens itself up to "Gift." This is uniquely the case in the matter of religious life. The Second Vatican Council – as well as the consistent teaching of the Church, presents the consecrated life as a way of **making a gift of one's entire life**, to be **a gift to God, in union with Christ, by the Holy Spirit** [cf. PC 1]. Canon Law itself emphasizes the giving of self to God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit: "... Life consecrated through profession of the evangelical counsels is a stable form of living, in which the faithful follow Christ more closely under the action of the Holy Spirit, and are totally dedicated to God who is supremely loved." [cf. Can. 573]. "Some of the Church's faithful are specially called by God to this state, so that they may benefit from a special gift in the life of the Church, and contribute to its

saving mission, according to the purpose and spirit of each institute” [cf. Can. 474 § 2]. The evangelical counsels, based on the teaching and example of Christ the Master, are **a divine gift** which the Church received from the Lord, and which by his grace it preserves always” [cf. Can. 575].

The most recent Papal Document on the Consecrated Life, *Vita Consecrata* (5), high-lights the role of the Holy Spirit in it:

**“... Like the whole of the Christian life, the call to the consecrated life is closely linked to the working of the Holy Spirit...It is the Spirit who awakens the desire to respond fully; it is he who guides the growth of this desire, helping it to mature...Those who by the power of the Holy Spirit are led progressively into full configuration to Christ reflect in themselves a ray of unapproachable light... The consecrated life thus becomes a particularly profound expression of the Church as Bride who, prompted by the Spirit to imitate her spouse, stand before him ‘in splendor, without spot of wrinkle or any such thing that she might be holy and without blemish’ [Ep 5:27]...” [# 19].**

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There are several points that bear emphasis in this context:

- **Every Total Gift of Oneself- inspired by the Holy Spirit;**
- **Total Self-Oblation of the Consecrated Life in the Recent Magisterium - “the absolute Infinite” [ET 34];**
- **The Principle of Totality, the ‘Thirst for the Divine Absolute’ of the Consecrated Life [cf. EN 69; VC 39].**

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### **[I] Every Total Gift of Oneself: Inspired by the Holy Spirit**

St. Augustine (6) uses a kind of “appropriation” of the word Gift for the Holy Spirit, in that God Himself is “Gift”:

**“...And just as for the Holy Spirit his being the gift of God means his proceeding from the Father, so his being sent means his being known to proceed from him. Nor, by the way, can we say that the Holy Spirit does not proceed from the Son as well; it is not without point that the same Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of the Father and the Son.” (7)**

In Fr. Hill's explanatory note, he points out:

**“... finding proper names for the Holy Spirit that will distinguish him from the other persons is a classic difficulty of Trinitarian theology. Augustine opts for this title of ‘Gift’ and will revert to the subject several times in the course of his work. What is required is a kind of ‘relational’ term, like ‘Father’ and ‘Son.’ (8).**

In Sacred Scripture, the Wisdom tradition reminds us that the Lord's gift remains constant to the devout [cf. Si 11:17]. In the Lord's own prayer, the Church is taught to ask for the gift of daily needs [cf. Mt 6:11]. As human parents strive to give good things to their children, how much more will the heavenly Father give what is good to His creation [cf. Mt 7:11]. To this, Luke offers a significant addition: “... how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! [cf. Lk 11:13]. The Spirit has been given to the Son without reserve [cf. Jn 3:34]. To the woman of Samaria, Jesus seems to be making the veiled offering of the gift of the 4: Holy Spirit: “.. If you only knew what God is offering ...” [cf. Jn 4:10]. [cf. also Rm 5:5, f.; I Jn 3:24; 13]

In the Acts of the Apostles, the presence of the Holy Spirit truly “gifts” the early Church. In the first conversions, Peter promises that after baptism, the faithful will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit [cf. Ac 2:38]. The Holy Spirit is given through the imposition of hands [cf. Ac 8:20; 19:1, f.]. Believers were astonished to see the gift of the Holy Spirit being poured out on non-believers as well [cf. Ac 10:45; 11:17].

St. Paul offers his unique development of this theme: there is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit, who is given to each person for a good purpose [cf. 1 Co 12:4, ff.]. God gives the Spirit so freely [cf. Ga 3:3, ff.]. The gift of God is not one of timidity but the Spirit of power, and love, and self-control [cf. 2 Tm 1:6].

The Liturgy offers this teaching as in the celebration for Pentecost, as the Spirit is called **“the Gift of the Most High God”** - the Sequence proclaims: “Father of the Poor, Giver of Gifts, Light of Hearts - sweet guest of the soul.” The Fourth Eucharistic Prayer offers this petition in the *Epiclesis* before the Consecration: “... So that we might live no longer for ourselves, but for Him who has died and is risen for us, You have sent, Father, the Holy Spirit, **First Gift to those who believe.**”

As has been noted, one of the early and greatest theologians of the “Holy Spirit as Gift” is St. Augustine of Hippo:

**“... the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. This relationship, to be sure, is not apparent in this particular name, but it is present when he is called *the gift of God*. [Ac 8:20; Jn 4:10]. He is the gift of the Father and of the Son, because on the one hand he proceeds from the Father [Jn 15: 26], as the Lord says; and on the other, the apostle's words, *Whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ is not one of his* [Rm 8:9], are spoken of the Holy Spirit. So when we say ‘the gift of the giver’ and ‘the giver of the gift’, we say**



each with reference to the other. So the Holy Spirit is a kind of inexpressible communion or fellowship of Father and Son and perhaps he is given this name just because the same name can be applied to the Father and the Son.” (9).

“...is the answer that the Holy Spirit always proceeds and proceeds from eternity, not from a point of time; but because he so proceeds as to be givable, he was already gift even before there was anyone to give him to? There is a difference between calling something a gift, and calling it a donation; it can be gift even before it is given, but it cannot be called in any way a donation unless it has been given...” (10) - [perhaps a little less ‘artificial’ in Latin: *donum/donatum* (11) .

In Book 15, St. Augustine discusses at length the propriety of the names we give to the Holy Spirit (12):

“... only the Son is called the Word of God, and only the Holy Spirit is called the Gift of God and only the Father is called the one from whom the Word is born and from whom the Holy Spirit principally proceeds...So it is the Holy Spirit of which he has given us that makes us abide in God and him in us. But this is precisely what love does. He then is the gift of God who is love... the Holy Spirit has been given to us [Rm 5:5]. Nothing is more excellent than this gift of God... So the love which is from God and is God is distinctively the Holy Spirit; through him the charity of God is poured out in our hearts and through it the whole triad dwells in us. This is the reason why it is most apposite that the Holy Spirit, while being God, should also be called the gift of God. And this gift, surely, is distinctively to be understood as being the charity which brings us through to God without which no other gift of God at all can bring us through to God...”

This doctrine was then offered by St. Thomas Aquinas (13). In *1 Sentences*, St. Thomas comments on Augustine’s treatment of the question when he asks whether the Holy Spirit might be called “gift” and “given”, or “donated.” The Angelic Doctor offers a rather developed “Division of his Text”. In Question 1, he divides the discussion into 5 articles - in the first of these, he asks whether the name ‘Gift’ is an essential name, or a personal one. He goes on to ask whether Gift is a name proper to the Spirit; whether through this name, all gifts are bestowed whether the Spirit is also God and whether he may be called “our” Gift.

In his *Summa*, the matter is succinctly summarized in two articles: “gift” imports an **aptitude for being given**, thus indicating its relation both to the giver and to that to which it is bestowed. The giver can only give what is his/her own - we are said to possess what we can use and enjoy. This can only be realized by a rational creature united to God.

“Gift” then is the proper name of the Holy Spirit - He is bestowed without the intention of being returned. Love of its nature is that of first gift, through which all free gifts are given. Since the Holy Spirit proceeds as love, He proceeds as the **first Gift** .

The recent teaching of the Church has pondered this special name given to the Holy Spirit. In his Encyclical Letter, *Dominum et Vivificantem* (14) [of May 30, 1986], Pope John Paul II has written:

**“...It can be said that in the Holy Spirit the intimate life of the Triune God becomes totally gift, an exchange of mutual love between the divine Persons, and that through the Holy Spirit, God exists in the mode of gift. It is the Holy Spirit who is the personal expression of this self-giving, of this being love [St. Thomas Aquinas] He is Person-Love. He is Person-Gift. Here we have an inexhaustible treasure of the reality and an inexpressible deepening of the concept of *person* in God, which only divine revelation makes known to us.**

**“At the same time, the Holy Spirit being consubstantial with the Father and the Son in divinity, is love and uncreated gift from which derives as from its source [ *fons vivus* ] *all giving of gifts vis-a'-vis* creatures [created gift]: the gift of existence to all things through creation; the gift of grace to human beings through the whole economy of salvation. As the Apostle Paul writes: ‘God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us.’ [# 10].**

In these few lines, we have the teaching of “**total gift**” as a Trinitarian concept, denoting the intimate life of God - God’s very being might be thought of as Gift. As all are made to the image and likeness of this God, this “total gift” is one of the dimensions all are called to live in the strength of baptismal consecration. In the creation of the universe, there is “gift” bestowed through God’s initiative. “Gift” is the heart of Christian Anthropology, as salvation is opened to humanity by means of this sharing of the very being and nature of God as “Gift.” Through this gift, rational creatures share in His nature.

**“... Christ’s farewell discourse at the Last Supper stands in particular reference to this ‘giving’ and ‘self-giving’ of the Holy Spirit. In John’s Gospel we have as it were the revelation of the most profound ‘logic’ of the saving mystery contained in God’s eternal plan, as an extension of the ineffable communion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit...” [# 11]**

This “**self-giving**” is behind the mystery of Divine Revelation, where in God revealed Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit - and His Divine Plan of Redemption. In the last analysis, these almost come together - in that the Revelation of the Trinity is meant to be the first step in sharing His inner life with creatures.

**“...This is the divine ‘logic’ which from the mystery of the Trinity leads to the mystery of Redemption of the world in Jesus Christ. The *redemption accomplished by the Son* in the dimensions of the earthly history of humanity - accomplished in his ‘departure’ through the Cross and Resurrection - is at the same time, in its entire salvific power, *transmitted to the Holy Spirit*: the one who ‘will take what is mine’ [Jn 16:14]...” [# 11].**

**“...Describing his ‘departure’ as a condition for the ‘coming’ of the Counselor, Christ links the new beginning of God’s salvific self-communication in the Holy Spirit with the mystery of the Redemption...” [# 13].**

In the sending of the Holy Spirit, “the words of the text of John indicate that, according to the divine plan, Christ’s ‘departure’ is an indispensable condition for the ‘sending’ and the coming of the Holy Spirit...” What begins in this is the new salvific self-giving of God in the Holy Spirit. Jesus almost assumes the role of Precursor of the Holy Spirit, preparing the heart of humanity for the coming of the Paraclete.

This mystery of the divine self-giving is the heart of the mystery of Redemption - and it is this that establishes the Church through Jesus Christ. As God is the “Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End” [cf. Rv. 1:8; 21:6; 22:13], Protology looks to Eschatology, first beginnings lead to the Last End of humanity:

**“... It is a new beginning in relation to the first, original beginning of God’s salvific self-giving, which is identified with the mystery of creation itself. Here is what we read in the very first words of Genesis: ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth..., and the Spirit of God [*Ruah Elohim*] was moving over the face of the waters.’ [Gn 1:1, f.]. This biblical concept of creation includes not only the call to existence of the very being of the cosmos, that is to say *the giving of existence*, but also the presence of the Spirit of God in creation, , that is to say the beginning of God’s salvific self-communication...’ Let us make’: can one hold that the plural which the Creator uses here in speaking of himself already in some way suggests the Trinitarian mystery, the presence of the Trinity in the work of the creation of man? The Christian reader already knows the revelation of this mystery, can discern a reflection of it in these words. At any rate, the context of the Book of Genesis enables us to see in the creation of man the first beginning of God’s salvific self-giving commensurate with the ‘image and likeness of himself which he has granted to man...” [# 12]**

Creation, then, is the beginning of the accompanying presence of God - centuries before the fulfillment of the Incarnation of the “Emmanuel” in Jesus Christ, God is “with” His people, leading them to the fulfillment of the Plan of Creation. Creation, then is subordinated to redemption - the separating of the waters above from

those below in Genesis [cf. Gn 1:6, ff.] is a foreshadowing of the Great Miracle of the Sea in Exodus [14: 21, ff.], dividing the waters to the left from those of the right, so that the people of God would walk through to freedom, and by separating the waters underfoot of the River Jordan [cf. Jos 3: 14 -17; 4:10-18]. This Spirit of God ‘fills the universe’ in every age:

**“... [Jesus Christ] offered his perfect sacrifice through the eternal Spirit, which means that the Holy Spirit acted in a special way in this absolute self-giving, in order to transform this suffering into redemptive love... [# 40] ... In the Third Eucharistic Prayer, referring to the same salvific plan, the priest asks God that the Holy Spirit may ‘make us an everlasting gift to you...’ [# 41] - “.. The Holy Spirit is the Gift that comes into man’s heart together with prayer...” [# 65].**

**“... Praying thus [the Sequence of the Solemnity of Pentecost] the Church unceasingly professes her faith that there exists in our created world a Spirit who is uncreated gift. He is the Spirit of the Father and of the Son: like the Father and the Son, He is uncreated, without limit, omnipotent, God, Lord... Man turns to him, as to the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth and of love, man who lives by truth and by love, and who without the source of truth and of love, cannot live. To him turns the Church, which is the heart of humanity, to implore for all and dispense to all those gifts of the love which through him ‘has been poured into our hearts’ [Rm 5:5]..” [# 67 - Conclusion].**

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [the publication of which was promulgated by the Apostolic Constitution, *Fidei Depositum*, October 11, 1992] presents the Holy Spirit as “God’s Gift” [cf. CCC ## 733-736]. Grace is shown to be the Spirit’s Gift - and this, in turn, includes the Gifts of the Holy Spirit which enable us to collaborate in the salvation of others and in the growth of the Body of Christ, the Church [# 2003].

In the Official Catechetical Text in Preparation for the Holy Year 2000 ( 15) states:

**“... The expression ‘in the Holy Spirit’, therefore, means first of all that God in his immensity welcomes each one and makes himself ‘gift’ through grace, by joining with him...” [pp. 16, f.]... “At the same time, the Spirit prepares the heart of man to listen, and makes him capable and willing to accept the Word... This turns faith into a reasonable option, without which the reality would remain shut up into the absurd and man would be unable to understand his most high calling’ [GS 22] [p. 19]...” “The Spirit is ever a gift, a grace granted to man by God the Father and it is the way through which man participates in the nature of God by the power of the new**

creation brought about by Christ [cf. c. 3, n. 1, p. 33]... “The Spirit is particularly present at the time of the death of Jesus. According to the Letter to the Hebrews [9:14-15] it was the Holy Spirit that kindled the sacrificial offering of Christ at his redemptive death and makes his self-immolation the very soul of the true sacrifice. Now Christ offered himself to God through the generous accomplishment of his will [cf. Heb 10:4-10] and this happened through the stimulus and power of the Holy Spirit that inspired and supported the sacrifice of Christ, since he was the source of his charity towards God and towards his brethren...” [c. 4, n. 1, p. 42]...In theology, the expression ‘gifts of the Spirit’ has acquired a two-fold significance: the one equivalent to “charism” or manifestation of the Spirit in a person for building the Church [this is the case in 1 Co 12] - and the one corresponding to spiritual ‘gift’ which is even greater than the infused virtues...” [cf. c. 7. n. 2, p.85].

The Holy Spirit communicates the **capacity of total self-giving**: both in the form of sanctifying grace, as well as in various charisms that build up the holiness of the Church. The Consecrated Life is just one such “charism”, a unique gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church.



## [II] Eucharistic Self-Giving

### The Eucharist and Victim

[cf. Giuseppe Manzoni, Victimale, in: *Dictionnaire de Spiritualite*, Col. 531-545]  
*Look with favor on your Church’s Offering, and see the Victim Whose death has reconciled us to Yourself... [EP - III]*

#### 1. Scripture:

a. **Presentation**: Whenever the discussion centers on the **Victim**, one thinks spontaneously about **sacrifice**. Among the Semites especially and in the biblical world in particular, the **Victim** expresses the **free gift** that the person presenting the **oblation** makes of him/herself to God. This is a means in order to enter into communion with Him. From this came the insistence of the Prophets that the believer be in solidarity with the victim being offered, renouncing sin from one’s life and entering into intimacy with God, symbolized by the smoke that rises up from the victim-holocaust, as a sweet odor for the Lord: *...This holocaust will be a burnt offering, and the fragrance of it will appease Yahweh ...*[the same line repeated three times in Lv 1:9,13,17]. God responds to the believer with His **pardon** and the **communication** of His love and a share in His life.

b. **In the Pentateuch**, the **Blood** of the **Victim** has a fundamental importance for the **expiation** of sins, since the life and the ‘soul [ *nephesh* ] were thought to reside in the blood and are the **inalienable property of God** [cf. Ex 29:11-

37]. The Blood of the **Victim** is very much more a **gift of the merciful love of God** to human beings than it is an oblation on the part of believers to God. In the Blood of the **Victim**, it is God Who **gives Himself** to the believer, who then **offers him/herself to God**. Following these rapid allusions to the ancient victims of sacrifice, it is helpful to ponder some of the more outstanding OT personalities, offered in Sacrifice. One of these, of course, would be **Isaac** [cf. Gn 22]. For Christians it is relatively easy to see in Isaac the figure of Jesus Christ, and in the comportment of Abraham, the response of God the Father:

*... God said: 'your only child, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him as a burnt offering, on a mountain I will point out to you...Do not harm the boy, for now I know that you fear God. You have not refused Me your son, your only son...I swear by My Ownself - it is Yahweh Who speaks - because you have done this, because you have not refused Me your only son, I will shower blessings on you.. [cf. Gn 22:2,12, 16] - ...Yes, God loved the world so much that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not be lost, but may have eternal life... [cf. Jn3:16] - ...what proves God loves us is that Christ died for us while we were still sinners... [cf. Rm 5:6, ff.] - ... Since God did not spare His only Son, but gave Him up to benefit us all, we may be certain that after such a gift, that he will not refuse anything that He can give... [cf. Rm 8:32].*

c. As for the mysterious figure of the **Suffering Servant of Yahweh**, **presented by the Prophet Isaiah**, particularly as he is presented in the Fourth Canticle [cf. Is 52:13-53:12], it is only in the light of the Passion, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ that this extraordinary Poem makes full sense to the Christian. To describe the Redemption worked out by Jesus Christ, the most ancient Christian *kerygma* is associated, in great part, with texts describing the Salvific Mission of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh. In the Canticle, this mysterious personality offers himself as a **Victim** in a sacrifice of atonement, expiation [ **asham** ] for the sins "of the many". Explicit references are rare <sup>66</sup>.

This mysterious personality of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh provides a sublime assistance in preparing the believing heart and mind to enter more profoundly into the mystery of Jesus Christ, in Whom *both Jew and pagan are justified through the free gift of His grace by being redeemed in Christ Jesus, Who was appointed by God to sacrifice His life so as to win reconciliation through faith...* [cf. Rm 3:25] - *...Jesus Christ is the sacrifice Who takes sins away, and not only ours, but the whole world's...* [cf. 1 Jn2:2]. For Jesus, the time of the passion is the most evident and the most perfect of **His Oblation of Love** for the Father, and **Mercy toward us!** This **total availability of love** Christ has manifested from the application of Ps 40 to Him: *Behold, I come...!* [cf. Heb 10:7]. He expresses His Love and Mercy perfectly in His Passion, where He indeed exercises fully His **Sacrificial Oblation** both as **priest** and as **Victim**: *...Although He was Son, He learned to obey through suffering; but having been made perfect, He became for all who obey him the source of eternal*

<sup>66</sup> cf. S. Lyonnet & L. Sabourin, *Sin, Redemption & Sacrifice*. ROMA: PIB 1998, reprint, pp. 166-181;193-201; 216-255.

salvation, and was acclaimed by God with the title of High Priest of the order of Melchisedech...By virtue of that **one single offering**, He has achieved the eternal perfection of all whom He is sanctifying...! Cf. Heb 5:8-9; 10:14].

This **Oblation of Love and Mercy** attains in the silence of the Passion its culminating point. The impressive cry of Jesus from the Cross: **My God, My God! Why have You abandoned Me?** [cf. Mk 15:34; Mt 27:46]<sup>67</sup>. This reveals the experience of the depths of reprobation on earth of sin, hated by God, and one which Jesus has assumed out of love for sinners. The humanity of Jesus, in the Divine Person of the Second Person of the Trinity, is overwhelmed by the experience of being severed from God, the effect of sin within human beings. Lk then prefers to call to mind the invocation of confidence which Jesus prayed from the Cross: **Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit!** [cf. Lk 23:46]. This expresses the **uninterrupted union of love** between the Father and the Son.

d. **In the NT, the Synoptics:** already at Jesus' Baptism, with the descent of the Holy Spirit, there is already the clear hint, or the Preface for the **oblation of Love and Immolation** that Jesus will offer of Himself, as **Victim** on Calvary: *...how much more effectively the Blood of Christ, Who offered Himself as the **perfect sacrifice** to God through the Eternal Spirit, can purify our **inner self** from dead acts so that we do our service to the living God...* [cf. Heb 9:14]. At His Baptism, Jesus is **consecrated as the Messiah, and the Suffering Servant of God.**

e. **The Corpus of John** offers a variety of texts which are often interpreted as showing Jesus as **Victim** :

*... Look, there is the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world!...Look! there is the Lamb of God!* [cf. Jn 1:29, 36]

*...I am the Living Bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I shall give will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh for the life of the world....For my flesh is real food and My Blood is real drink. .As I, Who am sent by the Father, Myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from Me. This is the bread come down from heaven; not like the bread our ancestors ate; they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live for ever...!* [cf. Jn 6:51-56]. –

*...I tell you most solemnly, unless a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but, if it dies, it yields a rich harvest. Anyone who loves his life, loses it; and anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If a man loves me, he must follow Me, wherever I am My servant will be there, too... [cf. Jn 12:24, ff.] –*

*...and for their sake I consecrate Myself, so that they too may be consecrated in truth... [cf. Jn 17:19] –*

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Gerard Rosse', *The Cry of Jesus on the Cross. A Biblical and Theological Study*. NY/Mahwah: Paulist 1987; Lorraine Caza, *Mon Dieu, pourquoi m'as-tu abandonné?* . Recherches Nouvelle Serie 24.. Montreal/Paris: Bellarmin/duCerf 1989.

*...When they came to Jesus, they found that he was already dead, and so instead of breaking His legs, one of the soldiers pierced His side with a lance, and immediately there came out blood and water... [cf. Jn 19:31-37] –*

*...the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin... [cf. 1 Jn 1:7] –*

*...He is the sacrifice that takes our sins away... [cf. 1 Jn 2:2] –*

*...this is the love I mean: not our love for God, but God's love for us, when He sent His son to be the sacrifice that takes our sins away... [cf. 1 Jn 4:10] –*

*...He loves us and has washed away our sins with His blood... [cf. Apoc 1:5] -  
...These are the people who have been through the great persecution; and because they have washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb, they now stand in front of god's throne... [cf. Rv 7:14] –*

*... they follow the Lamb wherever He goes; they have been redeemed from amongst men to be the first-fruits for God and for the Lamb... [cf. Rv. 14:4, f.].*

In addition to the Pierced Side of Christ, it is necessary to ponder the grandiose **Liturgy of Rv 5<sup>68</sup>**, which celebrates the **Triumph of the Lamb**, the Conqueror, the **Lamb that had been sacrificed, immolated, pierced**. By His Blood He has purchased human beings of every tribe, language, people and nation.

f. **St. Paul:** never seems to speak explicitly of the Prophecy of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh, but he is penetrated with the spirit of this figure, as was all of early Christianity. Here is how the Apostle transmits that which he received: The Christ has **died** for our sins, according to the Scriptures; He was **buried**, and **rose** up again on the third day, according to the Scriptures... [cf. 1 Co 15:3-4: the earliest NT Creed on the Resurrection]. The repeated expression, *according to the Scriptures*, refers to the death of Jesus, **Whose Oblation as a Victim**, is expressed in the Institution of the Eucharist: **This is My Body, which is given up for you!** [cf. 1 Co 11:24]. St. Luke speaks of the **Blood, poured out for you!** [cf. Lk 22:20]. The inseparable bond which in Paul's Soteriology, unites the **death as a Victim**, and the resurrection of Jesus is announced beforehand, by the humiliation and the glorification of the Servant of Yahweh [cf. Is 53:8-12], a theme much developed in the **Christological Carmen** in the Letter to the Philippians [cf. 2:5-11], the third Psalm of the large majority of First Vespers of Sunday.

In his **Letter to the Romans**, the Father is presented as having destined Jesus to serve as **expiation**: *both Jew and Greek, being redeemed in Christ Jesus, who was appointed by God to sacrifice His life so as to win reconciliation through faith...* [cf. Rm 3:25]. In 2 Co, Paul states: *...For our sake, God made the sinless One into Sin, so that in Him we might become the goodness of God ...* [cf. 2 Co 5:21]. Jesus Christ assumed a sinful humanity in order to become the **Victim** for sin in sinful flesh, and so that we might become **justified** before God. Thus, Jesus Christ is the **Victim of Expiation**, **immolated** as a Holocaust in the fire of the Holy Spirit [cf. Heb 9:14], for our sins. In a perfect manner, then, combining all these texts, there is the fulfillment

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<sup>68</sup> Cf. Roberto Rossella, *Le Liturgie celesti di Ap 4-5: Criteri Eermeneutici*. Tesi di Magistero. Santa Croce 1989-90.



of the ancient Leviticus [cf. 1:17] - Christ has loved us, and **given Himself up** for us, offering Himself to God as a **fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God** [cf. Ep 5:2].

For all that pertains to the manner by which God worked out our redemption in Jesus Christ, Paul often makes use of a three-fold formula:

- the **juridicial category**: God has sent His only Begotten and Most Beloved Son in the condition of our sinful and moral flesh. In this sinful and mortal body, He has conquered sin by His Suffering and death, paying the ransom price [cf. Rm 8:3];
- the category of **Victim** : presenting the Redemption as an **expiation** in the Blood of Jesus Christ [cf. Rm 3:25] - Jesus is the **Sacrifice of Redemption, for sin** [cf. 2 Co 5:21];
- the category of **solidarity and participation**: if we **share** in the death of Jesus Christ, we will also **participate** in His Resurrection [cf. Rm 6:4-10].

g. **St. Peter**: also emphasizes Jesus as **Victim** :

*...Remember the ransom paid to free you from the useless way of life your ancestors handed down was not paid in anything corruptible, neither in silver nor gold, but in the Precious Blood of the Lamb without spot, or stain, namely Christ... [cf. 1 P 1:18, f.] -*

*Peter instructed the Christians of all places and times that they have been chosen by the provident purpose of God the Father, to be made holy by the Spirit, obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with His Blood... [cf. 1 P 1:2] -*

*...He was bearing our faults in His own body on the Cross, so that we might die to our faults and live for holiness; through His wounds you have been healed...! Cf. 1 P 2:21, ff.] -*

*...Why Christ Himself, innocent though He was had died once for sins, died for the guilty, to lead us to God. In the body, He was put to death, in the spirit He was raised to life... [cf. 1 P 3:18].*

h. **Hebrews**: this is an extended meditation on OT **sacrifice** offered by the **Priesthood**, applied now to **Jesus**: the infinite superiority of the **Victim** of Calvary has rendered empty, meaningless the victims of old [cf. Heb 10:5-7], incapable of eliminating sins [cf. 10:4]. The **Blood of Christ** eliminates these [cf. 9:14]. The unique Subject Who eliminates sin and expiates and reconciles is **always and solely God**. In Jesus, He comes to us **propitious** and **clement** [cf. 2:17], and the **Victim** in His **Priesthood**.

## 2. Biblical Summary

[1.] After having considered Jesus Christ's oblation of love as His being a Victim of expiation [cf. 1 Jn 2:2], it is only normal to ask: what attitude should a disciple of Jesus Christ assume in life? Jesus responds for us all: "... take up your cross every day and follow Me!... [cf. Lk 9:23] -"... This is My commandment: love one another, as I have loved you..." [cf. Jn 15:12, f.] - Paul offers a significant dimension:

*“... Now you are able to appear before him holy, pure and blameless - as long as you **persevere and stand firm** on the solid base of the faith, **never letting yourselves drift away from the hope** promised by the Good News... It makes me happy to suffer for you as I am suffering now, and in my own body to do what I can to make up all that still has to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church...” [cf. Col 1:22-24].*

[2] The sacrifice of Jesus Christ, **His entire priestly life and state of “victimhood”** enjoys a universal bearing. Each human being is called to Passover from death to life, from the state of sin to the state of justification in Jesus Christ [cf. 2 Co 5:21] For the eternal Word of God has taken on, assumed our flesh of sin in order to be in solidarity with our humanity. The Father has condemned sin and death in the sinful and mortal flesh assumed by Christ, thus putting an end to the domination of sin and death over flesh [cf. Rm 8:13].

[3] For Paul, the flesh [ *sarx* ] is a reality that is closed in on itself: this is weak, feeble, mortal humanity which perishes - this is a human being, distanced from God. The ‘body’ [ *soma* ], on the contrary is a reality upon to the transcendent: this is a human being bearing within the hope of the resurrection.

### **3. The Call to Victimhood**

Jesus Christ has immolated the flesh of sin, becoming for humanity a sacrifice for sin [cf. 2 Co 5:21]. He has transformed into a spiritual body by His resurrection, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to honor the Father -we are thus enabled to enter into solidarity with Him in death, so that we might also be in the resurrection. This is the be one with Him as an oblation to the **Father** of the Kenosis of **Jesus Christ**, as a Gift of the **Holy Spirit**.

a. The Mysterious “Belonging” of the Christian to the Paschal Christ: this is expressed by Paul with the simple expression, and its variations: ***in Christ [Jesus]*** . This is used some 164 times in his letters, with a variety of nuances.

In 1 Tm, Paul speaks of **Jesus Christ as a great mystery of our religion** [cf. 3:16]. In this “great mystery of our religion” each of the baptized shares in some way. This is also expressed in other ways:

*“... he learned to obey through suffering ... having been made perfect, he became for all who obey him the source of eternal salvation and was acclaimed by God with the title of **high priest** of the order of Melchisedek...” [cf. Heb 5:9] - “... he has offered one single sacrifice for sins... by virtue of that **one single offering**, he has achieved the eternal perfection of all whom he is sanctifying...” [cf. Heb 10:14].*

This **one priesthood** of Jesus Christ has a variety of manifestations: the common priesthood of the baptized and the ministerial priesthood of the ordained in the sacrament of Holy Orders. The essential function of priesthood as such seems to be **to offer**. There can be no priesthood without **victim** - Jesus is the victim in His own Priesthood: He is what is offered: “... *During his life on earth he offered up prayer*

*and entreaty, aloud and in silent tears, to the one who had the power to save him out of death and he submitted so humbly that **his prayer was heard...*** [cf. Heb 5:7-10, passim].

It is this **attitude of oblation** which constitutes His priesthood [cf. Heb 10:5-18]: "... This is the covenant that I will make with them when those days arrive [cf. Jr 31:31-34]... *and the Lord goes on to say: I will put my laws into their hearts and write them on their minds. I will never call their sins to mind, or their offenses. When all sins have been forgiven, there can be no more sin offerings...*" - As Christ as done, each Christian is invited to **make an offering of his/her entire life**: "*Make of your bodies an **oblation**, to God's mercy...*" [cf. Rm 12:1, ff.] - join your **spiritual sacrifices** to the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ [cf. I P 2:3, ff.] By this action, the transforming Spirit takes ordinary every day life - the humble routine of each day - and makes it **priestly** and **sacrificial** in its entirety.

**The Eucharistic Liturgy**: is an invitation to make of our life a **continuing celebration of self-giving**. The words of Christ Jesus at the Institution of the Eucharist imply a priesthood through the ages: **Do this in memory of Me!** [cf. L 22:19] These words apply directly and immediately to the offertory gifts of bread and wine - but are extended to include as well our entire lives, our persons. The ritual liturgy of Oblation continues in the **Liturgy of Life** and our own personal history - the oblation is our own lives in the daily routine.

**Christ's own mind-set of self-oblation** allows each one to comprehend better the **oblative spirituality** of each Christian regarding all of his/her life: past, present and future: memory, presence and promise. This self-giving as epitomized by Jesus Christ allows us to comprehend even better that this is not simply a matter of the moral or spiritual life: it is simply **living baptism through a unity of life with Jesus Christ**, our merciful High Priest- **strengthened** by Confirmation, **nourished** by the Eucharist. This "being one" with Christ Jesus in response to the Father's gift of the Emmanuel enables us in the Holy Spirit to be oblations to the heavenly Father - interiorally dominated and vivified by the Holy Spirit, poured into us - giving our hope every assurance. [cf. Rm 5:5; LG 34]

b. **Participation of the Believer in the Life of Jesus Christ, Priest and Victim**: this implies that the Christian is called, and daily challenged to make up for what is lacking in the sufferings of Jesus Christ for His Body, the Church [cf. Col 1:24]. This not only holds for the more challenging aspects of life, but everything that makes up a part of each person's daily apostolic and social life, family life and life alone: this is simply **the daily life of faith, hope and charity which is an "oblation"**. This text does not mean, of course, that any of us can add anything to the perfect redemption already achieved by Jesus Christ. It simply means to join all our apostolic trials for the coming of His Reign - simply to follow along the path of all that Jesus has endured before us.

For Paul, as for every Christian, the daily life as well as the formal apostolate, is to be regarded as a cultic act, a Liturgy, in which the Christ offers to the

Father all human beings, victims, first of sin - and now **offered to God** through their garments being washed clean in the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ:

*“...He has appointed me as **a priest of Jesus Christ**, and I am to carry out my priestly duty **by bringing the good news** from God to the pagans, and so make them acceptable as an offering, made holy by the Holy Spirit.. [cf. Rm 15:16]*

*“...We are Christ’s incense to God for those who are being saved and for those who are not...” [cf. 2 Co 2:15]*

*“... We are only the earthenware jars that hold this treasure, to make it clear that such an overwhelming power comes from God and not from us...always, wherever we are, we carry with us in or body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus, too, may always be seen in our body...” [cf. 2 Co 4:7, 10]*

*“... and then if my blood has to be shed as part of your own sacrifice and offering - which is your faith - I shall be happy and rejoice with all of you...” [cf. Ph 2:17]*

Whenever one thinks of Paul, it is significant to see that he places to the forefront the organization of his work of evangelization in Corinth, his struggles, his fatigue - the fact of his becoming all things in order to win over all [cf. 1 Co 9:23] -all as an **Oblation**.

1.] What makes his apostolate truly effective **is his assimilation to Jesus Christ** - this means to live anew His unique sacrifice. One can understand how it is that in each one’s weakness - that of the Apostle, just as that of every believer - the grace of Jesus Christ, by the action of the Holy Spirit, attains its greatest effectiveness:

*“...I was given a thorn in the flesh... I pleaded with the Lord three times for it to leave him but he said: ‘ My grace is enough for you; **My power is at best in weakness.**’ So I shall be very happy to make my weakness my special boast so that the power of Christ may stay over me -and that is why I am content with my weaknesses, and with insults, hardships, persecutions, and the agonies I go through for Christ’s sake. For it is when I am weak that I am strong...” [cf. 1 Co 12:9, f.].*

2.] There is no doubt that each one’s commitment to the apostolic life as well as to the life of grace, are all necessary - but, they would be without results and would have no value unless they were all worked out “in Christ Jesus.” This means that Paul has not simply “offered up” his life as a sacrifice making of himself a “**victim**” - what it really means is that he tried always to live his life **in union with Christ Jesus**.

It is always clear that it is not mere human effort that saves the world - it is always God Himself, through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. It is the “**scandal of the Cross**’ [cf. 1 Co 1:22,f.] that saves the world. The Reign of God is built up with

very poor human contributions: the weakness of love, faith, hope, the meager oblations, each one's immolation, reparation.

Whenever believers think about, or act upon - anything connected **with oblation, reparation, immolation** - this is always to fathom the depths of the priesthood and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This means to live ever more deeply the theological and even the mystical life. The primacy of the "little ones", the "poor in spirit" is presented not only as the prime destinaries of salvation, but these are the most effective protagonists, collaborators in the work of salvation - profoundly united to Jesus Christ, the great High Priest and victim. This is where the little ones of this earth find their strength and assume their true stature: "... Think of God's mercy, my brothers and sisters, and worship him, I beg you, in a way that is worthy of thinking beings, by offering your bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing unto God..." [cf. Rm 12: 1, ff.]:

*"...Indeed while we are still alive, we are consigned to death every day, for the sake of Jesus, so that in our mortal flesh the life of Jesus, too, may be openly shown..."* [cf. 2 Co 4:11, f.] - *"... I have been **crucified with Christ**, and I live now not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me. The life I now live in this body I live in faith: faith in the Son of God who loved me and who sacrificed himself for my sake..."* [cf. Ga 2:19, ff.]. - *"... Unless a grain of wheat falls on the ground and dies, it remains only a single grain; but if it dies, it yields a rich harvest..."* [cf. Jn 12:24].

c. **The essential element for "Victimhood"** is that each one offer his/her **own oblation of Love:**

*"...From the beginning until now the entire creation is **groaning** in one great act of giving birth ... the Holy Spirit too, comes to help us in our **weakness**. For when we cannot choose words in order to pray properly, the **Spirit** himself expresses our plea in a way that could never be put into words..."* [cf. Rm 8:18, ff.]. - *"... If you read my words, you will have some idea of the **depths** that I see the **mystery** of Jesus Christ... this mystery has now been revealed through the Spirit... it means that pagans now **share** in the same inheritance, they are parts of the same body, and that the same promise has been made to them, in Christ Jesus, through the gospel... I have been made the servant of that gospel by a gift of grace from God who gave it to me by his own power...never lose confidence just because of the trials that I go through on your account: they are for your glory..."* [cf. Ep 3: 1, ff.].

Considering the Christian life under the aspect of the priesthood and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ - and, consequently, under the aspect from the views and the initiative of God - there is no antithesis between these two inter-connected ideals: **the Victim for Divine Justice** - and **the Victim for Divine Love**. Any separation of these two would make no sense. There may have been introduced an excessive dichotomy between God's "justice" and God's "love" in times past in some interpretations of spirituality. All is harmonized in the living of God's mercy, by living out each one's expiation and immolation.

If sin is substantially a refusal of the love of God, expiation and reparation consist fundamentally in **allowing oneself to be loved by God**, and to return to Him love for love. All this is only “truly meet and just”. If love is indeed realized, “all justice is sublimely accomplished” : - *...anyone not living a holy life and not loving his brother is no child of God’s... this has taught us love - that He gave up His life for us; and we, too, **ought to give up our lives** for our brothers. ...our love is not just to be words or mere talk...* [ cf. I Jn 3:10, 16-17].

The justice of God is that love which gives totally of self:

*“... God’s love for us was revealed when God sent into the world his only Son so that we could have life through him; this is the love I mean: not our love for God, but God’s love for us when he sent his Son to be the sacrifice that takes sins away...”* [cf. I Jn 4:9, f.] - *“...what proves that God loves us is that Christ died for us while we were still sinners...”* [cf. Rm 5:8] - *“... For our sake God made the sinless one into sin so that in him we might become the goodness of God...”* [cf. 2 Co 5:21]. - *We are truly the disciples of Christ acting in accord with His Justice whenever we accept the gratuitous love of God and we live our whole lives in faith which works for charity: “... what matters is faith that makes its power felt through love...”* [cf. Ga 5:6].

It is always necessary for spirituality to consider the challenges of **the spirituality of victimhood** solely from the perspective of God Himself. All becomes then a work of God. Even suffering, in its depths, is called to become an experience of love. This is why the Victim is always a Victim of Love - this was the happy intuition of the Little Flower who always offered her life as a **Victim to the Merciful Love of God**.

1.] Pius XII in his *Haurietis Aquas* [1956] presents both redemption and reparation as a mystery of love:

**“... [we] must clearly understand the reasons why the Church gives the highest form of worship to the Heart of the divine Redeemer. There are two reasons: first, which applies also to the other sacred members of the body of Jesus Christ, rests on the principle whereby we recognize that His heart, the noblest part of human nature, is hypostatically united to the Person of the Divine Word. Consequently there must be paid to it that worship of adoration with which the Church honors the Person of the Incarnate Son of God Himself. We are dealing here with an article of faith...**

**The other reason which refers in a particular manner to the Heart of the Divine Redeemer, and likewise demands in a special way that the highest form of worship be paid to it, arises from the fact that His heart, more than all the other members of His Body is the natural sign and symbol of His boundless love for the human race...”** [cf. ## 21, 22].

2.] This is likewise the perspective of Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical Letter, *Dives in Misericordia*, [1980], c. 7:

“...The Church lives an authentic life when she professes and proclaims mercy - the most stupendous attribute of the Creator and the Redeemer - and when she brings people close to the sources of the Savior’s mercy, of which she is the trustee and the dispenser. Of great significance in this area is the constant meditation on the Word of God, and above all, conscious and mature participation in the Eucharist and in the sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation. The Eucharist brings us even nearer to that love which is more powerful than death... Mercy in itself, as a perfection of the infinite God, is also infinite. Also infinite therefore and inexhaustible is the Father’s readiness to receive the prodigal children who return to his home. Infinite are the readiness and power of forgiveness which flow continually from the marvelous value of the sacrifice of the Son. No human sin can prevail over this power or even limit it.... Authentic knowledge of the God of mercy, the God of tender love, is a constant and inexhaustible source of conversion, not only as a momentary interior act but as a permanent attitude, as a state of mind. Those who come to know God in this way, who ‘see’ Him in this way, can live only in a state of being continually converted to him. They live, therefore, in *statu conversionis*... [# 13].

Therefore, the **spirituality of victimhood** is lived in union with the passion and death of Jesus Christ, realizing through Him **total reparation**, as a **return of love**, and exchange of love - this is its vertical dimension. But, there is also a horizontal dimension, that of **consecrating the world** - and working **apostolically** within it for this to take hold. Much like the anonymous penitent of ages ago who promises the Lord that he/she will teach the world of God’s mercy after first “experiencing” it on the deepest personal level: “... **be my savior again, renew my joy, keep my spirit steady and willing; and I shall teach transgressors the way to you...My sacrifice is this broken spirit, you will not scorn this crushed and broken heart...**” [cf. *Miserere*]. This is also similar to the “penance” the Risen Lord gave to His “Vicar” - Peter, do you love Me? then, then, **feed My lambs, My sheep!** [cf. Jn 21: 15, ff.].

d. Beyond and above any hint of a dichotomy between the Victim of Love or the Victim of Justice, the spirituality of Victimhood is called by vocation to **participate every day more deeply in the Passion and Death, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord** [cf. Jn 12:24, f.]: “.. *Anyone who loves his life, loses it; anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life...*” [cf. Jn 12:24,f.]. This intensifying participation would give some idea of the necessary and burdensome purifications that have to be in any and every spiritual life. In the classical Carmelite tradition, there is clear description of the **Dark Nights** of both the Senses the Soul. The Cross will enter every life - every day.

e. **The Life/Spirituality of Victimhood** is not in itself, something reserved only for the very special, "hardy" souls. It has its roots, strengthening and nourishment in the **Sacraments of Initiation**, open to all. The Liturgy of the Eucharist presents the reality of victimhood of Jesus Christ, with the daily appeal to live our lives as Missionary Oblation; Consecration and Communion.

The Third Eucharistic Prayer, in particular, is a variation on a central theme: all of life is sacrificial offertory: that of Christ, that of the Church and that of each Communicant, living the priesthood of believers. The prayer is that the Holy Spirit might make of us all a spiritual offering: "... Through all those works befitting Christians, they can offer spiritual sacrifices and proclaim the power of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light [cf. I P 2:4-10].

Therefore, all the disciples of Christ, persevering in prayer and praising God [cf. Ac 2:42-47] should present themselves as a **living sacrifice**, holy and pleasing to God [cf. Rm 12:1]. Everywhere on earth they must bear witness to Christ and give answer to those who seek an account of that hope of eternal life which is in them.." [cf. I P 3:15]... the faithful join in the offering of the Eucharist by virtue of their royal priesthood. **They likewise exercise that priesthood by receiving the sacraments, by prayer and thanksgiving, by the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity...** [cf. LG 10]. [cf. also LG 11, 21; AA 3; PO 2].

f. In writing to the Romans, just recently converted from a pagan way of life, Paul beseeches the heavens that they might become, through his ministry, **an oblation that would be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit** [cf. Rm 12:1, ff.] - the Lord had appointed Paul a "priest" to bring the Good News to non-believers, by making them **acceptable as an offering**, made holy by the Holy Spirit [Rm 15:16].

The reference to **sacrificial sanctification** achieved by the Holy Spirit, recalls to mind the Lord Jesus Christ Himself - consumed by the Fire of the Holy Spirit on the Cross:"... how much more effectively the blood of Christ, who **offered himself as the perfect sacrifice to God** through the eternal Spirit, can purify our inner self from dead actions so that we do our **service** to the living God [cf. Heb 9:15].

As it is for Jesus, so it is for every one of His followers. There is a need for each Christian to receive the Holy Spirit through docility. Without this acceptance through apostolic charity and the specific invocation of the Holy Spirit on all our actions, it will never be possible to comprehend the more fully the mystery of the Cross, and even will it be less probable that we will ever truly live this central mystery in convincing profundity.

Our solidarity with Jesus Christ needs to be so deep, alive, that it will make of us vibrant **cooperators, continuators of the Salvation** He has won for us. Each in his/her own way, by His explicit Will, needs to work with Christ in making this a reality in the life of the Church in our own time. By our own personal Redeemer, Jesus Christ, we continue to live His Mystery as Savior, the One Who makes Reparation to the Father - the ones who adore the Father "in union with Christ Jesus":



*“... I am the true vine...**make your home in me** as I make mine in you... if you **remain** in me, you will bear fruit...**whoever remains** in me, with me in him, bears fruit in plenty... if you **remain** in me, and my words remain in you, you may ask what you will, and you shall get it...It is to the glory of my Father that you should bear much fruit...As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. **Remain** in my love... You did not choose me, no, I chose you...” [cf. Jn 15].*

g. In what concerns the historical reality of making a **Vow of Victimhood**, it is very difficult to make precise its specific area - and this is juridically necessary for any “vow.” Many make the specific act of the will to live in the spirit of Victimhood, in imitation of Jesus Christ, with relationship to His heavenly Father’s will. What is needed, for every Christian, is to have **the ever more serious and intense disposition to do everything for the will of God.**

There can never be **oblation**, without **immolation** - and there is no immolation without oblation. However, the authentic substance of **victimhood** is simply **oblative love**, that willingness to be **united with the oblation of reparation** in union with Jesus Christ, to the Father, in the Holy Spirit, for the salvation of the world.. For any sense of validity, there needs to be in every believer the acceptance of the daily crosses of life, the willingness to undergo immolation as life unfolds, drains away - that willingness to be transformed in order to **enter into ever deeper communion with the life of the Trinity, grace.**

As a basic minimum, it is necessary **to accept the daily Crosses** - physical, moral, and spiritual. The fatigue of daily commitment, the terrible weight of daily routine is the “stuff” of sublime holiness. All needs to be brought into union with Jesus’ own Self-Oblation - all is offered as a proof and manifestation of **love for the heavenly Father**, without ever giving up entirely, surrendering to sadness, lamentation, discouragement... despair.

There is always room for St. Peter’s **Crucified Joy**:

*“... **This is a cause of great joy for you, even though you may for a short time have to bear being plagued by all sorts of trials...**” [cf. I P 1:6] - “... **My dear people, you must not think it unaccountable that you should be tested by fire. There is nothing extraordinary in what has happened to you. If you can have some share in the sufferings of Christ, be glad, because you will enjoy a much greater gladness when his glory is revealed. It is a blessing for you when they insult you for bearing the name of Christ, because it means that you have the Spirit of glory...**” [cf. I P 4:13, ff.]*

It is far deeper wisdom not so much to look for crosses - or to submit to them blindly, fatalistically - but rather willingly, joyfully to accept them.

The spiritual life is never an oppressive sense of failure, pain, defeat - we need to **rejoice** in the Lord, always and **rejoice** again! [I Th 5:16; Ph 4:4]. Life is not merely fatalistic submission, passive acceptance. It is rather a response to God’s invitation in

**Joy and Hope, in personal happiness and apostolic commitment.** Sustained by the Holy Spirit, we live the special **Fruits** that He infuses into those who strive to live the theological life [cf. Ga 5:22] - we are called to be creatures of joy - of peace - of patience - of goodness - of benevolence - gentle and kind - faithful to Jesus Christ. We need to take some control of our thoughts, our desires, our affections, our words, our actions - not acting out of self-seeking, but rather to note that Christian personality is self-emptying, giving. We need more and more to be guided by the Spirit of God [cf. Ga 5:22-25].

h. **Suffering and Trials** are indeed privileges experiences for **Victimhood**. These realities are beyond the pale of any devotional sentimentalism. The experience of pain is difficult to endure- even Christ Himself found it extremely difficult [cf. Mt 26:37-38; Mk 14:33-34; Lk 22:43-44].

It is only the **theological life - faith, hope, charity** - that can make any response to the non-sense of deep pain, tragedy, death- and the only "explanation" that makes sense would be those offered by Scripture: punishment - pedagogy - reparation - redemption -purification - eschatology: the Cross of Jesus Christ. Faith cannot give an "answer" that would satisfy every question for specific sufferings - but gives an over-all reading to all of life. The life of faith opens up **new meanings**, it infuses a **light** into the darkest corners of human existence - and it permits one to persevere under the daily burden of a heavy cross.

**Suffering is simply a reality of life:** it needs to be spoken of with discretion, and met with courage and perseverance. One of the sublime values of the faith is abandonment to God, availability to the Church. This needs to be done perseveringly.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Christian needs to live life in preparation for **the supreme act of oblation in death** - and a life-long commitment to the apostolate in some form: "... all I want to know is Christ and the power of His resurrection and to share his sufferings by reproducing the pattern of his death..." [cf. Ph 3:10]. If His death on the Cross is the act of efficacious salvation which has saved the world, one can further say that the death of the Christian is in union with the death of Jesus Christ - we are all crucified with Him in Baptism . There is need to give more value to the "every-dayness" of life, and to see in routine the Cross of human existence. This is a demanding vocation asking cooperation with grace in generosity. It is a continuing appeal to live the life of Christian with commitment. The challenge is to live the Christian way, truth and life in depth, with simplicity, modesty and humility in some consolation [cf. 2 Co 1:3, ff.].

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## EXCURSUS IV

### The Teaching of the Great Saints: St. Thomas Aquinas & St. Ignatius of Loyola

- St. Thomas and St. Ignatius [from his Military back- ground].
- Ignatius' famous Letter on Obedience.

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#### A. St. THOMAS AQUINAS

##### St. Thomas Aquinas: Jesus' *Obsequium* to the Father & Ours The Influence of St. Thomas Aquinas in St. Gaspar Bertoni's Charism" *Missionarii Apostolici in OBSEQUIUM Episcoporum*

##### Abandonment to God, Availability to the Church

[An Italian version of this appears as follows: *La formula 'in Obsequium' nel linguaggio di S. Tommaso.*  
in: ANGELICUM LXIX (1992), pp. 453-470].

#### Introduction:

Before the final approval of LG 25 - so much discussed subsequently - a very particular scrutiny was given to some of the expressions:

*... fideles autem in sui Episcopi sententiam de fide et moribus nomine Christi prolatam concurrere, eique religioso animi obsequio adhaerere debent. Hoc vero religiosum voluntatis et intellectus obsequium singulari ratione praestandum est Romani Pontificis authentico magisterio etiam cum non ex cathedra loquitur...*

*... singuli praesules... nexum inter se et cum Successore Petri servantes... quod adhuc manifestius habetur quando, in Concilio Oecumenico coadunati, pro universa fidei et morum doctores et iudices sunt, quorum definitionibus fidei obsequio est adhaerendum...*

The difficulty of rendering this passage into English may be noted by comparing two English translations of the Dogmatic Constitution:

“... the faithful are to accept the teaching (of the Bishops in communion with the Roman Pontiff) and adhere to it with a religious assent of soul. This religious submission of will and of mind must be shown in a special way to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra* ...”

“... This authority is even more clearly verified when, gathered together in an Ecumenical Council, they are teachers and judges of faith and morals for the universal Church. Their definitions must then be adhered to with the submission of faith...”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> *The Documents of Vatican II*. Walter M. Abbot, SJ, General Editor. NY: Herder & Herder/ Association Press 1966, pp. 47, ff.

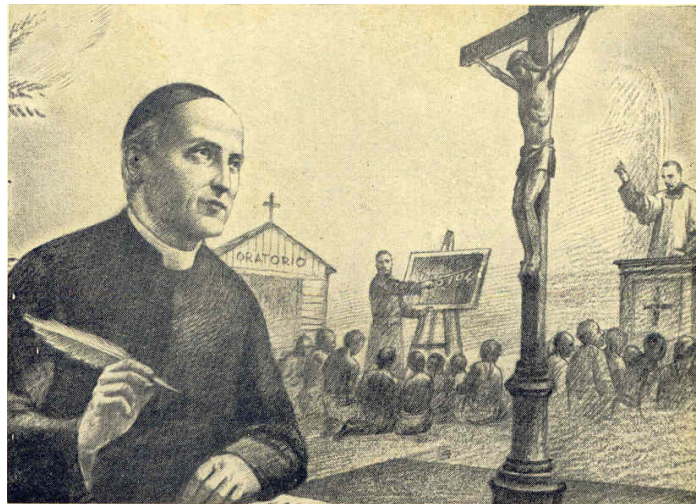
In the “Flannery” translation, these pertinent passages are rendered in a slightly different way:

“...the faithful ... are obliged ... to adhere (to such teaching) **with a ready and respectfully allegiance of mind. This loyal submission of will and intellect** must be given in a special way, to the authentic teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff, even when he does not speak *ex cathedra* ...”

“... **This is still more clearly the case, when assembled in an Ecumenical Council, they are, for the universal Church, teachers and judges in matters of faith and morals, whose decisions must be adhered to with loyal and obedient assent of faith...**”<sup>70</sup>

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### 1. **In the gradual formulation of his charism, St. Gaspar Bertoni [1777-1853]**



Founder of the Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ [was canonized on November 1, 1989], the words ***in obsequium*** are used most often. His charism might be described as “**Abandonment to God, Availability to the Church**”<sup>71</sup> [3]. Much influenced by St. Ignatius of Loyola, Fr. Bertoni also received deep insights for his spirituality from the Angelic Doctor, as well as from the Word of God.

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<sup>70</sup> *Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents.* General Editor, Austin Flannery, OP, Dublin/Clonskeagh: Dominican Publications/ Talbot Press. 1st Printing, pp. 379,ff.

<sup>71</sup> cf. Joseph Henchey, CSS, “Abandonment to God and Availability to the Church: St. Gaspar Bertoni [1777-1853]”, in: *ANGELICUM* LXVII (1990), pp. 87-108.

## 2. *In obsequium* in the Vulgate

To translate the history of ancient Israel, the Latin makes use of these words a number of times. In the story of the army commander of the King of Aram, healing comes to Naaman through the interest of a young girl in the service of his spouse<sup>72</sup> [4]. The terms are found again when the officials of Judah come to pay court to the king<sup>73</sup> [5]. As the army of Judas Maccabbaeus laid siege to the Citadel of Jerusalem, some of those under attack made their way to the king and stated that they had been content to serve the king's father<sup>74</sup> [6]. In the collections of the sayings of Ecclesiasticus, the praises of wisdom are sung: whoever serves her, ministers to the Holy One<sup>75</sup> [7]. Later in the same book, in glowing account of Israel's history, the honor paid to Cabel ends with the principle that all the sons of Israel should see that it is good to follow the Lord<sup>76</sup> [8].

In the New Testament, outside of one unusual text in John<sup>77</sup> [9] found in Christ's discourse on the hostile world, He warns the Apostles that anyone killing them will think that this is a holy duty for God [*obsequium*].

It is in Paul, however, that there may be found the most rich use of the terms *in obsequium*. It occurs several times in his Letter to the Romans. When Paul speaks of the privileges of Israel, he states that they were adopted, given the glory and the covenants, and the Law and the ritual were drawn up for them<sup>78</sup> [10] - a variant reading for ritual is *obsequium*. Letter in the same Letter, he asks for prayers so that the aid that he carries to Jerusalem might be accepted by the saints. In a variant reading of the Vulgate, this refers to his ministry<sup>79</sup> [11]. Perhaps most importantly, though, for the purposes of this present study, Paul invites the Romans to make an oblation of their entire lives, as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God<sup>80</sup> [12].

In his Second Letter to the Corinthians, Paul offers a kind of "apologia" for his ministry, and responds to the accusation that he is weak - he maintains that his every thought is captured, brought into obedience to Christ<sup>81</sup> [13]. Then, in his Letter to the

<sup>72</sup> "... puellam parvam, quae erat in obsequio uxoris Naaman..." [cf. 4 Reg. 5:2; cf. also Ps 123:4].

<sup>73</sup> "... qui delenitus obsequiis eorum acquievit ei..." [2 Par. 24:17].

<sup>74</sup> "... ambulare in praeceptis eius et obsequi edictis eius ..." [1 Macc. 6:23].

<sup>75</sup> "... qui serviunt, obsequentes erunt sancto ..." [Eccli 4:15].

<sup>76</sup> "... bonum est obsequi Domino..." [Eccli 46:12].

<sup>77</sup> ... qui interficit eos, arbitretur obsequium se praestare Deo ... [Jn 16:2].

<sup>78</sup> ...legislatio et cultus [obsequium] et promissiones... [Rm 9:4].

<sup>79</sup> ...et ministerium meum pro Ierusalem acceptum... [or: obsequii mei oblatio accepta fiat in Hierosolymam...] [Rm 15:31; cf. also Ph 2:30: ... erga meum obsequium ...

<sup>80</sup> ... Obsecro itaque vos, fratres, per misericordiam, ut exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem, sanctam Dei placentem, rationabile obsequium uestrum... [Rm 12:1; cf. also 1 Pet. 2:5 ff.].

<sup>81</sup> ... et in captivitatem redigentes omnem intellectum in obsequium Christi ... [2 Co 10:5].

Philippians, there is a reference to faith, their own sacrifice and offering<sup>82</sup> [14]. These texts will have much influence on St. Thomas.

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**3. Modern exegetical and theological reflection have been fascinated with the mystery of Christ's "Loving Obedience" toward the Father,** perhaps offering Trinitarian insights, remembering the definition of the Council of Florence:

***"... everything (in the Trinity) is one where there is no opposition of relationships"***<sup>83</sup> [15]. The very "being of the Son", of Jesus Christ, is intimately tied in with His carrying out the Father's Will<sup>84</sup> [16]. Christ's obedience unto death in realizing the Father's Plan is a kind of "**constitutional obedience**" - Christ's entire earthly existence does offer a revelation into the Mystery of the Trinity, with the **kenosis** serving as the new image of God<sup>85</sup> [17]. In developing the principle revealed by Jesus that 'whoever sees Him, sees the Father' [cf. Jn 14:9, ff.], exegetes maintain that Jesus' obedience finds its principle and ultimate foundation precisely in His Filiation<sup>86</sup> [18] - Jesus is "turned toward His Father" [cf. Jn 1:18]. His Mission is most often represented as "obedience" toward the Father, which manifests His inner life<sup>87</sup> [19]. The **oblation** that Jesus offers, according to the Document to the Hebrews, is a supremely "**personal**" gift on His part, and is a manifestation of His **salvific**

<sup>82</sup> ...ita obsquium fidei vestrae..." - "... deerat erga meum obsequium [ministerii erga me ] [Ph 2:17, 30].

<sup>83</sup> Council of Florence, Decree for the Jacobites: "... *omniaque sunt unum, ubi non obviat relationis oppositio...* [D-S 1330. Denzinger-Schonmetzr, *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*. Editio 36. Barcinone/Friburgi/Romae: Herder 1876 - "...everything (in them) is one where there is no opposition of relationship..." - *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*. Revised Edition. Edited by J. Neuner, SJ, and J. Dupuis, SJ. Staten Island, NY: Alba 1981, n.325, p.11.

<sup>84</sup> Kazimierz Romaniuk, *L'Amour du Pere et du Fils dans la soteriologie de Saint Paul*. Rome: Biblical Institute Press. Analecta Biblica 15 A. 1974, pp.264, f.: ... *sa mission etait de faire la volonte' du Pere...* [cf. Jn 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 8:29; 15:10; 19:30]. ... *etre Fils signifie precisement obeir...*

<sup>85</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*. in: *Mysterium salutis*. Nuovo Corso di dogmatica come teologia della storia di salvezza. Vol. 6. L'evento Cristo. Brescia: Queriniana 1973, pp. 184, ff. cf. also: 'Esistenza nella kenosis come obbedienza fino alla morte di croce...', pp. 236,ff.

<sup>86</sup> Ignace de la Potterie, SJ, "Obbedienza e filiazione in Cristo", in: *Il mistero del cuore trafitto. Fondamenti biblici della spiritualita' del Cuore di Gesu'*. Bolgnoa: EDB 1988, pp. 47, ff. : ... l'obbedienza trova il suo principio e il suo fondamento ultimo proprio nella figliolanza di Gesu' ... La specificita' filiale di Gesu' si manifesta proprio in questo ... tutto quello che dice, fa ... viene dal Padre ...; come Persona, Gesu' e' solo il Figlio del Padre ...

<sup>87</sup> Ignace de la Potterie, SJ, "The Biblical Basis of the Theology of the Heart of Christ. Jesus' Sovereignty, His Obedience to the Father, His Filial Consciousness", in: *Towards a Civilization of Love. A Symposium on the Scriptural and Theological Foundations of the Devotion to the Heart of Jesus*. San Francisco: Ignatius 1985, pp. 59, 63, ff.; 67: ... His inner life, which was composed of obedience to the Father and love for the Father, was the human expression and perfect image of His divine life, that is to say, the life of the Son who is eternally turned toward the Father (cf. 1 Jn 1:2; Jn1:18).

**love**, revealed in **His self-giving** - this has its ultimate source in His filial docility toward His Father<sup>88</sup> [20].

By the "**obedience of faith**", each believer enters into communion with this loving obedience of Jesus Christ - in Him, each one pronounces an "amen" to God. It is through the life of faith that one "follows/imitates" Jesus Christ<sup>89</sup> [21].

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#### 4. **In Obsequium** - Texts in St. Thomas

There are two tests in particular where St. Thomas develops more extensively his understanding of **in obsequium**. In III Sentences he discusses the nature of *latria*, and offers a variety of insights for consideration. He states that **obsequium** can be offered to different persons, but that in a special and supreme manner it pertains to God, in Whom there is the supreme reason of majesty and dominion. The service (**obsequium**) that is due to God merits the special name *latria*. It can be understood in three ways:

- when it stands for that which is manifested to God's honor, such as sacrifice, genuflections, and the like - this is simply the "material" of the virtue;
- secondly, it can be used for the act of the virtue, its manifestation;
- the term is used to describe that habit by which the **obsequium** is offered - this is the virtue of the *latria*, known by four separate names:
  - it is called **pietas**, whenever it refers to the **effect** of devotion;
  - **theosobia**, or **eusebia** refer to the divine **worship** intended;
  - **religio** is the determination of the **works** of worship offered to God;
  - it is called **latria** when it means that **service** is exhibited in recognition is due to God as Creator<sup>90</sup> [22].

St. Thomas again discusses **obsequium** at some length in his Commentary on Romans 12<sup>91</sup> [23]. He reflects on these words of St. Paul: ... *Obsecro itaque vos fratres, per misericordiam Dei ut exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem, sanctam, Deo placentem, rationabile obsequium vestrum* ...

<sup>88</sup> Albert Vanhoye, SJ, "L'oblazione di Gesu' sacerdote", in: *Spiritualita' oblativa riparatrice*. Bologna: EDB 1989, pp. 57-75. cf. especially, pp. 65, 73.

<sup>89</sup> Jean-Marie Faux, SJ, *La Foi du Nouveau Testament*. Bruxelles: Institut d'Etudes Theologiques. 1974, pp.261-269.

<sup>90</sup> III Sent., d. 9, q.1, Sol 1 - secundum impressionem Petri Fiaccadori - Parmae. New York: Misurga Publishers 1948 - Vol. VII, I - p. 105, b.: ... *Similiter cum obsequium diversis possit exhiberi, speciali quodam et supremo modo Deo debetur...*

<sup>91</sup> In Epist. ad Romanos. Cap. XII, Lectio 1 - Vol. XIII, pp. 120, ff.: ... *visibile sacrificium, quod exterius Deo offertur, signum est invisibilis sacrificii, quo quis se et sua in Dei obsequium exhibet...*

It is by the mercy of God that the ministry has been committed to each [cf. 1 Co 7:25]]. Following St. Augustine, the Angelic Doctor points out that the visible sacrifice through which each person offers one's own self and goods *in obsequium* of God. Each person has a three-fold good that can be offered:

- the good of one's soul: this is offered through the humility of devotion and contrition, as is prayed in the *Miserere* [cf. Ps 51:17]. where the Psalmist's sacrifice is presented as "this broken spirit ... this crushed and broken heart..."
- one's exterior goods, through alms-giving;
- when one exposes bodily life to death for the Reign of God, as **Christ offered Himself** as an oblation [cf. Ep 5:2] - and when Paul states that he rejoices over the sacrifice, or the *obsequium* of the Philippians; faith [cf. Ph 2:17];
- **secondly**, when one gives his/her body over to fasting and vigils [cf. 1 Co 9:27];
- **thirdly**, when the body is committed to works of justice and carrying out divine worship.

The Host that was immolated to God, according to the old law, had to have four characteristics:

- it has to be integral and uncorrupted;
- it had to be immolated;
- pleasing to God;
- fourthly, seasoned with the salt [of wisdom].

St. Thomas interprets St. Paul's *rationabile obsequium vestrum* to mean that discretion is needed in making of one's body a "host", through **martyrdom**, through **abstinence**, or through any work of **justice**. In all of this, the goodness and justice of a person are found principally in interior acts, by which one believes, hopes and loves. These interior actions are to be exterior in the manner of end, or purpose. The theological life is the principal *obsequium* that one can offer to God. This way of life prohibits conformity to this world, and asks for the interior reformation [conversion] of one's mind with the discernment of the divine will.

a. **Models of Obsequium:**

1.] **Christ's obsequium redounds to the Heavenly Father:**

Particularly in his Commentary on John, and the scene of the washing of the Apostles' feet, St. Thomas analyzes profoundly this *obsequium* of humility. In this, Christ shows Himself to be their minister, servant [cf. Mt 20:28] - and on the mystical level, this pertains to the Incarnation and Passion of Christ. He has come to save humanity from tribulation by laying aside His majesty and assuming human smallness. This is symbolically presented in the putting off of the outer garment, putting on the



towel. In washing the feet and returning to table, Christ shows the Paschal Mystery, dying on the Cross and raising up again by returning to table <sup>92</sup> [24].

Christ's **obsequium** of humility offers important lessons: the type of humility was most sublime, in that the divine majesty was set aside to wash the feet of the servants. The fullness of the **obsequium** was shown in washing and drying the feet performing the task Himself and not through others <sup>93</sup> [25]. The **obsequium** of Christ's humility needs to be imitated - in order to be a servant as He is, as in removing His outer garment, He reaches that much has to be laid aside <sup>94</sup> [26].

So great is the dignity of Jesus Christ that His **obsequia** shown to the Apostles redounds ultimately to the glory of God, and all that will ever be done for the faithful through Christ redounds to the Father. This is shown in all that is done to the least of Christ's brothers and sisters, is done also for Him [cf. Mt 10:40] - and the **obsequium** exhibited to Christ redounds to His Father <sup>95</sup> [27].

In the Old Law, it was prescribed that the oblation be doubled on the Sabbath, and offered in the Temple. The Apostles were totally dedicated to greater than the Temple, namely to Christ Himself - Christ's Body is this Temple <sup>96</sup> [28].

In Chapter 26, Matthew prepares for the Passion of Christ, which he accomplishes in three ways: first, by the words of Christ Himself, predicting it; secondly, by the evil counsel taken together by His enemies - and thirdly, by the **obsequium** offered by the woman who anoints His feet. St. Thomas explains that the expensive ointment that represents the good deeds of the believers rendered precious when offered to God <sup>97</sup> [29] - this is the **obsequium** being asked of the Church.

The **Blood of Christ** is offered for the spiritual **obsequium** of God, it is offered in His service. In the Old Law, the blood of the animals could cleanse only of the external stains such as contact with a dead body. In the New Law, God is life [cf. Jn 14:6] - Christ, Who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, offers this service <sup>98</sup> [30]. The notice Pilate put on Christ's Cross was in three languages:

- in **Hebrew**, in that Christ dominated over all **theology**, in that the knowledge of divine things was handed over to the Israelites;

<sup>92</sup> Super Evang. Io. Caput XIII, Lectio 2, n. 1 - Vol. X, p. 527 b: ... *praemittitur praeparatio Christi ad humilitatis obsequium ...*

<sup>93</sup> *ib.*, n.2. p. 528 b: ... *ponit Christi obsequium ...*

<sup>94</sup> *ib.*, Lectio III, l. pp. 530, a, b: ... *Postquam Dominus extendit humilitatis obsequium ...*

<sup>95</sup> *ib.*, n. 9, p. 533 b: ... *obsequia eis impensa quoddammodo videantur redundare in Deum ... obsequium Christo exhibitum redundat in Patrem...*

<sup>96</sup> Super Evang. Matt., Caput XII, Lectio I, l - Vol. X, p. 116 a, b: ... *quia fiebat ad obsequium templi et Dei...*

<sup>97</sup> *ib.*, Caput XXVI, Lectio I. Vol X, p. 241 s: ... *tertio facto et obsequio ...*

<sup>98</sup> In Epist. ad Heb., Caput IX, Lectio III. Vol XIII, p. 740 b: ... *sanguis Christi ad spirituale obsequium...*

- in **Greek**, to show that Christ dominates over all **philosophy**;
- in **Latin**, to show that Christ is the supreme moral principle, as the Romans were known for their **moral** science.

This was done so that all intellects would be led into captivity, into the **obsequium** of Christ [cf. 2 Co 10]<sup>99</sup> [31].

St. Thomas concludes this idea in the *Summa* teaching that Christ's Passion in two ways is the cause of our reconciliation: first, by taking away sin, by which humanity became God's enemies - and secondly, inasmuch as the Passion is a most acceptable sacrifice to God. The proper effect of a sacrifice is to appease God, just as anyone would overlook an offense committed on account of some pleasing act of homage [ **obsequium** ] that might be shown<sup>100</sup> [32].

## 2.] The Holy Spouses, Mary and Joseph:

In contrast to the Gentiles who came to the fruit of grace without servicing [ **obsequio** ] the Law, the Jews obtained it by keeping and servicing [ **obsequium** ] it, is St. Paul's teaching to the Galatians<sup>101</sup> [33]. He also taught the Romans that the dignity of the People of the Old Law was that in their worship, they offered Him homage [ **obsequium** ]. This is how they served Him while all other peoples served idols<sup>102</sup> [34]. In the call of the Prophet Isaiah, St. Thomas teaches that the sending of the Prophet was an **oblatum obsequium**. The voice of the Lord is heard asking: 'Whom shall I send? Who will be **Our** Messenger? [ *Et quis ibit nobis* ? ] St. Thomas comments that the first part of the question: *Quem mittam?* - refers to the unity of the divine essence - and the plural [ *nobis* ] reveals the plurality of persons. The prophet offers himself as the oblation<sup>103</sup> [35].

It is in this tradition of faith and service that Mary and Joseph are chosen. In her election, Mary willingly gives her free acceptance for a sedulous and prompt **obsequium**<sup>104</sup> [36]. In her response to the Angel, she offers to God the free gift of her obedience<sup>105</sup> [37]. It was indeed fitting that Mary and Joseph should be married and their Espousals was indeed a true matrimony. In the purpose assigned by God, marriage must also see to the upbringing of children. Mary and Joseph fulfilled the duties of husband and wife, by which they help one another in rearing their off-

<sup>99</sup> Super Evang. Io., Caput XIX, Lectio IV, 2. Vol. X, p. 618 b:... *in obsequium Christi, ut dicitur in 2 Co 10* ...

<sup>100</sup> Summa Theol III, q. 49, a. 4 c: ...*propter aliquod obsequium acceptum quo ei exhibetur...*

<sup>101</sup> In Ep. ad Gal., Caput III, Lectio 9. Vol XIII, p. 412 a: ... *sine obsequio legis* ...

<sup>102</sup> In Epis ad Rom., Caput IX, Lectio 1. Vol. XIII, p. 92: ... *et obsequium, quo sc. Deo serviebant* ...

<sup>103</sup> In Isaiam, Caput VI, n.2 - Vol. XIV, p. 457 b:... *Secundo ponitur oblatum obsequium* ...

<sup>104</sup> III Sent., d. III, q. II, a. 1. Vol VII, 1, p. 45 b: ... *ad obsequium... 'Ecce ancilla Domini'*...

<sup>105</sup> III, q. 30, a. 1 c: ...*Tertio, ut voluntaria sui obsequii...*

spring<sup>106</sup> [38]. Furthermore, the Holy Spouses needed to be instructed concerning Christ's birth before He was born, since it was their duty to show reverence to the conceived child, and to serve Him even before He was born<sup>107</sup> [39].

In Joseph's marriage to Mary, we find the heart of the biblical message concerning him. The Angel instructs him not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit [cf. Mt 1:20, ff.]. St. Thomas explains the three tasks which the Angel performs here: divorce between the Holy Spouse is prohibited; he reveals something of the Mystery of the Incarnation and tells Joseph of his own future **obsequium** regarding the Child<sup>108</sup> [40]. The Angels shows that the mystery is primarily between the Holy Spirit and Mary - but that he, Joseph, also has an important role, his **obsequium** of the Child is made known to him [41]. Joseph's particular **obsequium** is briefly touched upon then, by Matthew. When the first-born comes to birth, they called His Name, Jesus [42]. In his response to the question why did the Holy Family flee into Egypt - it was to give the ancient persecutors of Israel, the "First-born of God", the possibility of rendering service to the Only-begotten Son of God [43].

### 3.] The Angels:

It is of the very nature of the Angels to minister and to be subjected to God. In some way, St. Thomas teaches, the Apostles witnessed this in Christ's Passion [cf. Lk 22], in the Resurrection and in the Ascension. The Angels ascend and descend in so far as they ministered unto Christ and offered their homage to Him [**obsequendo et ministrando**] [44]. In His darkest hour, Jesus claims that He could have twelve legions of Angels. In St. Thomas' Commentary, he points out that all who do the will of God may be called Angels, or messengers [cf. Is 18:2] - and all who serve [**obsequuntur**] are indeed Angels [45]. After the Resurrection, on entering the empty tomb, the Apostles find two Angels - St. Thomas interprets this to mean: that this was also to instruct the Church that all the orders of the Angels, both those assisting and those ministering, offer their services [**obsequabantur**] to Christ [46]. In one of those very lengthy articles and responses of the *Prima-Secundae* [47], St. Thomas instructs concerning the role of the Angels in the Holy of Holies of old. There was a table, called the Propitiatory raised above the wings of the Cherubim. At the prayers of the high priest, the people received propitiation. It was held up, so to speak, by the Cherubim, in obedience [**quasi Deo obsequentibus**], as it were, to God.

### 4.] Other New Testament Personalities:

- The **Magi** are described as offering their **obsequium** not to any earthly king, but only to the Heavenly King [48].

<sup>106</sup> III, q. 36, a. 2, ad 2um: ... et obsequii nascituro ...

<sup>107</sup> III, q. 29, a. 2 c: ... sibi invicem obsequuntur ad prolem nutriendum ...

<sup>108</sup> Super Evang. Matt., Caput I, 4. Vol X, p. 16 a: ... ipsius Joseph futurum obsequium...

- In **John the Baptist's** gesture of humility, stating that he was not even worthy to loosen Christ's sandals, St. Thomas sees in this the very lowest **obsequium** [49].
- **Lazarus** is presented as "our friend", and St. Thomas describes this as flowing from the many benefits and **obsequia** that the deceased had rendered to him [50].
- In his Commentary on John, the Angelic Doctor makes frequent use of **obsequium**, and its derivatives, to express the relationship of different people toward Christ. **Martha and Mary** are singled out for the **obsequium** exhibited toward Christ [51].
- **Mary [Magdalene?]** is presented as offering an important **obsequium** in the anointing of Christ's feet, and in the effect this had in permeating the house with the sweet odor of the balm [52]. There is great humility in this service the woman renders in preparation for His death and burial - her action is called **obsequium** [53]. This action on the part of the woman is a delicate service rendered to Christ [54].
- **Judas**, though, is displeased with this **obsequium Christi** [55]. St. Thomas reasons that Judas was not happy with the presence of Christ that asked for a specific **obsequium**. Christ makes clear to him that in a little while He will be gone, and that Judas will no longer be burdened with His presence [56].
- John's Gospel gives special praise to **Joseph of Arimathea**. St. Thomas points out that while the disciples did lose confidence in Jesus during His passion, Joseph expresses his trust, by publicly offering his services - **publice obsequendo** [57].

### 5.] The Apostles:

Jesus, the Divine Good Shepherd, shows that He knows His own and that His flock really knows Him. The flock is His by predestination, vocation and grace. They offer Him service in their love [ **obsequuntur** ] [58]. The Apostles are in a special category - they were called by Jesus personally, and they left all things to follow Him [cf. Mt 19:27]. Their response was the diligent service they offered Him out of love [ **diligenter et reverenter ei obsequabantur** ] [59]. Even though Paul was called after the Resurrection, he presents himself as a "servant of Jesus Christ". St. Thomas points out that there are two kinds of "servants": those who minister out of fear, against their own will; and those who serve out of love. This is the service of friends who seek to bring benefit and to serve the friend because of his well being. In this, St. Thomas quotes Aristotle's idea of "friendship" [60]. Faith is indeed a sacrificial offering - in converting others, the Apostle offers to God a sacrifice to those he converts. The Good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep - the Lord did this to complete the service [61].

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### b. **Obsequium : An essential Ecclesial Attitude**

The uniqueness of the glory of the Word is brought out in four ways:

- first, in the testimony which the Father gave the Son;
- secondly, it was brought out in the service of the Angels;
- thirdly, it came through the submission [**obsequium**] of nature. For all nature obeyed Christ and heeded [**obsequabatur**] His slightest command;
- fourthly, we see it in the way He taught and acted [62].

Hence, all of nature is *in obsequium Christi* - and, in a special way, was the star of the Epiphany, created and placed at the service of the recently born Christ. This star was made for His **obsequium** [63]. In the Plan of God, even evil itself is at the service of divine justice [ **obsequabatur divinae justitiae** ] [64], though even a venial sin [of ingratitude] removes a virtuous act of obedience [ **obsequitur** ] to God [65].

With **obsequium** so present in Christ Himself in His attitude toward the Father, and in so many biblical personalities, St. Thomas very logically applies it to the members of the Church:

- **Bishops**: since the bishop institutes ministers to the altar and founds the Church, there pertains to him particular divine services [ **divinis obsequiis** ]. As in divine worship he acts in the similitude of Christ. The bishop very specially is said to be “the spouse of the Church” as is Christ [66].

- **Priests**: in the conferral of the Order, the bishop performs two duties: he prepares the candidates by instructing them regarding their proper office, and hands on the power of Order to them. This “preparation” consists in three actions: blessing, the imposition of hands and anointing. By the blessing, the candidate is deputed for the divine services [ **divinis obsequiis mancipatur** ] [67]. St. Thomas also offers an article in which he expresses concern regarding simony: whether it is lawful to grant spiritual things in return for an equivalent of service [**obsequio**], or for other remuneration. In the first objection, the Angelic Doctor quotes St. Gregory who states that the equivalent of service [**munus ab obsequio**] denotes the interests of the Church. In the response to this objection, the word **obsequium** appears about five times:

‘...If a cleric renders a prelate a lawful service, directed to spiritual things [e.g., to the good of the Church, or benefit of her ministers], he becomes worthy of an ecclesiastical benefice by reason of the devotion that led him to render the service, as he would by reason of any other good deed. Hence, this is not a case of remuneration for service rendered, such as St. Gregory had in mind...” [68].

- **Ministries**: St. Thomas comments on St. Paul’s first chapter to the Philippians [v. 20, *magnificabitur Christus in corpore meo* - that Christ is magnified in two ways in our bodies: in one way, as we dedicate our body to His service [ **ad obsequium eius** ]; and, in another way, by risking our body for Christ [69].

- **Discipleship**: when Christ gets into the boat, for St. Thomas, this represents either the Church, or the Cross: the disciples of the Lord follow Him in the Church through their keeping of the mandates: **obsequium** [70].

- **Members of the Church**: receive from Christ, the Head of the Body - and the Head receives from the members through their **obsequia** [71].

- **Servants**: are called to minister and to offer their **obsequia** to their superiors [72]. There is a fear that is in accord with reason and it is this that legitimately servants manifest that they be not deficient in the services [ **obsequia** ] they owe [73].

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### c. **Obsequium and the Consecrated Life:**

In a definition of a vow, St. Thomas states that it is a certain ordination to the one making the profession to the worship, or service [**obsequium**] of God [74]. By the religious life, a person deposes all of life to God's Service [**obsequio**] [75]. Religious communities can indeed be established for the works of the active life, in that each person who is a part of it individually intends all that pertains to the divine service [ **obsequium** ] [76]. In one of the objections raised against religious teaching and preaching, St. Thomas quotes St. Gregory who stated that it is impossible to fulfill ecclesiastical duties [**obsequiis**]. In his response, the Angelic Doctor shows that sometimes religious may be occupied in such service [77].

By serving [**obsequuntur**] their neighbor for God's sake, religious are obedient to the divine love [78]. St. Thomas clearly teaches that the religious state is directed toward the perfection of charity. The services [**obsequium**] which we render to our neighbor, in so far as they are referred to God, are "sacrifices" that redound to God Himself [cf. Mt 25:40], and religious can be in the world only for the sake of serving God [**propter divinum obsequium**] [79].

St. Thomas thought it was fitting for a religious order to be founded for preaching, or hearing confessions, teaching. What is required is that all orders be directed to the good of our neighbor, and the service [**obsequium**] of God. In the service [**obsequium**] no sacrifice is more acceptable than zeal for souls. If some are willing to minister to the faithful gratuitously, they can be supported by charity. If none can be found, the ordinary prelate is bound to support them [80]. Communities may be established for the purpose of study, in reference only to that doctrine which is according to Godliness. It is not fitting for religious to seek any other learning, as their whole lives are dedicated to the service [**obsequiis divinis**] of God [81]. Whether religious communities may possess goods, the Angelic Doctor teaches that the Lord did not forbid all care, but only such that is excessive is harmful. The possession of much wealth increases the weight of care, which is a great distraction, and hinders one from being given over wholly to God's service [**in Dei obsequium**] [82].

In showing that it would be licit, under certain circumstances, for a parish priest to enter religion, St. Thomas teaches that the obligation of perpetual vows stands before every other obligation, and it belongs to bishops and religious to be bound by perpetual vow to devote themselves to the divine service [**ad vacandum divinis**

**obsequiis** [83]. Clerical monks may also be devoted [**obsequentes**] to the sacred ministry [84]. St. Thomas also asks whether professed religious are held to obey their lawful superiors in all that is directly contained in the rule, and also those matters indirectly contained there, as all those things that pertain to their mutual assistance [**ad mutua obsequia**] [85]. The entrance into religion, then, pertains very much to God, since thereby a person devotes himself entirely to the divine service [**divinis obsequiis**] [86].

The perplexing matter of the duties of religious toward their parents is discussed several times by St. Thomas, from different perspectives. The obligation toward parents are often described by the use of the term **obsequium filiorum erga parentes** [87].

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#### d. **Obsequium in the Life of the Faithful:**

The act of faith is suitably distinguished as “believing God, a God, in God”. Particularly when the object of faith is considered in the intellect being moved by the will, an act of faith is to believe in God. Here, the First Truth is referred to the will through having the aspect of a final “end.” To believe God in a God, and in God is one and the same act, having different relationships to the object of faith [88].

Prayer and service pertain to the worship of faith [89]. Faith is surely not against reason, but is above it - faith does not deny, or destroy reason, but is captured and brought into obedience to Christ [cf. 2 Co 10:5] [90].

In a beautiful teaching on Prayer, St. Thomas shows how it expels sadness and increases hope - for whenever the king admits anyone into his intimate circle and conversation, one acquires a greater confidence in petitioning and obtaining [91].

In showing that sacred doctrine might indeed be a matter of argument, St. Thomas responds to the objection that if the basic argument of theology is from authority, it would not be unfitting as is seen in this analogy: since grace does not destroy nature, but perfects it - natural reason should minister to faith as the natural bent of the will ministers [**obsequitur**] to charity [92]. In demonstrating that perfection consists in the observance of the commandments, the Angelic Doctor shows that there is already a perfection inherent in nature which is developed by growth - similarly, there is a perfection of charity realized by its being intensified. There is that spiritual growth whereby a person refrains even from what is lawful, in order to be the more freely dedicated to the service [**divinis obsequiis**] of God [93], This is the area of the counsels.

Meditation is the cause of devotion in so far as through it one conceives the thought of surrendering oneself to God’s service [94]. In commenting on the last verses of Hebrews 12, St. Thomas teaches that we have been given grace to worship God in the way He finds acceptable, in reverence and fear - this induces that **obsequium** that is required of us. God is supremely served by interior obsequium, as noted in the *Miserere* : the Lord does not scorn the spirit, the heart that is being offered [95].

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## 5. *In obsequium* - in the Modern Magisterium

The words express three realities: the full homage of intellect and will in faith; a religious submission of will and intellect, even when the doctrine has not been proclaimed in definitive manner; and the sincere obedience and reverence of religious to the authority of bishops.

### a.] Vatican I:

In its definition of faith, the Council used this formula: "... we are bound to yield by faith the full homage of intellect and will to God Who reveals [96]. For some interpreters, this *obsequium* of the will pertains to that previous submission by which a human being, recognizes that human reason is not the supreme rule of all truth. Through the will, a person accepts using another manner of knowledge permitting contact with total Truth. This "salutary faith" was described in these terms in which the Council of Trent offers a description of the act of faith: "... adults... are awakened and assisted by divine grace, they conceive faith from hearing [cf. Rm 10:17], and are freely led to God, believing to be true what has been divinely revealed and promised ..." [97].

Faith, then, is clearly based on the authority of God - while Vatican I defined faith more in itself, Trent saw it dynamically as that which prepares for justification [98].

### b.] Vatican II and Post-Conciliar Documents:

1.] *Dei Verbum*: in this Dogmatic Constitution, the Council refers back to Vatican I, as that Council in its turn had quoted the Council of Trent. *Dei Verbum* uses *obsequium* twice in its early articles: "...Hearing the Word of God with reverence, and proclaiming it confidently, this most Sacred Synod takes its direction from these words of St. John [cf. 1 Jn 1:2-3] [cf. DV 1]. The Council continues then in Chapter I: "...The 'obedience of faith' [Rm 16:26; cf. 1:5; 2 Co 10:5-6] must be given to God who reveals, an obedience by which man entrusts his whole self freely to God, offering the full submission of intellect and will to God who reveals', and freely assenting to the truth revealed by Him..." [99].

In addition to reiterating the previous conciliar definition, these words of DV 5: [...*se totum libere Deo committit* ...] in the recent Council teaching, seem to refer to that "spirit of faith" already evident after Vatican I. It has been described as that disposition to live in conformity with one's faith, a filial abandonment into the hands of God, a confidence in the effectiveness of prayer. This involves the gift of oneself- to God, implying continuing conversion, a complete renewal of one's manner of living. This "new birth", an attitude of totality toward God, underlines the importance of confidence, dependence on the Absolute, the generous openness to that gift that God offers in penetrating the life of a believer [100]. Such an attitude of faith present by Trent and Vatican I is the germ of the beatific vision, and makes of it a gradual realization of the truth believed [101]. St. Paul's expression: 'obedience of faith', cited in DV 5, is already faith, hope and charity [102].



2.] Lumen Gentium 25: has been much discussed since the Council [103], but this is beyond the scope of the present study. A number of Canons also apply the principles of LG 25: Canon 218 speaks of the due allegiance to the Magisterium of the Church [*servato debito ... obsequio...*] Canon 752 clearly distinguishes between the “assent of faith” and the “religious submission” [*religiosum tamen intellectus et voluntatis obsequium...*] even when the Supreme Pontiff, or the College of Bishops, declare upon a matter of faith, or morals, but do not intend to proclaim that doctrine by a definitive act. The very next Canon speaks of the adherence of the faithful “with a religious submission of mind” [*religioso animi obsequio adhaerere tenentur ...*] to the authentic Magisterium of their bishops in union with the Roman Pontiff. The precise nature of this religious submission is not further specified, but is asked of teachers of sacred doctrine and of all the faithful.

3.] Canon 678, § 1: pertains to the obedience of religious to bishops: “... In matters concerning the care of souls, the public exercise of divine worship and other works of the apostolate, religious are subject to the authority of the bishop, whom they are bound to treat with sincere obedience and reverence...” ... *devoto obsequio ac reverentia...*].

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## 6. *In Obsequium* in St. Gaspar Bertoni

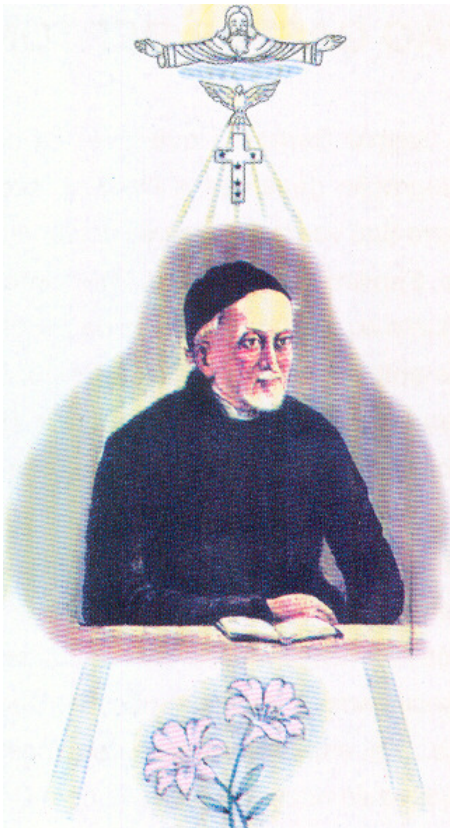
Fr. Bertoni, priest of the Diocese of Verona, Italy, and Founder of the Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ, was beatified by Pope Paul VI, on All Saints’ Day, in the Holy Year, 1975 - and canonized, on the same date, by Pope John Paul II in 1989. Fr. Bertoni’s spirit was studied around that latter date at a Symposium held on the occasion of the Canonization [104]. An ardent student of St. Thomas, Fr. Bertoni was also much influenced by the Constitutions and the spirit of St. Ignatius of Loyola, and his Apostolic Mission to the Church.

In the Ignatian Constitutions, the entire Part VII is dedicated to the “Missions” [105] and the frequent recurrence of the *obsequium* as described there by the Jesuit Founder [106], and his *servitium, auxilium, obsequium* In the Ignatian charism, the Missions of the Holy Father are the “intention of the Fourth Vow” [107]. The “Mission” is defined in the *Epitome* of Part VII [108].

The Stigmatine ideal was described by the second Superior General, Fr. Giovanni B. Lenotti [1871-1875], as a parallel to the Company of Jesus, which is in a special way dedicated, directed to the service [ *ossequio* ] and to the dispositions of the Roman Pontiff, as the Stigmatines are *in obsequium Episcoporum*. [109].

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One of Fr. Bertoni's own images in the following/imitation if Christ was the persevering effort to "draw a portrait of Jesus Christ" in one's own life [110]. Fr. Bertoni achieved this in his personal life by offering his service to God, acceptance of long illnesses and his entire life as a Holy Abandonment. For him, **obsequium** is a key expression of this spirituality. As Christ's own **obsequium** redounded to the glory of the Father - so Mary and Joseph, the Holy Spouses offered their precious **obsequium** to Christ. Fr. Bertoni presented the challenge of offering an ecclesial service, an availability to the Church, through his **in obsequium Episcoporum**, in the assistance of Bishops. For the Apostolic Missio, the bishops incarnated the divine will for the Stigmatine Founder in the choice of the specific service this community is called to render.



Whether it was the **obsequium** of his own life - or the services offered to the Church through the bishops - the ideal of the Stigmatine charism is to serve Christ and the Church, as an **obsequium** that redounds **to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit!**

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### END NOTES

- 1.+ *The Documents of Vatican II.* Walter M. Abbot, SJ, General Editor. NY: Herder & Herder/ Association Press 1966, pp. 47, ff.
- 2.+ *Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents.* General Editor, Austin Flannery, OP, Dublin/Clonskeagh: Dominican Publications/ Talbot Press. 1st Printing, pp. 379,ff.
- 3.+ cf. Joseph Henchey, CSS, "Abandonment to God and Availability to the Church: St. Gaspar Bertoni [1777-1853]", in: *ANGELICUM LXVII* (1990), pp. 87-108.
- 4.+ "... puellam parvam, quae erat in obsequio uxoris Naaman..." [cf. 4 Reg. 5:2; cf. also Ps 123:4].
- 5.+ "... qui delentis obsequiis eorum acquievit ei..." [2 Par. 24:17].
- 6.+ "... ambulare in praeceptis eius et obsequi edictis eius ..." [1 Macc. 6:23].
- 7.+ "... qui serviunt, obsequentes erunt sancto ..." [Eccli 4:15].
- 8.+ "... bonum est obsequi Domino..." [Eccli 46:12].
- 9.+ "... qui interficit eos, arbitretur obsequium se praestare Deo ..." [Jn 16:2].
- 10.+ "...legislatio et cultus [obsequium] et promissiones..." [Rm 9:4].
- 11.+ "...et ministerium meum pro Ierusalem acceptum..." [or: obsequii mei oblatio accepta fiat in Hierosolymam...] [Rm 15:31; cf. also Ph 2:30: "... erga meum obsequium ..."]
- 12.+ "... Obsecro itaque vos, fratres, per misericordiam, ut exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem, sanctam Dei placentem, rationabile obsequium uestrum..." [Rm 12:1; cf. also 1 Pet. 2:5 ff.].
- 13.+ ... et in captivitatem redigentes omnem intellectum in obsequium Christi ..." [2 Co 10:5].
- 14.+ ...it obsequium fidei vestrae..." - "... deerat erga meum obsequium [ministerii erga me [Ph 2:17, 30].
- 15.+ Council of Florence, Decree for the Jacobites: "... omniaque sunt unum, ubi non obviat relationis oppositio..." [D-S 1330. Denzinger-Schonmetzr, *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de rebus fidei et morum.* Editio 36. Barcinone/Friburgi/Romae: Herder 1876 - "...everything (in them) is one where there is no position of relationship..." - *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church.* Revised Edition. Edited by J. Neuner, SJ, and J. Dupuis, SJ. Staten Island, NY: Alba 1981, n.325, p.11.
- 16.+ Kazimierz Romaniuk, *L'Amour du Pere et du Fils dans la soteriologie de Saint Paul.* Rome: Biblical Institute Press. Analecta Biblica 15 A. 1974, pp.264, f.: "... sa mission etait de faire la volonte' du Pere..." [cf. Jn 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 8:29; 15:10; 19:30]. "... etre Fils signifie precisement obeir..."
- 17.+ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale.* in: *Mysterium salutis. Nuovo Corso di dogmatica come teologia della storia di salvezza.* Vol. 6. *L'evento Cristo.* Brescia: Queriniana 1973, pp. 184, ff. cf. also: 'Esistenza nella kenosis come obbedienza fino alla morte di croce...', pp. 236,ff.
- 18.+ Ignace de la Potterie, SJ, "Obbedienza e filiazione in Cristo", in" *Il mistero del cuore trafitto. Fondamenti biblici della spiritualita' del Cuore di Gesu'.* Bolgnoa: EDB 1988, pp. 47, ff. : "... l'obbedienza trova il suo principio e il suo fondamento ultimo proprio nella figliolanza di Gesu ... La specificita' filiale di Gesu' si manifesta proprio in questo ... tutto quello che dice, fa ... viene dal Padre ...; come Persona, Gesu e' solo il Figlio del Padre ..."
- 19.+ Ignace de la Potterie, SJ, "The Biblical Basis of the Theology of the Heart of Christ. Jesus' Sovereignty, His Obedience to the Father, His Filial Consciousness", in: *Towards a Civilization of Love. A Symposium on the Scriptural and Theological Foundations of the*

*Devotion to the Heart of Jesus.* San Francisco: Ignatius 1985, pp. 59, 63, ff.; 67: "... His inner life, which was composed of obedience to the Father and love for the Father, was the human expression and perfect image of His divine life, that is to say, the life of the Son who is eternally turned toward the Father (cf. 1 Jn 1:2; Jn1:18)."

20.+ Albert Vanhoye, SJ, "L'oblazione di Gesu' sacerdote", in: *Spiritualita' oblativa riparatrice.* Bologna: EDB 1989, pp. 57-75. cf. especially, pp. 65, 73.

21.+ Jean-Marie Faux, SJ, *La Foi du Nouveau Testament.* Bruxelles: Istitut d'Etudes Theologiques. 1974, pp.261-269.

III Sent., d. 9, q.1, Sol 1 - secundum impressionem Petri Fiaccadori - Parmae. New York: Misurga Publishers 1948 - Vol. VII, I - p. 105, b.: "Similiter cum obsequium diversis possit exhiberi, speciali quodam et supremo modo Deo debetur..."

23.+ In Epist. ad Romanos. Cap. XII, Lectio 1 - Vol. XIII, pp. 120, ff.: "... visibile sacrificium, quod exterius Deo offertur, signum est invisibilis sacrifici, quo quis se et sua in Dei obsequium exhibet..."<sup>2</sup>

24.+ Super Evang. Io. Caput XIII, Lectio 2, n. 1 - Vol. X, p. 527 b: "... praemittitur praeparatio Christi ad humilitatis obsequium ..."

25.+ ib., n.2. p. 528 b: "... ponit Christi obsequium ..."

26.+ ib., Lectio III, I. pp. 530, a, b: "Postquam Dominus extendit humilitatis obsequium ..."

27.+ ib., n. 9, p. 533 b: "... obsequia eis impensa quoddammodo videantur redundare in Deum ... obsequium Christo exhibitum redundat in Patrem..."

28.+ Super Evang. Matt., Caput XII, Lectio I, I - Vol. X, p. 116 a, b: "... quia fiebat ad obsequium templi et Dei..."

29.+ ib., Caput XXVI, Lectio I. Vol X, p. 241 s: "...tertio facto et obsequio ..."

30.+ In Epist. ad Heb., Caput IX, Lectio III. Vol XIII, p. 740 b: "... sanguis Christi ad spirituale obsequium..."

31.+ Super Evang. Io., Caput XIX, Lectio IV, 2. Vol. X, p. 618 b:"... in obsequium Christi, ut dicitur in 2 Co 10 ..."

32.+ Summa Theol III, q. 49, a. 4 c: "...propter aliquod obsequium acceptum quo ei exhibetur..."

33.+ In Ep. ad Gal, Caput III, Lectio 9. Vol XIII, p. 412 a:"... sine obsequi legis ..."

34.+ In Epis ad Rom., Caput IX, Lectio 1. Vol. XIII, p. 92: "... et obsequium, quo sc. Deo serviebant ..."

35.+ In Isaiam, Caput VI, n.2 - Vol. XIV, p. 457 b:"... Secundo ponitur oblatum obsequium ..."

36.+ III Sent., d. III, q. II, a. 1. Vol VII, 1, p. 45 b: "... ad obsequium...'Ecce ancilla Domini'..."

37.+ III, q. 30, a. 1 c: "Tertio, ut voluntaria sui obsequii..."

38.+ III, q. 36, a. 2, ad 2um: "... et obsequii nascituro ..."

39.+ III, q. 29, a. 2 c: "... sibi invicem obsequuntur ad prolem nutriendum ..."

40.+ Super Evang. Matt., Caput I, 4. Vol X, p. 16 a: "... ipsius Joseph futurum obsequium..."

41. ib., n. 4, p. 17 a: "... ipsius Joseph obsequium ..."

42. ib., Caput II, 5. p. 19 b: "... Sequitur obsequium. Lc 2..."

43. ib., p. 25 b: "... ut obsequeretur Unigenito. Is 19,1..."

44. Super Evang. Io., Caput I, Lectio XVI,4. Vol X, p. 329 b: "... Angeli ... in quantum ei adsunt obsequendo et ministrando ..."

45. Super Evang. Matt. Caput XXVI, 6. Vol. X, p. 236 b: "... Quicumque enim obsequuntur Deo, Angeli dicuntur. Ps 103:4 ..."

46. Super Evang. Io. Caput XX, Lectio 2, n.2. Vol. X, p. 626 b: "... omnes Angelorum ordines ... Christo obsequuntur..."
47. I-II, q.102, a.4, ad 6um: "... quasi Deo obsequuntur..."
48. Super Evang. Matt. Caput II,1. Vol X, p. 22 a: "... non praestaverunt [Magi] obsequium regi terreno ..."
49. Super Evang. Io. Caput I, Lectio 13 4.Vol. X, p. 317 b:"... quod est minimum obsequium ..."
50. ib.,Caput XI, Lectio III, 1. Vol. X, p. 491 a, b: "... beneficia et obsequia ..."
51. ib., Caput XII, Lectio I, n. 3, 4. Vol. X, pp. 505, b, f.: "... ponit obsequium Cristo exhibitum..."
52. ib., n.4, p. 506 a: "... [Martha et Maria] ... obsequium ..."
53. ib., p. 507 a: "... caput Christi iungit qui ipsum obsequitur ..."
54. ib., Lectio II. p. 508 a: "... et obsequium hujus mulieris..."
55. ib., n. 6. Vol. X, p. 507 a:"... effusum in obsequium Christi ..."
56. ib., p. 508 b:"... tulit obsequium Christo impensum..."
57. ib., Caput XX, Lectio VI, a. Vol X, p. 622 a.: "... publice obsequendo..."
58. ib., Caput X, Lectio IV, 2. Vol. X, p. 480 a:"...'Et cognoscunt me meae...' me diligentes obsequuntur..."
59. ib., Caput XIX, Lectio IV, aa. Vol. X, p. 620 b: "... (Apostoli) secuti sunt Iesum... diligenter et reverenter obsequebantur..."
60. In Epist. ad Rom., Caput I, Lectio I. Vol. XIII, p.4 b: "... Paulus servus... servitus amoris ... est beneficere et obsequi amico ..."
61. In Epist. ad Phil. Caput II, Lectio IV. Vol. XIII, pp. 517, a-518 b: "... erga meum obsequium.."
62. Super vang. Io. Caput I, Lectio VIII, n.2. Vol X, p. 307 b:"...Tertio vero ad naturae obsequium..."
63. Super Evang. Matt. Caput II, Lectio II. Vol. X, p.21 b: "...ad obsequium eius factam..."
64. Ad Heb. Caput XI, Lectio VI. Vol XIII, p. 767 b:"...etsi obsequatur ... divinae justitiae..."
65. II-II, q. 107, a. 3 ad 1um: "... homo Deo obsequitur..."
66. IV Sent., d.24, q.3, a.2, q.3, ad 3um. Vol. VII, II, p. 901 b: "...mancipare aliquid divinitus obsequiis... Episcopus specialiter sponsus Ecclesiae dicitur, sicut Christus..."
67. ib.,q. II, a 7, p. 898, b: "... Per benedictionem, divinis obsequiis..."
68. II-II,q. 100, a.5, ad 1um:"...munus ab obsequio..."
69. In Epist. ad Phil., caput I, Lectio III. Vol. XIII, p. 509 b:"... corpus nostrum deputamus ad obsequium eius..."
70. Super Evang. Matt. Caput VIII, Lectio 3. Vol X, p. 86 a:"...per obsequium mandatorum..."
71. III Sent.,d.13, q.2, a. 1, obj. 6. Vol VII/I, p.139: "...ut nutrimentum et alia obsequia ..."
72. In Epist ad Gal., Caput VI, Lectio 2. Vol. XIII, p.438 a:"... inferiores debere superioribus et obsequi ... prompte... perseveranter ... committer..."
73. II-II, q. 125, a. 1, ad 2um: "... ne deficiat ab obsequiis..."
74. ib.,q. 88, a. 5 c: "... votum ...in divinum cultum, seu obsequium ..."
75. ib., a.12, ad 1um: "... homo totam vitam suam Dei obsequium deputat..."
76. ib., a. 188, a.2, ad 1um:"... ad divinum obsequium spectant..."
77. ib., q. 187, a. 1, ad 3um:"... docere et praedicare pertinent ad ecclesiastica obsequia..."
78. ib., a. 2 c: "... dilectioni divinae obsequuntur..."

79. ib., q. 188, a. 2 c, ad 3um: "... obsequia ... dicuntur esse sacrificia..."
80. ib., a. 4 c, et ad 4um: "... et ad obsequia... gratis ...ministrare..."
81. ib., a.5, ad 3um: "... ad religiosos, quorum tota vita divinitus obsequiis mancipatur..."
82. ib., a. 7 c: "... qui est vacare divinis obsequiis..."
83. ib., q. 189, a. 7 c: "... ad vacandum divinis obsequiis..."
84. ib., a. 8, ad 2um: "... sacris mysteriis obsequentes..."
85. II Sent., d. 44, q. 2, a. 3. Vol VI, p. 789 b: "... quae pertinet ad mutua obsequia..."
86. II-II, q. 189, a. 3 c, et ad 3um: "... per hoc homo totaliter mancipat divinis obsequiis..."
87. St. Thomas several times returns to the matter of religious caring for their own parents, making use of obsequium: I-II, q. 100, a. 5, ad 4um; II-II, q. 101, a. 2 c; a. 4 ad 3um; q. 189, a. 6 c et ad 1um.
88. II-II, q. 2, a. 2, c, et ad 1um et 4um: "... credere in Deum..."
89. In Epist I ad Tim., Caput II, Lectio I. Vol. XIII, p. 592 a: "... ad cultum fidei, ex orationibus et obsequiis..."
90. III Sent., d.23, q. 2, a. 4, ad 3um. Vol VII/1, p. 252 a: "... captivans in obsequium Christi, ut dictum est in 2 Co 10..."
91. In Ps 40., n.6. Vol. XIV, p.312 b: "... ad familiare obsequium et colloquium..."
92. I,q. 1,a. 8, ad 2um: "... naturalis inclinatio voluntatis obsequitur caritati..."
93. II-II, q. 184, a. 3, ad 3um: "... ut liberius divinis obsequiis vacet..."
94. II-II, q. 82, a. 3 c: "... homo concipit quod se tradat divino obsequio..."
95. In Epist. ad Heb., Caput XII, Lectio 5. Vol. XIII, p. 783 a: "... Maxime autem servitur Deo per obsequium interiorius, Ps 50, et Lc 1:74..."
96. D-S 3008; *The Christian Faith*, n. 118, p. 42.
97. Sessio VI, Cap.6: "... Disponuntur autem ad ipsam dum excitati divina gratia et adjuti, fidem ex auditu concipientes, libere moventur in Deum, credentes vera esse quae divinitus revelata et promissa sunt ..." cf. D-S 1526; *The Catholic Faith*, n. 1930, p. 557.
98. Roger Aubert, *Le probleme de l'acte de foi. Donnees traditionnelles et resultats des controverses recentes*. 4ieme ed., Louvain/Paris: Nauwelaerts/Beatrice - Nauwelaerts 1969, pp. 157,ff.
99. DV 1: "... Sancrosancta Synodus verbis S. Ioannis obsequitur dicentis ..." Flannery: "... the Sacred Synod assents to the words of St. John..."
- DV 5: "... Deo revelanti praestanda est oboeditio fidei (cf. Rm 16:26; Coll. Rm 1:5; 2 Co 10:5-6), qua homo se totum libere Deo committit 'plenum revelanti Deo intellectus et voluntatis obsequium praestando (Vat. I, 3008), et voluntati revelationi ab Eo data assentiendo..." ["... By faith,, a man commits his entire self to God..." - Flannery].
100. cf. Aubert, o.c., pp. 691, ff., especially p. 695.
101. o.c., pp. 703, ff.
102. cf. Jean-Marie Faux, SJ, *La Foi du Nouveau Testament*. o.c., pp. 289, ff.
103. *The Kung Dialogue. Facts and Documents. A Documentation on the Efforts of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith and of the Confrence of German Bishops to achieve an appropriate Clarification of the Controversial Views of Dr Hans. Kung [Tubingen]*. Washington DC: U.S. Catholic Conference 1980; cf. also Charles E. Curran, *Faithful Dissent*. London: Sheed & Ward 1987.
104. 'Symposium Bertonianum' *In occasione della solenne canonizzazione del Fondatore degli Stigmatini, S. Gaspare Bertoni*. [Sabato, 28 ottobre 1989. Pontificia Universita' S. Tommaso. ANGELICUM] Verona: Edizioni Stimmgraf.

105. Septima Pars. De iis quae pertinent ad admissos in corpus Societatis ad proximorum utilitatem per vineam Domini distribuendos. nn. 603-654. cf. also Antonio M. DeAldama, *Repartendosi en la vinya de Cristo. Comentario a la Septima Parte de las Constituciones de la Compania de Jesus*. Roma: Centrum Ignatianum; cf. also Dionigi Spanu, *Inviati in Missione. Le istruzioni data da S. Ignazio*. Roma: CIS 1979.

106. Jesuit Constitutions, Pars VII, Caput I: “De Missionibus Summi Pontificis”:  
n. 603: “... quacumque maius Dei et Domini nostri obsequium et animum profectum... ubi magnus divinae gloriae et obsequii proventus speratur...”

n. 608: “... et maius Dei obsequium mittere cogitaret...”

n. 609: “...a Summo Pontifice mittatur ut Eius Sanctitas ad maius Dei et Sedis Apostolicae obsequium fore...”

n. 611: “... sint ad huiusmodi missionem aptiores; ... ad Dei obsequium...”

n. 612: “... missionem suam et scopum ... ut in omnibus ad Dei et Sedis Apostolicae obsequium utilius suum impendat ministerium...”

n. 614: “...sed etiam Summi Pontificis missionibus iuvare poterit; ut melius quod ad Christi Domini nostri obsequium quaeritur, consequatur...”

n. 615: “... qui sanctam intentionem Pontificis in Christi Domini nostri obsequium...”

n. 616: “... divini obsequii poshabebit ...”

107. ib., cf.n. 605.

108. Societatis Iesus Constitutiones et Epitome Instituti. Roma: Apud Curiam Praepositi Generalis 1949. cf. Epitome, Pars VII, Titulus II: De Praecipuis modis distribuendi nostros in vinea Domini. Caput I. De Missionibus, p. 553: “...Missiones dicuntur expeditiones apostolicae iussu Summi Pontificis, vel Superiorum Societatis susceptae, ad maiorem Dei gloriam et animarum auxilium, ut plurimum extra loca residentiae nostrae...” [n. 612, 1].

n. 612, n. 2: “... ubi maius Dei obsequium ... speratur...”

109. cf. G. B. Lenotti, “Flnis: Missionari Apostolici in Obsequium Episcoporum”, in: *Collectanea Stigmatina. Collezione di documenti e studi riservata agli Stigmatini*. Roma: Curia Generalizia 1961, pp. 408, ff.: “...Si vede chiaro che l’intendimento del P. Bertoni deve essere stato di istituire una Congregazione, la quale, come la Compagnia di Gesu’ e’ in modo speciale dedicata, indirizzata all’ossequio e alle disposizioni del Romano Pontefice, avesse ad essere dedicata e determinata in modo tutto speciale e segnalato al servizio ed ossequio dei Vescovi ... I Nostri non facciano il voto di obbedienza al Vescovo, ma cerchino in ogni guisa che possano aiutarlo, assisterlo ossequiosamente, in modo particolare a lui dedicati ... Due le principali armi del Missionario: la spada della Divina Parola e la spada dell’Orazione... La Spada della Divina parola: ... nel confessionale, nelle carceri, sul pergamo, sul palco, dagli altari, negli Esercizi, Missioni, Oratori, Ritiri, conversazioni familiari, ecc., animandola dallo Spirito del Signore...”

110. Personal Diary, *Memoriale Privato*, February 26, 1809, in: *Lo Spirito del Beato Gaspar Bertoni*. Verona: Stigmatini 1914. Reprinted 1977, p. 229: “Dobbiamo fare un ritratto i noi stessi di Gesu’Cristo...”

**B. St. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA**  
**St. Ignatius of Loyola and *Obsequium***  
**[Ignatian Texts using *Obsequium*]**

□

**ST. IGNATIUS'<sup>109</sup> LETTER ON OBEDIENCE<sup>110</sup>**

**a. The Letter itself [March 26, 1553]**

Jesus – May the perfect grace and everlasting love of Christ our Lord greet and visit you with His most holy gifts and spiritual graces.

**[1]** It gives me great consolation, my dear Brothers in our Lord Jesus Christ, when I learn of the lively and earnest desires for perfection in His divine service and glory, which He gives you, Who by His mercy has called you to this Society, and preserves you in it and directs you to the blessed end at which His chosen ones arrive.

**[2]** And although I wish you all perfection in every virtue and spiritual gift, it is true [as you have heard of me on other occasions], that is in obedience more than in any other virtue, that God our Lord gives me the desire to see you signalize yourselves, and that not only because of the singular good there is in it, so much emphasized by word and example in Holy Scripture, in both the Old and the New Testaments, but because, [as St. Gregory says]. Obedience is the only virtue which plants all the other virtues in the mind and preserves them once they are planted.<sup>111</sup> And in so far as this virtue flourishes, all the other virtues will flourish and bring forth the fruit which I desire in your souls and which He claims Who by His obedience redeemed the world after it had been destroyed by the lack of it, becoming obedient unto death, even death on the Cross.<sup>112</sup>

**[3]** We may allow ourselves to be surpassed by other religious orders in fasts, vigils, and other austerities, which each one following its Institute holly embraces: but in the purity and perfection of obedience, joined to the true resignation of our wills and the abnegation of our judgment, I am very desirous, dear brethren, so that by this virtue its true sons may be recognized, men who regard the person whom they obey, but in him Christ our Lord, for Whose sake they obey. For the Superior is to be obeyed not because he is prudent, or good, or qualified by any other gift of God, but because he holds the place and authority of God, as Eternal Truth has said: *He who hears you,*

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<sup>109</sup> For the Latin translation: cf. *Thesaurus Spiritualis Societatis Iesu*, Brugis: Desclee 1928. pp. 430-439. [cf. Appendix 2 of these notes].

<sup>110</sup> *Perfect Obedience. Commentary on the Letter of Obedience of Saint Ignatius of Loyola*. Father Manuel Maria Espinosa Polit, SJ. Westminster MD: The Newman Bookshop 1947, pp. 20-30; Spanish Version, o.c., pp. 300-307.

<sup>111</sup> St. Gregory, *Moralium*, Book 35, c. 10: Obedientia sola virtus est quae menti caeteras virtutes inserit insertasque custodit.

<sup>112</sup> Ph 2:8: *Factus est oboediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis.*



hears Me; he who despises you, despises Me<sup>113</sup>; nor, on the contrary, because he lacks prudence, is he to be any the less obeyed in that in which he is Superior, since he represents Him Who is infallible wisdom, and Who will supply what is wanting in His minister; nor for the lack of goodness or other desirable qualities, since Christ our Lord having especially said: *The scribes and Pharisees have sat on the chair of Moses, adds: all things, therefore, that they command you, observe and do. But do not act according to their works.*<sup>114</sup>

[4] And so, I should wish that all of you would train yourselves to recognize Christ our Lord in any Superior whomsoever, and with all devotion, reverence and obey in him His Divine Majesty. And this will appear less strange to you, if you keep in mind that St. Paul, writing to the Ephesians, bids us obey even temporal and pagan Superiors as Christ from Whom all well ordered authority descends: *Slaves, obey your masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling in the sincerity of your hearts as you would Christ: not serving to the eye as pleasers of men, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart, giving your service with good will as to the Lord, and not to men.*<sup>115</sup> From this you can judge, when a religious is taken not only as a Superior, but expressly in the place of Christ our Lord, to serve as a director and guide in the divine service, what rank he ought to hold in the mind of the inferior, and whether he ought to be looked upon as a man, or as the Vicar of Christ.

[5] I also desire that this be firmly fixed in your minds, that the first degree of obedience is very low, which consists in the execution of what is commanded, and that it does not deserve the name, since it does not attain to the worth of this virtue unless it rises to the second degree, which is to make the Superior's will one's own; so that there is not merely effectual execution of the command, but interior conformity, both willing and not willing the same. Wherefore, it is said in Scripture: *obedience is better than sacrifice*<sup>116</sup>; for according to St. Gregory: 'In victims the flesh of another is slain, but in obedience our own will is sacrificed.'<sup>117</sup> And because this disposition of the will in man is of so great worth, so also is the offering of it, when by obedience it is offered to his Creator and Lord.

[6] How great a deception it is and how dangerous for those who think it is lawful to withdraw from the will of their Superior, I do not say only in those things pertaining to flesh and blood, but even in those which of their nature are spiritual and holy, such as fasts, prayers and any other pious works! Let them hear Cassian's comment in the Conference of Daniel the Abbot: 'It is one and the self-same kind of disobedience,

<sup>113</sup> Lk 10:16: *Qui vos audit, audit me; qui vos spernit, spernit me.*

<sup>114</sup> Mt 23:2: *Super cathedram Moisi sederunt scribae et pharisei. Omnia quaecumque dixerint vobis, facite; secundum vero opera eorum nolite facere, etc.*

<sup>115</sup> Ep 6:5: *Obedite dominis carnalibus timore et tremore, in simplicitate cordis vestri, sicut Christo, non ad oculum servientes, quasi hominibus placentas, sed et servi Christ facientes voluntatem Dei, ex animo cum bona voluntate servientes, sicut Deo et non hominibus...*

<sup>116</sup> 1 K 15:22: *Quod melior est oboedientia quam victimae.*

<sup>117</sup> St. Gregory, *Moralium* Book 35, c. 14, n. 28: 'Per victimas aliena caro, per obedientiam propria voluntas moetur.'

whether in earnestness of labor, or the desire of ease, one breaks the command of the Superior, and as prejudicial to go against the statutes of the monastery out of sloth as out of watchfulness; and finally, it is as much to transgress the precept of the Abbot as to contemn it to sleep.’<sup>118</sup> Holy was the activity of Martha, holy the contemplation of Magdalen, and holy the penitence and tears with which she bathed the feet of Christ our Lord; but all this had to be done in Bethania, which is interpreted the house of obedience. Whence it would seem that Christ our Lord would give us to understand, as St. Bernard remarks: ‘that neither the endeavor of good works nor the quiet of contemplation, nor the tears of the penitent, could have been grateful unto Him out of Bethania.’<sup>119</sup>

**[7]** And so, my dear brothers, try to make the surrender of your wills entire; offer freely<sup>120</sup> to God through His ministers the liberty He has bestowed on you. Do not think it a slight advantage of your free will that you are able to restore it wholly in obedience to Him Who gave it to you, whereby you do not lose it, but rather perfect it, when you conform your will wholly to the most certain rule of all rectitude, which is the Divine will, the interpreter of which is the Superior who governs you in place of God.

**[8]** And so, you must never try to draw the will of the Superior [which you should consider the will of God] to your own, for this would be not to make the Divine Will the rule of your own, but your own the rule of the Divine, thus distorting the order of His Wisdom. It is a great delusion in those whose understanding has been darkened by self-love, to think that there is any obedience in the subject who tries to draw the Superior to what he wishes. Hear St. Bernard, a man well experienced in this matter: ‘Whoever endeavors either openly or covertly to have his spiritual father enjoin him what he himself desires, deceives himself if he flatters himself he is a true follower of obedience; for in that he does not obey his Superior, but rather the Superior obeys him.’<sup>121</sup> And so, he concludes that he who wishes to rise to the virtue of obedience must rise to this second degree which [over and above the execution] consists in making one’s own the will of the Superior, or rather in putting off his own will to clothe himself with the Divine will interpreted by the Superior.

**[9]** But he who aims at making an entire and perfect oblation of himself besides his will must offer his understanding [which is a further and the highest degree of obedience], not only willing, but thinking the same as the Superior, submitting his own judgment to his, so far as a devout will can bend the understanding. For although this

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<sup>118</sup> Cassian, *Collationes*, Book 4, c. 20. ‘Unum et idem inbedientiae genus est, vel propter operationis instantiam, vel propter otii desiderium, senioris praeterire mandatum; tamque dispendiosum pro vigilantia, quam pro somno monasterii statuta convellere; tantum denique est Abbatis transire praeceptum ut legas quantum si contemnas et dormias...’

<sup>119</sup> St. Bernard, *Sermo ad milites templi*, c. 13: ‘Quod nec studium bonae actionis nec otium sanctae contemnationis, nec lacrimae poenitentis extra Bethaniam illi accepta esse potuerunt.’

<sup>120</sup> The copy of the Letter destroyed in the fire at Madrid began here.

<sup>121</sup> St. Bernard, *Sermo de tribus ordin. eccles.* n. 4 ‘Quisque vel aperte vel occulte satagit ut quod habet in voluntate hoc ei spiritualis pater iniungat; ipse se seduicit, et quasi de obedientia blanditur, nec ipse in ea re praelato, sed magis ei praelatus obedit.’

faculty has not the freedom of the will, and naturally gives its assent to what is presented to it as true, there are, however, many instances when the evidence of the known truth is not coercive, in which it can with the help of the will, favors this or that side. And when this happens every obedient man should conform his thought to the thought of his Superior. And this is certain, since obedience is a holocaust in which the whole man without the slightest reserve is offered in the fire of charity to his Creator and Lord through the hands of His ministers; and since it is a complete surrender of himself by which a man dispossesses himself to be possessed and governed by Divine Providence by means of his Superiors, it cannot be held that obedience consists merely in the execution by carrying the command into effect and in the will's acquiescence; but also in the judgment which must approve the command of the Superior, in so far [as has been said] as it can, through the energy of the will, bring itself to this.

[10] Would to God that this obedience of the understanding were as much understood and practiced, as it is necessary to any one living in religion, and acceptable to God our Lord. Necessary, I say, for, as in the celestial bodies, if the lower is to receive movement and influence from the higher, it must be subject and subordinate, the one body being ordered and adjusted to the other: so, when one rational creature is moved by another [as takes place in obedience], the one that is moved must be subject and subordinated to the one by whom he is moved, if he is to receive influence and virtue from him. And this subjection and subordination cannot be had unless the understanding and will of the inferior is in conformity with the Superior.

[11] Therefore, if we regard the end of obedience, as our will, so our understanding may be mistaken as to what is good for us; wherefore, as we deem it expedient to conform our will with that of the Superior to keep it from going astray, so the understanding ought to be conformed with his to keep it from going astray: *Lean not on your own prudence*, says the Scripture<sup>122</sup>. And thus, those who are wise judge it to be true prudence not to rely on their own judgment even in other affairs of life, and especially when personal interests are at stake, in which men, as a rule, because of their lack of self-control, are not good judges. This being so, we ought to follow the judgment of another [even when he is not our Superior] rather than our own in matters concerning ourselves; how much more, then, the judgment of the Superior, whom we have taken as a guide to stand in the place of God and to interpret the Divine Will for us? And it is certain that this guidance is all the more necessary in men and matters spiritual, as the danger in the spiritual life is great when one advances rapidly in it without the bridle of discretion. And hence, Cassian says, in the Conference of the Abbot Moses: 'By no other vice does the devil draw a monk headlong, and bring him to death sooner, than by persuading him to neglect the counsel of the elders, and trust to his own judgment and determination.'<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Pr 3:5: *Ne innitaris prudentiae tuae...*

<sup>123</sup> Cassian, *Collationes* Book 2, c. 11: 'Nullo alio vitio tam praecipitem diabolus monachum pertrahit ac perducit ad mortem, quam cum neglectis consiliis seniorum suo iudicio persuaserit definitionique confidere. [cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, CF # 151]

[12] On the other hand, without this obedience of the judgment, it is impossible that the obedience of the will and execution be what they should; for, the appetitive powers of the soul naturally follow the apprehensive, and, in the long run, the will cannot obey without violence against one's judgment. And when, for some time it obeys, misled by the general apprehension that it must obey even when commanded amiss, it cannot do so for any time; and so perseverance fails, or if not this, at least the perfection of obedience which consists in obeying with love and cheerfulness; but when one acts in opposition to one's judgment, one cannot obey lovingly and cheerfully as long as such repugnance remains. Promptitude fails, and readiness, which is impossible without agreement of judgment, such as when one doubts whether it is good or not to do what is commanded. That renowned simplicity of blind obedience<sup>124</sup> fails when we call into question the justice of the command, or even condemn the Superior because he bids us do something that is not pleasing. Humility fails, for although on the one hand we submit, on the other, we prefer ourselves to the Superior. Fortitude in difficult tasks fails, and, in a word, all the perfections of this virtue. On the other hand, when one obeys without submitting one's judgment, there arise dissatisfaction, pain, reluctance, slackness, murmurings, excuses, and other imperfections and obstacles of no small moment which strip obedience of its value and merit. Wherefore, St. Bernard, speaking of those who take it will when commanded to do things that are unpleasant, says with reason: 'If you begin to grieve at this, to judge your Superior, to murmur in your heart, though outwardly you fulfill what is commanded, yet this is not the virtue of patience, but a cloak of your malice.'<sup>125</sup> Now, if we regard the peace and quiet of mind of him who obeys, it is certain that he will never attain to it who has within himself the cause of his disquiet and unrest, that is, a judgment of his own opposed to what obedience lays upon him.

[13] And, therefore, for the maintaining of union which is the bond of every society, St. Paul so earnestly exhorts all *to think the same thing*'<sup>126</sup>, because it is by the union of judgment and will that they shall be preserved. Now if head and members must think the selfsame, it is easy to see whether the head should agree with the members, or the members with the head. From what has been said, it can be seen how necessary is obedience to the understanding.

[14] But how perfect it is in itself and how acceptable to God can be seen from the value of this most noble offering which is made of the most worthy part of man; and because in this way the obedient man is made a living holocaust most acceptable to His Divine Majesty, keeping nothing whatever to himself; and also because of the difficulty overcome for love of Him in going against the natural inclination which all men have of following their own judgment. Hence, it follows that obedience, though it be a perfection proper to the will [which makes it ready to fulfill the will of the Superior], yet,

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<sup>124</sup> CSJ n. 547.

<sup>125</sup> St. Bernard, *Sermo 3 de Circumcisione*, n. 8: 'Hoc si moleste coeperis sustinere si dijudicare praelatum, si murmurare in corde, etiam si exterius impleas quod iubetur, non est virtus patientiae, sed velamen malitiae...'

<sup>126</sup> Rm 15:5; 1 Co 1:10; Ph 2:2: cf. Giovanni Ceresatto, *Il volto e l'anima. Profilo spirituale di San Gaspare Bertoni*. Verona: CSS 1991, p. 156 [episode of Fr. L Schlor]

it must also, as has been said, extend to the understanding, inclining to agree with the thought of the Superior, for it is thus that we proceed with the full force of the soul – of will and understanding – to a prompt and perfect execution.

**[15]** It seems to me that I hear you say, most dear Brethren, that you see the importance of this virtue, but that you should like to see how you can attain to its perfection. To this I answer with Pope St. Leo: ‘Nothing is difficult unto the humble, and nothing hard to the meek.’<sup>127</sup> Be, therefore, humble and meek, and God our Lord will bestow His grace which will enable you to maintain sweetly and lovingly the offering you have made to Him.

**[16]** Besides these means, I will place before you three especially, which will afford you great assistance in attaining this perfection of obedience of the understanding.

The first is that [as I said at the beginning] you do not behold the person of your Superior a man subject to errors and miseries, but rather Him Whom you obey in man, Christ, the highest Wisdom, immeasurable Goodness and infinite Charity, Who, you know, cannot be deceived and does not wish to deceive you. And because you are certain that you have set upon your own shoulders this yoke of obedience for the love of God, submitting yourself to the will of the Superior in order to be more conformable to the Divine will, be assured that His most faithful charity will ever direct you by the means which you yourselves have chosen. Wherefore, do not look upon the voice of the Superior, as far as he commands you, otherwise then as the voice of Christ, in keeping with St. Paul’s advice to the Colossians, where he exhorts subjects to obey their Superiors: *Whatsoever you do, do it from the heart, as to the Lord, and not to men* [knowing that you shall receive of the Lord the reward of inheritance]. *Serve the Lord Christ.*<sup>128</sup> And St. Bernard: ‘whether God or man, His substitute, commands anything, we must obey with equal diligence, and perform it with like reverence, when, however, man commands nothing that is contrary to God.’<sup>129</sup> And thus, if you do not look upon man with the eyes of the body, but upon God with those of the soul, you will find no difficulty in conforming your will and judgment with the rule of the action which you yourselves have chosen.

**[17]** The second means is that you be quick to look for reasons to defend what the Superior commands, or to what he is inclined, rather than to disapprove of it. And a help towards this will be to love whatever obedience shall enjoin; whence will come a cheerful obedience without any trouble, for as St. Leo says, ‘it is not hard to serve when we love that which is commanded.’<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> St. Leo, *Sermon 5 de Epiphania*, c. 3: ‘Nihil arduum humilibus, nihil asperum mitibus.’

<sup>128</sup> Col 3:23-24: *Quodcumque facitis, ex animo operamini sicut Deo et non hominibus ...Christo servite...*

<sup>129</sup> St. Bernard: *De praecepto et dispensatione*, c. 9: ‘Sive Deus, sive homo, vicarius Dei, mandatum quodcumque tradiderit, pari profecto obsequendum est cura, pari reverentia deferendum; ubi tamen Deo contraria non praecipit homo.’

<sup>130</sup> St. Bernard: *Sermo 4 de jejuniis septimi mensis*: ‘Non ibi dura necessitate servitur, ubi diligitur quod iubetur.’

[18] The third means to subject the understanding which is even easier and surer, and in use among the holy Fathers, is to presuppose and believe [very much as we are accustomed to do in matters of faith] that what the Superior enjoins is the command of God our Lord, and His holy Will; and to proceed blindly without enquiry of any kind, to the carrying out of the command, with the prompt impulse of the will desirous of obeying. So it is to be thought Abraham did when commanded to sacrifice his son Isaac<sup>131</sup>; and likewise in the New Testament, some of those holy Fathers, to whom Cassian refers, as the Abbot John, who did not question whether he was commanded was profitable or not, as when with such great labor he watered a dry stick throughout a year<sup>132</sup>; nor whether it was possible or not, when he tried so earnestly at the command of his Superior to move a rock which a large number of men would not have been able to move.<sup>133</sup> We see that sometimes God our Lord confirmed this kind of obedience with miracles, as when Maurus, St. Benedict's disciple, going into a lake at the command of his Superior did not sink<sup>134</sup>; or, in the instance of another, who, being told to bring back a lioness, took hold of her and brought her to his Superior<sup>135</sup>; and others with which you are well acquainted. By this I mean that this manner of subjecting one's own judgment, without further enquiry, supposing that the command is holy and in conformity with God's will, is in use among the saints and ought to be imitated by anyone who wishes to obey perfectly in all things, where manifestly there appears no sin.<sup>136</sup>

[19] In spite of this, you should feel free to propose a difficulty should something occur to you different from his opinion, provided you pray and it seems to you in God's presence that you ought to make the representation to the Superior. But if you wish to proceed in this matter without suspicion of attachment to your own judgment, you must maintain indifference before and after this representation, not only as to undertaking or relinquishing the matter in question, but you must even go so far as to be better satisfied with, and to consider as better, whatever the Superior shall ordain.<sup>137</sup>

[20] And what I have said of obedience is not only to be understood of individuals with reference to their immediate Superiors, but also of rectors and local Superiors with reference to Provincials, and of Provincials with reference to the General, and of the General towards him whom God our Lord has given as Superior, His Vicar on earth; for in this way complete subordination will be observed, and, consequently, union and charity<sup>138</sup>, without which the welfare and government of the Society or of any other congregation would be impossible. And by this means Divine Providence

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131 Gn 22:2, 3

132 Cassian: *De Institutis renuntiantium* [alias, *coenobiorum*] Book 4, c. 24.

133 Cassian, *o.c.*, c. 26.

134 St. Gregory the Great, Book 2, *Dialogue. Life of St. Benedict*.

135 St. Gregory the Great, *De Vitis Patrum*, Book 3, n. 27.

136 St. Gaspar Bertoni, CF # 141.

137 [St. Gaspar Bertoni, CF # 144].

138 [St. Gaspar, Part X: The Unity, Or The Union of the Congregation [## 187-266].

gently disposes all things, bringing to their appointed end the lowest by the middlemost and the middlemost by the highest. Even in the angels there is the subordination of one hierarchy to another; and in the heavens, all the bodies that are moved, the lowest by the highest, and the highest, in their turn, unto the Supreme Mover of all. We see the same on earth in well-governed states, and in the hierarchy of the Church, the members of which render their obedience to the one universal Vicar of Christ our Lord<sup>139</sup>. And the better this subordination is kept, the better the government, but when it is lacking every one can see what outstanding faults ensue. And, therefore, in this Congregation, in which our Lord has given me some charge, I desire that this virtue be as perfect as if the whole welfare of the Society depended on it.

[21] Not wishing to step beyond the bounds I set at the beginning of this letter, I will end by begging you for the love of Christ our Lord, Who not only gave us the precept of obedience, but added his example, to make every effort to attain it by a glorious victory over yourselves, vanquishing the loftiest and most difficult part of yourselves, your wills and intellects; that thus the true knowledge and love of God our Lord may possess you wholly and direct your souls throughout the course of this pilgrimage, until at length He and you and many others through you to the last and most happy end of bliss everlasting. I commend myself most earnestly to your prayers.

From Rome, March 26, 1553.

The servant of all in our Lord,

Ignatius<sup>140</sup>

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## b. A Commentary on this Letter

### INTRODUCTION

Let us begin with the Conclusion of Letter<sup>141</sup>: Jesuit scholars have verified an exact agreement between the ideas of this Letter on Obedience, and those contained in the [Conclusion of the ] Book of the Spiritual Exercises nn. 352-370 of St. Ignatius. It will not be amiss to show in a **combined view** how the doctrine of obedience has its foundation and finds its most exact explanation in the great ascetical principles of the **Exercises**.

The **mutual relationship** between obedience and the teaching of the **Exercises** may be studied under a double aspect:

- either that of **the role that obedience** develops within the spiritual system of the **Exercises**;
- or, that of the **influence** these [**Exercises**] have for the perfect practice of that virtue.

<sup>139</sup> NB: for this, cf. *Sentire cum ecclesia*, cf. especially SpEx nn. 353 [Rule # 1] and 365 [Rule # 13].

<sup>140</sup> *Monumenta Ignatiana*, series I, IV, 669-681.

<sup>141</sup> cf. Espinosa Polit, o.c., pp. 253- 257

[1] The Role that **Obedience** develops within the spiritual system of the **Exercises**: With regard to the former, it is evidently **a principal means** to attain the purpose of the **Exercises**, which is to order one's life, or to set it on the road to sanctity, **by the perfect fulfillment of God's will**. In fact, what is solid and true in Christian sanctity consists in conforming our entire lives with the Will of God, our Lord. St. Teresa affirms this very positively, and it may be said that her statement is the expression of the unanimous opinion of Catholic tradition:

*The entire aim, she says, of one who is beginning prayer [and do not forget this as it is very important] must be to endeavor to determine and dispose himself, with all the diligence possible, to make his will conform with that of God; and, as I shall say later, be very sure that **in this consists the greatest perfection attainable in the spiritual way**. He who holds this more perfectly will receive more from the Lord, and will advance more in this way.*<sup>142</sup>

Now, the **Exercises** have no other aim than to teach us how to do the Will of God perfectly, for on the very threshold we are told that they are dedicated **to prepare and dispose the soul ... to seek and find the Will of God in the management of one's own life**.<sup>143</sup> St. Ignatius wishes the exercitant to learn to discern the **Divine Good Pleasure**.

The obedient man will find, then, in the **full submission of his own will** to that of the Superior, **an effective means** of regulating his life according to the ideals of holiness found in the **Spiritual Exercises**. And this by itself is enough to justify the singular importance given to **obedience in the Ignatian spirituality**, and consequently, **in the life of the Society of Jesus**.

[2] The Influence which the **Exercises** have for the perfect practice of that **virtue**: It remains now to consider the **second aspect** of the relation between religious obedience and the teaching of the **Spiritual Exercises**. There can no room for doubt that the truths contained in the golden little book are excellently suited to move the members of the Society to an effort **to signalize themselves in that which is the characteristic virtue of their order**, that of being in the Company, Society of Jesus.

[a] For, in the first place, the **Exercises** point out with marvelous accuracy the **immovable foundation on which the virtue of obedience rests as on a cornerstone**. This is **the absolute and inalienable dominion of God**, our Lord, over man in virtue of the very fact of his **Creation**. **Obedience to the Divine will** by which man in a practical way recognizes and worships the sovereignty of His Creator, is, then, the logical consequence of his condition as a creature, a **duty of justice and religion** founded in the essential relations that flow from the fact of his participated existence<sup>144</sup>.

<sup>142</sup> *Second Mansions*, n. 15.

<sup>143</sup> MI, series 1a, I, 682.

<sup>144</sup> *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 4, a. 7, ad 3 um; q. 104, a. 3, ad 1 um.



[b] But, as true and solid virtues do not grow in the soul except in proportion to the extent that a man overcomes and denies himself, it is evident that the sole way to arrive at **the summit of perfect obedience** is the royal road of **abnegation** and **sacrifice**. **The practice of obedience such as St. Ignatius understands it** presupposes a heart so detached from the spirit of pride and ambition that only he who tramples these enemies underfoot will know how to put from himself effectually his own will and judgment so as to will and think the same with the Superior, even in the instances of being bidden to do things that are difficult and repugnant to sensuality.<sup>145</sup>

[c] In the **Exercises** of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Weeks, the Jesuit Founder is intent on teaching us to **wage war** on all that the world vainly esteems and to establish ourselves in the mortification and genuine humility of Christ, with no other thought than that of **imitating and following Him as closely as possible**. The Religious imbued with these ideas esteems himself happy and successful if he loses all to gain Christ; he will experience no difficulty in **renouncing his own judgment and in willing to be ruled entirely by Christ, having no other will and life than His**.

[d] In the last place, the '**Contemplation for Obtaining Love**' with which the **Exercises** are closed, contains the noblest and most powerful motive possible to arouse a generous will to make daily more effective the **holocaust, the oblation, the obsequium [cf. Rm12:1, f.] it offered in the Vow of Obedience**. For, after establishing that the love of friendship demands a reciprocal giving between lovers, St. Ignatius has the exercitant  ***dwell with great affection [SpEx 234]:***

*...The First Point, I will call back into my memory the gifts I have received – my creation, redemption, and other gifts particular to myself. I will ponder with deep affection how much God our Lord has done for me, and how much He has given me of what He possesses, and consequently how He, the same Lord, desires to give me His very self, in accordance with His divine design.*

*Then I will reflect on myself, and consider what I on my part ought in all reason and justice to offer and give to his Divine Majesty, namely, all my possessions, and myself along with them. I will speak as one making an offering [obsequium] of deep affection and say:*

**Suscipe!**

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and all my will – all that I have and possess. You, Lord, have given all that to me. I now give it [all] back to You, O Lord. All of it is Yours. Dispose of it according to Your will. Give me Your love and Your grace, for that is enough for me.

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<sup>145</sup> CSJ, P. III, c. 1, n. 23.

This is how God has complied with this **fundamental law of a loving friendship**, bestowing upon man gifts and blessings which only He Who is substantial and infinite love can bestow. And when the human soul, realizing interiorly all the good the unworthy believer has received, one comes to experience himself in an abyss before the immensity of the love that God has shown, a longing will break forth spontaneously from the innermost source of one's being and offer and give, in a just interchange, to the Divine Lover, ***all things that are his and himself along with them.***

But, among a person's possessions, that which is of the greatest value, the most worthy of being offered to the Giver of all good, is one's **liberty**. For this reason, writes Fr. Casanovas, St. Ignatius places **the surrender of liberty** before every other offering, as the gift which includes all other gifts. Lovers have always looked upon it as the pearl of the Gospel **to offer an entire life to the one who is loved**, glorying in bearing the marks of servitude, for **surrendering one's liberty is equivalent to surrendering oneself.**

The effective contemplation of the infinite manifestations of Divine love leads, therefore, **by virtue of the law of friendship, to the servitude of perfect obedience.** In fact, the ***Suscipe***, springing from a heart that feels itself infinitely loved, seeks to return love for love and ***in all things love and serve His Divine Majesty [SpEx # 233]*** achieves its fullest realization in religious obedience, above all, if to promptness of **execution** there is added the **adherence of the will** and the **humble surrender of one's judgment.** Because only then can it be said with truth that man has **given all for pure love**, without reserving anything at all, **to belong entirely to God**, and to **serve as a docile instrument in the furtherance of His designs.**

### **Summary**

There can be no surprise at the perfect agreement to be seen between the teaching of the **Spiritual Exercises** and the standards and norms of obedience given in the **Constitutions** and in the great **Letter** [of March 1553] which our holy Father wrote on this virtue, seeing that all these writings have been inspired with the same spirit and spring from identical principles. And having forged the ***Exercises*** according to the happy expression of Fr. LaPalma, **'the first Plan and Pattern of the Society of Jesus as a Religious Order'**,<sup>146</sup> it is obvious and natural that they should contain the substance of the teaching on obedience which is so essential a virtue in our Order, and its symbol, so to say, and prerogative.

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<sup>146</sup> Cammino espiritual, Book 8, c. 2; II, 298.

## 1. SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

### OT:

**Gn 22:2,3:** *Take your only begotten son, Isaac, whom you love, and go into the land of vision: and there you shall offer him for an holocaust upon one of the mountains which I will show you. So, Abraham rising up in the night, saddled his ass; and took with him two young men, and Isaac, his son; and when he had cut wood for the holocaust, he went his way to the place which God had commanded him...*

**I K 15:22:** *And Samuel said: Does the Lord desire holocausts and victims, and not rather the voice of the Lord should be obeyed. For obedience is better than sacrifices: and to hearken rather than to offer the fat or rams.*

**Pr 3:5:** *Have confidence in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not upon your own prudence ...*

### NT

#### Synoptics:

**Mt 11:29:** *Learn of Me for I am meek and humble of heart and you will find rest for your souls...*

**Mt 16:24:** *I exhort you, then, to be His disciple, to deny himself... etc.*

**Mt 17:5; 23:2:** *This is My Son, the Beloved; He enjoys My favor. Listen to Him...  
...do not be guided by what the [Pharisees and Scribes] do...*

**Lk 9:35; 10:16:** *... this is My Son, the Chosen One; listen to Him...  
...Anyone who listens to you, listens to Me; anyone who rejects you, rejects Me, and those who reject Me, reject the One Who sent Me...*

### JOHN:

**Jn 6:38:** *I have not come to do My Own Will...*

**Jn 20:21:** *... As the Father sent Me, so am I sending you....*

### PAUL:

**Rm 15:5, f.:** *... following the example of Christ Jesus, so that united in mind and voice you may give glory to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ...*

**1 Co 1:10:** *... for the sake of Our Lord Jesus Christ ... be united again in your belief and practice ...*

**Ep 6:5 [2 x]:** *... Slaves, be obedient to the men who are called your masters in this world, with deep respect and sincere loyalty, as you are obedient to Christ ...*

**Ph 2: 2, 8, 18; 3:17:** *... if love can persuade at all, or the Spirit 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 ...He was obedient unto death..... My brothers, be united in following my rule of life...**

**Col 3:23-24: Whatever your work is, put your heart into it as if it were for the Lord and not for men, knowing that the Lord will repeat you by making you his heirs. It is Christ the Lord that you are serving ...**

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Fr. Espinosa Polit, SJ offers his classical commentary: This last text, from the Letter to the Colossians<sup>147</sup> shows us once again how conformable to the teachings of revealed truth are the rules and counsels on obedience which the holy Founder of the Society gave to his sons. To poor slaves, frequently the victims of the cruel demands of their heartless masters, the divinely inspired Apostle earnestly recommends an open and generous obedience, and his exhortation is founded on the motives of consolation offered them by the faith. Christ is their true Master, and, therefore, when they fulfill their duties, they in reality serve and please our Lord, and thereby make themselves His creditors for those eternal blessings which He reserves for His friends and faithful servants. They should then overlook the vices and the wickedness of their masters and subject themselves to them with a heart expanded with hope, confident that God Who gladly accepts their services will give them in turn the eternal inheritance of sons in glory:

***... He who hears you, hears Me, and he who despises you, despises Me [Lk 10:16] – Whatever you do, do it from the heart, as to the Lord and not to man [Col 3:23] ... Obey your prelates and be subject to them... [Heb 13:17] ... And so brothers, your faith has been a great comfort to us in the middle of our own troubles and sorrows; now we can breathe again, as you are still holding firm in the Lord...[2 Th 3:7-9]. ... Do not let people disregard you because you are young, but be an example to all the believers in the way you speak and behave, and in your love, your faith and your purity... [1 Tm 4:12]... Since, as president, he will be God's representative, he must be irreproachable... [Tt 1:7]***

#### **St. Peter offers his ideal:**

***... Now I have something to tell your elders: I am an Elder myself, and a witness, to the sufferings of Christ, and with you I have a share in the glory that is to be revealed. Be the shepherds of the flock of God that is entrusted to you: watch over it, not simply as a duty, but gladly, because God wants it; not for sordid money, but because you are eager to do it. Never be a dictator over any group that is put in your charge, but an example that the whole flock can follow. When the chief shepherd appears, you will be given the crown of unfading glory***  
... [1 P 5: 1-3]

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<sup>147</sup> Fr. Manuel Maria Espinosa Polit, SJ, *Perfect Obedience. Commentary on the Letter on Obedience of St. Ignatius of Loyola* [March 26, 1553]. Westminster MD: Newman 1947, pp. 138, f.

It would be helpful to consider the motives which the holy Founder of the Jesuits had in **making obedience the honor and glory of his Order**, while giving it a **marked pre-eminence over the other virtues**. Of the reasons set forth in the **Letter** [March 26, 1553], the first, contained in the clause:

**...God our Lord gives me the desire to see you most truly eminent in the virtue of obedience; and this not only for the excellent and singular fruits thereof, are proved by many testimonies of Holy Writ, both in the Old and New Testament...**

This is based on the great blessings which obedience bring with it, which the Holy Spirit has deigned to point out to us in Holy Writ.

There are many passages, to be sure, in the Sacred Scriptures, as the Jesuit Founder states, in which by word and example the merit and value of obedience is extolled, or where, on the other hand, is weighed the harm and evil caused by disobedience. The Historical Books and the Wisdom Books, especially, contain many admirable sentences and suggestive examples which put **in a clear light the pleasure which our Lord looks upon obedience**, not merely that general obedience to the commands of those who have authority from Him, as well as the severity with which He chastises the disobedient. [See, for example, Ex 16:8; Dt 17:10-13; 1 S 15:22-23; Pr 15:28; 21:28. Also among others, the examples of Isaac (Gn 22:9) and Samuel (1 S 3:5-10) – Patterns of perfect obedience].

Other holy persons of the OT are noted for their docility and submission to their Superiors, thus bringing on themselves and their people, the blessings of God. [Take for example: Joseph, Gn 37:14; Jacob, Gn 28:1-5; Ruth Rt 3:5; the Young Tobias, Tb 5:1; Esther, Est 2:20]. On the contrary, the disobedience and revolt against Moses was the cause of the terrible destruction of Core, Dathan and Abiron – Nb 16:1-35. Saul was for his disobedience disowned by God which was the beginning of his aberrations and misfortunes – [1 S 15:23; See also Nb 14:41-45].<sup>148</sup>

It might be asked: Has this ancient insistence still any objective reality, or is it merely a pious fiction of ancient writ? Are the words of the Gospel: ***Qui vos audit, Me audit*** [Lk 10:16] – anything more than a way of speaking to make concrete in our eyes the authority of the Superior? Let us examine the exact meaning and the true scope of the statement of our Lord, for the matter is too important to be passed over lightly.

In the text: *He who hears you, hears Me* [Lk 10:16], the word *hear* means not only docility to teaching, which is evident, but also submission and obedience to the direction of legitimate pastors and reverence for their authority.

We can infer this as the precise meaning of obedience:

- first, from the meaning of the Greek verb, *akouo*, which means obey, as well as to hear, not only in classical Greek, but in NT Greek [cf. Mt 17:5; Lk 10:167 – texts given by Greek biblical dictionaries];

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<sup>148</sup> ib, pp. 46, f.

- in the second place, from the fact that the authority which Christ communicated to His Apostles as His representatives and the continuators of His work is the same as He receive from the Father: As the Father has sent Me, so I send you... [Jn 19: 19, f.]

Wherefore, as the divine words of Tabor, *ipsum audite* [listen to Him: Mt 17:5; Lk 9:35: addressed to all believers]] must be understood, according to the interpreters, not merely in receiving His teaching, but also in the sense of doing what He says [as his words addressed to the Apostles: *do this in Memory of Me !*]. In like manner, the word in our text must be taken as a synonym of submission and obedience, for in both the one and the other instance there is question of an acquiescence of the will with one who has the right and power of command.

Then, the words: *He who hears you, hears Me* – clearly suppose that the Apostles and disciples to whom they were directed received real authority from Christ to impose laws and precepts, and they, therefore, leave no doubt as to the real identity between the Person of Him Who sends and him who is sent, between the Divine King to Whom has been given all power in heaven and on earth<sup>149</sup>, and His ambassadors, between Christ and His Apostles. Whoever receives their teachings, whoever submits himself with docility to their direction in the things that pertain to the Kingdom of God, hears and obeys Christ Himself. Whoever, on the contrary, rebels against their authority, despises the authority of Christ Himself...<sup>150</sup>

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## 2. The Exemplary Causality of Jesus Christ

[cf. also the **Theology of the Eucharist** [faith supplies for the defect of the senses] and **Faith** [oblation of intellect and will – DV 5]]:<sup>151</sup>

[a]. We shall speak now of the NT, where **the sublime example of the Son of God sheds its calm light**; there we find the Christian concept of view both by St. Paul and the Prince of the Apostles [read carefully on this point: Rm 13:1-7; Ep 6:5-9; Col 3:23-25; 1 Th 5:12-13; 1 Tm 6:1-12; Tt 2:9, 10; 3:1; Heb 13:17. 1 P 2:13-18]. This principal, or practical norm from which obedience draws all its force and energy, is enunciated by the saint in a phrase of lapidary conciseness:

**... they regard not the individual whom they obey**, but in him, Christ our Lord, for Whose love they obey ...

... For the Superior is not to be obeyed because he is prudent or virtuous, or excels in any other divine gift whatsoever it may be, but for this only that **he is in the place of God**, and has authority from Him, who says: *he that hears you hears Me, and he that despises you, despises Me...*

<sup>149</sup> Suarez, *De Rel. S.I.*, Book IV, c. 15, n. 3 [508].

<sup>150</sup> Espinosa-Polit, o.c., , pp. 60, ff.:

<sup>151</sup> [Fr. Manuel Maria Espinosa Polit, SJ, *Perfect Obedience. Commentary on the Letter on Obedience of St. Ignatius of Loyola* [March 26, 1553]. Westminster MD: Newman 1947, pp. 56-59, *passim*.

[b]. As is seen, for St. Ignatius, **obeying the Superior and obeying God are one and the same thing**. This idea which contains the substance of the teachings of the holy Patriarch on obedience, he inculcates, *importune et opportune*, and it will be worth while to collect together as a sheaf of testimonies, some of his frequent passages in the **Constitutions**, in his **Letters**, and **Instructions**, where we see repeated with various shades of meaning the real thought of the Founder.

In the **Formula**, or Fundamental Rule of the Institute of the Society, presented to Julius III, and approved by him in the Bull, **Exposcit Debitum**, there is express mention of this principle as of something of vital importance in the way of life proper to our vocation:

**... And all its subjects, as well as for the great fruits resulting from good order, as for the very praiseworthy exercise of continual humility, will be found in all things that pertain to the Institute of the Society, always to obey not only the superior, but to recognize Christ present in him and give him becoming reverence ...**<sup>152</sup>

To the Candidate who knocks at the door of the Society, the saint explains very properly the same doctrine with clarity and an abundance of detail, which give him clearly to understand how seriously he must take it from the rest of his life. Beginning with the humble duties which are usually performed, above all in the time of probation, the holy Jesuit Founder says:

... When anyone goes to the kitchen to help the cook, he must obey him with much humility in all things pertaining to his office, showing him always complete obedience; for if he does not, it is not likely that he will show obedience to any Superior, since true obedience is not concerned about the person to whom a thing is done, and for whom; but if he does this for our Creator and Lord alone, the same Lord of all is obeyed. Wherefore, one should not look to see whether it is the cook of the house, or its Superior. Whether he who commands is one or the other, for neither to them, nor for them – [as sound intelligence understands it] is this obedience shown, but only to God and for God, our Creator and Lord.

And therefore, it might be better for the cook not to ask his helper to do this or that, but modestly to command him, or say: do this, or that. For if he asks him, he will appear rather to speak as man to man; and it does not seem honorable, or right for a lay cook to ask a priest to wash pots or do anything similar. But if he bids him to do this or that, he will show that he speaks rather as Christ to man, since it is in place of Him that he commands. And so, if he who obeys is to be entirely acceptable to His Divine Majesty, he should reflect and look upon the words that come from the cook, or from the Superior, as though they came from Christ our Lord...<sup>153</sup>

<sup>152</sup> Institutum Societatis I, 25.

<sup>153</sup> Examen, c. 4, n. 29, 30: CSJ nn. 84, 85.

The **Novices** who are admitted to probation and the **Scholastics** who, following the Novitiate, and who take their First Vows, are preparing themselves for the apostolate of tomorrow with the two-fold reputation of **learning and virtue**<sup>154</sup>, must nourish their spirits with the clear vision of Christ in their Superior and prepare themselves for the sacrifices which holy obedience may demand of them. The **Novices** are exhorted:

... It chiefly conduces to advancement and is very necessary, that all should give themselves to perfect obedience, **acknowledging the Superior, whoever he may be, in place of Christ, our Lord,** and yielding to him **inward reverence** and love ...<sup>155</sup>

... and it is very necessary that all should obey not only the Superior of the Society, or house, but also subordinate officials, who have received authority from him.... And they must accustom themselves not to behold who he is whom they obey, but rather **who He is for Whose sake they obey, and for Whom they obey in all, that is Christ, our Lord** ...<sup>156</sup>

The second group, the **Scholastics**, are reminded:

... that they must hold the Rector in great reverence **as one who holds the place of Christ our Lord**...<sup>157</sup>

Dealing with the more advanced of his sons, and wishing, as he himself says in the beginning of the Sixth Part, to point out to them some more substantial things which will help them:

... more fruitfully to employ themselves according to our Institute in the divine service and help of their neighbor ... that they show great reverence especially towards their Superiors, **beholding and reverencing them in Jesus Christ...that in all things to which obedience can with charity extend, we be ready at its voice, as if it came from Christ our Lord, since in His place and for His love and reverence we do it**...<sup>158</sup>

Those who are **scattered** *in the vineyard of Christ to work in that part which was entrusted to them*, he bids to:

... leave the free disposal of themselves to the Superior who **in the place of Christ our Lord** directs them in the way of His greater service and praise...<sup>159</sup>

<sup>154</sup> cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, Part IV of his *Original Constitutions: De Progressu* - ##47-68.

<sup>155</sup> P. III, c. 1, n. 23: CSJ n. 284.

<sup>156</sup> P. III, c. 1, n. 24: CSJ n. 285.

<sup>157</sup> P. IV, c. 10, n. 5: CSJ n. 423.

<sup>158</sup> P. VI, c. 1, nn. 1, 2: CSJ nn. 547; 551

<sup>159</sup> P. VII, c. 1, n. 2; c.2, n. 1: CSJ n. 606; cf. litt. A; I.



Although the Office of *Collateral* [the **Admonitor**] has been, and actually is in little use in the Society, some of the instructions given by our Holy Father for the proper discharge of its duties are much to our purpose. One of its principal duties is:

**... to harmonize as much as possible the dealings with subjects with their immediate Superior, going among them like an angel of peace, endeavoring to see that their attitude towards the Superior have the proper affection, since he holds the place of Christ our Lord...**<sup>160</sup>

Finally, abridging the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter of Part Nine, concerning the authority which the **General** should hold over the Society:

... and he must be obeyed and revered as one **who holds the place of Christ our Lord** ...

Fr. Espinosa continues<sup>161</sup>:

[c] **The Apostles**: But the authority which the Apostles had the right to exercise in the Church in Christ's name was not a purely personal prerogative. Rather, as they must have successors to perpetuate their Mission of transmitting to them the power and authority necessary for good government of the Church. And, consequently, Christian tradition has always understood the words of Christ: ***He who hears you, hears Me*** [Lk 10:16] – not only as said to the Apostles and immediate disciples of the Lord, but also to those who in one for or other, in the course of the ages would inherit their authority. Referring to this text, Fr. Suarez writes:

***... Christ speaks to the Apostles who must take His place as Pastors, and in them, to all those who will have the care of souls; but, St. Basil, St. Bernard, the Abbot Antiochus, St. Vincent and others, apply these words in a particular manner to religious superiors*** ...<sup>162</sup>

... It chiefly conduces to advancement and is very necessary, that all should give themselves to perfect obedience, **acknowledging the Superior whoever he be, in place of Christ our Lord**, and yielding him inward reverence and love ... [CSJ n. 284]

... likewise, let them treat their Superiors with great interior reverence, **beholding Jesus Christ in them and loving them sincerely as fathers in Christ** ... [CSJ n. 451].

Fr. Mersch, who has explained solidly and clearly, the close relation which exists between **the virtue of obedience and the dogma of our incorporation with Christ**, remarks that, according to the axiom ***operari sequitur esse***, 'the act of the will in the supernatural order should pattern itself on the supernatural life from which it

<sup>160</sup> P. VIII, c. 1, litt. D: CSJ n. 661.

<sup>161</sup> o.c., pp. 61, 71, f., 93-96.

<sup>162</sup> De Rel. S.I., Book IV, c. 15, n. 3 [508]

flows.’ Our supernatural life, even before our own, **is of Christ** from Whom we have received it, so that, as the life of the branch depends upon its union with the trunk, and only by means of this union receives the sap which rises from the roots, and as the life of the member depends entirely on its insertion into the body, so, in like manner, our life and activity depend upon our adherence to Christ, on our being engrafted on Him...

[d] **‘To put on Christ’**, writes Fr. Ferdinand Prat<sup>163</sup> means to be wrapped in that divine atmosphere, made a living member of Christ, placed under the influence of that supernatural force which is called the soul of the Church and which is nothing other than the Holy Spirit. The Apostle delights to speak of **putting on Christ, or the Lord Jesus Christ – putting on the new man, putting on immortality, the weapons of light, the armor of God, the helmet of salvation, the breast-plate of faith and charity:** in all these examples the figurative meaning is transparent. **We put on Christ**, less as a mantle which covers our wretchedness than as a vital form which us to participate in His life.

Among the spiritual notes of Fr. Jerome NADAL, St. Ignatius’ ‘own’ theologian for his *Constitutions*, can be found a few paragraphs of particular interest, as they seem to confirm the point of view here advanced. In fact, they permit us to know how deeply that excellent man, who understood the spirit of our Father as few men did, experienced the **mystery of our incorporation with Christ** and its influence on our spiritual activities. He says: ‘Accept and diligently exercise **this union with Christ Jesus** which the spirit of the Lord graciously moves you, so that you will realize in spirit that it is **through His intellect that you understand, through His memory that you recall, through His will that you desire**, and that you are wholly in Him, that you live and work not in yourself, but **in Christ**. And this is the height of perfection in this life, a divine virtue, wonderful sweetness.

Our Holy Father begins<sup>164</sup>, therefore, by recalling **the principal foundation of obedience**, which is to see the Superior as clothed with the divine authority, not as a mere man, but as an instrument, an interpreter, a representative of God, Whose place he takes. This principle is most true, and we can, therefore, without doing the slightest violence to reality, close our eyes to the human qualities and deficiencies of the Superior to see God alone, Who by means of man communicates Himself to man ;to show him His ways and to teach him His paths...’ [cf. Ps 24:4].

**[1] Abandonment to the Divine Will: “Thy Will be done!”**

In the studies of Lk’s presentation of Mary, it is noted that her FIAT is much more noted in the 3<sup>rd</sup> evangelist than it is in Mt – **Jesus’ FIAT is a command, Mary’s is an optative**. Mt, coming from the rabbinical tradition, seems more interested in God’s Will – whereas for Lk, the central concern is the Kingdom. The **Third Petition**

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163 Vol. II, p. 311.

164 cf. Fr. Espinosa, p.133.

of the **LORD'S PRAYER** is that His Will indeed be done. This has a deep OT background:

*... you asked no holocaust or sacrifice for sin; then I said: HERE I AM! I am coming... to do your will... (cf. Ps 40:7, ff.; cited by Heb 10:9). Bless Yahweh, all His angels, heroes mightily to enforce His word, attentive to His word of command ... servants to enforce His will... (cf. Ps 103:19, ff.). ... I have fled to you for shelter; teach me to obey you, since you are my God: may your good spirit guide me... (cf. Ps 143:9, f.).*

But now give thanks to Yahweh, the God of your ancestors, and do His will (cf. Ezr 10:11).

*I am God, unrivalled, God who has no like ... I say: My purpose shall last ... (Ps 46:10)*

*... the Lord's will is sovereign ... (cf. Ps 135:6).*

*My beloved will perform my pleasure ... (cf. Is 48:13, f.).*

*Cyrus, my shepherd ... he will fulfill my whole purpose... (cf. Is 44:27; cited by Ac 13:22).*

*Whatever be the will of God, he will perform it... (cf. 1 M 3:60).*

It may be that the Semitic mentality is much clearer in this distinction regarding the "Will of God":

- the subjective sense: the divine faculty of willing;
- the objective sense: the "content", what it is that God wills.

In Jesus Christ, true God and true man, there are two wills: the divine and human. In the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, united in the One Nature, there is only one divine will common to the three. The divine faculty of willing is sometimes referred to as "innards", the deepest interior (the Italian "*reni*"), the divine heart.

In the objective sense, it is not so much the result of some abstract decision: but rather, the more spontaneous and instinctive tendency. The faithful are called upon to give preference in their lives, to seek out the divine good pleasure.

In the **OUR FATHER**, the central concern seems to be not so much the psychological, spiritual power of choice, but much more the concrete object willed by God – that which He desires, loves. The "content" is what is understood by the Greek THELMA.

In most modern languages, the divine will perhaps most commonly means just precisely what it is that God would want in these circumstances. The term: "the divine good pleasure" gives to many a sense of "paternalism", "condescendence", of one putting up with one considered inferior. To find the proper terminology in the discussion is not always easy, nor agreed to by all. There is a divine "Will" that seems clear to a believer: the commandments, duties of one's state in life. Then, there is that very vague and difficult area of "all that happens."

Not very often is the divine will found in the plural – it might respond to the various intentions of one's prayer, but it also seems to leave the door open to caprice, involving a multiplicity of choices. Some have tried to render the "divine good pleasure" by the word "desires". However, for many others, this seems much too weak to apply to God in that it is often contrasted with **HOPE**, which is a future good, difficult, but possible. It is its "difficulty" that separates **HOPE** from desires. These are much more passing, much closer to "velleity", wishful thinking.

Through the centuries, the divine will is not only seen as the object of verbs, such as "to do", "to carry out" – but perhaps even much more is the divine will the object of verbs such as: "to seek out", "to choose". Both QUMRAN and the Ignatian tradition come together on this point – in the spirit of St. Ignatius., "discernment" plays a most important role.<sup>165</sup>

The **NT** often speaks of the divine will and it is found often in connection with "to do; become".

The **Synoptics**: praise particularly those who "do" the Father's Will:

**Who are My mother and My brothers?... Here are My mother and My brothers. Anyone who does the will of God, that person is My brother and sister and mother ... (cf. Mk 3:45; cf. also Mt 12:50).**

**It is not those who say to me: 'Lord, Lord', who will enter the kingdom of heaven – but the person who does the will of My Father in heaven ... (cf. Mt 7:21).**

**In the Prayer of Gethsemane, there are some interesting variations:**

**But let it be as You, not I, would have it (cf. Mk 14:36).**

**Nevertheless, let it be as You, not I, would have it... if this cup cannot pass by without My drinking it, Your will be done! (cf. Mt 26:39, 42). Father, he said, if You are willing, take this cup away from Me. Nevertheless, let Your will be done, not Mine... (cf. Lk 22:42).**

In a different way, **the 4<sup>th</sup> Evangelist** insists on the intimate tie between Jesus and the Father's Will:

**My food is to do the will of the One Who sent Me ... (4:34).**

**My aim is not to do My own will, but the will of Him Who sent Me (5:30). ... I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but to do the will of Him Who sent Me ... (6:38).**

**... anyone who does the will of God remains forever... (1 Jn 2:17).**

The **Epistles** contain similar insights:

**... be obedient as to Christ ... (cf. Ep 6:16).**

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<sup>165</sup> cf. Piet Penning de Vries, Discernment des esprits. Ignace de Loyola. Paris: Beauchesne 1964

**God, here I am! I have COME TO DO YOUR WILL (Ps 40, LXX) ... You will need endurance to do God's will, and gain what He has promised (cf. Heb 10:6,f., 36).**

**... may He make you ready to do His will in any kind of good action... (Heb 13:21).**

Hence, the NT emphasis seems to emphasize much more the “content” of the divine will:

**Now the will of Him Who sent Me is that I should lose nothing of all that He has given to Me, and that I should raise it up on the last day. Yes, it is My Father's will that whoever sees the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life and that I shall raise him up on the last day ... (cf. Jn 6:39, ff.)**

**What God wants for you is to be holy (cf. 1 Tm 4:3)... keep away from fornication... it is indeed the will of God that makes people holy ... (cf. Mt 6:10; cf. 2 Th 2:13; Ep 1:4).**

**Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus ... ( cf. 1 Th 5:17,f.).**

**God wants you to be good citizens ... (cf. 1 P 2:13, ff.).**

\_\_\_\_\_ In synthesis, it seems that **the Will of God for the NT writers** means **to keep the commandments** – and the will of God for Christ is **to lead all to everlasting life**. In petitioning that God's Name be hallowed, we pray that we might be led through the divine good works to extend His glory:

**... your light must shine in the light of men so that seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven ... (cf. Mt 5:16).**

In asking for **His Kingdom to come**, we are asking that it might come also for us – in the hope and prayer that the divine will, which the Kingdom is, might find no obstacle, that we might indeed be governed in accord with His will. So, **Thy WILL be done**, is in perfect harmony with the two preceding petitions of the Our Father: **“Hallowed be Thy Name” – “Thy Kingdom come”**: the Will of God simply is that His Kingdom should come ever more fully, and procure all glory for His Name.

As in the earlier petitions, there is no subject to these verbs – and this intended omission allows the Church to make the most broad application possible.

The **intense prayer of the Church** is that the Will of God be done everywhere, always and by all. We do not pray, therefore, simply that creatures carry out the will of the Creator – but we are asking that God Himself carry out His will. .

We are asking God, as in a **Prayer of Abandonment**, to be made docile and obedient in bringing our wills in harmony with His. This is why not a few translators read this passage: that the divine will be carried out, accomplished, fulfilled, realized. Such a translation really is not necessary: the open style of the original implies this already.

The usual translation: **Thy Will be done!** – has the advantage of being more vague, general and universal – and hence, the more easily can it include both aspects, that the divine will be done:

- on the part of God, that He be not impeded;
- and on the part of humanity, by the willing acceptance of human beings.

There is no implicit “fatalism” in the term: in the sense that since God is already omnipotent, and that His will will be done anyway – then: so be it. Such a spirit, however, may not be terribly far from what is related of Judas Maccabbaeus:

**Whatever be the will of heaven, He will perform it – it is better to die in battle than to watch the ruin of our land** (cf. 1 M 3:60).

This is similar in spirit as well to the appeal made to Paul not to go on to Jerusalem:

**For my part, I am ready not only to be tied up but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.**

**And so as he would not be persuaded, we gave up the attempt, saying: The Lord’s will be done!** (cf. Ac 21:14).

Hence, the Petition: **Thy Will be done!** – is **the prayed HOPE** that the Will of God will be effectively realized. One prays – and almost commands God – that He carry out His will and that each one might collaborate the more to bring this about.

This 3<sup>rd</sup> Petition simply continues the first: “Hallowed be Thy Name!” And the 2<sup>nd</sup> Petition (“Thy Kingdom Come!”) also adds a dimension to the first Petition. The coming of the Kingdom means for all “**sanctification**”, **consecration to the service of God**. This **sanctification** transforms us, elevates us in a fundamental manner – but at the same time, this **being raised up to a new life** gives us the capacity, a certain empowerment, and imposes the obligation, to render an effective service, that each might undertake one’s duties with this new spirit of the risen Lord. Hence, this 3<sup>rd</sup> Petition: **Thy Will be done!** Adds to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Petition (“Thy Kingdom come!”) also a commitment. The Kingdom of God is within – it is still coming, and is the ultimate bearer of the divine will. God comes to accomplish His will, which is our sanctification.

In His coming, He offers a superabundance of messianic goods. It is these blessings of the New Covenant which establish one as pertaining to the New Covenant, and which constitute one as pertaining to His Kingdom.

There is required of the believer, however, that each be opened up to this divine coming. Through the Kingdom that is received, the divine will takes full possession of one, leads and draws those who will respond, by its own inner power.

The challenge is to follow this divine impulse through an effective abandonment. This sublime obedience – in imitation of Christ’s own

relationship with His heavenly Father – is but a prolongation, a lived attitude of inner correspondence through which more and more the divine will becomes a concrete and vibrant reality within the believer. It becomes a truly active presence, as one begins to see Jesus as **A value** – then, grows, intensifies some, to see Him as an **IMPORTANT value**. The ultimate ideal would be achieved when **He is THE value**.

The intimate and close relationship between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Petitions of the OUR FATHER shows the most profound tie between the Kingdom of God (heaven) and the Will of God. For some interpreters, this is why Lk has not reproduced the OUR FATHER in such detail as in Mt, enumerating all these Petitions that are so closely inter-connected: his tendency, “style”, is to suppress that which appears superfluous.

For Lk, once one has asked for the Coming of the Lord’s Kingdom, one is implicitly asking at the same time for the full realization of the divine will. For the rabbinic tradition, however, it is the Will of God that is tantamount, and which constitutes the essential Prayer for Mt. There are citations that come close to this thought:

**Eli said: He is Yahweh: LET HIM DO WHAT HE THINKS GOOD (cf. 1 S 3:18). Joab said: Take courage and stand firm for the sake of our people and the towns of our God. And MAY YAHWEH DO AS HE THINKS RIGHT ... (cf. 1 Ch 19:13).**

**Summary:** This attitude is part of Mt’s rendition of the OUR FATHER – the committed believer wills only the Father’s Will. There is involved in this the **OBSEQUIUM** (cf. Rm 12:1; also 1 P 2:4, ff.) **of our own personal will**, and the elimination of all that would be self-centeredness. The effort here is to base our lives on the Will of God. There is in this the firm decision to share in this Will in the fullest possible accord with one’s own capacity<sup>166</sup>.

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## [2] THE LORD’S LIVED EXAMPLE

As all Christian virtues, Holy Abandonment has its source in the Gospel – in the words and deeds, the teachings and example of our Lord Jesus Christ. St. Francis de Sales presents Christ as the **MODEL OF HOLY ABANDONMENT** in the various stages of His mortal life:

- in the Crib (cf. Entretien XXI);
- His infancy (Love of God, book IX, c. 14);
- in the flight into Egypt (cf. Entr., III);
- and above all, during those terrible sufferings that concluded.

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<sup>166</sup> NB: for these pages of these notes, cf. Jean Carmignac, *Recerches sur le Notre Pere*. Paris: Letouzey 1969, pp. 103-109, *passim*. Cf. also: R. Guardini, *The Lord’s Prayer*. Manchester: SOPHIA: 1932 [re-print]; Lehodey, *Holy Abandonment*. Rockford: TAN 1934 [re-print 2003]; de Margerie, SJ, *L’Abandon a Dieu*. Paris: Tequi 1997.

His earthly sojourn, particularly in these words: **“Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit!”** <sup>167</sup>

The **Imitation of Christ** is the great challenge of believers: He Leaches by word and example how to be abandoned to the Will of God in suffering – all believers are thus challenged to repeat the Savior’s own words in the LORD’S PRAYER and in GETHSEMANE: Your Will be done... not Mine ... Not what I will, but as You will it. (cf. Mt 6; 26:39; Lk 22:42).

The culminating example of Abandonment is to be sought in Jesus on the Cross. Through the doctrine and the lived experience of the saints, the believers of today – assisted by grace – can imitate the abandonment of Jesus Christ. In the trials of human life, the Lord’s grace can lead the faithful through a variety of levels, or stages of the faith, and eventually come to the offering of the “spiritual sacrifice”, the “oblation” to God’s Mercy.

For many theologians, such a sacrifice asks a correspondence to the call of “costly discipleship”, passing through a variety of “stages of development”, “seasons in a person’s life”: Dark Night, Spiritual Winter. As for the perfection of abandonment, of course, no one could reach it without the special assistance of God. In the supreme level, sacrifice is consummated.

The Lord’s own teaching in this regard may be seen in a special way in episodes that are central to His Person and Mission: the teaching of the OUR FATHER, and the example of GETHSEMANE.

### 1.] **THE “OUR FATHER”**

On Christ’s lips, this invocation’ has a profundity of meaning that it seems the disciples came to understand only with time. With Joachim Jeremias, many believers hold that every time Jesus referred to His Father in direct address, most likely He would have used the affectionate term ABBA<sup>168</sup>. The original text may be in the Synoptic accounts of Gethsemane, particularly that of Mk:

**ABBA! (Father), He said. Everything is possible for you. Take this cup away from Me. But let it be as You, not I, would have it ... (cf. Mk 14:36).**

a. Then, it is found in two Epistles attributed to Paul:

**... it is the spirit of sons and it makes us cry out: ABBA. The Spirit and our spirit bear united witness that we are the children of God ... (cf. Rm 8:15).**

**The proof that you are sons is that God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts – the Spirit that cries ABBA, Father ... (cf. Ga 4:6).**

b. For Christ Himself, this term was the expression of the Mystery of His own divine Filiation within the bosom of the Most Blessed Trinity. The first Christians

<sup>167</sup> cf. St. Francis de Sales, *Love of God*, b. IX, c. 15.

<sup>168</sup> cf. also Marchel, *Dieu Père dans le NT*. Paris: du Cerf 1966; Robert Hammerton-Kelly, *God the Father*. Philadelphia: Fortress 1979



used this same term to express their own adoptive filiation, that associates them to the person and to the prayer of Jesus Christ.

c. The early Church seems to have been convinced that a prayer of this nature could be formulated only with the help, and by the direct activity of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, for the early Church, the expression: ABBA, Father – had profound theological implications for Trinitarian theology and for the theology of the divine Indwelling, the life of Grace:

- for Christ Himself it meant **His Trinitarian Filiation:**
- for the faithful, it implied our **adoptive filiation.**

Periodically, the question arises – sometimes as an objection – could the LORD’S PRAYER, the OUR FATHER, really have been Jesus’ own personal prayer? (“*Videtur quod non...*”). The OUR FATHER is clearly extended in the context in which it is found – of a group of disciples asking to be taught how to pray – to the disciples of all time, to all who would be willing to accept a share in His filiation.

Some have excluded Christ Himself from the prayer, not only because it asks for forgiveness of “sins”, but also in the light of His clear distinction made to Mary Magdalen:

***He said to her: But go and find the brothers, and tell them: I am ascending to MY Father and your Father, to MY God, and your God...*** (cf. Jn 20:17).

Once more, this kind of language seems to find a parallel in OT discourse:

***Ruth said to Naomi: wherever you go, I will go, wherever you live, I will live. Your people shall be my people, and YOUR GOD, MY GOD*** (cf. Rt 1:16).

However, the context of Jn 20:17 seems to be that Jesus is returning to the One Who is at the same time, HIS Father, and to HIS God: Who is also, through Jesus, our Father and God. Two “distinct” paternities may indeed be noted:

- never before, or elsewhere does Jesus use a formula that would risk confusing His unique filiation, that of His divine person – with the adoptive filiation of His disciples;
- precisely, in Jn 20:27, where God is presented at one and the same time as Christ’s Father and the Father of all disciples.

These two distinct “paternities” seem carefully noted in the formula used by Jesus: *MY... your*. This precision seems that it had for its purpose the avoidance of any ambiguity also in the OUR FATHER.

In consulting a concordance, it can be seen that Jesus often distinguishes between “**My**” Father (18 x in Mt; 4 x in Lk; 25/26 x in Jn) – and “**your**” Father (13 x in Mt; 2 x in Mk; 3 x in Lk 2/3 x in Jn) – without ever bringing together the two formulae in one common “Our” Father. In the case at hand, some have concluded that the OUR FATHER pronounced by the disciples brings them together, all in one collective, ecclesial invocation to their common Father – but, does not include Christ in it. In addition to this, it is evident that the Petition including the pardoning of sin, could not apply to Jesus. Thus, many interpreters have concluded that the LORD’S PRAYER

was not truly His “own” – it was merely one that He taught to the Church for its usage, but was not so much His own personal prayer.

**BUT (Sed contra....!):** this conclusion is far from the majority view. The “us” of the OUR FATHER is not limited to the disciples, it does not exclude Jesus: He also is associated with the lowest dregs of society, us sinners [cf. Ga 3:14; 2 Co 5:21 – cf. Dt 21:23]. For Him, God is His Father; at the same time, **the Father of all disciples**. This is proven by a great number of the variants of certain texts (cf. Mt 18:14) concerning the divine paternity. This permits the conclusion that the conscience of the early Christian had absolutely no hesitation in affirming that the OUR FATHER was the Prayer: both of the disciples, as well as the special prayer of the Lord Himself, addressed to their common Father.

The LORD’S PRAYER may not be reduced, then, to some kind of collective prayer of Christians, worked out by the early Church. It is the echo of **the very personal Prayer that Jesus would offer** throughout His mortal life. By His Mission, He made **this personal Prayer of His** into **the very personal Prayer of each and every disciple for as long as time lasts**. He has taught this personally to His “own”, whom He loved to the very end.

a. Most would seem to see the OUR FATHER in this light: it is the Lord’s own Prayer, **the echo of His personal Prayer**, and He has made it the personal Prayer of all who would ever accept to follow Him. The Prayer has distinct ecclesial characteristics.

b. The gospel precision that carefully clarifies the distinction between **Jesus’ unique filiation – and the “adoptive” filiation** for everyone else, needs not also to be insisted on here in the OUR FATHER. As Jesus shared in our humanity, our **adoptive filiation** is indeed **a share** in Jesus’ own natural filiation, **in His “essential” Filiation**. In like manner, we can say that our **filial prayer** is an analogous participation in the Trinitarian prayer of Jesus. This seems to be behind St. Paul’s words: the proof that you are children is that God has sent His Spirit, the spirit of His Son, into our hearts – it is the Spirit that cries ABBA! (cf. Ga 6:4).

c. All the Fathers of the Church and early commentators have insisted on an evident consequence of this common divine Paternity. Since all have the same Father, that all human beings are really brothers and sisters, who are divinely called to love one another, and to treat each other as such. This is the fundamental principle that inspires all of the morality and the spirituality of Christianity. The gospel states this explicitly:

***... you are all brothers... since you have only one Father, and He is in heaven ... (cf. Mt 23:8, ff.).***

This theme has been eloquently and repeatedly developed down through the years – with evident implications for the theology of charity.

A further difficulty: was this prayer meant to be something reserved only to believers, to the faithful – is the divine paternity limited to them? Is God the Father of the sinner?

a. With **GS 22**, that in some way, **Jesus is united in some way to every single human being**. There is always need, therefore, to clarify the more the true nature of divine paternity and the broader amplitude of this human fraternity. Some questions do need reflection:

- God is indeed Our Father because He has created us;
- even more so, He is Father in redeeming, sanctifying us.

b. The divine paternity is the more fully extended to those who do accept God as Father, and model their lives on that of His Son. Creation does indeed constitute the divine paternity, and makes of all human beings truly brothers and sisters. This is already clear in the gospel:

**But I say this to you: love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you – in this way, you will be the sons of your Father in heaven, for he causes the sun to rise on the bad as well as on the good... (cf. Mt 5:44, ff.).**

c. There is a problem in an overly restrictive reading of the context for the OUR FATHER in Lk's presentation. It does seem to be addressed just to the followers of Christ, perhaps in some contrast even with those who followed John the Baptist: **“Lord teach US to pray, just as John taught his disciples ... (cf. Lk 11:2).** Even in Mt's rendition (cf. Mt 6:7,ff.), another precision is offered: **“In your prayers, do not babble as the pagans do – for they think that by using many words they will be heard.”** Some interpreters read this in an exclusive sense – that therefore, the LORD'S PRAYER is meant exclusively for the close followers of Christ.

Nonetheless, all Christian prayer is essentially **a share in the life and mission of Jesus Himself** – all become sisters and brothers in what Christ has accomplished for the world. This is so in a particular manner, when one prays motivated by faith, hope and love – the OUR FATHER, as Christ prayed this.

a. There are various “extensions” that have been suggested over the years:

- primarily restricted to those who share the same faith – at least in Jesus Christ as Savior and Son of God;
- an exclusive reading would be to see this prayer limited solely to those in the state of grace;
- others see this as the special prayer of those who sincerely seek the truth, honestly do good, seek integral justice: **“facienti quod in se est, Deus non denegat gratiam.”** (St. Thomas wrote: when one is said to do what is in him to do, this is said to be in his power, **according as he is moved by God.**” (cf. **I-II, q. 109, a. 6, ad 2um**).

b. There is a particular value, of course, in sharing in Christ's own life of filiation – adoption is transmitted to us by Christ Himself. There is already a natural fraternity among human beings – Pope John XXIII also called **“socialization”** (the gathering of human beings for various motives, as culture, sports, business) – as one of the very promising signs of our time. So, there is no attempt to deny the natural bonds of fraternity that need to be encouraged among human beings – or, to make membership in the Church a kind of exclusive saving “Noah's Ark” for the storms of our times.

c. Perhaps a solution to a possible difficulty would be to extend the ***Our*** of the OUR FATHER as far as ***neighbor*** in the commandment, to include every “other”, all human beings are called by Jesus to come follow Him, to become members of His household, partners with His disciples, to listen and to put into practice His Beatitudes.

d. Indeed, already “blessed” are the “pure of heart”, the “poor in spirit”, “those who mourn”, those “who suffer for justice’s sake.”<sup>169</sup> Certain “levels”, stages in the divine Paternity, and its corresponding “filiation”. There is, first of all, the unique “natural” Filiation of Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity. There follows then, a “**share in His nature**” (cf. 2 P 1:4), those who willingly accept and live the life of grace. The matter was often discussed in various ways through the centuries.

e. The early Church included in its baptismal liturgy as well as in its Eucharistic liturgy – the LORD’S PRAYER, and this from the very beginning. This is surely because the newly baptized are plunged deeply into the mystery of Christ through the re-generation afforded by baptism. Surely, the baptized, those who specifically follow Jesus Christ have a special right/obligation/challenge to pray and to live the Lord’s own Prayer. With immersion into the Paschal Mystery of Christ (cf. Rm 6), and with Christ present in the Eucharist, Christians can surely echo in a more resounding way, uniting their voices to the very Person of Christ, present in a most special manner in the Eucharist, present “in a way that surpasses all other ‘presences’” [cf. Paul VI, ***Mysterium Fidei***, Sept. 1965].

f. Periodically this view emerges anew under various forms (pertaining either to the mystery of grace, or to the Church), ‘would restrict the right to the OUR FATHER especially to the “saints”. For this view, espoused also by many of the Fathers of the Church, the LORD’S PRAYER should be reserved to those who are sincerely trying to conduct their lives as sharing in Christ’s own filiation. Around the year 250, Cyprian wrote that the new Christian ‘person’, regenerated and given over to God by the grace of baptism, can now indeed say ‘Our Father.’ The reason is because such a person has just become son/ daughter. In appealing to God as Father in heaven, such a person attests in his/her first stuttering utterances that he/she has surrendered earthly relationships in favor of the heavenly.

1.) St. Augustine (around 410) repeated this view in other terms: one could not pray the OUR FATHER if he/she were not yet “born”. In his Sermon 59, he stated that the OUR FATHER is not yet the prayer of the catechumens – but will become so after their baptism.

2.) Much closer to our own time, Karl Barth wrote that the OUR FATHER is not just any ordinary prayer: there is much emphasis also to be given to the “our” and to “us.” He is indeed “our” Father in a particular manner: by bestowing this privilege, He has made some demands. It is through the mediation of Jesus that we indeed have become His children, and He has become “ours”. It all depends on

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<sup>169</sup> (cf. Jacques Deupont, OSB, *Les Beatitudes*

whether or not we will follow in His footsteps, living His own life. This prayer implies communion with Jesus, that we enter into His discipleship, that we undertake His Mission. It is Jesus Who invites us, permits us, commands us, enables us – to come and follow Him. Only He can give us the ability to use His very own Prayer in addressing His very own Father. This prayer does indeed invite us to adore Him, to pray to God as His children – to make the Words of His only-begotten, most beloved Son – our own.

c. Yet, through the centuries the Church has defended strongly against an overly “exclusivist” understanding of being the “children” of God. Different forms of Jansenism have been rejected through the years:

- the Constitution “**Auctorem Fidei**” (1794) rejected a number of propositions of a Synod which met at Pistoia in Tuscany (1786);
- there were also condemned many rigorist positions: the conception of a Church comprised solely of the saints (cf. D-S 2615) – or that all grace needs to be mediated through the Church was rejected by Clement XI in 1713 (cf. D-S 242.9)

Surely, in a most unique manner, the Father is Jesus’ “own” – Jesus is His unique, most-beloved Son, the “first-born.” Only through adoption does the follower of Christ receive His Father. God becomes the Father of those who become the disciples of His Son, imitate His way of life, who truly want to follow after Him, to see where “He lives.” In this sense, one needs to accept the “total Christ”, be a vital, living part of the community He has founded.

a. To modern hearts, rightly attuned to socialization, ecumenism – it might seem excessive to limit the OUR FATHER in this way.

1.) Because of creation, in some way God is indeed the Father of all, in that He gives life, nourishment, up-bringing. Humanity does seem to be the glorious crown of the universe, at least in some of its conceptions – even in its infinitesimal insignificance. Already, the divine “paternity” includes all that has been created, as a first stage.

2.) Further, this created universe is already (passively) open toward – has a natural, passive obediencial capacity – also for Christ. There are levels, then, of divine paternity, depending upon the extent that one would accept adoptive filiation. In this sense, we are not children of God by nature alone – but are called to enter into a more intimate relationship with the Father through grace, a unique share in the Filiation of His own Son.

b. Should anyone reject His extended hand, try to establish one’s own personal relationship unassisted with the Father, this is condemned from the outset to failure. Jesus has made a special gift of His own relationship with the Father to each and everyone who will agree to come and follow Him.

c. With all that is said: Jesus’ own personal Prayer to the Father remains a Mystery. This will never be penetrated in comprehensive manner, even when we pray His own prayer, and express ourselves in terms of His own natural Filiation.

**SUMMARY:** surely, Christians and non-Christians alike, saints and sinners: none are excluded totally from the divine paternity. Nonetheless, in order to become the adopted children of the Heavenly Father in the full sense, it is necessary to become truly His adopted children, by accepting His grace, acting upon it, by taking up the Cross of Jesus Christ every day, and to follow Him. The challenge is to live the full density of the OUR FATHER – a certain “composite picture”, pattern, paradigm evolves in any careful reading of Scripture:

- the Son is one with the Father (cf. Jn 10:30; 17:21);
- the Son’s prayer is one of adoration for the Father’s glory (cf. Mk 14:36; Jn 17:4);

Jesus has come on earth specifically to give to human beings the power to become the children of God (cf. Jn 1:12);

- He has come to gather the dispersed children of the Most High (cf. Jn 11:52);
- Jesus’ coming has made all brothers and sisters, and in a more intense, elevated manner (cf. 3n 20:17);
- the OUR FATHER is a formula that expresses the new relationship uniting human beings to God;
- by the Incarnation, God the Creator offers to all the possibility of re-birth to a new life (cf. Jn 3:5-16; 10:10).

While it is true that the formula: OUR FATHER can be in common with anyone who thinks of God as Creator – on Jesus’ lips it also expresses His own unique relationship, which is offered to anyone who will accept it, as a participation in it. Therefore, the fullest meaning of the OUR FATHER is to live HIS WILL, to share in some way, already now, within the life of the Most Blessed Trinity<sup>170</sup>.

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## 2.] **GETHSEMANE (cf. Mk 14:32-42; Mt 26:36-46; Lk 22:39-46)**

While some of the dogmatic questions associated with the OUR FATHER lead to **Trinitarian** reflections and also to some thoughts on the Nature of **Grace** and the Divine Indwelling, the Agony of Gethsemane leads to a consideration of the “wills” in Jesus Christ, and the old teaching called Monothelitism.

### a]. **A Bit of History:**

a. The eternal Son of God, “**one of the Trinity**”, became man in order to save the world. The mystery of the Word Incarnate has been approached throughout the Christian Tradition from two opposite directions, using as their starting points:

- the humanity of Christ – as largely followed by the School of Antioch;
- the divinity of the Son of God – as espoused by the School of Alexandria.

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<sup>170</sup> NB: for these pages of these notes, cfr. Jean Carmignac, *Recherches sur le Notre Père*. Paris: Letouzey 1969, pp. 63-69, *passim*.

Both schools had the problem of showing that Jesus Christ is **truly God** and **truly man**, and that He is One.

b. This led to a variety of errors:

- Arianism: denied the divinity of Christ;
- Nestorianism denied the unity of His Person;
- Monophysitism rejected the duality of natures after union. (For all practical purposes, this last mentioned, rejected the humanity of Christ).

The great Christological Councils of the 5<sup>th</sup> century were faced with the task of expressing in clear terms the mysterious union of the two natures in one person.

c. Later it became also necessary to explicate the same mystery on the level of Christ's actions – against the Monothelitist tendency, the Church explained that the two wills and actions, the divine and the human, remain distinct in the one person of the God-man. Except for the exclusion of the error of the AGNOETES (who held that in Christ there was ignorance), the Church's reflection on the mysterious union of the divine and human knowledge was reserved for a later period.<sup>171</sup> Thus, the mystery of Christ, a mystery of unity in duality, has been through the centuries the object of a deep reflection; in recent years this reflection has taken on a new dimension with the problem of the psychological unity of the God-man<sup>172</sup>.

## b]. A FEW DEFINITIONS OF THE CHURCH:

### a. The Council of Lateran (649):

If anyone does not, according to the holy Fathers, confess truly and properly two wills, the divine and the human, intimately united in one and the same Christ God, since it is one and the same Who by each of His two natures has willed our salvation, let him be condemned (D-S 51d; The Christian Faith, 11 627/10 – p. 167).

If anyone does not, according to the holy Fathers, confess truly and properly two actions (ENERGEIA), the divine and the human, intimately united in one and the same Christ God, since it is one and the same Who by each of His two natures has worked out our salvation, let him be condemned. (cf. D-S 511; The Christian Faith, 627/11).

If anyone, following the infamous heretics, confesses only one nature or one will, or one action of divinity and humanity in the Christ God, destroying thereby

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<sup>171</sup> cf. Jacques Maritain, *On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus*. Herder & Herder 1969; Bertrand de Margerie, SJ, *The Human Knowledge of Christ*. Boston: St. Paul 1980

<sup>172</sup> cf. Pietro Parente, *L'io di Cristo*. Rovigo: Padano 1981; cf. also The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church. rev. ed. by N. Neuner, SJ - J. Dupuis, SJ. Staten Island, NY: Alba 1982

what the holy Fathers confess and denying the mystery of the Incarnation of our Savior, let him be condemned (cf. D-S 512; The Christian faith, // 627/12).

If, in the Christ God in Whom, as has been taught by our holy Fathers, the two wills and the two actions, the divine and the human, are essentially preserved in their unity, anyone, following the infamous heretics, confesses against the doctrine of the holy Fathers one will only and only one action, let him be condemned (cf. D-S 513; The Christian Faith, // 627/13).

If anyone, following the impious heretics, confesses their impious doctrine of one will and one action in the Christ God, and denies and rejects the two wills and two actions, the divine and the human, 'physically' preserved in their unity in the Christ God, as is professed about Him by the holy Fathers according to orthodox doctrine, let him be condemned. (cf. D-S 514; The Christian faith, # 515). – for these texts, cf. id., pp. 167, f.).

**b. The IIIrd General Council of Constantinople (681):**

We likewise proclaim in Him, according to the teaching of the holy Fathers, two natural volitions, or wills, and two natural actions, without division, without change, without separation, without confusion.

The two natural wills are not – by no means – opposed to each other, as the impious heretics assert; but His human will is compliant, it does not resist or oppose, but rather submits to His divine and almighty will. For as the wise Athanasias says it was necessary that the will of the flesh move itself, but also that it be submitted to the divine will; because just as His flesh is said to be and is the flesh of God the Word, so, too, the natural will of His flesh is said to be and is God the Word's very own, as He Himself declares: 'I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.' (Jn 6:38). He calls the will of His flesh His own will, because the flesh also has become His own. For just as His most Holy and immaculate flesh, animated by His soul, has not been destroyed by being divinized but remained in its own state and kind, so also His human will has not been destroyed by being divinized. It has rather been preserved, according to the words of Gregory the theologian: 'For His will – referring to that of the savior – being fully divinized, is not opposed to God. (D-S 556; The Christian Faith, // 635 – pp. 172, f.)

Therefore, preserving entirely what is neither fused nor divided, we proclaim the entire matter in this concise utterance: believing that one of the Holy Trinity, who after the incarnation is our Lord Jesus Christ, is our true God, we say that His two natures shine forth in His one hypostasis. In it, throughout His entire human existence in the flesh, he made manifest His miracles and His sufferings, not in mere appearance, but in reality. The difference of two natures in that same and unique hypostasis is recognized by the fact that each of the two wills and performs what is proper to it in communion with the other... (D-S 537; The Christian Faith, // 636, p.173).



### 3.] A THEOLOGY OF HOLY ABANDONMENT TO THE DIVINE WILL

a.] THE MEANING OF THE WORD: generally, the following distinction is made:

- passive: one can have the experience of having been abandoned by God (the “Dark Night”, “Spiritual Winter”: Why have you abandoned Me? (Ps 22).
- active when one really abandons him/herself to God.

“Passive” Abandonment is generally considered as a part of the spiritual life, and is considered under the headings of: ARIDITY, DESOLATION, DERELICTION, PURIFICATIONS.

Of particular interest here would be the reflection that is needed on Active Abandonment to the divine will. This was defined in classical theology as: a conformity to the divine good pleasure. It is a “**conformity**” that **springs from love**, and is brought to an elevated degree. In some manuals, the Latin equivalent was often considered to be resignatio, used by the author of the classic *Imitation of Christ*, and by others in the *Devotio Moderna* school.

b.] ITS FIELD: the spiritual life is a work accomplished by two, the accomplishment of two wills: divine and human, the second being that of the believer. The Will of God has infinite power, and in a certain sense, is considered by many to exercise the principal role. It is the divine will that takes the initiative, offers the means. It is the role of the human will to cede, to accede, to the divine in the work of cooperation: our will is **called to be in conformity with the divine will**, to depend on it more and more. St. Alphonsus is quoted to refer to this process as bringing the human will into **uniformity** to that of God. This is the summit of perfection. (Scripture does offer a few “models” from every day life of how baptism makes us one with Jesus Christ: Peter’s “Living Stones”, resting on the Risen Corner Stone; the vine and the branches with the same life; putting on the garment of Christ; the nuptial theme; the Mystical Body).

For St. Vincent de Paul, perfection consists in so uniting our will to that of God that His and ours are properly speaking, but one and the same – both in willing, as in non-willing. Whoever excels the more in this, is the more perfect. A meditation that dates from the Middle Ages on the Lord’s Prayer, and attributed to St. Anselm, proceeds thus:

This is the joy of the Angels, the celestial desire to be able to offer yourself totally for the reward of heaven, to accept all for this, to conform your will to it fully... (“... tibi totaliter obsequendum...”).

c.] DISTINCTIONS: the “Will of God” may be considered as follows:

1.] The “Signified Divine Will”: this is what is already known in advance, manifested clearly and explicitly by the commandments of God, the precepts of the Church, counsels, inspirations, rules, and constitutions (cf. St. Francis de Sales,

Treatise on the Love of God, Book 8, c. 3, & 5-9) – the vows and the orders of superiors.

2.] **The Divine Will of Good Pleasure**: under this difficult title, the committed believer is called to accept all the events of life, over which there is no control. This includes all those things that happen: sickness, deaths, affliction, consolations – adverse, as well as prosperous realities, all that has not been foreseen, planned, “programmed.”

To submit to the SIGNIFIED DIVINE WILL, technically, is not “Abandonment” – it is **obedience**, which when coupled with love, is the normal means of achieving perfection. The broad area of the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE is the specific field of Holy Abandonment.

One could imagine situations when the SIGNIFIED DIVINE WILL would call for Abandonment, as in the instance of one giving truly dedicated effort constantly to the duties of one’s state in life for the success of some endeavor, that also depends on many other factors. Some of the efforts that may indeed be judged to be “the will of God” call upon Abandonment particularly when the results do not seem in proportion to the effort that went into it all (cf. St. Francis de Sales, Divine Love, book 9, c. 6).

- a.] There can never any real conflict between the “Divine Will of Good Pleasure” and the “Signified Divine Will” – of necessity, being the same Will of God, they are in agreement. Should there ever be an apparent conflict, the SIGNIFIED DIVINE WILL takes precedence, and gives ultimate meaning to the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE. St. Francis de Sales taught that in doubt, obedience should predominate.
- b.] Not all submission to the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE merits the name “Abandonment”, even when it is in conformity to God’s Will. “To resign oneself”, in the present meaning of the word, is not always “Abandonment.” In order to be genuine “Abandonment”, one would need **a more generous self-giving** – not one that is forced. Abandonment is never a quiescent restraint that may imply hesitation and deliberation. St. Bernard indicated three levels of submission to the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE:
  - that initiated by fear, sustaining the Cross of Christ patiently;
  - those more proficient, may carry the Cross out of hope, willingly;
  - those consummate in charity, embrace it even ardently.

Conformity to the Divine Will that proceeds from Fear is simple resignation; that conformity which comes from ardent love is surely Abandonment.

- 1.] Some of the earlier discussion centered on whether in the act of perfect abandonment, there could be mixed in any elements of HOPE - and there were theologians who would eliminate hope from the practice of authentic abandonment.
- 2.] For others, though, there is a specific exercise of ABANDONMENT, expressed as **perfect Hope in God**. Such

Abandonment demands an act of confidence in the goodness of God – it rejects not only all worrying solicitude, but remains committed; it would never be accompanied by uncontrolled restlessness, concern. It disposes us to **a total oblation of oneself to God.** Such abandonment that realizes these conditions will lead virtually to the act of charity. It will soon and easily become a pure love of God. However, it is necessary to make clear that the Virtue of Abandonment is already constituted by these elements, and not merely by confident Hope in God.

- 3.] Other interpreters see it differently: for them, conformity through hope is not yet that complete detachment, which would ask for a more complete detachment, indifference, to the remission of one's will wholly into the hands of Providence. Abandonment cannot be partial conformity with the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE – it is rather an entire conformity, a complete reconciliation to His Will, in order to embrace that of God. This special character of abandonment necessarily requires the exercise of charity. Conformity through the exercise of hope is an abandonment in potency – or, rather, an initial abandonment: it will only be achieved when love is added to it.
- 4.] Most authors do speak of **Abandonment** only in connection with **Charity**. However, Fr. R. Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, maintains that **heroic hope is the eminent degree of Abandonment**. It makes one tend more and more toward God, relying on the help promised to all. The formal motive of theological hope is helpful Omnipotence, Mercy! Heroic Hope is characterized by invincible firmness and trusting abandonment.
  - a.] The Council of Trent (D-S 1541, *De munere perseverantiae*) teaches that all should have a most firm hope in the help of God, for if we do not resist His grace, as He has begun the work of salvation in us, He will finish it, working in us both to will and to accomplish (cf. Ph 1:6; 2:13).
  - b.] The invincible firmness of hope appears in the passive purifications, when the Lord permits every human hope to disappear. The tried person, in the “**School of God**” of suffering, obtains a clearer view of his/her own need. In times of illness, strong temptations and in discouragement, the call is to hope heroically and theologically against every human hope.
  - c.] When trials are courageously endured, hope grows stronger and is increased. Like all theological virtues, which are infused, Hope, too, is infused “like an acquired virtue”, and therefore – with the concomitant help of Grace – it needs to be exercised. The Christian hopes increasingly for

salvation with a certitude of tendency. The firmness in tending toward eternal life should be invincible, because of the formal motive on which it rests. In spite of rebuffs, contradictions, the sight of our own wretchedness and our sins, we are called to have hope in God, Who has promised His help:

***Ask and it shall be given to you – seek, and you shall find – knock, and it shall be opened to you... (Lk 11:9-13).***

If God is for us, who is against us: Even if one were the greatest sinner on earth,

There is still no reason not to have any less trust in God – for hope does not rest on human innocence, but on God’s omnipotence as mercy (St. Therese).

- 5.] With St. Paul, we can almost rejoice in our infirmities, so that the power of Christ might indeed dwell in us. **For when we are weak, then it is that we are truly strong** (cf. 2 Co 12:7, ff.). Often one is crushed to grow, in order to be the more configured to Him. Isaiah speaks of Him as “**He was wounded for our iniquities... by His Wounds, our are healed...** (cf. Is 53:5).
- 6.] Heroic Hope manifests itself not only in firmness, but by **trusting abandonment to divine Providence** and to **the omnipotent goodness of God**. Perfect abandonment differs from Quietism because it is accompanied by Hope and unwavering fidelity to duty. Such unwavering fidelity to the SIGNIFIED WILL OF GOD, made known in the present responsibilities, prepares one to abandon oneself with full confidence to the as yet unrevealed DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE.
- 7.] Heroic Hope rests more and more on the infinite merits of our Savior, on the value of the Precious Blood that He shed for us. No matter what happens, all are called to hope in the divine Good Shepherd, Who gave His life for the sheep – and in good, the Father, Who after having handed over His Son, cannot refuse to come to the aid of those who have recourse to Him – and in the Holy Spirit, who breathes where He wills, overshadows us, to bring forth Christ, as He did Mary.
- 8.] The Church professes this heroic hope, trusts also in Mary, universal Mediatrix. At the foot of the Cross, she stood, and there made her great act of Hope when all seemed lost. She merits to be called: Mary, Help of Christians, Comforter of the Afflicted, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, “our life, our sweetness and our **hope!**”. In her own FIAT, and her message to the servants of Cana: DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU – she has left this heritage for the Church of every generation.

- 9.] Heroic Hope, then, is never separated from Charity – just as Paul’s “**obedience of faith**” (cf. DV 5) means includes the entire theological life of faith, hope and charity. Hope also is united to the **KENOSIS** – its best climate is the **Beatitude of Poverty, and the Gift of Fear of the Holy Spirit** – in St. Thomas’ synthesis (cf. II-II, q. 19). Hope, therefore, is not “selfish”, self-seeking: it does not seek eternal life solely “for us”, but for the glory of God. Faith keeps hope from being merely political, as it must be based on an “integral” reading of God’s word. And charity keeps hope from being solely for oneself: it must include God and neighbor. Its scope has been considerably broadened in recent reflection (cf. e.g. GS 39).

#### 4. ] **ABANDONMENT AND INDIFFERENCE:**

a. Very frequently in the Rule of St. Ignatius, there is insistence on “being content”, being “indifferent.” This kind of attitude seems to be one of the goals of his **Spiritual Exercises**. “Indifference”, classically was considered to be a “negative virtue”, a kind of “pre-requisite to “full-fledged” abandonment. As it is described in the fundamental meditation of the **Spiritual Exercises** of St. Ignatius, it is a preliminary disposition to the fuller living of Abandonment. Holy Abandonment supposes the human will exists in a loving expectancy, a waiting upon God’s Will, ready to proceed into act once this DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE is known. “Indifference”, then, would seem to have no further reason for being once the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE is clear.

b. Nonetheless, the two are intimately bound together in that St. Francis de Sales may confuse the two: he often refers to “Holy Abandonment” as a “Holy Indifference.” He defines Holy Abandonment as a kind of perfect Indifference to receive, accept all kinds of happenings that take place through Divine Providence – affliction as well as consolation, sickness as well as health, poverty as well as wealth, rejection as well as honors, shame as well as glory.

c. In Book 9 of the Love of God, the saint treats of the love of submission by which the human will is united to the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE, and hardly seems to distinguish between resignation and indifference.

d. Perhaps coming from his soldier’s training, St. Ignatius of Loyola insists very much on abandonment, as **obsequium** to the Roman Pontiff in matters of the Apostolic Mission. This seems to be the area of the “**Fourth Vow**”.<sup>173</sup> The matter of Holy Abandonment is treated in the well-known classic by Jean-Pierre de Caussade<sup>174</sup>.

<sup>173</sup> cf. Albert Chapelle, *La quatrième voeu de la Compagnie*. Rome: CIS 1978.

<sup>174</sup> *Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence*. Collins, Fontana Library 1959.

**5.1 SPIRITUAL TEACHINGS BASED ON THE GOSPEL:** this is not some kind of sublime spirituality unknown to the flock. It has deep biblical roots:

**That is why I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body, and how you are to clothe it. Surely life means more than food, and the body more than clothing! Look at the birds in the sky ... yet, your Heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth more than they are? ... Think of the flowers growing in the fields ... they never have to work, or spin. Yet, I assure you that not even Solomon in all his regalia was robed like one of these...Now, if that is the way God clothes the grass in the field, which is there today and gone tomorrow, thrown into the furnace, will he not much more look after you, you men of little faith!...So, do not worry... Your heavenly Father knows your needs. So set your hearts on His kingdom first, and on His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you...So do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own... (cf. Mt 6:25-34).**

**There is no need to be afraid, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you the kingdom... (cf. Lk 12:22-31).**

St. Peter teaches his own brand of abandonment when he encourages the followers of Christ to put all their care on the Lord, because He will take care of them:

**Bow down, then, before the power of God now, and He will raise you up on the appointed day; unload your worries on to Him, since He is looking after you ... (cf. 1 P 5:7, ff.).**

**6. DIVINE PROVIDENCE:** <sup>175</sup>The scholars who have studied Abandonment see it founded on a variety of dogmatic truths, that offer the solid basis on which to entrust ourselves totally to God. The principal dogma would be Divine Providence, particularly in these aspects:

**a. THE SOVEREIGN DIVINE WILL:**

1.) All that happens on earth flows out from the sovereign will of God. St. Augustine remarked in his *Enchiridion* (n. 24) that nothing happens that is not willed by divine omnipotence: either by permitting it, or by positively bridling it about. All that a human being endures against his/her will – in the last analysis, really cannot be limited to the choices of human beings – rather, all that happens is to be attributed to the Will of the One Who gives power to all wills (cf. *De Civ. Dei.*, 1. V, c. 10, n. 1).

2.) In effect, God holds in His own hand all the created wills and even when they act contrary to the divine will, even when they seem to go contrary to His designs: through his omnipotence, he can make them tend toward the goals that He has established in advance. St. Augustine stated (*De Civ. Dei.*, 1. XXII, c. 2) that much is done by the devil, even contrary to the Will of God – but, such is His wisdom, such is His power and virtue that He is able to direct all to those purposes, or goals, that He knew beforehand; even what seems for the time adverse, in some way, tends

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<sup>175</sup> cf. St. Catherine of Siena, *The Dialogue.* The Classics of Western Spirituality. NY / Ramsey/Toronto: Paulist 1980.

to His purposes. God even accomplishes His designs that are, in the long run, beneficent – even by making use of ill will. Even the sacrilegious death of Jesus Christ is turned by the omnipotent mercy and wisdom of God to the redemption of the world.

3.) Since the divine wisdom and power govern and direct all, as St. Augustine deeply believed, he was able to draw this conclusion: in our lives, nothing happens by chance – all that seems to go against our choices, can only come through the will of God, from His Providence, from that order that He has personally established, from that consent that He bestows and from the laws that He has drawn up (cf. En in Ps 118, v. 12).

4.) Behind the secondary causes that affect us directly, we are called upon to see the hand of God – to see God, in all that happens. All that humanity undergoes, despite free will (the afflictions, the chagrin, travail, humiliation) – all, is attributed to the just will of God (cf. En. In Ps 32, II, n. 24, 26).

**b. THIS DIVINE WILL IS INFINITELY BENEFICENT:**

1.) The divine choices, decisions, all are good: in their source, in their goal, in their forms – good even without the mixture of evil, good in all aspects and always! St. Augustine commented on this basic principle of his: God is so good that even evil serves His purposes. He would never allow evil just to happen, if He did not have some plan to utilize this by His sovereign will (*Opus imperf. Contra Julianum*, V, n. 60 – PL 45, 1495).

2.) The glory of God, in which all the divine actions coincide fully with the ultimate good of each one, may not seem in accord with apparent good – but, beyond doubt, this leads (in the final analysis) to each and everyone's eternal good. Cassian pointed out that really no one could say in the depths of one's own being these words of the LORD'S PRAYER: 'Thy Will be done!' – except one who would believe that everything: adversity, as we 11 as prosperity – is dispensed in our regard by God, for the ultimate and final good. God's only purpose is for the salvation and well-being of the faithful. For this, He is more attentive and more caring than anyone could be in his/her own regard (Cassian, Conference IX. On Prayer, c. 20)

3.) A line from St. Paul that is often quoted in this regard is: ***We know that by turning everything to their good God cooperates with all those who love Him, with all those that He has called according to His purpose*** (cf. Rm 8:28).

4.) The Will of God is the sole rule for the devout. In all that occurs, the devout, the truly faithful, will only that, and are attached to only that. Those who respond to this grace see the divine blessings in it; become content with their lot in life – and desire only that God's will be accomplished. The graced believer is convinced that God would will nothing, allow nothing, that He could not turn to the advantage of those whom He infinitely loves. **All that happens, flows from His hand** – all, but sin. All events can become blessings – all occasions, can become opportunities. The crosses that come into every life lead one to resemble ever more the Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, and Model of all spirituality.

5.) For a committed believer, dedicated on making this world more humane, nothing would be more reasonable than entrusting the entire endeavor more and more to the Word of God (cf. DV 5). The exercise of this abandonment leads of its very nature to convert all that happens into virtue, blessing. If indeed, one believes that God is the sovereign Master, Lord of the universe, His will indeed is accomplished in all things.

6.) **Christian abandonment is far superior to Stoic resignation.** As with Aristotle, and his brilliant insight into the spirituality of the soul, there is also an admirable preparation for truly “Christian” abandonment in Epictetus. He once wrote that he was trying to become instructed to learn how to will those things that did happen! One has to come to ponder the One who has regulated it all (cf. his “Contentment of Spirit”). It does seem that the Stoics made a concerted effort to balance perfectly human activities with the divine interventions in their lives. They readily understood the basic distinction between what did truly depend on human choices, and all that was above these. Particularly regarding these latter, this system of thought strove seriously to teach a perfect submission to those things that God indeed had chosen. Epictetus taught never to disobey God, never to reproach Him, never to complain about those things He asked us to share – never to be discontent in doing, or in suffering, what indeed was inevitable.

7.) All of life offers repeated opportunities to put oneself in conformity with the Will of God: this is that sublime capacity to turn to gold whatever one touches! The contribution of the old Stoic school, in this regard, is indeed considerable: with the revealed sense now of “God is love” (cf. 1 Jn 4:8, 16), and with the assistance of grace – this doctrine may be lived to a most sublime degree.

8.) Abandonment goes hand in hand with a deeper appreciation through faith in Divine Providence. In the school of St. Francis de Sales, St. Jeanne de Chantal practiced abandonment to God’s love to a sublime degree. Hers was a sublime devotion to Divine Providence. Her abandonment was indeed entire and genuine – her love for divine providence was both real and solid. Any reflection on this mystery for her was a blessing. Her synthesis of sacred Scripture was that saying: Eternal Father, Your Providence governs all things! Under such government, the offer is peace of soul. In success, as well as in the harsh events of life, in all fatigue – the ideal faith is to unite divine Providence with the free divine Will, moved by Mercy toward humanity in all of His interventions.

**7.] ELEMENTS AND EFFECTS OF ABANDONMENT:** different theologians over the years have pondered the nature of Holy Abandonment and offered their own “list” of elements, or virtues that go to make it up. High on this list would be these following that recur so often: detachment, faith, confidence, love, hope.

- for Bossuet, abandonment is the sum total of **all the Christian virtues**: the most perfect faith, the most complete hope, and the most fervent and faithful love.
- for de Caussade in his Spiritual Instructions, he chose to follow this doctrine, for the most part. For him, the state of abandonment is **a certain**



**mixture of faith, hope and charity**, in one and the same act, which unites one's heart with God and to His activity (cf. Book II, c. 1, II 3).

- Piny understood the way of abandonment as that alone which one exercises the most vivid faith – and where one practices **supreme hope** – while being at the same time, the path of **true love**. It is where one practices the more, the virtue of **justice** and the virtue of **patience**. Abandonment, then, is the most penitent and crucifying way to follow the Lord.

**In summary**, then: for most of the classical interpreters, Abandonment is a synthesis of all the theological and all the moral virtues. The following are its absolutely essential elements:

a. **RESIGNATION**: in it, one surrenders his/her own self, own will, one's own interests, to be occupied solely with God's will and His love. To be abandoned TO God, one has to depart FROM much that pertains to self. There could be no wonder in noting that all the classical descriptions of Abandonment are much colored by "abnegation."

1.) The "resignatio" of the Imitation of Christ seems to occupy the mid-way point between abnegation and the gift of self – or, rather, a combination of both of these (cf. Book III, c. 37). In order to obtain freedom of heart, there is necessary a pure and integral resignation of self. Abandonment, as presented by St. Francis de Sales, coincides with "abnegation", and the "handing of oneself over to God."

2.) In order to abandon oneself, and to set aside one's own interests, this will always mean "surrender", to be detached from one's own will, in order to surrender oneself totally to God. In the sublime ideals of St. Francis de Sales, this means: to ask for nothing for oneself; but not to refuse anything, either. It involves committing oneself to the arms of Divine Providence, without being diverted, or side-tracked by any personal desire. In the final analysis – with all the efforts to describe it – it comes down simply to will what God wills for us. In order to be attached to God, means not being riveted to anything else. To live this state, there is required that the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE needs to be discerned and become the ultimate principle, the rule of life. It is in this attitude that all are invited to formulate all of prayer.

3.) Abandonment is a "**cession**", a handing over of self to God. It has to be a totally free choice on the part of a committed believer. It involves one's whole being: body and soul, thoughts and desires, intellect and will – past and future: to remit oneself to God according to His sublime ideals. It is presupposed that one will believe in the infinite and omnipotent Goodness, Love and mercy of God. It asks for a complete self-surrender to these divine attributes. It is to trust in the infinite power and grace of God, to make all this possible.

b. **LOVE**: detachment, faith and hope in divine Providence are just the "dispositions", the "pre-requisites" for genuine abandonment. In order that this state be integral, complete, to be handed over to God unreservedly, LOVE is necessary.

1.) Abandonment to God in the midst of adversity calls necessarily upon a filial affection. It is in trials and tribulations where it can be seen whether one is a slave / servant, or trusting child. When adversity threatens, when it really does come – the hired-hand flees. The child, on the contrary, remains indefectibly attached to the parent in the difficulties as well as in the good times (Tauler).

2.) St. Francis de Sales writes with great insight in this regard: to entrust oneself to God in sweetness and peace, when times are good, is possible for all. But, to commit oneself to Him in the times of storm and tempest, this is proper only to His children. My view is that we are called to commit ourselves to Him with a total abandonment (Letter of January 7, 1611).

3.) It is from its real purpose, which is that of uniting the believer to God – that one is able to distinguish authentic abandonment from that which is useless, or perhaps an exercise in Stoic vanity. **Love remains the distinguishing mark.** Abandonment leads to the perfection of holy love, while all the while, permitting one to experience this love. It can truly be said: in order to be abandoned to God, one must love Him; and it is only in loving God, that one could ever even begin to be abandoned to Him. In this sense, abandonment is the most integral expression of perfect love for God.

4.) Throughout the history of spirituality, most praise has been heaped on the Way of Holy Abandonment. St. Paul of the Cross called it “the most perfect way, the treasure of all treasures.” St. Francis de Sales offers the most frequent praise of it, as it permeates so much of his work on divine love: “Abandonment is the virtue of virtues: it is the chrism of charity, the odor of humility, merit of patience, and the FIAT of perseverance: great is this virtue and only worthy to be practiced by the most beloved children of God.” Surin, a classical spiritual writer, placed the Love of Abandonment among the points of perfection that lead the believer to great holiness.

## 8. **ITS SCOPE:**

a. There is perhaps no other reality as extended as is Abandonment. It is extended to everything: to the past, the present, to the future. It involves the body and all the states it passes through – to the soul, and all its miseries, as well as to its considerable qualities – to good as well as to evil; it includes the benevolence of others, as well as their malice. It involves the vicissitudes of the material world: death, time, eternity.

b. In brief, it has the same extension as Divine Providence does. From this, nothing is excluded, escapes. The saints were “abandoned” to God regarding their own physical well being. It may be noted that the truly “faithful”, with a most sure conscience, can be fully committed in everything, to the divinity. Each should rejoice without knowing in advance what it is that God may ask. Perfection resides, then, in committing oneself to the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE.

c. This level of abandonment involves the spiritual life as well. St. Francis de Sales wrote (Jan. 16, 1603): I supplicate you... that you repeat often with the Psalmist: ‘I am Yours – save me!’. Or, be like Mary Magdeline who so trusted Jesus Christ who called her by name, to sanctify His Name.

## 9. LIMITS TO HOLY ABANDONMENT:

**a. To pray for suffering, reverses:** this would seem to go beyond the usual state of Holy Abandonment. One can indeed offer heroic service to God, give witness, without asking for suffering – while yet remaining willing to accept it should it come. The specific prayer for suffering, the offering of oneself as a “victim”, surpasses the limits of Holy Abandonment. This manner of the spiritual life can only be entered upon with great discretion, counsel – and only by those persons who are indeed called to it by God.

1.) St. Therese of the Child Jesus, despite her desires for suffering, and even though she offered herself as a “victim” to the merciful love – in order not to leave behind the way of abandonment, did not ask for any sufferings beyond those which God destined her to have. “I would be afraid of being presumptuous, and these sufferings would then be unbearable to me, and I might be obliged to carry them alone. I would never be able to do that, all alone.” (cf. History of a Soul, c. 12).

2.) Yet, even here, there is nothing outside the way of abandonment in striving to endure those sufferings that God might send, also in the spirit of “victim”. Thus, we should never limit the ways of Providence. Even heroic individuals may not be called specifically to pray explicitly for sufferings – the way of Holy Abandonment only asks that those that do come, be accepted. Only the truly exceptional could rightfully ask for suffering – for most, the ideal would be to accept as “crucified joy”, those that do come:

*...This is a cause of great joy for you, even though you may for a short time have to bear being plagued by all sorts of trials... (1 P 1:6).*

*... you, too, the holy priesthood that offers the spiritual sacrifices which Jesus Christ has made acceptable to God, may be living stones for the spiritual house... (2:5, f.) .... think of what Christ suffered in this life, and arm yourselves with the same resolution that He had...*

*...Think of God’s mercy ... offer your living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God... (cf. Rm 12:1, ff.).*

3.) It might also be well to recall the Eucharistic Doctrine of Pius XII and Paul VI:

“To shed further light on the mystery of the Church, it helps us to realize that it is nothing less than the whole Church which, **in union with Christ in his role as Priest and Victim**, offers the sacrifice of the Mass and is offered in it... the summit of sanctity which is nothing else **than the total offering of oneself to service of the divine majesty.**” (cf. Mediator Dei 1947; Mysterium Fidei, 1965, notes nn. 25; LG 11).

**b. Energetic Performance of Duties:** the way of Abandonment will never dispense one from carrying out positive duties. Between the SIGNIFIED DIVINE WILL, and the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE, there is never any opposition. Whatever the Signified Divine Will calls for, must be carried out.

1.] Authentic abandonment will never exclude prudence – but presupposes it. There is a general care of body, soul, mind and will that must be taken: Holiness also means “wholeness / health”: *sana mens, sanum corpus*. Such care is already demanded by the SIGNIFIED DIVINE WILL. Hence, abandonment could never reach the extreme that it would demand the absolute sacrifice of one’s salvation: there simply could not be any state in this life that could ever consent to the eternal damnation, and to make the surrender of eternal life. St. Thomas offers a commentary on this:

To will one’s own eternal damnation would not be in conformity with the divine will, but only to the will of sin (cf. De Ver., q. 23, a. 8, ad)

2.] In the writings of the saints, one might occasionally come across such sentiments expressed in **bursts of ardor** – but, these must be taken “with a grain of salt”. All the saints sincerely and ardently yearned for their beatitude, without ever wishing to renounce that sovereign possession of God, to which all are called. One cannot take expressions that seem to oppose this, in the rigorous meaning of the terms expressed. There is need to bring to such ardent expressions the broadest possible interpretation. One has to enter into the “spirit” behind such expressions – as Moses, St. Paul and the Little Flower are often quoted here:

a.) Moses:

**And yet, if it pleased you to forgive this sin of theirs ... But if not, then blot me out from the book that you have written ...** (cf. Ex 32:32).

b.) St. Paul:

**I would willingly be condemned and be cut off from Christ if it could help my brothers of Israel, my own flesh and blood ...** (cf. Rm 9:3).

c.) St. Francis de Sales:

He held that a person might indeed become so heroically indifferent, preferring perhaps even hell, with God’s Will, over Paradise without God’s Will. Should such a hypothesis be simply unrealistic – what he was implying with the unusual expression is that all he wanted to do in life was the will of God – in everything (cf. Love of God, 1. IX, c. k).

d.) The Little Flower:

“... I said to God that to please Him I would consent to see myself plunged into hell so that He would be loved eternally in that place of blasphemy...” (Story of a Soul, c. 5. Washington: ICS 1972, p. 112).

3.) In these “**impossible hypotheses**”, the emphasis is the grandeur, the vehemence, the ardor of their charity. But, all of the above are infinitely distant from the crass indifference in possessing God, or losing Him eternally: as though it was of equal value to be loved eternally by God – or, by hating Him eternally. These fervent saints willed that they would most willing to do anything so that the divine will might be achieved. They would endure all the struggles of time, and even the pains similar to

those of hell – without, of course, ever sinning, which is the only way in which the pains of hell might be inflicted. They so love God that they are most desirous of pleasing only Him, and they are most willing to do all that within them lies to glorify Him, and to bring souls to Him.

## **10. CONDITIONS:**

**a. Active:** Abandonment must be exercised, lived: there does not really exist “passive virtue” (cf. Leo XIII, *Testem Benevolentiae*, Jan. 22, 1899). God Who has indeed created us without us, does not redeem us without us! The state of Holy Abandonment does not dispense one from concerted effort. Our sanctification must always be the work of God’s grace and free human cooperation, collaboration. It is not without repeated and costly effort that one will ever come in practice to the state of a holy indifference.

1.] Before the event, the believer is called to remit him / herself into the merciful hands of God, by a simple and general sense of expectancy, awaiting. However, this is not passive, and it is not without real effort of collaboration with grace as one “waits” in this way. Abandonment presupposes that the believer follows through on all the movements of grace. There needs to be a balance between expectancy and activity; otherwise, one could tempt God.

2.] To abandon oneself to God without pulling one’s share, this is “laxity”, nonchalance in the worst sense. Authentic and venerable abandonment is that which is accompanied by that which God is asking from each. It is contained in a number of expressions that are well known in various traditions, all flowing from the central injunction in this regard from Christ Himself:

- Watch and pray!
- ***ora et labora;***
- ***contemplata aliis tradere;***
- to pray as though all depended on God; to work as though it all depended on oneself.

3.] Abandonment is an attitude that is accompanied by the recognition of our need, and a healthy mistrust of self – it is a matter of recourse to God through prayer, accompanied by a firm confidence in Him. It is the r<sup>e</sup>al commitment to attention to God and the proper consideration of oneself. It involves the firm resolution of fighting temptations and of working out all that Providence will present us to do, and to suffer, should this occur.

4.] St. Francis de Sales recommended to his spiritual daughter, St. Jane de Chantal, a kind of “sweet repose” in the arms of the Savior (cf. Ps 131), and adds: Remain in tranquil resignation, to commit yourself to the hands of our Lord, without ever ceasing to cooperate dedicatedly with His holy grace by the exercise of the virtues and the occasions that present themselves. One who is truly committed, abandoned into the hands of God ... only seeks to remain with Our Lord, without caring for anything else, whether for one’s body or soul. It will always be necessary, of course, to think of those things to which we are obliged, each according to one’s own responsibilities.

5.] It is most apparent, then, that in the unfolding of Holy Abandonment, it is necessary to give the proper place, time, to human activity. One who is committed to this way in the spiritual life has no other concern than to remain within the arms of the Lord, not unlike the biblical image of spiritual childhood. The child accepts being put down, and lifted up again. The infant does not give much thought to where he/she is going, but so often allows the parent to lead (cf. Ho 11). A believer committed to this spirit, seeks only the Will of God, the will of DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE. In all of the events of life, the believer allows the unfolding of the divine plan – and seeks to do everything possible to cooperate with the SIGNIFIED DIVINE WILL.

6.] It is only right in general terms to say that our active piety corresponds to the “Signified Divine Will” – and that our “passive piety” has for its area of concern, the “divine Will of Good Pleasure.” To maintain oneself in this loving and confident submission to God, it is necessary to give very active effort to the endeavor: to hold on under fire, is not an easy task!

7.] To strive to enter into the way of Holy Abandonment will not eliminate the natural repugnance which is never separated from the most difficult inner struggles. Abandonment in no way will dull, or lessen suffering. Abandonment resides in the “upper part of the soul”: keeping in mind that desires that are contrary to God’s will can exist simultaneously in the same person. Abandonment is one of those virtues that have their roots in the “superior” part of one’s nature. St. Paul noted that within him, there was often a kind of terrible “battle” going on:

***... I am unspiritual... I cannot understand my own behavior... I have a self that acknowledges that the Law is good ... there is nothing good living in my unspiritual self ... What a wretched man I am...! (cf. Rm. 7: 14, ff.)***

8.] Some interpreters, perhaps combating Quietism, state that abandonment to God is the most perfect, the surest way of reaching heaven. While it does allow full sway to God, it is never that passive in the acceptance of the divine will that there is hardly anything one has to do on his/her own, whether interiorly, or exteriorly, in all that pertains to one’s duties. However, it must be kept in mind that while it is true that the divine will is but the First Cause in our regard – it will never exclude, but will make intensifying demands on the believer, as a secondary cause: collaboration, in the application to all that He wills and orders. Whether the endeavor succeeds, or not – must be left up to the DIVINE GOOD PLEASURE.

9.] In the way of Holy Abandonment in the spiritual life, there has to be a certain balance maintained between abandonment to God and personal effort – this synthesis has been admirably expressed by a number of the saints, but perhaps particularly well by St. Ignatius – whose Part VII of the Constitutions Company of Jesus speaks so sublimely about the Mission (s) carried out in response to the directives of the Roman Pontiff: the Latin term that the most often recurs is obsequium: so much discussed in Vatican II (cf. LG 25), the religious submission to the Magisterium required of the entire Church.

**b. UNIVERSAL:** the way of Holy Abandonment cannot exclude any other virtue – all the virtues are inter-connected. Holy Abandonment must accompany them, and can never take their place.

1.) Abandonment is not the only way, nor does it offer a complete treatise of Christian reflection. The emphasis rightfully given to it is merely to show its immense value. No one, however, has ever taught that this “way” is the only way to reach holiness.

2.) The way of Holy Abandonment is often recommended, particularly in the writings of St. Francis de Sales. Some reading his writings receive the impression that for the Bishop of Geneva it has almost an absolute value.

### CONCLUSION

The way of Holy Abandonment and the “Little Way” of St. Therese come together in some of their essential points. She described her “Way” as the way of confidence and total abandonment. In itself, it presents few complications – but, it does suppose uncommon detachment, extraordinary humility, outstanding obedience, and on-going mortification. It is clearly biblically inspired – and may reach its culmination in the spirituality of St. Therese of Lisieux<sup>176</sup>.

†††

### A PRAYER OF ABANDONMENT

FATHER,

I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will.

Whatever you do, I thank you. I am ready for all, I accept all.

Let Your will only be done to me, and in all Your creatures.

I wish for no more than this, O Lord.

Into Your hands I commend my soul.

I offer it to you with all the love of my heart, for I love you, Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself, into Your hands with boundless confidence,

for you are my

FATHER!

[Charles de Foucauld + Dec. 1, 1916]

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<sup>176</sup> NB: for these pages of these notes, cf. M. Viller, “Abandon”, in: *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*. Paris: Beauchesne, 1937, Vol. I, col. 1-25. [cf. also Fr. Nello Dalle Vedove, *Il Modello di sant’ abbandono*. An English translation of this may be found under ‘STUDIES’: [www.st-bertoni.com](http://www.st-bertoni.com)].

### 3. St. Ignatius' Principles: based on the Person of Jesus Christ<sup>177</sup>

As early as 1569, St. Francis Borgia wrote these remarkable words in a letter to the whole Society, entitled: 'On the Means of Preserving the Spirit of the Society and of Our Vocation':

**'... As to the virtue of obedience which is the purpose and guide of the Society and its tower of defense, although I might call attention to some things, I shall rather refer you to the excellent and admirable Letter [of March 26, 1853] which our Father Ignatius, of happy memory, has written on that virtue; he has said all, and left nothing more to be said: Hoc fac, et vives [Lk 10:28]; I hope in the Lord that if we do what is there set down, we shall be true sons of obedience....'**

The same thought is repeated by Fathers General Aquaviva, Mutius Vitelleschi, and later by Father Lawrence Ricci on the eve of the catastrophe to which the Society succumbed. After the restoration in 1814, Fr. Peter Beeckx expressed himself in identical terms in his letter of April 15, 1855, 'On the Observance of the Vows.' Nearer our own day, Fr. Louis Martin in turn made the thought of his predecessors his own in his well-known letter: 'On Some Dangers of Our Times', speaking of obedience says:

**... Concerning this virtue, which can be called the soul which informs the Society and governs its movements, and ought to be, according to St. Ignatius, the distinguishing mark of her character, it seemed little to him surely to have dictated such wise laws in his Constitutions, but he also wrote that admirable Letter [of March 26, 1553], which is in my judgment, the most perfect and complete pronouncement on obedience that could be made...**

The *Letter on Obedience* deals not with the Vow, but with the virtue, more accurately still, with the perfect practice of the virtue... And truly though I wish you to be perfect in all spiritual gifts and ornaments, yet **especially do I desire** [as you have understand of me heretofore] **to see you most eminent in the virtue of obedience.** The idea that **perfect obedience must be the essential law of the Society and the distinctive mark**, as it were, by which its true sons may be recognized, was for our holy Father something like a **fixed idea**. He takes it for granted that the Fathers and Brothers of Portugal, to whom the *Letter* is addressed, already know, having heard it on other occasions, how much he has at heart to see them all really signalize themselves in this virtue and excel all others in its practice. It is, therefore, quite natural that this idea should be found scattered throughout the other writings of the saint. And beginning with the *Constitutions*, there are many passages in them, says Fr. Aicardo, in which **the necessity of obedience** in the Society is stressed, from the

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<sup>177</sup> Fr. Manuel Maria Espinosa Polit, SJ, *Perfect Obedience. Commentary on the Letter on Obedience of St. Ignatius of Loyola* [March 26, 1553]. Westminster MD: Newman 1947, pp. 31, f.;38-40, *passim*.



**Examen** where the **candidate** receives his first instructions in obedience, even to the **eldest** in the House<sup>178</sup> :

- in the formation of **Novices** special stress must be given to obedience<sup>179</sup>;
- and it is recommended especially to **those in their studies**, not only in the observance of the discipline of the house, but also in the order, method, and time of study<sup>180</sup> ;
- obedience must take precedence in the duties of those **admitted to profession**, or otherwise **incorporated** into the Society<sup>181</sup> ;
- and by obedience must be strengthened the bonds of union throughout **the whole body of the Society**<sup>182</sup> .

Two texts merit special attention, for they recommend briefly, but weightily, the hearty eagerness which all of ours should feel **to signalize themselves in the practice of religious obedience**. They are:

... It chiefly conduces to advancement and is very necessary, that all should give themselves to **perfect obedience**, acknowledging the Superior, whoever he be, **in place of Christ the Lord**.<sup>183</sup>

...All must be **especially sturdy to observe obedience and to excel in it**, at the mere sign of the Superior's will, though he should give no express command...<sup>184</sup>

This doctrine is **intended for all**, and far from exempting from the law of obedience even partially those who are outstanding in authority, in prestige, or any other merit, they are exhorted so to exert themselves as to serve as models for the rest, and by their example to contribute to its preservation in the Society in all its freshness and vigor. The Jesuit Founder legislated:

**... and let even the foremost in the Society give good example in this matter [of obedience] to the others, maintaining a close union with their Superior, and devoutly and humbly obeying him ...**<sup>185</sup>

<sup>178</sup> *Examen*, c. 4, n. 29: CSJ, n. 84; 32: CSJ n. 89

<sup>179</sup> P. III, c. 1, n. 23, 24, V: CSJ nn. 284-286.

<sup>180</sup> P. IV, c. 6, n. 2: CSJ n. 361; c. 10, n. 5, 8: CSJ nn. 424; 434.

<sup>181</sup> P. VI, c.1,n. 1, 2: CSJ nn. 547; 551.

<sup>182</sup> P. VIII, c. 1,n. 3: CSJ n. 659; X, n. 9: CSJ n. 821.

<sup>183</sup> P. III, c. 1, n. 23: CSJ n. 284.

<sup>184</sup> P. VI, c. 1, n. 1: CSJ n. 547.

<sup>185</sup> P. VIII, c. 1, n. 3: CSJ n. 659.

**...And ordinarily those who being in charge of others, and having to exact obedience of them, should give them the example of obedience by practicing this virtue towards those who are the Superiors, in place of Christ, the Lord...**<sup>186</sup>

It is understood, then, why the holy Patriarch desired so earnestly that his sons excel in this virtue, persuaded as he was, that if it **flourished**, the Society would appear in the divine presence, always *without spot or wrinkle, holy and immaculate*... [Ep 5:27: spouse], adorned with those solid and perfect virtues which will help it better to correspond fully with the providential designs of her King, Christ Jesus, in raising her up in His Church.<sup>187</sup>

After merely referring to the example of Jesus Christ made obedient to death, even the death of the Cross [Ph 2:8], St. Ignatius adds, by way of corollary, another reason for the pre-eminence of this virtue, i.e., that perfect obedience ought to make up in the Society for greater austerity and other praiseworthy practices which other Institutes piously observe, and which for just reasons are not practiced among us. Let us hear the words of the Saint:

...More easily may we suffer ourselves to be surpassed by other Religious Orders in fasting, watching, and other severities in diet and apparel, which according to their Institute and rule everyone does piously practice. But in true and perfect obedience, and in the abnegation of our will and judgment, I greatly desire, most dear Brothers, that those who serve God in this Society, should be conspicuous, and that the true and genuine progeny of the same should as it were be distinguished by this mark...<sup>188</sup>

Fr. Suarez thinks that in this passage there is question not only of pointing out the pre-eminence which the virtue of obedience ought to have in the Society, but also of insisting that the pre-eminence in the practice of this virtue is one of the proper and specific means which St. Ignatius points out for attaining the particular perfection of our Order<sup>189</sup>.

This virtue is more necessary [according to St. Robert Bellarmine] for us than for all others. For, without it, I do not see what we can do in the divine service; other religious have frequent fasts, their apparel is poor, they make frequent use of the discipline, wear haircloth, keep strict silence, remain continually shut up in their houses and rise, nearly all, at night, to chant the divine praises. But we eat well, dress well, sleep well, we are not bound to a rigorous silence, we are frequently out of the house, and have no regular practice in the matter of disciplines and haircloths. And what is more, some of us live more comfortably than we have lived in our own homes. If, then, in spirit of this, we fail to obey; if, dedicated with all our strength to one thing, we do

<sup>186</sup> P. IV, c. 10, n. 8: CSJ n. 820.

<sup>187</sup> Espinosa, pp. 50, ff.

<sup>188</sup> Letter to Fr. Andres de Orviedo.

<sup>189</sup> De Rel. S.I., Book I, c. 2., n. 11 [25]

another, what reward can we look for? I am afraid, indeed, that we should be deserving rather of chastisement than recompense, for what answer shall we give when God asks us what good we have done? But, if we keep this virtue with great care, there is no reason why we should envy another Religious Order, because it is impossible to practice obedience except at the cost of great sacrifice, and, on the other hand, God take much delight in it.

Our Holy Father wishes his sons to practice obedience with the highest perfection ... It is a matter of capital importance for us to have clear and accurate ideas on the fundamental principle of obedience. This will permit us to understand why St. Ignatius lays so much stress on it, and does so whenever he speaks of this virtue...<sup>190</sup>

Fr. Espinosa presents the challenging matter of 'Blind Obedience':<sup>191</sup> ...In the light of this, one can do no less than wonder when Fr. Pedro de Ribadeneira undertakes to give a restricted and softened sense to the word *blind*. He takes his stand on Ignatius' words [cf. CSJ n. 547] *caeca quadam obedientia* which are found in the Latin translation of the Constitutions as if the intention of the holy Founder had been to soften with that indefinite adjective *quadam*, what might be absolute and too inflexible in the word *blind*. But, what is stranger still, seeing that the adjective *quadam* is not found in the original text, is that this unusual interpretation has been adopted by authors of note, even in our own day<sup>192</sup>.

However, Fr. Nadal, in his *Scholia* [120], commenting on the words *caeca quadam obedientia*, says nothing that might be interpreted as a thinning down, a diluting of the meaning - a clear proof that he did not think that the sense was changed in the least by the addition of the indefinite *quadam*..... We have three texts from which to determine with exact fidelity the real thought of St. Ignatius on blind obedience in all its shades of meaning:

**[1] The Letter of March 1553:**

***...is to determine within yourself whatsoever the Superior commands to be the commandment and Will of Almighty God Himself; and as to believe what the Catholic faith proposes, you at once bend all the forces of your mind to consent thereunto; so in doing that which your Superior commands, you must be carried with a kind of blind impulse of your will desirous to obey ...***

**[2] CSJ n. 547:**

***... persuading ourselves that everything is just, denying with a blind obedience every contrary judgment or opinion of our own in everything that the Superior commands, where [as has been said] we cannot discern any kind of sin, realizing that they who live under obedience must suffer themselves to be carried and ruled***

<sup>190</sup> Espinosa, p. 56.

<sup>191</sup> Espinosa, c. 7, pp. 148-186: CSJ n. 547: Blind Obedience – a very long text in the Constitutions.

<sup>192</sup> Suarez, Lib. 4, c. 15, n. 26 (531)...

*by Divine Providence in their superiors, as if they were a dead body which suffers itself to be borne to any place or treated in any manner whatever; or, like an old man's staff which serves him who holds it in his hand where and in any manner whatsoever [quacumque] he pleases; for thus the obedient man should employ himself cheerfully in whatever way the Superior should wish to use him for the good of the whole body of the Order, holding it for certain that he is thus fulfilling the Divine will more than he would in any other way of his own choosing by following his own will and judgment...*

**[3] Letter to Fr Juan Felipe Vito:**

*... I should not belong to myself but to Him Who created me, and to him who holds His place, so that he may direct and govern me [just as a piece of wax receives the impression of the smallest object] and be ready either to write or study to speak with some persons rather than with others, and find all my devotion in doing as I am bidden*

*I should be like a dead body which has neither will nor understanding; or like a little crucifix which, without difficulty, allows itself to be moved from one side to another; or, finally, I should be like a staff in an old man's hand who may put me where he pleases and where I can be of most help to him. Thus, I must be ready to help and serve my Order in any way I shall be directed ...*

†††

**4. Theological Reflections on the Letter**

**a. In General [A Virtue]<sup>193</sup>**

Special obedience, or obedience properly so called, may be defined: a habit of virtue which inclines us to fulfill what a legitimate Superior enjoins for the very reason that he has commanded it. Obedience, so understood, is a moral virtue allied to justice. Its object extends to all acts enjoined by the Superior within the limits of his authority, once he makes known his wish in a clearly expressed precept, or is satisfied with making it known some other way, by means of counsel, exhortation or suggestion.<sup>194</sup> ... The Superior complies with the obligations he is under to correct and direct his subjects in keeping with the End of the Institute, not merely by explicit orders and commands, but also in a milder and kindlier manner by the prudent and discreet manifestation of his will.

Hence there arises another important division of the virtue of obedience, namely, necessary and perfect obedience. The first, according to St. Thomas, occurs when one submits his will to an express command of the superior, and it is clear that in this case he cannot fail to comply with it without sin. Perfect obedience is that by which the subject is brought to conform his will with the will of the Superior, even in that which is not commanded, the superior merely advising or showing his inclination.

<sup>193</sup> Espinosa, pp. 36, f.

<sup>194</sup> Suarez, *De Religione* ... Tr.X, Book 4, c. 14, 11 – 492.

The field of this Obedience is very broad ... it is likewise the subject of the **Letter** [March 1556] of our Holy Father.

Finally, we only need to recall that obedience may be considered under two aspects, as a moral virtue, and as a religious vow. As a virtue, it inclines a man to reverence the will of God and submit himself to it whether it is manifested directly, or whether it is transmitted, as usually happens, through the agency of another man in whom resides the authority derived from God. By the vow of obedience, which is one of those essential to the religious state, the subject, besides the obligation of justice which binds him to the Superior arising out of the surrender he has made of himself to the religious order, contracts a fresh obligation attached to the virtue of religion, by which he engages himself to God to obey in all that his legitimate superior enjoins, provided it be possible, licit, and in keeping with the rules and constitutions of the Order...

**b. Its special nature:**<sup>195</sup>

The expression of St. Augustine is well known; it has all the brevity and luminosity of an aphorism: *In a certain sense, this virtue of obedience in the rational creature is the mother and guardian of all the virtues...*<sup>196</sup> Similar is the thought of St. Catherine of Siena: *Oh, how sweet and glorious is this virtue of obedience, in which all the others are included!*<sup>197</sup> Theologians state that obedience is the most direct way to sanctity in the spiritual life, because if we possess it, we possess in a wonderful manner all the other virtues; we traverse in a short time all the ways of the true life, and we quickly approach eternal life, which is the goal of all our desires and our perfection. We can understand how obedience plants and preserves the other virtues in the soul in two ways showing the connection and dependence that these have with obedience:

- either the acts of the moral virtues depend directly on obedience in so far as they are the objects of a divine command;
- or, also because obedience, inclining a person to conform himself in all things with the Divine Will and Pleasure, disposes him to exercise the acts of any virtue which he recognized as agreeable to God.<sup>198</sup>

All of our rules and all the tasks that we are enjoined are an exercise of virtue... Another reason why **obedience may be called the mother of the virtues** is that it wonderfully prepares the soul for the practice of all that is good and perfect. For, any act of obedience, as St. Thomas has just shown us, is by its intrinsic nature a real recognition of the supreme domination of God our Lord. It is clear, therefore, that the daily exercise of this virtue will tend by repeated acts to strengthen the conviction of one's own dependence, and consequently the determination of belonging entirely to

<sup>195</sup> *ib.*, pp. 48, ff.

<sup>196</sup> *City of God*. Book 14, c. 12.

<sup>197</sup> *Dialogue*. Tr. 5, c. 2.

<sup>198</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa*, II-II. q. 104, a. 3, ad 2<sup>um</sup>.

God, and of serving Him with the reverence and perfect which are his due. Now, this disposition which St. Ignatius points out as the principle and foundation of sanctity, has, in the opinion of the Angelic Doctor, a marvelous efficacy for inclining the will to the habitual exercise of all the virtues. For when a man seeks and desires only the greater praise and service of God our Lord, aspiring only to know always and fulfill perfectly the divine pleasure, his will be not less disposed to keep the moral order sanctioned by God, not merely in one particular thing, but in all things without distinction. The acts of the various virtues, even the most sublime and difficult, will then gush forth, as from their own foundation, from this will, which is determined to see nothing else in life that **to love and serve the Divine Majesty in all things** [SpEx 233].

c. The ‘subject’ of obedience – where it ‘resides’:<sup>199</sup>

The power of jurisdiction is not the sole power to which religious are subject. In many cases, perhaps in the larger number, they submit their will by the Vow of Obedience to the **power called dominative**, which results from the **surrender** [**obsequium**] which the religious makes to the Order, when he professes in it a determined rule, with the promise and obligation of obedience according to it. In virtue of this **surrender**, says Fr. Suarez [Tr. 8, Bk 3, c. 18.], the Order and its Superiors acquire the right of commanding the religious and of profiting from his labor as they shall judge proper. The **dominative power**, as far as the religious is concerned, according to the same *Doctor Eximius*, does not descend from Christ by special communication, such as He has made to the Church; rather, its origin is to be sought **in the will of him who professes the Rule**, and makes the **surrender** of himself to the Order, as has been said.

1.] Obedience of the **Execution, Will**<sup>200</sup>:

**Dom Columba Marmion** states: the humble soul knowing the sovereignty and the rights of God which flow from the fullness of His being and the infinity of His perfections and being aware of its own nothingness and dependence, does not seek to find in itself the motives for its life and its activity; it looks for them in the Will of God and for that reason **it sacrifices its own will** to the Divine Will...; consenting to what God grants it to know through the voice of a man as His good pleasure... [***Christ, the Ideal of the Monk***]...

After having firmly established the fundamental principle on which religious obedience rests, as on an immovable base, our holy Father goes on at once to expound **its perfect practice**. For the understanding of the teaching he is going to give us, he presupposes the distinction, as simple as it is natural, of **the three classes**, or degrees of obedience, namely of **execution**, of **will** and of **understanding**. Among the manifold divisions of obedience proposed in their treatises

<sup>199</sup> ib., p. 69

<sup>200</sup> Espinosa, pp. 75-99, *passim*

by doctors and ascetical writers, that adopted by St. Ignatius has the advantage of being based on the very nature of the act of obedience: for as Suarez [Bk 4, c. 13, n. 2 (478)] well observes, three elements concur in the obeying of any law, or precept:

- the execution of what is commanded;
- the will to fulfill the precept;
- and the judgment of the understanding which points to the conformity of will and then the execution of the act.

In the Constitutions the holy Founder clearly points out the nature of these degrees when he says:

**...There is obedience of execution, when the thing enjoined is done: there is obedience of the will, when he who obeys has the same will as he who commands; there is obedience of the understanding when he thinks the same, judging good what is commanded ... [CSJ n. 550.]**

Here we see that the classical division into obedience of **execution**, of **will** and of **understanding** does not refer to the faculty which produces the act, but to the act itself that is commanded, considered purely in its material realization, or in its realization accompanied by the assent of the will, or finally, when to this will there is still added the conformity of one's own judgment with that of the Superior.

[a] **The first degree, that of execution**, St. Ignatius dismisses with this brief remark: 'Moreover, I desire that this should be thoroughly understood and deeply imprinted in your minds, that it is but a base and very imperfect kind of obedience which consists in the natural execution only of that which is commanded; and that it is not worthy of the name of this virtue, unless I pass to a further degree, making the will of the Superior our will, and so agreeing with the same that there is not only external fulfillment of the command, but also agreement of will; that so both may be of the one mind in willing and not willing the same.'

Obedience in an action that is merely external is empty of all spiritual value. The will, it is true, intervenes to require of the external powers the action necessary to realize the command, but this influence is so low and faint that, although it is enough to satisfy, and in fact, does satisfy, the obligation of the vow [Suarez, Bk 4, c. 13, n. 3 [479]; c. 14, n. 78, 499.] it is in no way sufficient to assure the exercise of the virtue, and much less its perfection.

Now the Jesuit Founder in his Constitutions considers obedience of execution as united with that of the will and the judgment and vivified by the influx of these faculties, because it is his intention to present in a kind of ensemble the perfection of obedience such as he wishes to see practiced in the Society.

[b] Our Holy Father invites us to consider the supernatural excellence of **perfect obedience of the will**. This is founded precisely in the magnitude of the sacrifice which the obedient man imposes on himself to make the will of the Superior in act his own. And for this, the Saint begins by examining the intrinsic worth of the

obligation by which a man abdicates his own will into the hands of the Superior who takes the place of God in his regard.

Let us first transcribe the words in which he declares his thought on this point: ‘And for this reason it is said in Holy Writ, **‘obedience is better than sacrifices.’** [1 S 15:22] For as St. **Gregory** teaches, **in victims, the flesh of another, but in obedience our own will is killed.** And because this part of the soul is so excellent, hence, it is that the offering of it to our Lord and Creator through obedience is of great price and value.

After recalling the two classical texts in this matter, that of **1 S** and that of **St. Gregory**, which exalt the merit and value of obedience, praising it as **the most exalted of all sacrifices, since it immolates the most precious possession of man, his free will**, St. Ignatius proceeds to the very heart of the question, and points out with admirable precision the intrinsic reason of this worth.

According to the common thought of men, a sacrifice must be esteemed in the direct ratio with the greatness of what is sacrificed and the difficulty one has in dispossessing himself of it. Now, there is no doubt that according to this standard, the sacrifice that is made in obedience is not surpassed in merit and dignity by any other except martyrdom [St. Thomas, II-II, q. 124, a. 3, ad 2<sup>um</sup>]. Because if we regard what the religious renounces is placing himself under obedience, we see that it is just that which a man most prizes after his own life, that is, his own liberty of disposing of himself independently by means of the free exercise of a will that is *sui iuris*. According to the graphic expression of St. Robert Bellarmine, the will which is the source and principal cause of man’s actions is converted by obedience into a living instrument in the hands of another.

In this way, we can understand how it is that in perfect obedience we offer to God **the supreme sacrifice of ourselves**, a sacrifice which under a number of aspects resembles that of **martyrdom**, and for that reason shares in the inestimable worth of martyrdom. With reason, does **St. Gregory** assert: **To make little of, and abandon external possessions is perhaps an achievement, but to abandon oneself is something very hard and difficult. It is not much to renounce what one has, but it is very much to renounce what one is.** [Hom. 32, in Evang.]

This is what St. Ignatius says in the Letter to Gandia, already quoted: ‘This way of life [under obedience] is likewise of singular merit for those who know how to take advantage of it, since **it is a martyrdom** which continually cuts the head off one’s own judgment and will, placing in its place that of Christ our Lord, made known to us by His minister.

The greater merit of obedience will more than compensate for what should have been acquired in the work that was omitted. This doctrine is in complete conformity with the teaching of the Angelic Doctor. When he explains why the vow of obedience is the most excellence of the three vows of religion, he expressly states: **All that is done through obedience is more acceptable to God than what is done by one’s own**



**will, and thus fasting does not please God when it proceeds from its own will** [II-II, q. 186, a. 8, c.].

And elsewhere, after demonstrating the primacy of obedience over the other moral virtues, for the reason that it **sacrifices not any possession whatever**, but the greatest and most prized of all man's possessions, he continues: Wherefore all the works of the other virtues are meritorious in God's sight because they are done in obedience to His Will. Because should one suffer martyrdom or distribute all one's goods to the poor with some other purpose distinct from fulfilling the Divine Will, which fulfilling pertains directly to obedience, all these acts would fail to be meritorious ... [II-II, q. 104, a. 3, c.].

Obedience indeed is a **kenosis** [cf. Ph 2:5, ff.]...In fact, what is proper and peculiar to true obedience is, as has been said, **the complete and unrestricted surrender of our will to God, our Lord, into the hands of the man who holds His place, absolutely and without reserve**. By obedience, the religious empties himself of his own will to be possessed by the Divine Will, accepting it in advance for the supreme norm and the unique motive of his actions.

Obedience is also an **obsequium voluntatis** [cf. Rm 12:1, f.; DV 5; LG 25] ...St. Ignatius adduces, therefore, two reasons to prove his assertion: the first, that by this complete surrender of his will to God in the hands of His legitimate representative, man makes the most noble use of his personal liberty; the second, that this surrender is in every way conformable to reason.

Obedience indeed merits the term **Suscipe** [SpEx n. 234]: ...The **oblation** which takes place in obedience succeeds, then, in satisfying one of the most public and generous aspirations of the Christian heart, that of returning to God practical love for practical love, **the will of self-surrender for the will with which the Lord Himself desires to give me Himself in so far as He can according to His divine ordination...**

## 2.] **Obedience of the Understanding**<sup>201</sup> :

The obedience of the will is perfect obedience: that of the understanding is most perfect. And for this reason, our Father delays over his study of it with visible pleasure, devoting more than half of the Letter to this point. What this obedience of the understanding of the saint sufficiently sets for as follows: ... **But he that will wholly sacrifice himself to God, besides his will, must offer up his understanding [which is the third and highest degree of obedience], that he may not only will, but also think the self-same with his Superior; and submit his own judgment unto him, so far as a devout will can bend the understanding ...**

Obedience, says Fr. Meschler, is a virtue of the will; the act of obedience embraces the exterior execution of the command imposed and the interior conformity

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<sup>201</sup> Espinosa, pp. 100-125, *passim*

of the will with this command. The operation of the understanding should precede and accompany the action of the will, because of this, considered in itself, is a blind faculty and has need of light and direction of the understanding. It is the part of the understanding to point out to the will what must be done, why and how it should obey. In so far as it is a speculative faculty, it must determine whether the command is in every respect licit and honorable, and, in so far as it is the practical reason, it must propose to the will the means and the motive for carrying into execution the order received.

In what, then, does this obedience of the understanding consist exactly? In a passage of the Constitutions, already quoted, St. Ignatius defines it thus: **It is obedience of the understanding, when he who obeys thinks the same as he who commands, when what is commanded appears good to him...** [CSJ n. 550].

It only remains to remark with Fr. Nadal that for this perfect obedience it is not enough to suspend a judgment that is opposed to the judgment of the Superior, but that it is necessary, moreover, to approve as good what which he commands . In fact, every command of a legitimately appointed Superior is in reality a means ordained to a double end: to a proximate and particular end intended by the Superior, and to the ultimate supernatural end intended by God.

Let us hear the Angel of the Schools: Sometimes the understanding cannot be determined to one or other of conflicting statements, not seeing at once the precise force of the terms, as it does in first principles, nor deducing the truth by reasoning, as happens in the conclusions of a proof. But, it is determined by the activity of the will which resolves to attach itself to one of two statements to the exclusion of the other, by a motive which, if not sufficient to move the intellect, is sufficient to sway the will, in the sense that the assent of the intellect seems good and proper; and this is the disposition of the believer who admits the assertions of another on the grounds that they seem good and reasonable ... [De Ver. q. 14, a. 1].

Example of the **Heavenly Constellations**: Inanimate and irrational beings are ruled in their movements and operations by natural powers and properties, which are only so many other instruments which God makes use of to move them properly to their ends. In exactly the same manner God directs the actions of rational creatures to their ends in a way in keeping with their nature, by setting their understanding and will in motion by means of precepts and counsels [St. Thomas, I-II, q. 6, a. 1, ad 3um; II-II, q. 104, a. 1, c.]... thus in the **sidereal universe** from which our holy Father takes the point of comparison for his argument, the planets, the comets, and their satellites will never be able to revolve in their respective orbits if they are not found in those **spheres of influence** of the **Star towards which they turn and gravitate**.<sup>202</sup>

Moreover, unless we have this obedience of our understanding, it is impossible that either the consent of the will, or the execution, will be such as it ought to be: for

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<sup>202</sup> cf. von Balthasar's Christological Constellation: 'The Real Christ in His Constellation', in: *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church*. Ignatius 1986. pp. 131, ff. [cf. St. Gaspar, Parish Sermon, Epiphany 1806 –MssB ## 1211-1240.]

nature itself has so ordained, that the concupiscible powers of the soul must follow the apprehensive, and the will, without violence, cannot long obey against the understanding. And if there be any who for some time obey, induced by that common apprehension, that obey they must through commanded amiss; yet doubtless this cannot be firm and constant, and so perseverance fails, or at least the perfection of obedience, which consists in obeying promptly and with alacrity; for there can be no alacrity and diligence, where there is discord of minds and opinions. There perishes that zeal and speed in performing, when we doubt whether it be expedient or not, to do what we are commanded: there perishes that renowned simplicity of blind obedience, when we call in question the justice of the command, and perhaps even we condemn the Superior, because he bids us do such things as are not very pleasing unto us; there fails humility; for although on the one hand we obey; yet, on the other, we prefer ourselves before our Superior; there fails fortitude in difficult enterprises, and [to conclude in brief]. The whole force and dignity of this virtue is lost...

### 3.] A possible fourth level: 'blind' obedience<sup>203</sup> :

Fr. Suarez, after a careful examination of the principal testimonies of the Fathers and Doctors, does not hesitate to affirm that the Saint either borrowed the teaching on blind obedience [cf. **CSJ. n. 547: *omnem sententiam ac iudicium nostrum contrarium caeca quadam obedientia abnegando ...***] from them, or at least spoke with the same spirit as they [Lib. 4, c. 15, n. 4; n. 26.].

It is not easy to determine just exactly what those authors who have written on the subject thought of the specific value of blind obedience. Even those who follow St. Ignatius as their master and guide do not always use in their writings the precision and clearness which one might desire. Some in particular, seem to speak of blind obedience **as though it were a new division of this virtue, something like a fourth degree, distinct from obedience of the understanding.** Fr. Ignatius - wrote Fr. Acquaviva - in speaking of **blind obedience**, stating that he wished to designate with this name only an obedience that is pure, perfect, simple, which does not discuss the command, nor its reasons, being satisfied with knowing that it is commanded.

### 4.] Loving Imitation of Jesus<sup>204</sup> : Parallel in Faith with the Eucharist [*sensuum defectui*]:

As may be seen, in all the texts cited, it is taken for granted that there is a *practical* identity [in faith] between God and the Superior, in virtue of which every command of holy obedience is clothed for us with the character and dignity of a divine command. Taking his stand here, our holy Father insists on the necessity of prescinding from the gifts and talents that may adorn the man who has been given us for Superior, and fixing the gaze of the soul on the titles and credentials which accredit him as **a vicar of Christ**, and the **visible substitute** of the invisible God, **something similar** to what we **see in the mystery of the Eucharist** [*sensuum*

<sup>203</sup> Espinosa, Chapter VII, pp. 148-186. [cf. e.g., CSJ, n. 547: only occurrence: CF ## 149, 150, *passim*??]

<sup>204</sup> *ib.*, pp. 60-63.

**defectu]**, when we forget the white wafer of the accidents, and hurry straightway **on the wings of faith and love** to the **adorable Person of the Savior Who** is hiding beneath them.

Seeing Christ, then, in the Superior is equivalent to ignoring the exterior accidents which make an immediate impression on our senses; it is rather to go at once to **the divine reality hidden beneath those accidents**, which is the **most holy will of Christ our Lord** made known to us by means of the Superior. Hence, it is that for the truly obedient man it is not talent nor goodness nor the moral prestige of him who commands that constitutes the ultimate reason for his obedience; and though these motives are not without some power to move him to conform his will with that of the Superior, they remain, finally, merely human and consequently, contingent, passing, frail, totally insufficient to serve as a foundation in difficult circumstances for the exercise of perfect obedience. A motive of incomparably greater excellence, nay, a motive of divine excellence is that offered by faith, when it teaches that the command of the Superior is not in reality the command of a man, but the command of God Himself, who avails Himself of man as a conscious instrument for the transmission of His will.

‘When we gaze at the ‘Sacred Host’, beautifully writes Dom Columba Marmion, ‘our senses exclaim: ‘That is not Christ: it is nothing but bread.’ We see, though, and taste only bread. But as Christ has told us: ***Hoc est corpus meum: this is My body***, setting aside the testimony of our senses, we say to Christ: ‘You have spoken – I believe, ***credo***; and to give exterior expression to our faith, we fall on our knees before Christ, really and substantially present under the species, we adore Him, and we surrender ourselves to Him to fulfill His Holy Will.

In the same way, Christ conceals Himself from us in our Superiors. In spite of his imperfection, **the Abbot is for us the representative of Christ**; Christ hides beneath the weakness and the imperfections of the man, just as He conceals Himself beneath **the Sacramental species**. Just because the Superior is placed in such faith, as it were, *supra candelabrum*, the daily exchanges which we have with him may betray his deficiencies; wherefore, we feel tempted to exclaim: ‘This man is not Christ’ his poor judgment is not infallible, he can make mistakes, in fact he does; he can compromise my plans; he allows himself to be guided by this or that preference. But, faith answers: ***Abbas Christi in vices Christi creditur***. Whether Christ gives us a Solomon to take His place, or a man without talent, to the eyes of faith, it is **always Christ Whom this man represents. Faith discovers Christ**, and touches Him, so to say, **behind** the imperfections of the man. And if I have faith, I will say: *Credo, I believe*. I obey this man whoever he may be, because in obeying him, **I obey Christ**, and I remain united with Him: ***qui vos audit, Me audit*** [Marmion, ***Christ the Ideal of the Monk***, pp. 267-268].

### 5.] This is an Oblation of the Intellect<sup>205</sup> :

According to what we have said, religious obedience is essentially a **sacrifice a holocaust**; it is the **total oblation of self** as an act of supreme homage to God our Creator and Lord in recognition of His sovereign dominion over creatures. The Fathers and theological writers, alluding to the most perfect sacrifice of the Old Law, call it a **holocaust**, in which the victim was burned and totally consumed by fire, **nothing at all being reserved** even for other holy uses. The comparison is certainly suggestive and corresponds to reality with sufficient exactitude. As a matter of fact, **obedience in its truest sense means an unconditional and absolute surrender** by which **man strips himself [kenosis] of what is most his own, to belong henceforth only to God**, leaving in His hands **the entire disposal of himself and of all his actions**. In this **surrender**, then, is verified literally and in the loftiest and noblest sense that **destruction and annihilation** characteristic of the ancient holocausts.

This concept of **totality** which excludes all limitation in the sacrifice we have already considered when dealing with the obedience of the will, and from it we deduced precisely the excellence and extraordinary merit of religious obedience, seeing that it embraces **the complete offering** made to God of one's own will and liberty. But even though the **total renunciation** of the will constitutes a most excellent sacrifice, there yet remains to man something which can be **offered in sacrifice, of much greater value, which marks him out specifically as man – his reason and judgment**. Now if this sacrifice must be consumed by the fire of charity, that is, if it must reach the ultimate consequences attainable by a generous love, if obedience must be entire and perfect, and properly merit the name of **holocaust**, to the sacrifice of the will must be added **the sacrifice of the understanding**, so that the judgment of the inferior remain completely subject to the reason and judgment of the Superior.

But, let us hear these ideas from the very lips of the Jesuit Founder:

*... For obedience being a **holocaust**, in which the whole man, nothing at all excepted, is offered unto his Creator and Lord in the fire of charity, through the hands of his substitute, and as it is a full renunciation to which a religious man freely yields up all his own rights to dedicate and bind himself to God, to be possessed and governed by His Divine Providence by means of his Superior; it cannot be denied that obedience comprehends not only the execution, so that the person do that which is commanded, and the will, so that he do it willingly, but also the judgment, so that whatsoever the Superior commands and thinks good seems just and reasonable to the inferior, so far, as I have said as the will by its force and vigor can bend the understanding.*

The obedience then, which reaches to the subjection of the understanding appears to St. Ignatius as the greatest and most generous **sacrifice** which man, short of his own life, can offer to his Creator and Lord; and, for the same reason, he felt that

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<sup>205</sup> ib, pp. 107, ff.

there was hardly another more worthy of being sought by a heart on fire with desire to **serve** the Divine Majesty in all things. Indeed, **the renunciation of one's own will and judgment** represents the **total gift**, the **complete offering**, the **perfect sacrifice** which a rational creature can make of itself; for then it not only **immolates** its most valued and prized possessions with which the liberality of its Creator has enriched it, but, as the saint reflects, all that becomes **a living holocaust** most grateful to His Divine Majesty, keeping nothing whatever to himself.

Obedience, writes Fr. Oswald in his Commentary, is the noblest and most excellent **sacrifice** by which we can offer to the sovereign Majesty of God the worship and the honor that are His due. Because in obeying, our will asserts a deliberate desire to belong completely to God, as right reason demands; and in proof of it, it **subjects and surrenders** to Him the supreme and absolute Master of all things, that which only the free will has the power of disposing of, namely, understanding and will, with the one desire that He accept and dispose of those faculties according to His good pleasure. Thus, that **sacrifice** of annihilation is consummated by which we cease to be masters of ourselves, and begin to be the property and possession of God.

Fr. Roupain notes: Obedience surely supposes a **renunciation** and a **sacrifice**, since we cannot obey without suffering diminution in something. But the highest interests will be compromised the moment this kind of obedience ceases to be regarded in the Church with the appreciation and esteem it deserves. To refuse God the **sacrifice** of that which we most love, of that which **we look upon as most our own**, our convictions, namely, our opinions, our preferences would be equivalent to making little of that fundamental axiom of the Gospel: **He who does not renounce all that He possesses, cannot be My disciple** [Lk 14:33]. And the **greatest sacrifice** which a soul anxious to practice the virtue of religion with the greatest perfection, can make to God is the **renunciation** of its own ideas, submitting them to the direction of a Superior in whom it recognizes God as ruling and governing it.

The sacrifice, it is true, is immense, but as **St. Gregory** well observes: *For a man to give up his possessions is perhaps a thing easily done, but for a man to give up himself is a work of great difficulty; for if it costs little to renounce what he has, it costs very much more to renounce what he is.* [Hom. 32, in Evang.].

This is indeed an **obsequium**<sup>206</sup> - as Fr. Mersch affirms, emphasizing the necessity of perfect obedience in spite of the errors and shortcomings of Superiors: ... we have not engaged ourselves to obey Superiors, or men, but Christ. Our Lord has the power and the wisdom to make all things redound to our greater good. This is the great principle and definitive truth on obedience. We have **surrendered ourselves** to the direction of Christ in the manner in which He wishes and approves. We need not know more to be certain that He will not abandon us, and that in the measure of our faith and love, He will manage things in such a way that we shall not come to love Him less for having exerted to love Him more, as He Himself teaches us.

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<sup>206</sup> ib, pp. 136,ff.

This last observation naturally leads us to examine the other reason proposed by our holy Father for reposing confidently in obedience; the certainty, namely, that the divine fidelity has, so to say, undertaken to stand by us in all difficulties, provided we **surrender ourselves** into the hands of the Superior and through him, into the hands of God, rather than trust to our own judgment. He says: And because you are conscious within yourselves that you have undergone this yoke of obedience for the love of God, to the end that you might, in following the Superior's will, more assuredly follow the Divine Will; doubt not but the most faithful charity of our Lord continually directs you and leads you the right way by the hands of those whom he has given you for Superiors.

Fr. Aicardo has a masterly development of the idea set forth in the text of our Father that the vow of obedience has the force of a **bilateral contract**, in this, that, on the one hand, the religious surrenders himself to his Superiors to be guided by them in the way of sanctification, and on the other, that God in a certain sense promises not to permit in His minister so serious a misapprehension as invincibly to lead the subject to error. This obedience, he says, is like all the life of perfection, a free and spontaneous **offering and oblation** which the religious makes, taking another person as Superior and father to be directed in the service of God by the means which He has chosen. By a principle of faith that all authority comes from God, and that everything happens in the world, aside from the malice of sin, is of divine ordination, the religious sees in the Superior, freely chosen by him and to whom he has submitted, an instrument of God for his own sanctification, an interpreter of the Divine will. From this motive, then, he obeys him and all those to whom the Superior delegates his authority, that is to say, wherever clearly appears the formal and supreme principle of obedience, which is the fulfilling of the will of God....Therefore, obedience looks upon the Superior as **God's instrument**, and not as this or that person, or this or that man, but only inasmuch as he is invested with his office, applying to him what our Lord said to His Apostles: ***He that hears you, hears Me!***

#### 6.] A Distant Comparison to Theological Faith<sup>207</sup> :

The essence of blind obedience apparently consists in prescinding completely from every consideration inspired by natural prudence alone to take refuge in principles of faith... Our holy Father adds that taking such a position before the difficulties of this obedience of the understanding must be in a **manner similar to that which takes place in matters of faith,**

He is quite right in using the word **similar** which denotes a certain community of traits, more or less integral and perfect, rather than a complete identity. In fact, there is **an essential difference** between the act of **blind obedience** and the **act of faith**. Because, while the believer subjects his understanding to the truths of faith by relying on their absolute certainty, a certainty derived from **the infallible authority of God**, the religious who with **blind obedience** subjects his judgment to the opinion of his Superiors relies on the **practical certainty** he has of finding y this means the Will

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<sup>207</sup> Espinosa, pp. 154, ff.

of God, a **certainty derived from the Superior's power of commanding, always supposing that what he commands is lawful** [Suarez, Book 4, c. 15, n. 31.].

In fact, just as the Christian in being presented with a mystery of faith does **not give his assent on intrinsic reasons** that convince him of the truth of the mystery, but by means of **the infused habit of faith**, submits to the **revealed truth** on a motive that is entirely **extrinsic**, the authority of God, from Whom the revelation comes: so, **in like manner**, the religious to whom the Superior gives a command, the reasonableness, or unreasonableness of which does not evidently appear, once he has discarded the possibility of sin, does **not bother about the intrinsic reasons** which might move him to subject his understanding and conform it with that of the Superior, but is solely concerned, because of the strength of the **virtuous habit of obedience**. With the **extrinsic motive, which is the Will of God**, manifested in the command he has received.

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## APPENDIX I

### *Constitutional Filiation*

Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger has written an insightful book (*Behold the Pierced One*, San Francisco: Ignatius 1986) in which he presents Christology also from the aspect of Jesus' Prayer:

a. In the Trinity everything is one and the same where there is not the opposition of relationship – this is an old principle (from St. Anselm?) defined by the Council of Lyons (in 1442) in its Decree for the Jacobites (cf. D-S 1330; *The Catholic Faith*, n. 325). In a certain sense, Jesus' "personality" is **established, made manifest, in his constant communication with His heavenly Father**. Of all of Jesus' titles, those which seem to predominate are: the Christ, the Lord, and "Son". **Jesus' most intimate communion and distinction with/from the Father are clear in His constant "going aside" to pray in solitude, as well as in public**. The Church imitates this in her praying the Creed – the confession of faith is not merely a "shopping list" of articles of faith, but a genuine prayer of adoration, praise and hope. Jesus' "Person" is contained in His prayer.

b. Jesus died – praying: His death was the ultimate commendation of His soul, His existence, unto the Father – by breathing forth His holy spirit. Jesus' last words are eloquent testimony of His devotion, infinite trust, love, for the Father. He had previously groaned: *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* But, He concludes His earthly sojourn by commending all of His work, life, Self, to the Father. (cf. Mt 27:50, f.. p.; Rm 12:1, ff., I P 2:4, f.).

c. By his divine power, he has given us all the things we need for life and for true devotion, bringing us to know God Himself... In making these gifts, he has



given us the guarantee of something very great and wonderful to come: through all this, we share in the divine nature (cf. 2 P 1:3, ff.). Agreeing, then, that the core of Jesus' own Person is His prayer, the expression, revelation of His relationship to His Father – we need to share in His prayer. There is no other way to be one with Him. All knowledge is a certain union between the knower and the known. The fundamental response of the religious person is always prayer. Christian prayer, though, is unique in that it is entirely based on the Father's Will: ultimately, it is the act of self-giving, surrender to God.

d. Jesus' own summary of Prayer opens with "OUR" Father – sharing in this prayer will always demand communion with all those He loves: forgive US; give US; lead US not into temptation: deliver US from evil. We are in-grafted INTO the body of Christ (cf. Rm 6:1, ff.). It is in prayer that the past is future and the present is simultaneously tradition and hope, preparing us for eternity. History becomes prophecy and presence becomes promise based on sacred memories of the wonders of God extended to His People. We become one with the Trinity in Whom all time is NOW. Jesus' Plan is simply to carry out the Father's Plan for a New Creation, a new heavens and a new earth (cf. Is 51:16; 65:17; 66:12; Rm 8:19 +; Mt 19:28| Rv. 21:1, ff.). In establishing the Church, Christ intends to renew the People of God.

d. In order for faith to develop in the Church, we need to heed the words of the Council:

**... The Tradition that comes from the apostles makes progress in the Church, with the help of the Holy Spirit. There us a growth in insight into the realities and words that are being passed on. This comes about in various ways. It comes through:**

- the contemplation and study of believers who ponder these things in their hearts (cf. Lk 2:19, 51);
- it comes from the intimate sense of spiritual realities which they experience;
- and it comes from the preaching of those who have received, along with their right of succession in the episcopate, the sure charism of truth.

**Thus, as the centuries go by, the Church is always advancing towards the plenitude of divine truth, until eventually the words of God are fulfilled in her... (cf. DV 8).**

d. The heart of the teaching of the Church is that "Jesus is Lord!" He is the true Son of God, and is truly man - Jesus is of Nazareth, of Galilee – the Lord of heaven and earth in the catharsis of the Paschal Mystery. This has become known to the Church which was "let in on" the messianic secret, enabled to listen in on the eternal conversation of the Father and the Son, with the Holy Spirit.

**APPENDIX II**  
**St Ignatius' Abundant use of *Obsequium***  
**[Constitutiones Societatis Jesu]**

**Examen** [8 x]

[nn.1-133]

**n. 8:** ... maius Dei obsequium semper intuendo...

**n. 13:** ...Coadjutores [Brothers] se impendiunt auxilio et obsequio omnium ex amore divinae maiestatis...

**n. 18:** ...firmiores sint in divino servitio ...

**n. 49:** ... ad Dei obsequium fore, maiusque auxilium Illius...

**n. 59;** [2 x] ... haec instrumenta sint ad Dei obsequium ... et ad maius Dei obsequium sit futurum...

**n. 82:** ... ad divinum obsequium et laudem magis se possint submittere ..iuxta quod eis praescriptum verl constitutum per Summum Christi Vicarium ...

**n. 118:** ...sibi persuadendum, quod ea in re obsequium et laudem praestant suo Creatori et Domino...

**n. 119:** ... cum eorum opera ad maius Dei obsequium se non iuvare .. eos dimittere ...

**Constitutions**

**Proemium** [1 x]

[nn. 133-137]

**n. 134:** ... necessarium esse arbitramur Constitutiones conscribi, quae iuvent ad melius in via incepta divini obsequii procedendum ...

**Part I** [6 x]

**Admission**

[nn. 138-203]

**n. 138:** ...ad maiorem servitium Dei ...

**n. 141:** ...ad divinum servitium ...

**n. 147:** ...iuxta Societatis divinum servitium ...

**n. 149:** ... [Coadjutores] ... ad maius Dei ac Domini nostri obsequium pertinentibus ...

**n. 152:** ...ad Ipsius maius servitium et laudem ...

**n. 156:** ... strenuum in iis quae ad divinum sservitium aggrediuntur ...

**n. 161:** ...ad Eius obsequium ac laudem uberiorem susceperunt ...

**n. 162:** ... ad Dei obsequium fore ...

**n. 176:** ... ad Dei et Domini nostri obsequium eius opera ad modum iuvare posse...

**n. 187:** ...ad finem maioris divini servitii nobis praefixum ...

**n. 192:** ... ad Dei et Domini nostri Iesu Christi obsequium idonei in hac Societate esse viderentur...ac propositum divinae ac summae maiestati in hac Societate serviendi ...

**n. 194:** ...qui nondum obsequio divino in hac Societate se dedicare omnino statuisset ...

**Part II** [4 x]

**Dismissal**

[nn. 204-242]

**n. 204:** ...ad propositum huic Societati finem divino obsequii et auxiliium animarum convenit conservare ...

**n. 205:** ...in divino obsequio esset idoneus ...

**n. 212:** ...qui sincere divinum obsequium querunt ...

**n. 213:** ... ad divinum obsequium polleant ...

**Pars III** [8 x]

**Promotion**

[nn. 243-306]

**n. 244:** ...quae iuvent in divino obsequio et ad id consequendum ...

**n. 245:** ... ubi divino obsequio commodius insistat ...

**n. 266:** ... ad finem illum divini servitii et laudis quem sibi praefixit societas ...

n. 273: ... melius et efficacius possint se divino obsequio et auxilio proximorum impendere ...  
n. 276: ... in quo ad maius Dei servitium et gloriam sunt constituti ...  
n. 279: ... ad serevitium Dei ac Domini nostri ili iuventur ...  
n. 281: ... ad progressum in maiori obsequio Dei excitare ...  
n. 283: ...se totum immobiliter divino servitio mancipare...  
n. 292: [2 x]...ad divinum obsequium valetudinis ac virium corporis laude digna...id magis expedire ad divinum obsequium ac suum maius bonum ...  
n. 296: ... ad divinum obsequium laudemque conservetur ...  
n. 304: ... et, quamvis nostra vocationis conservetur loca peragrarere, et vitam afgere in quavis plaga ubi mius Dei obsequium et animarum auxilium speratur ... impensius divino servitio vacare posit ...

#### Pars IV [14 x]

##### Education

[nn. 307-509]

n. 308 ['End'] [2 x] ... ad maiorem laudem et obsequium Dei ac Domini nostri, cupiebamus ... ad maius Divinae Maiestatis obsequium fore ...  
n. 321: ... ad finem divini servitii quem sibi praefixit Societas ...  
n. 324 [2 x]: ... ad ea quae in illis ad divinum obsequium quaeruntur impedire solent ... expedita ad Sedis Apostolicae missionis obeundas aliaque opera ad Dei obsequium et animarum auxilium esse debet ...  
n. 326: ... ad maiorem gloriam et servitium Dei, gerere poterit ...  
n. 332: ... maius divinum obsequium et universale bonum prae oculis semper habendo ...  
n. 338 [2 x]: ...ad divinum oseuium ... quatenus ad maiorem aedificationem ac maius Dei ac Domini nostri obsequium superior expedire iudicaverit...  
n. 362: ...Et haec quidem omnia maiori cum desiderio obsequii et gloriae divinae fiant...  
n. 386: ...ad scopum divini servitii ...  
n. 414: ... ad maius Dei servitium  
n. 415: ... ad divinums ervitium magis proficient ...  
n. 416: ... vel magnum Dei obsequium ab eis expectaretur ...  
n. 417: ... ad maius Dei obsequium et gloriam essent occupanda ...  
n. 419: ... ad maius Dei ac Domini nostri obsequium provideri convenit ...  
n. 428: ... ut utiliter illud impendat divino servitio curet ...  
n. 437: ... et in omnibus quod senserit divinae ac summae bonitatis gravitas et ad Ipsius obsequium ac gloriam maiorem, omnibus perpensis provideat...  
n. 442: ... ad finem propositum divini servitii id oneris subire ...  
n. 458: ... prase oculis maiorem adificationem etSei servitium habend o ...  
n. 486: ... ad obsequium et amorem Dei ac virtutum, quibus ei placere oportet, movendos ...  
\* n. 488: ...ut omnia ad gloriam et servitium Dei, et par est...  
n. 508: ... quod iudicaverit ad maiorem gloriam et obsequium, et bonum universale fore [qui unicus scopus in hac et in omnibus rebus nobis est ...

#### Pars V [4 x]

##### Those admitted to the Body of the Society

[nn. 510-546]

n. 510: ... ad maius Dei obsequium et gloriam conveniat...  
n. 521: ... ad maius Dei obsequium et Societatis bonum sic convenire indicaret ..  
n. 528: ... Promissio docendorum puerorum ac rudium hominum ... devotius curetur propter singulare obsequium quod Deo per eam in animarum auxilio exhibetur; et quia facilius oblivionis tradi poterat...  
n. 541: ...prout Praeposito ad maius Dei obsequium fore videbitur, emittendus ...  
n. 542: ... et obseuio Dei et gloriae sese imendere ...

#### Pars VI [1 x]

##### The Personal Life of those admitted

[nn.547-602]

n. 547: . ... divino servitio et proximorum auxiliis se impendant ...  
n. 552: ... ne id quidem ad divinum servitium ...

n. 565: ... in divino servitio procedere ...

n. 566: ... ob solum Christi Domini nostri obsequium ...

Pars VII [21 x!]

Missions

[nn. 603-654]

c. 1: Missions of the Supreme Pontiff [9 x]

[nn. 603-617]

n. 603 [2 x]: ... discurrant quacumque maius Dei et Domini nostri obsequium et animarum profectum assequi se posse arbitrentur ... in aliquibus locis ubi magnus divinae gloriae et obsequii proventus speratur...

n. 605: ... maiorem Dei gloriam et animarum auxilium investigando...

n. 608: ... ad commune bonum Societatis et maius Dei obsequium mittere cogitaret ...

n. 609: ... ut Eius sanctitas ad maius Dei et Sedis Apostolicae obsequium fore ...

n. 611: ... qua in re maius bonum universale intuebitur, et ut quam minimum detrimentum alia opera ad Dei obsequium suscepta petiantur ...

n. 612: ... ut in omnibus ad Dei et Sedis Apostolicae obsequium utilius suum impendat ministerium...

n. 614: ... sed etiam Summi Pontificis missionibus iuvare poterit; ut melius quod ad Christi Domini nostri obsequium quaretur, consequatur ...

n. 615: ... qui sanctam intentionem Pontificis in Christi Domini nostri obsequium consideraba, transigentur ...

n. 616: et cum fructu divini servitii... ut in locis vicinis animarum auxilio serviens ... nec propter alias occasiones, licet bonas, divini obsequii posthabeat ...

c. 2: Missions of the Superior [5 x]

[nn. 618-632]

n. 618 [2 x]: ... id semper quod ad maius Dei obsequium et bonum universale facit ... superiori qui eum Christi loco dirigit ad ipsius maius divinum obsequium quaritur, consequatur ...

\* n. 622... prae oculis habendo maius divinum obsequium et universale bonum ... [The next 3 Constitutions offer the Principles: *magis ... maius ... universalius...*: to discern which ministry of the Word of God to offer]

\* n. 623: ... Fiant vero haec omnia propterea quod ad maius Dei obsequium maiusque proximorum bonum ita conveniat ... res aliquae in divino servitio magis urgeant ...

\* n. 624: ... Plures quam duos, cum opus ad quod mittuntur maioris esset momenti in divino obsequio ac maiorem multitudinem exigeret ... ad maiorem gloriam et universale bonum sectantium possset providere, Superior mittere poterit ...

n. 625: ... Superior, undecumque maiorem proximorum aedificationem et divinum obsequium intento od convenit, constituet ...

n. 629: ... ut maius servitium Deo fiat, magisque commune bonum ...

c. 3: Free Movement [1 x]

[nn. 633-635]

n. 634: ... ad maius Dei obsequium etiam devitabit ...

c. 4: Ways of helping others [2 x]

[nn. 636-654]

n. 650: ... qui maius obsequium ac bonum universale semper ob oculos sibi proponet ...

651: ... vel Collegiorum finem in divino obsequio fiet ...

Pars VIII [4 x]

Mutual Union

[nn. 655-718]

n. 663: ... magis convenire ad divinum obsequium videretur ...

n. 665: ... ad divinum obsequium ac commune bonum iudicio illius qui curam eius habet, magis conveniret ...

n. 680: ... vel rationem procedendi in illa pertractare ad maius divinum obsequium ...

n. 688: ... ad electionem eius Praepositi qui ad maius Dei obsequium conveniat, exhortetur ...

Pars IX [8 x]

Government

[nn. 719-811]

n. 728: [2 x] ... nec ab eo quod ratio et divinum obsequium postulat ... pro Societatis bono in obsequium Iesu Christi Dei ac Domini nostri subeundum ...

n. 733: ... quae magis ad aedificationem et Dei obsequium in eo officio conferunt ...

n. 746:... alius non est quam Dei obsequium et eorum bonum qui hoc vivendi institutum seuuntur, praestabit...

n. 749: ... quod convenientius ad divinum obsequium et salutem animarum abiturus in Domino videbitur, constituet ...

n. 753: ... communicare quam in ipso bene collocatum ad finem divini obsequii nobis praefixum existimaverit ...

n. 770: ... ad maius obsequium et gloriam Dei, admonere teneatur...

\* n. 771: ... Societas autem, semper intuendo quae ad maius Dei obsequium et gloriam pertinent ...

Part X [7 x]  
Conservation  
[nn. 812-827]

\* n. 812: ... hoc opus, quod ad obsequium et laudem suam et auxilium animarum inchoare dignatus est ...

n. 813: ... media ... efficaciora ... et pura intento divini servitii

n. 814: ... si tamen et addiscantur et exercentur sincere ad solum Dei obsequium ...

n. 817: ... quod ad divinum obsequium melius esse intellexerint ... ad gloriam Dei et Domini nostri id proponat ...

n. 818: ... ubi multum referre ad Dei obsequium iudicaret ...

n. 823: ... multum habet momenti ut aditus ad divinum obsequium et animarum auxilium aperiatur vel praecludatur ...<sup>208</sup>

n. 824: ... multum facit ut ostium divini servitio et bono animarum aperiatur vel praecludatur ... magis in rebus omnibus Dei obsequium et Gloria crescit ...

n. 825: ... ut et a Societate ipsi iuvare et eandem ad propositum sibi finem obsequii et gloriae divinae maiestatis iuvare current ...<sup>209</sup>

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APPENDIX III:

These parallel expressions might easily be checked as well in the Jesuit Constitutions:

- A.M.D.G.;
- servitium;
- servire:

Examen  
[nn. 1-137]

A.M.D.G.:14; 18; 30;51; 52; 55; 63; 71; 72; 78; 82; 89; 93; 98 [2 x]; 103; 119; 126; 131; 135; 136; 137.

Servitium: 4; 8; 13; 18; 26; 30; 51; 59 [2 x]; 82; 83; 114 [2 x]; 119; 132; 133; 134 [2 x].

Servire: 5; 13; 49; 53; 66 [2 x]; 72; 74 [2 x]; 79; 98; 104; 106; 111 [2x]; 114; 117; 118 [2 x]; 121; 132 [2 x].

<sup>208</sup> Almost identical terminology with what follows in n. 824.

<sup>209</sup> This Constitution is just two from the end, n. 827

Part I  
Admissions  
[nn. 138-203]

A.M.D.G.: 142; 144; 148; 161; 189; 196; 202.

Servitium: 138; 142; 143; 145; 147; 148; 149; 152; 156; 161; 162; 176; 177; 187; 193.

Servire: 146; 150; 153; 163; 189; 190; 192 [2 x]; 194; 197.

Part II  
Dismissal  
[nn. 204-242]

A.M.D.G.: 210; 222; 230; 242.

Servitium: 204; 205 [3 x]; 208; 212; 213 [2 x]; 236.

Servire: 216; 217; 226; 229; 235; 237; 239; 240; 241.

Part III  
Promotion  
[nn.243-306]

A.M.D.G.: 246; 251; 258; 259; 269; 276; 305.

Servitium: 243; 244; 245; 254; 258; 260; 266; 273; 276; 281; 283; 191 292 [2 x]; 296; 304 [2 x].

Servire: 276; 277; 279; 288.

Part IV  
Instruction  
[nn. 307-509]

A.M.D.G.: 307; 308; 318; 323; 325; 326; 336; 339; 343; 349; 358; 360; 362; 379; 390; 398; 406; 18; 423; 431; 437; 440; 450; 460; 470; 469; 488; 508.

Servitium: 308; 315; 318; 321; 324 [2 x]; 326; 331; 332; 334; 338 [2 x]; 340; 362; 386; 392; 408; 414; 415; 416; 417; 419; 424; 428; 437; 442; 458; 486; 488; 508.

Servire: 307; 308; 338; 356; 359; 398; 446; 450.

Part V  
Body of Society  
[nn. 510-546]

A.M.D.G.: 510; 511I 516I 519I 529I 539

Servitium: 510; 521; 523; 541

Servire: 542.

Part VI  
Vows, etc]  
[nn. 547-602]

A.M.D.G.: 555; 572 [2 x]; 573; 577; 579; 586; 591; 593; 602

Servitium: 547; 532; 564; 565; 566; 592.

Servire: 547; 555; 593; 595.

Part VII  
Missions  
[nn. 603-654]

A.M.D.G.: \*603 [2 x]; 605; 616; 618; 622; 624; 636; 645; 647; 649.

Servitium: 603 [2 x]; 608; 609; 611I 614I 615I 616 [2 x]; 618 [2 x]; 622; 623 [2 x]; 624 [2 x]; 625; 634; 639; 650; 651.

Servire: 612; 629; 650.

Part VIII  
Union  
[nn. 655-718]

A.M.D.G.: 655; 661; 667; 669; 676; 693; 711.

Servitium: 665; 680; 686; 693; 694; 698.

Servire: 667; 670.

Part IX  
Government  
[nn. 719-811]

A.M.D.G.: 731; 744; 746; 749; 754; 757; 765; 766; 770; 771; 774; 776; 779; 789; 792; 802; 803.

Servitium: 719; \*728 [3 x]; 733; 746; 749; 753 [3 x]; 762; 768; 770; 771; 794.

Servire: 802.

Part X  
Conser vation  
[nn. 812-827]

A.M.D.G.: 813; 817; 825.

Servitium: 812; 813; 814; 8818; 823; 824; 825.

Servire: 817; 821; 823; 824 [2 x].

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APPENDIX IV – IGNATIAN VARIATIONS

Testi ignaziani

[A] FINIS

(1) Toward God

Formula 1: *Quicumque in hac Societate nostra, quam Iesu nomine insigniri cupimus, vult sub cruces vexillo Deo militare, et soli Domino ac Ecclesiae Ipsius sponsae, sub Romano Pontifice, Christi in terries Vicario servire...*

CSJ 266: *...sed tantum ea quae faciunt ad finem illum divini servitii et laudis quem sibi praefixit Societas...*

CSJ 307: [IV Pars - Proemium] : *Cum scopus, ad quem Societas recta tendit sit suas ac proximorum animas ad finem ultimum consequendum, ad quem creatae fuerit, iuvare; cumque ad id, praeter vitae exemplum,, doctrina et modus eam proponendi sint necessaria...quo iuvare possint ad magis consequendum magisque serviendum Deo Creatori ac Domino nostro...doctrina ad nostrum Institutum necessaria satis instructi...*

CSJ 308: *...ad maiorem laudem et obsequium Dei et Coministri cupiebamus...ad maius divinae Maiestatis obsequium, fore...*

CSJ 321: *...an, omnibus perpensis, utile sit ad futurum Societati ad finem divini servitii quem sibi praefixit huiusmodi Collegium...*

CSJ 338: *... ad divium obsequium, quod solum in iis que di Societate et extra illam sunt, expetitur...quatenus ad maiorem edificationem ac maius Dei ac Domini nostri obsequium Superior expedire iudicaverit .*

CSJ 442: *... udicando utile etiam tunc esse Societatis ad finem propositum divini servitii id oneris subire...*

CSJ 466: *...magna cum consideratione id fiet, prae oculis habendo scopum nostrum maioris boni universalis...*

CSJ 508: *...quod iudicaverit ad maiorem Dei gloriam et obsequium, et bonum universale fore [qui unicus scopus in hac et in omnibus rebus nobis est] constituet...*

CSJ 591: *...quae Dominus patrociniū susciperet, ius Societatis ad maiorem Dei gloriam posset defendere...*

CSJ 592: *...ad finem divini servitii praefixum, facultas dispensandi ad tempus relinquetur.*

CSJ 603: *... Ut in Sexta Parte de iis dictume st quae observanda sunt cuiue de Societate erga seipsum, it in hac septmae [Parte] de iis dicendum est uae erga proximos, whi finis nostri Instituti valde proprius est, dum dividuntur per Christi vineam... [per diversa loca mittantur ... Ut discurrant quacumque maius Dei et Domini nostri obsequium et animarum profectum assequi se posse arbitrentur...ubi magnus divinae gloriae et obsequii proventus speratur. Et in primo loco, de Missionibus Summi Pontificis...ad maiorem Dei gloriam et animarum auxilium, inter fideles, vel infideles, nos mittendos censuerit...*

CSJ 605: *... maiorem Dei gloriam et animarum auxilium investigando, se conferrent...*

CSJ 617: *... quia ipsi Societas peculiari voto circa missiones...*

CSJ 746: *... finem earundem Constitutionum intuendo, qui alius non est quam maius Dei obsequium et eorum bonum qui hoc vivendi institutum seuuntur, praestabit...*

CSJ 753: *... quam in ipso bene collocatum ad finem divini obsequii nobis praefixum existamaverit...*

(2) Toward Community members

CSJ 3: Finis huius Societatis est non solum saluti et perfectioni propriarum animarum cum divina gratia vacari...

CSJ 136: Cum Constitutionum hic finis sit ut universum corpus Societatis et particularia eius membra ad sui conservationem et incrementum, ad gloriam Dei et universalis Ecclesiae bonum, iuventur...

(3) Toward one's Neighbors

Formula 1: ...ad fidei defensionem et propagationem, et profectum animarum in vita et doctrina Christiana, per publicas praedicationes, lectiones et aliud quodcumque verbi Dei ministerium ac Spiritualia Exercitia, puerorum ac rudium in christianismo institutum, Christi fidelium in Confessionibus audiendis, ac ceteris sacramentis administrandis, spiritualem consolationem praecipue intendat...

Formula 3: [Romani Pontifices...] ...iusserint ad profectum animarum et fidei propagationem pertinens...

CSJ 3: ...sed cum eadem impense in salutem et perfectionem proximorum incumbere.

CSJ 30: ...qui in em [Societatem] sunt ingressuri ad bene et fideliter evangelizandum, et in agro Domini verbum divinum seminandum, eo aptiora ad id instrumenta erunt ... se totum dedicat maiori servitio et gloriae sui Creatoris et Domini...

CSJ 351: Cum doctrinae quae in hac Societate addiscitur his scopus sit suis et proximorum animis, Dei favore aspirante, prodesse;...

CSJ 446: Cum Societatis atque studiorum scopus sit proximos ad cognitionem et amorem Dei et salutem suarum animarum iuvare...

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[B] Media(1) Spiritual: Pro Membris

Formula 1: ...post solemne perpetuae castitatis, paupertatis et obedientiae votum....gratis omnino... et nullo stipendio accepto...totis viribus assequi...

Formula 3: ...Et quamvis Evangelio docemur, et fide de orthodox cognoscamus, ac firmiter teneamus omnes Christi fideles Romano Pontifici, tamquam Capiti ac Iesu Christi Vicario, subesse; ob devotionem tamen maiorem ad obedientiam Sedis Apostolicae, et maiorem voluntatem nostrarum abnegationem et certiore Spiritus Sancti directionem, summopere conducere iudicavimus singulos nos, et quicumque endem in posterum professionem emiserint, ultra illud commune trium votorum vinculum, speciali ad hoc voto adstringi, ut quidquid modernus et alii Romani Pontifices, pro tempore existentes...

CSJ 4: Ad hunc finem melius consequendum, tria vota in ea, obedientiae, paupertatis et castitatis emittuntur; sic paupertatem accipendo ut nec velit nec posit reditus ullos ad sustentationem, nec ad quidvis aliud habere... gratis omnino].

CSJ 812: ...in Eo solo spem constituti oportet quod conservaturus sit et promoturus hoc opus, quo ad obsequium et laudem suam et auxilium animarum inchoare dignatus est...

CSJ 813: ...Huiusmodi [efficaciora media] est probitas et virtus, ac praecipue caritas, et pura intentio divini servitii, et familiaritas cum Deo in spiritualibus devotionis exercitiis, et zelus sincerus animarum ad gloriam eius qui eas creavit ac redemit...

(2) Apostolic: Pro Proximis [cf. Pars VII: De Missionibus]

CSJ 308: Cum scopus ac finis ad quem tendit haec Societas sit, varias mundi partes [quocumque], ex obedientia summi Vicarii Christi Domini nostri, vel Superioris eiusdem Societatis, peragando, verbum Dei praedicare, Confessiones audire, et reliquis poterit mediis uti, divina gratia aspirante, ad animas iuvandas necessarium esse, vel in primis rationi



*consentaneum visum est... Et quia boni simul et eruditi, pauci inveniuntur...boni simul et litterati essent ...*

**CSJ 360:** *...nihil aliud in litteris quam divinam gloriam et animarum fructum quaerente; et in suis orationibus gratiam, ut in doctrina proficient ad hunc finem, crebro petant...*

**CSJ 400:** *Scopum illum intuendo, ad quem studia Societatis diriguntur, sub ipsorum finem congruum erit ad arma spiritualia in proximorum auxilium tractanda assuescere incipient...*

**CSJ 813:** *Ad conservationem et incrementum non solum corporis, id est eorum uae externa sunt, sed etiam spiritus Societatis, atque ad assecutionem finis quem sibi praefigit, auxilii animarum ad ultimum et supernaturalem suum finem consequendum, media illa quae cum Deo instrumentum coniungunt, media illa quae cum Deo instrumentum coniungunt ac disponunt ut a divina manu recte gubernetur, efficaciora sunt quam quae illud disponunt erga homines...*

§§§

[C] Modus Noster procedendi<sup>210</sup>

**CSJ 92:** *...Cum etiam semper parati esse, iuxta nostrae professionis rationem et procedendi modum, ad discurrendum per has et illas mundi partes debeamus, quodcumque oer Summum Pontificem, vel Superiorem nostrum immediatum fuerit nobis iniunctum; ut melius secundum Dei voluntatem huiusmodi missiones fiant...*

**CSJ 152:** *Admittere homines difficili admodum ingenio, vel inutiles Congregationi, licet ipsismet non inutile foret admitti, considerantes tamen Instituti nostri finem ac modum procedendi modum, persuademus nobis in Domino ad Ipsius maius servitium et laudem non expedire.*

**CSJ 216:** *... si tempore probationis in aliquo morbus aut debilitas huiusmodi cereretur cum qua eum non posse progredi in laboribus uod noster procedendi modus requirit ad Deo in eo serviendum videretur...*

**CSJ 398:** *... non tamen sunt recipiendae obligations vel condiciones quae sinceritatem impediant nostri in procedendo modi, qui est dare gratis, quae gratis accepimus...*

**CSJ 629:** *Quocumque Superior mittet aliquem, eum plene instruere, et ordinarie in scriptis, debet, tam de modo procedendi quam de mediis quibus eum uti velit ad finem, quem in animo habet...ad maius servitium Deo fiat, magisque commune bonum per personas Societatis iuvetur...id magis exigit...*

**CSJ 789:** *... sed ita regere universum huius Societatis corpus ut conservetur et, gratia divina aspirante, in bono suo stato et modo procedendi ad Dei et Domini nostri gloriam crescat...*

**CSJ 802:** *His Praepositi Minister vir esse sollicitus, et discretionis, et, si fieri posset, doctrinae dono, et specie honesta, ac modo agendi verbo et litteris cum oni hominum genere praeditus esse deberet... ad gloriam divinam valeat.*

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□

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<sup>210</sup> Ignatius often uses the word *religion* in the medieval canonical sense of a *religious institute* [cf CSJ 553, 816]. He uses the term *Institute* of the Society to mean, first and fundamentally, the manner in which its members live and work, as contexts and synonymous phrases reveal: *el fin de nuestro Instituto y modo do proceder...* [cf. CSJ 152; 216; 586; 602; 603] – [cf. *St. Ignatius of Loyola. The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. Translated, with an Introduction and a Commentary*, by George Ganss, SJ. St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources 1970, p. 43].

□□□□□

[E] ... I offer to you and consecrate to Your Service...

... offer ... in union with your merits and those of your Blessed Son...

[I] THE INDWELLING OF THE MOST HOLY TRINITY

A. THE FACT OF THE INDWELLING

1. God's Immensity:

"... *If I climb to the highest heavens, you are there; there, too, if I lie in Sheol...*" (Ps 139:7, ff.).

"... *Since it is in him that we live, and move, and exist...*" (Ac 17:28).

St. Thomas treats of God's omnipresence through presence, essence and potency (I, q. 8, a. 3). This general presence of God is explained in the continuation of the creative act, which produces reality, not through some instrument, but immediately. Thus God, as efficient Cause, is effectively **present** in all things, in so far as He effectively **conserves** them

2. A Special Divine Presence: Sacred Scripture also speaks of a special presence of God:

"... *Wisdom will never make its way into a crafty soul, nor stay in a body that is in debt to sin...*" (Ws 1:4)

"... *If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to live and make our home with him...*" (Jn 14:23). [This verb is in the future, and would seem to indicate a new and "special" coming on the part of God].

"... *God is love and anyone who lives in love, lives in God and God lives in him...*" (1 Jn 4:16)

"... *And this hope is not deceptive, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us...*" (Rm 5:5).

"... *Didn't you realize that you were God's temple and that the Spirit of God was living among you...?*" (1 Co 3:16)

"... *Your body, you know, is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, since you received him from God. You are not your own property; you have been bought and paid for. That is why you should use your body for the glory of God...*" (1 Co 6:19, 20).

### 3. Throughout Tradition:

#### a. **The Creed of Epiphanius (about 374):**

“... We believe also in the Holy Spirit, who spoke in the Law, and preached through the prophets, and descended to Jordan, and spoke through the prophets, and lives in the faithful..” (D-S 44)

b. **Leo XIII’s Encyclical, “Divinum Illud Munus” (May 9, 1897):** (D-S 3325-3331) - in this Encyclical, the Pope treats of the special presence of the whole Trinity, which is “**appropriated**” to the Holy Spirit (D-S 3331).

c. **Pius XII’s Encyclical, “Mystici Corporis” (June 29, 1943):** the Divine Persons are said to “indwell” inasmuch as, being present in a mysterious way to living, intellectual creatures, they are attained by these through knowledge and love (l, q. 43, a. 3), but in a manner which transcends all nature and is quite intimate and unique. In order to achieve some little understanding of this mystery, it is necessary to employ the method recommended by the 1st Vatican Council (D-S 3016). Light is sought for some partial perception of God’s hidden truths in a comparison (*analogy*) between the various aspects of the divine Mystery of faith, in a comparison of the various truths contained therein, and the last end toward which all is directed:

**“...thus, when our wise Predecessor of happy memory, Leo XIII, was treating of this union of ours with Christ and the indwelling of the divine Paraclete within us, he appropriately turned his gaze to that beatific vision wherein one day in heaven this mystical union will find its perfect consummation..’ This marvelous union,’ he wrote, ‘known by that special name indwelling, differs only by reason of our condition, or state, from that union in which God embraces and beatifies the citizens of heaven...’ (Divinum Illud Munus [ D-S 3331]. In that vision, it will be granted to the eyes of the mind, its power augmented by supernatural light, to contemplate the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, for all eternity, to witness close at hand the processions of the Divine Persons, and to enjoy a beatitude very similar to that with which the Holy and Undivided Trinity is blessed...” (D-S 3815).**

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## B. THE NATURE OF THE DIVINE INDWELLING

Theologians have disputed and written much concerning the nature of the Divine Indwelling. Here are some of the major opinions:

1, **F. Suarez, SJ:** the formal cause of the Indwelling is in supernatural knowledge and love, independently of the presence of immensity. The supernatural friendship which charity establishes between God and the soul, demands the real presence and not only the intentional presence of God in the soul. By the power of the friendship, God would really come to the soul even if He were not already there by any other title (e.g., the presence of immensity).

Evaluation: this view has not satisfied the majority of theologians, in that friendship pertains to the affective order - love, as such, does not make the beloved present.

**2. John of St. Thomas**: presupposing the presence of immensity, sanctifying grace through the operations of knowledge and love, which proceed from faith and charity, is the formal cause of the Indwelling of the Trinity. Such knowledge and love do not constitute the presence of God in us, but, presupposing that God is already in the soul by the presence of immensity, the special presence of the Divine Persons consists in supernatural knowledge and love, or in the operations which proceed from grace.

Evaluation: this does seem superior to Suarez' theory, but still presents this difficulty: if the operations of knowledge and love, proceeding from grace, were indeed the formal cause of the Indwelling of the Trinity, the indwelling would be denied to those baptized before the use of reason, or to the souls of the just during sleep - to those actually not performing acts of knowledge and love.

Response: but even in such cases, there would be a certain permanent presence of the Trinity, by reason of the procession of the virtues of charity and faith, which are capable of producing that presence.

Yet: some theologians still respond that these virtues only give the power, or capacity of producing such acts - and the logical conclusion would be that if these were not actually operating, there would be no Divine Indwelling.

**3. Galtier,SJ**: the Indwelling consists formally in a physical and loving union between God and the soul. This union is effected by sanctifying grace, in virtue of which the one and triune God is given to the soul and is substantially and personally present to the soul, making it share in the divine life. Grace is like a seal on fluid matter, and for the permanence of the seal on such matter, it is necessary that the seal be impressed constantly; so, in like manner, if grace - which is the assimilative imprint of the Divine Essence in the soul - is to remain in the soul, it is necessary that this divine nature be physically present to the soul.

Evaluation: this interpretation is rejected by many theologians because it does not seem to differentiate fully the Indwelling from the common mode of God's existence *per essentiam* in all created things.

**4. Gonzalez**: would blend the theories of John of St. Thomas and Galtier: the Divine Persons are made present in some way by the efficacy and conservation of sanctifying grace - since this grace gives a formal and physical participation in the divine nature as such, and therefore, gives also a participation in the intimate life of God.

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The Trinity is present to the soul through sanctifying grace - the just soul enters into contact with the Trinity by the operations of knowledge and love which flow from the grace itself. By the production of Grace, God is united to the soul as Principle - by

the operations of knowledge and love, the soul is united to the Divine Persons as terminus of these same operations.

Therefore: the Indwelling of the Trinity is **both an ontological and psychological reality**:

- ontological: by reason of the production and conservation of grace;
- psychological: by reason of supernatural knowledge and love., at least virtually experienced.

**5. No Agreement can be achieved among Theologians in this Mystery**: in his Encyclical, *Mystici Corporis*, Pius XII stated the following:

*"... It must be remembered that we are dealing with a hidden mystery which during our exile on earth can never be completely unveiled, never altogether understood, nor adequately expressed in human language..."* (D-S 3815).

**6. Theologians do agree on these points**:

**a. It is not a Hypostatic Union**: for the individual retains his/her own personality - hence, this is not a personal union, but a real moral union. For the Trinity is present not only through an effect of the divine operation, but also through the divine substance.

**b. The Trinity is present as an efficient and exemplary cause**, as an Object known and loved: - a rejection of Peter Lombard's opinion.

**c. This Indwelling is common to all three Divine Persons**: however, it is often rightfully "appropriated" to the Holy Spirit.

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### C. THE PURPOSE OF THE DIVINE INDWELLING

**1. To give us a Share in the Divine Life**: God's dwelling in us as in His Temple, is not best exemplified by the presence of the Eucharist in the Tabernacle. God's grace puts in us a new life, a participated divine life. The doctrine of the Divine Indwelling is very closely associated with the doctrine of the Divine Filiation. This generation of those who respond as children of God (cf I Jn 3:1), presupposes a continued act of God for as long as the individual remains in friendship and grace. If God were to withdraw His conserving action, all would cease to be. Thus, it is the Divine Life within: *"... and I live, now not with my own life, but with the life of Christ who lives in me..."* (Ga 2:20).

This Indwelling is an image, or a reflection of the Trinity. This adoptive filiation has some similarity with the eternal generation of the Word - our union with God is something similar to the union between the Son and the Father through the Holy Spirit (Jn 17:20-23). We are one with God by the formal and physical participation of His own divine nature. It is the three Persons Who dwell in us, since it is not the property

of any one Person in particular to engender us as children of God, but it is an action common to all.

**2. To make God the Mover and Ruler of all our actions:** life is essentially dynamic, active and developing. To live the divine life, is to operate in a divine mode. The theological virtues have God as He is in Himself as their immediate object. However, such sublime virtues must be accommodated to the human mode which is necessarily impressed upon them - hence, they cannot develop fully the immense virtuality which is theirs. This is the reason for the Gifts of the Holy Spirit which perfect the human faculties for these infused virtues. Under the influence of these Gifts, human reason is more acted upon than acting of itself, and the resulting acts are materially human, but formally divine. The unique Mover in the Gifts of God is God, while human beings are limited to receiving the divine movement and seconding it with docility. Through the divine motion of the Gifts, it is no longer human reason which governs, but the power of God.

**3. To make God the Object of Fruition by an unexplainable Experience:** individuals advanced in the spiritual life speak of this august experience of the Blessed Trinity intensely working in them:

“...This Flame of Love is the Spirit... and this flame the soul feels within it, not only as a fire that has consumed and transformed it in sweet love, but also as a fire which burns within it and sends out a flame, as I have said, and that flame bathes the soul in glory, and refreshes it with the temper of divine life...”  
(St. John of the Cross, *Living Flame of Love* , Stanza I, n. 3).

The Divine Persons are given to us that we may “experience”, or “enjoy” Them. This experimental knowledge of God, although substantially the same, is infinitely superior in its mode to that which is had of Him through reason enlightened by faith.

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## [II] SACRAMENTAL CHARACTER ACCORDING TO THE MAGISTERIUM

### A. The Code of Canon Law

[*Sacrae Disciplinae Leges* - January 25, 1983]

#### Canon # 845,§ 1:

“Because they **imprint a character**, the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and order cannot be repeated.

#### Canon # 879:

“The sacrament of confirmation **confers a character**. By it the baptized continue their path of christian initiation. They are enriched with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and are more closely linked to the Church. They are made strong and more firmly obliged by word and deed to witness to Christ and to spread and defend the faith.

**Canon 1008:**

“By divine institution some among Christ’s faithful are, through the sacrament of order, **marked with an indelible character** and are thus constituted sacred ministers; thereby they are **consecrated and deputed** so that, each according to his own gade, they fulfil, **in the person of Christ the Head, the offices of teaching, sanctifying and ruling, and so they nourish the people of God.**

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**B. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Exhortation**  
**Pastores Dabo Vobis - March 25, 1992**

[With the rich doctrine and varied terminology used throughout this document, the following is what may be a somewhat “arbitrary” listing of some of the terms used to describe Priestly Character]:

**Character**

**# 70:** “With the sacramental outpouring of the Holy Spirit who **consecrates** and sends forth, the priest is **configured** to the likeness of Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd of the Church, and is sent forth to carry out a pastoral ministry. In this way, **the priest is marked permanently and indelibly in his inner being as a mister of Jesus and of the Church.** He comes to **share in a permanent and irreversible way of life** and is entrusted with a pastoral ministry which, because it is **rooted in his being and involves his entire life**, is itself permanent. The sacrament of Holy Orders confers upon the priest the sacramental grace which gives him **a share not only in Jesus’ saving power and ministry, but also in His pastoral love.** At the same time, it ensures the priest can count on all the actual graces he needs, whenever they are necessary and useful for the worthy and perfect exercise of the ministry he has received.

**Configuration**

**# 3:** “...The concern of the 1990 Synod of Bishops and its discussion focused on the increase of vocations to the priesthood and the formation of candidates in an attempt to help them come to know and follow Jesus - as they prepare to be **ordained** and to live the sacrament of holy orders, which **configures** them to Christ the Head and Shepherd, the Servant and Spouse of the Church...”

**# 15:** “...Through the laying on of hands [cf. Ac 6:6; 1 Tm 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tm 1:6] which transmits the gift of the Spirit, they are called and **empowered** to continue the same ministry of reconciliation of shepherding the flock of God and of teaching [cf. Ac 20:28; 1 P 5:2]. Therefore, priests are called to **prolong the presence of Christ**, the one High Priest, embodying His way of life and making Him visible in the midst of the flock entrusted to their care...” This is the ordinary and proper way in which ordained

ministers **share in the one Priesthood of Christ**. By the **sacramental anointing** of holy orders, the Holy Spirit **configures** them in a new and special way to Jesus Christ, the Head and Shepherd; he forms and strengthens them with His pastoral charity; and He gives them an authoritative role in the Church as servants of the proclamation of the Gospel to every people and of the fulness of Christian life to all the baptized..."

**# 21:** "...By **sacramental consecration**, the priest is **configured** to Jesus Christ as Head and Shepherd of the Church, and he is endowed with **a spiritual power** ... which is a **share** in the authority with which Jesus Christ guides the Church through His Spirit. By virtue of this **consecration** brought about by the out-pouring of the Spirit in the sacrament of holy orders, the spiritual life of the priest is **marked, molded and characterized** by the way of thinking and acting proper to Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd of the Church, and which are summed up in his Pastoral charity..."

**# 23:** "...The **internal principle**, the **force** which animates and guides the spiritual life of the priest in as much as he is **configured** to Christ, the Head and Shepherd, in pastoral charity, as a **participation** in Jesus Christ's own pastoral charity, a gift freely bestowed by the Holy Spirit, and likewise a task and a call which demand a free and committed response on the part of the priest..."

**# 71:** "... The formation of the priest in its spiritual dimension is required by the new Gospel of Life, to which he has been called in a specific way by the Holy Spirit, poured out in the sacrament of Holy Orders. The Spirit, by **consecrating the priest and configuring** him to Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd creates a **bond** which, **located in the priests very being**, demands to be assimilated and lived out in a personal, free and conscious way through an even richer communion of life and love and attitudes of Jesus Christ. In this **bond** between the Lord Jesus and the priest, an **ontological and psychological bond**, a **sacramental and moral bond**, is the **foundation** and likewise the **power** for that 'life according to the Spirit' and that 'radicalism of the Gospel' to which every priest is called today and which is fostered by ongoing formation in its spiritual aspect..."

### Consecration

**# 11:** "...Jesus then presents Himself as filled with the Spirit, '**consecrated with an anointing**', 'sent to preach the good news to the poor.' He is the Messiah, Who is priest, prophet and king... the Synod Fathers reflected on the problem of priestly formation in the present-day circumstances. This problem cannot be solved without the previous reflection on the goal of formation, i.e., **the ministerial priesthood, as participation in the Church - in the very priesthood of Jesus Christ**..."

**# 18:** "...The priest **shares in Christ's consecration and mission** in a specific and authoritative way, through the sacrament of Holy Orders, by virtue of which he is **configured** in his being to Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd, and **shares** in the mission of 'preaching the good news to the poor' **in the name and person of Christ Himself**..."



**# 20:** "...the Conciliar text [PO 12] goes on to point out some elements necessary for determining what constitutes **the specific quality** of the priest's spiritual life. These are elements connected with the priest's **consecration**, which **configures** him to Christ the Head and Shepherd of the Church, with the Mission, or ministry peculiar to the priest; which equips and obliges him to be **a living instrument of Christ**, the eternal priest and to act in the name and person of Christ Himself - and with His entire life, called to manifest and witness in a fundamental way the radicalism of the Gospel..."

**# 24**" "...The Spirit of the Lord **anointed** Christ and sent Him forth to announce the Gospel [cf. Lk 4:18]. **The priest's mission is not extraneous to his consecration**, or juxtaposed to it, but represents its intrinsic and vital purpose: consecration is for mission. In this sense, not only consecration, but mission as well is under **the seal of the Spirit** and the influence of its sanctifying power..."

### Empowerment

**# 15:** "... Through the laying on of hands [cf. Ac 6:6; 1 Tm 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tm 1:6] which **transmits the gift of the Spirit**, they are **called and empowered** to continue the same ministry of reconciliation of shepherding the flock of God and of teaching [cf. Ac 20:28; I P 5:2]. Therefore, priests are called to **prolong the presence of Christ**, the one High Priest, embodying His way of life and making Him visible in the midst of the flock entrusted to their care...'

### Espousals

**# 22:** "...Hence, Christ stands 'before' the Church and 'nourishes and cherishes her', giving His life for her. The priest is called to be the living image of Jesus Christ, the Spouse of the Church [ cf. *Mulieris Dignitatem*, 26]. Of course, he will always remain a member of the community as a believer along-side his other brothers and sisters, who have been called by the Spirit, but in virtue of his **configuration** to Christ, Head and Shepherd, the priest stands in this **spousal relationship** with regard to the community.

**# 23:** "...Inasmuch as he represents Christ, the Head, Shepherd and **Spouse** of the Church, the priest is placed not only in the Church, but also in the forefront of the Church..."

### Mind of Christ

**# 27:** "...For all Christians without exception, the radicalism of the Gospel represents a fundamental, undeniable demand flowing from the call of Christ to follow and imitate him by virtue of **the intimate communion of life** brought about by the Spirit [cf. Mt 8:18, ff.; 10:37, f.; Mk 8:34-38; 10:17-21; Lk 9L57, ff.]

**# 40:** "...The aim of education for a Christian is to attain to the 'stature of the fullness of Christ' under the influence of the Spirit. This happens when, imitating and sharing Christ's charity, a person turns his **entire life into an act of loving service** [cf. Jn 13:14-15], offering to God a spiritual worship acceptable to Him [cf. Rm 12], and

**giving himself** to his brothers and sisters. This service of love is the fundamental meaning of every vocation, and it finds a specific expression in the priestly vocation. Indeed a priest is called to live out, as radically as possible, the pastoral charity of Jesus, the love of the Good Shepherd, 'who lays down his life for his sheep' [cf. Jn 10:11]

### Mission

**# 12:** "... It is within the Church's mystery, as a mystery of **Trinitarian communion**, in **missionary tension**, that every Christian identity is revealed, and likewise, **the specific identity of the priest** and his ministry. Indeed, the priest, by virtue of the **consecration** which he receives in the sacrament of orders, is sent forth by the Father, through the mediatorship of Jesus Christ, to whom he is **configured** in a special way as Head and Shepherd of His people in order to live and work by the power of the Holy Spirit in service of the Church and for the salvation of the world..."

### Obsequium = Self-OBLATION

**# 13:** "...Jesus is the promised Good Shepherd [cf. Ex 34], Who knows each one of His sheep, and **offers His life for them** and who wishes to gather them as one flock with one Shepherd [cf. Jn 10:11-16]. He is the Shepherd who has come 'not to be served, but to serve' [Mt 20:28], who in the **paschal action** of the washing of the feet [cf. Jn 13:1-20] leaves to His disciples **a Model of Service** to one another and who freely offers Himself as an 'innocent Lamb, sacrificed for redemption' [cf. Jn 1:36; Rv 5:6, 12]..."

**#15:** "...In the Church and on behalf of the Church, priests are **a sacramental representation of Christ** - the Head and Shepherd - authoritatively proclaiming His word, **repeating His acts of forgiveness and His offer of salvation** -- particularly in baptism, penance and the Eucharist, showing His loving concern to the point of **a total gift of self** for the flock, which they gather into unity and lead to the Father, through Christ and in the Spirit..."

**# 21:** "... Jesus' service attains its fullest expression in His death on the cross, i.e., **in His total gift of self**, in humility and love. 'He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men...and became obedient unto death, even death on the Cross.

**# 22:** "...**Christ's Gift of Himself to His Church**, the fruit of His love, is described in terms of that **unique Gift of Self made by the bridegroom and the bride**, as the sacred text often suggest. Jesus is **the true Bridegroom** who offers to the church the wine of salvation [cf. Jn 2:11] . He Who is 'the Head of the Church, His body, and is Himself its savior ' [Ep 5:23], 'loved the Church and **gave Himself** up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present the Church to Himself in splendor, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish..."

**# 23 [the whole article]** "...The **internal principle, the force** which animates and guides the spiritual life of the priest inasmuch as He is **configured** to Christ the Head

and Shepherd, is pastoral charity, as a **participation** in Jesus Christ's own pastoral charity, **a gift** freely bestowed by the Holy Spirit and likewise a task and a call which demand a free and committed response on the part of the priest.

“The essential content of this pastoral charity is **the gift of self, the total gift of self to the Church, following the example of Christ**. ‘Pastoral charity is the virtue by which we imitate Christ in **His self-giving and service**. It is not just what we do, but **our gift of self** which manifests **Christ's life for His flock**. Pastoral charity determines our way of thinking and acting, our way of **relating to people**. It makes special demands on us.’

“**The gift of self**, which is the source and synthesis of pastoral charity, is directed toward the Church. This was true of Christ ‘who loved the Church and **gave Himself up** for her’ [Ep 5:25], and the same must be true of the priest. With pastoral charity, which distinguishes the exercise of the priestly ministry as an **amoris officium**, the priest, who welcomes the call to ministry, is in a position to make this a loving choice, as a result of which the Church and souls become his first interest and with this concrete spirituality he becomes capable of loving the universal Church and that part of it entrusted to him with **the deep love of a husband for a wife**. The **gift of self** has no limits, marked as it is by the same apostolic and missionary zeal of Christ, the Good Shepherd, who said: ‘And I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock and one shepherd.’ [cf. Jn 10:16]

“Within the Church community the priest's pastoral charity impels and demands in a particular and specific way **his personal relationship with the presbyterate, united in and with the bishop**, as the Council explicitly states: ‘Pastoral charity requires that a priest always work **in the bond of communion** with the bishop and with his brother priests, lest his efforts be in vain.

“**The gift of self** to the Church concerns her insofar as she is **the body and the bride** of Christ. In this way, the primary point of reference of the priest's charity is Jesus Christ himself. Only in loving and serving **Christ the head and spouse** will charity become a source, a criterion, measure and impetus for the priest's love and service to the Church, **the body and spouse of Christ**. ..

“Pastoral charity, which has its specific source in the sacrament of holy orders, finds its full expression and its supreme nourishment in the Eucharist. as the Council states: ‘This pastoral charity flows mainly from the eucharistic sacrifice, which is thus the center and root of the whole priestly life. The priestly soul strives thereby to apply to itself the action which takes place on the altar of sacrifice’ Indeed the Eucharist represents, makes once again present, the sacrifice of the cross, **the full gift of Christ to the Church, the gift of his body given and his blood shed**, as the supreme witness of the fact that he is Head and Shepherd, **servant and spouse of the Church**. Precisely because of this, the priest's pastoral charity not only flows from the Eucharist but finds in the celebration of the Eucharist its highest realization - just as it is from the Eucharist that he receives the grace and obligation **to give his whole life a ‘sacrificial’ dimension**.

“The same pastoral charity is **the dynamic inner principle** capable of unifying the many different activities of the priest. In virtue of this pastoral charity the essential and permanent demand for unity between the priest’s interior life and all his external actions and the obligations of the ministry can be properly fulfilled, a demand particularly urgent in a socio-cultural and ecclesial context strongly marked by complexity, fragmentation and dispersion. Only by directing every moment and every one of his acts toward **the fundamental choice to ‘give his life for the flock’** can the priest guarantee this unity which is vital and indispensable for his harmony and spiritual balance...”

**# 31:** “The priest’s membership in a particular church and his dedication - even to **the gift of his life** - to the up-building of the Church ‘in the Person of Christ’, the Head and Shepherd, in service of the entire Christian community and in a generous and **filial relationship** with the bishop, must be strengthened by every charism which becomes part of his priestly life and surrounds it ...”

**# 36:** “...The call - Paul VI once said - ‘is an extensive as the response’. There cannot be vocations unless they be there, i.e., unless they be **spontaneous offerings of oneself, conscious, generous, total... oblations we call them**. Here lies in practice, the heart of the matter... It is the humble and penetrating voice of Christ who says, today as yesterday, and even more than yesterday: Come! Freedom reaches its supreme foundation: precisely that of **oblation**, of generosity, of sacrifice. The **free oblation** which constitutes the intimate and most precious care of a person’s response to God who calls, finds its incomparable model, indeed **its living root**, in the most **free oblation which Jesus Christ, the first of those called, made to His Father’s Will**: Consequently when Christ came into the world, he said: ‘Sacrifice and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me Then I said: Lo, I have come to do your will, o God...!’ [cf. Heb 10:5, 7].

**# 65:** “...If training for the priesthood is, as it should be, essentially the preparation for future ‘shepherds in the likeness of Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd’, who better than Jesus Himself through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit can give them and fully develop in them that pastoral charity which He Himself lived to the point of **total self giving** [cf. Jn 15:13; 10:11] and which He wishes all priests to live in their turn.

### **Ontological Bond**

**#11:** “... These statements [end of Synod to God’s people] showed an awareness of the specific **ontological bond** which unites the priesthood to Christ the High Priest and Good Shepherd...”

**# 13:** “...The new priestly people which is the Church, not only has its authentic image in Christ, but also receives from Him **a real ontological share in His own eternal priesthood**, to which she must conform every aspect of life...”

**# 25:** “... For a spiritual life that **grows** through the exercise of the ministry, it is essential that the priest should continually renew and deepen his awareness of being a minister of Jesus Christ by virtue of **sacramental consecration and configuration**

**to Christ**, the Head and Shepherd of His Church ... In this way, the exercise of his ministry deeply involves the priest himself as a conscious free and responsible person. The **bond** with Jesus Christ, assured by **consecration and configuration** to Him in the Sacrament of Orders gives rise to and requires in the priest the **further bond** which comes from his 'intention', i.e., from the conscious and free choice in his ministerial activities what the Church intends to do. This **bond tends** by its very nature to become as extensive and as profound as possible, affecting one's way of thinking, feeling and life itself: in other words, creating a series of moral and spiritual **dispositions** which correspond to the ministerial actions performed by the priest..."

### Participation

**# 17:** "...By its very nature, the ordained ministry can be carried out only to the extent that the priest is united to Christ through **sacramental participation** in the priestly order, and thus to the extent that he is in hierarchical communion with his own bishop. The ordained ministry has a radical communitarian form, and can be carried out as a collective work..."

**# 24:** "...Live the mystery that has been placed in your hands!... Be aware of what you are doing... Do not neglect the gifts you have! [cf. 1 Tm 4:14; cf. 2 Tm 1:6]. The **relationship** between a priest's spiritual life and the exercise of his ministry can be explained by the sacrament of holy orders. The ministry of the priest, precisely because of its **participation** in the saving ministry of Jesus Christ, the Head and Shepherd, cannot fail to express and live out his pastoral charity which is both the source and spirit of his service and **gift of self**..."

### Relationship

**# 12:** [whole]: "The priest's identity, as the Synod Fathers wrote, like every Christian identity, has its **source in the Blessed Trinity**, which is revealed and is communicated to people in Christ, establishing in Him and through the Spirit, the Church as 'the seed and the beginning of the kingdom.' The Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici*, summarizing the Council's teaching, presents the Church as mystery, communion and mission: 'She is mystery because the very life and love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are **the gift** gratuitously offered to all those who are born of the water and the Spirit [cf. Jn 3:5] and called to relive the very communion of God and to manifest it and communicate it in history [mission].

"It is within the Church's mystery, as **a mystery of Trinitarian communion, in missionary tension**, that every Christian identity is revealed, and likewise the specific identity of the priest and his ministry. Indeed, the priest, by virtue of the consecration which he receives in the sacrament of orders, is sent forth by the Father through the mediatorship of Jesus Christ, to Whom he is **configured** in a special way as Head and Shepherd of His people, in order to live and work by the power of the Holy Spirit in service of the Church and for the salvation of the world.

"In this way **the fundamentally "relational" dimension of priestly identity** can be understood. Though the priesthood which **arises from the depths of the**

**ineffable mystery of God, that is, from the love of the Father, the grace of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit's gift of unity**, the priest sacramentally enters into communion with the bishop and other priests, in order to serve the People of God who are the Church and to draw all mankind to Christ in accordance with the Lord's prayer: Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one... even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me...' [cf. Jn 17: 11, 21].

“Consequently, the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood cannot be defined except through **this multiple and rich interconnection of relationships which arise from the Blessed Trinity and which are prolonged in the communion of the Church, as a sign and instrument of Christ, of communion with God and of the unity with humanity [LG 1]**. In this context the ecclesiology of communion becomes decisive for understanding the dignity of the priest, his essential dignity, and his vocation and mission among the people of God and in the world. **Reference to the Church** is therefore necessary, if not primary, in defining the identity of the priest. *As a mystery, the Church is essentially **related** to Jesus Christ.* She is his fullness, his body, **His spouse**. She is the ‘sign’ and living ‘memorial’ of his permanent presence and activity in our midst and on our behalf. The priest finds the full truth of his identity in being **a derivation, a specific participation in and continuation of Christ Himself, the one High Priest of the new and eternal covenant**. ¶ The priest is **a living and transparent image of Christ the priest**. The priesthood of Christ, the expression of His absolute ‘newness’ in salvation history, **constitutes the one source and essential model of the priesthood shared by all Christians and the priest in particular**. **Reference to Christ** is thus the absolutely necessary key for understanding the reality of the priesthood.”

**# 14:** “...Jesus thus established **a close relationship between the ministry entrusted to the apostles, and His own Mission**: ‘He who receives you, receives me, and he who receives me, receives him who sent me’ [cf. Mt 10:40]. He who hears you, hears me - and he who rejects you, rejects me, and he who rejects me, rejects him who sent me’ [Lk 10:16]. Indeed in the light of the Paschal event, of the death and resurrection, the Fourth Gospel affirms this with great force and clarity: ‘As the Father has sent me, even so I send you’ [Jn 20:21; cf. 13:20; 17:18]. Just as Jesus has a **Mission** which comes to Him directly from God and makes present the very authority of God [cf. Mt 7:29; 21:23; Mk 1:27; 11:28; Lk 20:2; 24:19]. So, too, the apostles have a **mission** which comes to them from Jesus...”

**# 16:** “The priest’s **fundamental relationship is to Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd**. Indeed, the priest **participates** in a specific and authoritative way in the **consecration/anointing** and in the mission of Christ [cf. Lk 4:18-19]. But, intimately linked to this **relationship** is the priest’s **relationship** with the Church. It is not a question of ‘**relations**’ which are merely juxtaposed, but rather of ones which are **interiorly united in a kind of mutual immanence**. The priest’s **relation** to the Church is inscribed in the very **relation** that the priest has to Christ such that the **sacramental**

**representation** to Christ serves as the basis and inspiration for the **relation** of the priest to the Church...

“...The **relation** of the priest to Jesus Christ and in Him, to His Church, is found **in the very being of the priest** by virtue of his **sacramental anointing** and in his activity, i.e., in his mission, or ministry. In particular: ‘ the priest minister is the servant of Christ present in the Church as mystery, communion and mission. In virtue of his **participation**, in the **anointing and mission** of Christ, the priest can continue Christ’s prayer, word, sacrifice and salvific action in the Church.

- In this way, the priest is a servant of the Church as mystery, because he actualizes the Church’s sacramental signs of the presence of the Risen Christ.

- He is a servant of the priest as communion, because in union with the bishop, he is closely related to the presbyterate - he builds up the unity of the Church community in the harmony of diverse vocations, charisms and services.

- Finally the priest is a servant of the Church as Mission, because he makes community a herald and witness to the gospel...”

### Trinity

**# 12:** “... The priest’s identity as the Synod Fathers wrote, ‘like every Christian identity, has **its source in the Blessed Trinity**... ‘

**# 26:** :... Finally, the priest is called to express in his life the authority and service of Jesus Christ, the Head and Priest of the Church, by encouraging and leading the ecclesial community, i.e., by gathering together ‘the family of God as a fellowship endowed with the spirit of unity’, by leading it **in Christ, through the Spirit to the Father**...”

### Victim

**# 21:** “... Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, His body. He is the Head in the new and unique sense, of being a ‘servant’, according to His own words: ‘The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to **give his life** as a ransom for many...’ The authority of Jesus Christ as Head coincides then with **His service and with His gift**, with **His total, humble and loving dedication in behalf of the Church**. All this He did in perfect obedience to the Father: He is the one true **Suffering Servant of God, both Priest and Victim**...”

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**C. Catechism of the Catholic Church**  
**John Paul II, *Fidei Depositum*, October 11, 1992**  
**[30th Anniversary of the Opening of Vatican II]**

**In General**

**# 698:** “The **seal** is close to that of **anointing**. ‘The Father has set his **seal**’ on Christ and also seals us in him [Jn 6:27; cf. 2 Co 1:22; Ep 1:13; 4:30]. Because this **seal** indicates the indelible effect of **the anointing with the Holy Spirit** in the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders, the image of the **seal** [ *sphragis* ] has been used in some theological traditions to express the indelible ‘**character**’ imprinted by these three unrepeatable sacraments.

**# 1121:** The three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders confer, in addition to grace, a sacramental **character**, or ‘**seal**’ by which the Christian **shares in Christ’s priesthood** and is made a member of the Church according to different states and functions. This **configuration** to Christ and to the Church, brought about by the Spirit, is indelible [DS 1609]. It remains forever in the Christian as a positive disposition for grace, a promise and guarantee of divine protection and as a vocation to divine worship and to the service of the Church. Therefore, these sacraments can never be repeated.

**Baptism**

**# 1216:** “‘This bath is called *enlightenment*, because those who receive this [catechetical] instruction are enlightened in their understanding..’ Having received in Baptism the Word, ‘the true light that enlightens every man,’ the person baptized has been enlightened, he becomes a son of light, indeed he becomes light himself:

“Baptism is God’s most beautiful and magnificent gift... We call it gift, grace, anointing, enlightenment, garment of immortality, bath of rebirth, seal and most precious gift.

It is called **gift** because it is conferred on those who bring nothing of their own;  
**grace** since it is given even to the guilty;  
**Baptism** because sin is buried in the water;  
**anointing** for it is priestly and royal as are those who are anointed;  
**enlightenment** because it radiates light;  
**clothing** since it veils our shame;  
**bath** because it washes;  
**seal** as it is our guard and sign of God’s Lordship.

**# 1272:** “**Incorporated** into Christ by Baptism, the person baptized is **configured** to Christ. Baptism **seals** the Christian with the indelible spiritual **mark** [ *character* ] of his belonging to Christ. No sin can erase this mark, even if sin prevents Baptism from bearing the fruits of salvation [DS 1609-1619]. Given once for all, Baptism cannot be repeated.



**# 1273:** “**Incorporated** into the Church by Baptism, the faithful have received the **sacramental character** that **consecrates** them for Christian religious worship [LG 11] The baptismal **seal** enables and commits Christians to serve God by a vital participation in the holy liturgy of the Church and to exercise their baptismal priesthood by the witness of holy lives and practical charity [LG 10].

**# 1274:** “**The Holy Spirit has marked us with the seal of the Lord** [**‘Dominicus character’** ] ‘for the day of redemption’. Baptism indeed is **the seal of eternal life**. The faithful Christian who has ‘kept the seal’ will be able to depart this life **marked with the sign of faith** with his baptismal faith in expectation of the blessed vision of God - the consummation of faith - and in the hope of resurrection.

**# 1280:** “Baptism imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual sign, the character, which consecrates the baptized person for Christian worship. Because of the character, Baptism cannot be repeated [cf. DS 1609; 1624].

**# 2769:** “In Baptism and Confirmation, the handing on [**traditio**] of the Lord’s Prayer signifies a new birth into the divine life. Since Christian prayer is our speaking to God with the very word of God, those who are ‘born anew... through the living and abiding word of God’ [I P 1:23], learn to invoke their Father by the one Word he always hears. They can henceforth do so, for the **seal** of the Holy Spirit’s anointing is indelibly placed on their hearts, ears, lips, indeed **their whole filial being**. This is why most of the patristic commentaries on the Our Father are addressed to catechumens and neophytes. When the Church prays the Lord’s Prayer, it is always the people made up of the ‘new-born’ who pray and obtain mercy [cf. I P 2: 1-10].

### Confirmation

**# 1293:** “In treating the rite of Confirmation, it is fitting to consider the *sign of anointing* and what it signifies: a spiritual *seal*.

“Anointing in biblical and other ancient symbolism, is rich in meaning: oil is a sign of abundance and joy [cf. Dt 11:14; Pss 23:5; 104:15]; it cleanses [anointing before and after a bath], and limbers [the anointing of athletes and wrestlers]; oil is a sign of healing, since it is soothing to bruises and wounds; and it makes radiant with beauty, health and strength.

**# 1304:** “Like Baptism which it completes, Confirmation is given only once, for it too imprints on the soul an **indelible spiritual mark**, the ‘character’. which is the sign that Jesus has marked a Christian with the **seal** of his Spirit by **clothing him with power from on high** so that he may be his **witness** [DS 1609; Lk 24:48-49].

**# 1305:** “This ‘character’ **perfects the common priesthood** of the faithful received in Baptism, and the confirmed person receives **the power to profess faith in Christ publicly** and as it were **officially** [**quasi ex officio** ]. [St. Thomas III, 75, 5, ad 2].

**# 1317:** “Confirmation, like Baptism, imprints a **spiritual mark**, or indelible character on the Christian’s soul; for this reason one can receive this sacrament only once in one’s life.

### Holy Orders

**1563:** “Because it is joined with the episcopal order, the office of priests **shares** in the authority by which Christ himself builds up and sanctifies and rules his Body. Hence, the priesthood of priests, while presupposing the sacraments of initiation, is nevertheless conferred by its own particular sacrament. Through that sacrament priests by the anointing of the Holy Spirit are **signed with a special character** and so are **configured** to Christ the priest in such a way that they are able to act in the person of Christ, the Head” [PO 2]

**# 1570:** “Deacons share in Christ’ mission and grace in a special way [LG 41; AA 16] The Sacrament of Holy Orders marks them with an *imprint* [*character* ] which cannot be removed and which **configures** them to Christ, who made himself the ‘deacon’, or servant of all. [cf. Mk 10:45; Lk 22:27]. Among other tasks, it is the task of deacons to assist the bishop and priests in the celebration of the divine mysteries, above all the Eucharist, in the distribution of Holy Communion, in assisting at and blessing marriages, in the proclamation of the Gospel and presiding over funerals, and in dedicating themselves to the various ministries of charity. [LG 29; SC 35,§ 4; AG 16].

**# 1581:** “This sacrament configures the recipient to Christ by a **special grace of the Holy Spirit**, so that he may serve as **Christ’s instrument** for his Church. By ordination, one is **enabled** to act as a **representative of Christ**, Head of the Church, in His triple office of priest, prophet and king.

**# 1582:** “As in the case of Baptism and Confirmation, this **share in Christ’s office** is granted once and for all. The Sacrament of Holy Orders, like the other two, confers an *indelible spiritual character* and cannot be repeated, or conferred temporarily [PO 16].

**# 1583:** “It is true that someone validly ordained can, for a just reason, be discharged from the obligations and functions linked to ordination, or can be forbidden to exercise them; but he cannot become a layman again in the strict sense [ DS 1767; LG 21; 28; 29; PO 2], because the **character imprinted** by ordination is forever. The vocation and mission received on the day of his ordination **mark** him permanently.

**# 1584:** “Since it is **ultimately Christ who acts and effects salvation through the ordained minister**, the unworthiness of the latter does not prevent Christ from acting [cf. CIC ## 290-293; 1336 § 1, 3, 3, 5, 1338 § 2; DS 1774]. St. Augustine states this forcefully:

“As for the proud minister, he is to be ranked with the devil. Christ’s gift is not thereby profaned: what **flows through him** keeps its purity, and what **passes through him** remains clear and reaches the fertile earth... The **spiritual power** of the

sacrament is indeed comparable to **light**, those to be enlightened receive it in its purity, and if it should pass through defiled beings, it is not itself defiled.

**# 1558:** Episcopal consecration confers, together with the office of sanctifying, also the offices of teaching and ruling... In fact.... by the imposition of hands and through the words of the consecration, the grace of the Holy Spirit is given, and **a sacred character is impressed** in such wise that bishops, in an eminent and visible manner, take the place of Christ himself, teacher, shepherd, and priest, and act as his **representative** [ *in Eius persona agant...*] [LG 21]. By virtue therefore of the Holy Spirit, who has been given to them, bishops have been constituted true and authentic teachers of the faith and have been made pontiffs and pastors [CD 2 § 2].

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#### **D. MORE RECENT REFLECTIONS** **from the Modern Magisterium**

#### **VATICAN II**

#### **LG 11**

“It is through the sacraments and the exercise of the virtues that the sacred nature and organic structure of the priestly community is brought into operation. Incorporated into the Church through baptism, the faithful are consecrated by the baptismal character to the exercise of the cult of the Christian religion. Reborn as children of God, they must confess before others the faith they have received from God through the Church. Bound more intimately to the Church by the sacrament of Confirmation, they are endowed by the Holy Spirit with special strength. Hence they are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith both by word and by deed as true witnesses of Christ...”

#### **AA 3:**

“ The laity have the right and duty with respect to the apostolate from their union with Christ their Head. Incorporated into Christ’s Mystical Body through baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord himself. They are consecrated into a royal priesthood and a holy people [cf. 1 P 2:4-10] in order that they may offer spiritual sacrifices through everything they do, and may witness to Christ throughout the world. For their part, the sacraments, especially the most holy Eucharist, communicate and nourish that charity which is the soul of the entire apostolate.

‘The apostolate is carried on through the faith, hope and charity which the Holy Spirit diffuses in the hearts of all members of the Church. Indeed, the law of love, which is the Lord’s greatest commandment, impels all the faithful to promote God’s glory through the spread of his kingdom and to obtain for all men that eternal life which consists in knowing the only true God and Him

whom He sent, Jesus Christ [cf. Jn 17:3]. On all Christians therefore is laid the splendid burden of working to make the divine message of salvation known and accepted by all men throughout the world...

## **PO 2:**

“The Lord Jesus, whom the Father has made holy and sent into the world’ [Jn 10:36] has made His whole Mystical Body share in the anointing by the Spirit with which He Himself has been anointed [cf. Mt 3:16; Lk 4:18; Ac 4:27; 10:38]. For in Him all the faithful are made a holy and royal priesthood. They offer spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ, and they proclaim the perfections of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. [cf. I P 2:5, 9] Hence, there is no member who does not have a part in the mission of the whole Body. Rather, each one ought to hallow Jesus in his heart and bear witness to Jesus in the spirit of prophecy.

“Now, the same Lord has established certain ministers among the faithful in order to join them together in one body where ‘all the members have not the same function’ [Rm 12:4]. These ministers in the society of the faithful would be able by the sacred power of their order to offer sacrifice and to remit sins. They would perform their priestly office publicly for men in the name of Christ...”

“...Since in their own measure priests participate in the office of the apostles, God gives them the grace to be ministers of Christ Jesus among the people. They shoulder the sacred task of the gospel, so that the offering of the people can be made acceptable through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. For through the apostolic proclamation of the gospel, the People of God is called together and assembled to that when all who belong to this People have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit they can offer themselves as a ‘sacrifice, living holy pleasing to God’ [Rm 12:1]. Through the ministry of priests, the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful is made perfect in union with the sacrifice of Christ, the sole Mediator. Through the hands of priests and in the name of the whole Church, the Lord’s sacrifice is offered in the Eucharist in an un-bloody and sacramental manner until He Himself returns.

“The ministry of priests is directed toward this work and is perfected in it. For their ministry, which takes its start from the gospel message, derives its power and force from the sacrifice of Christ. Its aim is that ‘the entire commonwealth of the redeemed, that is, the community and society of the saints, be offered as a universal sacrifice to God through the High Priest who in His Passion offered His very self so that we might be the body of so exalted a Head.

“The purpose, therefore, which priests pursue by their ministry and life is the glory of God the Father as it is to be achieved in Christ. That glory consists in this: that men knowingly, freely and gratefully accept what God has achieved perfectly through Christ, and manifest it in their whole lives.

Hence, whether engaged in prayer and adoration, preaching the word, offering the Eucharistic sacrifice, ministering the other sacraments, or performing any of the works of the ministry for men, priests are contributing to the extension of God's glory as well as to the development of divine life in men. Since all these activities result from Christ's Passover, they will be crowned in the glorious return of the same Lord when he Himself hands over the kingdom to His God and Father."

### **LG 21:**

"...For the discharging of such great duties, the apostles were enriched by Christ with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit who came upon them [cf. Ac 1:8; 2:4; Jn 20:22-23]. The spiritual gift they passed on to their helpers by the imposition of hands [cf. 1 Rm 4:14; 2 Tm 1:6-7] and it has been transmitted down to us in episcopal consecration. This Sacred Synod teaches that by episcopal consecration is conferred the fullness of the sacrament of orders, that fullness which in the Church's liturgical practice and in the language of the holy Fathers of the Church is undoubtedly called the high priesthood, the apex of the sacred ministry.

"But episcopal consecration, together with the office of sanctifying, also confers the offices of teaching and of governing. [These, however, of their very nature can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the head and the members of the college]. For from tradition, which is expressed especially in liturgical rites and in the practice of the Church both of the East and West, it is clear that by means of the imposition of hands and the words of consecration, the grace of the Holy Spirit is so conferred and the sacred character is so impressed that bishops in an eminent and visible way undertake Christ's own role as Teacher, Shepherd and High Priest, and they act in His Person. Therefore, it devolves on the bishops to admit newly elected members into the episcopal body by means of the sacrament of orders."

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### **Paul VI, *Divinae Consortium Naturae* [1971]**

"...In baptism, neophytes receive forgiveness of sins and adoption as sons of God as well as the **character of Christ** whereby they are made members of the Church and are given a **first sharing in the priesthood of their Savior** [cf. 1 P 2:2-9]. Through the sacrament of confirmation, those who have been born anew in baptism receive the ineffable gift, the Holy Spirit Himself, by which 'they are **endowed with special strength**' and **by the character of this sacrament 'are bound more perfectly to the Church'** [cf. cf. LG 11] and '**are more strictly obliged as true witnesses of Christ, to spread and defend the faith by word and by deed...**' [cf. LG 11] [cf. *The Christian Faith*, Neuner-Dupuis, ALBA n. 1441, p. 400].

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## Synod of Bishops of 1971

### *[Ultimis Temporibus]*

#### Part One, n. 5: Permanence of the Priesthood:

“By the laying on of hands, **a gift of the Holy Spirit** is communicated which cannot be lost [2 Tm 1:6]. This reality **configures** the ordained minister to Christ the Priest, **consecrates** him [PO 2], and makes him **a sharer in Christ’s mission** under its two aspects of authority and service.

“This authority does not belong to the minister as his own: it is manifestation of the Lord’s **exousia**, or power, by which the priest is an ambassador of Christ in the eschatological work of reconciliation [cf. 2 Co 5: 198-20]. He also assists in directing human freedom toward God for the building up of the Christian community.

“The **life-long permanence of this reality which imprints a sign** - and this is a **doctrine of faith** referred to in Church tradition as **the priestly character** - expresses the fact that Christ irrevocably associated the Church with Himself for the salvation of the world, and that the Church herself is **consecrated to Christ in a definitive way for the fulfillment of His work**. The minister, whose life bears **the seal of the gift** received through the sacrament of Orders, reminds the Church that **God’s gift** is irrevocable. In the midst of the Christian community which lives by the Spirit, he is a pledge, despite his defects of the salvific presence of Christ.

“This **special participation in Christ’s priesthood** is in no way lost, even if a priest, for ecclesial or personal reasons, is dispensed or removed from the exercise of his ministry.” [cf. *Official Catholic Teachings. Clergy and Laity*. ed. by Odile M. Liebard. Wilmington NC: McGrath 1978, pp. 329, ## 1266-1269].

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### **Mysterium Ecclesiae, June 24, 1973, Congregation of the FAITH**

#### **[A Declaration]**

#### **The Church associated with the Priesthood of Christ**<sup>211</sup>:

“Christ the Lord, the High Priest of the new and everlasting covenant, wished to associate with his perfect priesthood and to form in its likeness the people he had bought with his own blood [cf. Heb 7:20-22, 26-28;10:14, 21]. He therefore granted his Church **a share in his priesthood**, which consists of the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood. These differ from each other not only in degree but **also in essence**; yet they are mutually complementary within the communion of the Church [ [LG 10].

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<sup>211</sup> cf. Flannery ed., *Vatican Council II. More Post Conciliar Documents*. Collegeville MN . Vol 2, Document # 105, pp 435, f.:

“The common priesthood of the laity, which is also rightly called a royal priesthood [cf. I P 2:9; Rv 1:6; 5:9, ff.] since through it the faithful are united as members of the messianic people with their heavenly King, is conferred by the sacrament of Baptism. By this sacrament ‘the faithful are **incorporated** into the Church and are **empowered** to take part in the worship of the Christian religion; in virtue of **a permanent sign known as a character**: reborn as children of God they are obliged to profess before men the faith they have received through the Church ‘ [ LG 11].

“Moreover, Christ, the Head of the Church, which is his Mystical Body, appointed as ministers of his priesthood his apostles, and through them, their successors, the bishops, that they might **act in his person** within the Church and also in turn legitimately hand over to priests in a subordinate degree the sacred ministry they have received [LG 28]. Thus, there arose in the Church the apostolic succession of the ministerial priesthood for the glory of God and for the service of his people and of the entire human family, which must be converted to God.

“By means of this priesthood bishops and priests are ‘indeed set apart in a certain sense in the midst of God’s people. But this is so, not that they may be separated from the people or from any man, but that they may be totally dedicated to the work for which the Lord raised them up’ [ PO 3]: namely, the work of **sanctifying, teaching and ruling**, the actual execution of which is more precisely specified by the hierarchical communion [LG 24, 27, ff.]. This many-sided work has as its basis and foundation the continuous preaching of the Gospel [PO 4], and as the summit and source of the entire Christian life, the Eucharistic Sacrifice [ LG 11; Trent, DS 1739-1743]. Priests, acting in the Person of Christ, the Head, offer this sacrifice in the Holy Spirit to God the Father in the Name of Christ and in the name of the members of the Mystical Body [Paul VI and DS 1313] This sacrifice is completed in the Holy Supper by which the faithful, partaking of the one body of Christ are all made into one body [cf. I Co 10:16, ff.].

“The Church has ever more closely examined the nature of the ministerial priesthood, which can be shown to have been invariably conferred from apostolic times by a sacred rite [cf. I Tm 4:15; 2 Tm 1:6]. By the assistance of the Holy Spirit, she recognized more clearly as time went on that God wished her to understand that this rite conferred upon priests not only an increase of grace for carrying out ecclesiastical duties in a holy way, but also **a permanent designation by Christ, or character, by virtue of which they are equipped for their work and endowed with the necessary power that is derived from the supreme power of Christ**. The **permanent existence** of this character, the nature of which is explained in different ways by theologians, is taught by the Council of Florence [Conc. Oec. Decr. n. 546 - DS 1313], and reaffirmed by two decrees of the Council of Trent [Conc. Oec. Decr. pp. 685, 742, 744 - DS 1609, 1767, 1774]. In recent times the Second Vatican Council more than once mentioned it [ LG 21; PO 2] and the Second General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops rightly considered **the enduring nature of the priestly character throughout life as pertaining to the teaching of faith** [ Ministerial Priesthood, Part I, 4] The **stable existence of a priestly**

**character** must be recognized by the faithful and has to be taken into account in order to judge properly about the nature of the priestly ministry and the appropriate ways of exercising it.

“ Faithful to Sacred Tradition and to many documents of the Magisterium, the Second Vatican Council taught the following concerning the **power** belonging to the ministerial priesthood: ‘Though everyone can baptize the faithful, **the priest alone can complete the building up of the Body in the Eucharistic sacrifice**’ [ LG 17].’ And again: ‘The same Lord, in order that the faithful might form one body in which ‘all the members have not the same function’ [Rm 12:4], appointed some ministers within the society of believers who **by the power of Orders would be capable of offering the sacrifice and of forgiving sins**’ [ PO 2]

“In the same way, the Second General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops rightly affirmed that **only the priest can act in the person of Christ and preside over and perform the sacrificial banquet in which the People of God are united with the oblation of Christ** [ [The Ministerial Priesthood, Part I, 4]...”

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## E. Directory for the Life and Ministry of Priests

[Congregation for the Clergy, January 31, 1994]

### Chapter I: The Identity of the Priest

1. The entire Church **participates in the priestly anointing of Christ in the Holy Spirit** In the Church, in fact, ‘all the faithful form a holy and royal priesthood, offer spiritual sacrifices through Jesus Christ and proclaim the greatness of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light’ ‘ [cf. I P 2:5, 9] [PO 2]. **In Christ, his entire Mystical Body is united in the Father through the Holy Spirit for the salvation of all men.**

“However, the Church cannot carry out this mission alone: all her work **intrinsically** needs **communion with Christ**, the Head of his Body. **Indissolubly united** to her Lord, she continuously receives from him the effects of grace and truth, of guidance and support so that she may be for all and for each one ‘a **sign** and **instrument**, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men.’ [LG1]. The ministerial priesthood finds its reason for being in light of **this vital and operative union** of the Church with Christ. As a result, through this ministry the Lord continues to accomplish among his People the work which as Head of his Body belongs to Him alone. Thus, the ministerial priesthood renders tangible the actual work of Christ, the Head, and gives witness to the fact that Christ has not separated himself from His Church; rather He continues to vivify her through His **everlasting priesthood**. For this reason, the Church considers the ministerial priesthood **a gift** given to Her through the ministry of some of her faithful.



“This gift which was instituted by Christ to continue His own salvific mission was conferred upon the Apostles and remains in the Church through the Bishops and their successors.

### I. Trinitarian Dimension

2. “Through the **sacramental ordination** conferred by the imposition of hands and the consecratory prayers of the Bishop, ‘**a specific ontological bond which unites the priest to Christ**, the High Priest and Good Shepherd’ [ PDV 11] is established.

“Thus, the identity of the priest comes from the **specific participation in the priesthood of Christ**, in which the one ordained becomes in the Church, and for the Church **a real, living and faithful image of Christ, the Priest, ‘a sacramental representation of Christ**, Head and Shepherd’ [PDV 15] . Through consecration, the priest receives **a spiritual power, as a gift** which is a **participation** in the authority with which Jesus Christ, through His Spirit, guides the Church [PO 2; 12] This **sacramental identification with the Eternal High Priest** specifically **inserts** the priest into the **Trinitarian mystery**, and, through the mystery of Christ, into the ministerial Communion of the Church so as to serve the People of God [PDV 12 c].

3. “If it is true that each Christian, by means of Baptism, is in communion with God, One and Triune, it is equally true that by the power of the consecration received with the sacrament of Holy Orders, the priest is placed in **a particular and special relation with the Father, with the Son and with the Holy Spirit**. In fact, ‘Our identity has its ultimate source in the charity of the Father. He sent the Son, High Priest and Good Shepherd, and we are **united sacramentally** with the ministerial priesthood through the action of the Holy Spirit. The life and ministry of the priest are **a continuation of the life and the action of the same Christ**. This is our identity, our true dignity, the fountain of our joy, the certainty of our life’

“Therefore, the identity, the ministry and the existence of the priest are **essentially related to the three divine Persons for priestly service to the Church.**

4. “The priest, ‘as a visible continuation and sacramental sign of Christ in his own position before the Church and the world, as the **enduring and ever-new source of salvation**’ [PDV 16], finds himself **inserted into the Trinitarian dynamics with a particular responsibility**. His identity springs from the *ministerium verbi et sacramentorum*, which is in **essential relation to the mystery of salvific love of the Father** [cf. Jn 17:6-9,24; 1 Co 1:1; 2 Co 1:1], **to the priestly being of Christ**, who personally chooses and calls His ministers to be with Him [cf. Mk 3:15], **and to the gift of the Spirit** [cf. Jn 20:21] who communicates to the priest **the necessary power** for giving life to a multitude of sons of God, united in the one ecclesial body and oriented towards the Kingdom of the Father.

5. “From this, one perceives **the essentially ‘relational’ characteristic** [Jn 17:11, 21] [PDV 12] of the priest’s identity.

“The **grace** and the **indelible character** conferred with the **sacramental unction** of the Holy Spirit [DS 1763-1778], place the priest **in personal relation with the Trinity** since it is the fountain of the priestly being and work. Therefore, the priest must live this relationship in an intimate and personal manner, in a dialogue of adoration and of love with the three divine Persons, conscious that he has received this gift for the service of all.

## II. Christological Dimension

6. “The Christological dimension, like the Trinitarian dimension, springs directly from the sacrament which **ontologically configures the priest to Christ the Priest, Master, Sanctifier and Pastor** of His People [LG 18-31; CIC 1008]. The faithful, who, maintaining their common priesthood, are chosen and become part of the ministerial priesthood are granted **an indelible participation** in the one and only priesthood of Christ. This is a **participation** in the public dimension of mediation and authority regarding the sanctification, teaching and guidance of all the People of God. On the one hand, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are necessarily ordered one for the other, **each in its own way participates** in the only priesthood of Christ and, on the other hand, they are essentially different [PO 2].

“In this sense, the identity of the priest is **new** with respect to that of all Christians who through Baptism **participate** as a whole in the only priesthood of Christ and are called to give witness to Christ throughout the earth [AA 3; CL 14]. The specificity of the ministerial priesthood lies in the need that the faithful have of the mediation and dominion of Christ which is made visible by the work of the ministerial priesthood.

“In this unique identity with Christ, the priest must be conscious that his life is a **mystery totally grafted onto the mystery of Christ and of the Church in a new and specific way and that this engages him totally in pastoral activity and rewards him** [PDV 13-14].

7. “**Christ associates the Apostles to his own mission.** ‘As the Father has sent me, I also send you’ [Jn 20:21]. In Holy Ordination itself, **the missionary dimension is ontologically present.** The priest was **chosen, consecrated and sent** to carry out effectively in our time this eternal mission of Christ; he becomes his authentic representative and messenger. ‘He that hears you, hears me; he that despises you, despises me; and he that despises me, despises him that sent me’ [Lk 10:16].

“One can therefore say that the configuration to Christ, through **sacramental consecration, defines the role of the priesthood** in the heart of the people of God, making him **participate in his own way** in the sanctifying, magisterial and pastoral authority of Jesus Christ Himself, Head and Pastor of the Church [PDV 18].

“Acting *in persona Christi capitis*, the priest becomes **the minister of the essential salvific actions, transmits the truths necessary for salvation and cares** for the People of God, **leading them towards sanctity** [PDV 18].

### III. Pneumatological Dimension

8. “In priestly Ordination, the priest has received **the seal of the Holy Spirit** which has **marked** him by the **sacramental character in order always to be the minister of Christ and the Church**. Assured of the promise that the Consoler will abide ‘with him forever’ [Jn 14”16-17], the priest knows that **he will never lose the presence and the effective power of the Holy Spirit** in order to exercise his ministry and live with charity his pastoral office as **a total gift of self for the salvation of his own brothers**.

9. “It is also the Spirit who by Ordination confers on the priest the prophetic task of announcing and explaining, with authority, the word of God. **Inserted in the communion of the Church** with the entire priestly order, the priest will be guided by the Holy Spirit whom the Father has sent through Christ. The Holy Spirit teaches him everything and reminds him all Jesus has said to the Apostles. Therefore, the priest with the help of the Holy Spirit and the study of the Word of God in the Scriptures, with the light of Tradition and of the Magisterium [DV 10; PO 4] discovers the richness of the Word to be proclaimed to the ecclesial community entrusted to him.

10. “Through the **sacramental character** and the identification of his intention with that of the Church, the priest is always **in communion with the Holy Spirit** in the celebration of the liturgy, especially in the Holy Eucharist and the other sacraments.

“In fact, in each sacrament, Christ invoked by the priest who celebrates *in persona Christi*, acts through the Holy Spirit with His **efficacious power** on behalf of the Church [PO 5; CCC 1120].

“Thus, the sacramental celebration finds its **efficacy in the Word of Christ** who has instituted it and **in the power of the Holy Spirit** which the Church invokes frequently in the epiclesis.

“This is particularly evident in the Eucharistic prayer in which the priest, **invoking the power of the Holy Spirit** on the bread and on the wine, pronounces the words of Jesus and **actualizes** the mystery of the Body and Blood of Christ really present through transubstantiation.

11. “It is thus **in the communion with the Holy Spirit** that the priest finds the **strength** to guide the community entrusted to him and to maintain it in the unity wanted by the Lord [PO 6]. The prayer of the priest in the Holy Spirit can be patterned on the priestly prayer of Jesus Christ [Jn 17]. Therefore, he must pray for the unity of the faithful so that they may be one in order that the world may believe that the Father has sent the son for the salvation of all.

### IV. Ecclesial Dimension

12. “Christ, the permanent and always new origin of salvation, is **the mysterial font** from which is derived the mystery of the Church, his **Body and his Bride, called by his Spouse** to be a **sign and instrument** of redemption.

“Through the mystery of Christ, the priest lives his multiple ministries and is **inserted** into the mystery of the Church which ‘becomes aware in faith that her being comes not from herself but from the grace of Christ in the Holy Spirit [ PDV 16]. In this sense, while the priest is in the Church, he is also set in front of it [PDV 3].

13. “ The sacrament of Holy Orders, in fact, makes the priest a **sharer** not only in the mystery of Christ, the Priest, Master, Head and Shepherd, but, in some way, also **in Christ ‘Servant and Spouse of the Church’** . This is the Body of Him who has loved and loves to the point of **giving Himself for her** [cf. Ep 5:25]; who renews her and purifies her continually by means of the Word of God and of the Sacraments; who work to make her always more beautiful and lastly Who nourishes her and treats her with care [cf. vv. 26-29].

“The priests, as collaborators of the Episcopal Order, form with their Bishop a sole presbyterate [Lg28; PO 7; CD 28; AG 19; PDV 17], in a subordinate degree, in the only priesthood of Christ. Similar to the Bishop, they participate in that **spousal dimension in relation to the Church** which is well expressed in the rite of the episcopal ordination when the ring is entrusted to them [LG 28].

“The priest who ‘in the individual local communities of the faithful makes the Bishop present’, so to speak, to whom they are united with a faithful and great spirit [LG 28], must be **faithful to the Bride** and almost like **living icons of Christ the Spouse** render fruitful the multi-form donation of Christ to His Church.

“By this communion with **Christ the Spouse**, the ministerial priesthood is also founded - as Christ, with Christ and in Christ - in that mystery of transcendent supernatural love of which the marriage among Christians is an image and a participation.

“Called to the act of supernatural love, absolutely gratuitous, the priest should love the Church as Christ has loved her, consecrating to her all his energies and giving himself with pastoral charity in a continuous act of generosity...

20 ...”In light of the above-mentioned regarding the priest’s identity, the communion of the priest is fulfilled above all with the Father, the ultimate origin of all his **power**; with the Son in whose redemptive mission he **participates**; with the Holy Spirit, Who gives him **the power for living and fulfilling that pastoral charity** which qualifies him in a priestly way.

“In fact, the nature and the mission of the ministerial priesthood cannot be defined except in **this multiple and rich network of relations which spring from the Blessed Trinity** and is prolonged in the communion of the Church as a **sign**, in Christ, of the union with God and the unity of the human race .

21. “The priest’s **communion-relation** with the Church in its aspect of mystery and ecclesial community comes from this **fundamental inter-communion with Christ and the Trinity** [LG 8]. In fact, it is within the mystery of the Church, as a mystery of Trinitarian communion with a missionary zeal that the identity of every Christian is

revealed and, therefore, the specific and personal identity of the priest and of his ministry as well.

“Precisely, the **ecclesial communion** of the priest is lived in diverse ways. In fact, through Sacramental Ordination, he develops **special bonds** with the Pope, the Episcopal Body, his own bishop, other priests and the lay faithful....”

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### [III] OBLATION OF LIFE

#### EXCURSUS I: Rm 12:1...

*Think of God’s Mercy, My brothers, and worship Him, I beg you, in a way that is worthy of thinking beings, by offering your living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God. Do not model yourselves on the behavior of the world around you, but let your behavior change, modeled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God, and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do...* [Rm 12:1: ...]

1. **Context:** this is a *parenthesis* offered by Paul with the totality of return that the Lord wills from those who accept to follow Him. This is the ‘shouldering the task of the Gospel’ – the appeal to ‘soldier on in perseverance’ to the end in imitation of Christ on the Cross – whose opened sacred side manifests the treasures of the Trinity. This is **the new life in Jesus Christ**, transfusing His precious Blood to the re-birth of humanity, a **New Creation**. The faithful are to live and act in Christ. As we are redeemed **from the slavery to sin, for the freedom** to serve the Lord and one another -, this New Life is a **gift from God** to be returned, as the talent, **with interest, to God**.

The ‘content’ of the Good News needs to be **pondered with daily contact with the ‘sacred page’**, that the teachings of the Good News permeate one’s heart and mind – so, too, it then becomes a concerted challenge to be lived and handed on by word and deed, teaching and witness. There can be no divorce between dogma and spirituality, faith and ethics – which feed each other. There is a Trinitarian core to all Christian human conduct<sup>212</sup> - the source is the integral Paschal Mystery, and the reward is to celebrate the Mercy of God in the Heavenly Holy of Holies with the great High Priest, Jesus Christ.

2. **Basic Stipulations:** We are provided in Rm 12:1, f.; with the very foundation of the Christian Way, Truth and Life. Spiritual worship presenting all of one’s conscious life as the central immolation, demands a conversion, a **transformation of mind and heart**.<sup>213</sup> A life in harmony with the **summaries** of Act [cf. c. 2: the breaking of bread

<sup>212</sup> Ceslaus Spicq, OP, *The Trinity and our Moral Life according to st. Paul*. Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock 1963.

<sup>213</sup> Ronald D. Witherup, *Conversion in the NT*. Collegeville MN; Glazier/ Liturgical 1994.

and prayer, the teaching of the Apostles and the brotherhood of charity] is truly a Liturgy when understood as **sevice** of Christ [cf. Rm 14:18]. The winning over of the Gentiles, they, too become an **offertory Gift** to the Lord [cf. Rm 15:16].

The good use of individual charisms and gifts from God are indeed an **oblation** [cf. Rm 12:3, ff.] – fraternal love shown as persevering sympathy, honor and forgiveness for all human beings is an **immolation** [cf. Rm 12:9-21] - civil obedience to lawful author, is a true **sacrifice** [cf. 13:8, ff.] – persevering hope is a true **holocaust** [13:11, ff.] – the delicate charity toward those weak in the faith, is a true **offertory gift** to God [cf. 14:1-15:13]: in other words, **the total handing over of one's entire life is a holy, living sacrifice, a Liturgy of Life truly pleasing to God.**

**3. Early Way of Teaching?:** scholars wonder whether there may have been a primitive pattern of moral teaching from which the inspired authors drew their materials, like a ***Book of [Moral] Sentences, Domestic Exhortations***. This is in itself the true of **1 P**, with its **domestic exhortations** – whether it was a first encyclical sent out to the whole Church in Peter's Name – or, whether it indeed reflected the early baptism in the Church. Thus scholars speak of a Baptismal 'for', 'document', 'baptismal catechesis' - a 'pattern of teaching', 'a body of instructions', or a source book for traditions.

Rm 6-8 almost fits this ideal – it is Baptism **into** [a progressive idea] the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus – this involves redemption **from** sin, **for** service of the Lord, through the conferral of the Holy Spirit. This is a drawing forth **from slavery** into the **service of the Lord**. The elements of a rich catechesis are right here: the themes of a **spiritual liturgy, moral conversion, Christian obligations in general**. Behind Romans, there may be precisely just such a frame-work: the Church early was thought of as a **priestly, sacrificial communion** – in such an assembly, there was a built-in tendency of spiritualizing, and encouragement.

**4. Early Form of Spiritual Sacrifice:** this ideal peaks in Paul's text right here: an exhortation to make of one's entire life an **oblation to God's Mercy**. In Ph 2:17, Christian living is understood as an **immolation, a sacrifice**. Expressions of the Christian life, as **generosity in alms**, is spiritualized also to think of **all self-giving as a holocaust: a total handing over of one's life**. Paul may have derived some inspiration from Judaic and Greek ideals of 'spiritualization'. From his influences and personal inspiration, Paul preached a **spiritual worship, a Liturgy of Life**.

**a.] Greek Philosophers and Moralists:** this seems to have left a trace in Paul's insistence here on offering **in a way worthy of thinking beings** - in Greek: **logike' latreia**. The saying was: if I were a bird, I would act like one – but, I am a **logikos** - therefore, praise God! For these thinkers, philosophy was the religion, ignorance a kind of sin, and wisdom is virtue.

**b.] In Judaism:** while the LXX does not use the term, but formalism, or mere ritualism, externalism – will never please God [cf. Am 5:5, 21, ff.]. There must be a **'religion of the heart'**, as **Dt** preached already. There was a particular appeal for social justice among the **Prophets** [cf. e.g., Hos 2:1, ff.; 4:12, f.; Am 2:5-8; 3:10;

4:1; 5:4, ff.]. The practices of religion must never serve as a cover-up for continuing in malice – cultic sacrifices must be offered **in spirit and in truth**. There was even danger in the high regard for the temple [cf. Jr 7:7-11; 26:2; Am 1:2; Is 30:29; Ho 9:4, ff.] could degenerate into a kind of ‘triumphalism’, or a false security – the prophets’ main message was the **fulfillment of the inner spirit of the sacrifices**. There needed to be **purity of heart, love for neighbor**.

The **Psalms** [cf. Ps 40:6, ff.; 50:8, 15, 23; 51:18, f.,; 69:30, f.; 141:2] took over from the Prophets. This body of literature much inspired piety of the People of God and the **ethical, spiritual side** of worship became strongly emphasized. The **love of neighbor** [cf. Tb 4:4; 12:9; Si 3:30] – the **support of parents** [Si 3:3] – **fasting and prayer as privileged means of atonement**. In extra-biblical authors, such as Philo, the Epistle of Aristeas, there is evidence of a concerted movement towards pure interiority, an ethical deepening of ritual worship. A new era was being prepared by the Providence of God. Eventually, in order to be a **legitimate sacrifice**, the ceremony would have to include **the total gift of oneself**, which would be a **living, holy sacrifice, pleasing to God**.

**5. The Mercy of God**: Paul is exhorting all Romans, by God’s Mercy, to live out their sublime call of making of their lives, a **new Liturgy of Life and Spiritual Transformation**. So, Paul exhorts, entreats and consoles in his challenge – a special form of proclamation. He is laboring under a deep concern, and speaks not as a hard legislator, but one offering a hidden consolation. He emphasizes in his *paranesis*, the mercies of God upon which his discourse is resting. He reminds his beloved Romans that the principal agent here is **the mercy of the Triune God, by the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Holy Spirit** [cf. Rm 15:30; 1 Co 1:10]. Sometimes he encourages **by the meekness and gentleness of Jesus Christ** [cf. 2 Co 10:1]. He lines up the powers working within himself: God’s grace, His name, the Lord Himself, the love of the Spirit. The emphasis here is **God’s Mercy**.

In the new community, there is an imitation of Jesus Christ in His unique Filiation toward the Father. This is imitated by the faithful in a kind of lived **father-children bond** [cf. 1 Th 2:10, f.; 1 Co 4:14, f.] - there is often emphasis on **Christian fraternity** [cf. 1 Tm 5:1, ff.; Ph 4:1-10]. The **communal sacrifice** is inseparable from these bonds. Brothers, spurred by God’s Mercy, make a sacrifice, an immolation of themselves, for the cause of God and their faithful believers. It is most probable that Paul has based his *paranesis* on **God’s Mercy throughout Salvation History**.

The emphasis throughout is God’s initiative, His gratuitous love and mercy as expressed in Jesus Christ in His integral Paschal Mystery. The reign of God, centered on the incarnate mercy of Jesus Christ, is what justifies and saves. This one man, Jesus, through His obedience, more than satisfied for the First Man’s disobedience and righteousness has been poured forth on this world. This capacity of Christ’s obedience is made possible through union with Him in Baptism and faith. When one is united to Christ, each one can share in His life-giving Spirit, which then permeates the Liturgy of Life, enabling each of the faithful to offer this Liturgy of Life.

God's Mercy is so gratuitous, so generous, that it **begs a response, only satisfied in the Liturgy of Life**. As the First Adam sinned through excessive self-assertion – and the Angels fell by choosing not to serve – the New Adam has become **obedient unto death, by total Self-giving, making of His life a Holocaust**. The heart of the message remains **self-sacrifice**.

**6. Challenges of Baptism:** an old Greek word is used to describe the presenting of a sacrifice, once one is empowered to **offer the priestly oblation of one's life**, through the consecration of Baptism. This sacrament is indeed a **consecration, a complete dedication of oneself to God**. Thus, in Paul's view: this sacramental consecration at work in the mind and heart of the believer, asking each one to be Faithful, making the presence of sin incompatible. Sin cannot be the master in a believer servicing the Lord with his/here own life. The Christian call is to give up slavery to sin, and to take on more on more a total service of the Lord, but in every word and deed.

The end purpose of this sacramental consecration, in-grafting into Jesus Christ, is to persevere in this unto ever-lasting life, unto sanctification 'Impurity and iniquity' are a kind of generalization of the non-Christian manner of conducting one's life. In this sense, willfully accepted sin disqualifies one from the Liturgy of Life – the oblation needs to be spotless, without blemish. Perseverance in consecration leads to sanctification, the ultimate goal of this **new liturgical service of God** to which sacramental consecration commits each. While there is an initial [ontological ?] holiness, Christians are called to cooperate with this gift, gradually leading to a more complete, perfect sanctification [cf. 1 Th 4:3, ff.] to be an ever more fit '**liturgist**' in the **oblation of one's own life**. This is a process fitting one for ever more intense divine service, to become ever better suited for this acceptable Liturgy to which the Lord calls each one. Heb 12:14 puts it clearly: may each of the faithful **strive for that holiness without which no one will see God**. This all involves the **content** of self-sacrifice.

**7. A Self-Oblation:** the totality of God's Mercy challenges a totality in response of self-sacrifice. Here the **Principle of Totality** holds completes way. The word *body* here – like the word *flesh* [*sarx*] in the mystery of the Incarnation – means the whole human reality: **to offer one's body means, one's entire life** sometimes called by Paul as your members, yourselves. One's whole 'self' is the content of the **obsequium**. The response to God's Mercy is not self-assertion, but a **progressively total self-abandonment**.

**8. A Further Description of the Offertory Gift: living, holy, acceptable :**

**a.] Living:** this is not only the physical life being described here – but a person alive with the Holy Spirit of the Risen Lord, lived in immolation to the Glory of the Father. We have been brought back from death, like prodigal children – thus meant to live now for the Savior. The life of Christ has been infused in Baptism, providing us with a life-giving Spirit. The **Holy Spirit** is the **Principle of New Life** [cf. Rm 8:9, ff.; 1 Th 4:8] – He dwells within each of the Faithful. As He was for Christ, the Holy Spirit is the **Principle of the Resurrection**. This provides the empowerment to fidelity in the teaching of the Apostles and to the Decalogue, to the universal call to



holiness. Through the Holy Spirit, **the Lord and the giver of Life**, our self-oblation becomes a **living sacrifice**. In this **holocaust of one's own life** we are a **living sacrifice** - this Christ-life within leads to eternity.

**b.] Holy:** in this context, the word is analogous to **living**. The 'saints', ontologically 'holy', immolate their lives already consecrated, set apart in Jesus Christ [cf. 1 Co 6:11; cf. Rm 15:16]. They are all called to pursue spiritual, moral holiness by corresponding their choices in accord with the life of Jesus Christ. Each is called to **holiness** [cf. Rm 6:19, 22; 1 Th 4:3, 7; - all are called to **prayer** [cf. 1 Th 5:2]. This holiness is **cultic, liturgical** in character – it marks the believer a **Faithful Follower of Jesus Christ**. Each is consecrated in and himself the Gifts of the Spirit unto **new life**. **Belong to Christ/ life in the spirit** are synonymous. **Holiness is moral life in Jesus Christ** – holiness merges with the moral life.

**c.] Acceptable:** this is the designation of a life, offered as a spiritual sacrifice [cf. 1 P 2:3, ff.], **in union with that of Christ, completely surrendered to Him**, with its **new life** brought to the faithful by the Holy Spirit – will always be '**acceptable**' to God.

**9. Obedience as a Holocaust, Immolation:** this provides the faithful believer with a number of insights:

**a.] Christ's Obedience:** in Rm, it is the **Principle of totality** that is being put forward, a total **obedience** and **submission** to God's will. This is the ultimate challenge, most likely because sin came into the world by the **disobedience** of the angels and of the first Adam. The **obedience of Christ** is at the source of our salvation. [cf. Rm 5:19; 6: 15, ff.]. The death of Christ was a **redemptive holocaust** because of His **supreme submission out of love to His Father's will**. In Heb 10:5, ff., **priestly sacrifice** and **free obedience** are brought together – **expiation** in Rm 3:25, refers to the obedience of Jesus Christ – by Whose blood we are **justified** [cf. Rm 5:9]. The **sacrificial obedience** of Christ brings the supreme expression of God's Mercy, the **ultimate basis of self-oblation**. God's own Son is our expiation – His love is shown in His obedience unto death [cf. Ph 2:8; Rm 5:8].

The human relationship toward God has been disrupted by disobedience – which then runs through humanity like a plague [cf. Rm 1:21, 28]. Christ's **sacrificial obedience** is the antidote for this poison [cf. Rm 5:19]: **by one Man's obedience** salvation has come. Christ is the Head of a new humanity – His **obedience** in all to His Father has manifested for us the **salvific will of the Father**. This expiates the disobedience, and blind self-serving of Adam. The **Kenosis Hymn** [cf. Ph 2:5-11], with its appeal: **to put on the mind of Christ Jesus** - shows the mystery of the Cross as one of **supreme loving obedience**, leading to **everlasting glory**. This **immolation of obedience** brings the Faithful to God in Jesus Christ. Christ's death proved to be a **supreme act of obedience and love**.

**b.] An Obedience for all:** the time-honored expressions, **for the many**, really means that this sacrificial mystery of obedience makes the many righteous, that it is a **representative obedience**. Christ's **universal Mediation** is at work here, as

the **Head** of the Human race, who **re-capitulates** all in Himself. Jesus is the Great High Priest of God's Mercy [cf. Heb ] and **the mediator of the New Covenant in God's Mercy**. His loving obedience, lived through suffering and death, reveals that His **immolation** is the Divine Son's **sacrificial immolation, holocaust of loving obedience** in complete **solidarity with humanity** is the action of the Son of God.. Christ put on the life of the Prodigal Son, and by His **supreme act of loving obedience**, has made us all the **most beloved** off-spring of the Eternal Father, regenerated in His Precious Blood. We are baptized into the integral Paschal Mystery, into **newness of life** [cf. Rm 6:4, 11; 8:1, 5] – this will be **perfected, completed** in sharing in the Risen Life for all eternity, celebrating the **Liturgy of Life** in the Heavenly Holy of Holies.

**10. The Oblation of One's Total Life:** this is simply in imitation, the full following, of the **total Self-giving of Jesus Christ, putting on His mind**. Christian obedience, then, is to strive to live one's entire life in accord with God's will. The wound of past sin, impurity and lawlessness [cf. Rm 6:16,ff.] must be overcome, healed, in order to **hand oneself over** to the **New Service** of righteousness expressed supremely in the **Liturgy of this New Life**. This **sacrificial self-oblation** is to live life hallowing God's Name, in **submission, adoration and thanksgiving** – along with **imitation**.

This leads to a deeper grasp of the inter-connections of the virtues: as **obedience is an expression of love, and** it is also tied in with **living faith** [cf. DV 5]. Paul's apostolic mission is to propagate that **obedience which is faith** [cf. Rm 1:5; 2 Co 10:5; Rm 15:18; 16:19]. To accept such faith, and to live by it, has to be the end result of a **free choice**. It requires **trust, commitment, life-long obedience** – all offered as the '**content**' of the Liturgy of Life. It is the chosen acceptance of God's claim on humanity, with the full response in **life-style** and **action**. Faith-obedience is the **lived holocaust**.

We are to *draw a portrait within ourselves of Christ Jesus* - this means, to imitate, live, follow, put on the mind of the **total Self-giving of Jesus Christ**. Another formula saying the same is **to live for God in Christ Jesus** [cf. Rm 6:11; Ga 2:19] - **to walk according to the Spirit** [cf. Rm 8:4; Ga 5:15] - **to live according to the Law in Christ Jesus** [cf. 1 C 9:21] - **to put on Christ** [cf. Ga 3:27; cf. Rm 8:29; Col 3:18]. This means to use Jesus as **the IKON of the Invisible God** as a **window** [looking in to the Mystery of the Trinity] – and as a **mirror** for our future actions and to shape our own **personal immolation to be offered in the Liturgy of Life**. This **Pilgrimage of faith** will reach its **perfection** [cf. Ga 4:19; 1 Co 13:12], a central image of Hebrews, showing Jesus as the Great High Priest of mercy leading humanity forward to an eternal celebration of Life in the Eternal Holy of Holies.

**To believe/ to love/ to obey:** seem to be for Paul different nuances of the same reality of **self-surrender, the holocaust, the total sacrifice, the immolation, the oblation of oneself in the Liturgy of Life**. These are all rooted in the **integral Paschal Mystery** of Jesus Christ – we live the **kenosis** so that Jesus Christ might be the only **pleroma** in our lives.

Through the long centuries of Church life, the **self-oblation** of the individual Christians has provided continuity, unity, the **authentic handing on of the tradition**. Each one is indeed baptized **into** Christ Jesus [cf. Rm 6:3, ff.] – are con-crucified with Jesus Christ [cf. Rm 6:6; Ga 2:20] – thus every response to the invitation for a further **self-giving** is derived from and joined to **Jesus' own obediential love for His Father**.

This is the **core of the ideal of NT Holocaust**. Christ's death is presented in Liturgical terms: an oblation, a consecration, an immolation, holocaust, a holy communion [with the Trinity, solidarity with humanity], bread that is broken, wine that is poured out. In His living out of the Paschal Mission, Jesus provides supreme glory to his Father, and infinite Hope for all the brothers and sisters of Jesus. Dying and rising with Christ through Baptism, strengthened in Confirmation, nourished in Holy Communion, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, consecrated by the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ – **unites our spiritual sacrifices with the one sacrifice of Christ in one Liturgical Oblation of Life**. Faith is indeed a **sacrificial liturgy, an obsequium** [cf. Ph 2:17] – **Christian existence** is meant to be lived in terms of the **sacrificial liturgy of our most precious gift, life**. This is our most pleasing gift back to God [cf. Rm 15:16].

11. A '**Logical [reasonable] Liturgy**': A Sacrifice worthy of Thinking Beings [*logike' latreia*]: this is Paul's summation, an expression in apposition to all that went before: **present your entire lives, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable, pleasing to God**. Liturgy is one of the principal means of **worshipping God**. The day-in and day-out **giving of oneself** indeed the **Immolation of an entire Life** - when one makes this particular choice when so many other more pleasing choices are possible. This would be simply **the logical, rational conclusion: to accept the Folly of the Cross over the more pleasing, readily available, wisdom of this world**. This is much in harmony with Peter's great ideal for the Early Church:

*... You are new born ... you should be hungry ... for that spiritual honesty which will help you grow up to salvation- now that you have tasted the goodness of God!... You are the holy priesthood which offers the spiritual sacrifices which Jesus Christ has made acceptable to God... a holy priesthood, a people set apart to sing the praises of God who called you out of the darkness into His own wonderful light ...* [cf. 1 P 2:2-10, *passim*]

This is the **true worship**, as opposed to formalism, ritualism – this is the **genuine article** as opposed to the many unreasonable facsimiles - this is the **most reasonable oblation** as opposed to what is mechanical, routine – this is the **virtue which stands in the middle**, in the heights far above the two extremes of rigidity and laxity - this is the **essential** as opposed to the endless accidentals – this is the **Christian reality** as opposed to mere externals. For Paul, totality is the **cult** for which Christian reason calls each one to live.

## **EXCURSUS II: On the Principle of Totality**

Regarding religious life, Pope John Paul II has left an urgent appeal as a summary of his **Apostolic Exhortation**:

### **A. The Total Self – Giving of the Consecrated Life**

**taught by the**

**Magisterium: “The Absolute Infinite” [ET 34]**

From the opening document of his Pontificate, Pope John Paul II considered the last forty years of this 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a kind of “New Advent” for the Third Millennium of the Church, the setting for the “New Evangelization”:

“... We are in a certain way in a season of a New Advent, a season of expectation ... through the Incarnation God gave human life the dimension that He intended man to have from his first beginning: he has granted that dimension definitively – in the way that is peculiar to him alone, in keeping with his eternal love and mercy, with the full freedom of God... [O happy fault... which gained us so great a Redeemer..!]<sup>214</sup>

“... In fact, preparing for the year 2000 has become, as it were, a hermeneutical key of my Pontificate. It is certainly not a matter of indulging in a New Millenarianism, as occurred in some quarters at the end of the first millennium. Rather: it is aimed at an increased sensitivity to all that the Spirit is saying to the Church and to the churches [cf. Rv 2: 7, ff.]; as well as to individuals, through **charisms meant to serve the whole community**. The purpose is to emphasize what the Spirit is suggesting to different communities – from the smallest ones, such as the family – to the largest ones, such as nations and international organizations, taking into account cultures, societies and sound traditions...”<sup>215</sup>.

With so much else, this period has been very rich in official documents that have developed the theology of the Consecrated Life throughout this “New Advent”:

**LUMEN GENTIUM**, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, November 21, 1965, ## 39 – 42:

“... Likewise, the Church’s holiness is fostered in a special way by the manifold counsels which the Lord proposes to his disciples in the Gospel for them to observe. Towering among the counsels is that precious gift of divine grace given to some by the Father [cf. Mt 19:11; 1 Co 7:7] to **devote themselves to God alone** more easily with an undivided heart [cf. 1 Co 7:32-34] in virginity, or celibacy...The Church bears in mind also

<sup>214</sup> Pope John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptor Hominis*, 1st Sunday of Lent, March 4, 1979, n. 1.

<sup>215</sup> Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, November 10, 1994, n. 23.

the apostle's admonition when calling the faithful to charity and exhorting them to have the same mind which Christ Jesus showed who 'emptied himself, taking the form of a servant... and became obedient unto death' [Ph 2:7, f.] and for our sakes 'became poor though he was rich' [2 Co 8:9]. Since the disciples must always imitate this love and humility of Christ and bear witness of it, Mother Church rejoices that she has within herself many men and women who pursue more closely the Savior's self-emptying and show it forth more clearly, by undertaking poverty with the freedom of God's sons, and renouncing their own will: they subject themselves to man for the love of God, thus going beyond what is of precept in the matter of perfection, so as to conform themselves more fully to the obedient Christ..."<sup>216</sup>

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**PERFECTAE CARITATIS**, Decree on the Up-to-Date Renewal of Religious Life, October 28, 1965:

"...From the very beginning of the Church there were men and women who set out to follow Christ with greater liberty, and to imitate him more closely, by practicing the evangelical counsels. They led lives dedicated to God, each in his own way. Many of them, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, became hermits, or founded religious families. These the Church, by virtue of her authority, gladly accepted and approved. Thus, in keeping with the divine purpose, a wonderful variety of religious communities came into existence. This has considerably contributed towards enabling the Church not merely to be equipped for every good work [cf. 2 Tm 3:17] and to be prepared for the good work of the ministry unto the building-up of the Body of Christ [cf. Ep 4:12], but also to appear adorned with the manifold gifts of her children, like a bride adorned to her husband [cf. Apoc 21:2] and to manifest in herself the multiform wisdom of God..." [# 1].

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**EVANGELICA TESTIFICATIO**, Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation on the Renewal of Religious Life, June 29, 1971<sup>217</sup>:

"...And yet, it is well known that the Council recognized '**this special gift**' as having a place in the life of the Church, because it enables those who have received it to be more closely conformed to 'that manner of virginal and humble life which Christ the Lord elected for himself and which the Virgin Mother also chose...' [# 2] ...From the first centuries, the Holy Spirit has stirred up, side by side with the heroic confession of the martyrs, the wonderful strength of disciples and virgins, of hermits and anchorites...[#

<sup>216</sup> cf. LG 42 c, d.

<sup>217</sup> *Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents.* Volume 2. Gen. Editor, Austin Flannery, OP, Document 53, pp. 680-706.

3 b]...Dear sons and daughters, by a free response to **the call of the Holy Spirit**, you have decided to follow Christ, **consecrating yourselves totally to him...** [# 7 a]...In reality, the charism of religious life, far from being an impulse born of flesh and blood, or one derived from a mentality which conforms itself to the modern world, is **the fruit of the Holy Spirit**, who is always at work in the Church... [# 11]...through obedience, you offer to God **a total dedication** of your own wills as a sacrifice of yourselves [# 27]...This grace will be given to you by Christ Jesus in proportion to **the fundamental gift** which you have made of yourselves and which you do not retract [# 31]..."

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**MUTUAE RELATIONES**, Directives for the Mutual Relations between Bishops and Religious in the Church. The Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, April 23, 1978 (Some Doctrinal Elements)<sup>218</sup>.

"... From the day of Pentecost onwards (LG 4)there exists in the world a 'new' people which, vivified by the Holy Spirit, is united with Christ and has access to the Father (Ep 2:18). The members of this People are gathered from all nations and are bound together in such an intimate unity (LG 9) that it cannot be explained solely by axioms of the sociological order: there exists between them a kind of 'newness' which transcends the human condition. It is only in this **transcendent perspective** that mutual relations between the various members of the Church can be correctly understood. The reality upon which this unique nature is based is the very presence of the Holy Spirit... The spiritual and pastoral re-awakening of recent years ... is due to the presence of the Holy Spirit and is clear evidence of a specially privileged moment (EN 75) for the renewal of the youth of the Church as she looks forward to the Day of her Lord (Rv 22:17)..” [# 1]

"...Vocation to the Apostolate: the whole Church is driven by the Holy Spirit to do her part for the full realization of the plan of God (LG 17; AA 2l AG 1-5)... This vocation demands of every man, as a sign of his ecclesial communion, that he recognize the primacy of the life in the Spirit upon which depends docility to the word, interior prayer, awareness of life as a member of the whole body, desire for unity, dutiful accomplishment of one's official mission, **the gift of self in service** and the humility of repentance... From this common baptismal vocation to *life in the Spirit* there come to light clearer demands and effective means in what concerns relations between Bishops and Religious..." [# 4].

"...Religious institutes are numerous in the Church and they differ one from the other according to their own proper character (PC 7-10). Each

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<sup>218</sup> *Mutuae Relationes*. in: *Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*. Volume 2. Flanner, OP, Document # 92, pp. 209-243.

in fact, contributes its own vocation as a **gift raised by the Holy Spirit**, through the work of 'outstanding men and women' (LG 45; PC 12) and authentically approved by the sacred hierarchy. The 'charism of the Founders' (ET 11) appears as '**an experience of the Spirit**' transmitted to their followers to be lived by them, to be preserved deepened and constantly developed in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in a process of growth. It is for this reason that the distinctive character of the various religious institutes is preserved and fostered by the Church (LG 44; CD 33, 35, § 1 and 2, etc.). [ # 11].

"... The historical fact between **charism and cross**, apart from other factors which may give rise to understanding, is an extremely helpful sign in discerning **a call from the Spirit**. Individual religious also possess personal gifts coming from the Spirit to enrich, develop and rejuvenate the life of the Institute, to further unite the community and to show forth its renewal. But the discernment of these gifts and their correct use can be recognized to the extent to which they harmonize with the community commitment in the Institute and with the needs of the Church, as determined by legitimate authority..."[# 12]

"... Religious and their communities are called upon in the Church to give a visible testimony of their **total consecration to God**. This is **the fundamental option** of their Christian existence and the first objective to be attained in their distinctive way of life, whatever the specific character of their Institute, religious are, in fact, consecrated in order to proclaim publicly in the Church-sacrament that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes (LG 31)..." [# 14].

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**THE CONTEMPLATIVE DIMENSION OF RELIGIOUS LIFE**, by the Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes, March 1980 <sup>219</sup>:

"...The contemplative dimension is basically a reality of grace, experienced by the believer as **God's gift**. It enables persons to know the Father (cf. Jn 14:8) in the mystery of Trinitarian communion (cf. 1 Jn 1:3], so that they can enter *into the depths of God* (1 Co 2:10). It is not the intention here to discuss the many and delicate aspects of different methods of contemplation, nor to analyze contemplation in so far as it is **an infused gift of the Holy Spirit**. We describe the contemplative dimension fundamentally as the theological response of faith, hope and charity, by which the believer opens up to the revelation and communication of the living God through Christ in the Holy Spirit, 'The concentration of the regard of one's heart on God, which we define as **contemplation**, becomes **the highest and fullest activity of the spirit**,

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<sup>219</sup> *More Post Conciliar Documents*, Vol. II Document 93, pp. 244-189.

the activity of which today, also, can and must order the immense pyramid of all human activities' [Paul VI, Dec. 7, 1965].

“As the **unifying act of all human movement towards God**, the contemplative dimension is expressed by listening to and meditating on the Word of God; by participating in the divine life transmitted to us in the sacraments, particularly, the Eucharist; by liturgical and personal prayer; by the constant desire for God and the search for His Will in events and people; by the conscious participation in His salvific mission; by **self-giving to others** for the coming of the Kingdom. There results, in the religious, an attitude of continuous and humble adoration of God's mysterious presence in people, events and things: an attitude which manifests the virtue of piety, an interior fount of peace and a person who brings peace to every sphere of life ad apostolate.

“All this is achieved in continual purification of heart, under the light and guidance of the Holy Spirit, so that we can find God in all things and people and become ‘the praise of his glory’ [Ep 1:6].. The very nature of the consecrated life stands out in this way as the profound source which nourishes and unifies every aspect of the lives of religious...” [# 1].

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**THE CODE OF CANON LAW**, promulgated by Pope John Paul II, by the Apostolic Constitution, ***Sacrae Disciplinae Leges***, January 25, 1983, [## 573-730] – this is its own study, with references to the Consecrated Life as a **Gift of the Spirit**, inspiring **the total self-gift** of those who enter it.

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**LETTER OF JOHN PAUL II TO UNITED STATES BISHOPS, ON PROBLEMS OF THE RELIGIOUS LIFE**, April 3 , 1983 220:

“... **Consecration** is the basis of religious life. By insisting on this, the Church places the first emphasis on the initiative of God and on the transforming relation to him which religious life involves. Consecration is a divine action. God calls a person whom he sets apart for a **particular dedication to himself**. At the same time, he offers the grace to respond to that consecration is expressed on the human side by a **profound and free self surrender**. The resulting relationship is a pure gift. It is a covenant of mutual love and fidelity, of communion and mission, established for God's glory, the joy of the person consecrated and the salvation of the word...” [# 5].

“... Jesus lived his own consecration precisely as Son of God: dependent on the Father, loving him above all and completely given to his will.

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<sup>220</sup> Cf *Enchiridion Vaticanum*, Vol. 9, ## 184-296.



These aspects of his life as Son are shared by all Christians. To some, however, for the sake of all, God gives **the gift of a closer following of Christ** in his poverty, chastity and obedience, through a public profession of these counsels mediated by the Church. This profession in imitation of Christ, manifests a particular consecration which is 'rooted in that of baptism and is a fuller expression of it '( PC 5). The fuller expression recalls the hold of the divine person of the Word over the human nature which he assumed and it invites a response like that of Jesus: a dedication of oneself to God in a way which he alone makes possible and which witnesses to his holiness and absoluteness. Such a **consecration is a gift of God**, a grace freely given..." [# 7].

"... The identity (in religious consecration) derives from that **action of the Holy Spirit** which is the institute's **founding gift** and which creates a particular type of spirituality, of life, of apostolate and of tradition [cf. MR 11). Looking at the numerous families one is struck by **the wide variety of founding gifts**. The Council laid stress on the need to foster these as **so many gifts of God** (cf. PC 2 b). They determine the nature, spirit and purpose and character which form each institute's spiritual patrimony, and they are basic to that sense of identity which a key element in the fidelity of every religious<sup>221</sup> .. [# 11].

"...It is proper, though not exclusive to religious life to profess the evangelical counsels by vows which the Church receives. These are a response to **the prior gift of God** which, being **a gift of love**, cannot be rationalized. It is something God himself works in the person chosen..." [# 13].

"... The vows themselves are specific: three ways of pledging oneself to live as Christ lived in areas which cover the whole of life: possessions, affections, autonomy. Each emphasizes a **relation to Jesus, consecrated and sent**. He was rich but he became poor for our sakes, emptying himself, and having nowhere to lay his head. He loved with an undivided heart, universally and to the end. He came to do the will of the Father who sent him, and he did it steadily, learning obedience through suffering and becoming a cause of salvation for all who obey..." [# 15].

"... When God consecrates a person, he gives **a special gift** to achieve his own kind purposes: the reconciliation and salvation of the human race. He not only chooses, sets apart and dedicates the person to himself, but engages him or her in his own divine work. Consecration inevitably implies mission. These are two facets of one reality. The choice of a person by God is for the sake of others: the consecrated person is one who is sent to do the work of God in the power of God. Jesus Himself was clearly aware of this. Consecrated and sent to bring

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221 cf. ET 51

the salvation of God, he was **wholly dedicated** to the Father in adoration, love and surrender, and **totally given** to the work of the Father which is the salvation of the world..." [# 23].

"... (The consecration of religious) calls for **the self-giving** without which it is not possible to live either a good community life, or a fruitful mission. Jesus' statement that the grain of wheat needs to fall to the ground and die if it is to bear fruit, has a particular application to religious because of the public nature of the profession. It is true that much of today's penance is to be found in the circumstances of life, and should be accepted there..." [# 31].

"... For each religious, formation is the process of becoming more and more a disciple of Christ, growing in union with, and in configuration to him. It is a matter of taking on increasingly the mind of Christ, of **sharing more deeply his gift of himself to the Father**, and his brotherly service of the human family, and of doing this according to the **founding gift** which mediates the Gospel to the members of a given religious institute. Such a process requires a genuine conversion. The 'putting on Jesus Christ' (cf. Rm 13:14; Ga 3:27; Ep 4:24) implies the stripping off of selfishness and egoism (cf. Ep 4:22-24; Col 3:9-10). The very fact of 'waiting henceforth according to the Spirit' means giving up 'the desires of the flesh' (Ga 5:15). The religious professes to make this putting on of Christ, in his poverty, his love and his obedience, the **essential pursuit of his life**. It is a pursuit that never ends. There is a constant maturing in it, and this reaches not only to spiritual values but also to the fullness of the human personality. ...the religious grows toward the fullness of Christ according to his or her state of life..." [# 45].

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**ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS IN THE CHURCH'S TEACHING AS APPLIED TO INSTITUTES DEDICATED TO WORKS OF THE APOSTOLATE** May 31, 1983<sup>222</sup>.

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**REDEMPTIONIS DONUM**, Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul II, to Men and Women Religious on their Consecration in the Light of the Mystery of Redemption. March 25, 1984<sup>223</sup>:

'...When Christ looked upon you and loved you', calling each one of you... that redeeming love of his was directed towards a particular person, and, at the same time, it took on a spousal character: it became **a love of choice**. This love embraces **the whole person**, soul and body, in that person's unique unrepeatable personal 'I.' The One who,

<sup>222</sup> cf. EV 9, ## 193-293.

<sup>223</sup> Cf. EV, 9. pp. 694-759 [## 721-758]

**given eternally to the Father**, ‘gives’ himself in the mystery of Redemption, has now called man in order that he in his turn should **give himself entirely** to the work of Redemption through membership in a Community, of brothers and sisters, recognized and approved by the Church. Surely, it is precisely this call that St. Paul’s words can be applied: ‘Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit..? You are not your own: you were bought with a price [I Co 6:19, f.]... Christ says: ‘If you wish ...’. And the response to this call is, therefore, a free choice. You have chosen Jesus of Nazareth, the Redeemer of the world by choosing the way that he has shown you...” [# 3].

“...In this perspective the fundamental treasure of one’s own humanity is connected to the fact of ‘being’, **by giving oneself**. The direct point of reference in such a vocation is the living person of Jesus Christ. The call to the way of perfection takes shape from him, and through him, in the Holy Spirit, who continually recalls to new people, men and women, at different times of their lives, but especially in their youth, all that Christ has said...The vocation in which a person discovers in depth **the evangelical law of giving**, a law inscribed in human nature, is itself a gift! It is a **gift overwhelming with the deepest content of the Gospel, a gift which reflects the divine and human image of the mystery of the Redemption** of the world...” [# 6].

“... Religious profession creates **a new bond** ...In this way, religious profession is deeply rooted in baptismal consecration and is a fuller expression of it [PC 5]. In this way, religious profession in its constitutive content, becomes **a new consecration**; the consecration and **giving of the human person to God**, loved above all else. The commitment undertaken by means of the vows to practice the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, according to the determinations proper to each religious family as laid down in the Constitutions is the expression of a **total consecration to God**, and, at the same time, the means that leads to its achievement. This is also the source of bearing witness and of exercising the apostolate...” [# 7].

“...In this form is contained **your answer to the call of redeeming love**, and it is also an **answer of love; a love of self-giving** which is **the heart of consecration**, of the consecration of the person. The words of Isaiah: ‘I have redeemed you ... you are mine...’ seem to seal precisely this love which is **the love of a total and exclusive consecration to God**. This is how **the special covenant of spousal love** is made, in which we seem to hear an unceasing oath of the words concerning Israel, whom the Lord ‘has chosen as his own possession.’ For in every consecrated person the Israel of the new and eternal Covenant is chosen. The whole messianic people, the entire Church, is chosen in every person whom the Lord selects from the midst of this people, in every person who is

**consecrated for everyone to God as his exclusive possession...” [# 8].**

“...In this particular context of the Jubilee Year of the Redemption, let us then go back again to the mystery of the body and soul of Christ as **the complete subject of spousal and redemptive love**: spousal *because* redemptive. For love he offered himself, for love he gave his body for the sin of the world. By immersing yourselves in the Paschal Mystery of the Redeemer through the consecration of the religious vows, you desire, **through the love of total self-giving**, to fill your souls and your bodies with the spirit of sacrifice, even as St. Paul invites you to do in the words of the Letter to the Romans just quoted: ‘to offer your bodies as a sacrifice’ [Rm 12:1]. In this way, the likeness of that love which in the Heart of Christ is **both spousal and redemptive**, is imprinted on the religious profession.... this love is the beginning of **new life in Christ and the Church; it is the beginning of a new creation...” [# 8].**

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**LETTER TO UNITED STATES BISHOPS**, John Paul II, February 22, 1989 <sup>224</sup>:

“... They are **at the heart of the mystery of the Church**; they **belong inseparably to her life and holiness**. They are called to **a radical living of the baptismal commitment** common to all [#2186].

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**DIRECTIVES ON FORMATION IN RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES**, February 2, 1990 <sup>225</sup>.

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**PRELIMINARY STUDY FOR THE 1994 SYNOD OF BISHOPS, LINEAMENTA** .

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**FRATERNAL LIFE IN COMMUNITY – CONGREGAVIT NOS IN UNUM**. February 2, 1994 <sup>226</sup>.

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<sup>224</sup> cf. EV 11, ## 2160-2190.

<sup>225</sup> Cf. EV 14, ## 345-357.

<sup>226</sup> Cf. EV 14, ## 345-357.

## B. The Principle of Totality:

### “The Thirst for the Divine Absolute’ of the Consecrated Life

[cf. EN 69; VC 39] – John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*, March 25, 1996: in this document, the challenge to live the “Principle of Totality” is multiplied:

“... In every age there have been men and women who, obedient to the Father’s call, and to the **prompting of the Spirit**, have chosen this special way of following Christ in order to **devote themselves to him with undivided heart** [cf. I Co 7:34]. Like the Apostles, they, too, have left everything in order to be with Christ and to put themselves as he did, at the service of God and their brothers and sisters...” [# 1].

“... the choice of **total self-giving to God in Christ** is in no way incompatible with any human culture or historical situation...” [# 2].

The consecrated life may experience further changes in its historical forms, but there will be no change in the substance of a choice which finds expression in **a radical gift of self** for the love of the Lord Jesus and, in him, of every member of the human family...” [# 3].

“... These new forms of consecrated life now taking their place along-side the older ones bear witness to the constant attraction which **the total gift of self to the Lord**, the ideal of the apostolic community and the founding charisms continue to exert, even on the present generation. They also show how the firsts of the Holy Spirit complement one another...” [# 12].

“...Many of the baptized throughout history have been invited to live such a life ‘in the image of Christ.’ But, this is possible only on the basis of a special vocation and in virtue of **a particular gift of the Spirit**. For, in such a life baptismal consecration develops into a **radical response** in the following of Christ through acceptance of the evangelical counsels, the first and essential of which is the sacred bond of chastity for the sake of the kingdom. This special way of following Christ, at the origin of which is always the initiative of the **Father**, has an essential **Christological and Pneumatological** meaning: it expresses in a vivid way the Trinitarian nature of the Christian life, and it anticipates in a certain way, that eschatological fulfillment toward which the whole church is tending..” [# 14].

“... ‘Lord, it is well that we are here!’ [Mt 17:14] ... These words bespeak the Christocentric orientation of the whole Christian life. But, they also eloquently express **the radical nature of the vocation to the consecrated life**: How good it is for us to be with You, to devote ourselves to You, to make You the one focus of our lives! Truly those who have been given the grace of this special communion of love with Christ

feel as it were, caught up in His splendor: He is the fairest of the sons of men'[Ps 45:2], the one beyond compare..." [# 15].

"...'This is My Beloved Son!...The words from on high give new depth to the invitation by which Jesus himself at the beginning of his public life called them to follow him, to leave their ordinary lives behind and enter into a close relationship to him. It is precisely this special grace of intimacy which in the consecrated life makes possible and even demands the **total gift of self** in the profession of the evangelical counsels... In the consecrated life, then it is not only a matter of following Christ with one's whole heart, of loving him more than father or mother, more than son or daughter' [cf. Mt 10:37] – for this is the required of every disciple – but of living and expressing this **by conforming one's whole existence to Christ in an all-encompassing commitment which foreshadows the eschatological perfection** to the extent that this is possible in time and in accordance with the different charisms..." [# 16].

"... Contemplation of the glory of the Lord Jesus in the icon of the Transfiguration reveals to consecrated persons first of all the Father, the Creator and Giver of every good thing who draws his creatures to himself [cf. Jn 6:44] with a special love and for a special mission. 'This is my beloved Son: listen to him!' [cf. Mt 17:5]. In response to this call and interior attraction which accompanies it, those who are called entrust themselves to the love of God who wishes them to be **exclusively at his service and they consecrate themselves totally to him and to his plan of salvation** [cf. I Co 7:32-34].

"This is the meaning of the call to the consecrated life: it is an initiative coming wholly from the Father [cf. Jn 15:16], who asks those whom he has chosen to **respond with complete and exclusive devotion**. The experience of this gracious love of God is so deep and so powerful that the person called senses the need to respond by unconditionally dedicating his or her life to God, **consecrating to him all things present and future, and placing them in his hands**. This is why, with Saint Thomas, we come to understand the identity of the consecrated person, beginning with his or her **complete self-offering, as being comparable to a genuine holocaust** [2-22, q. 186, a. 1]. [# 17;].

"...the practice of the evangelical counsels is also a particularly profound and fruitful way of sharing in Christ's mission, in imitation of the example of Mary of Nazareth, the first disciple, who willing put herself at the service of God's plan **by the total gift of self**. ..." [cf. # 18; cf. all of ## 28 & 34 for the example of Mary's totality].

"... The eyes of the Apostles are therefore fixed upon Jesus, who is thinking of the Cross [cf. Lk 9:43-45]. There his virginal love for the Father and for all mankind will attain its highest expression. His poverty will reach **complete self-emptying**, his obedience, **the giving of his life**... It is the

contemplation of the Crucified Christ that all vocations find their inspiration. From that contemplation, together with **the primordial gift of the Spirit, all gifts, in particular, the gift of the consecrated life, take their origin.** After Mary, the Mother of Jesus, it is John who receives this gift. John is the disciple whom Jesus loved, the witness who together with Mary, stood at the foot of the Cross [cf. Jn 19:26,f.]. His decision to **consecrate himself totally** is the fruit of the divine love which envelops him and fills his heart..." [# 23].

"...the sense of mission is at the very heart of every form of consecrated life... To the extent that consecrated persons live **a life completely dedicated to the Father** [cf. Lk 2:49; Jn 4:34], held fast by Christ [cf. Jn 15:16; Ga 1:15-16] and animated by the Spirit [cf. Lk 24:49; Ac 1:8; 2:4], they cooperate effectively in the Mission of the Lord Jesus [cf. Jn 20:21]... Consecrated persons will be missionaries of having been called and chosen by God, to whom they must therefore direct and **offer everything that they are and have**, freeing themselves from the obstacles that could hinder the totality of their response..." [# 25].

"... Fundamental to every charism is a three-fold orientation: ... charisms lead to the Father in **the filial desire to seek his will**, through a process of unceasing conversion...the attitude [mind] of consecrated persons... is progressively conformed to Christ...Finally, every charism leads to the Holy Spirit, insofar as it prepares individuals to let them be guided and sustained by him, both in their personal spiritual journeys, and in the lives of communion and apostolic work, in order to embody that **attitude of service** which should inspire the true Christian's every choice..." [# 36].

"... All consecrated persons by practicing **the evangelical discipleship**, commit themselves to fulfilling the Lord's 'new commandment' to love one another as he has loved us [cf. Jn 13:34]. Love **led Christ to the Gift of Self**, even to the supreme sacrifice of the Cross, So, too, among his disciples, there can be no true unity without that unconditional mutual love which demands a readiness to serve others generously, a willingness to welcome them as they are without judging them [cf. Mt 17:1-2] and an ability to forgive seventy times seven..." [Mt 18:22] [# 42].

"...Consecrated men and women are sent forth to proclaim by the witness of their lives the value of Christian fraternity and the transforming power of the Good News, which makes it possible to see all people as sons and daughters of God and **inspires a self-giving love** toward everyone, especially the least of our brothers and sisters. Such communities are places of hope and of discovering of the beatitudes..." [# 51].

## CONCLUSION

With a rich and varied vocabulary, the Universal Magisterium of this “New Advent” has emphasized repeatedly that the Consecrated Life is truly a Gift of the Spirit. The witness that the Church needs most of all is that of the challenge to answer as totally as Jesus Christ did to His Father’s Mission in the Holy Spirit:

**[1]** The Consecrated Life is based on God’s own salvific Self-communication, His divine self-giving. The Life is a gift through grace, from One eternally given to His Father in the Holy Spirit.

**[2]** The Consecrated life is presented as “this special gift” - a call of the Holy Spirit, that places Church members side by side with her martyrs. This gift has been raised up in the Church - this experience of the Holy Spirit is meant to be the fundamental option for all who embrace it. It is a unique gift of God’s love, offering a special relationship with the Jesus Christ, consecrated and sent.

**[3]** The following are some of the many expressions to challenge the full living of the gospel life – through a ‘Principle of Totality’ - asked of all the baptized. The Consecrated Life is presented as a way imitating Christ’s own life with His Apostles, a truly radical discipleship, living all through life the evangelical law of self-giving; a truly radical living of Baptism; a living of evangelical discipleship:

- a progressively fuller configuration to Jesus Christ;
- an expression of devotion to God alone, through the mind of Jesus Christ;
- a total dedication to God and the Church;
- the living of the transcendental perspective;
- a gift of one’s entire self to God;
- complete self sacrifice, of one’s whole existence;
- giving oneself up for God and His plan;
- the sacrifice of one’s whole existence to God and His people;
- the surrender of one’s total existence;
- an entire commitment to God;
- a sponsal gift of self in service;
- exclusive belonging to God;
- the giving of oneself exclusively to God;
- wholly dedicated, totally given;
- the essential pursuit of one’s whole life;
- total and exclusive self-giving
- a whole, specific and exclusive gift of self;



- self- immolation lived as the soul of sacrifice;
- the giving of oneself entirely to the One Who gives of Himself eternally;
- a love of choice by the whole person;
- a gift overwhelming with the deepest content of the Gospel;
- gift reflecting the divine and human image of the mystery of Redemption;
- a new bond, a total consecration, giving the human person to God as His possession;
- the answer to the call of redeeming love;
- the heart of consecration: an answer to the love of Christ's self-giving;
- the love of a total and exclusive consecration to God;
- a special covenant of spousal love;
- consecrated for everyone to God as his exclusive possession;
- complete subject of spousal and redemptive love of total self-giving;
- new life in Christ, in the Church, the beginning of a new Creation;
- unconditional dedication, consecrating all, present and future;
- complete self-offering, a genuine holocaust;
- the oblation of all that one is and has.

**[4]** On March 22, 1995, Pope John Paul II dedicated his Catechetical Instruction through his Wednesday audience to "The Influence of the Holy Spirit in the Consecrated Life"<sup>227</sup>. In the course of this instruction, the Holy Father presented many insights that offer a good conclusion to these reflections.

**[a]** John Paul II stated that the spirituality of the commitment of the religious life is to be understood in the strongest sense of that word, meaning that it is meant to be an orientation bestowed by the Holy Spirit Himself. The Holy Spirit is the author of every interior progress, and the Giver of every grace in the Church [cf. LG 44; PC 1]. The living of the consecrated life flows from the sovereign and decisive action of the Holy Spirit, that the consecrated persons might experience in ineffable manner a certain created co-naturality of divine charity - quoting St. Thomas Aquinas [2-2, q.45, a.2].

**[b]** It is the Holy Spirit Who develops in the secret of each soul the grace of vocation - He is the principal Educator of vocations it is He Who guides the consecrated souls to perfection - He is the author of magnanimity, of patience, of the fidelity of each one. If allowed, the Holy Spirit exercises His influence in the formation of candidates to the consecrated life.

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<sup>227</sup> Cf. "La vita consecrata. La catechesi di Giovanni Paolo II, dal 28 settembre 1994 al 22 [29] marzo. Introduzione di S. Em., il Card. Eduardo Martinez Somalo", in : Quaderni dell'Osservatore Romano, n. 27. Citta' del Vaticano: Libreria Vaticana 1995, pp. 98=101, passim.

**[c]** It is the Holy Spirit Who arouses within human beings the inspiration of a radical donation to Jesus Christ – it is He Who is at the origin of a more immediate relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit as the effect of the evangelical counsel of chastity [cf. PC 13] It is the Spirit who exercises His permanent influence in order to bring about perseverance of those consecrated in prayer and in the life of intimate union with Jesus Christ. It is the breath of the Holy Spirit Who animates the Apostolic Mission of the Consecrated Life of community. Those living the consecrated life are called up to live a Holy Abandonment to His initiative.

**[d]** This is the challenge of the Holy Spirit for the consecrated life, for those living it, and who are engaged in its apostolic mission as the dawn of the Third Millennium rapidly approaches. The consecrated life is a very special path to realize the ideal of the Second Vatican Council: "... le 'obedience of faith' [Rm. 16:26; cf. Rm 1:5; 2 Co 10:5-6] must be given to God as he reveals himself. By faith man freely commits his entire self to God, making 'the full submission of his intellect and will to God who reveals' , and willing assenting to the Revelation given by him.." [DV 5].

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[F] ... I offer to you and consecrate to Your Service...

### CONSECRATE, SANCTIFY MYSELF<sup>228</sup>

*... Consecrate them in the truth; Your Word is truth. As you sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world, and for their sake, I consecrate Myself , so that they too might be consecrated in truth...* [cf. Jn 17:17-19].

**Presentation:** in Jesus' Priestly Prayer the word *truth* is used three separate times: Jesus prays for His disciples: *Consecrate them in the truth* - then Jn adds: *Your Word is truth*. And lastly: he repeats them same prayer, while comparing His own consecration, sanctification to His own: *for their sake, I consecrate Myself , so that they too might be consecrated in truth* . Like every great exegete, Fr. delaPotterie, SJ prior to analyzing these verses, studies textual criticism – and examines the unusual vocabulary.

[1] The text contains at least three variants in the manuscripts:

- some early mss. suppress the definite article prior to the first usage of 'truth' in the first sentence – it seems the underlying reason for this as to make the text more harmonious presenting 'truth' the same way three times;
- other manuscripts have this usage of truth followed by a genitive;
- and lastly, other mss. which restore the article before the third member.

[a] What is surprising for Greek scholars is the absence of the definite article in the final two usages. But, the laws of interpretation call for the more difficult reading, which is what the JB presents to us. It is a biblical formula – something like it is found in Jn 14:6: *... I am the way, I am [no definitive article!] Truth, and Life* [cf. Jn 14:6].

[b] Similar expressions might be noted also in Jn – so the noun without the article is present:

*... and truth has no place in us...* [cf. 1 Jn 1:8]

*... and truth has no place in him...* [cf. 1 Jn 2:4].

[2] This contrast in Jn 17:17-19 – between the first verse and the last verse is seen as an apparent anomaly and has provoked challenges in the transmission of the text. There are those interpreters who are convinced that the presence or the absence of the definite article prior to the 'truth' imply a different meaning: with the article, the emphasis is: in the truth – whereas the second, without the article, would be understood more adverbially, like *truly*. But others are convinced that this is an exaggeration.

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<sup>228</sup>Ignace de la Potterie, SJ, *La verite' dans saint Jean. Tome II Le croyant et la verite'* Rome: PIB 1977, pp. 706787, *passim*.

[3] Another example of unusual constructions in this regard is 2 Jn 4: ... *It has given me great joy to find that children of yours have been living the life of truth...* In truth, therefore, is a usual expression of Jn – in the present case [Jn 17:17-19], the reason is for emphasis: ***so that they may be consecrated in truth.***

## A. Truth and Holiness in the pre-Johannine Tradition

### Introduction

[1] Some scholars once believed that the idea of a **purification by the truth** was inexistent in the Bible outside of St. John. Today many would connect Jn 17:17-19 to **Baptismal Catechesis** underling a number of NT writings, especially 1 P 1:3-23:

*... Your minds, then, must be sober and ready for action; put all your hope in the grace brought to you by the revelation of Jesus Christ. Do not allow yourselves to be shaped by the passions of your old ignorance ... Jesus was marked out before the world was made and was revealed at the final point of time for your sake. Through Him you now have faith in God, Who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory for this very purpose – that your faith and hope should be in God...! Since by your obedience to the truth you have purified yourselves so that you can experience the genuine love of brothers... your new birth was not from any perishable seed but from imperishable seed, the living and enduring Word of God.*

[2] This truth is not somewhere ‘out of this world’ – as is clear from Jesus’ emphatic prayer: *...I am not asking You to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the Evil One. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world...* [cf. Jn 17:15, ff.]. **To be of this world** does not so much indicate the origin of a person, but much more his sense of a **spiritual belonging**. Some would interpret these lines to mean that it is clear that we have in Jesus’ prayer that the disciples may be sanctified on the plane of absolute reality – some see this is an excessively ‘Platonic’ interpretation. The emphasis, however, of most biblical scholars is to seek for its source more from those familiar with a Biblical background.



### [I] The Jewish Tradition

The idea of a **purification** and a **sanctification** by the Word, or by the Truth is found clearly stated in the Qumran documents. . However, the doctrine pre-dates the establishment of the Qumran community. It may be found in a number of ancient **Sapiential** works and the **Apocalyptic**.

1. **The Wisdom Tradition**: teaches that believers have within a divine force which purifies them from their faults and permits them not to sin any more. This is **Wisdom**, the Word of God, or the **Torah**, present in the heart of the just person: *... No one who obeys Me will ever have to blush, no one who acts as I dictate will ever sin...* [cf. Si 24:22]. And the Psalms attach moral integrity to the action of the **Torah**, which has become interiorized to anyone who will keep it: *... Wisdom comes from the lips of the upright, and his tongue speaks what is right; the Law of God is in his heart, his foot will never slip...* [cf. Ps 37: 30,f.].

2. **The Apocalyptic Literature**: the Lord declares that He has planted His Law into the hearts of His believers. This Law which is among them, will help them as the excellent wisdom that it is. It is an excellent wisdom which is indeed within us, and will assist us. Wisdom is always granted to the Elect – and they will all live, and sin no more. While the majority of this literature [as the various books of Esdra; the Syrian Baruch; Enoch] is not biblical – it has impacted the Word of God.

3. **The Qumran Writings**: this is another non-biblical source – with its haunting library found at Qumran in the bat caves, in 1947. In this desert, monastic setting the notions of holiness and of truth are noted as in Jn 17. The great instrument of **moral purification is the truth**. The titles assumed by these ‘members of the Covenant’ are already significant: the Community of Holiness and Truth. Parallel expressions for them are: ‘the sons of truth’ - the ‘saints. Moral perfection was described in this ancient monastery as ‘the House of Perfection and Truth’. In this mysterious community there was an intimate bond between ‘holiness’ and ‘truth’. Healing for sinners is a counsel of truth and understanding. Healing comes for sinners from the teachings of the Sage. When one has been purified from his offences, this person’s works are then **in the divine truth**. To be purified means to come to know the truth of God’s precepts. In the oft repeated choice between the **Two ways** [Dt; Didache’; and the **Two Standards** {Banners} of Ignatius]. These systems of reading God’s word pray for purification of all human endeavors by the truth of the Lord. When one’s undertakings are purified by the Holy Spirit, all former acts of impiety give way to the Spirit of truth, Wisdom. The ‘Last Ties’ will be characterized by an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

4. **The Prophets**: the ‘spirits’ of truth and iniquity are in conflict within the human heart. The outpouring of the Spirit of Truth will be a sign of the final times for two of the major Prophets – there are two parallel texts of the **New Heart and Spirit** and the **New Covenant**:

*... I shall pour clean water over you and you will be cleansed; I shall cleanse you of all your filth and of all your foul idols. I shall give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh instead. I shall put my spirit in you, and make you keep My Laws, and respect and practice my judgments ...*

*...Look, the days are coming, Yahweh declares, when I shall make a New Covenant with the House of Israel [and the House of Judah], but not like the Covenant I made with their ancestors, the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of slavery, a Covenant which they broke, even though I was their Master, Yahweh declares. Within them I shall plant My Law, writing it on their hearts. Then I shall be their God and they will be My People. There will be no further need for everyone to teach neighbor or brother, saying: ‘Learn to know Yahweh’. No, they will all know Me, from the least to the greatest, Yahweh declares, ‘since I shall forgive their guilt and never more call their sin to mind...’ [cf. Jr 31:31-34].*

5. **Liturgical Texts**: these are testimonies from the Jewish tradition which describe the interior purification. Each time that a pious individual would practice the

commandments, there was a prayer noted at Qumran: ‘**Blessed are You, o Lord of the earth, Who has sanctified us by Your commandments.**’ In an ancient new year’s ritual that would make use of the above prayer with this addition: for to the prayer for the sanctification and the purification by the Lord’s commandments there was added a three-fold mention of the Lord’s truth: ‘**Our God and the God of our fathers! Sanctify us by Your commandments, and give us a part in Your Law... Purify our hearts to serve You in truth – for You, God, you are Truth and Your word is Truth, and this remains forever!’ This ancient prayer is very close to Jn 17 – the ancient Jews prayed to be sanctified in by the commandments, by the Law, while Jesus prays for the sanctification of His disciples by the truth. The 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel, almost from the outset has made it clear that the **Truth** is the equivalent typology for the Law of Moses: *... for the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ...* [cf. Jn 1:17]. Perhaps even more remarkably, in this old prayer of Qumran there may be found Jn’s precise expression: **Your Word is Truth...****

**By way of Summary:** the tradition noted here furnishes surprising contacts to indicate the pre-Christian back-ground of Jn 17:17-19. The common idea behind all this is that **interior purification can be obtained by the Word of God, by the Torah.** From the point of view of the literary genre, the passage from Jn is situated rather in the prolongation of the texts from the ancient Jewish Ritual – and in both instances **sanctification, consecration,** is the object of prayer. Jn’s text is much closer to the monks of Qumran: as they did, millennia ago, Jn attaches **sanctification, consecration to truth.** These textual resemblances should not, then, lead to the hasty conclusion that, therefore, Jn 17 should be read in exactly the same sense as the prayers or the promises of Judaism, expressed in the Ritual of Qumran. Jn will provide most sublime insights into **consecration, sanctification** and the **Truth.**

## (II) The pre-Johannine Judaeo-Christian Tradition

1. **The Acts of the Apostles:** in the NT, the theme of the **purification, sanctification, consecration** by the **truth**, although not very frequent, is nonetheless found clearly attested. In Peter’s Discourse in Jerusalem on the matter of the **Descent of the Holy Spirit** on the non-believers in the House of Cornelius, it is clearly stated:

*... God showed His approval of them by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as He had to us. God made no distinction between them and us, since He purified their hearts by faith...* [cf. Ac 15:9].

This purification is here attributed not so much to the Ritual of Baptism, but to the **faith** of those who had heard the Word from Peter:

*... While Peter was still speaking the Holy Spirit came down on all the listeners. Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were all astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit should be poured out on the gentiles, too...* [cf. Ac 10:44]

***... My brothers, Peter said, you know perfectly well that in the early days God made His choice among you:: the gentiles were to learn the good news from me and to become believers...*** [cf. Ac 15:7].

The context of all this was the matter of legal purity. The point under discussion at the Council of Jerusalem was whether the non-believers coming into the Christian community had to submit to the ritual of circumcision [cf. Ac 15:15]. Peter's position – opposed by Paul – was that if the bodies of these non-believers had not yet been circumcised, ritually they remained 'impure'. However, God had already purified their hearts by faith, and thus they could be admitted to Baptism. The proof that their hearts had been genuinely purified, had been furnished by the Holy Spirit Himself, Who descended on these non-believers just as He had done on the disciples on Pentecost. Purification by faith is required as a pre-condition to Baptism: ***whoever believes and is baptized will be saved ...*** [cf. Mk 16:16]. Purification comes from hearing the Gospel, and listening to it. It is interesting to note that this mention of purification by faith pertains to a Baptismal context: ***... Could anyone refuse the water of baptism to these people, now they have received the Holy Spirit...?*** [cf. Ac 10:47, f.].

2. **1 Peter**: for many interpreters this reflects of a **common Baptismal Catechesis**:

***... Since by your obedience to the truth you have purified yourselves so that you can experience the genuine love of brothers, love each other intensely from the heart; for your New Birth was not from any perishable seed but from imperishable seed, the living and enduring word of God ...*** [cf. 1 P 1:22].

a. First of all, it needs to be pointed out that the resemblance of this text with the Ritual of Initiation into the Community of Qumran noted above. The newly accepted into the old monastery will be purified 'by the submission of his soul to all the precepts of God. The instrument of his purification will be the truth of God's precepts'. This purification of the candidate took place at the moment when 'he would be purified in his flesh, in receiving the aspersion by the lustral waters and in sanctifying himself in the expiatory waters. Purification by the Truth is therefore closely bound to the to his sanctification which he would obtain by a ritual bath.

b. **1 P 1:22** even more so than **Ac 15:9** also makes up part of cultic context. It seems to belong to what many scholars think the **early Baptismal tradition**. In fact, the following **v. 23** recalls to believers the fact of their **baptismal regeneration**. And in **2:1** the author refers to them as **new-born babies**. However, the means indicated for their interior purification is not Baptism – but their **obedience to the truth** – i.e., their **faith**, here described as an **obedience** as it is elsewhere:

***... Jesus Christ, our Lord, through Whom we received grace and our apostolic mission of winning this obedience of faith among all nations for the honor of His name...*** [cf. Rm 1:5]

***... to Him, Who can make you strong ... as the eternal God commanded to be made known to all the nations so that they obey in faith: to Him, the only wise God, give glory through Jesus Christ forever and ever. Amen*** [Final Doxology – Rm 16:26].

c. This is also called **faith in the Truth** [cf. 2 Th 2:13]: ... ***God chose you from the beginning to be saved by the Spirit Who makes us holy and by faith in the truth...*** – this **Truth** is nothing other than ***the living and eternal word of God*** [cf. 1 P 1:23]. This is the **Good News** which has been proclaimed to them [cf. v. 25; cf. v. 12]. In Paul's expression:

***... now, you too, in Him have heard the message of the truth and the Gospel of your salvation and having put your trust in it you have been stamped with the seal of the Holy Spirit and the Promise, Who is the Pledge of our inheritance, for the freedom of the people whom God has taken for His own, for the praise of His glory ...*** [cf. Ep 1:13].

d. Adherence to the Gospel, ***obedience to the truth***, is presented in this whole section [cf. 1 P 1:13-2:2] as the great means of **Christian Sanctification**. Already in 1:2, there is an approximation of the terms: **sanctification** and **obedience**: ***... to all those living as aliens in the Dispersion ... who have been chosen in the foresight of God the Father, to be made holy by the Spirit, obedient to Jesus Christ, and sprinkled with His blood...***

e. And again, in 1 P 1:14-16, the author bases his exhortations to the practice of the Christian life by an appeal to the state of **obedience** of the believers and their vocation to **holiness**: ***...as obedient children, be yourselves holy in all your activity, after the Model of the Holy One Who calls us, since scripture says: 'Be holy as I am holy...!***

f. There can be noted the ideas of **purification** [1:22] and **sanctification** [1:2, 16] and these are very close to each other. In order to obtain their purification and their sanctification, Christians are invited to live as **obedient children** [cf. 4. 14] – **in obedience to the truth** [cf. 1:22].

g. **St. Paul** will speak in a similar manner of the **New Man** who is created **in the holiness of the truth**: ***... put on the New Man that has been created on God's principles, in the uprightness and holiness of the truth..*** [Ep 4:24]. All this vocabulary is quite similar to Jn 17:17-19.

3. **St. James**: as would be imagined there are other NT texts touching on this same theme, even though perhaps not in such a clear and evident manner. The NT 'Wisdom Writer', St. James, exhorts Christians so that they might be prompt in hearing the Word:

***... Remember this, my dear brothers everyone should be quick to listen, but slow to speak and slow to human anger; God's saving justice is never served by human anger; so do away with all impurities and remnants of evil...*** [Jas 1:19-20]

a. Then he adds a verse, quite close to 1 P 1:22: ***... Humbly welcome the word which has been planted in you and can save your souls...*** [cf. Jas 1:21].



b. The contact with 1 P is all the more apparent if one keeps in mind Jas 1:18: ***...By his own choice he gave birth to us by the message of the truth; so that we should be a sort of first-fruits of al His creation...*** [cf. Jas 1:18]. This is quite close to the following: ***... Since by your obedience to the truth... for your New Birth was not from any perishable seed but from imperishable seed, the living and enduring word of God ...*** [cf. 1 P 1:22].

c. James speaks of **the word which saves** – 1 P considers rather its effect of **purification** and of **sanctification**. **But, the latter likewise situates this fruit of the word n the perspective of salvation** [cf.1 P 1:5, 9, 10; 2:2].

d. Let us recall furthermore that the Pauline Epistles present the Gospel as a **divine force [dunamis ] for salvation:**

***... For I see no reason to be ashamed of the Gospel; it is God's power for the salvation of everyone who has faith..*** [cf. Rm 1:16]

***... The message of the Cross is folly for those who are on the way to ruin, but for those of us who are on the way to salvation it is the power of God...*** [cf.1 Co 1:18]

***... We know, brothers, loved by God, that you have been chosen, because our gospel came to you not only in words, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit with great effect ...*** [cf. 1 Th 1:6].

e. There are likewise other texts which bring out more than once the salvific effect that the Word of God produces in believers :

***... I want to make clear to you, brothers, what the message of the gospel that I preached to you is; you accepted it and took your stand on it; you are saved by it, if you keep to the message I preached to you; otherwise, your coming to believe was in vain...*** [cf. 1 Co 15: 1,ff.].

***... Another reason why we continually thank God for you is that as soon as you heard the word that we brought you as god's messenger, you welcomed it for what it really is, not the word of any human being, but God's word, a power that is working among you as believers...*** [cf. 1 Th 2:13, ff.].

***... You must keep to what you have been taught and know to be true; remember who your teachers were ; and how, ever since you were a child, you have known the holy scriptures – from these you can learn the wisdom that leads to salvation through Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and useful for refuting error, for guiding people's lives and teaching them to be upright. This is how someone who is dedicated to God becomes fully equipped and ready for any good work...*** [2 Tm 3: 14, ff.].

***... The word of God is something alive and active; it cuts more incisively than any two-edged sword: it can seek out the place where the soul is divided from the spirit, or joints from marrow; it can pass judgment on secret emotions and thoughts...*** [cf. Heb 4:12].

4. Lastly, it would be interesting to cite from St. Clement of Rome: 'Please do not count the sins of Your Servants and of Your hand-maidens, but **purify us by the**

**Truth**'. In harmony with the *parenetic* fascination of the great final prayer of the Epistle [cf. 1 Corin. 59,2- 61,3] this passage considers above all the moral point of view of the purification of sins as the Qumran texts and the **Baptismal Tradition**: it is normal that the theme has become detached from its early baptismal context, for purification by the truth, begun at the instant of one's entrance into Christianity, ought to be pursued all through the life of believers.

**(B) Consecration in the Truth  
[Jn 17:17-19]**

**Presentation**

[1] Compared to the texts of the pre-Johannine tradition, this passage manifests several significant particulars. It needs to be stated first of all the rarity of the term: **consecrate, sanctify** in Jn's writings, even though it is found 4 times in the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel. It is not found at all in the Johannine Letters and only once in the Apocalypse:

*... let the sinner continue sinning, and the unclean continue to be unclean; let the upright continue in his uprightness, and those who are holy continue to be holy...*  
[cf. Rv 22:11].

[2] Of the 4 Gospel texts, three of them are grouped in these verses 17:17-19 in Jesus' Priestly Prayer of Farewell. The 4<sup>th</sup> is found in Jn 10:36:

*... Yet, to someone whom the Father has consecrated and sent into the world, you say: 'You are blaspheming' because I said I am the Son of God...* [cf. Jn 10:36]

[3] All of this emphasizes the vital importance of the theme in this spot under discussion. The doctrinal richness of the passage connects likewise with the diversity of the thematic connections which the Christian ideal of **sanctification** always implies: the **consecration** of Christians is demanded by the **Father**; it is at the same time intimately united to **Jesus Christ** – since He declares that He declares that **He sanctifies Himself** for them. It is noted twice [vv. 17 & 19] that **sanctification, consecration is realized in the truth**.

[4] This formula, by reason of its present context, assumes here several new nuances. Finally, too, this notion of **sanctification, consecration** is close to the theme of **Mission**. As is clear, these verses are quite complex. In the exposition which follows here we will treat successively of the **sanctification, consecration** of believers in the different aspects that will be pointed out.

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**[I] The Father sanctifies, consecrates His Disciples [vv.11, 17]**

[1] Regarding the 4 uses in the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel [cf. 10:36; 17:17, 19 (2 x)] two of these have God the Father as their Subject [cf. Jn 10:36; 17:19]. In the first of these texts [10:36] the verb is applied to the **Son**, Whom the **Father has consecrated** and **sent** into this world. Jn 17:17 is the only passage in all of St. John which speaks of the

**sanctifying action** of the Father in Christians. However, in the same context [17:11], the Father is invoked by Jesus as **Holy Father**. For this adjective **Holy**, it is necessary to make the same remark for the verb **to sanctify, consecrate**: this epithet is not applied anywhere else in the entire 4<sup>th</sup> gospel.

[2] Since these two terms: **holy/ to sanctify** are rare in Jn and the fact that they are here brought together they must clarify one another: Jesus addresses Himself to the Father as **Holy Father** [cf. v. 11] because He is going to ask of His Father **to consecrate His own**. [v. 17]. We have here the Johannine equivalent of the **Rule of the Holiness Code [Lv 17-26]: You are to be holy, for I am holy** [cf. Lv 11:44]. In Lk 6, **holy** is changed for **compassionate, merciful**.

[3] Furthermore, the parallelism [ **Holy Father ... Consecrate, sanctify them in the Truth** ] of these two verses appears also in their construction and their internal movement. This parallelism is very important for the interpretation of v. 17a. to comprehend better the Father's **sanctifying action** revealed here it is necessary to examine ever more closely the two parts of v. 11b: **Holy Father, keep those You have given Me true to Your Name so that they may be one like Us...**

†

#### 1. **Holy Father [v. 11]:**

a. The idea of Divine Holiness has deep OT roots. However, in the Bible, Holiness is not merely one attribute of God among many others. Holiness rather constitutes the very divine essence, it is that which makes God precisely what He is. The **Holy One** became the constant manner of designating 'God.' The **Holiness** of God is His uncreated transcendence His **majesty** which reveals itself as His **Glory**:

*... O Lord in need of nothing, it has pleased You that the Temple where You dwell should be here with us. How, therefore, Holy Lord of all Holiness, preserve forever from all profanation this House, so newly purified...* [cf. 2 M 14:36].

This **Holy God** is radically inaccessible simply because He is totally 'other':

*... For it is I, Yahweh, Who am Your God. You have been sanctified and have become holy : do not defile yourselves with all these creatures that swarm on the ground. Yes, it is I, Yahweh, Who brought you out of Egypt to be your God: you must therefore be holy, because I am holy, the Holy Lord of all Holiness!* [cf. Lv 1:44, f.].

*... the Seraphin were shouting to each other: 'Holy Holy, Holy is Yahweh Sabaoth. His glory fills the whole earth...* [cf. Is 6:3].

However, to this 'metaphysical' aspect there is joined – especially among the Prophets - a moral and religious aspect: God is infinitely elevated above sin, from all that is weak and reprehensible.

b. In the OT, except for that rather late text [cf. 2 M 14:36] just noted above, one does not find prayers, or the Israelites addressing God, calling Him: **Holy**

**Father.** On the contrary, this appellation is characteristic of the Jewish and the Judaeo-Christian prayers. In 2 M, this title seems to have a liturgical resonance: thus in 2 M, in the specter of the impending destruction of the much revered sanctuary by the non-believing Nicanor, the priests of the sanctuary address their fervent, anguished appeal to **the Holy Lord of all Holiness!** They do this in order to obtain that their beloved Temple, only recently purified might not suffer profanation. In an early writing, the Apostle Philip is presented as invoking **The Holy Father of the Holy Son, Jesus Christ** – in order to obtain the punishment of the great High Priest Annanias, who more and more opposed the Christian faith in the presence of non-believers of Athens. A like invocation might be found in the Ap [cf. 6:10: ... **Holy, true Master, how much longer...** [cf. 6:10]. In these prayers, God is referred to as **Holy**, because the supplicant wants to obtain that He manifest **His powerful holiness**: both in protecting from all impiety their revered place of worship which is consecrated to the Holy God – as well as in punishment of the impious because of their bold attacks against the faith.

A particularly remarkable parallel may be read in the *Didache* [[10,2] – which is more or less contemporary to the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel: ‘We bless You, **Holy Father**, for your **Holy Name**, that You have made dwell in our hearts and for the knowledge, the faith and the immortality that You have revealed by Jesus Christ, Your Servant.’ The manifestation of the Father’s Holiness which the invocation **Holy Father** implies, consists here in the fact that God ‘has made His **Holy Name** dwell in the hearts of the faithful. Genuine believers learn early to consider their hearts to be like a **Temple**, where the Holy Name of the Heavenly Father dwells in hallowed honor. Thanks to that unique revelation brought to bear by the words and deeds of Jesus Christ, and to the Gift of a vibrant faith and knowledge open to this Incarnate, Cosmic, Eucharistic and Revealed Word of God.

However, many of the scholars believe that this exegesis is too vague and its basis is far more conjectural. It would not appear legitimate at all unless it could be confirmed by the analysis of the prayer which follows the comma; Holy Father! This examination will permit the student at the same time to make more clear the relationship between the epithet ‘holy’ and the name ‘Father’ used by Jesus.

**2. *Keep those You have given Me true to Your Name ! [v. 11]- and this so that they may be one, as We are one!*** This verse can be analyzed from two complementary points of view - if we consider the persons about whom Jesus speaks we will find two different groups: disciples and the Father and the Son. The first two members have for their theme the Name of the Father: Jesus prays so that the disciples might be protected in His Name – this **Name** has been given to the Son by the Father. The theme. The theme of the second group of persons is **unity**. Both for the **Name** as well as for **unity**, one may note the shifting of the attention which leads the disciples on each occasion and that is toward the Father and the Son this shows from the outset that that which is said of the disciples finds its primary source and its authentic explanation **in the relationship between the Father and the Son**: the disciples are called to be protected in the **Name** of the Father, as the Son is – as He

himself has received this Name from the Father. They are all called to be **one**, just as the Father and the Son are **One**.

a. This difficult phrase has received several explanations over the tradition of the centuries. For the principal representatives of the Antiochian School as well as for certain commentators of the Middle Ages and of the renaissance, and even for some modern interpreters, this verse is a prayer to the Father with this intention: ***guard them, protect them, in Your Name.*** His means simply: *Guard them under Your protection, by Your Providence, against the dangers of this world* [v. 15].

However, this exegesis does go beyond the OT formulations – as in Ps 54:3, f. ***... But now the Lord Himself comes to help me, the Lord, the supporter of my life..!*** - this seems to 'negative', reductive, and it does not keep in mind the remarkable development regarding **unity** in the second part of this same verse: how does the simple divine protection against the contamination of the world be able to create among the disciples such a **profound unity**, such a **complete communion**, that it might be compared to that unity which exists within the Trinity, between the Father and the Son?

Today's more modern and current exegesis would comprehend the Words of Jesus in this following manner: ***Conserve the disciples in their attachment to the same Name that You have entrusted Me to reveal to them!*** One recent objection even against this view would be: the name is not the same reality as **adherence to that Name**, and to **give the Name** is not synonymous with **giving the Name with the specific purpose of making it known**.

In this more extended interpretation there is expressed in a characteristic manner a frequent tendency among modern interpreters: they seek to explain from the human point of view that which John attributes to the **divine action**. Put in other terms, many seem drawn to give to **an essentially theological text**, a translation that is merely moral and anthropological.

However, recently a third interpretation has emerged which is even more 'metaphysical': the Name given to Jesus Christ, is the **divine nature** which is communicated to the Son by the Father – or, further: this is the **glory** and the **power** of the Divinity - the text means in this view: guard them in Your Name, meaning: **by Your divine power**. A serious objection that is raised against this exegesis is the following: that is that the 'Name' in Jn does not anywhere designate the **divine nature** [in the metaphysical sense], the **glory** nor the **power** of God. The term is applied here to the Father in that He is the One Whom theology refers to, calls the Person of the Father.

It is indeed in this personal sense that this last group of exegetes that need to be mentioned: for them, the Name in this verse can only be the **Name of the Father**. It forms the vital milieu where the Father and the Son live. This constitutes the foundation of their unity – and this is likewise the foundation of the unity of the disciples: Jesus is asking here, then, that they be guarded in the Name that He reveals to them [cf. v. 6], that **they be maintained in union with the Father**, and

therefore, in their **filial pathway towards the Father**. It is only this exegesis that is entirely faithful to both the letter and the spirit of the text.

b. Understanding the importance of this v. 11, parallel to v. 17 under discussion, it is necessary to develop somewhat this interpretation and to seek at the same time to provide a more rigorous basis for it:

1.] First of all it is necessary to clarify the exact sense of **His Name**. Contrary to the to the opinion of several exegetes, both ancient and modern, it is necessary to maintain that the **Name of God** in Jn never designates the **divine nature**, or the OT meaning for the **Divine Name**. It is not to be identified more to the **Glory of God** or to **His Power** even though these two notions are close to the Johannine notion of **Name**. When the term is applied to God, it always signifies the **Name** of the **Father** – whether there is formally found the expression ***in the name of My Father*** [cf. Jn 5:43; 10:25] – or whether the **Father is invoked** in the words which immediately precede, as is the case in a number of passages:

*... What else shall I say: Father, save Me from this hour... ?* [cf. Jn 12:28]

*... Now, Father, it is time for you to glorify Me with that glory I had with You before ever the world was. I have made known Your Name to the men You took from the world to give Me... Holy Father, keep those You have given to Me true to Your Name so that they may one like us, Father, righteous One, the world has not known You, but I have known You... I have made Your Name known to them and will continue to make it known, so that the Love with which You loved Me may be in them, and so that I may be in them...* [cf. Jn 17:5, 6, 11-12, 25-26].

For Jn, God has not other name than **Father** – correlatively when the term is applied to Jesus, it always designates Him as the **Son**. Some draw from this unexpected conclusions that are also inexact: that **the Name is equivalent to the Person**. While this is often so, some would conclude that **Your Name** here designates the Person of the Father. However, there must be concluded here: this means the Father **considered in Himself**.

Hence, the objection: what can this gift be, bestowed on Christ by the Person of the Father, in that precisely speaking, the Father cannot give that which constitutes Him in 'Personhood'. This objection by some exegetes of an earlier time derives from a metaphysical conception of *person*, that comes from much later Theological controversies regarding the Trinity, that brought real precision to the concept. The simplest answer to this question above is, of course: certainly Jn did not intend to enter into the later theological controversies, intending to give a precise limiting idea to **Person** in the sense of its establishing the distinctions within the Trinity. It is true that in the Bible, **the Name is the Person**. But, in this Judaic, Hebrew context Person enjoys more a functional sense. The **Name of God** in the OT designates God Himself, whenever its context is the mystery of **Creation**, or God manifesting His **Power**. In this sense, the Divine **Name, Person**, is a term of revelation. For Fr. Dupont, OSB, the **Name** designates for the ancients **the role of a being within the universe**.

In the Johannine writings the **Name** does not simply designate the **Person** – it is not indeed synonymous with the title given to someone. The parallelism between **Name** [17:11] and **Truth** [17:17] shows that the formal object of the term is something that is revealed: the **Name of God** is that which is revealed to us about God. When Jesus, in the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel addresses Himself to God the Father, by appealing to **His Name**, this is brought forth in order to make understood that which is revealed to us as **Father**.

It is interesting to note that the analysis of the words **Thy Name** makes us come forth to the same conclusion which is the same as the epithet **Holy**. These two terms: **Name/ Holy** designate God in so far as He manifests Himself. He makes Himself known as **Father** and He makes Himself known as **Holy**. But since these two themes are found here reunited in one and the same invocation, **Holy Father**, these two terms shed light on one another and allow the careful reader to synthesize the results of these two analyses. This means that according to this present passage under discussion, the **Divine Holiness** receives a new specification: the revelation of this **Holiness** of God is confused here, even to the point of identification, with the revelation of His Character as **Father**. In other terms, it is precisely in His manifesting Himself as **Father**, that God makes Himself known as **Holy**, and it is in this manner that He reveals His transcendence.

**2.]** How is it, then, that **the Name of the Father** can ever have been given to Jesus Christ? After that which was said above, this statement is by now less paradoxical, since the idea of the **Name** implies that of manifestation, i.e., of **revelation**.

But, this also serves to call to our minds that full theological importance of the word **give** [*didomai*] in Jn: an indication of the relationship between the Father and the Son. This is one of those **key words** in the Priestly Prayer, and it returns 16 times. It essentially **defines** the Father: in Jn 17:1-24 it comes up 13 times relating to the Father, and the 3 other times relating to Jesus. One of its remarkable details: in no one of these texts is it said that the Father gives directly to humanity – He is always and exclusively **giving** to the Son and Jesus, in His turn, is the One Who **gives** to the disciples. These initial statements show already that the use of this verb makes profound reference to the **unity between the Father and the Son, in the accomplishment of the work of salvation**.

Furthermore, in addition to His Name, the Father **gives** other goods to the Son, following Jn 17:

- He gives **words**, those words which Jesus in His turn has given to humanity [v. 8];
- He also gives **glory** on Him, which Jesus hands over to His own [cvf. Vv. 22, 24];
- The Father gives **power** over all flesh [v. 2];
- He gives the **work to be carried out** [cfd. V. 4];
- The Father gives to Jesus **humanity itself** [cf. vv. 2 b, 6, 9].

As will be abundantly clear all these terms present a striking analogy with the gift of the Divine **Name**.

In v. 8, Jesus says to His Father: The **Words** that You have given to Me, I have given to **them**. These words in the plural lead back, or recall to mind, the unicity of the **Word** in the singular ,i.e., to the **Revelation** of God in and through Jesus Christ. This **Word** is fundamentally that of the Father [cf. vv. 6, 17]. However, the Father, having **given** all that pertains to the Father to the Son [cf. v. 10], this Word is at the same time the **Word of Jesus**. The text therefore clearly implies the **union of the Father and of the Son in the work of Redemption**, a work *ad extra* of the Most Blessed Trinity. Due to the fact that Jesus had said: *My Doctrine is not My own, but of Him Who has sent me!* [cf. 17:16]. In the words of Augustine:

‘... Therefore, just what is the Doctrine of the Father, if not the very Word of the Father? Therefore, Christ Himself is the Doctrine of the Father since He is the Father’s Word. And since the Son cannot be of no one, but has to be the Son of someone: and He proclaims His own doctrine, i.e., Himself. But, this is not His own Word, but He is the Word of the Father. What is more ‘yours’ than ‘you’? and what is less ‘yours’ than ‘you’ if one is of someone...’

While it is true that this commentary from St. Augustine surpasses the precision brought forth in Jn 17, it does justly and profoundly express the ultimate bearing of this sublime gospel passage. This text has long been pondered by mystics and theologians alike, offering a deeper insight into the Trinitarian relationships.

This same insight is equivalently present at the beginning of the discourse of the Last Supper: *The Word that you hear is not Mine, but of Him Who has sent me!* [cf. Jn 14:24]. In other terms, the Word of Jesus is one that has been **received**. Both texts cited here refer to the **personal Mission** of Jesus Christ by the Father, and in an implicit manner only, to His pre-existence. However, Jn 17:8 which refers to the **words given** to the Son, is more explicit: it appeals fundamentally to the coming of Jesus from the Father and, therefore, of His pre-existence with the Father [cf. also v. 5: *the glory that I had with You before the constitution of the world*]. This, too, is on the level of pre-existence it seems, that it is necessary to comprehend the **gift of the Word to the Son**.

Another gift to be recalled that the Father bestows on the Son is the divine **Glory**. Jesus speaks of this twice near the end of the Priestly Prayer: **I have given them the Glory that You have given to Me, so that they might all be one as we are One** [cf. v. 22]. **I wish that where I am, they might also be with Me, so that they might contemplate the Glory which You have given to Me!** [cf. v. 24]. This **Divine Glory, received** from the Father Christ had already possessed already before the constitution of this world with the Father [cf. vv. 5, 24]. Therefore this is the **Father’s Glory** – it is however, **His Glory** which as Son, He holds **from the Father** [cf. Jn 1:14]. As for those whom the father has **given** to Him, they are destined to be there where He Himself is [cf. 17:24], i.e., **with the Father**: they have been called to contemplate His Spirit, to see it for what it truly is [cf. 1 Jn 3:2] in the eschatological



unfolding of His quality as Son. It will be noted how these developments on the **Gift of Glory** are intimately bound up with the theme of **Filiation**.

However, to grasp better the sense of the Gift of Glory, it is necessary to keep in mind two details noted in vv. 22 & 24. Let it be noted at the outset that the **Gift of Glory** is in tight relationship with the **Love of the Father**: *so that they might contemplate the glory which you have given to Me, because You have loved Me before the constitution of the world* [v. 24; cf. vv. 22-23; 3:35].

This communication without reservation of the Father to the Son is deeply rooted in the Father's Love: this love is at the same time the **eternal love of the Father for His Son** [cf/ 17:24] – and the **love** that He experiences for the historic Jesus, by reason of the faithful accomplishment of the work of salvation, a work that of its very nature remains always as the work of the Father [cf. 10:17; 5:20; 17:4]. Another significant point is: the **Gift of Glory** is one that makes **Unity**: this is said unmistakably in 17:22, a verse which for the composition of the theme is much like our v. 11:

*... The Glory which You have given to Me  
I have given to them –  
So that they may be one,  
As We are One...*

One might conclude as follows: in time and before all time, the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel defines the relationships of the Father and of the Son as those of a **love which gives**. This **love gives** the **Mission**, as well as all the **Power** that this Mission might be fully accomplished; it gives that which is properly **Divine: Life** and the **Power** to vivify it; **Judgment** and also **Glory**. The **love of God**, thus released in history, brings humanity into that same **unity** of which the relation of Father and Son are the eternal archetype.

By keeping in mind the two parallels that have just been examined [i.e., the gift of words – and the gift of glory] enables the careful believer to comprehend this difficult formula of v. 11, where Jesus is speaking of the **Name** which the Father has given to Him. It is necessary to recall that **Name** is a term of **revelation** and one that is very close to the theme of the **Word** - and these terms all clarify each other. From the fact that in v. 6, the two words are practically equivalent: ***I have manifested Your Name to men, i.e. Your Word***. The **Name** of the father manifested to humanity, this is His **Word, Revelation**. From these reflections, it is necessary to accept the challenging interpretation of a century ago: **the Name given to the Son is: that Revelation which the Father has made, of Himself, to the son from all eternity**.

This still does not suffice. It is necessary also to keep in mind that second parallel, that which treats of the **Gift of Glory** [cf. vv. 22-24]. In v. 11, as in vv. 22-24, the **Unity** of the disciples has for its foundation the **Gift** which the Father makes to the Son – from both sides equally, this **Unity** among believers is compared to the **Trinitarian Unity** of the Father and the Son and is at the same time founded upon it [*kathos*]. The second passage ought therefore help us to comprehend the first. Now

the **Glory** that the Son has received from the Father, is according to the Prologue, the **Glory** which the Son has from His Father as the Only-Begotten, Most beloved Son [cf. 1:14]. It is further that **Glory** which represents for Him the fact of being **eternally loved** by His Father [cf. 17:24]. The formula of v. 11, **Thy Name which You have given to Me** : does not merely imply that the Father has manifested Himself to His Son. The verb employed by Jn is **dedokas**, which the 4<sup>th</sup> gospel also uses for the **Gift of Glory** [cf. 17: 22, 24] – for the **Gift of Life** [cf. 5:26] for the gift of **All**, as a **sign of His Love** [cf. 3:35]. Beyond the communication of a knowledge by the Father to the Son, this verb describes also a vital act, **the Gift of Life**.

In brief: the formula, **Your Name which You have given to Me** - implies at the same time a **revelation** and a **vital communication** : a **revelation to the Son**, a word spoken. But, this is also an authentic **Gift**, the communication by the Father to the Son of something that remains common to Them Both [cf. v. 10]. In other terms, in **giving His Name** to His Son, the Father **makes Himself known** to His Son as His 'Father', but at the same time, He **gives Himself** to His Son in an **eternal love**. As for what pertains to this Son, in **receiving** this Name from the Father, and this **Gift of His Love, knows God** [cf. Jn 5:26; 1 Jn 5:11-12]. This **Life** which is in Him, remains always bound to the Father's Revelation. But, this is a **life turned toward the Father** - it is essentially for Him an **eternal Filial Life**. On the other hand, the Name of the Father appeals and supposes that of the Son, **the Name of the One and the Name of the Other mutually include One Another**. The believer is thus able to comprehend that this Name of the Father given to the Son might and should constitute the very foundation of their **Unity**. However, this **Unity** of which Jesus speaks is a **living and personal Unity** – it is **the unique and transcendent communion of life which exists between the Father and the Son**.

3.] We are now in a position to take up the genuine object of this analysis of Jn 17:11: the **Prayer of Jesus for His disciples**, that they be **guarded in the Name of the Father**. The interpretation of these words: **given to Me** - of which we have pondered the context, has all rendered this task all the more simple.

The structure of the verse indicated above shows very clearly that what factors into **the share of Unity for the disciples** is the fact that they have been **protected in the Name of God, the Father**. On the other hand, this Unity receives as its Model – its Exemplary **Cause** - that same Unity between the Father and the Son, and it is in this, that it is ultimately founded and brought about. But, since this Unity of the Son with His Father consists in His communion with the Father and therefore **in His Filial Life**, the internal logic and cohesion of the entire verse requires that this is then extended toward the **Disciples** of all times: these will be realized among them with an authentic, genuine Unity, **in the measure that they will live their filial life with the Son. To be protected in the Name of the Father** - signifies therefore for the faithful believers: to be **maintained by the Father** in this life which He **gives** them, **to be protected, conserved in their filial life in their communion with the Father**. This is the equivalent of that which John describes: **to remain in the Son and in the Father** [cf. 1 Jn 2:24] – and **to remain in God** [cf. 1 Jn 4:16].

These formulae of 1 Jn express exactly from the point of view of believers that which was described from the point of view of the Father in Jn 17:11.

4.] This exegesis presented here was already that of one of the first representatives of the Antiochian School, Theodore of Mopsuestia. He paraphrased as follows the Prayer of Jesus, in v. 11:

‘... **From the fact that You have united Me to God the Father by the Holy Spirit, and has rendered Me worthy of Filiation, so that I might call You My Father, make of these likewise Your children in giving them the grace of the Holy Spirit. And thus, as I am, they too will be one, they will possess the same union with You and with confidence they will call You Father...**’

This interpretation which is being suggested here will come to confirm and clarify more the conclusion of this analysis of the words: **Holy Father**, which open the prayer: the **Name of the Father** which has been revealed to believers, constitutes for them **a kind of Temple, a sacred domain, where they can truly live as authentic children of God, united to their Father.**

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3. **Sanctify, Consecrate them in the Truth [v. 17]:** there has been some concentration here on the analysis of Jn 17:11. because this verse truly is parallel to Jn 17:17 – which is the proper object of these reflections. This v. 17 is also quite difficult, if the scholar is to judge by the multiplicity of explanations given to it over the years. Nonetheless, the conclusions reached above will provide some help in clarifying the sense of this Prayer of JESUS.

a. **A variety of Interpretations:**

- It is and has been the opinion of a number of authors, and almost all of the ancients, who see in these words a prayer of Jesus Christ for the **interior sanctification** of His disciples. St. Thomas, for example, has written: Sanctify these men, by sending into them the Holy Spirit; and this in Truth, i.e., **in the knowledge of the truth of the faith and of Your Mandates.**

- For many others, the text speaks less of a sanctification in the moral sense than of an authentic ‘consecration’. However, this term is understood in several ways: for Calvin, Jesus asks His Father that His disciples might become His own proper ‘good’, His ‘possession’; for others, by reason of v. 18. They connect this ‘consecration’ to His **Mission**, to the **Apostolic Ministry.**

- However, there are still other numerous commentators who seek to synthesize these various aspects of consideration: **consecrate/ sanctify** means at one and the same time, **to vow to God**, and **to be deputed to His Service in the divine ministry.**

- Still others in like manner, suggest a double nuance to these terms, **consecrate sanctify**, not so much by distinguishing two aspects in the consecration of the disciples, but rather in joining the idea of **sanctification** [which the first group of

opinions held] t this the word **consecration**: Jesus thus prays fervently for the moral and interior sanctification rather than for their deputation for the ministry of preaching.

- The final group of opinions to be offered here is the view of those who would understand the term **sanctify, consecrate** - in the sense of **sacrifice**, not only for Jesus Christ Himself – which is the current exegesis for many interpreters - but also for the disciples, because of v. 19. The verb means to be set aside with a view to a **sacrifice** offered to God. For St. Thomas, an authentic sacrifice is every work that is performed, so that we might inhere the more intimately to God in a holy society, i.e. related, orientated to that end of good y which we might become truly blessed. Even though this may be accomplished, or offered by a man, nevertheless all sacrifice is truly a divine matter As a result anyone who is consecrated in the Name of God and vowed to God, realizes in so far as one dies to this world that he/she might live for God – this is **sacrifice**<sup>229</sup>. Thus understood the sacrifice of Jesus Christ designates a total **oblation** to His Father, His adherence to the Father's will. Such **obedience** Jesus Christ practiced throughout His entire life, but especially on the Cross [cf. Ph 2].

As can be seen, the interpretation of Jn 17:17 is rather embroiled! The principal reason for this diversity of scholarly opinions seems to be that there may be different understandings of the central verb; **consecrate, sanctify**. The present challenge will be to clarify the implications of this important term, in order then to have a better appreciation of Jn 17:17.

#### b. Sanctify / Consecrate:

1.] The first important aspect is to try to grasp **sanctification** as the OT understands the term. According to the Bible, only God is truly **holy**, since the notion of **holiness** is fused with His metaphysical image and His moral goodness. Human beings can only be 'holy' when they enter into **relationship with God**. This is why holiness is a privilege of the Chosen People, for the **Holy One of Israel** [cf. Is 1:4; 10:17; 30:11, 12; Jr 50:29, etc.] has set His People apart among all the nations in order to make of them His very own People. The Holiness of Israel is a direct consequence of the Covenant: ***You will be for Me for I am Holy, I, the Lord, and I have set you apart among the peoples so that you might be mine!*** [cf. Lv 24:26; cf. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7]. ***If you will keep My Covenant, you will be among all the people, My special people ... you will be to me a kingdom of priests and a consecrated, holy nation*** [cf. Ex 19:6]. The holiness of Israel corresponds to a two-fold demand: that of **ritual** purity, or the absence of all impurity [cf. Lv 11-16] – which proceeds from the Law of Holiness– and secondly, that of a **moral holiness** – according to the different prescriptions in the Holiness Code [cf. Lv 19:1-37].

The verb: **consecrate/ sanctify** - almost always translates the Hebrews **qadosh** - and there are clearly distinguishable the proper aspects of the two verbal forms. These nuances are evident in Greek translations: in one verbal form, the word has an **inchoative sense** and means to **place one in a state of cultic holiness**. In another verb form, it no longer implies the relationship of an aptitude for worship –

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<sup>229</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, III, q. 48, a. 3.

rather whatever [ or, whoever] is **consecrated, sanctified** becomes the **possession of God** - what is **consecrated belongs to God alone**.

Scholars have noted about 20 texts where **to consecrate/ sanctify** has the meaning noted in Jn 17:17 – it has God as the subject and human beings as the object of the divine action. It is necessary to divide them always into two categories, according to the underlying Hebrew forms just noted above:

- in the *piel* form of the Hebrew verb, it has an inchoative value and it signifies: **to place one in a state of cultic holiness**. In this stereotyped formula in which God says to His Elect: ... ***It is I, the Lord, Who sanctifies [consecrates] you!*** [cf. Ex 31:13; Lv 20: 8; 21:8, 15; 22:9, 16, 32; Ezk 20:12; 37:28] This is to place on in a state of being able to draw near to the Lord, to approach Him – to make it possible to participate in sacred actions. For all practical purposes it means to play a role in the sacred ceremonies. An important detail here is: the context of these different passages there is mentioned each time an exterior cultic reality as the observance of the Sabbath, the obedience to the laws, the very presence of the sanctuary in Israel. These provide a visible witness of the fact that God has **set His People apart** from other peoples and has **sanctified, consecrated** them. These **cultic practices** which are in the end, human activities, ought to be distinguished from the **divine sanctification, consecration itself**. These activities are but a **means** to recall to Israel that it is a **Holy People** - these are meant to serve as assign of their election and of the Covenant.

- however, when the Hebrew verb is in the *hiphil* form, it places its emphasis on the causative aspect of the action: the mention of the **divine consecration, sanctification** it is no longer practically accompanied by any reference to exterior practices, which are meant to render the believer more apt to celebrate his/her faith. In this second situation, it is more a matter of the direct divine consecration, holiness. By means of this **consecration/ holiness**, God reserves them for Himself, so much so, that the **Holy, Consecrated People belong to Him**. The whole emphasis here, then, falls on this belonging to God. This is evident in the following: ... ***Every First-Born belongs to Me I consecrate to Myself every First Born in Israel, both of men as well as of bests – they are Mine!*** [cf. Nb 3:13; 8:17; Dt 15:19]. From this on, to have been **consecrated/ sanctified** by God means that one can approach Him [cf. S 33:12]. In this, or that case, the verb receives a particular application: it can designate **consecration/ sanctification** or the **election** of certain individuals with a view to a **determined union**, beyond any limited cultic context. Thus, these examples come to the fore: the prophetic consecration of Moses, or Jeremiah [cf. Si 45:4; 49:7, 9; Jr 1:5].

Even in the case where the **consecration/ sanctification** requires on the part of believers the accomplishment of certain cultic ceremonies, it remains true that the holiness can only **emanate from God**: definitively, it is **He alone Who consecrates, sanctifies** human beings. By this **consecration, sanctification** a believer shares in the **holiness, the inviolability of God**. **Sanctification** is an actualization of the Covenant - consecration is the fruit of the active presence of God in the midst of His People.

2.] **The NT Doctrine:** beyond Jn 17:1, the Pauline text of **1 Th 5:23** is the only passage where the **consecration, sanctification** of human beings is attributed to God. This verse merits that we ponder it at least for a while. Its chiasmatic structure is very instructive:

*... May the God of peace Himself  
make you perfectly holy,  
and may you entirely, spirit, soul and body  
be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

The parallelism between **to consecrate/ sanctify** and **to protect, preserve**, is the same as noted in Jn 17:11, 17. It has been utilized by Paul under an equivalent format above in the same epistle: in order to strengthen your hearts to be beyond reproach – in **holiness** before God, our Father – until the Parousia, the Second Advent of our Lord Jesus with all the saints [cf. **1 Th 3:3**]. In **1 Th 5:23**, **to be protected without reproach**, only expresses the negative aspect, the condition of sanctification – a comparison might be made between these two texts:

*... as He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before Him... [cf. Ep 1:4]*

*... that he might present to himself the Church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.. [c.f Ep 5: 27].*

The essential is to be **sanctified by God** [cf. **1 Th 5:23 a**], i.e., **to be made strong in holiness before God** [cf. **3:13**]. This theme is frequent in the Epistles: Christians ought to be forced to **guard the faith**:

*... I have competed well; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith... [cf. 2 Tm :7].*

*... So, as you received Jesus Christ, the Lord, walk in Him, rooted in Him and built upon Him and established in the faith as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving... [cf. Col 2:7].*

Christians are also called to **guard the unity of the Spirit**:... **striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace** ... [cf. Ep 4:3]. They are meant to be **strengthened** and to **grow in their knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ**:

*... Therefore, I will always remind you of these things, even though you already know them and are established in the truth you already have... [cf. 2 P 1:12].*

All these texts are situated in an **eschatological perspective**. If the Christians receive in Paul the **eschatological title, the Saints**, it remains true that their **sanctification** is always unfolding and will never find its definitive accomplishment except in the **final eschatology**, when they will be admitted into the presence of the Lord. But, **holiness** is realized only progressively in their Christian life by their **strengthening in the faith**, in the **doctrine of the Gospel, in the truth!** There is a clear parallelism between **sanctification of the Spirit** and **the faith in truth**. The remark cannot be avoided of the striking analogy of this Pauline theme with that of Jn

17:17, where Jesus prays for His own faithful followers, so that the ***Father might consecrate/ sanctify them in the Truth!***

c. **Sanctify/ Consecrate them!** – these reflections now open on the direct interpretation of Jesus' Prayer in Jn 17:17. It is necessary for the interpreter to place correctly the verse in the scroll of relationship where we find it situated. In other words, it is necessary to discern its relationship with the of **sanctification** in the **OT** – and its analogy with the **eschatological theme of the Pauline Letters**. To this it will be also necessary to take note of the diverse connections of these words with other formulations in the interior of vv. 17-19. However, this final point will not be studied until there will be examined more in detail the many elements of this complex passage. For the time being, the effort will be to seek to understand v. 17 a, keeping account of the preceding analyses.

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1.] Here are the results already obtained, grouped in the historical order of the texts: **OT; Paul; John:**

- **Jn's biblical antecedents**: the translation of the Greek verb meaning: ***consecrate/ sanctify*** invites the faithful believer to comprehend here this **sanctification** as the **realization of the Covenant by God: to be sanctified, consecrated, by the Father** signifies therefore that the disciples become **the possession of God**, that they obtain from Him **the power to approach the Father and to remain in His presence** [cf. Si 33:12; Ep 1:4];
- **the Pauline Text** [1 Th 5:23]: suggests that the **divine sanctification, consecration** has for its effect that of **guarding, protecting Christians beyond reproach** – above all else, this would mean: **strengthening them in the truth of the Gospel**, with a view to the encounter with the Lord;
- **In Jn's Parallel Text** [17:11]: the **liturgical invocation, Holy Father** - seems to introduce a prayer of Jesus so that the Name of the Father might be for the Disciples **a kind of Temple** and that **the Father will protect them there so that His Name might never be profaned in their hearts**.
- **In v. 11** here, the petition: ***keep them in Your Name... so that they may be one as We are One*** means: keep them in the life which I have given to them, so that **their unity might be the image of Ours, and rooted in Ours**. In brief, Jesus is praying to His Father that His disciples might be kept ***in their filial life***, so that they may be one, united among themselves and with the Father, **as Jesus Himself – the Only-begotten, and Most Beloved Natural Son of God - is One with His Father**.

2.] Among these different indications furnished by these parallel texts, the faithful believer and student might easily discover a **profound convergence**. These of course do not have the same worth, and it would be a mistake in method to explain principally our text under discussion, as is indeed done at times, by a direct recourse to the OT. While this suggestion has led to some helpful research into the LXX, this

does not have the same importance that the Pauline doctrine does, as he expresses himself in 1 Th 5:23. And then, it is necessary to keep in mind even that what Paul teaches us cannot be raised to the same level as to that which Jn points out to us even though his formulation might be somewhat similar as vv. Jn 11 and 17:

- The totality of our observations here lead the careful interpreter first of all toward a negative conclusion of great importance: **sanctify / consecrate them in the Truth** does not imply a formal and direct reference to the **Mission**, i.e., toward the ministry of preaching of the disciples in our world, continuing Jesus' personal mandate received from His Father. This view, however, has nonetheless attracted a good many modern interpreters. This modern point of view is established at times, on the support of a few biblical texts which speak clearly of a **consecration** with a view to some **divine service**, or to some particular **mission** – one example would be Fr. Raymond Brown: he argues from two earlier biblical passages:

... [Aaron and his sons] **You consecrate them so that they might exercise My priesthood** ... [cf. Ex 28:41]

... **Because of his faith and his meekness, the Lord consecrated him and He has chosen him among all flesh...** [cf. Si 45:4] – the Mission is noted on the next line, **so that he might teach Jacob the Covenant and His decrees to Israel.** [One might also cite Si 47:7-9; Jr 1:5: on the prophetic mission of Jr. In both cases this **mission** is indicated formally by the injunction through the use of the word *prophet*. In neither of these cases is the mission of one who has been **consecrated** as explicitly noted. So, there is no real parallel to Jn 17:17. ]

The **mission** of various individuals [such as Moses, Aaron, Jeremiah] seems somewhat separated from their **consecration**. The texts cited here speak more toward a **consecration** for some special mission – and these are rather exceptional in the OT. So, many exegetes are unable to accept their application as a clear parallel to Jn 17:17 – as in this verse it is a matter of a more general sense, much more that of the **sanctification** of the disciples of Jesus Christ. As a result, the careful student should situate this passage of Jn 17 into the prolongation of the biblical texts where God is presented as the One Who sanctifies His People, in the context of the New Covenant. In this view, there is no mention that is made of **Mission** .

Some have tried to draw an argument from the text of Jn 17 itself. Certain scholars have been of the view thinking that the Greek verb meaning: **to consecrate/ sanctify** is the same of some other Greek consecration. The proponents of this point of view translate this passage as: **Consecrate them to the Truth** - or: **consecrate them to the service of the Truth.** No such translation is possible, nor philologically defensible. Even more often, there are those scholars who take inspiration from v. 18, where in fact Jesus does indeed speak explicitly of **Mission**: ... **As You sent Me into this world, so I sent them into the world.** However, other scholars think that it would be : imprudent to look for the key for v. 17 in the following verse: it would be contrary to that which we have already noted in the OT texts brought forward. In these the mission is not described as the formal purpose of the **sanctification/ consecration**. Moreover, the interpreter should not neglect the fact



that between these verses [Jn 17:17-19] there is clearly an asyndeton - the structure of the passage itself emphasizes more the relative independence of the two themes:

- v. 17. A.     **Sanctify them in the truth**  
                   **Your Word is Truth**
- v. 18. B.             **As You have sent Me into the world,**  
           B.             **So, I have sent them into the world.**
- v. 19. A'    **And for them I consecrate [sanctify] Myself**  
                   **so that they may likewise be consecrated [sanctified] in the Truth.**

The theme of the **Mission** is concentrated in the center-piece – whereas, that of the sanctification/ consecration is in the preceding line. As this study unfolds, ample space will be given to a contemplation of where **mission** fits in with **consecration**. The position held here is that with relation to the theme of **Mission**, sanctification/consecration here maintains a relatively autonomous position.

**3.] In harmony with the OT texts:** here **sanctification** is used of the People of God as the **actualization of the Covenant**. Thus, in accord with this context, the words of Jn 17 from the lips of Jesus Himself would imply a prayer so that the Disciples of the Lord might **belong totally to the God, the Father** [cf. Nb 3:13]. The word **consecrate/ sanctify** and **protect/ guard/ keep** has its own importance. This parallel is also noted in 1 Th 5:23 and 2 M 14:36, in a cultic, liturgical sense: **O, Lord, holy One of all holiness, keep this recently purified, dwelling place ever immaculate.** According to this parallelism, **to be sanctified/ consecrated** by the Father means: **to be maintained, kept in His presence, as in a sacred place.** In these texts the pre-Johannine Christians, the expression: **to be guarded, kept in...** had a precise sense: believers had to be **kept in the faith** [cf. 2 Tm 4:7], or: **strengthened in the present truth** [cf. 2 P 1:12]. It is in this tradition that there is situated the Johannine formula: **to be sanctified in the truth.**

However the parallel Johannine text of Jn 17:11, within the very prayer itself for unity, permits the careful student to go further: believers need to be guarded, protected, kept, **in the Name of the Father**, as in a **Temple**. This deepens considerably the words, **in the truth**, that we which we found previously in 2 P 1:12. This will be re-considered in the following segment. However, it is already noted that all the indications collected thus far seem to be heading in the same direction. At this point, the much discussed expression can be briefly described: **consecrate/ sanctify them** with the words from Calvin: Therefore, Jesus first petitions that the Father might **sanctify** the disciples, that it that He might lead all to Himself and that He might claim them as a **sacred treasure**.

Consequently, the **holiness** that Jesus demands is certainly not the disciples' interior purity: Jesus petitions that the disciples might be protected from the Evil One [cf. Jn 17:15] – or, that one be pure of sin is only the negative aspect of holiness. From the earliest Christian tradition, one might clearly distinguish **purity** and **holiness**. Holiness for the Church consists often in being presented all glorious to the Lord, as a **spouse** to her **husband**. This view is identified with the **eschatological presence** of the Church to the celestial Christ. And in St. Jn himself, Jesus had

already, in this same context [cf. 15:3], declared that the disciples were pure, thanks to the word that Jesus had announced to them. The Prayer of Jn 17:17 goes further: the **holiness, consecration** that Jesus desires for His own disciples has an eminently positive aspect. It expresses itself in the best way as **belonging** to the Father, as a **communion**, as a clear-cut **closeness** to the Father.

- Among the numerous scholars who interpret more or less this passage as has been presented here, there is noted nonetheless many differences, which reflect even the matter of the **translation**:

- traditionally, the translation of the Greek word was, **to sanctify**. [Yet, a great number of exegetes would prefer to translate this Greek verb as **to consecrate**.] It seems that if some interpreters reject here the meaning of **to sanctify** this is because they comprehend the verb in the sense of an **interior progress**, and of a **moral progress** towards perfection. But, this is certainly not the real meaning of the text since **sanctification** is essentially a **gift of God**. One simply does not have the right to limit the sense of the verb, **to consecrate/ to sanctify**, to this moral and subjective sense of the term.

- on the other hand, many modern authors prefer to translate this Greek verb as **to consecrate** - this might be the reason for the modern forgetfulness for the category of the 'sacred'. In the immediate context here it is probably due to the fact that they bind this verb both to the idea of **mission**, as well as to a **deputation to the ministry of the word**. This would then imply an **inaugural consecration**, as perhaps that toward **sacrifice**.

It has already been pointed out that the first idea is not that of this verse – and further on, the effort will be made to show that the idea of **sacrifice** is not directly suggested here. It is to be remarked further that the verb, **to consecrate**, as distinguished from **to sanctify**, has a strongly **cultic** resonance: it evokes a precise moment, that of the accomplishment of a religious rite by which a person, or an object, becomes **dedicated to God**. And when this verb has God its subject, as in Jn 17:1, it means rather: **to be reserved, to choose**, both of which would still indicate a point in time. There is nothing of this in Jn 17:17 – where the imperative of the verb implies an action of God that is **prolonged** on the Faithful. The same remark holds true as well throughout the passage. This is why some translators prefer the translation: **to sanctify**. The tradition underlying this passage - with its implicit reference to the old **Code of Holiness [cf. Lv 17-26]** and the parallelism of vv. 11 & 17 show that there exists an important tie between the **Father's Holiness** and His **sanctifying action**. This is why Jn uses twice two words with the same root [ **agios/ agiazein** ]. This connection is lost when the verse is translated **consecrate** – i.e., if one is not careful in the translation, two separate words [ **Holy Father... sanctify them...** ] need to reflect their identical root.

For all these reasons, Fr. dela Potterie's view is that it is necessary to maintain the manner of translating as: **sanctify them in the truth!** In this sense, Jesus' Prayer is that He is asking His Father to see to it that His disciples be truly believers in spirit and in truth – **that they be penetrated by His truth and transformed by it.**

d. **In the Truth**: by these words, Jesus offers more insight into the very nature of the **sanctification of His Disciples**:

- it is helpful and very instructive here again to **run through rapidly the entire gamut of interpretations that have been suggested**. What is discarded here are those three exegeses which have no support in Jn 17:

- one would translate *in the truth*, adverbially, meaning **truly**;
- a second view would understand the expression, *in the truth*, as do the Latin interpreters by opposing this sanctification to that of the OT figures;
- finally, the **metaphysical** interpretation, which would see here that divine reality revealed in Jesus Christ.

However, since Jn himself wrote in the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the verse, ***Your word is truth***, the majority of exegetes identify the **Truth**, with the **Word of God, Revelation**, or intellectualizing a bit further, **the Christian doctrine**. Others have summarized all this and join the **Truth** to the **Revelation of the Father**. From Augustine on, much of the Latin tradition provide an exegesis that is more directly Christological: with Jn 14:6 called to mind [... ***I am the Way, Truth, and Life***...] – this trend identifies the **Truth** with **Jesus Christ Himself**. For others, though, admittedly a small number **sanctification in the truth** should be understood as the interior anointing of the Holy Spirit.

1.] Let us mention lastly, those interpretations that might be called ‘synthetic’ - because they strive to combine two or more exegeses indicated up to this point. Certain authors admit, as do so many others as well, that the **Truth** here indicates **the Word of God**, but they understand the expression in a personal sense: in the ultimate analysis, this would mean **Christ Himself**, since He is elsewhere referred to as the **Logos**, the **Truth**. Among the majority of the exegetes of the Antiochian School, and later certain authors in the renaissance period with some modern interpreters, the **Truth** in this text would mean at one and the same time **the Word of God** and **the action of the Paraclete**. However, the most dense exegesis of all has been suggested by **St. Cyril of Alexandria** and **St. Thomas Aquinas**, followed by many scholars in the modern age.. They read this text to mean **sanctification in the truth by the Word of Truth that Jesus has preached**. However, this is at the same time **sanctification by Christ Himself and by the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth**.

What judgment can be brought to bear on all these varied interpretations. Each one of them has something true – but, the impression give in all this study, except for the last scholar mentioned, remain unilateral. Furthermore, certain of these opinions are formulated in a manner that is too absolute, not keeping in mind all the data from the text and the context. These diverse indications can be grouped as in a fascicle, and the scholars can draw an explanation which will be rather close to the extraordinary view of **St. Cyril of Alexandria**.

- second: the **Truth** in which the faithful are to be sanctified, is **the Word of the Father**. This is identified with **revelation**, the work of the Father. But, this **Word**,

**Revelation**, was explained in v. 6 by the clear parallelism between *Your Name/ Your Word*: the **Truth** which Jesus reveals.

This speaks in v. 17, is nothing other than **the revelation of the Father's Name**. This conclusion is all the more precise if the careful student considers the parallelism, already several times underlined, between v. 11 and v. 17: ***Keep them in Your Name, which You have given to Me*** - this verse should be more or less synonymous with: ***consecrate/ sanctify them in the Truth***. This is close to 3 Jn 7-8: ***...It was entirely for the sake of Your Name that they set out, without depending on the non-believers for anything; it is our duty to welcome people of this sort and contribute our share to their work for the Truth...*** So, the **Truth** is the **Name of the Father**, as **of the Father** has been given to His **Son** – and it has been pointed out above that if this 'Gift' signifies a manifestation of the Father to the Son, it also implies that He communicates **Life** to His Son. This 'Gift' received by the Son constitutes for Him His **Filial Life**.

On the other hand if the Name of the Father has been manifested to His Son, Jesus in His turn has revealed it to humanity: this **Revelation**, this **Word** of the Father, is precisely **the Truth**. The **Truth** in which the Faithful are to be *consecrated/ sanctified* is not simply a **revelation** on the Father brought to humanity by Jesus Christ, and which would remain foreign to Him. It is necessary to recall here that a characteristic of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel, analyzed by scholars, is Jn's tendency to **identify the Word and the Person of Jesus**.

2.] Early interpreters affirmed with good reason that the **Word** and the **Truth** in Jn 17:17, designated **Jesus Christ**. Nonetheless, this ought to be understood in a more functional sense than metaphysical in direct liaison with the **Word of the Father proclaimed by Jesus**. It is necessary to complete the exegesis suggested here for Jn 17:17 by a more **Christological note**. **The Truth is the revelation of the Name of the Father**. To be even more clear: it is **the revelation of the Name of the Father**, even more than that which has been received by the Son, for Whom **this Word constitutes His Life, His Filial Life**. The **Truth** therefore, is **the revelation of the divine life** of this **communion, unity** which exists between the Father and the Son: but this **Revelation** has been brought to humanity by Jesus and in **Jesus Who has made Himself known as Son**. It is precisely in this revelation of His **Filial Life, in this Truth**, that Jesus asks **His Father that we might all be consecrated/ sanctified**.

Once again, there is noted the decisive importance of v. 11 to explain v. 17 in depth. The **Name of the Father** in the first text, and the **Truth** in the second are both the equivalent in Jesus as His **Filial Life**. He serves as the exemplary cause [the source] and the foundation of the lives of all the children of God. It seems then only right to apply to this verse an ancient commentary from Theodore Mopsueste regarding the prayer of Jesus, since by faith, we enter **spiritually into communion with Him**. From this instant on, since we are **united to Christ**, we receive a **familiarity** [in the fullest sense of that term] **with the Father**. This is what Jesus prays: grant that by the Grace of the Holy Spirit, we may be united to Him as sons and daughters, and that we might be able rightfully to call him, **Abba, Father**.

Put in other terms, 'to be protected, kept in **communion with the Father**, thanks to **our communion with Jesus Christ**, Who is **united to the Father as the Word of God, and as Son**. St. Thomas Aquinas holds practically the same view – even though in this text, he is not speaking formally about our **filial life**. He explains **sanctification in the Truth** as a participation in the **holiness of God**: 'Father **sanctify** – i.e., **perfect them**, and make them **saints**. And this **in Truth**, i.e., in Me Your Son, Who **is the Truth** [cf. Jn 14:6]. This is though He were praying: Make us participants of My perfection and Holiness<sup>230</sup> .

If we wish to apply full value to all the data from this passage, it must of course be read in a **Trinitarian vein**. This should convey by now very little surprise, following all these insights provided across the centuries. Earlier on, we have seen that this is the correct reading of the prayer of Jesus. Each time that this section is studied from this perspective, other Johannine passages using the expression, **in the Truth, to walk in the Truth**, this means to live in the light of the **revelation of Love which comes to us from the Father and the Son**. **To love in the Truth** means to love one's brothers and sisters in the radiance of this truth – **To adore in the Spirit and in Truth**, means to adore the Father, with an adoration which is **practiced in communion with Jesus** as Truth, as in a Place of Prayer, and **under the inspiration of the Spirit of Truth**. It is normal that the Prayer of Jesus here needs to be understood in an analogous manner: **to be consecrated, sanctified, in the Truth**, for all believers, means **to live and to remain as the children of God** in the Revelation of the Name of the Father - and therefore, **to live in communion of the Son and the Father**. The secret of the sanctification of Christians is in God, in their **participation in the life proper to the Father and to the Son in their unity**.

- **thirdly**, if indeed this is the proper interpretation, it might be surprising that there is no mention here of the **Holy Spirit**. Fr. Raymond Brown notes this: It is curious that this Prayer of Jesus, concerning the future of disciples, there is no mention of the Paraclete-Spirit, Who will be the most important factor in that future. Yet, essentially in Eastern Orthodox theology the Prayer has been interpreted in terms of the role of the Holy Spirit. [But this is a bit of a stretch].

It seems that on the condition of striving to integrate this view in the exegesis provided thus far, according to which the expression **in the Truth** calls to mind immediately the **revelation of the Filial Life of Jesus Christ**. Flowing from this, therefore, is the **communion of believers with the Father and the Son**. A first reason for thinking that **sanctification/ consecration in the Truth** for Jn supposes and implies also the **activity of the Holy Spirit**, is that the prayer is situated in the perspective of His **approaching 'Hour'**. That which Jesus prays to His Father for will really not begin to be realized until **after the Resurrection**. According to Jn [7:37-38] – it will only begin with the glorification of Jesus that the Holy Spirit will be present in the community of believers:

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<sup>230</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas In Jo., n. 2229

***... On the last day, the great day of the Festival, Jesus stood and cried out: 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to Me! Let anyone who believes in me come and drink!. As Scripture says: 'From His heart shall flow streams of living water.' He was speaking of the Spirit which those who believed in Him were to receive; for there was no Spirit yet, because Jesus had not yet been glorified...***

It is in this same perspective of the time of the Church that He places the promises of the Paraclete [cf. Jn 14-16]. In an Ecclesial context, the **Truth** for the evangelist, is never separated from the action of the Holy Spirit: Jn had reported in Jn 14:6 this statement of Jesus: ***I am the truth...!*** - but Jn will further make known in 1 Jn 5:6: ***... The Spirit is the Truth!*** For the Truth brought by Jesus is only able to be interiorized and rendered active in the hearts of the Faithful thanks to the Holy Spirit. In parallel manner, Jn notes in 1 Jn 2:20, 27 that the anointing of believers: this is the Word of the Gospel, the Truth, interiorized by the Spirit among authentic Christians.

The **sanctification / consecration** of Christians ***in the Truth***, is realized, this, too, in the time of the Church; this can only be the work of the Holy Spirit. One more precise indication in this sense is furnished for the believer in Jn 4:23-24 regarding adoration in the Messianic times:

***...But the hour is coming – indeed is already here – when true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth. This is the kind of worshiper the Father seeks. God is Spirit and those who worship, must worship in Spirit and truth...***

This text together with the one being studied here, Jn 17:17-19, is the only passage where one finds the formula ***in truth***, in the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel: all the other uses of the expression [studied above] pertain to the Epistles, which sheds the spotlight on their ecclesial resonance. As for the two texts in the Gospel, that of the discourse with the **Samaritan** woman, and that of the **Prayer** regarding the **Hour** [Jn 17], they have the same ecclesial bearing, for they are both situated in the perspective of the future: **the Prayer of Jn 17** opens up the account of the Passion and the Resurrection. Jn 4:21-24 speaks of the future. The parallel then with this verse and Jn 17 is most interesting. Jesus says to the sinful Woman of Samaria that beginning from that Hour which is coming, the adoration of the Father will be accomplished ***in Spirit and in Truth***. The **Spirit** is mentioned here at the same time as the **Truth**. The believer is therefore being invited to comprehend in the same manner the sanctification of Christians in Jn 17:17: as their adoration of the Father, this too will be accomplished ***in the Spirit and the Truth***.

The Second Promise of the **Paraclete** [cf. Jn 14:26] confirms moreover the view maintained here. This text is important: it is the sole passage where the **Spirit** receives the qualifying title ***Holy*** – exactly as it does in Jn 17:11 – the sole place where the Father is referred to as ***Holy***. It is highly likely that the epithet ***Holy*** applied to the Spirit seems to present the relationship for the role assigned. This is described in these terms: ***He will teach you and remind you of all that I have said to you***. By His action the Holy Spirit will interiorize Jesus' words into the hearts of the disciples and this will provide them with genuine intelligence, in the light of faith. Following the content of Jn 17:26, the **sanctifying** action of the Holy Spirit is exercised by the word

of Jesus. The same has to be said for Jn 17:17, even if the Spirit is not mentioned there: **holiness** is prayed for to the Father. This is accomplished **in the Truth**, in the **Father's Word**. But this Word, this Truth, will only be **sanctifying** when they penetrate into the hearts of the disciples in order to transform each one. And this is precisely the task of the Holy Spirit.

Having said all this, the fact remains: the Spirit is not explicitly named in this passage. Some explanation is requested. His action, certainly is supposed, but to show it, have to have recourse to the totality of the Johannine theology. This is a sign in this present text where the emphasis falls elsewhere: **sanctification** is worked out not in the Holy Spirit, but **in the Truth, in the Word of the Father**. It is necessary then to guard against all deforming centrism, i.e., falling into all Pneumo-centrism. Here also the parallel text of Jn 4:23-24 can help the believer to provide a perfectly balanced exegesis: the adoration of the Father, Jesus remarks to the Samaritan, is accomplished ***in the Spirit and in the Truth***. As has already been brought out the first of these two expressions is subordinated to the second: **the action of the Spirit** has for its object **the Truth of Jesus**. It is also true that in Jn 17:17 the word **Spirit** does not figure. Without doubt His activity is indispensable, but it is formally **in the Truth of Jesus** that the Christian, under the action of the Spirit, is to be **sanctified, consecrated**. In brief if the Spirit is the cause or the Agent of **consecration, sanctification** His action might be said to be **ministerial**, and subordinated in relationship to the Truth. For Jn, the proper milieu where **Christian sanctification** is to be worked out is the **Truth of Jesus**.

**3.]** We arrive now at the final question that remains to be treated with regard to Jn 17:17: i.e., the proper value of the preposition **in** for the expression, **in the truth**.

Some authors see here simply that **in** must be translated in an instrumental sense: thus, Christian **holiness, consecration** is achieved **in virtue of this Divine Truth**. This idea, surely is Johannine. However, to indicate instrumental causality [of the **Truth**, or the **Word**], Jn uses rather the preposition ***dia*** with the accusative [***through***]. In Jn, there does not seem to be any other case of **in** implying an instrumental causality. The vocabulary of Jn invites us rather to give to **in** here in this context, a locative value, taken metaphorically. Very often Jn uses **in** and the dative to describe the **spiritual milieu**, in which the Christian existence unfolds: the believer **is, remains, dwells, walks** in the darkness, or in the light – depending on each one's choice [cf. 1 Jn 1:6; 2:9-11] The faithful believer **walks** in the truth [cf. 2 Jn 4; 3 Jn 3]; ***in the commandment of Jesus*** [cf. 2 Jn 4:6]; as the **seed** which bears fruit that remains – i.e., intimately united intimately with Him – thus the Faithful remains **in** Jesus Christ [cf. Jn 15:4] ***in His Love*** [cf. 15:9, 10; c. 1 Jn 4:16] – ***in His Word*** [cf. Jn 8:31] – ***in His doctrine*** [cf. 2:Jn 9]. All these formulae describe a **spiritual reality** which has been described as the **Johannine 'space'**. Jn 17:17, therefore, is attached to this same series: the Believer is **sanctified/ consecrated in the Truth**.

Not without good reason certain interpreters submit spontaneously this formula by using certain images: for the Disciple of Jesus Christ, the truth is the **milieu, the element, the spiritual atmosphere** - where each one is sanctified.

However, if the preposition **in** evokes immediately the idea of a **spiritual space**, it also implies its **efficacy**. Therefore, these two aspects must be joined together: the truth is an **ambience**, a **spiritual milieu** where the Faithful are sanctified, but this **milieu** constitutes the **very means** of each one's **consecration, sanctification**. This is not mere 'localization' – these 'spatial terms are used to signify the entire Christian Mystery - that of Jesus Christ Himself, as well as the Mystery of the Believer This idea is truly 'mystical' - for it places the Christian Mystery in that which is the more **interior** and the more **spiritual**. The secret **traction** of both **grace and truth** and the regenerating power of the **Holy Spirit** give to the faithful believer – that of coming to the Father in Faith in His Son, and of **remaining and of living daily in Him**. These are the invisible spiritual movements of the faith, they generate the divine encounter on a stable and more permanent basis – this is at the heart of Jn's 'theology'.

This **Truth** is the sphere in which believers are to be set apart, kept and protected - this is the **medium** of their consecration – the element into which the believer is introduced – an atmosphere where each of the Faithful is called to live daily life – this is the element in which there unfolds the life of the genuine disciples. It is the 'sacred space' of divine revelation – thus, the Divine Name constitutes a sort of **domain**, where the faithful believer moves, living in God.

The definite article [**the Truth**] adds to this mystical, spatial ideal – it is found in all the formulae that are similar – the definite article provides an **emphatic** interpretation to the abstract term, **truth**. The **truth** as presented by Jn is abstract, but it is likewise a well-circumscribed reality – it is the **spiritual space** which constitutes the **communion of the Faithful** with the Father and the son – this concrete designation of an abstract term requires the use of the definite article.

This philological analysis reinforces the interpretations give here from the exegetical perspective: in Jn 17:11 the **cultic resonance** of the expression, **Holy Father**, is particularly brought out. Jesus is asking His Father that His disciples be **kept, protected** in His Name, as though in a **Holy Place** – in order to live out their lives as children of God. By reason of the **locative** interpretation of **in the Truth**, the same interpretation should be continued in v. 17. We have in the two cases the same construction: **In His Name - in the Truth**. The **locative in** utilized by Jn evokes the ideal of a **milieu, a Temple** - it is there that the Faithful encounter the Father and the Son.

**4.]** To conclude all these analyses, it is helpful to try to synthesize the results obtained thus far – thus, there will appear the theological and spiritual wealth of the verse:

- Jesus' prayer is addressed to the Father, Whom He addressed in v. 11 as **Holy Father**; He asks His Merciful Father here **to sanctify, consecrate the Disciples in the Truth**. The work of Christian sanctification is essentially the Father's Work; from Him, their evolves the entire work of Revelation as well as the entire endeavor of sanctification: God the Father **sanctifies**, He has them live in His **presence**, in His **Communion**, in keeping them **in His Name**, as in a sanctuary, in maintaining them in **communion with Him, in their filial life, as children of God**. The **Truth** in



which the Father **sanctifies** them is the **revelation of His Name**: He has first of all accomplished this revelation to His Son, but **He also transmits it to the disciples, by the Son and in the Son.**

- It is helpful to compare this Commentary with that of St. Cyril of Alexandria: the disciples cannot be kept in the Father's Truth, in any other way than through Jesus Christ Jesus, by nature, is His Truth. For Jesus is His substantial Word, living and hypostatically united to Him. For it is indeed of Him that what is said here is prayed. Just note how in practically everything that Jesus proclaims regarding the Father's activity. At least that which can be grasped, He adds always furtively in His own Person, perhaps wishing to show by this how it is true that ***all has been made by Him and without nothing happens.*** A little earlier He appealed to the Father to **keep** His disciples in that **Name** which had been given to Him; now He wishes that His Prayer for them might accomplish them in the Truth of the Father. What this means and toward what do these diverse proposal tend, other than showing that there is but one activity which the Father exercises and which the Son accomplishes by Him for the conservation of the saints? He reveals to the saints His own Son Who is the Truth. He does not allow that the spirit of believers be turned by Satan towards a lying knowledge as once Hymenes and Alexander did: in order to have adhered to the error and rejected the Word of the Truth they became ship-wrecked in the faith. In order to remain in the rectitude of thoughts and actions, this is therefore something great to be kept, protected, guarded by the Father **in the Name of God and in the Truth.**<sup>231</sup>

- One might note how much the exegesis proposed throughout this study approaches that of St. Cyril. These two interpretations differ on one point only: how the majority of the Alexandrian Fathers, Cyril interprets here The **Truth** in the metaphysical sense [inspired perhaps by Plato] and identifies it as a result with the hypostasis of the **Word**. For St. Jn, we believe to have shown that He does not directly designate the Person of the **Logos** but the Word of the Father, the **revelation** which He brings regarding Himself. However, this Revelation is concentrated on Jesus and that this leads the pious faithful to discover the **Son and the Word**. The functional and historical aspect of the Economy of Revelation remains therefore the necessary mediation in order to come to its content, its transcendent object.

All disciples are sanctified in this truth in living **in communion with Jesus Christ**, in **participating in His Filial Life**. This entire enterprise of sanctification is realized under the action of the Holy Spirit, Who **interiorizes** in the hearts of the faithful the **Truth of Jesus Christ**. Nonetheless, the **means** of sanctification, the **interior and vital space** where this is all worked out remains always that **Truth** brought by Jesus and is present in Him. This Truth which is the **unfolding of the Name of the Father** in Jesus, and is therefore, the **development of the Filial Life itself**, becomes for the Faithful Disciple, **the spiritual space for an encounter with the Father**. This is the equivalent of **Jesus the New Temple – explained in Jn 4 where the Father yearns for worshippers in Spirit and in Truth**. The sanctification/

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<sup>231</sup> cf. Cyril of Alexandria, *In Jo.*, XI, 9.

consecration of the Disciple **in the Truth**, this is each one's participation every more intense **in this Life of the Son in His uniquely personal relationship to the Heavenly Father.**

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### [II] Jesus consecrates, sanctifies Himself for His Disciples

After having prayed to the Father to **sanctify/ consecrate** His Faithful Disciples in the **Truth: *And for them I sanctify/ consecrate Myself , so that they might be sanctified/ consecrated in the Truth.*** This time, however, the whole emphasis falls on **the filial service of Jesus Christ in Christian consecration, sanctification.** For greater clarity we will analyze separately the two members of this verse:

#### 1. ***For them, I sanctify/consecrate Myself...*** [v. 19 a]

##### a. **Different Interpretations**

1. There are some superficial interpretations which holds that all modern scholars are in agreement here. According to this view, the verse under discussion would simply have this meaning: **I offer Myself for them as a sacrifice.** On the contrary, however, any history of modern exegesis shows that the situation is not so simple. The **sacrificial Interpretation**, it is true, with its direct allusion to the **Cross**, has become classical. Nonetheless, along side this 'classical' opinion in ancient times there were also two other interpretations that should not be ignored. This explanation of ***sanctify/ consecrate*** as Jesus' impending **sacrifice** comes from the Antiochian School , above all from St. John Chrysostom, and these cite a variety of other authors of the same insight. This is how the Golden Mouth orator explains it: 'What does this mean? ***I sanctify Myself?*** It means: 'I offer for you a **sacrifice of my earthly life.**' St. Cyril of Alexandria also points out this exegesis - but in his vast knowledge, he is also aware of another explanation which seems to have its preferences, and about which mention will be made just below. In the **Latin** tradition it is only right to bring out the **sacrificial interpretation** which only began to spread during the Middle Ages. However, this is the opinion which became habitual during the Renaissance and among the majority of modern scholars who think of little else beyond the **sacrifice of the Cross.**

2. The second possible opinion might be termed **metaphysical**: since it is based on the distinction of the **natures in Christ**: according to His **divine** nature,. He is **holy by His essence** – but, in His **human** nature He **sanctifies/consecrates Himself through His Incarnation** by the **Indwelling of the Word and the Spirit.** This view was, it seems to have been the exegesis of the Alexandrian School prepared by Origen. This same view permeated the Latin West through Augustine, the Venerable Bede, and worked its way into the *Ordinary Gloss* . This then became the view of **St. Thomas Aquinas**: who also holds the **Sacrificial View.** However, in the modern era this view was practically abandoned at least under the form that the ancients gave to it.

3. Then, there exists a third opinion which noticeably is close to the preceding, in that this interpretation extends **sanctification/ consecration** of Jesus to the **totality of His earthly sojourn**. Yet, **sanctification/ consecration** is here understood not only as the **metaphysical view** would hold but in a more 'functional', dynamic and existential sense: in this view, **consecration/ sanctification** means **the total, life-long, abject obedience of Jesus Christ to the Will of His Heavenly Father**. This is the **constant oblation, immolation, holocaust** that He **offered of Himself** throughout His entire earthly sojourn. This reaches its culmination of the Cross: **obedient unto death... on a Cross** [cf. Ph 2:6, ff.]. It is in this sense of a uniquely more interior sacrifice, immolation, oblation that interpreters would see this as a further extension of the **sacrificial interpretation**, and a deeper application of the **metaphysical interpretation**. Such was the interpretation of Alcuin, Calvin with a variety of nuances, this view is now bandied about by an increasing number of modern interpreters. This is the interpretation to be followed here.

### b.] The Interior Sacrificial Interpretation

There are many challenges in being satisfied simply with defending the view that believes **Jesus' consecrating/ sanctifying Himself** refers directly and solely to the Sacrifice of the Cross.

1.] Certain authors take their support from the OT where this verb: **to consecrate/sanctify** never means merely the external ritual : as to elevate something, or a person, from the ordinary, every-day profane, natural usage in order to consecrate one to God and to be vowed to His service It is only in certain specific cases that one's **consecration** should lead to a **oblation sacrifice, immolation**, properly so-called. There is nothing in the verb: **to consecrate, sanctify**, to have it referring to the death of Jesus – the reference lies in the over-all, context, this is being done **for them** . There are a few OT texts [often implying external usage in the ceremonial] which do associate to some extent **consecration** with **sacrifice**:

*... Consecrate all the first-born to Me... !* [cf. Ex 13:2]

*... You must consecrate every first-born male from your herd and flock to Yahweh, your God. You must not put the first-born of your herd to work nor shear the first-born of your flock. You are to eat it, you and your household, each year, in the presence of Yahweh your God, in the place Yahweh chooses. If it has a blemish, if it is lame or blind, or has any serious defect at all, you must not sacrifice it to Yahweh your God. You must eat it at home, unclean and clean together, as you would gazelle or deer, only you must not consume the blood, but pour it out on the ground... [cf. Dt 15:19-23].*

The verse in Jn resents many challenges as have been noted. This same verb: **to consecrate/ sanctify** is used by Christ **for the Disciples** of all time: it is an indication that it refers twice to **sanctification**. This means, set aside for God, to be destined to be close to God. Furthermore, Jesus Christ is **sanctified/ consecrated** so that **the disciples too** might be **sanctified**. These two sanctifications are fundamentally homogeneous. The disciples participate in that of Jesus – this **union** between the Lord and his **own**, has sublime support. Now, for the disciples, there can

be no question here as object of this verb to **consecrate** - there does not seem to be a **directly sacrificial meaning** – at least, in the sense of any **exterior immolation**. Therefore, the interpretation here most likely would be for some interpreters the same when the construction is to **consecrate Himself** as uttered by Jesus Christ.

Certain authors, who clearly see this difficulty declared that the verb ought to be taken in a unique sense [cf. the Greek word *morphe* in the Christological Hymn: while Jesus did assume **the form of a slave** – He did not put off the **form of God** in any metaphysical sense. Thus there would be for some interpreters, a kind of ‘play on words’ here which others see as ‘arbitrary’. This is especially so if the 4<sup>th</sup> evangelist in using the same verb twice to express two distinct realities, he would be guilty of presenting an unintelligible text – words have meanings! The entire construct there, **and also these disciples**, seems to bring out the **similarity of the two ‘consecrations/ sanctifications’** - His and that of His Disciples.

Still another difficulty: the parallelism, no longer that between the two members of v. 19, but between v. 17 and v. 19. In these two verses Jesus prays for His own Disciples that they be **consecrated/ sanctified in the Truth** - the first time, the sanctification results from the **action of the Father** – while the second time, the end result is from **Jesus’ activity**. By reason of this contact between the two passages, it is probable that **the sanctifying action of Jesus Christ continues and prolongs** that of the Father. But, for that **sanctification/ consecration** worked out by the Father, it is not evidently possible to speak of a **sacrificial sense**. If this should be the interpretation of v. 19 – and if the two texts [vv. 17, 19] had therefore a different bearing, the reader could not be able to comprehend any more why Jn would have formulated the two verses in such a similar manner in bringing out even their parallelism in the structure of this passage. The inspired author would have presented a rather singular equivocation an astonishing paradox. It is far more likely that the **sanctification/ consecration** of Jesus Christ for His own followers [v.19] would attaché itself in some manner to the underlying theme of v. 17: and if it is still remembered, this would imply the **filial life of Jesus shared by His ‘own’ Disciples**.

2.] It might be helpful right here to consider another parallel passage to that of Jn 17: 18-19, and this would be **Jn 10:36**:

*... Yet you say to Someone the Father has consecrated and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming’ – because He says ‘I am the Son of God ...!’*

As in Jn 17:18-19, the expression: **sent into this world**, the question is at what point can one speak of a literary contact between the two texts? As can be seen clearly the **sanctification/ consecration** of Jesus in the earlier text has to refer to His **Personal Mission into this world** by His Father.

a.] Some see in Jesus’ own argumentation in Jn 10:34-36] a most important text for it is the sole Johannine to our passage of Jn 17:17-19. In Jn 10:34, Jesus’ contemporaries had accused Him of blasphemy because being only Man, in their eyes, He had declared that He was God. Jesus responds in citing v. 6 of Ps 82: **... I once said: You, too, are gods, sons of the Most High, all of you, but all the same,**

***you shall die as other men; as one man, princes, you shall fall...!*** This verse refers to all those to whom God's word is addressed and been accepted. In the Jewish view, these words were addressed by God to **Israel** alone. On Sinai: by the Gift of the **Torah**, The Israelites had become as 'gods', the 'sons of the Most High.' With all the more reason, Jesus could give Himself as Son of God, the **One Whom the Father consecrated, sanctified and sent into this world**. This passage has given way to a number of explanations. But, it suffices for us to state that the effect produced by the **sanctifying action** of the Father is that by which Jesus might indeed be called **the Son of God** – and that this Filiation of Jesus is here placed parallel with Israel's Filiation.

**b.]** In what concretely does this **sanctification/ consecration** of the Son consist by His Heavenly Father? Having understood that mentions this sanctification to explain by what right does He make it clear how He is indeed the **Son of God**, some scholars have understood this to mean the eternal generation of the Son by the Father - as Bultmann notes that in Jesus to be **sanctified/ consecrated - and to be sent** refer to the Incarnation itself. This exegesis at least has the merit of placing a relationship between the **sanctification/ consecration** of Jesus and His **Filiation**.

But this view does not seem what the context calls for here as the entire emphasis seems to fall on his **temporal Mission**. For a goodly number of commentators, **to consecrate/ sanctify** would simply imply that God has elected, predestined and consecrated the Christ to His **Mission** by the fullness of grace received in the hypostatic union. **For others, this interpretation remains insufficient – for Christ's Filiation as it is presented in this text as an effect of the divine sanctification, consecration, could not depend on any free choice, or decision of the Divine Election.**

**c.]** One must therefore approach **a third line of reasoning** for the proper reading of this verse: this is represented by a very important current of the tradition of the Church. According to this verse describes the **sanctification of the humanity of Jesus**: the Man Jesus has been sanctified, consecrated from His **Mission** into this world, because to accomplish it, He was united to the Word of God as the **Son of God, and in Him, dwells the fullness of the Holy Spirit**. For St. Thomas, quoting Hilary this context refers to Jesus Christ in His humanity Human beings might be called 'gods' only by their participation in the Word of God. Thus the charge of 'blasphemy' is registered in that this Man claims to be God, as He is united to the Word of God in Person. It is His humanity sanctified here. [St. Thomas].

As a result of these reflections it is not necessary to comprehend, as some of the Fathers of the Church did, that this **sanctification, consecration** of the Man Jesus in a **metaphysical** sense – as an aspect of His hypostatic union – but rather in a direct connection with His **Mission** – with His **service** that He exercised in this world. There are two details from the context that are going to aid in making this clearer: the very fact of the recalling to mind of Jesus' **Mission** – and His invitation to His contemporaries to **believe** in Him, because He accomplishes the works of His

Father [cf. vv. 37-38]. Both of these data orientate the careful reader towards the theme of **revelation**.

When Jesus speaks of His **Mission for the Father** He assigns to this a two-fold goal: both that of **revealing the Father's Word** [...*the One Whom God has sent*] - He pronounces God's Words and gives the Spirit beyond measure [cf. Jn 3:34; cf. also 5:3; 6:29] – as well as that of **saving the world and bestowing life on it** [...*God has sent His Son into the world ... so that the world might be saved by Him...*] - cf. Jn 3:17; cf. 1 Jn 4:9,10, 14]. This second series is orientated toward the **future** – on the contrary, attention is concentrated on this present moment on the **revealing activity** of Jesus and His **call to faith** throughout His entire public earthly sojourn. Jn 10:36 is where Jesus declares Himself to be the Son of God and commits Himself to this first series” the Mission of Jesus, the Son of God and His **sanctification** by the Father, are ordained to His service of **bringing revelation to the world**.

This is what confirms the theme of **Works**, briefly developed in the two following verses. Jesus never speaks of **His** works [in Jn 7:3, the ‘brothers’ of Jesus speak]: the works that He accomplishes are those of God [9:3], the works of His Father [10:37], the works of **the One Who sent Him** [9:4]; the Father entrusted these works to Him so that He would bring them to a good conclusion: these **works** which Jesus accomplishes render His testimony that the Father had sent Him [5:36]; the works that Jesus brings to a good end is to **glorify** His Father on earth [17:5]; His work is to make the Father known, as the true God and His Envoy, Jesus Christ [17:4]. Even more than the **signs**, the **works** have for their scope the **personal revelation of Jesus** and of His unique relationship to His Father. It is particularly clear in our passage here of Jn 10:37-38: if His contemporaries and disciples of all ages will believe in these works which Jesus accomplishes, in these works which are truly those of His Father, even non-believers will be able to discover progressively that **the Father is in Him and that He is in the Father**. Therefore, **that He is indeed the only-begotten Son of God**.

Here again we note that the **sanctification, consecration** of Jesus is tightly bound to His **Revealing Mission** which is likewise about **His own Divine Filiation**. This should not surprise us at all, since the two themes of **revelation** and that of **Filiation** are most inter-twined in St. Jn: for that which Jesus reveals to us, is precisely the fact that **He is the Son of God**, i.e., therefore His **vital relationship** to the Father; **His union** to the Father. **There is here the fact that** the Father's sanctifying, consecrating activity **is to be realized in Jesus**. This seems to indicate that for the Father, **to sanctify, consecrate**, the Man Jesus, this means to make clear just precisely who and what His Son is – it is therefore to **raise up in Him the life and the Filial attitude, an expression of His unique Person in the Trinity**. In other terms, the effect of this **consecration, sanctification** by the Father is that Jesus indeed fully lives His Filial Life, to the point that He can really say about Himself that He is indeed the Son of God. This **sanctification, consecration** of the Man Jesus is bound to His **Mission**, this only takes place to be **manifest to the whole world**.

**3.]** One final verification will complement this data: to seize more deeply the exact bearing of bearing of the verb **to consecrate, sanctify** in Jn 10:36, there cannot be omitted taking a look at in what sense does Jn utilize the adjective **holy** for Jesus. He does this only once in the entire 4th Gospel, in the **Confession of Faith** by St. Peter, following the Discourse on the **Bread of Life: ... You have the words of eternal life. We truly believe and we know that You are the Holy One of God** ... [cf. 6:69]. This title designates Jesus as the **Messiah**, but under the particular aspect of His **revealing service**: He possesses the words of eternal life; He has made Himself known the God's Envoy [v. 40] Jesus is called **the Holy One of God** in His quality as Messiah, the Son of God and the eschatological revealer Who by His revelation gives life to the world [v. 63]. There are special insights in two texts:

- in **1 Jn 2:20**: believers possess an anointing and unction coming from the Spirit – this anointing does not directly mean the Holy Spirit, but rather the **Word of God** proclaimed by Jesus Christ, and which Christians have spread from the beginning – cf. 1 Jn 2:24, 27. Jesus is called the **Holy One** because He transmits the Word of God, He is the **Revealer par excellence**. This oil of anointing is the **truth, revelation of Jesus as Messiah, the Son of God**. In this instance, once more the title **holy** is closely bound to **Jesus being the messiah and the Son of God**. – and therefore indirectly to His revelation of God the Father]
- also in the **Ap 3:7**, in the Letter to the Church of Philadelphia, the Christ is called the **Holy One, the Truthful** – much as God Himself is in 6:10. This connection already provides a transcendent bearing to the title. Furthermore, the **holy** is also connected to His **Mission**. This privileged title is reserved for the Letter to the Church of Brotherly Love.

In these texts, therefore, the title **Holy** applied to Jesus together with the totality of His **Mission of Revelation** and to the development of His being **the Genuine, Authentic One**, the One Who is indeed the Son of God and the Word of God.

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### c. The Exegesis of v. 19 a

This series of indications leads the careful reader to better seize the profound meaning of Jn 17:19. As that of the Disciples, the **sanctification, consecration** of Jesus Christ is accomplished **in the Truth**: this is closely tied, not directly to His **sacrifice**, but rather to His **Revelation** which He proclaims and which He bears in Himself. There are always those interpreters who always understand the much used **for others** is highly developed in Hebrews. There, the idea of the Cross and Christ's Oblation, Immolation, Holocaust is clearly developed – and there are many, with a global reading of the NT, would apply it also to Jn – but not all Johannine scholars would agree.

Therefore, Jesus **sanctifies, consecrates** all throughout His entire earthly sojourn as how very correctly the Alexandrian Fathers emphasized and those scholars who in our own times give to this exegesis a more existential form.

1.] The question is: concretely, in what does Jesus' attitude consist by which He **sanctifies, consecrates** Himself? To state that this is bound to His **revealing Mission** does not seem convincing to all since it is not clear to everyone how the act of **revealing** ought to have necessarily a **sanctifying value**.

But the two parallel texts which have been analyzed here orientate us towards the solution: according to Jn 17:17 which is parallel to 17:11, the Father sanctifies, consecrates the Disciples in the Truth and in revealing to them through Jesus Christ and in Christ, **His Name as Father**, and in keeping them in this Name [v. 11]: this Sanctifying Revelation accomplished in Christ is nothing other than the **revelation of His own filial life**, the foundation, source, and model of that of believers.

This also ought to be the meaning of v. 19: Jesus can declare that He **sanctifies, consecrates Himself [in the Truth]** because the revelation that He has accomplished regarding the **Father's Name** [cf. 17:11] and by Which He is **full of grace and of truth** [cf. 1:17], constitutes for Him the **spiritual milieu** where He dwells in union with the Father – this is the **interior space where He lives his Filial Life**. All that which God, in Himself, establishes the life proper to His Son, is likewise accomplished in the Man Jesus: His life, like that of the Word, is a **life turned towards the Father eternally** [cf. 1 Jn 1:2]. This earthly life of Jesus Christ is that of the Only Begotten turned toward the bosom of the Father [cf. Jn 1:18].

This which the **filial life** of the Incarnate Word actually is noted in Jn 1:14: the humanity assumed by the Word has appeared resplendent in with a transcendent **glory**. This glory was that which He had to receive from such a Father for such a Son – i.e., a **Filial Glory**. The **holy humanity** possesses in the Word, the relations of the Word. The **filial character** in the assumed humanity will also be therefore, **by participation** in relationship to the Father and to the Holy Spirit: this **Filial attitude** of the **reception** of life, the **attitude of being sent** and of **receiving**. For Jesus, to **consecrate, sanctify Himself** consists in living integrally His **Filial Life**. This is accomplished **in the Truth**, in the **revelation** that He has accomplished of His Father.

2.] The exegesis proposed here is tied fundamentally to that of the Alexandrian Fathers and to St. Augustine. There is, however, one difference in perspective here: in place of speaking in **metaphysical** terms of the two natures [the humanity of Jesus sanctified by His Divinity, by the Word], this different interpretation sees in this **sanctification** an **attitude** lived and this is described as **existential**. To this may be connected the view of Karl Rahner of completing the ontic Christology of the great Councils, with an **existential, consciential Christology**: Jesus Christ is the Person Who lives in a **complete, unique, absolute Gift of Himself to God - there might expressed in this in its authentic depths, the very essence of Jesus Christ**. This view seems most in harmony with the complexity of NT texts prepared long ago, by following the fire in the Night, the light by day, which is Wisdom. Thus, when Jesus states, **as for Me, I consecrate Myself** - He is referring to a **personal perspective, an active correspondence to this ontological sanctity**. For Jesus, this consists in **living His Filial Life** – this is His **Constitutional Filiation** – this **filial**



**life** is expressed in the **perfect unity of His Will as Son with that of the Father - this is expressed as His entire loving obedience always and in all to the Father**:

*...I tell you most solemnly, the Son can do nothing by Himself; He can only do what He sees the Father doing: and whatever the Father does, the Son does too...*  
[Jn 5:19].

*... When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He and that I do nothing of Myself: what the Father has taught Me is what I preach; He who sent Me is with Me, and has not left Me to Myself, for I always do what pleases Him...* [cf. Jn 8:28-29].

This was already the exegesis of Jn 17:19 in **Alcuin**: ***and for them, I sanctify Myself for I have not come to do My own will but the Will of My Father Who sent Me...*** The sanctification of the Faithful is in the **Son's loving obedience**: He was obedient to the Father ***unto death, and indeed, the death of the Cross...*** [cf. Ph 2]. As the text adds ***so that they too might be sanctified, consecrated in the Truth*** - this means: in Myself – for I, too, have been sanctified, consecrated in the Truth, the very Word of God. For the **humanity assumed has been sanctified by the Grace of Union, in the personal unity with the Person of the Word of God**. As Jesus is **sanctified, consecrated by loving obedience** – it is now necessary that this **loving obedience be deployed also in us as Jesus assimilates us, includes us, shares with us, His obedience. He consecrates Himself so that we, too, might be consecrated, sanctified through loving obedience.**

For more than one reason, this interpretation of Alcuin is remarkable. These ideas based on Augustine: **humanity assumed has been sanctified by the Grace of Union, in the personal unity with the Person of the Word of God** - show that Jesus' **consecration, sanctification** consists in the **union of His humanity to the Word** This is the **metaphysical interpretation**. After this, on the contrary Jesus' **holiness** is accomplished in His **loving obedience as Son** – and **this is the existential interpretation**. Would anyone accuse these great minds of incoherence in their interpretation, in that they seem to follow two separate exegesis?

There is rather here an extraordinary human effort of synthesis that is brilliant : that which constitutes the profound mystery of Jesus, His union to the Word, is translated on the level of His acting always **out of loving obedience toward His Father, turning ever towards Him**. The **metaphysical exegesis** thus finds itself completed by an **existential, *personalist* exegesis**. The former is that of the Alexandrians and St. Augustine – while the latter is the reading of many gifted modern scholars.

It is not necessary to disassociate these If the student would merely make the sanctification of Jesus consist in **His submission to the Father**, we would remain on the level of a moral virtue which is certainly not the only one that Jn considers. For indeed the whole secret of **Jesus' Obedience** is His **unique Filiation**. Jesus' **obedience** needs to be explained in and through **His Trinitarian relationships**. This **divine Filiation** has to be conceived as a **lived reality**, as a life-long **turning towards His Loving Father**. Consequently these two exegeses [**metaphysical &**

existential, *personalist* ], i.e., **the loving Obedience of the Divine Son** and **His life-long eternal filial attitude** - in the ultimate analysis, are one and the same reality. This is so because on the one hand His **Divine Filiation is His Loving Obedience to the Father** – and then, on the other hand, **His loving obedience is Filial.** .

These two interpretations translate **the very same most sublime reality regarding Jesus Christ** on two different levels. These are organically bound among themselves: the **perfect loving obedience of Jesus** was for Him, throughout His entire earthly sojourn **the existential expression of His Divine Filiation**. However, this was at the same time for His Faithful Followers **the revelation of His Divine Filiation:** in repeatedly seeing Jesus **submitted** to His Father in an absolutely unique manner - in noting His **lived sanctification, consecration**, the Disciples progressively discovered in Him **the Only-Begotten, Most Beloved Son of God**. When the Alexandrians, St. Augustine and Alcuin spoke of the **sanctification, consecration of Jesus' humanity by the presence of the Eternal Word**, they used the more **metaphysical** categories – but, ultimately they gave **one and the same interpretation.**

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#### d. **For them!**

We still need to add a few words on the subject of this formula, often used. The very presence of this expression is one of the principal arguments that would be present in favor of the **directly sacrificial view** of this verse: **for**, followed by the genitive is in fact, a kind of stereotyped formulation to indicate the **salvific sense** of Jesus; death and resurrection.<sup>232</sup> However, one might also reverse this argument: the fact that Jn in this verse does **not** utilize the technical vocabulary of which he makes use of elsewhere in order to speak of Christ's death, is already some indication that he has chosen **not** to speak exclusively of the **sacrifice of the Cross**. These words **for them** - simply signify that the **sanctification, consecration of Jesus** has for the Faithful a **salvific value**.

If this **sanctification, consecration** consists, as has been established, in the **total submission of Jesus to His Father** and in **His Filial Attitude towards Him**, it is evident that this **loving filial obedience** is to find its most perfect expression **in the holocaust, oblation, immolation of the Cross**. However, the exegesis proposed here is more bound to the **Incarnation**. It can however be very well assumed and integrated as part of the truth of the **sacrificial interpretation**. However, the verb: **to consecrate, sanctify Himself**, should not be limited in Jesus to His **final oblation**. The **sanctification, consecration** of the disciples is bound in some intimate manner to **Jesus' personal Mission**. It is the very Person of Jesus in **His Filial comportment** towards the Father which is for the Faithful, the source of all **sanctification, consecration**.

<sup>232</sup> Cf. Jn 10:11, 15; 11:51-52; 13:37-38; 15:13; 18:14; 1 Jn 3:16 – outside of Jn: 1 Co 15:3; 1Th 5:10; Ep 5:2, 25; Tt 2:14; 1 P 2:21; 3:18 – it is used **Eucharistically**: Jn 6:51; 1 Co 11:24; Lk 22:19-20.

And the heart of this filial comportment is that of **loving, filial obedience** that will culminate on the **Cross**. This is why this Word of Jesus makes up part of the prayer of Jn 17: **The Priestly Prayer of the Hour**: in this solemn moment the very vigil of His death, Jesus expresses totally, in all its purity and depth, that which has been His **fundamental attitude, option** throughout His entire earthy sojourn. In this culminating drama of Calvary His **life-long filial attitude will reach its supreme fulfillment**: On the Cross Jesus accomplishes the Mission for which He had been sent into this world, i.e., **the revelation of God's paternal love for humanity and His gift of eternal life**.

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2. ***So that they may be sanctified, consecrated in the Truth ...*** [v. 19 b]

The interpretation of the second part of this verse does not presently hardly any difficulties. It is to be presumed that **sanctification, consecration in the Truth** obtained by Christ [v. 19] will not differ from the **sanctification, consecration** in the Truth which Jesus had asked for from the Father two verses above. Let us call to mind a bit a few of the words to understand just what the Farewell Prayer of Jesus truly means: Jesus prayed so that the Father might **sanctify, consecrate** the Faithful followers, Disciples in making them live in communion with Him in **keeping them all in His Word in His revelation of His Father's Name**. This revelation, this Truth, can only reach the faithful Disciples through Jesus Christ and in Him, **in the unfolding of His Filial Life: sanctified, consecrated** for them, this means to be **kept in this revelation, in this Truth**, which is in Jesus – this is to be **kept in His Filial Life**.

In this **sanctification** of the Faithful by the Father, the role of Jesus Christ was not however, mentioned. However, it was certainly presupposed, since **the Truth** in which there is accomplished the **sanctification, consecration** of the Faithful is nothing other than the Word of the Father which is His work [vv. 4, 6, 11]. Verse 19 makes progress in the thought by placing now all the accent on this role of Jesus Christ: **He sanctifies Himself for them** so that indeed they, too, might be **sanctified, consecrated in the Truth**. Now Jesus sanctifies Himself – as has just been shown - in **living fully His filial life** and His **loving submission towards the Father**. The **sanctification, consecration** of the Faithful which Jesus obtains in sanctifying Himself is of the same order: they too, are **sanctified, consecrated in the Truth** in living fully their **filial life**. We find therefore here developed the same interpretation as the one above in v. 17.

A new nuance appears however, in v. 19 and that is that the **sanctification, consecration** of the Faithful in the Truth is realized under the influence of Jesus Christ and in Christ. This is a **participation in His own sanctification**. Justly, therefore, the Augustinian tradition wishing to shed some light on this idea of **participation in the holiness, consecration of Jesus Christ** compares His sanctifying action on His Faithful Disciples to the influence of the **Head on the members: The sanctified acceptance is in the unity of the Person of the Word of God; and because He is the Head of all the saints, and they are His members, and the members also through the sanctification of the Head, they are holy in**

**that Truth by which the Head is sanctified: and therefore in what follows He does not say that He is praying for them only.** [Alcuin]

However, an attentive reading of Jn 17: 17-19 brings to the fore a difficulty. Jn seems to assign in this passage three causes of Christian sanctification: i.e., the **Father**; the **Truth**; and the **sanctification of Jesus Christ Himself**. The question arises on just how to explain this diversity. Is this not at least one indication that all this effort noted here is wrong? It does not seem so: everything indicates in effect that one must speak carefully here of the three causes. For the first and third, there can be no doubt possible. : in v. 17, Jesus asks formally of His Father to **sanctify, consecrate** the Faithful Disciples. The **Father** is therefore, the **primary cause of their sanctification**. As for the influence that He exercises on believers the sanctification of Jesus, this is also clearly affirmed in v. 19. All the more might one hesitate a moment on the subject of **truth**: is it as the Father and as Jesus, an authentic **cause** of sanctification? If the response is positive, it will be necessary to explain what is the relationship between these three causes.

It is true that from the **philological** point of view, in the **Truth** does not indicate directly a cause [in occurrence, an instrumental cause], but a **locative**. In fact, the **instrument** of the Disciples' **sanctification is not the Truth, but Jesus' own sanctification. The reason why He invokes it is that in the Truth ought not to be translated as in the Authorized Version through the Truth - but in the Truth.** This is the exact rendition of the words: in v. 19, as above in v. 17, **in the Truth is locative** – as has been seen, this describes the **milieu, the space, area**, where **sanctification** is accomplished. However, it does not follow from this that this **milieu, space, area** of the Truth does not exercise any of its splendor, its influence on the ensuing **sanctification**: on the contrary, in that **sanctification, consecration** is accomplished in the Truth, that the end-result is likewise do to the salutary action of Truth. Some do translate the 'Truth' here in the Pauline sense of the **Gospel of Jesus Christ**: what the Lord is asking in prayer for His Disciples following Him, is in the full sense of the terms, **devotion to the Gospel**.

After justly criticizing those who would translate **in** here as **by, through**, some authors even following their correct translation here, paradoxically interpret the sentence in the sense of **through, by** the Gospel – which is faulty. If the author had comprehended that the Truth in Jn is not any more solely the Gospel Message, rather than meaning the **revelation present in Jesus Christ and interiorized in the Faithful Believer, Disciple, under the action of the Holy Spirit** - there would not be experienced any difficulty in admitting that this **Truth** is at one and the same time, the **milieu, the space, area** and the **instrument** of Christian sanctification. It can be noted here that St. Thomas has no hesitation in attributing by **appropriation** a role to each of the Divine Persons in the work of our **adoptive filiation**<sup>233</sup>: 'adoption is **appropriated** nonetheless to the Father as **author**; to the Son as **example**; to the Holy Spirit as **impressing in us the similitude of the exemplar, the divine Son**.' These three **causes** reflect the idea of the evangelist here.

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233 III, q.23, a. 2 ad 3 m

However, the idea of **causality** is expressed in some way, at the same time. There is a parallel situation in 2 Jn 1-2:

*From the Elder, my greetings to the Lady, the Chosen One, and to her children, she whom I love in the Truth – and I am not the only one, for so do all who have come to know the Truth – because of the Truth that lives in us and will be with us forever. In our life of Truth and Love, we shall have grace, mercy and peace from God, the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father...*

**To love in the Truth**, in the Light of the Truth – means for the Faithful Disciple that he/she loves in **virtue of the Truth** which each one bears within. If the **Truth is interiorized** within the Faithful Believer under the action of the Holy Spirit - if this **Truth** indeed does constitute each one's **spiritual space, milieu, area**, it is precisely right in this locale that each one's charity is nourished. **In the Truth** describes therefore quite well the **interiority of the Truth**, its **localization** within the Faithful Disciple then its efficacy is for action, its **causality** is indeed **instrumental**. Jn 8:31-32 presents a parallel case:

*... If you make My Word your home you will indeed be My disciples, you will learn the truth, and the truth will make you free...!*

In order to **learn the Truth** it is necessary to remain **dwelling in the Word of Jesus**. This will then produce all its fruits, all its effects on the faithful Disciples. Then the Truth will render them free. The efficacy of the Truth is also expressed elsewhere:

*... it is our duty to welcome others of this sort and contribute our share to their work for the Truth ... [cf. 3 Jn 8].*

**The interiority of the Truth** and its efficacy in the Faithful Disciple appeal to each other and condition each other. It follows quite simply, then, that the authentic action of the Truth supposes also always the intervention of **the Holy Spirit**.

We can apply these indications to Jn 17:17-19: the **sanctification, consecration** of Faithful Christians is accomplished in that **interior space** of the **Truth in the Faith**. But, the **Truth** is at the same time the agent of this **sanctification**. The causality that it exercises is not however identical to that of the Father and to that of Christ. Each of the three Causes of **sanctification, consecration** has His own proper character: the Father is the First Cause of it all, for it is in Him that **Revelation** finds its source; He reveals Himself in giving His own proper Name to the Son [v. 11] and by Him also to Faithful Believers. **Jesus**, in **sanctifying, consecrating Himself** is Himself the Cause of our sanctification, but in so far as its **Model** and **Mediator**, in our to conduct us to the Father: He does all this **in the truth** which is in Him [cf. Jn 14:6], by developing in us His **own Life of Filiation**, as the Only-Begotten, Most Beloved Son of God. By means of all this, Jesus becomes for us all the **Way** towards the Father. For, by this Revelation He provides us with the power of becoming children of God [cf. Jn 1:12]. This Revelation, the **Truth**, is therefore, a **cause** of **sanctification, consecration**, for the Faithful Disciples are sanctified, consecrated truly by means of, through the Truth, by the action of the Truth within each one [cf. 2 Jn 2; 3 Jn 8]. The Truth. However, is simply an **instrumental cause**,

for those who act directly in us by and in this revelation. These are the Father, and the Son.

But the Truth is above all the **spiritual milieu** where **sanctification, consecration** is accomplished, for the Truth i.e., the **Revelation** which has been addressed to us from the Father in the Christ, in Whom there is resplendent the **light** of the Word, the **Glory** of the Son, **turned towards the Father**. The Revelation of the **Filial Life of Jesus** becomes thus the **milieu** and the **means** of our **sanctification**. The Truth constitutes, therefore, if it could be said, that **space** where the Father and the Son meet, on the one hand - and the Faithful Disciple on the other. It is for this reason that Jesus, as the **Truth** is for us the only **Way** [again a spatial image]i.e., the **Mediator**. It is in this Truth of Jesus that the faithful Disciple is sanctified, because in it and by it, he enters into the **communion of the Son, and by Him into the Communion of the Father**.

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### 3. Sanctification and Mission [v. 18]

In the course of our examination of the pericope [Jn 17:17-19], we have up to the present studied in detail vv. 17 and 19: these are the two verses where there is presented the word **Truth**. There remains here to explain the meaning of the middle verse, v. 18 – the theme of which is the **Mission**. It is in this verse that a number of interpreters seek to find the key of the two verses that encase it: the **sanctification, consecration** of the Faithful Disciples would consist, according to the scholars, in their **consecration** to the ministry of **preaching**. Already in the pre-Johannine tradition the sanctification of Christians has already been tied in **with their obedience to the Truth**. [cf. 1 P 1:23; 2:2; Ep 4:24]. Jn brings this theme further by attaching it to the action of the Father and the Son.

The view presented in these pages is that such an opinion should already be discarded: between v. 17 and v. 18 there is no tie. The **Mission** is not presented as the **goal** of **sanctification, consecration**. This is not what gives to this latter all its sense all its reason for being. Nonetheless, there does exist some relationship between the two themes. If there is some bond between the first and the second verse, this is not true any more for the second and the third: v. 19 where it is once more a question of **sanctification, consecration**, it is tied back to the preceding verse by an **and [kai]**. There exists even between the two phrases a sort of stylistic parallelism. Furthermore, it cannot be forgotten that v. 18 is placed at the center of the entire composition. **Sanctification** and **Mission**, from then on, are not 'strangers' to each other, but it remains true that **sanctification, consecration** do not operate with a view to the **Mission**. Is there some means of indicating in a more precise manner the nature of their relationship?

1.] With the lack of sufficient indications in the pericope itself, the careful reader can try to clarify the two themes [**sanctification, consecration** and **Mission**], and above all their **mutual relationship**, by having recourse to the verses which are parallel to them, otherwise than in the Prayer. To do this it is necessary to bring up

those texts which can be useful to us beginning with the literary form: **sanctification, consecration** in v. 17 provides the object of Jesus' Prayer to the Father [the theme will be taken up again under a different form in v. 19]. On the contrary, that which is stated in v. 18 regarding the **Mission** is only a **simple declaration** which accompanies it.

Let us place the petition of v. 17 in the series of other **Prayers** formally addressed to the Father:

*... **Keep those in your Name, those whom You have given to me...** v. 11b] ...**I beg You... to keep them from the Evil One ...** [v.15] ... **Sanctify them in the Truth...** [v. 17] ...*

***I pray that they may all be one ... that they may be one in us** [vv. 20-21] **as we are one ... that they may be perfectly one...** [vv. 22-23].*

Let us not in passing here: these parallels come to confirm the exegesis followed here for v. 17. **Sanctification/ consecration** of the Faithful Disciples in the Truth ought to be quite close to the object of these other positive petitions here expressed in these verses, both positively and negatively: the faithful Disciples are **sanctified, consecrated** by their strong standing in the Name of the Father [v. 11] and therefore, in their **filial life**. They are **sanctified, consecrated** likewise in the strengthening in the Unity and in deepening that which is possible only in their union to the Father and to the Son v. 21-23].

Let us see now the passages which are parallel to v. 18, the one which speaks of the **Father's Envoy** into this world These texts are not formally that requests addressed to the Father but rather **declarations** of Jesus. Here again we place the verse which we are studying [v. 18] in its place in the series:

*... **They are in the world** ... [v. 11 a] ... **As You have sent Me into this world, so I now have sent them into the world...** [v. 18] ... **so that the world might believe that You have sent Me** ... [v. 21]... **so that the world might know that You sent Me** ... [v. 23].*

As in the preceding series we discover here in the list of parallels the same vv. 21-23. This meeting of the two lists permits the careful disciple to think that in these vv. 21-23 the relationship between the **prayer** of Jesus and the **declaration** which accompanies it will be the same in vv. 17-19.

**2.]** Let us examine more attentively this passage, 17:21-23, especially from the point of view of the relationship that it indicates between that which Jesus **petitions** for His 'own' – and that which He **declares** on the subject of the **world**. These verses are composed of two sections rigorously parallel; let us transcribe them in a kind of synopsis to perceive better all their articulations:

A.	So that they might all be one as You Father in Me, and I in You	A 1	so that they might be one, as we are one: I in them, and You in Me
A.	so that they might be one in us	A 2	so that they might be perfectly one
B.	so that the world might <u>believe</u> That You have sent Me ...	B 1	so that the world might <u>know</u> that that You have sent Me, and that You Have loved them as You have loved Me...

For the scope that we are pursuing here, i.e., to comprehend well the relationship between the **Prayer** of Jesus for unity – and His **declaration** regarding the world it is indispensable to analyze correctly the construction of these two long parallel phrases. Both of these contain three separate propositions introduced by *ina* [Greek] - ***so that!*** The role of these propositions, in the interior of each column is not explained by the same manner by everyone. The first two ***so that [ina]*** clauses are certainly coordinated since the second is a simple rephrasing of the first. We have therefore translated these two times in the same manner: ***so that.***

In these first two propositions, Jesus expresses the principal purpose, the **direct object** of His Petition: which is the **unity** the Faithful Disciples among themselves and with the Divine Persons. The theme is for Jn of such importance that he brings back four separate times in these verses [twice in each column]. As for the third appearance of ***ina [so that]*** does not depend grammatically the same way as do the two preceding verses and is not coordinated to them. This indicates rather a **subordinated purpose**, further extended, dependent on the accomplishment of the principal purpose.

To mark well the special character of this third ***ina [so that]*** we have modified here: ***in order that, so that*** - to distinguish, different from the first two translations. We have also placed this proposition in reserve in the structure [B & B 1] Thus it seems to respond better than the conversion of the world, for Jnis no longer the direct object of this **Prayer of Jesus**. It is no longer the motive for which Christians ought to work hard at realizing **unity among themselves** and **their union with the Father and the Son**. To say this would mean that this **unity** should be considered and this **union** simply as a means for obtaining a more elevated purpose: this **union** and **unity** are the most high end that Christians could possibly attain, since these are the very realization of the work of salvation: by their **unity among themselves** and their **union with God** the Faithful Believers constitute precisely **the People of God**, the **Messianic Flock** [cf. 10:16] – they realize the **Covenant of Mercy with God**.

However, this does not imply that the **unity among the Faithful** is without importance for the salvation of the world; the third ***so that [ina]*** indicates precisely this meaning. In other words, if Christians should not be united solely, or even principally and principally so that the world might be converted, their unity would already enjoy nonetheless a great value and significance for this conversion: There is indeed an **intrinsic relationship** between **the unity of faithful disciples** and **the**



**conversion of the world.** This is, therefore, a second purpose, not, though, in this sense that it would have no more than *secondary* importance, that so that it would be realized precisely for the accomplishment of the primary goal, which is the **unity of all believers**. In this sense, **the Church** is truly the sacrament of the world. One might even say with the *Epistle to Diognetus* [6, 1]: the Christians, faithful disciples, are called to be the 'soul' of this world.

3. It is highly probable that the same structure of thought is under-lying the two themes of vv. 17-19. Between **Jesus' Prayer** for the **sanctification** of His 'own Faithful Disciples and **His declaration** on their **Apostolic Mission** in this world we can expect to find an analogous relationship to that which we have discovered in the parallel passage of vv. 21-23, between the **unity** of the faithful Believers and the **conversion** of the world. Between the two pericopes indeed one can pose the thematic parallels such as follows:

	<u>vv. 17-19</u>		<u>vv. 21-23</u>
<b>A</b>	the <u>sanctification, consecration</u> of believers	<b>A'</b>	the <u>unity</u> of the faithful
<b>B</b>	their <u>mission</u> in the world	<b>B'</b>	the <u>conversion</u> of the world.

The scope of their **Apostolic Mission** as is noted in v. 18, is expressed in vv. 21 and 223: it is that the world *might be converted*, i.e. that the world might come to **believe** and come to **recognize** that Jesus Christ is the Chosen Envoy of the Father. There can be discerned a literary contact between the 3 verses: 18, 21 & 23. In each one of these, there may be found these words of Jesus regarding the Father: **He has sent Me**. However, in v. 18, this Divine Envoy sent by the Father is the Model, Exemplary Cause and the **foundation** of the personal missioning of the Disciples by Jesus as in vv. 21 & 23, this one and the same Personal Mission of Jesus by his Father, becomes the object of the faith of the world. It is that which the world is invited to believe and to recognize. This suggestive parallelism invites all the Disciples to think that in the perspective of the text itself, the world will not be converted unless in discovering in this **Personal Apostolic Mission of the Faithful Disciples** that which constitutes **its transcendent foundation, the Personal Mission of Jesus by His Father**. Consequently this Personal Mission of the Disciples will not achieve its ultimate effect in this world unless it is presented as the **prolongation of the Personal Mission of Jesus Christ**. This implies the importance of the Fidelity of the faithful Disciples in their belief for their **Apostolic Mission**: the source and the goal of their apostolate is in God.

It might at first glance seem somewhat surprising in that that we do not find here any indication on the task that the faithful Disciples of all times are called to accomplish – and which, according to the Synoptic and Pauline traditions [cf. Mk 16:15]; 1 Co 1:17]. This will indeed consist in **preaching to the world** and to share the Gospel the **Word of Truth**. Beyond any doubt, in v. 20 it is a question in passing of the word of the disciples. But this is not seen to be in direct relationship with their future Mission, as the perspective is not clearly *kerygmatic*.

In v. 20, where Jesus sees directly the result produced by the word of His Faithful Disciples the faith in it describes rather the enlarged circle of the beneficiaries of His Prayer: Jesus has prayed **for the Disciples whom the Father has already given Him** [cf. vv. 9, 15]: **He prays now even for those who will come to believe** thanks to the Word that is proclaimed, as these future Faithful Disciples belong already to the group of the first Disciples. Jesus' prayer remains moreover the same in both cases. After having asked His Father for the first group [... **that they might be one as we are** ... [v. 11] - He repeats now with some insistence: [... **that all might be one..** v. 21 ..] **that they all might be one as we are one...** v. 22].

These **new believers** are placed before them We have here a two-fold division of human beings, totally Johannine in view: the opposition between those who **believe in Christ** [v. 20] and the world; those who have been won over by the word of the initial band of Disciples are already incorporated into their initial group. The **Word** of v. 20 is not therefore properly speaking the word of the *kerygma*, the Missionary Message which must still convert the world. This v 20 is not properly a text of Mission.

The question almost naturally arises: by what means will the world be enabled to come to the **faith**? Verses 21-23 state clearly: **by the unity of the believers**. This will constitute a motive of credibility, while the disciples, are sent into the world by Jesus and they bring to it the witness of their unity and their union to the Father and to the Son. The moment described in vv. 21-23: **the Mission** of the Disciples precedes the **conversion** of the world. This sending is indeed for this **conversion in the world** an indispensable condition for it to happen. [cf. Rm 10:14-15]. This also holds true for the two connected themes of the first line of the above Table: the **sanctification, consecration** of the Disciples [A] is the **condition** and the **foundation** of their **unity** [A'].

However this little Table above ought not to be read solely from left to right, but also from top to bottom:

	<u>vv. 17-19</u>		<u>vv. 21-23</u>
<b>A.</b>	<b>The sanctification, consecration of Believers</b>	A'	the <b>unity</b> of believers
<b>B.</b>	Their <b>Mission</b> in the world	B'	the <b>conversion</b> of the world.

This table must be read from left to right since the sending into this world is the **condition** for the **conversion** of the world, and that the **sanctification** of the Disciples [A'] is the presupposition to the **conversion** – the **sanctification** of the Faithful Disciples is the requisite so that they might be able to realize among themselves a **profound unity**.

However, it is also necessary to read from top to bottom this same table and in each column: the **unity** of the Faithful Disciples [A'] is the presupposition for the **conversion of the world** [B']; in like manner, the **sanctification of the Disciples** [A] is necessary for their **Mission into this world** [B].

Therefore, the genetic analysis of the two themes of vv. 17-19 replaced into their context, has permitted the careful reader to discover the response to the question that was placed above regarding the relationship which exists, in the Johannine perspective between **sanctification, consecration** - and **Mission**. Let us recollect in a few words: the **Apostolic Mission** of the disciples is not the ultimate goal of their **sanctification consecration** [cf. vv. 17-19] – any more than is the **conversion of the world** is the ultimate purpose of their unity [cf. vv.21-23]. The **sanctification, consecration** of believers and their **unity** have value in themselves. They constitute the **primary and fundamental object** of Jesus' Prayer: they are the very purpose of His entire undertaking of salvation. This **sanctification, consecration** interests the **Apostolic Mission**, however, at its highest point: it is its **basic condition**, its **presupposition** – exactly as the **unity of believers** is the condition and the presupposition of the **conversion of the world** [cf. vv. 21-23].

This interpretation takes perfectly into account two small literary facts noted above: the fact that there is on the one hand, an *asyndeton* between vv. 17 & 18 – and that, on the other hand, vv. 18 & 19 are joined by the Greek, *kai*. The **sanctification, consecration** prayed for the Disciples by Jesus to the Father in v. 17 does not find its explanation unless in the **Apostolic Mission** of which Jesus will speak in v. 18: it is the direct object of His Prayer and aims at nothing more beyond that. It is the reason why v. 17 is separated from the following verse. V. 18 marks a new departure and opens up a new theme, i.e., the **Apostolic Mission** of the Faithful Disciples into this world, mentioned here for the first time in **the Priestly Prayer of Farewell, Jesus' Discourse at the Last Supper**.

The theme will reappear in Jn 20:21: this is the **Paschal Apostolic Mission**. There is found there in a different vocabulary the same relationship between the **sanctification, consecration** – and the **mission** as in 17:17-19. Jesus communicates the Spirit to the Disciples to arouse in them **Paschal Faith** - which is to be the **principle of the New Creation** – and therefore, of **sanctification**. In this way, **Jesus** capacitates, enables His Faithful Followers for their **Apostolic Mission** in the world which will be as His Person Mission from the Father is, a **Mission of Salvation through sharing the Word of God in the Holy Spirit, leading to being with the Father forever**.

From the instant that Jesus speaks of the **Apostolic Mission**, Jesus follows up in referring back to the theme of the **sanctification, consecration** [v.19]: **... I have sent them into the world, and for them, I sanctify, consecrate Myself, so that they, too, might be sanctified, consecrated in the Truth...** The conjunction: *kai* ['and'] has the value of an explicative: it could almost be translated as follows: **I have sent them into the world; this is why I consecrate, sanctify myself, so that they too might be sanctified in the Truth...** It is as if Jesus wished to make His 'own' comprehend that their **sanctification, consecration** is only the model of His

own, and is absolutely necessary for their **Apostolic Mission**. St. Thomas comments here: 'the necessity of sanctification lies under these statements sine He says: As You sent Me into this world, and so I have sent them into the world.' His prime concern is the **sanctification of His Faithful ones**: if this is realized it will be the indispensable ferment of their **Apostolic Mission** and it will have its intended effect, **the conversion of the world**.

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### Summary

[1] In going over the long and tormented history of the various interpretations of Jn 17:17-19 it has been able to be stated to what pint the commentators are often brought to disassociate the elements of these verses and to propose for each one of them a **fragmentary** and **autonomous** exegesis. In many cases this came about without seeking to integrate them into the over-all context of the entire pericope, which is so well constructed. In parceling out the text in this way, some scholars were led frequently to aligning the material without seeing in what was happening the profound sense and the inner and organic unity.

[a] Thus, it was even proposed a different explanation for the same words, **in the Truth**, in vv. 17 & 19, forgetting that the **Truth** is one of the two major themes of the passage and is what anchors its unity.

[b] And other scholars also proceed in the same fashion for the second of these major themes, that of the **sanctification, consecration**. These scholars invite the unwary reader to interpret this verb in a different sense, according to its reference to Christ to mean one thing - and that referring to the faithful Disciples to mean something else.

[c] And when applying the verb to the disciples, the sense of the same verb is further splintered - where it would refer to their **moral sanctification** and their **deputation to the ministry of the Word of Truth**.

[d] The fact is as hold the majority of interpreters the **missionary perspective** [of a Pauline style] would absorb almost the entire theological bearing of the verb. Under these conditions it can no longer be discerned how the clearly evident parallelisms of v. 17[... **Consecrate, sanctify them in the truth** ] – with v. 11: [... **Keep them in Your Name so that they may be one...** ] – and with v. 21 [ ... **that all may be one** ], since in these two passages there is not found any trace of the **Apostolic Mission**.

[2] In the exegesis presented above in these many pages [!] on the contrary, we have sought to place the true worth of the profound unity and dove-tailing cohesion of the three verses. All of this is riveted upon the **sanctification, consecration** theme as St. Thomas had seen quite clearly. The Angelic Doctor indicates that the general theme of the passage and the particular aspect of the theme in each verse: the Lord first prayed for their sanctification; secondly He assigned the necessity for this sanctification in these words: ' *As You sent Me into the world*'; thirdly, He insinuates the beginnings of this sanctification, in these words: *And I sanctify Myself for them.*'

Throughout, there is a question of one and the same theme: Christian **sanctification, consecration**, which is a **participation** in the sanctification of Jesus Christ, and the **necessary condition** for the **Apostolic Mission**.

[3] **This sanctification, consecration** of the Faithful Disciples which Jesus prays for to His Father is nothing other than their **deepening in the Truth**, in the **revelation of the Name of the Father**. It is therefore, a deepening, further fathoming of believers in His **Filial Life**, by their **Union to Jesus Christ**. Through all this, they **participate** in the very **life** and **in the same Unity of the Divine Persons**.

[4] It is thus that spontaneously St. **John of the Cross** comprehended the entire purpose of Jesus' Priestly Prayer of Farewell: while there is not a direct citation of Jn 17:17-19 in the Carmelite Doctor of the Church, he does comment on it in several places. He does comment on vv. 20-24 which we think are parallel to vv. 17-19. His interpretation of the whole Chapter has been well presented by other scholars. The Saint treats of this idea in his Strophe 38 of his ***Spiritual Canticle*** with some precision in his purely gospel simplicity.

[a] Transforming Union is affirmed as so real and as so intimate that it truly renders the soul as 'God'. This is **transformation by participation** solely, it assimilates however, so tightly the human soul to the Divine Son that the soul can produce with Him, in the very bosom of the Trinity by an act of love in common to the Three, the Person of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the son of God by nature has come to seek out on earth so that He might conduct us to His Father, and the full Union with Him is **filiation toward the Father**. Such is the **adoption of the children of God**, for all that is good, such blessed souls will address to God the very words that the Son Himself addresses in St. John to the Eternal Father: 'O Father, all that which is Mine, is Yours – all that which is Yours is Mine. [cf. Jn 17:10] He says this in an **essential manner**: He is the Son by nature and we can say the same thing in a **participated manner**, we are the adoptive children of God.<sup>234</sup>

[b] In citing these texts from St. John of the Cross in support of the exegesis of Jn 17:17-19 that has been presented in these long pages, evidently we do not mean to say that the evangelist in the **Priestly Prayer**, had wished to describe here **mystical transforming union**. It is necessary to distinguish the subjective aspect of the mystical experience and that which constitutes the object, i.e., the profound reality of **the life of grace in the human soul** of the Faithful Believer. That which counts for us is that St. John of the Cross has understood these Johannine texts as they have been studied here. He presents them as a description of the reality of our **divine adoptive filiation, a grace** which is granted to every Christian. The Mystic simply comes to experience in his/ her soul that which God works out in each believer In this sense, it can be said that the authentic nature of Christian Sanctification such as this is described in Jn 17:17-19 – has been quite well perceived by the Mystical Doctor. The explanation which he offers of all this corresponds to the profound thought of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel.

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<sup>234</sup> *Spiritual Canticle*, Strophe 36.

[5] The **sanctification/ consecration** of Jesus Himself means **His own proper filial attitude –His loving obedience to His Father-** is the **Model**, the **exemplary and Instrumental Cause** and the **foundation** of the Faithful Disciples' sanctification. Their sanctification ***in the Truth***, has therefore a **Christological sense**. : it is in **Christ as Truth, in Jesus** who has made Himself known as the **Son of God**, that there is revealed to all the **Name of the Father**. And it is also in Him Jesus that there is opened to all Disciples who would be **faithful** to live fully as the children of God.

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### Final Conclusion

[1] In these many pages which precede, the effort has been to study the various Johannine usages of the formula, ***in the Truth***. Nothing might have prepared even the most willing student for the amplitude of such reflection. At least night, there is possibly some better idea of the sheer depth and the broad sweep of such a study in Jn. ***To Live in the Truth*** - would provide a great insight into the heart of the matter. Since Jesus indeed **is** the Truth, it unfailingly follows that **life in the truth**, the **lived experience of the Divine Truth**, implies an entire earthly sojourn illuminated by the mystery of Jesus Christ. In simple terms, this is the **Way**, lived in His **Truth** that leads to an eternal **Life**. Anyone who will persevere in the memory of Jesus such a one lives also here on earth **in the truth**.

[2] In the texts studied so far, Jn seeks that which might be described as a **theology of Christian comportment, 'spirituality'**. When contemporary moral and spiritual writers remind us that the specifically Christian '**Way**' is traditionally presented as **the Way of the Obedience of Faith**. The *specificity* of this expression – despite the over-riding role of **Christian Charity** and the under-lying position of **Christ-like Humility** – the beginning that culminates in Eternal Glory remains the **obedience of Faith**. For Jn – as for all of God's Word and the Tradition of the Church – there is little real confusion among the **supremacy of Charity** – the **basic importance of Humility** – it is **the obedience in faith** that is the initiation of this **Christian Way**. For Jn, this synthesis of all formulations is ***in the Truth***. Pope Paul VI [on July 26, 1972] put it this way: **Christian morality, spirituality, is a manner of living according to the faith, i.e., in the Light of the Truth and the example of Christ.**

[3] The basic requisite in all this that our response to the Father's Word, with the prompting of the Holy Spirit, is ***to put on the mind of Jesus Christ!*** [cf. Ph 2:5]. The first element is to **imitate, follow Him** – hence, a **Christological, Paschal Dimension**.

[a] All of life needs to be looked at ***in the Light of Jesus Christ*** means to **walk in the Truth** [cf. 2 Jn 4; 3 Jn 3, 4]. This is the constitutive note of an entire authentic Christian life. This means to live in the light of **Revelation of the Divine Truth and this 'Light has appeared to us in Jesus Christ**.

**[b] to love in the Truth** - [cf. 1 Jn 3:18; 2 Jn 1; 3 Jn 1] this means that the truly Faithful need to allow to enter into them, so that they might indeed dwell and act in the Love of God for us, and this has been revealed to us in Jesus [cdf. 1 Jn 3:6-17]. This will demand loving our brothers and sisters just as Christ has loved us, and as His has loved Him.

**[c] To adore the Father in Spirit and in Truth** – [cf. Jn 4: 223-24] which means to adore the Father in profound union with the One Who is made manifest to us as the **Father's Envoy**.

**[d] To sanctify, consecrate oneself in the Truth** [cf. Jn 17:17, 19] - means to live ever more deeply **His Filial Life** in communion with Jesus Christ in Whom there are revealed to us both Father and the Son.

**[4]** Another aspect that is very new, much insisted on by Jn is the **interiorization of the Truth**. This *interiorization*, this **intimate and profound experience of the Truth** is an essential condition, always presupposed so that the Christian might live and act **in the Truth**: the living water of the Word of God, once it has been offered to the perspective Believer ought to penetrate within and slake every spiritual thirst [cf. Jn 4:14] so that each one might **adore the Father in Spirit and in Truth** [cf. 4:23-24]. Similarly, it is necessary that **the Truth remain in us** [cf. 2 Jn 2; cf. 1 Jn 3:18] so that all faithful Believers might authentically **love the truth**. Thus it is clear once again to note the importance of Jn's special vocabulary: the Truth is meant to be **in** us, we are all called to live **in the Truth**. Jesus' **Truth**, i.e. Jesus Himself, present and transparent in the Faith, has become the **spiritual and interior place, space, area, milieu**, where the **fervent Filial Life of the Christian unfolds and prospers** – this is where each of the Faithful is invited to live and move and have being. It is not an exaggeration to say than Jn proposes here, in all discretion but in clear terms **an entire morality and spirituality of Christian interiority**.

Modern exegesis of Jn has apparently overlooked these aspects to some extent. It is rather concerned above all else with problems of literary criticisms and drawing comparisons. But, the **interiority of the Truth** is so Johannine and remains very alive in the tradition. It would suffice to cite here two very beautiful texts from the Alexandrians and from St. Augustine: St. Clement is very close here to Jn when he notes the intimate bond between the **interior Truth** and our **spiritual filiation**: our title as 'children of God' translates the springtime of our lives **The Truth which is in us** and **our whole manner of being** is irrigated by this Truth. St. Augustine, on his part, recalls to mind this essential principle: Do not go outside, but return within yourself: for Truth dwells within the interior man. This conception has remained traditional in Christian Spirituality: it will reappear later in the developing Latin Patristic era and in the Middle Ages down to our own time.

This Johannine theme indicates also that **way, path**, that should be followed to realize **Christian Authenticity**. In Kierkegaard's view, the demand of **authenticity** this demand of authenticity which the formula: **to live in the Truth**, expresses so well is - particularly experienced by our own contemporaries. It is still necessary to comprehend it.: it does not mean for human beings to be simply themselves - as if this

*authenticity* were to be found in one's own self, within one's own depth of being as its own supreme norm and its own Truth. The **Word of God's Truth** which enters into the Christian comes from the outside, we are **Ad-vent People**, which means that Someone different than we are, comes to dwell within our hearts and minds.

At first view, some might decide but this 'Outside' coming from beyond us, is what would limit our own true self. However, it is the opposite that is true. For this Truth is not some strange teaching, doctrine, opinion. It is not something extraneous, and contrary to us that is being imposed. Rather it is the **revelation** of authentic humanity as assumed in Jesus Christ, offering us all a **participation** in the Father's Love for humanity. He tells us what we need to here, and not just what we like to hear. This Truth of the Son of God Who has descended among us is the Personal revelation of the father's Love incarnate in human flesh. He comes to us all with an appeal so that we might respond out of love.

Far from being alienating, this manner of being is irrigated by this Truth, engenders in the individuals open to it into a new life and permits the Faithful to participate in the **Filial Life** of Jesus. This creates in each one a new and profound way of being. It sends out the pressing appeal to live from now on, and for ever afterwards, **in the Truth and love**, - meaning in the truth of love. The **Truth of Jesus** can at first sight, appear somewhat strange and discomforting and even crucifying. However, it is destined to transform the individual into a Child of God [cf. Jn 1:12-16]. This Truth becomes progressively the ultimate human truth. The faithful believer finds in it the ultimate light of existence and comes to experience being more and more invaded by the Holy Spirit of Joy [cf. 1 Jn 1:4].





[G] **To Your Service [the Suffering Servant of the Lord]**

**A Literary Analysis of the Four Servant Canticles** <sup>235</sup>

**Introduction**

[1] Following the general setting of the entire Book of Consolation, and noting its division [cf. cc. 40-48; 49-55], we come now to a consideration of the four Poems, Canticles of the Servant. One of these pertains to the First Part of Second Isaiah [i.e., 42:1, ff.] – while the other three [i.e. 49:1, ff.; 50:4, ff.; 52:13-53:12] pertain to the Second Part.

[2] Leaving aside the studies conducted on the Pentateuch, perhaps there is no other problem so complex and more controverted than that of the Canticles of the Servant. The history of the studies conducted on these four Hymns is a study in itself!

[3] Perhaps up until the dawn of Biblical Criticism in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the generally accepted interpretation of the Poems [particularly of the Fourth Cantic] was that they were in reference to an individual in the future – this view is called the individual messianic interpretation [as contrasted with the collective view, i.e., as including all of Israel; and the selective reading, i.e., a noble segment of the People – and the individual non-messianic interpretation – as a figure from Israel's ancient history, as Moses, Abraham or David – or perhaps from recent past history, as Jeremiah himself, or Second Isaiah himself – or, the distant future, the Messiah himself. this last mentioned will be the view followed in these notes.

[4] In this Part Two, the effort will be to offer a **literary** analysis – then, in PART THREE, an attempt will be made to offer a **doctrinal** analysis.

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**A. Isaiah 42:1-7 [Introduction]** <sup>236</sup>

[1] The Lord Himself speaks and explains the election and the Mission of His Servant. He will truly be a charismatic personality upon whom the Lord has placed His own Spirit. Perhaps there is a connection here with Is 11:2, and the expression has a messianic resonance. He will make known to the world all that the Lord does – he will teach the People how to worship the Lord [cf. 2 K 17:26, ff.].

[2] There may be already an initial remembrance of Jeremiah: ... ***Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you ... I consecrated you...!*** [Jr. 1: 4, ff.]. The Servant will be gentle, and much different from the more militant Cyrus, who is also a 'servant', but of a much different type.

<sup>235</sup> For this part, cf. A. Feuillet, *Ancien Testament*, o.c. Paris: Gabalda 1975, pp. 119-179, *passim*.

<sup>236</sup> cf. Feuillet, o.c., pp. 128, ff.

[3] To inspire confidence in the Lord, there is a reference to the Creator and His awesome power. This is a frequent argument for Second Isaiah, as has been seen. However, as with so much else in the Servant Poems, there is great controversy where this poem ends - and whether v. 5 is an addition. [These technical considerations must be left for a more exegetical study].

[4] The Servant is the **Mediator of the New Covenant**. He is a kind of Second Moses, but even more –in that the Servant is an incarnation of the New Covenant.

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### The Text <sup>237</sup>

**v. 1:** by His breath – He breathed into the dust of the earth at the beginning, the Lord God is capable of animating a Faithful Servant to His will, and God now introduces this person to His hearers.

**a.** Some have applied this ‘Servant’ to Cyrus, or that the actual situation made the Prophet dream perhaps of later times. The brutal Nabuchodonosor had been called ‘servant’ by Jr [27:6], the Lord’s agent in punishing Israel for its infidelity. The divine Spirit was often inspired to enable one to carry on the Holy War, to battle for the Lord [cf. Jgs 3:10; 1 S 16:13; 2 S 23:2]. The Servant is being prepared with priestly, prophetic and royal traits.

**b.** This ‘Servant’ will bring true justice to the world, the judgment decreed by the Lord [cf. Ps 51:4]. In the collapse of the nation before Babylon in 587, Israel was the ‘victim’ of this justice – and now it will be the beneficiary, perhaps some 50 years later [cf. Is 49:4]. There will be a three-fold repetition of ‘justice’ [vv. 1, 4]. Israel will be restored.

**vv. 2, 3:** He does not cry out nor quench the wavering flame, nor break the crushed reed. The victory of the ‘Servant’ will not be won by blood-curdling battle cries. Earlier Isaiah did speak of these: **... on a bare hill hoist a signal, sound the war-cry** ... [cf. 13:2]. Israel earlier had been compared to a ‘reed shaking in the water’ [cf. 1 K 14:15] – the Lord had threatened to uproot this reed, or this precious vine which He had planted [cf. Is 5:1 +; Jr 2:21; 5:10; 6:9; 8:13]. An earlier threat for the non-observance of the Covenant is contained in the section of the Book of Deuteronomy which is a kind of **‘Collection of Covenant Curses’** [cf. Dt 28:33]. Israel at the present moment of indeed *cursh, wavered* - but, the Servant will not destroy the bit of life in the Remnant.

**v.4:** the Servant is an expression of the ‘fidelity’ of God Himself. This Servant will show himself to be unwavering, and a firm stock that will not be definitively crushed. While in the Fourth Canticle, it will be true that the Servant will be *crushed for our sins* [cf. Is 53:5], he will be a ‘strong root in arid ground’ [v. 2]. The Faithful Servant will restore ‘justice’ and will achieve so great an authority that even the most distant isles will be attentive to his new law.

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<sup>237</sup> cf. Bonnard, o.c., pp. 123-127.

**v. 5:** to confirm the authority of the Servant, God is about to speak to him in person. This is a kind of Oracle of the Most High: the Servant is being 'commissioned'. However, as an Introduction to what will be said, the Lord calls to mind His own glorious titles:

... thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and spread them out – the One who gave shape to the world and gave breath to its people, and life to the creatures that move in it ...

This is the Lord God, praised for these deeds so often in the Psalms: **... for those who fear the Lord, His saving help is near, and the glory then will live in the country ...** [cf. Ps 85:9 +]. The Glory of the Lord [cf. Ex 24:16 +] which had deserted the Temple and the Holy City, will return [cf. Ex 43:2; Hg 2:9 – cf. **JB** note here].

**a.** With great ease the Lord God created the heavens and the earth: His hand has touched all that is created [cf. Is 40:22; 44:23, f.; 45:8, 12, 18; 48:13; 51:6 – cf. also Ac 17:24, f.]. He *spread the heavens out like a cloth* - a formula like the Creation theme, dear to Second Isaiah [42:5; 44:24; 45:12; 51:13; Jr 10:12; Ezk 1:22; Jb 9:8; 26:7; Ps 104:2; Zc 12:1].

**b.** The 'ease' of the Creation for the Lord is compared to a craftsman casting a figure, or a gold-smith, a sculptor [cf. Is 40:19] – in contrast with the makers of idols. This omnipotent Creator has now chosen one Servant from the vast multitudes to whom He has given breath, inspired His Spirit.

**v. 6:** the Lord now describes somewhat the vocation He has committed to the Servant:

- *I have called you* [cf. 46:11; 48:15];
- *to serve the cause of right*: this means not only to 'judge' Israel, or to re-establish Israel in righteousness before the Lord - but it means more the full deployment of the Plan of Salvation. *Salvation* and *Justice* are practically synonymous [cf. Is 41:2];
- *I have formed you* : vocation is a kind of New Creation: **... Now I am revealing new things to you, created at this very moment ..** [cf. Is 48:6];
- *I have appointed you, destined, vowed you, as Covenant for the multitudes, their Light*. The Servant, then, will be 'given' to Israel.

**a.** The assembly of the People that will be liberated is symbolic and prophetic of all the peoples who will be converted to the Lord God. this special service toward the 'Servant' People can only be accomplished by the One Who will be the Servant, *par excellence*. The New Israel [cf. 45:40] will indeed be the light of the World [49:6], the Covenant of the Peoples [49:8]. The ultimate truth is that the Lord Himself is the Light of the Nations, and He communicates this to His Servant:

**... Pay attention to Me, you Peoples, Listen to Me, you nations. For from Me comes the Law, and My justice shall be the light of the nations ...**[51:4]

***... Arise, shine out, for your light has come, the glory of the Lord God is rising on you though the night still covers the earth and darkness the peoples... The nations come to your light and kings to your dawning brightness... No more will the sun give you day-light, nor moonlight shine on you, but the Lord God will be your ever-lasting light ...*** [cf. Is 60:1,3, 19, f.; cf. also Rv 21: 23; 22:5].

**b.** The mention of the Covenant for the multitudes opens up one of the major themes of Scripture – I am now as I was in the days of Noah... [Is 54:9]. There is an intimate connection between biblical ‘light’ [as in the First Creation] and the Covenant. The reference goes back to the very dawn of the Covenant revelation that Noah [cf. Gn 9:8] experienced. **The Gn account, which many believe was contemporary with Second Isaiah**, meditates on the lot of humanity which survived the flood, and considers the Remnant as entering into an unbreakable Covenant with God. God offers the rainbow as the sign of the Covenant. Ezechiel recalls this rainbow as a witness to the fidelity of God, who will never again abandon the children of Israel: ***... I saw what looked like fire, and a light all around, like a bow in the clouds on rainy days...*** [Ezk 1:28].

**c.** It is above all Second Isaiah Who, with the author of Gn, sees a connection between the theme of ‘**Light**’ and that of the **Covenant**, in bringing out the universal character of both the Light and the Covenant. This universality is already a Covenant involving ‘all flesh. All of humanity is invited to this New Covenant [cf. Is 56:, 4ff.]. It is this God-given light which enables one to see the salvation offered by the unique Savior [cf. Is 40:5; 66:23].

**v. 7:** the Mission of the Servant is further described:

- to open the eyes of the blind;
- to free captives from prison;
- to free those who live in darkness from the dungeon.

You reconciled nations, allied through the Servant now and forever, going forward into the Light – this is the vision of Ever-lasting Peace, early in the Prophecy of Isaiah:

***... In the days to come, the mountain of the temple of the Lord God shall tower above the mountains ... all the nations will stream to it ... He will wield authority over the nations, they will hammer their swords into plough-shares ...*** [cf. Is 2:2, ff.].

The condition for all this to happen is deliverance from present slavery. All those ‘lost in the night’ [cf. Ezk 34:11, ff.; 42:16; 43:8; cf.35:5] must be freed from their captivity [cf. Is 49:9; 61:1]. This will be the re-establishment of all oppressed peoples. Of all of them, the People of God will be the Light of Jerusalem – and all the nations will be attracted by these rays issuing from the people which reflect the Glory of God. All will come to the true savior [cf. Is 49:7; 52:15]. <sup>238</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> cf. Bonnard, o.c., pp. 123-127.

### Summary

[1] The Lord God Himself presents the Servant, His Chosen One, in whom He is well pleased. there will be an out-pouring of the Spirit on him to permit the carrying out the extraordinary mission entrusted to him.

[2] This is highly reminiscent of the presentation of Jesus in His Mission: prior to the public ministry, Jesus is baptized in the Jordan [cf. Mk 1:9, ff., par.]. The Father presents Jesus in Whom He is well-pleased, quoting these two texts:

- Ps 2:7 ... **You are My Son... !**
- Is 42:1: ... the Spirit of the Most High descends on Jesus, enabling Him to act as Messiah.

[3] It is already clear that the Servant's Mission, bringing him into full solidarity with sinful humanity, will be the Mission of Jesus. Jesus is united to sinners through His Baptism: and thus goes out to put their sin to death.<sup>239</sup>



### **B. Isaiah 49:1-6 – The Servant's Vocation**

#### **Introduction:**<sup>240</sup>

[1] This time it is the Servant who speaks. He recalls his prophetic vocation, as did Jeremiah, that he was called **before his birth** [cf. Jr 1:5]. His words will be as a sword in the hands of the cause of the Lord God, and that he is being held in reserve for the day of the decisive battle. These introductory lines are full of anticipation of what is to follow – [they go back to is 42:4, and announce 49:4; 58:4-7 – and all of c. 53].

[2] All of this seems to indicate that the Mission of the Servant will be a dolorous one. He will be in conflict, also with His 'own.' There will be a 'Dark Night' when the Servant will really think that he has labored totally in vain. This reversal seems to put a check on his entire mission, that has thwarted his glorious vocation. While he is charged with the deliverance of Israel, this will be a great struggle. The Servant will have the name of 'Israel', like the Patriarch Jacob, having struggled with God and man: the Servant will descend from this Patriarch and will be the point of departure for the New Israel.

[3] The Lord God speaks up, then, in vv. 5, ff., to re-confirm the Servant in his Mission. The spiritual and universalist character of his Mission will endure much hardship – so, the Lord has intervened to confirm this Mission in all its purity. The very one 'who formed the Servant in the womb' comes now. This Mission will ask for a conversion of hearts. At the accomplishment of this arduous task, the Servant will receive a name above all names: **the Light of the Nations!** The Covenant will not just be for Jacob, Israel – but, will extend to the furthest confines of the globe.

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<sup>239</sup> cf. Feuillet, o.c., p. 167.

<sup>240</sup> ib, pp.129-131.

[4] The verse that follow [vv. 7, ff.] are commonly thought of as not pertaining to the Second Cantic of the Servant – they do speak of the marvelous epic of the Return.<sup>241</sup>

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### The Verses <sup>242</sup>

This c. 49 opens with the second phase of the Book of Consolation. There is a slightly different emphasis, liberation has already begun. The concluding verses of the preceding chapter had asked the redeemed to cry out with shouts of joy, and that this should be proclaimed **to the ends of the earth**. So, now, in the opening verses of this chapter, the divine command is being carried out. The remembrance of the **First Exodus** with the splitting of the rock [48:21] is an apt introduction to this new phase in the history of Israel – as c. 49 unfolds, the Israelites are promised the **New Exodus**, in which they will never be scorched, or thirsty again. All the peoples of the earth are being asked to recognize the Lord as the sole Lord God, the unique Savior.

**v. 1:** all the peoples are being asked to listen: to show interest in what is being accomplished before their eyes. The assembly is as large as that earlier one already noted:... **Islands, keep silence before Me ...** [cf. 41:1]. Even the most distant regions are now invited – for the Lord God will extend the great favors to Israel and to all of them. The specially ‘Called’ One is extending the benefits and the graces of this special vocation also to them. As the Lord God ‘called’ this Servant, the ‘call’ is now being extended. This special grace of God has predestined the Servant from the very first instant of his vocation, his existence. The ‘Chosen’ all bear the name of the Most High [48:1] – it is this Name that bestows life to them.

**v. 2:** the Lord has equipped the Servant with what he needs for the task that has been set aside for him. He has given the Servant a ‘sharp sword’, an ‘arrow’ to pierce the hearts and minds of listeners: this is a fairly common biblical theme:

- the mouth as a sword [cf. Dt 13:126];
- which devours [cf. Dt 32:42];
- words as arrows [cf. Jr 9:7; Ps 7:14; 57:5; 64:4].

**a.** The sense of the metaphor is clear: the word pronounced by the Servant is totally effective, because it is the very word of God that has been communicated to him by God Himself: ... **I put these words into your mouth...** [51:16] – even before the foundations of the world – these words will not disappear [cf. 59:21].

**b.** There is here some hint of the spirituality of the divine word: the prophetic word will not be thwarted:

<sup>241</sup> cf. Feuillet, o.c., pp. 129, ff.

<sup>242</sup> Cf. Bonnard, o.c., pp. 217-222.

- the word of the King is indeed compared to an 'army' [cf. Is 11L4];
- and the Divine Word cuts more like a sword [cf. Ws 18:16; Rv 1:16;2:12, 16; 19:15; 2 Th 2:8];
- the mouth of the genuine prophet is also compared to an 'army' [cf. Ho 6:5; JR 23:29; cf. Qo 12:11];
- the Divine Word cuts right through to the core, to the human spirit [cf. Ep 6:17; Heb 4:12.

**c.** The Herald of the Lord, the Servant, is called to pronounce this Word, compared to the stars above [cf. ps 19]. The Servant has been kept in the background, perhaps not so much to protect him [cf. Ps 17:8; 27:5; 31:31; 64:3] – but, far more to send him at the appointed time, the proper moment, to 'surprise' the world by sending a totally unexpected Servant, one who will be able to speak with authority the Divine Word. If the voice of the Servant is compared to highly trained and qualified armies, this brings out all the more that he is a highly prepared instrument, one who will surely achieve the intended victory.

**v. 3:** equipped with the weapon of the Divine Word, which is even more powerful than all the armies of the world – the Servant understands that God has confirmed him in his title and Mission as 'Servant.' The title given to him dedicates him fully and forever to the service of the Most High. His function is to receive the splendor of God, then to communicate this to the world. The Lord has displayed His glory in Israel [cf. 44:23], and the intention of this is to have it spread throughout the world. The Divine Word will indeed be the splendor of God:

***... At various times in the past, and in various ways, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets, but in our own time, he has spoken through His Son ...He is the radiant light of God's glory and the perfect copy of his nature, sustaining the universe by his divine command ...*** [cf. Heb 1:1, ff.].

**v. 4:** the Servant could very well be overwhelmed by such a commission – and could even personally have wanted some other destiny. In his 'Dark Night', he imagined that he had worked for nothing – he had poured out his best energies for naught, and it was all as empty as the wind. He really was tempted to think he had worked in vain. The discouragement of the Prophets is a constant biblical theme [cf. 1 K 19:14; Jr 15:18; 17:15; 20:8; Jon 2:5; cf. also Ps 32:23; Mt 23:37]. The response to this is that the Word of God will not return to Him 'empty':

***... Yes, as the rain and the snow come down from the heavens and do not return without watering the earth, making it yield and giving growth to provide seed for the sower and bread for eating, so the word that goes from my mouth does not return to Me empty, without carrying out My will and succeeding in what it was set to do ...*** [cf. Is 55:40, ff.]

The promise is that through this Servant, 'Israel will not toil in vain' [cf. Is 65:23] – but, from now on, the People is recognized as pertaining by special right once more to the Lord. Even though in its 'Dark Night', Israel was tempted in its exile: ***... my***

**rights are ignored by the Lord ...** [cf. 40:27]. Later on, they will have to admit their error: **... all the while, my cause was with the Lord ...** [cf. 49:4].

This is the most encouraging 'judgment', the words of restoration that God pronounces in behalf of His People. The reward is the effective realization of the hopes that were dearest to the heart of Israel. Israel will then be the emissary of the Most High, even to the other nations – this 'service' of God will not be thwarted. He will lead whole hordes to the Lord [cf. Is 53].

**v. 5:** the Lord once more has claimed His Servant – He has emitted such an important declaration, and it will be followed by further affirmation: the initiative of the Lord will elevate the more the dignity of the Servant and indicate the great value of leading the nations to the worship of the Most High.

The prerogative of the Servant is that he has been formed by God from the first moment of his being in his Mother's womb. His basic task was that of leading Israel back to God. There may be present here a kind of two-fold return: both political and religious. The physical return of Israel should be preceded by the moral, religious return of the hearts of the People to their God. Israel is 'Precious' in the sight of the most High and deeply loved [43:4]. In his weakness, the Servant comes to understand ever more that it is the power of God that will achieve the marvelous return of the people: From Yahweh alone come victory and strength [cf. 45:24].

**v. 6:** it is not enough for you to be called My Servant – for the Servant will re-group the tribes of Jacob – in Sirach, there is the prayer that this would one day really happen: **... Gather together the tribes of Jacob, restore them their inheritance as in the beginning ...** [cf. Si 36:10].<sup>243</sup>

**a.** The Dispersed of Israel will be led back into the light, and in turn, these re-patriated exiles will be the light of the Nations. On receiving salvation, or evangelization, in its turn, Israel will be called upon to communicate this to all peoples – the New Israel will be, in a certain sense, the 'salvation' of all peoples. Salvation for Israel really means the Lord Himself – and the Servant and his people will become the privileged means to bring the Lord to the nations:

**... This Lord God proclaims to the ends of the earth: say to the Daughter of Sion: look, your savior [or, salvation] comes, the price of his victory with him ... they shall be called: the Holy People, the Lord's redeemed ...** [cf. 62:11].

**b.** The Servant is not only to gather the tribes, but to announce to them, to render the Lord God present, to the ends of the world. This is the Servant's role:

- it will be Jesus' understanding of Himself: the Light of the World and the Nations [cf. Lk 2:23];
- Paul will see it as his own role and that of all apostolic Christians:

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<sup>243</sup> The JB Note: the Hope of the Ingathering was particularly strong during the exile – and it remained a characteristic of Judaism long after the exiles had returned. The Diaspora was always considered temporary, and would be ended by the coming of the Messiah.



***... For this is what the Lord commanded us to do when He said: I have made you the Light of the Nations, so that My salvation may reach the ends of the earth ...***

[cf. Ac 13:43; Is 49:6; Jn 8:12 +]<sup>244</sup>.

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### **Summary**

**[1]** This Second Canticle begins, then, with recalling to mind the Servant's Vocation, already shown in the First Poem [42:1, ff.]. His Vocation is a Mission to the Nations, to convert, to lead Jacob back to God, and that Israel might indeed be reunited. However, the Servant is plagued by the hauntingly cruel feeling that his efforts have been in vain, but the Lord is abundant in His comfort:

- He lets the Servant know what He has in store for him;
- He announces to him that he will be the savior of the entire world.

**[2]** In the Synoptics, the prophecies of the Passion begin at Caesarea of Philippi, and they were occasioned by a partial 'check' placed on the ministry of Jesus. Thus, then, inaugurates a new phase of his ministry. From now on, Jesus openly announces to His disciples that He will have much to suffer, not so that He will 'become' the Messiah, but because He already is. He will be a Suffering Servant. The Transfiguration, which so eloquently recalls the Baptism, as there is just about the same declaration in both instances, is highly reminiscent of the Servant Songs [42:1-4; 49:1-3]. These proclamations are calling to mind the vocation of the Servant. They are, then, brief consolations in the midst of the Passion – context. They predict in eloquent manner, that Jesus' glorification will follow His suffering. Jesus is presented as the Universal Master: ***Listen to Him...*** - the Law [Moses] is presented as the Prophets [Elijah] as a preparation for Him.<sup>245</sup>

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### **C. Isaiah 50:4-7 [11]: A Suffering Sage<sup>246</sup>**

#### **Introduction:**

**[1]** Once more, the Canticle starts off with the Servant's own monologue. In this, he presents himself as the Lord's faithful Disciple, entirely available, dependent on the Lord. He comes across as a Prophet and a Sage. In the full picture of the 'Servant', he does manifest characteristics of the 'prophetic' vocation, as well as that of a Wisdom teacher.

**[2]** He gives a clear indication as to the source of his Wisdom: ***each morning he awakes me to hear, to listen like a disciple.*** The Lord Himself has opened his ear.

<sup>244</sup> For these thoughts, cf. Bonnard, o.c., pp. 217-222.

<sup>245</sup> cf. Feuillet, o.c., pp. 160, ff.

<sup>246</sup> cf. A. Feuillet, Ancien testament. Paris: Gabalda, o.c., pp. 131, ff.

Perhaps more than a reading, or a meditation on the Scriptures [available for all the 'servants of the Lord'], there seems to be here a hint at a direct instruction on the part of the Lord Himself. The Servant listens to this with **total docility** and with no hesitation. The overall scope of this teaching is to fortify those who are 'wearied', discouraged. This 'audience' seems to go back to the First Poem: ... **the Servant does not break the crushed reed, or quench the wavering flame...** [49:4]. These would be the Israelites, crushed by the years of exile, and strongly tempted to give up the faith. The servant is sent to them, to strengthen them, that they **might renew their strength like the eagle's**.

[3] The Servant discovers that the Mission to the lost tribes of Israel is a harsh service [cf. 4, ff.]. Nonetheless, the Servant offers himself to it without reserve. He seems to go a step beyond Jeremiah – who rebelled at the harsh lot that was his:

*... I said: Ah, Lord, look, I do not now how to speak [1:8] ... do not be dismayed... brace yourself for action. Stand up and tell them all I command you ... they will fight against you, but shall not overcome you, for I am with you... [cf. Jr 1:8, 17, ff.].*

*... You have seduced me, Lord God... the Word of the Lord has meant for me insult, derision ... Lod, I have committed my cause to You... [cf. Jr 20:7-11].*

[4] The Servant is convinced that he is fortified by the Lord God, and so is ready to weather the blows and the insults of his enemies. The Servant manifests an imperturbable confidence in the Most High, and this support was also offered to Jeremiah [1:18; 20:11, ff.] – and the same promise is given to all the Suffering Servants/ Sages of the Most High: **I will be with you!**

[5] The fundamental theme of the Third Canticle is the constancy of the Savior in the dispensation of a doctrine that has come from God, and which strikes its listeners with force. There is a certain insistence upon the message, and the doctrine which it communicates.

[6] There is much discussion whether verses 10-11 belong to this Poem – the **JB** seems to separate them. Most do consider them a kind of moral exhortation to follow after the Servant. For completeness' sake, we will treat them as part of the Fourth Canticle. <sup>247</sup>

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### The Text

Much like Jeremiah before him – and Paul long after him – the Servant offers us a brief glimpse into his own life through the autobiographical data he supplies here. The Servant, relying so totally on his God and urging with great insistence that his compatriots accept the invitation to convert, sees himself the butt of difficulties,

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<sup>247</sup> cf. Feuillet, o.c., pp. 131, ff.

ridicule and shame. Yet, he renews his unshakable faith in the Lord. The over-all picture that is given here may be summarised as follows:

- an avid listening to the lessons of God, so that the prophetic message will indeed be the Word of God;
- his dedication to the faithful transmission of the word to the discouraged;
- the inherent sufferings in any true 'service' of the Lord;
- his protestations of fidelity, his statements of confidence, and the certitude that he is in no way at 'odds' with the Lord.

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**vv. 4-5:**

**a.** The fundamental reality of which the Prophet is assured is the intervention in his life of the One he names here four times: the Lord God. He claims that the Lord has bestowed on him His very own Spirit: ***...and now the Lord God, with His Spirit, sends me...*** [48:16]. Here the Servant repeats insistently that the Lord God informs him and assists him. It is the Lord God, and no other, who has given him an ear and the tongue of a disciple: the Servant has been placed in the School of God, where he has been taught to teach capably in his turn. God freely commits secrets to him which he had not chosen to communicate before: ***You had never heard, you did not know, I had not opened your ear before-hand...*** [48:8].

**b.** The Lord made him attentive – and now the Servant will make all Israel listen, for he is to be the Teacher of the Lord's Word to the People. Each morning, the Master will address His attentive disciple – so that in His turn, the Servant might be able to sustain his fellow Israelites, by communicating this message to them. The special object of the Servant's preaching will be the 'discouraged'. His will be a Mission of comforting, consolation, of those who are presently suffering the Exile. His special sphere of interest will be the down-trodden: ***... He gives strength to the wearied, he strengthens the powerless...those who hope in the Lord God renew their strength, they put out wings like eagles ... They run and do not grow weary, walk and never tire ...*** [40:28, ff.].

**c.** By the intermediary, His Servant, the Lord would like to prepare all the sons/ daughters of Israel to become one day His disciples.

**v. 5:** a Mission of this magnitude and intensity will not be easy. It will demand that the Servant should give himself to the service of the Lord and, at the same time, to the service of his brothers and neighbors. God is calling him now for the service of his exile neighbors. The Servant does not 'flinch' from this service to his fellow-exiles. Many of his predecessors did not carry through on their share in the mission: ***... they revelled, they grieved his holy Spirit...*** [63:10]. The Servant will manifest an even greater intrepidity than Jeremiah, and will not voice his complaints. He will undertake his difficult Mission in the firm faith that it is all 'possible.'

**v. 6:** this aspect of accepting the shameful blows struck at him is a clear preparation for the passion of Jesus [cf. Mt 26:67; 27:30, *par.*]. The Lamentations speak of this: **... to offer his cheek to the striker, to be overwhelmed with insults ...** [cf. Lm 3:30]. The sufferings here are not only painful, but are a real attack on the dignity of the person: *To spit in one's face* is considered the height of insult [cf. Nb 12:14; Dt 25:9; Jb 30:10]. Not even this shameful treatment could discourage the Servant.

**v. 7:** what strengthens the Servant in this dark hour is the conviction that the Lord Himself aids him: **.. the Lord is coming to my help...** [v. 9]. Being so sure of the divine presence, the Servant will not be overwhelmed by the outrages which crush him. The Prophets are indeed promised the help of God in their difficult hours:

**... I, for my part, today will make you into a fortified city, a pillar of iron, a wall of bronze, to confront all this land...** [cf. Jr 1:18].

**... You must deliver My words to them, whether they listen or not... eat what I am going to give you...** [cf. Ezk 3:7, ff.].

The Servant sets his face like flint – not unlike Jesus Whose face was ‘fixed’ towards Jerusalem. He will show the same intensity for good which the rebels have exercised for evil.

**vv. 8, 9:** the Servant invites his opponents to appear with him before the divine tribunal. He claims that his ‘Vindicator’ [**GO’EL**], his Redeemer – is at hand. The invitation to appear before the tribunal is an old one: **they appeared before Moses ... the priest ... and the whole community ... Moses took their case before the Lord God ...** [cf. Nb 27:2, ff.]. The Lord not only ‘helps’ but He extends His justice, i.e., He declares ‘just’ - and shows that the Servant is ‘right’ in preaching salvation. And the Lord will bring His ‘justice’, i.e., hasten the day of salvation, will establish the truth of the message and the authenticity of the Servant’s Mission. Far from being ‘triumphalistic’, the Servant nonetheless, will be vindicated, not in himself – but, because of the sanctity of his message: his adversaries will be discarded like worn-out clothing. No one will ever be able to defeat those whom the Lord has sent. Paul seems to have had this in mind when he wrote:

**... After saying this, what can we add? With God on our side, who can be against us? Since God did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up to benefit us all, we may be certain that after such a gift, that he will not refuse anything He can give. Could anyone accuse those that God has chosen...** [cf. Rm 8:31-34].

**v. 10:** these next two verses are entitled: ‘Exhortation to follow the Servant.’ There are those commentators who would end the Third Canticle at v. 9. For completeness, we will add the exhortation:

**a.** Justified by the Lord Himself, Second Isaiah was able to invite his fellow country-men and women to follow him. He addresses his appeals to those exiles who Fear the Lord, those who obey Him, who listen to the voice of His Servant, the Prophet [cf. Dt 4:30; Ezk 3:7]. Even if they have had to struggle for a long time in the darkness of exile [cf Ps 42:7; 49:9], they will place their trust more than ever before in the Name

of the Most High. They will learn to rely on His tenderness, His constancy, His mercy and fidelity. There is an Exodus theme here [compare Ex 33:19, 34:6 and Is 48:9]: ... ***For the sake of My name, I deferred My anger – for the sake of My honor, I curbed it...***

**b.** What the Prophet has done first – trusted in the Lord and in His Word – he now communicates to God's People: let Israel trust in the Name of the Lord, let him lean on his God.

**v. 11:** not all do choose to follow the Servant and listen to his preaching. Not satisfied with just not listening, they become aggressive. In the historical context, some of the exiled population may have feared reprisals from their Babylonian captors: they have feared the position of privilege that they had achieved in the non-believing society. The ominous note with which the Canticle ends is indeed a good preparation for what is coming. The warning for non-acceptance is stern.

### Summary

**[1]** As the Servant speaks here, one day Jesus of Nazareth will also speak. There are many points of contact between this anonymous Prophet, struggling with his People in Babylon – and the Prophet of Nazareth, Jesus Christ. The evangelists had no hesitation in emphasizing these points of contact between Jesus and this Servant.

**[2]** Like the Servant, Jesus has come for the 'weak', and the 'down-trodden' [cf. Mt 11:28]. He tells them that the Father has taught Him [cf. Jn 8:28, 40]. He does 'fix His face' toward Jerusalem [compare Is 50:7 and Lk 9:51]. Jesus predicts shameful treatment, even including being covered with spittle [cf. Mk 10:32, ff.; 14:65; 15:19, *par.*]. In His darkest hour, Jesus expresses the fact that the Father is with Him, and that He is to bring about His glory and that He will indeed achieve justice [cf. Jn 8:46].

**[3]** Jesus also predicts that those who remain obstinate in their sins, will die in them [cf. Jn 8:24]. Even in the midst of His agony, He remains certain of the Father's love, and He invites His friends to pass-over with Him from the darkness into the light [cf. Jn 8:12]. The confidence that Jesus shows is not only that of a **Servant**, but that of **the Son of the Father**.<sup>248</sup>

**[4]** Jesus was tormented as was the Servant in this Canticle [cf. Mt 15:15-19]. There is more than abundant proof of the connection between Isaiah and the Evangelists on several accounts.

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<sup>248</sup> For these pages, cf. Bonnard, o.c., *Le Second Isaie ...* Paris: Gabalda 1972, pp. 233-236, *passim*.

## D. Isaiah 52:13-53:12 - The Servant's Ordeal / Triumph <sup>249</sup>

### Presentation:

[1] This Fourth Canticle is the most important of all. The interpreter is not faced with the problem of knowing when it begins or ends, as these lines of demarcation are rather clear. This Fourth Hymn appears to have been almost inserted as a unity where it is presently found. The difficulty of the Poem is internal to it – but this is also its beauty and its depth, in view of the great mystery it propounds.

[2] The experts point out that the Greek words chosen by the Evangelists to portray Jesus are the very terms found in the LXX of Is 53: the predictions that the Son of Man will have much to suffer, that He will be rejected – are terms familiar to Greek students of Isaiah [compare Lk 9:22 and Is 53:3; cf. also Mk 9:12].

[3] Jesus' claim that the Son of Man has not come to be served, but to serve – and to give His life as a ransom for the multitude [cf. Mk 10:45] is inspired by Servant terminology. Jesus refers to the ***Scriptures being fulfilled***, in the predictions of His Passion, and often the words used would lead the student to Is 53 [cf. vv. 10, 12]. The attitude, then, of the suffering Jesus is often expressed in terms reminiscent of the Suffering Servant.

[4] Jesus' being included among the 'guilty' or the 'sinners' [cf. Lk 22:37; Mk 15:27] is found also in Second Isaiah.

[5] The words for the Institution of the Eucharist [***this is My Body which is given for you ... This is My Blood ... This is the New Covenant in My Blood, which is shed for you, for the many, in remission for sins:*** - are 'Servant' inspired. Under these variants, the principal idea given is that Jesus has suffered for the remission of sins, which is the sacrifice of the Servant [cf. Is 53:10-12].

[6] In giving us the Cup of the Covenant which contains His life offered in Sacrifice of Expiation, Jesus cites various expressions in Scripture:

- in this one expression, we are brought back to Sinai - we are united to the New Covenant of Jeremiah [31:31-34];
- we are united with the Servant who pours out a sacrifice for the entire universe;
- we are united with Is 61 and Second Zechariah [cc. 9-14], Psalm 22 and Daniel.

The Eucharist, then, is a marvelous synthesis of the OT. Now, for a reflection on this Fourth Canticle:

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<sup>249</sup> cf. Feuillet, o.c., pp.132-138; Bonnard, o.c., pp. 53, ff.; 280, ff.

### The Preamble

Jesus is indeed the Servant raised up on the Cross and then elevated in Glory, higher than all else [cf. Ac 3:13; Ph 2:9], because also in His Passion He had been so disfigured. The crowds who had seen Him scourged, crowned with thorns, crucified and were horrified at His appearance [cf. Ga 3:13] – one day will be full of admiration, for they will contemplate an event without precedent [cf. Rm 15:21]: the One Who had known all this shame is now in eternal glory.

**v.13:** the Canticle opens with a kind of ‘pre-existence’ parallel with Christ: the Servant will ‘prosper’, be ‘lifted up’, ‘exalted’, ‘raised’ – to great heights. Because the suffering is so intense, the glory will be all the greater, as this ordeal was met with infinite divine love.

**v. 14:** the crowds are ‘appalled’, ‘astonished’ – kings are ‘speechless’, as this has never before been told, never been heard. This over-whelming stupor is caused both by the intensity of the suffering – as well as by the sublimity of the eventual glory.



1. The final words of v. 14 present a special difficulty: **... so disfigured did he look that he no longer seemed human ...** The JB footnote here offers a special reading: *...by my anointing, I took his human appearance from him...* the first part of the following verse: **... so will crowds be astonished at him ...** - is sometimes rendered: *... He will asperge the numerous peoples ...*

2. Mistaken by the crowds as one who is at least ritually ‘impure’ [further ahead, it seems that he is even to be considered to be leprous], the Servant hardly seems the one to purify the multitudes of sinners. The reference to the ‘aspersion’ [if that reading could stand] would lead the reflections back to Moses, who conducted the ritual of aspersion with the Blood of the Covenant, on the assembled multitudes on Sinai:

**... half of the blood Moses took up and put into basins, the other half he cast on the altar ...** [After reading the Book of the Covenant to the listening People] **Moses took the blood and cast it towards the people ...** [cf. Ex 24:6,ff.].

3. In this way, Moses had sealed the Sinai Covenant by sprinkling the chosen representatives of the Chosen People with the Blood of the victims. In like manner, Second Isaiah presents the Servant who will spiritually sprinkle the countless multitudes with the blood of his own martyrdom which will then purify them. The Servant is indeed the Covenant of the People and the light of the Nations [cf. Is 42:6]: he is being presented as the **New Moses**.

4. The Prophet Ezechiel also foresaw a metaphorical aspersion as the means of sharing in the benefits of the messianic era that was to come: **... I shall pour clean water over you and you will be cleansed; I shall cleanse you of all your defilement and all your idols. I shall give you a new heart and a new spirit ...** [cf. Ezk 36:25, ff.]. The *Miserere* also prays for this: **... wipe out all my guilt ... God, create a clean heart in me, put into me a new and constant spirit ... purify me**

**with hyssop until I am clean, wash me until I am whiter than snow ...** [cf. Ps 51: 7, ff.]. Jesus' words of the institution of the Eucharist recall the aspersion of Moses: **... This is My Blood, the Blood of the Covenant ...** [cf. Mk 14:24, f. , par. ].

5. However, this reading of the TM: **... he will asperge numerous peoples ...** is rendered by the JB: **... the crowds will be astonished at him ...** - which is the reading of the LXX. Some have said that the LXX translators were swayed in the presence of this difficult text to render it more in accord with its immediate context: **... kings were speechless before him .. who could ever believe what we have heard ...?**

6. A further support for the 'aspersion' interpretation would be a similar text found at Qumran of this passage of Isaiah, which is also rendered this way in the Syriac text: **...he will purify the numerous peoples ...** - there is a text from the Pentateuch using this Hebrew verb found there in the sense of the *asperges* :

**... The anointed priest is to carry a little of the blood of the bull into the Tent of Meeting. He is to dip his finger in the Blood and sprinkle the veil before the Lord seven times ...He shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle it over the veil of the Lord seven times before the Lord ...** [cf. Lv 4: 6, 17].

7. It should also be pointed out that the situation of the Servant of the Lord appearing in this terrible state has evoked the wonder of the by-standers all through Scripture [cf. Jn12:37, ff. – the unbelief of the Jews]: **...As Isaiah says: Lord, how many believed what we proclaimed?** [Rm 10:16] - **... those who have never heard about him will see him, and those who have never been told about him will understand...** [cf. Rm 15:21].

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### **The Expose' of the Mystery: The 'Ordeal'** [cf. Is 53:1-9]

**v. 1:** who could ever believe what we have heard, and to whom has the power of the Lord God been revealed?

This seems to indicate that what we have here is a revelation that comes from on high, which is so overwhelming that hardly anyone can believe it. The verses which follow put before the reader and the listener a group which speaks: the assembly. It speaks in the first person plural: **us ... we**. Some would see here an identity between this apparently anonymous collectivity and the 'kings' and 'crowds' noted in the verses above. However, there is some difficulty with this, for nowhere is it revealed that non-believers would come to understand the mysteries of salvation better than the children of revelation. The preceding Canticles have let it be understood that the coming of non-believers to the Covenant is the principal cause of the drama. This unfolds in Palestine and this chapter gives an account of it. The author does not make clear whether the 'assembly' is a representative 'elite' – or, simply the grouping of the Chosen People. The divine revelation will make more clear what the mystery is. It seems to be a liturgical gathering, noted in the Psalms: **... let us go to where he is waiting and worship at his footstool ... He I will make a horn sprout for David ...** [cf. Ps 132: 6, ff.].



**v. 2:** like a sapling he grew up in front of us, like a root in arid ground. Without beauty, without majesty, we saw him, no looks to attract our eyes... The mystery is now being presented to those who will have great difficulty in believing it: ... ***what panic there would be if you were to understand what it meant...!*** [cf. Is 28:19]. The mystery is placed in the perfect tense of the verbs – the wretched servant is compared to a shoot coming up from brambles in the arid desert soil. There might be here a reference to the Messianic stock of David: ... ***A shoot springs from the stock of Jesse, a scion thrusts from his roots on him the spirit of the Lord rests ...*** [cf. Is 11:1, ff.]. Or, there may be the idea here of the Messiah as the best of the ‘vine’ of Israel, uprooted from an abundant soul, and brought out into the desert: ... ***Let me sing to my friend, the song of his love for his vineyard...*** [cf. Is 5:1 +]<sup>250</sup> The future of Israel is tied to this vine, this root – this is the promised Davidic Dynasty, which will come to new life in the Person of the Savior.

**v. 3: ... a thing despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering, a man to make people screen their faces; he was despised and we took no account of him ...**

**a.** This verse prolongs and accentuates the description of the great mystery of ‘abasement’. There is a veritable accumulation of expressions indicting rejection. Eye-witnesses are said to turn away from him and this has led to a two-fold interpretation:

- the more common view is that people turn away in horror or disgust from this suffering of the Servant;

- a second view, which might be more in accord with what follows – this Servant hides his own face in accord with an ancient prescription: ... ***a man infected with leprosy must wear his clothing torn and his hair disheveled; he must shield his upper lip and cry: Unclean, unclean! ...***[Lv 13:45]. All of this ‘elaborate ceremonial’ was a signal visible form afar, for the passers-by to keep their distance.

**b.** There is a tie here with the Psalm of Abandonment experienced by Christ: ... ***My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me... yet, here am I, now more worm than man, scorn of mankind, jest of the people, all who see me jeer at me, they toss their heads and sneer...*** [cf Ps 22:1, 6, ff.].

**v. 4: ... and yet ours were the sufferings he bore, ours were the sorrows he carried. But we, we thought of him as someone punished, struck by God and brought low ...**

**a.** This theme of leprosy is prolonged in this verse – in fact, some would translate this: we thought of him as a leper, struck by God and humiliated. The word used here can either mean ‘blow’, or ‘leper’: the purification of lepers [cf. Lv 14] is very similar to the purification ritual for sin on *Yom Kippur* : but in place of the scape-goat

<sup>250</sup> cf. the JB note of Israel as a vine chosen and then rejected, is found first in Ho 10:1 – and will reappear throughout Jeremiah [2:21; 5:10; 6:9; 12:10; In Ezk 15:1-8; 17:3-10; 19:10-14. Cf. also Ps 80:8-18; Is 27:2-5]. This will come to full growth in Jn 15 – cf. also Dt 32: 32, f.; Si 24:17.

sent away with the sins of Israel burdened upon it the priest lets fly two birds – or, immolates one and gives the other its freedom – supposedly taking away the leprosy.

**b.** Leprosy is the terrifying malady considered in ancient times to be a punishment permitted by God for the most horrible crimes:

*... The anger of the Lord blazed out at Miriam ... He departed, and as soon as the cloud withdrew from the Tent, there was Miriam, a leper, white as snow! Aaron looked to her; she had become a leper ...* [cf. Nb 12:9, ff.]

*... While Uzziah was raging at the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead. They quickly turned him out, and he himself was anxious to go, since the Lord has struck him ...* [cf. 2 Ch 26:19, ff.].

*... Purify me with hyssop until I am clean...* [cf. Ps 51:7].

*... the priest must offer sacrifices for sin; and perform the rite of atonement for uncleanness over the man who is being purified. After this, he must immolate the holocaust, and send up holocausts and oblations on the altar. When the priest has performed the rite of atonement over him in this way, the man will be clean...* [cf. Lv 14:19]

**c.** The 'leprosy' of the Servant is not to be understood in the literal sense, but rather figuratively. Leprosy is here the symbol of all our spiritual maladies which the servant has willingly assumed.

**v. 5** *... he was pierced through for our faults, crushed for our sins. On him, lies a punishment that brings us peace, and through his wounds we are healed ...*

**a.** The previous thought is developed here – the Servant makes the offering for our peace by assuming the burden of the sacrifice. Peace and Healing really are messianic goods to come at the end of time.

**b.** *The one who was pierced* : will be a later prophecy of Zc: *... They will look on the One whom they have pierced; they will mourn for him as for an only child, and weep for him as people weep for a first-born child...*

**c.** Peter will quote the great paradox about the wounds that will heal, a sure sign of the messianic times.

**v. 6:** *... We had all gone astray like sheep, each taking his own way, and the Lord God burdened him with the sins of us all...*

The example of the Good Shepherd presented by the Prophet Ezk seems present here: *... I myself will pasture my sheep ... I shall look for the lost one, bring back the stray, bandage the wounded, and make the weak strong again ... I shall be a true shepherd to them...* [cf. Ezk 34:11, ff.].

**v. 7:** *... harshly dealt with, he bore it humbly, he never opened his mouth, like a lamb that is led to the slaughter-house, like a sheep that is dumb before its shearers, never opening its mouth ...*

The Servant is presented as enduring the slights and the hurts with meekness. The comparison with the Lamb led to the slaughter-house, of course, is taken from Jeremiah:

*... I, for my part, was like a trustful lamb, being led to the slaughter-house, not knowing the schemes they were plotting against me. Let us destroy the tree in its strength, let us cut him off from the land of the living, so that his name may be quickly forgotten ...* [cf. Jr 19:11, ff.].

**v. 8:** *... by force and by law he was taken; would anyone plead his cause? Yes, he was torn from the land of the living, for our faults struck down in death...*

No one seemed to understand what the Servant was about – there seems to be here another reference to Jeremiah – who did not know the schemes they were plotting [cf. Jr 11:19]. The Servant suffers **FOR** our faults – he was taken on himself the leprosy of others' faults.

**v. 9:** *... they dug him a grave with the wicked, a tomb with the rich, though he had done no wrong and there had been no perjury in his mouth...*

This does present a number of textual difficulties. Some would change the word 'rich' for the 'wicked' – others wonder if there is not some prophecy here of the royal burial of Jesus. [There is a *motif* of **kingship** throughout the Johannine Passion.

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### The Triumph [vv. 10-12]

**Presentation:** the Servant is now to be rewarded for his heroic generosity, and this may have been introduced in one interpretation of v. 9: *a tomb with the rich*, although this is not accepted by all.

**v. 10:** *The Lord has been pleased to crush him with suffering. If he offers his life in atonement [asham ], he shall see heirs, he shall have a long life and through him what the Lord God wills, shall be done.*

**a.** This verse shows that the sufferings of the Servant have not been in vain. They cannot totally be explained by the hatred of his fellow human beings, but all of this must be read from the perspective of a divine plan, that has freely been accepted. The death of the Servant has had the effect of an expiatory sacrifice, which the Servant has offered of his own free will. **Asham** as is known, is a technical term from the 'P Tradent', and it means the sacrifice of reparation which is offered after a fault, which might even have been 'involuntary': *... this is how the priest is to perform the rite of atonement over the man, and he will be forgiven...* [cf. Lv 5:15].

**b.** Furthermore, this **asham** denotes in particular that sacrifice imposed on lepers whom the priests have discerned to have been delivered from their malady: ...

***there is a law to be applied to a leper on the day he is purified ...*** [Lv 14:1-32]. The Victim that is offered in substitution should be a lamb to be immolated: ***... Then he must take one of the lambs and offer it as a sacrifice of reparation ... if he is poor and cannot afford all this, he need only take one lamb, the one for the sacrifice of reparation ...*** [cf. vv. 12, 21].

c. These verses are sometimes interpreted as meaning the voluntary penal substitution.

**v. 11:** So many aspects of these verses are vague and mysterious, and this may even have been the knowing choice of the unknown author of these lines. There are various references to a posterity following after the Servant [cf. the preceding verse: ***... he shall see his heirs ...*** - and now here]: ***... His soul's anguish is over, he shall see the light and be content. By his sufferings shall My Servant justify many, taking their faults on himself ...***

a. The 'posterity' will evidently be 'spiritual'. The plan of God will prosper because of the Servant. Similar things have been said earlier with reference to Cyrus: ***...He will fulfill My whole purpose ...*** [44:28] - ***... I have spoken and summoned him, and prospered his plans ...*** [48:14, f.].

b. There are those who interpret 'light' as the Servant coming to life anew. He will be restored into full happiness.

c. As the words of God had introduced this Fourth Canticle [cf. Is 52:13-53:12] – now God speaks once more in praise of His Servant's 'service', that he has 'justified', served the multitudes. Some would translate the word 'sufferings' in v. 11 as justifying the multitudes, as 'doctrine', 'knowledge'. [cf. JB footnote].

**v.12:** ***...Hence, I will grant whole hordes for his tribute, he shall divide his spoils with the mighty, for surrendering himself to death and letting himself be taken for a sinner, while he was bearing our faults, those of many, and praying all the while for sinners...***

a. This final line of the Canticle continues the contrast between the glory that has come to the Servant after the terrible humiliation. The promise of the numerous 'spiritual progeny' continues here. The 'high and the mighty' will all be a part of the 'spoils' of the Servant – it seems to mean that the spiritual empire of the Servant will extend further than all the conquered territories of the greatest military achievements.

b. One more time the Prophet returns to the theme of the death and humiliations of the Servant: ***...he will pray all the while for sinners.*** This is the perpetual role of mediation by the eternal Servant of the Father.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Cf. Feuillet, *Ancien Testament ...* Paris: Gabalda 1975, o.c., pp. 132-138, *passim*.

## REFLECTIONS

### Introduction

[1] As is well known, there is a wide variety of attempts to interpret the identity of the 'Servant' described in these four Canticles:

- **Collective** Interpretation - all of Israel;
- **Selective** interpretation: an *elite* :
  - some pious minority, as the *anawim*, the 'remnant';
  - the order of **prophets**;
  - the order of **priests**.
- **Individual** interpretation:
  - historical:
    - distant past: Abraham – Moses – David;
    - immediate past: Jeremiah – some unknown martyr;
  - present: an auto-biographical presentation by the anonymous second Isaiah.
  - future: the Messiah.

A point in common with many of these opinions is that it would leave the four Canticles precisely where they are, in their context as found in the text.

[2] Others have tried to show that the four Canticles existed independently and have been somewhat artificially placed here as they are. Furthermore, there are difficulties for whatever interpretation one may choose. Some objections presented **against** considering the Collective Interpretation:

- Israel was never the *asham* for the rest of the nations [53:10];
- in what sense was Israel 'inspired' each morning? [50:4, ff.];
- what does it mean that Israel was led like a lamb to the slaughter-house – the 'innocence' of Israel was never a prophetic model [cf. 53:7].

a. The 'hero' of the canticles includes a number of traits:

- a Disciple of the Word of God;
- a Sage, Doctor of the Law;
- a Priest, offering the *asham*.

b. Many of the great scholars of Scripture in our modern times would study the Poems as separate units, as though they existed independently as entities and have been placed artificially where they are presently found [e.g., M. J. Lagrange, Vaccari, Van der Ploeg, OP, Steinmann, Feuillet].

c. Some authors have even maintained that if the four Canticles are taken out of their context in Second Isaiah and placed one after the other, there would appear a kind of prophetic document, which could be called The Book of the Servant

[e.g., J. Coppens]. This view holds that they are not the work of Second Isaiah, but rather the composition of some other anonymous Prophet and author who was familiar with Second Isaiah, re-read his message and gave the work a much more spiritual, missionary interpretation.

**d.** A. Robert<sup>252</sup> considers these four Hymns to have been taken as separately existing fragments, and then inserted here in a text, and have been used by Second Isaiah as a point of speculation. Their basic meaning, in this view, would be individualist and directly messianic.

**e.** For the sake of completeness, it has to be pointed out that there is also another lengthy list of interpreters who totally reject this individualist interpretation – and totally deny as ‘unproven’ that these four Canticles are not in the place where they originally were written. [Some names here would be: Kissane, Tournay, Bonnard].

**f.** In a course of this nature, a dispute among such experts cannot be resolved – however, as an operative choice, we will consider the following:

- the interpretation may indeed be individualist-messianic;
- the Poems may be considered as separate entities.

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## 1. Characteristics of the Servant:<sup>253</sup>

**a.** There is a rather lengthy series of traits that might be deduced from a careful reading of the Servant Poems, not unique to him:

- the Servant has been formed, made by the Lord God [49:5] – this has also been said of Israel throughout Second Isaiah [e.g., 43:1, 7, 21];
- the Servant has been called by the Lord [49:1] – as was Israel [cf. 41:8, f.; 43:1; 48:12] – and Cyrus [41:25; 45:3, f.; 48:15];
- the Servant was called from his Mother’s womb [49:1] - as was Israel [cf. 44:2; 46:3; 48:8];
- the Servant is one of the ‘elect’, chosen [42:1] – as is Israel [41:8, f.; 43:10, 20; 44:1, ff.; 45:4];
- the Lord God sustains the Servant [42:1] as He does Israel [41:10];
- the distant isles await the Servant of the Poems [42:3; 49:1], as also the action of Cyrus [41:5] and the liberation of Israel [48:20; 51:5; 52:10];
- the Servant of the Poems receives the homage of the kings [52:15]. As does Israel [49:2] and Cyrus [41:2; 45:1];

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<sup>252</sup> “Mediation”, in *DBS* V, col. 997-1020.

<sup>253</sup> cf. Feuillet, o.c., pp. 122-128, *passim*.

- the mouth of the Servant is a sword with the Lord's word, and He has the Servant in the shadow of His hand [49:2] – and the Lord has made similar promises to Israel as such [51:16];
- the Servant will have a posterity [53:10], and this same promise is made to Israel [44:3];
- the good pleasure of the Lord will work through the hands of the Servant of the Poems [53:10] – and something similar has been said of Cyrus [cf. 44:28; 48:14].

**b.** These many parallels would argue that the Servant of the Poems is a creature of the same author of the rest of the pages of Second Isaiah. Some have deduced from these parallels that even the Servant of Isaiah 53, where the personality of the Servant is most developed, should be identified with 'Israel', as such – or, at least with a part [the 'better' half] of the Chosen People. There is a **selective** interpretation of Israel [i.e., the *anawim*, the *Remnant* promised by the Prophets, or the entire Order of the Prophets – who might be considered innocent enough to suffer as an expiatory victim for the rest of humanity. The argument runs as follows:

**1.]** Humiliated and enslaved in exile, this group of just Israelites endured the particularly unjust treatment at the hands of their captors. These sufferings were put against the infidelities of the nations at large, as well as those of Israel. This *Remnant*, or group of the Pious of Israel, assumed the posture of the **innocent martyr** and patient intercessor. These people assumed in their comportment the attitude of victims offered as sacrifices of expiation. They assumed all the traits of the friends of God, so anxious to put themselves between the just wrath of God, and their own compatriots and all human beings. They were descendants of the 'true' Israel, the genuine servants: Abraham, Moses, Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezechiel. They thus fulfilled a liturgical tradition, offering themselves as 'sacrifice' – and they fulfilled **the prophetic tradition, continuing the line of those whose lives were totally shaped by the Word of God**. Despite the assaults of evil, they remained good – and despite the unrelenting hatred, they withstood it all out of love for humanity, so that God's justice and goodness was channelled through them.

**2.]** The usual response to this, at least by those who maintain the individual interpretation, the Messianic Servant, as presented especially by Is 53 – is that it seems to be a question of some individual, who will come in the future.

## **2. The 'Servant, *par excellence***

**a.** The Servant is anonymous: even though the word 'Servant' does appear with much frequency – both within the Poems and outside them, all through Second Isaiah, when it is not in reference to the Suffering Servant of the Poems, often the Servant is clearly identified with 'Israel' [cf. 41: 8, f.; 42:19; 43:10; 44:1,2, 21; 45:4; 48:20]. Furthermore, in every case except one [49:3, when the 'servant' is identified with 'Israel'], the Servant of the Canticles remains anonymous.

**b.** The contrast between the Servant of the poems and Israel: all throughout, the nation 'Israel' is shown to be indocile, sinful, constantly reprimanded by the Prophets. Because of the faults of the people, the exile was indeed a merited punishment [40:2; 43:24,f.; 43:25-28]. Israel is rather a 'blind' servant, and 'deaf' to the Lord [cf. 41:18.ff.].

**1.]** The Servant of the Poems, on the other hand, notes to the great emphasis given not only to his election, but also to his merits. The Suffering Servant expresses an ideal of holiness, based on the various OT figures, such as Jeremiah, Job, the heroes of the Psalms. In the Servant, OT holiness seems to reach a peak, a supreme degree:

- heroic docility [50:4-6; 53:7];
- absolute innocence [53:4, f., 9];
- a martyr, whose life is offered as an expiatory sacrifice [53:10].

**2.]** Nowhere else in the OT is such a peak reached. This Suffering Servant is almost presented in contrast with Israel, who failed as the Lord's 'son', and 'servant.'

**c. The Mission of the Suffering Servant:** Israel as 'Servant' seems to offer a more 'passive service.' The nation is indeed the witness of the Lord God [43:12; 44:8], but this is primarily because of the gratuitous love of God, working through His Special Servant, Israel has been redeemed. Israel 'being delivered' [passively] is a stirring witness for non-believers of the wisdom and power of God, the endless extent of His 'sphere of interest.'

On the contrary, in the Poems the Servant has a most active Mission of Instruction: he has to struggle in order to accomplish it. In willingly sacrificing his life, he assures the ultimate success of the Plan of God. This is why in his very person, he is the Covenant of the People [cf. 42:6] and the Light of the Nations [42:6; 49:6].

**d. The Eschatological Perspective:** Second Isaiah envisages the material restoration in Palestine of the chosen nation. This restoration and return home will be the direct result of a political factor: the fall of Babylon [cf. 41:11, ff.; 42:13; 47, entire]. In passages treating of 'Israel as the Servant of God' there is hardly any concern shown for moral conversion and perfection for this **New Israel** [cf. 48:10; 54:13; 55:1-7]. The accent is placed much more on the Lord God's intervention which is going to work out salvation by pure grace and suddenly, as an expression of the divine glory and love [cf. 40:2; 43:22; 44:8, ff.]. This gratuity in liberation does offer one of the more beautiful universalist perspectives – yet, the universalism which is indeed evident, is only partially decentralized: Israel remains 'the hub' of the author's universe. The theme that runs throughout here is that the Lord will give to Cyrus many other nations as a ransom for the damage he will suffer for the loss of the Chosen People [cf. 43:3, ff.]. All the ancient enemies of Israel are 'thrown in' to make up for the compensation for Cyrus, and these will have to serve him humbly [cf. 45:14; 49:22, f.; 55:5].



e. Then, whenever it is a question of the Servant in the Poems, the emphasis is clearly shifted from the political to the **spiritual** realm:

1.] The Servant comes across as a **messianic personality** – his ‘human’ feature is scarce indeed: he will only encounter hostility from his ‘own’ [cf. 53:2]. **His mission is basically one of religious instruction, of encouragement, and exhortation to conversion** [cf. 42:3, 7; 50:4]. Sin has not been effaced, contrary to what is stated in Is 40:2. even though there are some passages of Second Isaiah like this one that would indicate that the ‘time of captivity’ is over, these must be read in the light of the global content of these pages. The Lord has asked a heavy price, the spontaneous sacrifice of a victim of expiation. It is true that the Servant will enter a glorious phase of his own life, and still be ‘called’ upon to intercede for sinners [cf. 53:12].

2.] His Mission to the nations is intimately bound to suffering. He preaches that all peoples will come to the religion in the God of Israel, that they will have faith in the Lord God [cf. 42:4]. In his very person, he is the Covenant and the Light of the nations [cf. 42:6; 49:6]. Kings and nations will be overwhelmed with wonder before the mystery of suffering and glory [52:14, f.]. His spiritual empire, implicitly compared to that of Cyrus, has been acquired by expiatory sufferings [53:10-12]. In the vocation of the Servant, it is not the nationalist glory of Israel that is under discussion, but much more the religious truth, the Reign of God, victory over sin. The universalist victory that the Servant will achieve will not win any special favor for Israel among the nations: the Servant’s victory is totally decentralized, it is **victory over sin**.

3.] It really takes a stretch of the imagination [at least in the view of some interpreters!] to read the sufferings of Is 53 as referring to the difficult struggle of Israel in Exile. In the prophecies that came just before Second Isaiah – and, in particular, Ezekiel [c. 34] – the image of the flock that had wandered off and had become lost – is applied to the Chosen People, captive in Babylon. Perhaps offering an implicit explanation to a time when a good number of Israelites had come back to the Promised Land, without experiencing any religious fervor, or sense of having been spiritually delivered, Is 53 also communicates the idea that it is not so much the geographical distance from their native soil that is the real Exile. What is more grave, is the **spiritual dispersion**, far from the Lord, which has been provoked by sin. It is solely this dispersion that the Servant has been charged to redress, by the offering of his life – he is charged with the spiritual deliverance of his own, and the peoples of the world – from sin: ***... we had gone astray like sheep, each tending his own way, and the Lord God burdened him with the sins of all of us ...*** [53:6].

4.] The four points of view considered here [that the Servant is ‘anonymous, with personal conduct much different from that of ‘Israel’, with an active mission of instruction, struggle – and that his mission is eschatological] it is clearly seen that their perspectives naturally shed light on each other. They reinforce one another, and all converge toward this same perspective:

- on the one hand, the deliverance of Israel which, once established in Palestine, will be the center of the world;
- and, on the other, the extension of the Covenant to the entire world, and the totally spiritual redemption of Israel and the world, through the sufferings of one person, the 'Servant', *par excellence*.

**5.]** This inter-connection and evident contrast between the two 'servants' [the '**political**' one, Israel – and the anonymous **spiritual** 'Servant'] leads to the conclusion among some interpreters that the Spiritual Servant Canticles are not merely added on, or appended to the writings of Second Isaiah. We might compare the Servant Canticles, in some way, to the Gospels: which add a 'fuller' sense to the material promises of the earlier prophets. Furthermore, the Gospels themselves will add even more to the Servant Canticles, applying them to Christ. In relation to Second Isaiah, the Four Servant Poems do represent a transcendence. While there is continuity between them, there is clearly a higher level in the four Hymns. This contrast between the two understandings of 'Servant' might not as clearly be seen by interpreters who would merely fuse the two.

**6.]** Such a doctrinal evolution could indeed be the work of one and the same author. However, such an eventuality would involve a marked change in one's thinking and expression, which ordinarily does not occur. It would imply **a totally new religious orientation**. So, a view that is offered by those who interpret the 'Servant' of the Poems to be different than the Servant of the rest of Second Isaiah is the following:

**a.]** Seeing clearly that the return of the exiles from Babylon was not being accompanied by the political-religious restoration announced by Second Isaiah, and noting the permanence of sin and infidelity of Israel in its mission, a writer – later than Second Isaiah, made use of his work, presents the person and the work of the Messiah under a new twist.

**b.]** This would mean another writer, who 'sees far in the distance' a humble descendant of David and the prophetic movement, one who synthesises in his own person and doctrine the prophetic doctrine [especially that of Jr] – and extends to all peoples the great benefits of the New Covenant. This anonymous descendant of Second Isaiah sees the future Servant as **an expiatory victim** for all of Israel and for the entire world – and represents him as establishing a spiritual empire as vast as that of recent times won by Cyrus [and perhaps fulfilling the idealized kingdom of David]. There seem to be present in the servant thus pictured elements of the Priestly, Prophetic and Royal circles.

**7.]** In these Servant Poems, we find ourselves in the presence of a kind of a theology: bringing together the best of the earlier literary and theological insights. The Servant Poems are a kind of Synoptic Gospel of what went before – and a kind of 'revelation' of what is yet to come. Using the expression of authors who

preceded him [especially Second Isaiah], this enabled the author to present a marvelous synthesis and prophecy of the revealed Word<sup>254</sup>.

### 3. Further Reflections on the Internal Coherence of the Four Canticles<sup>255</sup>:

a. It is fairly well accepted by a large number of commentators that the first two Poems [42:1-17; 49:1-6] – even though they pertain to different sections of Second Isaiah's work, inspired by differing historical circumstances, have in mind the same person. The texts speak of **one Chosen by God**, who is called to **bring the Light to the Gentiles**, and the **true religion**, and to **extend the divine action of salvation** to the far extremities of the world.

b. The Third Canticle [50:4-7], however, has been somewhat contested: there are at least two principal difficulties noted between this Third Hymn and the first two:

- in 40:4-9 the Servant is badly treated;
- there is hardly any mention of his universal mission.

1.] These two difficulties, though, are hardly convincing. There is some intimation in the first two poems [cf. 42:4; 49:4] that the Mission of the Servant will be difficult. The sufferings of the Servant in the Third Poem are but a more explicit progression in relation to the previous announcements concerning him. There is also the implication that the harsh treatment that the Servant endures – much like that inflicted earlier on Jeremiah – is due to the **universalist** manner in which the Servant sees his Mission. The sufferings that came to him come mostly from his own compatriots. In other words, the universalist mission of the servant is at least 'implied', even though not explicitly expressed.

2.] Furthermore, there is data in this Third Canticle that would identify the Servant of 50:4-7 with the first two Servant Poems. There is at least one analogy between sustaining the 'wearied' [the discouraged] and not crushing the reed, or stifling the flickering flame. He is a Servant who does not cry out, or come with any fanfare.

3.] While it is true that 49:2 does remind one of the Vocation of Jeremiah [cf. 1:5] – so, too does 50:4-7 call to mind the Confession of Jeremiah [cf. cc. 11-20]. In the Third Poem of the Servant, the reader is treated to some personal comments on the part of the Servant. However, the Servant Canticles do manifest a step forward – in that there is no room in the Servant's revelations for discouragement or personal vindication – which are often expressed by Jeremiah [cf. Jr 11:18, ff.; 12:3; 15:10, ff., 16-18; 20:7-12, 14-18].

<sup>254</sup> For this part, cf. Feuillet, *Ancien Testament ...*, o.c., Paris: Gabalda 1975, pp. 120-129, *passim*.

<sup>255</sup> cf. Feuillet, o.c., pp. 138-132, *passim*.

**c.** Perhaps there is even greater difficulty trying to tie in the final Canticle [Is 52:13-53:12] with the previous three Servant Canticles: the usual difficulties that have been considered are the following:

- in the first three Poems, we are presented with a Servant full of strength, who has been called to lead Israel back out of Exile – whereas in the Fourth Canticle, we see a Servant who suffers awesomely in silence. As compensation for his **martyrdom**, he will become the **teacher** of King and of peoples;

- from the point of view of form, the much more developed Fourth Canticle uses a great number of words that are not found anywhere else in all of Second Isaiah;

- furthermore the Fourth Canticle offers more literary contacts with Third Isaiah, as the following verses might indicate:

- compare 53:6 & 56:11 – they all go their own way;

- compare 53:6 and 57:17 – like a rebel, he went the way of his own choice;

- compare 52:11 & 60:21 – the people will be ‘upright’, ‘just’.

**1.]** These arguments have been called *philological* and *ideological* - and have been addressed as follows:

**a.] Philological:** it should not be surprising that the Fourth Canticle offers a good number of new words in respect to the first three Canticles of the Servant, because it is treating of new aspects of the Servant’s person and life. Neither is it surprising that there is a literary connection, at least between the Fourth Canticle and Third Isaiah, because the historical situation behind some passages of Third Isaiah would be similar to that experienced by the author of the Fourth Canticle.

**b.] Ideological:** the Servant of the first three Canticles is presented as entrusted with restoring Israel politically – and maybe the Servant of the Fourth Canticle and his **Mission of Teaching** should be understood that through his **martyrdom**, he will find himself at the head of an empire as broad in its **spiritual dimensions**, as that of the well-known kings of the time, especially Cyrus. The realm of the Servant will be the greatest ever known.

**2.]** Furthermore, in addition to the intimate relationship between the first three Canticles and the Fourth, there might even be noted – as some do – a cycle of progressive prophecies that gradually develop and build on one another, thereby deepening the understanding of all of them. The Fourth Canticle has been called ‘the Crown’ of them all. It is even noted that the Third Canticle [50:4-7] would be incomplete unless the Fourth one concluded with the ultimate exaltation of the Servant.

**a.]** The stock that grows in wild arid ground already ties in the Servant with the Messiah of Psalm 110.

**b.]** Furthermore, Is 53 implicitly compares the martyred Servant to Jeremiah, who was led like a lamb to the slaughter-house, and who was

constantly threatened with being taken from 'the land of the living' [cf. Is 53:7, ff.; Jr 11:19]. Jeremiah already seems implied in the mention of the call of the Prophet even 'from his mother's womb' [cf. Is 49:1;50:4, ff.].

**d.** With all the research on these Canticles, considering them from almost every conceivable angle, it has also been asked whether in addition to these four Canticles, there might be other Servant-Poems to be found. The following passages have been suggested as possibilities:

- Is 42:19-25: the blinding of the People. This is rejected because it presents the People as blind and deaf to the Words of God, totally uncharacteristic of the Servant of the Poems.
- 48:14-16: here Cyrus is called the 'Beloved.' The finale of this passage is what draws attention: and now the Lord God, with His spirit, sends me. [But, this is controversial, and may be an addition]. Some see this as Second Isaiah himself, defending himself against the critics who may doubt his authority – as Paul would later defend himself as an apostle.
- 51:4-5: this does not seem to be a Servant-Canticle, as this is the Lord Himself who speaks.
- Is 51:16: **... I put My words into your mouth ... you are My People...!** It is true that this resembles the First Canticle, Is 49:2 – but, perhaps this is more in line with the over-all message of Second Isaiah, which joins **cosmological** and **soteriological** perspectives [cf. Is 44:24, 28; 45:12, f.; 48:13, f.].

**e.** Far more serious a possibility would be the well-known passage from Third Isaiah: **... The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for the Lord God has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to bind up hearts that are broken ...** Is 61:1-3 –ad some would add also vv. 4-11].

**1.]** Three principal arguments are used to sustain this passage as a possible 'Fifth Canticle' of the Suffering Servant:

- the great connection between Is 60-62, with Second Isaiah;
- the application which Jesus makes of this Is 61:1, f., to Himself in the Synagogue of Nazareth [cf. Mt 3:16 +; Lk 4:18, f.; 7:22];
- the fact that as the Servant of the Lord, the Person considered here in Is 61:1-3 is endowed with the Spirit of God and charged with announcing the Good News of Salvation.

**2.]** These can be considered one by one:

**a.]** This first argument which is suggested by many interpreters does not seem very strong. Is 60-62 do offer numerous stylistic and doctrinal connections with Second Isaiah. But this can be explained in that Third Isaiah

is simply writing in the period subsequent to Second Isaiah, when the themes that had been foreseen had by now taken their course.

**b.]** The application that Jesus makes of these lines of Is 61:1, ff., to Himself would not necessarily make of this passage a Servant-Canticle. The application is made by Jesus in the fuller typical sense [as He also applies, or cites Ps22; 23]. The salvation promised in Is 61:1, ff., of itself does have a messianic ring – but this does necessarily make it a ‘Servant-Canticle.’

**c.]** The person speaking in Is 61:1, ff., may be the unknown author himself. This Prophet is not the Mediator of Salvation, nor does he of necessity speak of the universal Mission, that is purely spiritual – as the Servant insists so often.

**f.** A further phenomenon is noted concerning the four Canticles: they could be removed from Second Isaiah without affecting his message. Considered separately, they would not of necessity be identified as pertaining to Second Isaiah. This has led some interpreters to theorize that the four Servant Canticles were probably written after the completion of Second Isaiah’s work, and then later inserted into his work. The hard question with this theory then remains: how is it that these Hymns came to be written? {Eaton sees them as inserted here where we now find them}. On very close analysis, their sublime content would not find them properly inserted here, at least in the minds of some commentators.

**g.** Along with the mysteries of divine revelation, Sacred Scripture does not answer the many ‘natural’ mysteries that its study uncovers. The French scholar, A. Robert, has theorized thus: some unknown Scribe discovered these anonymous Canticles. He was immediately struck by their startling and revolutionary character. To render them more acceptable, he inserted them within the body of literature that was already accepted.

**h.** This theory would explain the rather sudden irruption of these words: **...You are My Servant, Israel ...** found in the middle of the Third Canticle [49:3], which is in open contradiction with the rest of the text. But, all of this is merely hypothetical – and the reflections on these lines are almost endless.<sup>256</sup>

#### 4. The Servant’s Lessons:<sup>257</sup>

**a.** In Pascal’s view the greatest of the proofs for Jesus Christ are the prophecies – and, he continues, this is why the event that fulfills them is a miracle which has subsisted from the very birth of the Church. If this is so, then, these four Canticles of the Servant are among the greatest proofs for Jesus Christ – for perhaps in no other prophecy is the Christ of the Gospels so clearly predicted. There is offered a real insight here into His doctrine and mission.

**b.** From this very fact that the hero of these canticles is called a **Servant**, this means that he pertains to that category of the great ‘Chosen’ figures, the ‘Elect’,

<sup>256</sup> cf. Feuillet, o.c., pp. 138-142, *passim*.

<sup>257</sup> o.c., pp. 164-167, *passim*.

those called for a truly exceptional service. The following is a partial list of the great 'Servants' of the OT:

- the Patriarchs
- Moses
- the saints of Yahwism
- certain kings
- the Prophets
- the 'predestined'

Therefore, the title 'Servant' alone does not clearly indicate what the Mission entrusted to him would be: however, the accumulation of indications that is garnered from a reflection on his prerogatives gradually indicate that this is a unique 'Servant', with a sublime dignity [cf. 42:1, 6; 49:1, 50]. What seems to stand out from the overall grading of the Four Canticles is that the destiny of this privileged individual is hidden in the mysteries of God and that humanity will be called to accept the mission and the teaching of this servant, no matter how disconcerting this might be.

c. There is no doubt that the Servant will manifest some **royal** attributes. The author of the Canticles sees in the Servant a descendant of the royal line of David – this is alluded to in the course of comparing him to a 'stock of **Jesse**'; [cf. Is 11:2; 42:1; cf. also Is 11:1, 10; 53:2]. The servant, then, seems to be the Davidic Messiah. This privilege which bestows on his person the seal of messianic authenticity will bring out all the more the awesome depths of the **abasement** to which he will be brought.

1.] The author does not place any hope in any political restoration of the Davidic line as such. Throughout the Canticles he shows that the Servant has little or no interest in the political sphere. In connection with Is 61:1, ff. [the Mission of the Prophet to the poor, the broken-hearted] – the Suffering Servant will not restore the People of Israel in any political manner. The 'gathering of Jacob, Israel' to the Lord has overtones of leading them spiritually back to the Lord God. The emphasis is more clearly on the conversion of minds and hearts [cf. 49:50].

2.] The Lord does elevate the Servant by stating that it is not for him to be 'Servant' – he is called 'to restore the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the survivors of Israel' [Is 49:6]. Political restoration would be below the dignity of this Servant. It is the '**spiritual dispersion**' [cf. 53:6] that concerns the Lord. The Servant will lead Israel back to true faith and practice. A political role cannot be reconciled with the **spiritual mission** of the Servant. He is to be the **doctor [Prophet] of the nations** and the **expiatory victim [Priest]** for sinful humanity.

d. So, the idea of a **Royal Servant** can be well understood when it is seen as unfolding on the superior level of spiritual realities. The Servant is presented indeed as the **master of the world**. His religious message and his teaching [**torah**] will be heard to 'the far boundaries of the world' [cf. 42:4]. His vocation is concerned with '**the furthest peoples in the universe**' [49:1]. Kings themselves, and the peoples subject to them, will come to render homage to him and to the mystery he stands for [52:15].

e. Some offer the following explanation of the rather enigmatic expression: **... they gave him a tomb ... with the rich...** [53:9] – to mean:

- *he shall divide the spoil with the mighty...* [53:12];
- *He will have whole hordes for his tribute ...*

The 'great and the mighty' in the ancient orient seem to have been the famous conquerors, such as Cyrus – and the realm of the Servant is often implicitly compared with 45:1, , 3, f., 13; 48:15. The 'Servant' will be taken by the hand, like the specially chosen [cf. Ho 11:1, ff.] – he is predestined for the conquest of the whole world. In the spiritual order, the Servant will indeed be a new Cyrus – David – conquering the world and liberating those in captivity to sin.

f. This is about the only royalty that can be attributed to the Servant. All that pertains to the temporal dynasty of history is his Davidic dynasty. His **mediating service** has no other resemblance to the monarchies of history. The **Servant-King** will conquer his empire by the **total sacrifice of himself** – once this new order is established, the Servant Canticles do not tell us much about his specific activities – other than his over-all mission of his dominion intended by God to extend over the hearts of all humanity.

g. Two other traits that interpreters see in the light also of the NT, are the following:

1.] **Eschatological**: his basic mission seems to be one of **teaching** [Prophet] [cf. 49:2; 50:4]. He is the Light of the Nations [cf. 42:6]: *... the learned will shine as brightly as the vault of heaven, and those who have instructed many in virtue, as bright as stars for all eternity ...* [cf. Dn 12:2]. The Servant will fulfill so many of the characteristics lived and expressed by Jeremiah here. He has no need to leave Palestine for his world-wide mission.

a.] At times, he resembles more the **Sages [Prophets]**, the great **Wisdom Teachers** of the contemplative times of Israel. In contrast, with the aggressive **Prophets**, who so often were called to speak with vehemence in the public squares, this servant will not cry out, or shout aloud, nor does he make his voice heard in the streets [cf. 42:2]. Rather, much more like the **Sages**, he dispenses his teaching with gentle compassion for the disinherited:... *He does not break the crushed reed, nor quench the wavering flame ...* [43:3].

b.] His is a universalist doctrine: he will 'justify', i.e., serve the many, whole hordes [53:11] - and universalism is a characteristic of the Sages. Other sapiential traits are found: he will 'prosper', he will have a lengthy prosperity, and this will prolong his days, and the Plan of the Lord God will prosper in his hands [cf. 52:3; 53:10].

2.] **Christological**: some interpreters see an 'outline' for the life of Christ here, in the unfolding of the Four Canticles: the grand phases and stages of Jesus' life, use as their model these four Servant Hymns, in accord with this view:

a.] The Lord God Himself presents His Servant: Baptism in the Jordan and the transfiguration, with the personal 'presentation' by the Father.



**b.]** The Second Canticle develops somewhat the Servant's vocation: there is an intimation of future suffering, as Jesus first predicted His Passion, when He suffered a 'check' at Caesarea Philippi.

**c.]** The Third Canticle is the fullest and easiest to apply to Christ.

**5. Sources for the Doctrine of the Servant Canticles:** there are many possible theories that might be considered, both outside the Bible, as well as within:

**a.** Extra-Biblical: at this time, the world was witnessing the passing of the balance of power from Babylon to Persia: either one of these literatures might have influenced the writer of these Servant-Canticles:

**1.] Babylonian Literature:** there are several possibilities here:

**a.] The Babylonian Muth of TAMUZ:** Israel had lived in captivity in Babylon for several generations [70 years?]. The Babylonians worshiped a god of vegetation, called *TAMMUZ-DUMUZI*. In Babylon, as in other countries [a possible parallel in Greece, with the worship of Adonis] – the disappearance of vegetation in winter, and its reappearance in the spring – were represented in a kind of 'divine drama': the god of vegetation was believed to descend into the lower regions ['inferior/ infernal'] - in the spring-time, the god was 'sprung' [liberated]. Worship was rendered to the god by mourning his 'death', and then by celebrating his return to life. The theory then developed that Is 53 was influenced by this myth:

- either that the 'Servant' was simply identified with *TAMUZ*;

- or, at least, that the Prophet described the Passion of the Servant with terms borrowed, in part, from the Lamentations of the worship of *TAMMUZ*. [A number of German scholars have defended this view].

**RESPONSE:** **this thesis seems hardly likely**: the fact that in Is 53:2, the Servant is indeed compared to a 'root', still does not lend any support for this interesting theory. The Servant of the Canticles accomplishes a work of **Expiation**, whereas there is no such parallel in the Babylonian myth. The Servant does indeed die and resurrect - whereas the 'death and resurrection' of *TAMMUZ* are only metaphorical. The Bible does mention this Babylonian ritual once and does so to ridicule and reject it: ... ***He took me next to the entrance of the north-gate of the temple of the Lord where women were sitting, weeping for TAMMUZ. He said: 'Son of Man, do you see that? You will see even filthier things than that...!' [cf. Ezk 8:14, ff.]***

**b.] A Babylonian New Year Ritual:** another thesis proposed by the German Catholic scholar, L. Durr, would **fuse is 53 with the New Year Festival**. During the festival for the new year, which lasted for several days, the principal sanctuary of Babylon [the Temple, Esagil] would be purified by a priest. When this was accomplished, the king would descend into the temple. There, the High Priest would take from him the glorious signs of his rank, would strike him on the cheek, pull his ears and beard, have him kneel down and offer a prayer **in this ritual humiliation**

which would proclaim his innocence. The priest would then have the king promise to carry out his duties faithfully after this ritual humiliation – he would then re-vest the king in his garments of splendor, and the king would go out from the Temple ‘re-enthroned.’ This was all accomplished with an accompanying expiatory sacrifice.

RESPONSE: as appealing as this view is to some, it must be approached with great caution. It would be hard to accept from the fact that the Israelites would have taken over from the Babylonians, their great enemies, the idea of an expiatory role for the messianic sovereign. Furthermore, the purely ritual expiation of the king was not a ‘**real**’ **expiation** – as the very painful treatment of the Servant of the Canticles [cf. Is 53] is presented as a very real suffering. This goes far beyond any ritual tugging of the beard. It is almost *a priori* impossible to imagine that Israel would have accepted such a ritual farce as inspiration for such a basic trait of the Messiah.

**2.] Persian Influence: the ‘Cyrus Canticles’:** since Second Isaiah presents Cyrus as the instrument from the Lord for the realization of the eschatological hopes of Israel, the theory developed that the Servant Poems are nothing more than a kind of transposition from what might be called ‘the Canticles honoring Cyrus’, to the Servant Poems. the following texts are considered in this light: Is 41:2, f., 25, f.; 44:28; 45:1-6, 13; 48:14, ff.]. The Servant-Canticles would be nothing more than a correction brought to bear on the Cyrus Oracles. This theory states that the unknown author simply spiritualized the role of Cyrus and applied it to the Servant.

RESPONSE: there is something valid in this position. Certain formulae are used for Cyrus, and then later applied to the Servant:

- both have been called by the Lord God personally [cf. 41:25; 45: 3, f.; 48:15: Cyrus – 49:1 for the Servant];
- both accomplish the good pleasure of the Lord [Cyrus: 44:28; 49:14 – the Servant: 53:10].
- However, there are also some real contrasts to be noted:
- Is 53 seems to say that the Servant will be placed at the head of a spiritual empire – comparable, and even greater than the political reign of Cyrus;
- the Servant is presented as ‘meek and humble’, gentle - whereas Cyrus will win his victories violently, through war: ... **he will trample the satraps like mortar, like a potter treading clay ...** [41:25];
- some have advanced the thesis that the whole purpose of the First Servant-Canticle is to contrast him with Cyrus: ... **he does not cry out ... he does not crush the broken reed, or quench the wavering flame ...** [42:2].

Therefore, it is hardly acceptable to think of Cyrus as a ‘Messiah-Savior.’ The Lord simply has made use of Cyrus without his even knowing it. The fact that Cyrus is called ‘**the christ**’, the anointed – does not mean that Cyrus was dedicated to the Lord God of Israel, or that he is alligned through this title with the Savior Who is coming.

Cyrus' role is a military one, that he will deliver the Israelites from captivity – and that this is simply a prelude to the conversion of the nations.

**b. An a priori Opinion:** some Catholic interpreters side-step entirely this whole discussion on the possible sources of the Servant-Canticles by stating: they are all divinely revealed, and this is sufficient for any discussion regarding 'sources': they all originate with God. While the infinite wisdom of God is indeed the ultimate source of all of Scripture, it is incumbent on the student of tradition to delve even more deeply in the effort to discover developments that God Himself brings to bear on earlier revelation.

**c. Biblical Sources:** there are those who would make the following connections of earlier sources from Sacred Scripture:

**1.] Psalms of Sickness:** this form of Canticle is found in ancient Babylon, as well as in Sacred Scripture [cf. Pss 6; 13; 28; 31; 39; 61; 69; 70; 88; 102; 109]. Some authors would like Is 53 and Ps 88. In a certain number of these Psalms, the biblical authors have used hyperbolic expressions: they present the sick person as already 'dead', already laid out in his tomb, literally engulfed by a series of misfortunes. [In Babylonian literature, there has been found a composition that exalts a 'Just Person who suffers' – the tomb has already been prepared- guests are already arriving for the funeral repast. At this juncture, MARDUK intervenes: and the happy beneficiary of this help from the god tells his story of woe, and how he was 'brought back from the precipice of death.'

**RESPONSE:** Is 53 seems to differ profoundly from these possible parallels. In the format of the 'Psalms of Sickness', the interested parties themselves are telling the story of their ordeal, their death', their 'burial', and then their glorious 'return' to this life. The whole tenor of these Psalms is clearly hyperbolic and it is not always easy to discern just what has happened. In Is 53, the true beneficiary is the 'hordes': 'the people of the whole universe', all of sinful humanity. The sufferings, death and exaltation of the 'Servant' are in no way hyperbolic.

**2.] The Whole Prophetic Movement:** with special emphasis on outstanding figures from it: it seems more fully accepted to think of the sources of the Servant-Canticles to be found among the writings of the outstanding Prophets. One could profitably have recourse to the books, the lives and experiences of the Prophets themselves. Coming near the end of the prophetic movement, the author of the Servant Canticles could indeed have benefitted from this rich source of spiritual tradition in ancient Israel.

Very often theologians are satisfied to note that the OT sacrifices served as 'a **distant preparation** for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ', which is true. However, between these OT offerings of animals and the death of Jesus, offering Himself – there intervenes the great figure of Is 53. It seems that Is 53 is the result of reflection of the Prophetic Movement, and also a prophecy of the Messiah who was to come.

**a.] Great Mediators of Scripture:**<sup>258</sup> the Prophets were great mediators of divine revelation, instruments employed by God to speak to humanity. Furthermore, they were great intercessors. It would be excessive to think of the role of priests in the OT to be merely ceremonial in the OT.<sup>259</sup> Nonetheless, Scripture does not say much about priestly prayer [excepting, perhaps, blessings – cf. Nb 6:22, ff.].

On the contrary, Scripture seems far more abundant in describing the mediation of prayer being exercised by the **Prophets**. In these instances, it does not seem to have been a question of blessings. So often, prophetic prayer developed so spontaneously in the various situations in which these prophets were immersed. They give much evidence of a burning love for God, and for their own People, for whom they felt spiritually responsible. Because of the holiness of these prophets, and their intimacy with God, the People had great confidence in their praying intervention, and regularly had recourse to them.

**b.] Various Examples:** there is much evidence of the great Prophets in their role of intercessors:

- Samuel [cf. 1 S 7:8, ff; 12:19-23; 15:11];
- Elijah [cf. 1 K 17:20, ff.];
- Eliseus [cf. 2 K 4:33; 6:17];
- Amos [7:1-6];
- Hoseah [14"2-4];
- Isaiah [37"14].

The great heroes of the OT not rarely are compared to the Prpohets, at least in their role as intercessor:

- Abraham: is considered to be a Prophet, and he is said to be able to intercede in your behalf for your life [cf. Gn 20:7]; he did intercede in a moving way in behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah [cf. Gn 18:22].

- Job: is presented as offering intercession [42:8]: his 'friends' had offered a sacrifice to obtain his pardon, but it is thanks to the prayers of Job himself – "the Servant of Yahweh' - that they are not treated as their folly had merited: sacrifice alone was not enough for them to re-enter into the graces of God [cf. 1 S 3:14; 7:9; 15:22].

- the Servant offers an expiatory sacrifice accompanied always by an intercession: '**...praying all the while for sinners ...** [Is 53:12].

<sup>258</sup> cf. A. Robert, "Mediation", in: *DBS*, col. 1008.

<sup>259</sup> Cf. A. Cody, *A History of the OT Priesthood*. Analecta Biblica 35. Rome: Biblicum 1969.

The following are some of the outstanding 'prophets' whose example seems the more to have inspired the Suffering Servant:

**1.] Moses:** in the minds of many interpreters [with the notable exception, perhaps, of M.Noth], Moses is the greatest OT personality, a kind of 'super-prophet'. In the matter of intercession, he represents a high point which is never really surpassed. The manner in which Moses is sometimes described, particularly as regards his intercession, the expressions seem to date from the time of the prophets who came much after Moses.

**a.]** Moses is, first of all, the great Mediator of Revelation. But, he is also a Mediator by intercession. The 'J' Document, in particular, often mentions the prayerful intercession of Moses for the obtaining of the salvation of the people [cf. Ex 8: 4, 8, 24-27; 9:28, f., 33; 33:12-17; Nb 11:2].

**b.]** Furthermore, the 'E' Tradent offers a rather striking picture of the power of Moses' intercession [cf. Ex 17:11-13]. The Israelites win the battle against the Amalekites when Moses holds his hands in the form of intercession, but they lose when Moses' arms drop. Ezechiel will use this example of Moses when he criticizes the false prophets: ***... You have never ventured into the breach; you have never bothered to fortify the House of Israel, to hold fast in battle on the day of Yahweh ...*** [Ezk 13:5]. This gesture on the part of Moses in behalf of his people is also recalled by the Historical Psalmist: ***... The Lord talked of putting an end to the people, and would have done it, if Moses, His Chosen, had not stood in the breach, confronting him and deflecting His destructive anger ...*** [cf. Ps 106:23, ff.].

**c.]** Moses prayed for his people and offered himself in the event that God did not feel He could pardon the people: ***... But Moses pleaded with his Lord God ... remember Your promise ... so the Lord God relented and did not bring on His people the disaster He had threatened... [Ex 32:11-14]. ... If You cannot forgive this sin of theirs... then blot me out from the Book that You have written... [Ex 32:32].***

**d.]** The 'D' Tradent also places before us the image of Moses, the Intercessor:

***... then, I fell prostrate before the Lord God; as before, I passed 40 days and 40 nights, eating no bread and drinking no water... and once more the Lord God heard my prayer .. [Dt 9:18, ff.].***

***... And I will raise up a prophet like yourself, the Lord says to Moses, a prophet for them from their own brothers; I will put My words into his mouth, and he shall tell them all I command him... [Dd 18:18 +]***<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> JB Note: the prophetic office is ascribed to Moses by the Lord God at the time of the manifestation at Horeb [cf. Ex 20:19-21; Dt 5:23-28]. In the NT, St. Peter [Ac 3:22-26] and St. Stephen [cf. Ac 7:37] refer to this text.

**2.] Jeremiah:** represents a decisive turn in the prophetic movement: this has been defined [by Van Rad] as the irruption of the prophetic tasks into the personal life of the individual. This does not mean that this phenomenon was totally new with Jeremiah: already Elijah, Amos and Hoseah had suffered terribly under the heavy mission that had been entrusted to them.

With Jeremiah, there is a much more poignant drama which unfolds: this Prophet is totally rejected by the people he loved, and, at least in his view, by the God he tried to serve. He forthrightly condemned this People – and yet, he was the Prophet full of compassion who did all he could to hold back the divine judgment from them. He suffered cruelly in the thought of the evil People and were threatening his land [cf. Jr 4:19-21; 8:18-23; 14:7-9, 19:22; 15:16-19; 32:16-25; 42:2-4]. As ‘Prophet’, Jeremiah staunchly defends God - but as a ‘human being’ he pleads and prays for his people. Jeremiah, then, does offer something of a model for the lived and experienced ideal of salvation, so strongly expressed by Is 53, where the Servant ‘stands in the breach’ between the lord God and sinful humanity.

**3.] Ezekiel:** in a totally different manner, Ezk also enters most personally into his mission – and is something of a prelude to the Servant Poems. Ezk sees himself as being called to give his entire life to the service of his ministry [cf. Exk 11:1, ff.]. Perhaps with Moses in mind, Ezk makes this criticism of the ‘false prophets’: ... ***You have never ventured into the breach; you have never bothered to fortify the House of Israel, to hold fast in battle on the day of the Lord ...*** [cf. Ezk 13:5]. This language seems to imply the Prayer of Intercession.

Ezekiel also offers some of the symbolism in his gestures that he was invited to enact: ... ***Lie down on your left side and take the sin of the House of Israel on yourself ... And at the end of these days, you are to lie down again on your right side and bear the sin of the House of Judah ...*** [cf. Ezk 44:4-8].

The Prophets had long performed symbolic actions, but in Ezk there is something new concerning them; the Prophet is being asked to take upon himself the faults of his people. The sins of Israel have deep repercussions in the life of Ezk – he suffers from them as though he had been responsible, while remaining innocent. There is here another step forward toward that vicarious suffering developed throughout Is 53.

**4.] The Servant: a Living Synthesis of the two-fold Mediation: Prophetic and Priestly:**

- it is as Prophet that the Servant intercedes for sinners;
- it is as Priest that he bears the faults of Israel. It is this second aspect that has drawn some attention in recent times.<sup>261</sup>

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<sup>261</sup> Cf. A. Feuillet, *The Priesthood of Jesus Christ and His Ministers*. New York: Doubleday 1975.

**a.]** The expression: **to bear the faults, sins of someone** - [or, its equivalent] appears about 35 times in the OT – its meaning can be ascribed as follows: there are 8 passages where the expression does not pertain either to the 'P' Tradent, nor to Ezechiel: in all these cases, it means rather blandly: **to pardon** someone [cf. Ex 34:7; Nb 14:18; Is 33:24; Ho 14:3; Mi 7:18; Ps 32:5; 75:3] – there is some difficulty with Gn 4:13, where Cain believes that his fault is too great to be pardoned.

**b.]** In the other 27 uses of this expression, 19 pertain to the 'P' Tradent, and 9 to Ezechiel – and they are all situated in a Priestly context. It becomes a technical phrase and means: **one responsible for the sanctuary**, or the priesthood [cf. Nb 18: 1, 23]. It can also mean **one who has offended cultic regulations** [cf. Ex 28:43; Lv 5:1, 17; 7:18; 16:16; Nb 5:31; 30:16; Ezk 44:10, 12].

**c.]** Lastly, it can also mean one **who really bears the sins of others** [cf. Lv 16:17, 22; Ex 28:38; Ezk 4:4-6].

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### **Summary**

When the text speaks of the Servant ***bearing the sins of others***, this seems to imply **priestly language**, coming to the Servant through Ezechiel. The 'Servant' does not come into some **ritual solidarity** with sinful humanity. He unites his personal sacrifice with his prayer of intercession. It is the prophetic tradition that has brought this about, especially Jeremiah and Ezechiel. <sup>262</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Cf. A. Feuillet, *Ancien Testament*, Paris: Gabalda 1975, pp. 171-179, *passim*.

[H] ... *All my being* ...

## [I] The Kenosis of Christ]

**“In Your Minds, You Must be the Same as Christ Jesus” (JB)**

**“Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus”  
(RSV = “Your attitude must be that of Christ” NAB) (Ph 2:5)**

The Greek word here means that one should be united, with a common purpose, with a common mind (PHRONEIN). In v. 2 of this chapter of Ph 2, the verb suggests that agreement should be realized on some fixed point, or well determined rule. In v. 5, it is Christ Himself Who is suggested as the basis of interior unity and agreement.

This v. 5 introduces Paul’s famous Christological hymn for the “glory” of God and the KENOSIS of Christ.

### 1. Philological and Exegetical Analysis:

a. The simplest understanding of this word is to see it as Connecting what went before: “...let everybody be self-effacing...always consider the other person better than yourself...” Hence, we have here a kind of recapitulation of the various exhortations given in these verses 2-4. The appeal that Paul seems to be making is that the Philippians, and all Christians, should assume the same attitude, judgment as Christ Jesus.

b. The verb (PHRONEIN) means a profound sentiment of an individual, the central motivating disposition of a human being. It implies a way of thinking and feeling that would be in harmony with some principle – or, in this case, with Christ.

c. Some exegetes, however, maintain that Christ is so far beyond human imitation that the verb would rather have the meaning “aspire to” – “undertaking a kind of orientation toward” – to “tend toward”. In support of this “weaker” interpretation, authors would cite a number of NT passages (cf. E.g. Mk 8:33, par.; Rm 8:5; 11:20; Ph 3:15,19).

d. Many other exegetes, though, find this interpretation unsatisfactory – and they would insist on such meanings as: “to have a manner of feeling” – “an interior attitude” that would determine the conduct of a person, in his/her own personal feeling and acting. The Greek verb has an amplitude of meaning that would include both the act of the understanding as well as of willing.

e. There would further be added the nuance that expresses sincere interest and solicitude – implying a very clear impression of sympathy, of interest and vivid participation. The word means also a very practical tendency, a solicitous and constant



interest and concern. The verb does summon a specific attitude, and exhortation to carry it out.

f. The words “in your minds” may be understood at least in three separate ways:

1.] Individual: this would mean “in your heart”, or “within you”. This is the way the Latin Vulgate seems to have understood it. This would perhaps seem the most natural in the context because of the parallel with “in Christ”. The Greek Fathers, in particular, have understood it this way – and a strong argument for them is that Greek was their own native tongue. They almost “naturally” understood it in this way.

2.] Social: this would mean “between” you, reciprocally – one among the others. This would fit in well with the preceding – but, grammatically, for many, this would present some difficulties. Paul did use clearer expressions to express mutuality (cf. Rm 15:5; 1 Co 6:7). Nonetheless, many interpreters maintain that this “reciprocal” sense can stand.

3.] Ecclesial: this would mean that the sentiments of Christ Jesus should remain “among you”, in your community life. The entire context here seems “parenthetic” – while not all would accept this meaning, it would fit in with the general context.

g. The words “in Christ Jesus” also may be interpreted in different ways:

1.] Jesus as a physical person, an individual: this has been the traditional interpretation of the passage. This is the most simple and natural interpretation. Jesus here is the “paradigm”. In this sense, Jesus would be presented as a moral example.

2.] “Pertaining to Christ”: in this understanding, Christ is not seen so much as an individual person – as this expression is seen more as a “technical” phrase, with the meaning of living in a Christian way. This would be more in accord with the “watered down” version – in this sense, the Christian is merely being exhorted to tend toward Christ, to be orientated toward Him. For many interpreters (particularly the Protestant scholars), the “imitation of Christ”, or the “ethical interpretation” of this passage runs into serious difficulties. For these scholars, the hymn means that in their relationships with one another, believers should act in a Christian way: their calling orientates them toward being in Christ.

h. Beyond the verbal interpretation here, there are also “theological” differences of opinion on the meaning of one’s being “in Christ Jesus”:

1.] **Mystical sense:** this would mean that Paul is exhorting all to have the same sentiments as those that would be experienced in communion with Christ. This interpretation considers this Christological passage as a kind of Christ mysticism. This interpretation does leave itself open, in the view of

some interpreters, that the Philippians could have two attitudes: one in their mutual relationships, and the other as though incorporated into Christ. For Paul, though, there is only one attitude: in union with Christ Jesus.

2.] **Ecclesiological:** this would mean that the Philippians are being exhorted as befits members of the Church, i.e., as “in Christ Jesus.” The exhortation is that they conduct themselves in a manner corresponding to the fact that they are indeed members of the same (mystical) body of Christ. One difficulty with this view is that it would then represent a kind of tautology – in that the whole passage is somewhat “ecclesiological.”

3.] **Christological-Soteriological:** this means that those who are “in/baptized into” Christ Jesus are in the sphere of redemption. This would mean that to be “in Christ Jesus” would mean to make the free acceptance of His lordship. This is a technical phrase, often used by Paul, to indicate the truly “Christian.” Paul is exhorting a type of conduct that is proper to the circle of Christians. This third view seems to be one that has predominated: the Philippians are in the sphere of interest of the Lord Jesus. Paul uses this here as an introduction to the Christological hymn that follows.

## 2. A Few Reflections:

a. This verse 5 is used as a kind of introduction between the “parenetic” Section of Ph 2 (“be united in your convictions and in love, with a common purpose and a common mind...”) - and the Christological hymn. The entire exhortation is based on the example of Jesus.

b. Paul presents this hymn as a kind of ethical example –presenting Jesus as a kind of “paradigm”. The great emphasis is that the baptized are indeed “in” Christ Jesus, and that their manner of responding to life’s challenges is meant to be the same as Christ.

c. The clear emphasis here is that of acting, being, in union with Christ Jesus. And the high-point of the hymn will be the fact that Jesus has “emptied Himself” (KENOSIS) i.e., that He has renounced certain rights that were His from the fact that He is equal to God. Paul uses this sublime dogmatic fact as the motivation for his moral exhortation: the Philippians are being called to practice “fraternal humility”, to be self-effacing, to consider others as better than oneself, to think more of other people’s interests.

d. Paul is here emphasizing one single interior disposition. Paul’s insistence on the uniqueness and identity of this disposition is further strengthened by the repeated use of demonstratives. Paul intends that this one interior disposition should animate and lead the other Christian virtues to this one fundamental principle.

e. This is Paul’s suggestion: that all are to live this one interior spiritual attitude. All are to assume the same outlook as Jesus, to make His judgments on one another, to express His interests in others. Paul does not make any concrete application to this “imitation”, as to the humility of Jesus, or His compassion. He

seems to leave it in the abstract, with the express intention of presenting an overall imitation of Jesus.

f. It seems to be Paul's "style" to use rare expressions when he wants to inculcate a certain manner of conduct. Hence, the hymn that Paul here presents seems to have a "parenetic" scope, based on a most exalted doctrinal principle: the mysterious KENOSIS of Christ. Paul offers to the Christian world the "mind", the sentiments, the "attitude" of Christ Jesus.

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### 3. The *Kenosis* of Christ (cf. Ph 2:6-11)

#### Presentation:

[a] Paul's central exhortation for the Christians of all times is: put on the mind of Christ Jesus! This imperative is not some kind of logical conclusion that flows from some complicated reasoning process: this is the simplest practical demand that flows from being "Christian".

[b] This supreme rule, its modality and binding force have their unique support in the Person of Christ, and in being in communion with Him. The believer who would live the very life of Jesus (cf. Ga 2:20), will share also in His thoughts, in His judgment, in His outlook – in brief, in His "mind", attitude.

[c] As would be self-evident, this "Christ-like" mentality is not to be interpreted in an excessively materialistic manner – that Christ is to be imitated, copied slavishly, through some "fundamentalist" interpretation of the word of God. Paul suggests a central Christological theme for imitation: the "self-emptying" of Jesus, His KENOSIS.

The NT passages that speaking of "imitating" Christ never present a complete physiognomy of the Lord – but generally limit themselves to some particular point, and generally to this one aspect of the great mystery of Christ: His humble interior attitude (cf. 2Co – 8:9; Rm 15:3,7; Col 3:13; Ep 5:2,35; 1 P 2:21-25; 3:17, f.; Heb 12:2). What the early Church emphasized in the person of Jesus was His poverty and suffering, His humble sentiments, the renunciation of Himself. There are all aspects of the extraordinarily mysterious interior attitude of Jesus – that tells us something about the inner life of the Trinity. Jesus' filiation – and its accompanying expressions – are a window into the interior life of the Most Blessed Trinity and something of a mirror for the life of the Christian.

[d] In this connection, this phrase of Matthew is most important:

**"Come to me, all you who labor and are overburdened, and I will refresh you. Shoulder My yoke, and learn from Me, for I am meek and humble of heart. And you will find rest for your souls. My yoke really is easy and by burden is light..."** (cf. Mt 11:29, f.)

[e] To “learn from the Lord” is considered by the Evangelist not only in relation to the words of Jesus – but, the implication is also to assume his attitude, understood as a kind of indication of the closeness of the Kingdom.

[f] It seems apparent that in Mt, the earthly Jesus is presented to His followers as a model in a general way. But, in Paul, and in the other NT letters, the “parenthesis” is employed directly and almost exclusively centering on the humiliation of Jesus – to which, His exaltation will follow. In this Christological hymn of the Letter to the Philippians both the abasement and the exaltation are celebrated – even though the emphasis is on the abasement.

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#### a. The “Subject” of These Few Verses, of the “*KENOSIS*”

From the earliest times of the Church, right up through modern times, there are two principal currents of interpretation regarding Ph 2:6-7. The question is whether the subject of all this is Jesus in His earthly existence – or, whether these verses (as they are very often interpreted) refer to the pre-existence of Christ. From a merely exegetical point of view, both interpretations are possible – provided that both leave room for the essential content of the text: the divinity and the humanity of Jesus Christ.

There follow here some of the explanations that have been offered here by the exegetes:

##### 1.] The “pre-existent” Christ:

a.] This view understands that the subject of the kenosis is the eternal Son of God, pre-existing from all eternity. This view, perhaps from St. Ambrose onward, has had full sway particularly among the Latin Fathers. This view has so predominated that many serious exegetes believe that it is the only view. Many interpreters believe that all the attempts to deny that this passage is something of a parallel to the first lines of Jn’s prologue (proving the “pre-existence” of the Word) have failed.

b.] This text is often cited by theologians in the tracts on both Christology and the Trinity. This theological use of the passage has led many to maintain that this consensus among the scholars establishes the almost “natural” interpretation here to be of the “pre-existent Christ.”

c.] Some of the principal reasons that would defend this view are the following:

- a close look at the expressions, such as “the form of God” – “His equality with God” would seem to indicate the “pre-existent” Christ, not yet incarnate. In this sense, the “kenosis” would refer primarily to the Incarnation. Thus, the more common reading of this hymn presents the Person of Christ, in two aspects of His existence: the pre-existent Christ, Who becomes incarnate in time.

- the “form of God” for many interpreters is a specific avowal of His divinity – and hence, His pre-existence. It is true that many interpreters translate this as “condition”, “state”, “aspect” – or some other word, that would not have the same dogmatic overtones that “form of God” would have.
- for many, the “equality with God” is the same as the “form of God” – even though the latter expression is often seen as the interior nature – and the “equality” is seen more in the external manifestations of the divinity. But, both expressions could lend themselves easily to reading this verse as intending the pre-existence of Christ, from all eternity.
- “did not cling”: this would seem to imply a “good” (i.e., equality with God) pertaining to Christ, even before the Incarnation. From all eternity, Jesus was already in “possession” of the divinity, in a legitimate and uncontested manner. In the light of this verse, the rest makes even more sense: yet, even in spite of this divinity, Jesus “emptied” Himself.

The KENOSIS of Christ would be therefore, at least two-fold:

- the Incarnation: by assuming human nature, Jesus underwent the life long “self-emptying” process
- the redemption: Jesus also “emptied” Himself of His human life (blood) for the sake of redemption.

Therefore, the example of the KENOSIS that Paul suggests to the Philippians is one that will endure all through life. The Christian of all times is called to live the great mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption: to live the life of Jesus’ humiliation and obedience.

- the “form of a servant”: this would express the “content” of Christ’s KENOSIS. The word MORPHE is used to bring out the more the opposition between the divine nature and the human condition.

## 2.] The earthly existence of Jesus Christ:

a.] This is the older interpretation, general among the Greek Fathers – and also among the Latins, until the coming of St. Ambrose. More and more it has also appealed to modern scholars.

b.] This view would see the subject of the KENOSIS to be the incarnate Christ, the Jesus of Nazareth, the Galilean, the historical Jesus. Some of the reasons for the view are as follows:

- the subject of KENOSIS seems to be the Christ Jesus of verse 5: “in your minds, you must be the same as Christ Jesus.”
- the “form” of God would have meant one thing to classical, Aristoteleianism, viz., “substance”, “essence”. Biblically though, MORPHE does not seem to pertain to the abstract vocabulary of philosophy. It

seems more to present a kind of paradox: MORPHE is applied to Jesus both as God and also as Servant. Thus, it would apply only indirectly to the pre-existence of the Son, not unlike Galatians: God sent His Son, born of a woman, born subject to the Law... (cf. Ga 4:4).

- the expression “equality” with God does not refer so much to the “nature” of the divinity – but rather, to the treatment that might manifest the recognized condition of one. Thus, this expression might be paraphrased, according to this view: the “state”, or “condition” of equality with God – thus by-passing all discussion concerning the divinity of Christ (perhaps not unlike one’s being “treated like a king”). Thus, to be “equal” to God would indicate here a position of authority, of prestige, and honor, one of respect before humanity.
- then, it would be legitimate to translate “He did not cling” as He did not “press to His own advantage.” Thus, the emphasis of the passage would not so much be on whether Christ possessed, or did not possess, a divine right – but, rather, the fact that He did not conserve it jealously; He did not use it for His own advantage.
- therefore, in this view, the subject of the KENOSIS is the earthly Christ; and its “content” would be His lowly way of humiliation. The later verses in this hymn describe more fully the attitudes of the historical Christ during his earthly sojourn. He was “obedient unto death”, and never pressed to His own advantage His “state” of equality with God. In this interpretation the one KENOSIS would have as its subject the historical Jesus of Nazareth, in His human condition of lowliness.
- Paul seems to be insisting very much in this parenthesis on Jesus’ interior attitude of humility, in not making His own rights prevail. This interior attitude of humility of the man Jesus is what Paul holds up for imitation – and this would mean that here Paul’s main interests are not dogmatic.
- the “content” of the KENOSIS would indeed be the “form of a slave”, obedient even unto death on the cross. The contrast between the “state”, the “condition” of God/servant is to bring out the more the extent of His self-emptying. Far from assuming a human situation that would be more in harmony with His “equality” with God – as one might naturally expect from one in the “form of God” – Jesus, on the contrary, renounces Himself all His life long. He surrenders all condition of authority, of prestige, of rank, and puts Himself in the condition of a servant, throughout the entire period of His earthly sojourn.
- in this view, therefore, the meaning of the passage would be the following: the earthly Jesus, even though He was in the form of God, did not want to press His situation to His own advantage. His state of being on a par with God was surrendered in His assuming the condition of the servant. In His exterior condition, He was as a servant, similar to human beings, but “even humbler yet.”

3.] **A “Median” Position:** Just for completeness, there are scholars who have taken a middle view between these above two interpretations. On the one hand, they sustain the idea of the “pre-existence” of Jesus in the hymn. As a kind of antithesis, the KENOSIS offers the aspect of the humiliation of Jesus in His historical reality (the view of P. Bonnard). And because of all the research that has gone into these few verses all through the centuries, some interpreters hold we will never really know the precise meaning of Paul in these verses. The essential idea remains the same: Jesus has freely chosen to assume human nature, to live a life of humble obedience – and that He died on the Cross for the redemption of the world.

a.] Attempts at Synthesis:

1.] In all efforts at reading Scripture, it is necessary to keep in Mind the immediate context of the passage, as well as the over-all setting, the historical context, the intention of the author, in so far as these may be determined. It is also very difficult not to “read into” the text, in accord perhaps with these of theology.

2.] The immediate context here does not help a great deal to resolve the differences of opinion that have existed here from earliest times. The “ethical-paradigmatic” scope of this entire passage simply makes clear that the Apostle wanted to present Jesus as an example to the Philippians. It is true that Paul emphasizes the earthly situation of Jesus – and makes no clear reference to the fact of His “pre-existence” Whether Paul meant the pre-existence, or simply the Incarnation, makes no real difference either way.

3.] With the hypothesis that Paul may have taken this hymn from somewhere else – as from the liturgy (perhaps baptismal, or Eucharistic) – the problem of the over-all context is increased. The matter of the pre-existence of Christ was clearly and deeply believed in the early Church. Some interpreters wonder whether already in this young church of Philippi this idea could have been clearly grasped. However, most hold that a personal pre-existence of Jesus pertains to the very “heart” of Christianity.

4.] It might be that with this hymn, the Church has her earliest profession of faith in the personal pre-existence of Jesus: but because of the many interpretations of the passage, nothing dogmatic either way perhaps can be claimed.

b.] Some possible Conclusions

1.] It is still true that the majority opinion is that of St. Ambrose: the view that sees the subject of the KENOSIS to be the pre-existent Christ. And it is also historically true that among the early Church writers, prior to the Arian controversy, Ph 2:6-7 was interpreted as referring solely to the Word of God already incarnate.

2.] The arguments defending the pre-existence of Christ cannot be based solely on linguistic evidence – for the simple reason that the language used here is rare, and not totally convincing one way or the other. The words “the form of God – equality of God”, in a literal interpretation, are of great importance for the view seeing the subject here to be the “pre-existent Christ.” Yet, these can also be interpreted in totally differing ways: they do not necessarily have to refer to the “divine substance, or

essence.” They may indeed allude to the fact of the divinity of Jesus, but not necessarily have to mean His pre-existence.

3.] The modern exegetes find that the interpretation that stresses more the Incarnation of Christ, rather than His pre-existence, claim that their view is more coherent to the text, and in greater harmony with the context – and is the older opinion. The view that would see this text as presenting the “pre-existence” of Christ was deeply inspired by the Arian controversy.

4.] Another difficulty for the view that would defend the “pre-existence”, it would hardly seem likely that Paul would offer the pre-existent Christ as a model to be imitated, but only the Incarnate Christ. However, the defenders of the “pre-existent” view would counter that precisely here is the great Christological value: completed within the Trinity, Jesus comes incarnate as the paradigm of the Father’s love for humanity. And the debate goes on!

5.] It is true that Paul ordinarily presents Christ to the faithful under the aspect of the humiliation of the Incarnation. Yet, by the very same token, Paul does this in his firm faith of the pre-existence of Christ. The very instant of the Incarnation does not seem to hold much interest for Paul – his interests and exhortations are based on His humiliations along the course of His lowly terrestrial existence.

6.] Therefore, the hymn possibly may best be understood as seeing Jesus Christ, in His human-divine existence, as the center of this hymn – nonetheless, Paul was deeply imbued with the faith in Jesus’ pre-existence.

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## **b. Some of Paul’s More Difficult Expressions**

### **1.] MORPHE: The Divine “Condition” of Jesus**

a.] All the exegetes who have studied this hymn run up against the extraordinary difficulty of this word. There are almost endless philological explanations of its meaning, many discussions on the best way to translate the passage. Precisely, because of the many rare and enigmatic words that Paul has used here, the translation and meaning have been rendered most difficult. These terms are susceptible to a wide variety of explanations.

b.] The word MORPHE presents a classical example of this difficulty. In the world of Hellenism this word has a most precise meaning (essence, substance) – that would bring no small difficulty to the doctrine of the Incarnation as well as that of the Redemption.

c.] Here, a few of the possible interpretations of the Term ‘MORPHE’ will be offered:

[1] Morphe is the same as OUSIA, PHUSIS: some of the early Fathers translated the term this way. They understood the word to mean “essence”, or



“nature”, in the philosophical sense: i.e., the specific character, or essential being of something. There are still a few modern interpreters who have understood the word in this sense. However, for the most part, this interpretation has been abandoned. It would hardly seem that the biblical author would have used such a philosophical term for the revealed message. Such words would not seem to have been known by the majority of the simple faithful.

[2] MORPHE means DOXA: this view was rarely defended in antiquity, and also in posterity! Nonetheless, a few modern scholars have concluded that the “form of God” for Jesus meant simply the “divine glory.” Thus, when Paul writes that Jesus was in “the form of God” this would have been parallel to these words of John: that glory that I had before the world came to be (cf. Jn 17:5). The basic problem is that this equivalency between MORPHE-DOXA appears nowhere else in all of Sacred Scripture.

[3] MORPHE means EIKON: this was the considered view of some of the Fathers. In our own time, an increasing number of serious scholars defend this translation. This would present Jesus as the “form” of God, meaning the “image and the glory of God” (cf. 2 Co 4:4; Col 1:15; Ep 1:17; cf. Also Col 1:27; Jas 2:1). The emphasis of the term then would be on thinking of Jesus as the “second Adam”, which is so basic to Paul’s Christology. In this sense, Jesus is the fulfillment of Adam, made to the “image and likeness” of God (cf. Gn 1:26,

[4] Thus, MORPHE would mean the “image” of God, with a reference to the fact that Jesus is the fulfillment of the first Adam.

Nevertheless, even here there are great problems that would militate against such a translation:

- nowhere in classical Greek does MORPHE mean “image”;
- secondly, within the context of the hymn, MORPHE is also used in connection with DOULOS (servant, slave), which implies nothing “glorious.”

d.] **A Kind of Summary:** to say that Jesus is in the “form” of God, the hymn certainly presents the divinity of Jesus. This has been the consensus of the Fathers who ever discussed the passage. The divinity of Christ is proclaimed here. Perhaps, though, one nuance that comes to the fore (especially because of the closeness in meaning with DOXA and EIKON), is that which appears exteriorly: it is this aspect of Jesus that the hymn implies.

Thus, modern theologians (also to avoid endless discussions with other translations) render the term as the “condition”, or the “position”, “state”, “aspect”, “manner of existing” of God. But, every single term that has been suggested has also encountered certain criticisms. Perhaps, though, of all of the translations, the word “condition” has met with the lesser opposition.

e.] The Use of the Term in the NT: it should be noted that this word is very rare in the NT. The simple form (as we have it in this hymn) is found only in the so-called “canonical finale” of Mk (cf. 16:12): Jesus showed Himself under another “form”. It is found in a composite form (MORPHOSIS: Rm 2: 20; 2 Tm 3:5) and with a prefix (SYMORPHOS: Ga 4:19). A derivative is found in the Transfiguration account (cf. Mt 17:2; Mk 9:2) – and a few other times by Paul (cf. Rm 12: 12; 2 Co 3:18; Ph 3:10).

[1] From this survey, a few principles might be deduced: the meaning of all other words with MORPHE, as part of them, will be greatly influenced by the way that the basic word is translated. It is also noted that of the 13 NT usages, 10 of them are in Paul. Nowhere else do we find the expression “the form of God”. So even comparative studies have not shed much light on the meaning of this most unusual expression.

[2] The expression “form of a servant/slave” seems easier to understand. In the context of a “parenthesis”, the emphasis is on the humble attitude of Christ: He has assumed the form of a servant, which seems to be at least an implicit reference to Is 53, and the Suffering Servant of Yahweh. The use of “form” regarding God is justified by the antithesis that Paul presents in this text.

[3] These reflections also support the translation of the term by “condition”: Paul is exhorting the Philippians to assume the humble situation of Jesus: the middle of the hymn emphasizes humility, that will then be rewarded, or fulfilled, by the exaltation in the third part of the hymn. The condition of the servant is essentially humble – which offers a clear contrast to the “condition” of God, from the point of view of His divine sovereignty and dignity.

[4] At the same time, though, all admit that the word “condition” does not express the full wealth of the Greek term MORPHE. At the end of Mk’s gospel, Jesus presents Himself in a different “form” than He usually did – this seems to emphasize the exterior expression of one’s manner of existence. The resurrected state of Jesus, it might be argued, is far more than a different “condition” than His earthly existence.

[5] A brief look at the composites might be of some help:

- **Rm 8:29**: these are the ones He has chosen to become true images of His Son – the “saved” will truly be “conformed”, one in form with Jesus in glory. The Christian call is to resemble Jesus, and this “conformity” will also show exteriorly. The true Christian is a kind of image, portrait of the Lord, and is called to be this.
- **Ga 4:19**: Paul must go through his apostolic agony until Christ is formed (MORPHOTHE) in the Galatians. If Christ can indeed live in the faithful (cf. Ga 2:20; Rm 8:10; 2 Co 13:3,5; Col 1:27; 3:11), the

“form” of Christ might take hold in them – the spiritual outlines of Christ must be reproduced in them.

- **Ph 3:10:** Paul states his great principle that all he wants to know is the Person of Jesus and the power of His resurrection – to share His sufferings, by reproducing the very pattern of His death. Through suffering, Paul becomes “configured” to Jesus; Paul thus reproduces in himself the lineaments of Jesus in his own life.
- **Rm 12:2:** Paul has exhorted the faithful to make of their entire existence a “living host” (obsequium), and immediately adds: do not model yourselves on this world, but let your behavior be transformed... This can only be done by the renewal of one’s mind, to be able to discern the will of God. Christians are called to assume a different “form” from that which they have expressed heretofore – they must assume a new physiognomy in the spiritual way, that will express exteriorly their new way of life.
- **2 Co 3:18:** we will all grow brighter, until we are turned into the image we reflect. In this one important passage, MORPHE comes into close contact with two other “loaded” Greek terms: DOXA and EIKON. There is meant here an eschatological brilliance that flows from sharing in the glory of Christ. This METAMORPHOSIS is essentially the reproduction of the outlines of the figure of Christ, an effect of the emanation of the splendor of His glory.
- **Ph 3:21:** He will transfigure these wretched bodies of ours into copies of His own glorious body. The future “condition” of believers will be that of reproducing the “form” of Christ’s glory.

f.] Some possible conclusions:

[1] It would be clear from this survey that the biblical use of MORPHE is not identified with “substance” or “essence”. Yet, it cannot mean some kind of merely exterior appearance. The word indicates a very profound and real identity, even though the external aspect is emphasized.

[2] Some scholars would translate the word to mean “traits”, characteristics. These would manifest the very being of a person. MORPHE, therefore, indicates the concrete and external expression of a person. This idea has moved a good number of the experts to translate the word as “condition”.

[3] For the redemption of the world, Jesus has willingly assumed the “condition” of the Servant. As there is a chosen antithesis between “Servant” and “Lord”, so likewise: the “form” of God and the “form” of a Servant.

[4] Paul is exhorting the young Church to assume the humble attitude, with clear reference to that exhibited by Christ. The humiliation of Christ consists in that humiliating condition in which He voluntarily placed

Himself during His earthly sojourn. The evangelists consistently have characterized the earthly existence of Jesus as the work of a “servant” (cf. Mt 20:28; Lk 22:27; Jn 12: 23-26).

[5] Perhaps the best “parallel place” for this part of the text may be found in Jn:...

*... Jesus got up from table, removed His outer garment (His body?) and taking a towel...He washed the disciples' feet (sins?)...when He had washed their feet, and put His clothes back on again, He went back to the table (resurrection?) (cf. Jn 13:3, ff.)*

The washing of the feet is the graphic enactment of the KENOSIS of Christ. He serves His own in the condition of the Servant of the Lord. Jesus asks: do you understand all this? You call Me the Lord, and I am. I give you an example to follow (cf. Jn 13:13, ff.)

More difficult expressions:

## 2.] HE DID NOT CLING

a.] Further difficulties: thus far not overcome: this passage also has proven to be a true “cross” for the exegetes through the years. Once again, the reason is that this word is extremely rare in classical Greek. “He did not cling” forms a clear antithesis with the positive affirmation, “He emptied Himself”, and offers some precision as to its content.

b.] Perhaps the simplest interpretation (of the many that are possible) would be to understand this passage as an idiomatic expression, meaning: to use something for one’s own advantage.

c.] The expression as it is composed here implies the making of a practical judgment, in the sense of an “option”, or, the expression of a “preference”. It is a decision that characterizes an individual in his/her interior comportment.

## 3.] EQUALITY WITH GOD

a.] This is seen by some to be simply a grammatical parallel with being “in the form of God.” While many interpreters do deny such a reading, for a good many of the scholars, the phrase serves as an accentuation of an aspect of the divine condition in which Christ is.

b.] The expression has known great difficulty in the translation – as is customary with this entire hymn. The Latin translation seems to have been greatly influenced by the Arian controversies. This Latin interpretation, then, has influenced the reading of the hymn down to our own times.

c.] Linguistically, the expression really does not mean equality with God. Thus, Christ has not claimed for himself the treatment that would have been His right,

in belonging to the divine sphere. Technically, the expression might be translated as: “appearing as God.”

d.] Thus, in the hymn we find a variety of emphases given to the position of Christ in His earthly life, when He chose not to take any advantage of special privileges that might have been His. Thus, it is clearly stated that Jesus in no way had the slightest thought of “using” His divine rank to set forth His own pre-eminence. He submitted all to a freely chosen self-emptying, by assuming the condition of a slave. He made no use of the privileges that were proper to His “condition” of God.

†††

#### 4.] KENOSIS:

[a] There are in the passage at least two correlative propositions: One is introduced by a negative particle (“He did not cling”), and the other by the conjunctive “but – He emptied Himself.” These two expressions place in antithesis two verbs, implying two acts of the same subject. These are the positive and negative assertion of the same idea. The second expression introduced by “but”, emphasizes what comes after it. In a sense, the first phrase would indicate the principle of the fact – and the second phrase implies the actual carrying out of the former. The concrete fact here is the voluntary renunciation on the part of Christ of the glory due to His divine condition.

[b] Once more, there is no parallel text in all of Greek literature that might assist in the translation. The immediate object of the KENOSIS is expressed solely by the personal, reflexive pronoun: “Himself.” Nonetheless, the concrete content, the context makes clear: it is the “condition”, or the “state” of being equal to God.

[c] The reflexive pronoun gives real emphasis to the voluntary renunciation of Christ. Thus the KENOSIS is not presented here as an imposition – nor, as some kind of inexorable destiny, from which there was no way out. Paul presents the KENOSIS as freely chosen.

[d] This emphasis on the free choice of Christ brings out very clearly His will: between two possible choices, Jesus decides not to lay claim to His equality to God. Rather than coming as “Lord”, He has chosen to come as “servant.”

#### c. Classical Greek and the LXX:

- [1] The word ordinarily means “empty”, “without content”, “despoiled”, “nude”. It is often used to describe an “empty” house, or well. It can also be used for “empty” hands.
- [2] Metaphorically, or in a “translated” sense, the word is applied to “empty” words, or useless phrases. It can mean sentences that are devoid of all practical meaning.

## 1.] In the Septuagint

- [1] The word is used some 50 times – it is used to mean “empty” vessels (cf. Jr 14:3), or “empty” hands (cf. Ex 3:21; Dt 15:13).
- [2] Most often the word is used in a translated sense – to mean a life without content, one that is ethically negative, or uselessly lived (cf. Jgs 9:4; 11:3). In this sense, it is applied to evil men, murderers.
- [3] The majority of the uses of the word is to be sought for among the prophets, or in the later OT books, such as the Psalms, Job, Sirach. For the prophets, to go away from the Lord is to trust in emptiness. This happened when Israel sought in Egypt a vain and empty support. (cf. Is 30:7). The word is used to describe the “empty” offering of incense to an idol (cf. Jr 18:15). In the positive sense, it is used to express the principle that the just will never labor in vain (cf. Is 65:23). **The Wisdom** literature used the word to describe “vain” conversations (cf. Jb 27:12) – or the support offered by false friends (cf. Jb 21:34). It can mean months of illusion (Jb 7:3), days without hope (cf. Jb 7:6), or a life of no value.
- [4] The verb has its proper, as well as “translated” sense. It can mean to “render empty”, to “empty” something, in the sense of stealing; to “destroy” a patrimony. It is used to describe cities that “languish” (cf. Jr 14:2; 15:9).

## 2.] In the NT

- [1] In the literal sense, it is found only once: in the parable of the murderous husbandmen (cf. Mk 12:3; Lk 20:10, f.)
- [2] In most of the other passages, the word is used in the “translated” sense (cf. Lk 1:53, the Magnificat; Ac 4:25)
- [3] Of the 18 times that the word appears, 12 of these are found in St. Paul. The Apostle has conferred on the word his own connotation, often in a negative formula, meaning “not in vain,” “useless.”
  - **2 Co 6:1**: Do not neglect the grace you have received.
  - **1 Co 15:4**: if Christ has indeed not resurrected, then, your preaching is in vain.
  - **1 Th 3:5**: I was afraid that all our work might have been wasted.
  - **Ga 2:2**: Paul acted in a given manner for fear that the course of action he was following would not be allowed (i.e., would be in vain).

- **Ph 2:16**: this would mean that I had not run the race and became exhausted for nothing. (Here, and in other texts that follow, Paul has used the word in a religious and ethical sense.)
- **1 Co 15: 10, 58**: the grace that God gave me is not fruitless...if you are working in the Lord, you cannot be laboring in vain.
- **1 Th 2:1** our visit to you has not proved ineffectual.

In a positive sense, Paul speaks in a number of these texts about the divine strength and power itself which is at work in the apostolate. Therefore, he was deeply convinced that his missionary work could not have been ineffectual.

In all these passages, Paul manifests a very strong consciousness and a deep sense of responsibility concerning the greatness of the gift of God and of His divine grace. At the same time, Paul manifests a deep sense of realization of the tasks that this grace brings with it. Throughout, the Apostle manifests an extraordinary confidence in the power of divine grace, which always guarantees final success.

[4] In the NT, the VERB is found only in Paul: in addition to this present text under discussion (cf. Ph 2:7), it is found four times. Three of these instances, the verb is used in the passive negative, and in the metaphorical sense. The emphasis is placed on the emptiness of content, and on a being that is valueless:

- **Rm 4:14**: if the world is to be won only by those who submit to the Law, then the faith is pointless and the promise is good for nothing. In other terms, the faith, in so far as it is the principle of salvation, would be rendered vain, inefficacious, emptied of its power.
- **1 Co 1:17**: Christ sent Paul, not to baptize, but to preach the Good News and this, not in terms of philosophy: for in such language the message of the Cross would be emptied. Among the Corinthians, there was much esteemed the oratorical arts. Paul, however, recalls a basic biblical principle: to carry out the plan of salvation, God has made use often of inadequate instruments. A humanly wise philosophy would empty the Cross of its true meaning – and faith can never be based on the wisdom of human beings, but only on the power of God. Thus, the true worth of the Cross must not be emptied of meaning – its true efficacy is the divine power.
- **1 Co 9:15**: Paul has not exercised his right of living from the Gospel – this would deprive his work of its full meaning render it empty
- **2 Co 9:3**: The Apostle had exhorted the Corinthians to be generous in the collection – if they were not, this would deprive, or empty, his reasons for being proud of them. (It is further on in this passage that

once again Paul uses a dogmatic principle: you know how rich the Lord Jesus was, but He made Himself poor, so that we might be enriched by His poverty – to inculcate a moral principle, viz., generosity).

**d. Initial Conclusions:**

[1] From this rapid survey of the texts where the word is used, one finds that the prevailing use is in a “translated sense”, or metaphorically.

[2] When the noun is used concerning a human being, it generally indicates a life deprived of meaning, of content – a life that is ethically negative, or lived uselessly (cf. Job). In prophetic language, the word is often used to describe Israel in her state of separation from Yahweh. The word then means useless, futile, illusionary. In this state, the opposite state is the ideal that God intended for His people, viz., powerful, faithful and truthful.

[3] In the NT, particularly in the Pauline letters, the word is often used in a negative formula. In these instances it has reference to fundamental religious values, such as grace, kerygma, faith, the apostolate. These cannot be rendered “empty”, or “vain”, because the power of God is active in them – and this, for a believer such as Paul, can never be rendered ineffectual.

[4] There are two LXX passages where the word refers to the languor and spiritual dejection of the cities of Judah, because of a terrible drought (cf. Jr 14:2) – or, the image of a mother deprived of her seven children (cf. Jr 15:9).

[5] Paul’s prevailing use of the term is in a metaphorical sense: on one occasion he underlines the fact that neither the faith (Rm 4:14) – and another time, nor the Cross of Christ (cf. 1 Co 1:17) can ever be rendered vain, or ineffectual. In these, the salvific power of God remains at work.

[6] What is remarkable in all this, however, is the fact that nowhere else – other than this passage Ph 2:7 – does the verb appear in a reflexive construction: therefore, the expression “He emptied Himself” is a biblical “hapax legomenon”. At the same time, however, it is necessary to point out that all the biblical texts in which the verb occurs have this as their underlying “theological content”: that the power and the rights of God can never be rendered vain in their strength and efficacy.

[7] The term is always associated, then, with the idea of the power, the majesty and the dignity of God. While the immediate object of the verb in the text in question (Ph 2:7 – He emptied Himself) is reflexive, the more remote object is His divine “condition”, or state. During His earthly existence, Christ emptied Himself of this, by assuming the “condition” of a Servant. Jesus surrendered His being equal to God – at least as far as the divine glory is concerned.



e. **Textual Meaning**

[1] Generally, theologians ask: of what did Christ “empty” Himself: and the most general answer, on the Catholic side, has been that it was the divine glory.

[2] For biblical scholars, to look immediately for the “content” of the self-emptying, leads to enormously difficult doctrinal questions. For those who maintained that in the “kenosis”, Christ emptied Himself of His divinity, there are immediate and insuperable questions for the traditional understanding of both the Incarnation and the Redemption. Some interpreters have tried to argue from the “KENOSIS” passage that Christ “hid” the manifestation of His divinity; for still others, Christ renounced certain inherent or concomitant prerogatives pertaining to the “form of God.” (With a too literal interpretation of some of the terms in this extraordinarily difficult passage, one could arrive at such conclusions, so problematic for the faith).

[3] Biblical scholars, however, prefer to remain with the “translated”, or metaphorical sense here. Paul is not talking in this hymn as a “technical” theologian, in this view – but is using more metaphorical, idiomatic terminology. To seek to apply his words to subsequent doctrinal developments in the Church – or to descend too much down to details, would go beyond the limits of objective exegesis, and would lead one into speculative theology.

[4] It is also quite clear that this text most artfully presents the kenosis as a paradox and a mystery. In this passage the language of simple concepts reaches its extreme limit – and this opens the door for metaphorical expression. In a metaphor, the reality and the image expressing it are so intimately united, that it is next to impossible to express the concept of the metaphor with a single affirmation. At best, in this passage, through contemplation the Church has pondered all around this mystery, but cannot go beyond it.

[5] The word KENOSIS was chosen because it is a particularly strong expression of the totality of the self-renunciation of Jesus. Nonetheless, the wide difference of opinion concerning the “content” of the verb remains. Grammatically, it is found in the midst of these expressions:

- **He did not cling to His equality with God;**
- **He assumed the condition of a slave;**
- **He became as men are;**
- **He was humbler yet, accepting death on the cross.**

[6] In simple terms, the totality of these expressions would add up to the complete renunciation that Jesus made of Himself during His earthly sojourn. A deep meaning may be derived if the word is considered as a concrete description of that interior attitude of Jesus Christ, regarding His divine “condition”. Not only did Christ choose not to avail Himself of the privileges of His divine state, but He even assumed the condition of a servant. He “rendered inefficacious”, empty, His divine rank.

[7] The KENOSIS of Christ, for many interpreters, consisted essentially in assuming the condition of a Servant, with all the resulting consequences that flowed from that free choice.

HE ASSUMED THE CONDITION OF A SERVANT/SLAVE:

a.] The word DOULOS is one of those key words in this hymn: for one steeped in biblical background, it might lead one to the LXX translation of Is 53, and the EBED Yahweh. The word here must be seen in the overall context of the hymn. One interesting point is that in the NT, this is one of those rare cases where Jesus is clearly defined as DOULOS (cf. O. Cullmann, The Christology of the NT. London: SCM, Part I, n. 3).

b.] The phrase is placed in direct antithesis with “the condition of God”, on the one hand – and then, in opposition to the KYRIOS which follows in the third part of the hymn. The word DOULOS indicates the most extreme contrast with both “God” and “Lord.” For an OT mentality, to think of one “equal to God” presenting Himself here as “servant”, would either be simply impossible, or a scandal. The essence of “God” for the OT is that He be “Lord.” To make of one in “the condition of God” a “servant” would seem to take from this being the very being of God. Thus, there is cleverly placed here a most acute contrast.

c.] While the word ANTHROPOS (human being) would already have sufficed sufficiently to make the contrast with “God”, the author has chosen DOULOS, to interject also a clear contrast with KYRIOS. The One who is the “Lord” of all, has become the “Servant” of all. The entire mystery and paradox of Jesus’ abasement/exaltation is condensed in these two key words.

d.] Some see the word DOULOS chosen as a metaphor, to indicate the lowliness of Christ, His abasement that He freely chose – in contrast to His divine “state.” The “condition” of God would imply honors, power and authority – whereas, for the mystery of redemption, Christ freely chose the condition of a servant, that would characterize His earthly existence with rejection, powerlessness and total service.

e.] Thus, it is not absolutely necessary to read DOULOS as being in connection with Is 53 – nor, does it necessarily follow that in this hymn, Paul is presenting Jesus as the “just man suffering for His people.” And technically, too, biblical scholars look askance on the interpretation that would read the word DOULOS to mean “human nature”, more in the sense of the definitions of Chalcedon, than the words of the hymn to the Philippians.

f.] What Paul is emphasizing throughout this hymn, for many interpreters, is the freely chosen interior attitude. Christ simply chose not

to avail Himself of the privileges of His inherent greatness, His “condition” of equality with God. He chose rather the humble demeanor of a servant slave.

g.] Throughout His entire earthly sojourn, Jesus did not comport Himself as God and Lord over all of creation – but came as a servant, deprived of all dignity and power. Coming in this lowly situation, Christ brings the paradoxical message of dominion through service.

h.] This is the basic idea that Paul wants the Philippians to copy: fraternal humility. He is emphasizing an interior attitude, a disposition toward a lower place at table – Paul directs the Philippians not to strive for the esteem and the recognition of others. Paul personally would follow the way of the KENOSIS, a way despoiled of all seeking dignities, majesty or sovereign power. The Philippians are tearing one another apart, with a thirst for power. Paul is asking them to surrender every form of ambition, or self-seeking.

i.] The way of the KENOSIS for Christ was a preferential option, a precise and free choice through which He committed His entire earthly sojourn to the condition of serving. For Paul, the faithful are called to follow this difficult path.

j.] Thus, technically, and staying solely with the words in the text, beyond all dogmatic reflection – this hymn offers an ethical imperative: the “kenotic attitude” of Jesus Christ is then developed with expressions of profound theological meaning by what follows.

#### f. **He Became as Men Are**

[1] It is noted that in this hymn, verses 6-8, syntactically, constitute a single sentence, controlled by two main verbs: “He emptied Himself” – and “He humbled (ETAPEINOS) Himself.” (“He was humbler yet”). These verbs establish a progressive parallelism: the two phrases constitute a single process of abasement: beginning with the assumption of the “condition” of a servant, and culminating in the extreme aspect of the Kenosis, the stauros (the Cross).

[2] There is a verb that appears here as a participle (GENOMENOS) that is most important to the revelation of the Incarnation: “and the word became flesh.” Technically, the word means, “to be born”: Christ “became flesh” precisely in the same manner that all human beings are born (cf. Jn 1:14; Ga 4:4). There is emphasized by the grammatical form the historical reality of the total equality of Christ with other human beings. The reality of His human “condition” is further expressed by His freely chosen attitude of humility.

[3] The literal translation of the Greek used in this expression would be that Christ was generated in the “image”, the “form”, the “figure”, the appearance” of a man. The Greek word here (OMOIOMA) is often used as a synonym for other known Greek words, such as MORPHE, EIDOS, EIKON, IDEA. For some interpreters, the

closest word in meaning to OMOIOMA would be EIKON. The latter represents the original considered in itself – whereas OMOIOMA is rather the copy of the original, emphasizing the copy of the original as comparison. The emphasis is placed on the concordance, the similarity with a concrete figure. Once again, the reader is faced with a very ambiguous term: the word can mean either “identity”, “equivalence” – or, “similarity.” And these differences can offer some difficulties for the dogma. Nonetheless, the history of exegesis offers these three interpretations:

[a] The full similarity of the Incarnate Christ with other human beings consists precisely in this: that He was born, just as other humans are. This opinion would be based on the fact of the pre-existence of Christ, and this passage would be affirming His human birth. (Many biblical scholars reject this interpretation that seems self-evident).

[b] The similarity of Christ with human beings is not to be understood in the true and proper sense of the word, but rather, only analogously: in “appearance,” Christ was like other human beings, but in reality He was different from them. The reality of the human body would be the covering that hid the essential existence of Jesus – a kind of “mask” that He used in view of the role that He was called to live out. This would be the “docetistic” interpretation – that surely was not Paul’s.

[c] The third interpretation has held that the similarity of Christ with other human beings would regard His true humanity, as this is attested to in other NT passages. The very enigmatic phrase of Ph 2:7, however, would also indicate at the same time that Jesus was not merely man. The defenders of this position base their reasoning on what they see as the “descriptive” style of the author of the hymn. This view holds that even with the emptying and His self-emptying, Jesus remains pre-existent: Jesus is truly man, but not solely man. While the text, on the one hand, affirms the full humanity of Jesus – yet, at the same time, the figure of Jesus is left veiled in mystery.

(In the last analysis, perhaps, this rather enigmatic phraseology is clarified by the words that follow:)

**g. Being as All Men Are:**

[1] Literally, the phrase reads: “being in the ‘schema’ of all men” – the word ‘schema’ being synonymous with “form”, that which is seen, which covers the object. Thus, the ‘schema’ for the Greek mind pertained to the essence of a reality in so far as this was seen. Yet, this does not mean that the word implied merely exterior reality.

[2] In the NT, the word is used only twice, and both times by Paul (cf. also 1 Co 7:31). Here Paul uses it to describe the external appearance of Jesus, how He manifested Himself in the days of His “flesh” (cf. Heb 5:7). This phrase, then, contains a testimony of the true humanity of Christ – in the eyes of His contemporaries, with whom He would have come in contact during His earthly sojourn; He really was “a man.” The expression affirms without equivocation the reality of His humanity: He was

a “true” man, and not only – as some may have implied from the previous phrase – one who appeared as a man.

[3] Some have seen here a veiled reference to Daniel’s Son of Man (cf. Dn 7:13). This would present Christ in His transcendent state as a “heavenly Man”, Who has come to earth in the mission of Redeemer. Not only interpreters are in accord with this nuance.

[4] What is emphasized here is the identity of condition with the word “man.” There are emphasized the real characteristics of the person. A good parallel place to this would be Ga 2:17. Anyone who would have seen the ‘schema’ of Jesus on earth would have been convinced that indeed He was a man.

#### **h. He Was Humbler Yet**

[1] The scholars discern here a progressive parallelism between the verbs EKNOSEN and ETAPEINOSEN. The “content” of His humiliation is spelled out as even unto “death, and death on the Cross.” This is the “climax,” the high/lowest point of the KENOSIS.

[2] The Greek TAPEINOS, in its reflexive form, means: “to lower oneself,” “to humble oneself.” The expression has a very positive sense under the ethical and religious point of view. In classical Greek, it was sometimes used to express the attitude of a worshipper in a gesture of humiliation during the sacrifices.

[3] In the LXX, the reflexive form indicates the subjection of the mind and the will, to the judgments of God – a kind of self-abasement before God (cf. Lv 16:29,31; 23:27; 29, 32; Jdt 4:9; Is 58: 3,5, etc.)

[4] There are 14 uses of the verb in the NT, and 6 of these are in the reflexive form:

- **Mt 18:4**: it is necessary to make oneself as a little child to enter the kingdom of God.
- **Mt 23:12**: those who exalt themselves will be humbled – and those who humble themselves will be exalted. (cf. Lk 14:11) (Lk 18:14)
- **2 Co 11:7**: is Paul wrong, to lower himself, so that he might rise others high?

a.] In Mt and Lk the use of this expression is intimately tied to the announcement of Jesus of the promises made to those who humble themselves. He promises them the final exaltation.

b.] Three times the Synoptics attribute to Jesus the old saying on humility that expresses the eschatological intervention of God. Jesus promises eschatological peace to those who will follow His “Way.”

1.] Paul sees his apostolic ministry to be in imitation of the Lord. Paul has been endowed with this competence, in virtue of his being raised up by the Lord Himself (cf. Ph 4:13; 4:12.) The apostle had learned to live in lowly conditions, supporting himself with his own work that he might raise up the community with the announcement of the Gospel. He refused to avail himself of the special privileges of being an Apostle – but that his message was in no way inferior to any of the others (cf. 2 Co 10).

2.] It is worthy of note that in all of these texts the real background is constituted by the theme of humiliation and exaltation. The early NT writings (as Jas 4:10; 1 P 5:6) invited the faithful to this meek and humble comportment, particularly in their community relations.

3.] Thus, it is seen that this verb is often used in a context of a concern about hierarchical dignity and pre-eminence (cf. Mt 23:12; 18:4; Lk 14:11; 2 Co 11:7) – or, of unfitting vanity or ambitions (cf. also Lk 18:14), coming from a false sense of self-sufficiency. The emphasis is on the ultimate scope of this self-humiliation: viz., the eschatological exaltation on the part of God.

4.] Also in this hymn to the Philippians, Paul is contrasting ambitious self-aggrandizement on the part of those seeking dignities – an urgently suggests an attitude of humble, selfless renunciation. The central example is the kenosis of Christ.

5.] Herein is found the “means” of St. Paul – in formulating his exhortations to the young church of Philippi, his basic ideas center around the words KENOSIS and TAPEINOSIS, so expressive of the filiation of Christ, His attitude toward the Father, and His example for humanity.

6.] The early Church was deeply impressed with the idea of the ANAWIM – the proto-Christian parenthesis of the TOPOI. Once again, the example of the Servant of Yahweh (cf. Is 53) cannot be very far away. The Servant was described as a “lamb led to the slaughter” – whereas here the emphasis of Christ’s humility is at center stage. Deutero-Isaiah stresses more the soteriological and vicarious value of the suffering of the Servant – whereas in the hymn to the Philippians there is much more emphasis on the exemplarity of Christ. Furthermore, the letter to the Philippians stresses much more the obedience of the Son.

#### i. Obedience unto Death... on the Cross

[1] The word UPEKOS means obedient, submitted, subjected to, give attention to, respond to. In the LXX the word is also used when referring to obedience to other human beings. (cf. Dt 20: 11; Jos 17:13; Pr 4:3; 13:1; 21:28). In the NT, too, the word is used in the same manner (cf. Ac 7:39; 2 Co 2:9).

[2] Some interpreters state that Christ here is being presented as “obedient” toward the heavenly Father. Others, though, find it difficult to see in what sense the

self-emptying of Christ would express “obedience” to the Father. At least it might be said that arguing from the text alone, it is not easy to see to whom Christ is obedient, and in what.

[3] Nonetheless, there are serious scholars who think that the theme of “obedience” is the central idea of the hymn. Some would even go so far as to see here the “existential, or filial” obedience of Jesus, that constitutes Him as the second person of the Blessed Trinity.

[4] However, “obedience” is mentioned only at this point – so, there are those who would see this quality of Jesus just an expression of His kenosis: He is the subject, the submitted One. This would manifest the habitual and characteristic attitude of Jesus – that attribute that He manifested all throughout His entire life, even unto death. This attitude of submission would be an expression of His kenosis, His tapeinosis.

[5] There is surely a close connection between Jesus’ freely chosen self-humiliation and His obedience. Paul is giving to the young community the example of Jesus, humbled and obedient – in such sharp contrast with their own attitude of striving for authority and power. Paul wants them to do away with their arrogance, and look instead to the picture of the obedient servant, Christ.

[6] Throughout the hymn there is clearly evident a kind of ethical motivation. The whole parenetic context would imply that Paul is trying to hold up for imitation the obedient, humble Servant.

[7] This verse manifests the supreme degree of the kenosis, i.e. the death of Christ. This particular document in an impressive manner reveals the extreme limitations of the earthly sojourn of Jesus. What Paul is asking for here is a kind of subordination, or the acceptance of all the consequences of being human. This is an obedience that does not hold back before any sacrifice, but is accepted right through to the end.

[8] The hymn does not speak about the redemptive value of the death of Jesus. It is simply mentioned as the opposite extreme of the “Lord” of all creation. Yet, the salvific value of the existence of Jesus seems to be presupposed in this hymn.

[9] The hymn specifically mentions the kind of death Jesus suffered. Even His death is an expression of humiliation, reserved for the most wretched of outcasts. The introduction of the word STAUROS, shows that the word was already of major importance for the mystery of redemption in the early faith. The “Cross” always implied the salvific moment of the death of Jesus – while the redemptive element is not expressly mentioned, it seems safe to say that it was presupposed.

[10] Philippi was a Roman colony – and it is most likely that the Roman horror for this kind of execution prevailed among the citizenry: it was thought of as the lowest depths to which one could be reduced. It was the extreme form of capital punishment, reserved for rebellious slaves. For the Jews, the cross was held in horror for another reason: cursed of God was anyone who hung from the tree (cf. Dt 21:22, f.). This

implied ex-communication from the covenant with God (cf. also Ga 3:13; 1 Co 1:23; Ga 5:11; 6:12; Ac 5:30) – it was an indication of the “anathema”, the ban (HEREM).

[11] Death alone would not necessarily be the depths of the KENOSIS or the TAPEINOSIS – but “death on the Cross” surely would be. There may be some indication in the document to the Hebrews: in place of the glory that was reserved for Jesus, He subjected Himself to the Cross, and thus came to sit at the right hand of God (cf. Heb 12:2). Thus, the hymn offers the very earliest understanding of the Cross – and sees it in a profound message for the Church of Philippi, and of all time.

[12] The depths of infamy and dishonor that the cross implies are the most profound aspects of the humiliation of Jesus. At the same time, throughout, they are contrasted with the dignity, the rights and the privileges that flow from His divine state, to which He has total right – but which He freely and fully renounced for the salvation of the world on the cross.

[13] Therefore, the progressive manifestation of the interior attitude of Jesus, through His kenosis and tapeinosis, as a total self-renunciation throughout His entire earthly sojourn, in the long run, could redound to His honor and advantage. Its most beautiful and paradoxical expression is found in His ignominious and painful death. The Cross offers a complete synthesis of the spirit that is Jesus Christ.

[14] To “put on the mind” of Christ Jesus means to imitate His kenosis and His tapeinosis, that He manifested throughout His earthly sojourn as self-emptying and self-humiliation, that reached their supreme expression in the Cross. The death on the Cross is the ultimate appeal to put away all ambitious self-seeking and pride.

#### j. COROLLARIES

[1] The hymn does have for many interpreters pastoral characteristics. It has an ethical-paradigmatic function, and this would explain the greater part of the linguistic characteristics. Paul’s hope is that the young Church might indeed become imbued with the Person of Jesus, particularly under the aspects of His kenosis and His tapeinosis.

[2] The divinity of Christ, along with His genuine humanity is clearly presented in this hymn. The question of the pre-existence of Christ, as being formally presented here, is disputed by some biblical scholars – even though many theologians would use this text to establish it. Many biblical interpreters sustain that the subject of the kenosis is the earthly Christ.

[3] The “condition” of Servant is understood primarily in a social sense, characterized by submission, humble service. The “condition” of God, for a believer, would include dominion, authority, and dignity. Thus, it is the attitude of Christ that is mostly emphasized here (perhaps more than dogmatic considerations). His was a voluntary choice of a manner of living, like a Servant. He did this, notwithstanding the fact that He could have called upon His divine dominion and rights even during the earthly sojourn.



[4] The “equality with God”, in conformity with His divine “condition”, implies the dignity, the rights, the privileges there belonged to Him. These might all be summed up in the one idea “glory”: His kenosis was not His own glory, but that of the Father. Christ never took advantage of what was rightfully His, for His own advantage. He did not vindicate His own rights for His own glory.

[5] For many biblical scholars, the word kenosis is used rather in a translated or metaphorical sense here. While theologians have used the text as a support for the thesis inherent in the Redemption and the Incarnation, the main emphasis here linguistically, seems to be on the extraordinary mystery and paradox that is Christ. The word is most often associated with the power of God, which will not be rendered vain, or inefficacious. The word seems to imply the total self-renunciation, freely and willingly undertaken by Christ, for the salvation of the world.

[6] The term DOULOS is of utmost importance here. On its interpretation depends much of what is implied in the hymn. It is clearly contrasted with THEOS and with KYRIOS. This offers the “content” of the kenosis that Christ freely undertook. During His earthly sojourn, Christ chose not to conduct Himself as God and the Lord of all – but rather as a Servant, deprived of all dignity, power and authority. This kenotic manner of being is Christ’s existential option, a free and personal choice. He carried this option through to the end: through humiliations, sacrifices and sufferings that His “condition” as servant implied.

[7] Perhaps beyond dogmatic concerns, the hymn is directly dedicated to suggesting the interior attitude of Christ, as a model for the Church. Thus, the kenosis has been described as the total self-renunciation on the part of Christ, of His divine “condition”, and of all that this implied. Throughout His entire earthly sojourn – until His death on the Cross – He manifested the attitude of servant.

**(NB: for pages 57-68 of these notes, cf. Josef Heriban, Retto phronein e kenosis. Studio esegetico su Fil 2:1-5, 6-11. Biblioteca di Scienze Religiose 51. LAS – ROMA 1983, pp. 210-320, passim).**

#### **k. The Exaltation of Christ**

[1] The process of self-emptying and self-humiliation of Christ reaches its most profound point in His death on the Cross. In the succeeding verses, there is a sharp contrast – even from a grammatical point of view.

[2] The language in verses 6-8 was quite concise – but, now, in these subsequent verses becomes much fuller – as can almost be noticed from the JB setting of the hymn. In the place of the often-used pronouns of the earlier section, in this last section one finds nouns and proper names.

[3] In the earlier section, Christ was the subject of His self-emptying; but in this third section, He becomes the object of the favors of God, and of the praise of the entire cosmos. The principal Subject of this third part is God Himself. The transition to this section is made quite clear by means of two antitheses: abasement/exaltation and DOULOS/KYRIOS.

[4] Some have tried to see in this contrast “two separate Christologies”: the suffering Christ, more from the Gnostic of the Church. But, such opinions have not made a great deal of headway in the view of scholars.

[5] Christ remains the “center” of both parts of the hymn: while in the first two sections, He is the “subject” of the verbs; now, in this concluding part, He is the “object” of the exaltation on the part of the Father. Christ, Who had chosen to be the DOULOS, here is raised to the glory of the KYRIOS. Thus, abasement and exaltation are not two separate Christologies – but two aspects of the same.

#### **I. Exaltation to Supreme Dignity**

- [1] The exaltation of Christ can be interpreted as God’s response to Christ’ humiliation. This is an indication of the divine “manner of acting”, God who raises up the lowly- and, is at the same time, a confirmation of Christ’s own principle: whoever humbles him/herself, will be exalted (cf. Lk 14:11, 18:14; Mt 23:12). What God has done for Christ, is meant to make the faithful reflect, and to lead them to humility in their mutual relationships.
- [2] A great many Catholic interpreters (as Fr. Prat, V. Taylor, D.M. Stanley) understand the exaltation of Christ as a reward for His meritorious act of His humiliation. Many protestant scholars maintain that Christ’s exaltation is merely an exercise of the authority of God, and the effect of grace.
- [3] The Greek word for “raised Him Up” (HYPERUXO) is another one of those “hapax legomena”, that are relatively so abundant in this passage. With the addition of the prefix, many scholars see this as comparable to the superlative degree – meaning that God has raised Him up to the highest level.
- [4] This “exaltation” of Christ is commonly interpreted to mean His esurrection and ascension. His “sitting at the right hand of God” is seen as His investiture with power, majesty and glory. The word “exaltation” is rather close to the word “resurrection” – in fact, in the Acts (cf. 2:32, f.; 5:30, f.) both expressions are used, that suggests their identity in the early Church understanding.
- [5] After the self-emptying and the self-humiliation of Christ, in His divine-human reality, He now receives as a gift that condition of dominion, and supreme authority. He had renounced this right of His, all through His earthly sojourn, by assuming the condition of the Servant.

#### **m. The Gift of the Name above all Names**

- [1] The exaltation of Jesus on the part of God is completed by the bestowal of the name superior to all others, one that has no parallel in all of the universe. This is the only NT passage that speaks of the bestowal of a CHARIS to Christ. The “right” that Jesus freely surrendered, is now bestowed on Him as a “grace”.

- [2] Great emphasis is given to THE name (with the definite article). The text, however, is silent concerning the content and identification of the name.

Three suggestions have been made through the years:

- “Jesus”
- “Jesus Christ”
- “Jesus Christ, the Lord.”

- [3] The accentuation is placed on the fact that God Himself bestows this name. With the repetition of the article, some have concluded that the implication here is that the name is that of God Himself. The “name” therefore, indicates “status”, rank, and office. All of this in Jesus’ regard is summarized by KYRIOS (in the OT, Yahweh). God, Who is the supreme possessor of all things, because He has created them, and sustains them in existence, is called KYRIOS.

- [4] Therefore, the “Lord” has the right to make use of creation, to demand submission of it, and to call it to adoration. Thus, God has conferred on Jesus the right and supreme authority, over all that exists in heaven and on earth (cf. Mt 28:18). Jesus thus participates in the very “Lordship” of God Himself. Throughout His earthly sojourn, by His free choice, Jesus assumed a “kenotic” state – now, He is exalted above all the universe, participates in the very dominion of God. Jesus exercises the same dominion over the universe as redeemer and savior, that God the Creator and Sanctifier does.

- n. **The Universal Homage to the Exalted Christ:** the scope of Jesus’ exaltation to the highest dignity of “Lordship” is presented in the concluding part of this hymn as universal homage. It includes ADORATION as well as CONFESSION:

**ADORATION: The Homage of the Entire Cosmos:**

- [1] The context suggests a kind of “consequence”: Jesus has been raised up, SO THAT all would worship Him. The divine plan is gradually realized the more that Jesus’ Name becomes the object of adoration and praise.
- [2] Some would call the adoration of Jesus’ name to be a “cultic” one: the confession of this Name would thus constitute an act that would accompany adoration. This would be the means to express emphatically the submission of all who are in heaven, on earth and under the earth. This would imply a cultic invocation of the Name of Jesus in prayer, and in praise – much like the Israelites called upon Yahweh, the God of the Covenant.
- [3] Others would offer a broader interpretation: whenever the name of Jesus is mentioned, all would prostrate themselves in a sign of adoration and submission to His Lordship. In this interpretation, the phrase is not a formula

of invocation that accompanies cultic adoration, but indicates the reason for submission to Jesus' authority. This would simply mean the recognition of Jesus' dominion perhaps on a "cosmic" level.

- [4] The universal homage that is offered to Jesus is described in terms borrowed from the "Book of Consolation": before me (Yahweh) every knee shall bend, by Me every tongue shall swear (cf. Is 45:23). The text also adds "on the earth", above it and below it. This seems to indicate a universality of adoration.

[a] Some have understood this three-fold expression merely to be a simple rhetorical and pleonastic expression – one that would indicate the totality of the created world.

[b] But other scholars take this three-fold division of the universe even more literally: there is meant here a clear distinction of the beings that populate these different areas, in accord with the cosmology of the ancients. Thus, a considerable number of exegetes interpret the phrase to mean:

- **the angels of heaven:**
- **all of humanity on earth;**
- **and the inhabitants of SHEOL, or the demons.**

[c] More recent interpreters understand here a sense of totality – and that the Lord will be worshipped even by those spiritual powers, dwelling in the celestial spaces, on earth, and under it, hostile to God. These will be dominated.

[d] There may here be a rejection of those beliefs that all of life is determined by horoscopes, or other powerful beings, that take over human existence. (The Babylonians and the Persians, who deeply affected the people of God in the OT, had a rather highly developed astronomy).

- [5] The confessions of faith of the early Church expressed emphatically the submission of the invisible powers to the Lordship of Jesus Christ (cf. Rm 8:38, ff.; 1 P 3:22; 1 Tm 3:16). "Jesus Christ is Lord" also forms part of the exorcisms. There is likewise described in the NT faith the victory of Christ over those powers hostile to humanity (cf. also Heb 1:6; Ep 1:22).
- [6] More simply, many interpreters see in this passage merely a NT expression of the OT celebration of the Lordship of Yahweh. This adoration may be noted in many OT passages, and it has its root in the deep faith of ancient Israel, which professed that Yahweh is the One God and Lord of the universe. To Him are to be attributed all praise and adoration – not only on the part of the chosen people, but on the part of all peoples of the universe (cf. E.g. Ps 47:3,8; 83:19; 97:5,9; 103: 19; 1 Ch 29:11, f.).

[7] There are OT passages that express the hope that the times would come in which the regality and the Lordship of Yahweh would be made manifest to the whole world. When those days came, then all the peoples of the earth – even those who had previously rejected them – would be prostrate before Him, to praise Him and to adore Him (cf. Is 40: 1-11; 52: 7-10). Among these texts is Is 45: 22-25, referred to in this hymn to the Philippians.

[a] All creatures are called to recognize the Lordship of Yahweh, simply because He is the Creator, the Lord of the world (cf. Is 45:18; 48:13). This recognition is also asked of those who were once the enemies of God. The Lord will achieve this scope, not with a forced submission, or with the destruction of His adversaries. He will do it by gradually convincing them, and guiding them to Himself – so that, in His time, all the peoples of the world will confess Him as Lord, thus sharing in His salvation.

[b] Il-Is's idea is shared also by other OT writings (cf. Ps 86:9; 102: 13-23; Sp 14:9). A vivid expectance of the manifestation of the Lord was kept much alive in certain circles of late Judaism. The synagogal liturgy offered many prayers for this purpose.

[8] In the many texts noted thus far, one finds a particular emphasis on the one hand, given to the “honor”, or rather the “glory” (KABOD/DOXA) of God – and, on the other hand, to the greatness of His Name. To recognize the royal lordship of God means to recognize His incomparable glory. Thus, two concepts come together: the divine GLORY and the divine NAME.

[9] Is 45: 23 is the “classical text” of the OT profession according to which Yahweh is the one God, and Lord of the universe. Thus, the author of the hymn to the Philippians has made use of this passage to describe the elevation of Christ to supreme lordship. Thus, Is 45: 23 appears in the NT (cf. Rm 14:11; Ph 2:10, f.) to express this adoration.

[10] Nonetheless, Ph 2 adds something to this “classical text” of Isaiah: while the OT passages speak of the adoration on the part of humanity alone – Ph 2 adds the homage of the entire cosmos. “Cosmic adoration” includes all the beings capable of such a response of praise, in the vast arc of the universal creation of God: the “spirits” in heaven (cf. Is 6:3; Ne 9:6; Heb 1:6), those living on earth – and the dead in SHEOL (cf. Ps 22:30).

**o. Confession: *Jesus Christ is Lord!***

- [1] The homage offered to the exalted Christ is articulated in an “EXOMOLOGESIS.” Adoration (PROSKYNESIS) becomes confession.
- [2] “To bend the knees” indicates a gesture of submission – also used by the slaves in the ancient East. However, it also had a religious connotation, a sign of worship before the deity. As an act of cult, genuflection is a characteristic gesture of adoration and homage directed to God. It is owed to Him, in recognition for His majesty, power and sovereignty (cf. Ps 95: 6; Ep 3:14).
- [3] The bodily gestures of adoration must also be accompanied by the heartfelt confession of the lips. This confession with lips is already a kind of praise, a celebrating the supreme dignity of God. Thus, the acclamation of Jesus as the KYRIOS is considered to be a public profession of faith (cf. Rm 10: 9; 1 Co 12:3).
- [4] Some would see the confession of the lips in a more “bland” sense of “admitting” that Jesus is Lord. This would be the mere recognition of His right.
- [5] The solemn phraseology seems to offer a formula for worship. This hymn would seem to lend its support to a kind of liturgical context for it all: in this one phrase: Jesus Christ is Lord: the Church has offered both adoration and confession.
- [6] Yet, this adoring profession of faith was never meant to be merely a kind of “definition”, or a juridical or legal expression of the Church’s faith. Confession and adoration together are meant to be a kind of celebration. These formulae are found in different places of the OT – as the Prophet Elijah professing his faith in Yahweh (cf. 1 K 18:39); the description of the divine glory in the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the Temple (cf. 2 Ch 7:3).
- [7] With the solemnity that surrounds this text, and with the inclusion of the “triad” concerning the source of the adoration, there is further indication that this expression is not merely a formal “definition.” We are being offered a model for confession as well as for profession.
- [8] There is generally agreed that this hymn does make an act of faith: Jesus has been exalted, and given a name beyond all, because of the Paschal Mystery. Yet, at the same time, there are eschatological overtones: Jesus, in fact, is not yet the “Lord” in the minds and hearts of many. The hymn is also a prayer that indeed, in time, He will be. Due to the present condition of

the Church, the difficulties and opposition she meets on all sides, the hostile powers are not yet subject to the Prince of Peace. The idea of “conflict” and tension permeates the entire Pauline corpus of writings. This is generally true of much of the early Christian literature. Christ Himself showed on a number of instances that He did expect opposition, and that He looked forward to the day of total victory (cf. 1 Co 15:25; Rm 16:20; Heb 2:8; 10:13). The Church will be immersed in continual conflict with the powers of evil and will be the object of cruel persecution (cf. Ep 6:10. ff.; Ph 1:28, ff.; 1 Th 2:18; 3:5; 2 Tm 2: 8 ff., Ap 2-3; 12; 17).

- [9] Perhaps the “high point” of the entire Christological hymn is this final profession of faith. The cosmos confesses that Jesus is the Lord, with all the emphasis on this last word.
- [10] “Jesus Christ”, of course, is a proper name, a person known to the faithful. *KYRIOS* indicates His “state.” The Greeks would not have understood the Hebrew title “Messiah”, so there was needed a title they would understand. Based on the prophetic promise (cf. Jl 3:5), the early community was convinced that at the invocation of the name of Jesus as “Lord”, eschatological salvation had dawned (cf. Rm 10:13).

p. **Final Doxology: To The Glory of God the Father**

- [1] Some interpreters have held that Paul most likely added this line later. But even those who hold that it was a part of the original hymn, are hard pressed to determine its true significance in the context of this hymn. Two possible variations are:
- every tongue should confess, to the glory of God the Father, that Jesus Christ is the Lord. In this case, the confession itself redounds to the glory of God the Father.
  - So that every tongue should confess: Jesus Christ is the Lord, for the glory of God the Father.
- [2] There is no rivalry, competition, within God. The entire hymn Emphasizes throughout that the central attitude of Christ was not to take advantage of His particular “condition.” Jesus has chosen the way of self-emptying, and self-humiliation – and for this, He received from God as a gift, the supremacy over the entire cosmos. Nonetheless, even being raised up I exalted glory, Jesus remains the “Son” – He could not exercise the divine glory solely in His own behalf, but all of it is directed to God, the Father, the source of all goodness.

- [3] The doxology can include the entire hymn. The complete process of the kenosis, the abasement – and the subsequent exaltation and universal homage – all of this is for the glory of God the Father.

(NB for pages 78-83, of these notes, cf. Josef Heriban, Retto PHRONEIN e KENOSIS. Studio esegetico di Fil 2:1-5, 6-11 Biblioteca di Scienze Religiose – 51. LAS – ROMA 1983, pp. 321-367)

□□□

[II] ... *And whatever belongs to me Placing everything under your protection ...*

### A Lived Poverty

#### The Following of the Poor Christ in Today's World

1. **Modern Appreciation of the Witness of Poverty:** the Council consecrated **PC 13** to religious poverty: its first observation is to state forthrightly that today especially poverty is a sign that is much appreciated in the following of Christ, and that consequently, it ought to be cultivated diligently by religious - with a kind of predilection!

a. **The Present World:** offers a paradox of being, on the one hand, polarized by economic problems, dominated by money and the frantic preoccupation of accumulating material goods: one of Marx's primary statements was that economics is in the first place! - and then, that close to 80% of the world suffers monstrous underdevelopment and poverty. It is a world of a bitter quest after gain, and yet the ever-present misery of so many human beings - a world of frightful inequality, jealousy, hatred and violence.

However, the Council had already pointed out this awful situation in **GS 63 c**, where it is stated: there are not lacking reasons for concern. Not a few human beings, especially in those regions that are economically developed, who come across as governed solely by the needs of the economy, so that almost their entire personal and social life is consumed by the financial mentality, which is diffused both in those areas of the globe dominated by a collectivist economy than in others. At one and the same time in which there is development of the economic life, even though this is orientated and coordinated in a rational and human manner, which might promise an attenuation of the social disparities. Too often, though, this scene is changed over, because of aggravating circumstances, or in some countries it is even due to the falling behind of the social conditions of the weak, and a downright disdain of the poor. While immense crowds lack the absolute necessities, some even in lands that are less developed, live in opulence, or dissipate their goods. Luxury is so often in the company of misery. And while only a few men dispose of a more than sufficient power to act on their own initiative, or under their own real responsibilities, very often they allow millions to remain in conditions of life, or of daily work, that are unworthy of a human being. In a world such as this, voluntary poverty, in the measure that it is presented in forms that are both visible and understandable would possess an enormous power of impact.



**b. The Church Today:** has an urgent need of this vigorous testimony. In fact, for a long time it has appeared, and still appears to many, as bound up with the rich and with the powers of money. The greatest scandal of our time, Pius XIth once said, is that Christianity has lost the working classes. The impression of so many among the young is that priests have an easy life - the best cars - they can buy whatever they want. This judgment, admittedly, is somewhat unilateral - but, it is a fairly common perception. Even in the light of so many beautiful social documents on the part of the official Magisterium, one is reminded of the late communist's remarks, the scholar Roger Garaudy, in a televised debate with Cardinal Danielou, S.J.: **there is nothing wrong with your Church's documents - but who reads them, lives them?** It is a challenge, for all religious, to keep in mind the impression of the 'men of the cloth' give regarding their life-style.

This seems to be all the more challenging for the Church in the post-Conciliar time - it has to be the Church of the Poor Christ. Several eloquent voices rang out during the Council proceedings - as also since in the magnificent Magisterium of John Paul II. The Church is being called to distance itself from the centers of financial and political power and return to being the Church of the Beatitudes and so, the Church of the Poor. This will involve an immense conversion, but it would inspire an immense hope, and religious need to bring their most necessary and unique support to this undertaking.

**c. Religious Poverty Today:** are being called insistently to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, of powerfully rich and miserably poor. Religious are called to hasten the revelation of the authentic face of the Church, dedicated above all to the poor. With their vowed detachment and with their parsimonious manner of using the goods of this world, they are called to indicate vigorously that all these goods do not merit any regard, other than in the exact measure in which they are placed at the service of every human being and of each one's material and spiritual development. By means of Poverty, the religious participate in the same poverty of Jesus Christ, Who, rich as he was, became poor, made Himself poor out of love for us, so that He might render us rich in His poverty [cf. 2 Co 8:9]. In virtue of this participation, the poverty of religious assumes the same meaning and efficacy of that of Jesus Christ. With His despoilment, He has enriched the whole world: He enriches it certainly under the spiritual aspect, but also under the material aspect, contributing to a better division of goods and to a communion of love.

Thus, the Council addresses an appeal in this matter, to the spirit of invention of religious. It asks them to adapt the forms of their poverty to the evolving situation and to the concrete demands of this present world, so that such poverty might be realistically fertile: if it will be necessary, let them find new forms to express their poverty.

**2. The Meaning of Consecrated Poverty:** in a sober, but firm manner, the Council presents religious poverty as an **evangelical mystery**: PC 13 contains 8 explicit NT references. Poverty is inserted within the same positive meaning of chastity. It only has meaning in relationship to love. It is a liberation in order to love

better, more - and permits love to express itself in **four directions**, or rather, if one would want, in **two directions**, vertical and horizontal, which each time go both ways:

a. **A Love of Likeness and union with Christ: this is Poverty as Detachment:** in this first aspect, material goods and money are seen in their relationship with other more decisive goods: they appear therefore, as having a very relative value, and often prove to be dangerous. With voluntary poverty, the religious decides not to base his life on them, but rather on God the Father, imitating Jesus Christ.

The beginning of **PC 13** proposes a very simple definition of religious poverty, but which enjoys a n admirable precision: poverty that is voluntarily embraced is done so in order to place one in the following of Christ. Here we are once more before the theme of the *sequela Christi*. For the greater number of people, poverty is nothing other than an economic or social reality. It is suffered, not **chosen!** Of itself, it has no spiritual value. Religious poverty is voluntary. But, it is not simply to free one from the preoccupations of money that the religious makes himself poor. Commenting on the words of St. Peter to Jesus: *We have left all things in order to follow You!* [cf. Mk 10:28], St. Jerome explains: what is really important here is not that *we have left all things* - since this could be done as well by the philosopher Cratete, and many others know how to express their disdain for wealth. What is important is the motivating purpose of religious poverty: it is **to follow You!** - this is what is proper to authentic Apostolic Missionaries and committed believers.

The Gospel brings us before typical proofs and tragic as well, of the power that wealth obtains to harden the human heart, and to block generosity to the appeals of God. The rich young man was a fine youth, upright and pure. Of him, Jesus said with personal assurance that he had looked upon him with predilection. But, to Christ's appeal the wealthy lad responds negatively, and this was 'because he enjoyed great wealth!' [cf. Mk 10:17-28]. In the group of the Apostles themselves, there will be Judas, a living proof of the necessary choice placed before us: the love for 30 pieces of silver would prove sufficient in order to kill off in him love toward his Good Master. Avidity had its sinister place within the mystery of sin which sent the Son of the living God to His death on the Cross.

And this is a story that is lived out each day. Jesus announced in parables that the seed of His word is suffocated by the thorns of seductive wealth [cf. Mt 13:22], and that the invitation to the banquet of His Lord encounters the refusal of those who are concerned with the sole care of earthy goods: I beseech You, Lord, to hold me excused, but I have just bought some land! - or, five pair of oxen. Then the Lord says to His servant: Go, quickly to the squares and the highways of the city and bring in here the poor! [cf. Lk 14:15-21].

Precisely this movement of faith, founded on Poverty of Spirit, the religious expresses with all the vigor of his detachment even that external. And thus, he can follow Jesus Christ, more closely, according to the three-fold love of **similarity, union and service**. I love the poverty of Jesus Christ simply because Christ loved it first! This is the language of the saints from St. Francis of Assisi, all the way to our own

times with Charles de Foucauld, from Pascal to Pope John 23rd, who said: I am poor, thanks be to God, and I intend to die this way! The religious, in the Council's thought, has been made a participant of such poverty which marks clearly all the stages of the life of Jesus Christ: Bethlehem, Nazareth, His public life, the despoilment of the Cross - and it adds that thus one possesses his treasure in heaven. If one despoils himself from his material goods, it is only in order to find in the Risen Christ one's authentic wealth: My God and my All!, and in order to tend more ardently toward the possession of eternal goods.

**b. The Love of Dependence and of Confidence before the Heavenly Father: Poverty which is Dependence:** in fact, if Jesus Christ had chosen to live as a poor man it is because such poverty rendered more simple for Him that very pure form of **filial love** before His Heavenly Father, and this is sometimes called **Holy Abandonment**. By accepting to be poor as He was, the religious participates equally in the depths of that **filial** love. In the freedom of the sons of God, **LG 42 e** explains, each one takes on poverty. PC 13 c invites each one to distance from himself every excessive concern and to entrust oneself to the Providence of the Heavenly Father.

The rich young man is tempted to forget all about God, since he does not experience the need of His help: his wealth above all when accumulated for oneself, leads one to place more and more all confidence in himself, and one's assurance in his own goods. It is striking to note that **Atheism** is born in the wealthy West in an explicit manner, in the rich countries, and those wealthy in injustice. The rich are the first ones invited by God to avariciously despoil the poor, who thus lose the faith. Therefore, they lose their very selves, from the moment that God had become useless for them.

The poor man, at least in the evangelical sense, works hard for his 'daily' bread, which he knows has been assured to him by his Heavenly Father. As for the future, certainly, that he concerns himself about this, he foresees but without any real concerns, without despair, with out maddening obsession. He has confidence, is abandoned to the paternal providence of the One who nourishes the birds of the air and vests the lilies of the field.

The religious has made his vows to God, and God is his Father, who takes care of each one. From the hand of God such a committed believer receives all, through his superior, the 'father' superior. And this goes on day after day, down through the years of life. Who could better say: *Give us this day our daily bread!* Such a person is situated in a perpetual dependence, which leads to a continuing act of thanksgiving, for all that has been received, and a perpetual trust for all that each one will receive. He is like Israel in the desert: to live and to go ahead, such a dedicated religious counts above all on his God who accompanies him and nourishes him. It needs to be recalled, of course, that such trust will never lead either to laziness or any neglect of effort.

And it is this sign of a more radical dependence: in all our natural being and even more so in all our being and life of grace, and in our every apostolic mission, we receive from God, we depend on His initiative of love, we are His children, who await

from Him the faith, grace, hope, love, strength, zeal, peace! And it is evident that or poverty from material goods favors singularly in us, as by transposition, the sense of this radical need of God. All of our virtues, all of our merits, all of our spiritual progress, all of our apostolic successes and intellectual conquests - all of these are incessant gifts of the grace of God.

**c. Love of Fraternity for the Members of our own Congregation: Poverty as Exchange:** from another perspective, material goods and money are seen for themselves: they appear in their own consistency, in their value of necessity and utility for human life. With voluntary poverty, the religious decides to make them serve the common good of the fraternal community, and the community itself decides to make these serve for the good of the poorer human brothers and sisters.

Poverty, therefore, is one means to realize a community of love and of apostolic mission. On the one hand, there is renounced having those goods that are strictly personal, of which one might enjoy a personal possession, since this would signify creating differences, distinctions, jealousies, divisions as happens in our world: this is mine, and not yours! Then, on the other hand, in a positive sense, each one would bring his own goods, his energies, talents personal resources, his diplomas - each one labors for all and gains life for all. Correlatively, each one receives in accord with his concrete needs. Solidarity works in two senses: to receive and to give; each is useful for all, and each one has need of all. A two-fold series of ties thus unites all the members of the community. With egalitarianism however: each one gives according to his possibilities and each one receives according to his needs, in the respect of one's personal, concrete being.

This ideal seems to be ever more important in our time. It was noted in the beautiful original text put together in 1963, which then was not finally accepted in the interests of simplification: those who live without personal goods reproduce eminently that fraternal life of Christians, which at the origins of the Church, lived in equality, and they placed all in common. They manifested also the fraternity of the redeemed. They announced lastly that the future life of the family of God was present, in which the children of one and the same identical Father will hold all things in common. Thus, the religious life begins with that of the early Church in the historical Jerusalem in which the first Christians had made their experience of life in common in mutual love and shared poverty, and tends toward the heavenly Jerusalem, in which that common life will find its perfection in a total love and in a total poverty. Whenever in a community there are divisions, jealousies, conflicts, these happen in fact often because some members are unfaithful to the authentic exchange, in a spirit of poverty.

**d. A love of Solidarity and of Service toward the Poor: Poverty as Service:** all religious, the council teaches [PC 13] ought to love the poor in the mercy of Jesus Christ. And there are four NT references, especially Mt 25:35: *I was hungry and you gave me to eat!* Through voluntary poverty, in fact, one reaches not only the poor Christ, but all the poor of whom Christ has chosen to be their Brother in their wretchedness to the point of being identified in some manner, with all of them. A religious ought to find himself at his ease with the poor as well as with the rich; and if he finds himself at home with the rich, each should be, as Christ, in order to think of

them without their blemishes and ought to commit oneself and whatever they have to offer, in a generous service of the poor.

However, the religious ought not to content himself in merely affective poverty, by loving the poor in his heart; but each one is being called to help them and to serve them with predilection: he ought to enrich them with his own poverty, bringing to them when possible those material helps that might be necessary, and also their spiritual riches: the poor are to be evangelized! [cf. Lk 7:22]. The announcement of the Good News to the poor is one of the signs of the coming and of the advance of the reign of God!

**3. The Directives of the Council for Individual Poverty:** in this Gospel context, the Council chose to touch on a certain number of practical points relative to individual and collective poverty. For the practice of individual poverty, there are three directives:

**a. To live poverty personally:** above all when a community has financial possibilities, there might be installed among the religious a legalistic mentality that destroys every real poverty and the very spirit of the Beatitudes: from the moment that they have asked permission, they think that they are within the rule, even for certain expenses and certain comforts that really are not necessary! The ultimate rule that should not be abused: only for what would render a better apostolic service.

When it is a question of religious who are either not very spiritual, or downright immature, they might ask for all that they desire, leaving to the superior the entire responsibility of judgment. This puts the superior in a difficult position: if he gives in to every request, he then is an accomplice in the decadence; if he refuses sometimes, he knows all too well that he will embitter the confreres and will lose little by little their confidence. Therefore, he often gives in and just as often, perhaps, with objective remorse!

The Council states that religious who ask without judgment are really not genuinely poor: it is not enough to be subject to superiors in the use of material goods, but there is required that the religious should practice both an external as well as an internal poverty - that all be poor in spirit but also in fact! The religious himself is the prime responsible for the external and internal poverty - he must judge before hand, in the light of the Holy Spirit, whether it is right for him to ask, or not, the authorization for this acquisition, or that expense. The superior ought to be able to give with generosity, precisely because the requests should be discreet: in order that the superiors might indeed grant to those requesting it that which they are asking for, try to motivate them to ask precisely for that which is pleasing to You, o Lord - a prayer for the IXth Sunday after Pentecost.

**b. To Gain One's Living by the Sweat of One's Brow:** in the 13th century, the most notable testimony of poverty was the Mendicants, the beggars - and from this phenomenon, arose the Mendicant Orders, as contrasted with the rich Abbeys that were so well endowed. Today, such witness is entrusted to serious hard work, one that is technically valid, whether it be manual or intellectual.

In the present society, the *rich* person is one who disposes of abundant comforts which dispense him from the rudeness of hard work, and leave him a broad margin of security. The one who has broad availability which would permit him to enjoy his goods, his own time, and a certain consideration from the lesser endowed, with much comfort and personal satisfaction; He is the person who is comfortably installed in his social life. And the *poor* person is not so much the one who dresses in rags, or eats his soup in a bucket, or tin - rather, the poor man is one who has to gain his daily bread with the sweat of his brow, day after day, in the harsh work and in hope. It is for this reason that the Council declares: religious, each in their own office, should experience the need to obey the common law of labor, and while in this mode, they procure the means necessary for their sustenance and their works - but, who entrust themselves confidently to Divine Providence.

For too long a time, religious have been considered as lazy and as parasites in society. Now, the genuinely poor feel that they more than others are subjected to the universal law of work. What work? The forms are extremely varied from one religious community to another, different for individuals within the community, for the contemplatives and for those who are active. Let us note only that these religious lead a common life: each one is called to work, but this does not mean that each one will gain his own personal bread, and that all will be applied to a profitable job, or one that is paid, as working in a factory, with benefits. Adequate work of all makes all live within the community and its works. It is required moreover to say that many tasks that are spiritually most important [as missionary work, catechesis, work in poor neighborhoods] are remunerated very badly from an economic point of view, and they do not offer sufficient means to enable the religious community to live: these, then, ought to be helped by the charity of other communities endowed with greater means.

**c. To Offer Each One the Possibility to realize Total Gospel Poverty:**

PC 13 d makes this statement: the religious congregations in their Constitutions can permit that their members might renounce their patrimonial goods acquired or which will be eventually acquired. This brief statement is an authentic revolution. For many centuries, according to the old Roman legislation, it was not licit for the immense majority of religious, even those of simple vows to abandon the ownership of their own goods: they renounced only the use of such goods, and this for historical and sociological reasons of different types. By a surprising paradox, which manifests to what point juridicism might succeed in destroying the authentic gospel spirit, these religious were the only persons in the world to whom it was prohibited to surrender their own goods in order to follow the needs of the Gospel: Go, and sell ALL that you have, give to the poor and follow ME!

From now on, all the congregations can permit this to all those who would like to do it, naturally without imposing obligations on anyone else. This means in practice that all religious indistinctly might be able to emit the solemn vow of poverty. They will thus be led to support themselves ever more on their own work and on the community, while this latter will avoid all enrichment, thanks to a second series of directives presented by the Council.

#### 4. Council Directives for a Collective Witness of Poverty [cf. PC 13 e-f]:

**a. The Old Mentality:** From the point of view of collective poverty, the Council introduces new perspectives. After many centuries, even here, a species of a religious state of patrimony, had been introduced into the spirit as well as into the laws. It used to be thought: from the moment that religious practice personally poverty - the community: either the abbacy, or the congregation, can [and some would say, *should*] possess, acquire, administer material goods, even though of considerable value. It is clear, according to the History of the Church, that the great capitalists of the Middle Ages, even up to the 19th century, were - after the royal families - the abbacies and the religious orders. And this did not always prove to be beneficial to the faith. Every now and then a Saint would appear, a Founder, or a Foundress -like St. Francis of Assisi, or St. Teresa of Avila - attempted to obtain from this point of view, **the privilege of poverty!** It is true that then it seemed difficult to make the community live without a certain economic assets, assured by a solid capital.

The Council certainly did not suppress for the communities and the congregations the right of acquiring or of possessing: but, it wished to integrate this two-fold right to an evangelical and apostolic spirit, which tended to exclude collective wealth and all its many dangers.

#### **b. Positive Prescriptions:**

[1] The religious institutes themselves, keeping in mind the conditions of the individual places, ought to seek to give an almost collective witness of poverty. Congregations and Communities ought to be concerned of the effect that they exercise on believers, and on non-believers as well, who live around them and know them: how are they judged?

It will be noted that the Council uses in this regard certain nuanced formulae, almost embarrassed: a *quasi* collective witness! The Council urges that communities do whatever they can in this regard. Why are there such formulae as these? The reason is the realism of the Council: it knows that it is not always possible to witness visibly beginning from the moment that the institution assumes a certain breadth. A community of three or four brothers or sisters could live quite well in simple external conditions. But, a more vast community, of 20-40 persons, even when they are contemplative, will necessarily need a certain breadth of locales and space. A large hospital, or college, or professional school, a modern printing establishment: will simply not be able, as such, to give the appearance of being truly poor: the means of such institutes of necessity will be heavy and complex, materials are manifold and it is difficult to reduce these.

As a result, each institute needs to find its own style of poverty and naturally, in an institute, each community, always with a view to its specific purpose, and also, as the Council makes clear, this will always be with a view toward the places, the area in which they are found, the climates, races and other circumstances. Chastity and Obedience have only one manner of being

practiced - but, it is necessary to accept that there are many differing concrete ways to be poor, especially in a collective manner. Nonetheless, even for the community and the institutes of a certain social level, remains always open for exhibiting a manner of witness: this is the royal path of charity.

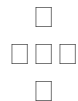
**[2]** A second prescription as the Council continues: they will all willingly destine a certain part of their goods in three directions:

- for other necessities of the Church - this is an extremely broad field: the Church in her institutions, in her works, missions, but even more so in her concrete members;
- for the sustenance of the poor: they have the right to be helped in the first place. In this help there is included also a total participation in a more just world;
- finally, the maintenance of the poorer communities of the Province, or other poorer Provinces. This paragraph has evoked sadness in some circles: sometimes in juridical rules the religious have been imprisoned, by those laws of accountability have become so entangled that it was necessary to have a General Church Council that would dictate to them what should be done spontaneously in families, among friends and neighbors: divide fraternally the goods of the family!

**c. Negative Prescriptions:** finally, the Council in the last paragraph of PC 13, indicates certain negative dispositions. If it should prove rather difficult at times to render collectively a clear witness of poverty, it is always possible at least to avoid a counter-testimony. For this reason, the Council forbids religious communities of manifesting the possession of anything that it is not necessary for their sustenance and for their life. There should be avoided even the appearance of the following:

- luxury;
- excessive gain;
- the accumulation of goods.

Rather than accumulate, the challenge is now to donate, to share - to place everything at the service of love, and to show in this manner that the Church and Her Christ the Lord have as their soul and purpose, Christian charity!





[I] ... Obtain for me, dear Lady, purity of soul and body...

## Chastity and Celibacy

### The Following of the Chaste Christ in Today's World

#### 1. The Present Human and Christian Importance of Consecrated Virginit

a. Among the Counsels, there stands out [*emine*] **Consecrated Virginit**: from the 13th century on, both in the theological presentation, as well as in spiritual literature, the three evangelical counsels were presented in this order: **poverty, chastity and obedience**. There was thought to be a certain logical succession in these, in that it seemed that the renunciation began with the surrender of those exterior goods, to tend, then, toward those goods that are more interior: those of one's own body, and then ultimately the supreme good of one's own will. Now, in all the texts, the Council has broken with tradition: it generally adopts this order: **chastity, poverty and obedience**<sup>263</sup>. There are reasons behind this evident choice, in that this was the more ancient order of presenting the theological virtues:

- **biblical reason**, first of all: in the Gospel and in St. Paul, the appeal to consecrated virginit is that, of the three evangelical counsels, this is the most clearly supported. Hence, obedience as a counsel is not found there with any direct support, except through the example of Jesus Christ<sup>264</sup>.

- **historical reason**: it is consecrated virginit which is attested to as the first official realization of a **total gift of oneself** in the Church: the religious life draws its concrete origin from the groups of virgins and widows. These came into being as a kind of 'exchange' for the earlier martyrs in signifying the most sublime form of the consecrated life. In the Liturgy, the profession of religious assumes the form of a Consecration of Virgins. On the other hand, of all the elements of the religious life, through the immense variety of their concrete realization, consecrated virginit appears as the most stable element and the least diversified: it is a species of fundamental element of all the historical forms of the consecrated life.

- **doctrinal reason**: it seems that it might be said legitimately that chastity is that of the three vows which, concretely for the people of this world, results as the most transparent sign and the most surprising of consecration to the Lord. It is that, therefore, that evokes such consecration in its most typical aspect of union with Jesus Christ, through mutual love; as it is that counsel, in fact, which signifies better the mystery of the **Church-Spouse** and its Eschatological Dimension: heaven is presented to us in the Apocalypse under the image of the **Nuptials** of the Engaged Bride and the Lamb [cf. Rv 19:7; 21:2-9].

<sup>263</sup> cf. LG 42 d, e; 43; PC 12-14].

<sup>264</sup> cf. LG 42.

However, no one should give to these reasons any absolute value, nor create too total the rupture between these three vows. These are actually **three aspects of the same mystery**. The Council, however, has restored to consecrated virginity a certain primacy. This fact coincides moreover with a series of facts:

**b. Today's reality:** with regard to Chastity and to the problems which pertain to it, the contemporary age has brought a new contribution that is quite important that cannot be neglected if anyone would like to comprehend how the problems concretely present themselves. The following need to be kept in mind:

- **the scientific discovery of sexuality:** from the biological and psychological point of view, there may be taken seriously the fact that each human is a sexual being. It is quite clear to any careful observer than human nature, 'in general', or in the abstract, never existed: it exists only as realized concretely in a masculine or feminine way. In grammar, there are neuter substantives and pronouns - but, in humanity there are either men or women, and nothing else. And it is this aspect of nature that is profound and signs being in its totality - not only the body, but the soul and all its faculties are marked with this sexual difference. There is a masculine manner and a feminine way of thinking, imagining, of loving, of acting, reacting - in brief, there are two directions in psychology.

- **from the educational point of view:** after Freud, it became clearer that the integration of the sexual realities is fundamental for the building up of personality. Not to arrive at situating oneself in an authentic manner as man in the presence of woman, and reciprocally. This is so in all the phases of growth, and failing to note this, means to expose oneself to disturbances more or less grave and to impede development in any harmonious manner.

- **from the philosophical and theological point of view:** one has sought out the meaning to this phenomenon. Nature means that God, in the final analysis, has willed that the human being should be a sexual reality. And this is not simply a biological necessity of procreation. God could very well have been able to have human beings spring in other ways. The profound meaning of sexuality refers more profoundly to the very reality of 'person': in all of each one's entire being, man is ordered toward woman, and woman toward man: sexuality is the inscription within human flesh itself and within each one's entire being, of this fact that the human person is unthinkable in isolation: the human person is **essentially relative** to the other, made for the other, and for one dissimilar to him/herself. Each human is only a person by means of the 'other' - the 'we' of society does not suppress these two differences - it includes them and harmonizes them.

And if we seek to clarify this data with the light of faith, we will be able to say that this **being toward** of man toward woman is nothing other than the outline of a movement which, in the end, reaches God Himself, the Supreme Other, the Absolute *Thou*, a community of inter-related Persons. It is precisely this that will permit us to say that virginity conceived as a **profound relationship of love with God**, far from frustrating us, **completes us**: it permits us to go directly and with one thrust, beyond all carnal expression, to the ultimate reality signified by sexuality. And thus,

consecrated virginity confers its whole weight on sexuality and reveals its meaning quite vigorously: it is a fact that virginity would educate all toward a civility of otherness: the lands in which this is not appreciated are often those in which there is not respected any more the 'human' value of conjugal love.

**c. A Second Series of Facts:** the promotion of woman, mixing in with one another which has become more customary, has led to the extraordinary deepening of the understanding of human love and matrimony, and of its possibilities of an ever deeper interpersonal relationship, on many levels, spiritual, affective and physiological. And correlatively, the discovery in the Church of the deeper meaning of the Sacrament of Matrimony, and the marvelous development of a conjugal spirituality. So often the priest who has contacts with groups of couples and of families, is struck by the wealth of their spiritual development. The Conciliar Church has given to this a kind of official consecration in LG and GS <sup>265</sup>. These facts bring out all the more the unusual character of consecrated virginity and bring it to bear in comparing with conjugal love, to justify better its own **superiority**, without however, ever lessening the values of human love. Rather, it has long been the teaching of the Church, the need to clarify the supreme values inherent in all Christian vocations. These words need to be remembered:

...As a way of showing forth the Church's holiness, it is to be recognized that the consecrated life, which mirrors Christ's own way of life, has an **objective superiority**...The Church has always taught the **pre-eminence** of perfect chastity for the sake of the kingdom, and rightly considers it the 'door' of the whole consecrated life ... <sup>266</sup> .

**d. A Third Series of Facts:** the actual difficulties of consecrated virginity and of priestly celibacy need to be noted: There are two central obstacles, in the minds of many:

- **on the level of life:** it is necessary to live such virginity in a large manner, lacking in faith - which renders also married life very difficult. Eroticism and sexual freedom have their impact on customs, in the press, in the movies, in songs, in advertising. All this might not as deeply impact the contemplatives - as it might the Apostolic Missionaries, who up to a certain point have to have regular contact with the concrete world, cannot help but be effected by all this.

- **on the level of thought:** virginity is publicly contested, as is priestly celibacy, for different reasons, by persons from every walk of life. These are no longer understood as signs: to set religious excessively apart is believed to impede their normal development as human beings. There have been necessary over recent years several magisterial interventions on the part of the Holy See: **Sacra Virginitas; Sacerdotalis Caelibatus** - which have the avowed purpose of defending the choice of virginity as a state in life and to proclaim officially its greatness and the most typical

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<sup>265</sup> Cf. LG 41 e; GS 48-50,

<sup>266</sup> cf. John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Vita Consecrata*, March 25, 1996, # 32.

fact is that these texts themselves still have not been received with unanimous approval.

**e. Conclusions:** authentic chastity cannot consist in ignorance of those sexual and affective realities, nor in any pathological fear or the rejection of these values, which remain willed by God, even when they may be abused at times. Virginity can never consist in a disdain of the values of conjugal love and of holy matrimony. Nor can it consist of striving to suffocate the normal development of affectivity. The fundamental reality to be understood seems to be that religious chastity has a relative value, and not one that is absolute: it is not an end in itself, but a means to a more perfect, more universal charity. It is not a negative withdrawal, but a positive overcoming a natural and sacred tendency for a higher value - it is totally justified by love and is orientated toward love. It is simply a disposition to loving better, more universally. The Council will call it a liberation for a much greater love. One is not chaste for glory, or for the recognition one might expect for being so - it is uniquely and positively to love better and more. There is a document on the Formational Orientations for Priestly Celibacy<sup>267</sup> which states that celibacy is chosen for the reign of heaven is **a state of love**. Outside of this perspective all becomes obscure and unsupportable.

The Council stated in this regard concerning seminarians [cf. **OT 10 b**] that all are to have a consciousness of the duties and the dignity of Christian marriage, which represents the union of Jesus Christ with his Church. However, they should understand the **superiority of virginity** consecrated to Jesus Christ, in order to make to God the **complete donation** of one's body and soul through a choice worked out with much deliberation and magnanimity.

Difficulties in this matter derive above all from the obscurity and from the uncertainties in the meaning of consecrated virginity. Our fundamental duty is therefore, that of discovering its wonders and of strengthening in its regard our own certainties.

## 2. The meaning and Dimensions of Consecrated Virginity in the Conciliar Texts<sup>268</sup>:

**a. Charismatic Dimension:** the first element upon which the Council insists is this one, in full accord with the Gospel and Tradition: on the one hand, human strength alone is incapable of a movement that is so contrary to the spontaneity of nature. And then, this movement will be the fruit of grace, but this precious gift of Grace is made by the Father to some<sup>269</sup>. And therefore, it is a gratuitous grace, which is a sign of a love proceeding from God for some chosen for His purposes.

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<sup>267</sup> S. Congregation for Catholic Education, 1974 - # 31.

<sup>268</sup> cf. PC 12; LG 42 d; OT 10; PO 16.

<sup>269</sup> cf. LG 42 d.

The fruit of this appeal of grace, Virginité can only be lived in a climate of grace. It is above all in the hands of God, a permanent work of the Holy Spirit, of that same Spirit thanks to Him, the chaste Jesus Christ Himself is born of the Virgin Mary. How would it be possible then to glory in being and remaining pure as though one were to think of it as a personal conquest? Nothing could be further off the mark, and even more a substantial danger for religious chastity. Authentic chastity is lived in a climate of modesty, of thanksgiving, of suppliant and confident prayer. Seen on this deeper level of its charismatic value, there is no wonder any longer that chastity is thus so little understood by so many. Jesus said it Himself: there is necessary a special grace in order to comprehend it [cf. Mt 19:11-12].

**b. Personal, Christological, Mariological, Apostolic Dimension:** the principal meaning of religious chastity is that of working out that **total, loving consecration** that is asked for in this aspect of the *sequela Christi*: We have left all things to follow You, said St. Peter, who was married. One might note three meanings in this matter of chastity:

- **it is a love of imitation** of Jesus Christ, in Whom Virginité stood out in singular light: He did not assume the conjugal experience and only recognized His love for His heavenly Father and for all His brothers and sisters.
- **it is a love of intimate union** with the eternal Christ, Who has risen, a love of the nuptial variety, since it is meant to be **total**, body and soul, and truly undivided [cf. 1 Co 7:35], which is already a prelude in a secret manner for that perfect union of heaven.
- **finally, it is a love of service** of Jesus Christ here and now: the person who is not married, says St. Paul, not only adheres to the Person of the Lord and wants to please Him, but this individual also adheres to His work: this man takes up His concerns [cf. 1 Co 7:32-34], with all the realism that the earthly condition requires. This is why of necessity this love of Jesus Christ blossoms forth toward all His members.

But, let it be repeated again: the fundamental motive for consecrated chastity remains this love of Jesus Himself. When impure temptations take hold of the religious, this can be a sign of a real emptiness - or for some, an insufficient presence of the living Christ in the depths of one's being, and always some indication that growth in Christ is beckoning from the depths of one's heart.

The fundamental law of chastity is therefore, to be cultivated in itself, fanned into flame, as the love for Jesus Christ, and to renew incessantly one's consecration. It is necessary often to see the importance beyond compare of the two most vibrant sources for this love: the **Gospel**, in order to contemplate the Christ of the ages; and the **Eucharist** in order to encounter the Christ present and eternal in the very act of His two-fold love as **Victim-Spouse** and **Nourishment**. To go to Communion is the most significant act of the chaste religious: it is of itself the renewal of the commitment of chastity.

A further source for this fidelity is a cordial, heartfelt devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary. She is all pure and totally consecrated. One of her tasks is certainly that of introducing souls to her Divine Son, and to maintain them in His climate. It will always be *ad Jesum per Mariam!* Celibacy is indeed the **Christological, Apostolic Way of Life.**

**c. Ecclesial, Fraternal Dimension:** it is committed also to the direct apostolate. Here again, and perhaps above all here, chastity reveals itself positively as a capacity and a disposition to a more profound and broader love of others. It is more profound because it commits all its spiritual and affective forces to the service of one's neighbor, without the risk of returning on oneself and partaking in that self-satisfying joy that sometimes conjugal love brings with it. It is a broader love because it allows one to be more available to all, to the whole Church, to all those whom the Lord places along our path. This vow enables us to hold our arms open for anyone, just for the good of that person. This vow renders us available to two categories of persons:

**- the members of our own community.** It is most evident that if we were all married, or even only two or three among us, community life would be immediately rendered impossible. Chastity permits us to constitute communities of charity. It gives to fraternal love of each one the characteristics of that attentive and joyful delicacy - it also opens one up to a good and authentic friendship. Some studies on communities where chastity is not practiced faithfully very often become places where bitterness and aggressions are harbored. St. Gaspar Bertoni noted that the members of one's own religious family are the first object of each one's Apostolic Mission [cf. CF # 188].

**- chastity also brings with it the desire to be able to love all those to whom the Lord sends us:** and to exercise in their regard an authentic spiritual parenthood. Authentic chastity has never dried up the genuine fountains of human affection - on the contrary, by purifying them, it intensifies them.

**d. Witness Value:** all that we have said with regard to the overall witness of the religious life is applied particularly here to consecrated Chastity. It reveals Jesus Christ in His chastity and in the power of His grace, which draws in its wake so many disciples of all ages. It reveals the Church in the greatest depth of its spiritual life, and in the dynamism that carries it to the full possession of the Lord in heaven.

It would be helpful to point out briefly that precisely this witness is precious to Christian couples, as a complement of all that has been said in their regard. They live a conjugal chastity, and it has its own real challenges. In fact, the problem should not be naively simplified by saying that all the difficulties lie heavily on those who live celibacy, while all the ease lies with those who are married. As priests, we know very well, due to the sacred confidence that the married place in them, that they undergo immense difficulties. The chastity of Religious, when it is radiant, helps them powerfully, encourages them, often secretly, without their saying anything - as religious and priests are enriched by faithful couples.

Chastity also works still another advantage. It sheds illumination on the authentic meaning of love. It is not a paradox by any stretch of the imagination, but it is the pure Christian truth to say that in order to understand marriage, it is necessary to look to the celibacy of the Religious - and not to judge this celibate merely as one who gives up marriage! The mutual gift of the spouses, when it is genuine, tends to a species of the absolute: all true loves speak of total possession and forever and one day! Unfortunately, human love is incapable of going to the depths of its own thrust. It is often spent in the face of many barriers and finally, when death intervenes. This great anguish, in the very heart of the mystery of love, so well expressed by the masterpieces of literature and the movies, is one sign of the fact that the human person is created for the truly absolute love of God. Matrimony, therefore, is but a manifestation of such superior love, which finds in chastity its pre-figuration that is more perfect. The chaste and consecrated Religious living this total love indicates to couples that their love must consent to transcend them both, whether sooner, or later, and to complete itself in the definitive love of God : the genuine marriage is that with God.

**e. Specific Motives for Priestly Celibacy:** all these riches are proper to religious chastity. The celibacy of the Priest, is something quite different, even though the two forms of chastity are concretely lived in the same manner. Chastity is an element that is essential to the religious life - for the Priest is a likewise a great convenience. The motivations and the purposes of these two forms of living the same chastity are at least partially different. While both choose Celibacy in imitation of Jesus Christ, the Religious accepts chastity in order to love more broadly, simply, as varied as are the practical expressions of this love - the priest is called to live celibacy under the original title of **his hierarchical ministry**, for the special reasons of his **Eucharistic** service and for his priestly duties with regard to the faithful.

His service as direct representative of **Christ the Head**, who builds up His Body appeals for, even though not intrinsically demands, this form of **imitation** and of **total self-giving** particular to Jesus Christ. However, in a special way it is his **eucharistic ministry**: to celebrate directly the mystery of the Body of Christ offered in oblation and His pierced heart signifies to understand an appeal of offering one's own heart and body. **Celibacy enters into the 'logic' of the celebrant of the Eucharist**, in the repeated expression of Pope John Paul II.

Perhaps there is for the celibacy of the priest a more direct motive of witness on the very sense of his mission. It is necessary to analyze carefully what the priest does with his preaching and in the distribution of the sacraments, especially in Baptism and the Eucharist. In these, he exercises a most sublime paternity: he generates souls for Jesus Christ and for God the Father in the Holy Spirit. This is done through a generation that is totally supernatural, the principle of which is not so much human flesh and blood, but that of the Holy Spirit, The Lord stated in conversation with Nicodemus that no one, unless one is born of water and the Holy Spirit can enter the reign of God. What is generated of the flesh, is flesh, and what is generated of the Holy Spirit is spirit [cf. Jn 3:5-6]. So, accepting celibacy, choosing it, the priest sacrifices carnal paternity in order to affirm better the existence of this new life that

comes from God and which passes through his ministry: these children of God whose parents have generated for life on this earth, the priest generates them for the divine nuptials and for heaven. This powerful testimony has been noted by the Council in a very beautiful text<sup>270</sup>, also noted by Paul VI in his Encyclical on priestly celibacy.

### 3. The Living of Consecrated Virginity

**a. Traditional Means:** in the present world above all, as has been noted, consecrated virginity is a reality that is both threatened and difficult to live. The Council, too, takes great care not to reject any of the traditional means of safeguarding it. In **PC 12 b** the Council emphasizes faith in all that the Lord has said on Virginity; therefore, confidence in God's help, requested in prayer and the sacraments; furthermore, prudence in order to reject all that could place chastity in danger - the perennial flight from real occasions. Lastly, mortification and the custody of the senses, with the observation that one must not neglect the traditional means that help mental and physical health. Nervous exhaustion which accompanies an excessively burdened life, constantly under pressure, sometimes sooner or later explodes in states of physical or psychological depression, which offer a privileged terrain for temptation; Rest and sufficient relaxation ought to safeguard the balance of temperaments.

**b. A New Impetus offered by the Council:** the Council Fathers offered a new and important element. The historical study of the text and the debates that eventually produced it, reveals a clear development. The first redaction of 1963 was somewhat moralizing in tone, and casts a negative look on this world: to remain chaste, the principal care is that of preserving oneself from every harmful influence and the sole means is flight from this world

However, the text finally voted upon in 1965 no longer mentions the need of a radical separation from earthly realities: how could religious apostles, immobilized in their dwellings, carry out their apostolate in the midst of a world that must be approached if it is to be saved? The text signals, of course, that there are dangers for chastity in this world. The response to these is to be prudent, to reject evil, to practice mortification. The Council, as has been seen, stated all this. But it situated on a greater depth its response to the possible difficulties: in interior solidity, both human and Christian at the same time, of the person, in that which is called psychological and affective maturity.

In other words, the Council took consciousness of the capital role of sexuality in the development and in the expression of the human person: it requires that consecrated chastity is gradually integrated in each person. Such chastity is not a static treasure to be preserved. It is a personal quality to be **assumed progressively**, as the dynamic construction of a certain type of human and Christian personality: that the religious should come to know himself in the complexity of his own tendencies, and that he come to know how he is not to ignore these, nor to deny them, but to dominate, order them and to direct them in response to an appeal of which he ought to take on all of its greatness in all its dimensions. There will result from this a series of

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<sup>270</sup> cf. PO 16, 2-3.



permanent reflections not so much of both fear and flight, but more the liberated attitude of one who, knowing all this and choosing it, has allowed himself to be **polarized by the great love of the Lord.**

This is of particular interest in the period of choosing, discerning - and the time of entrance into the religious life: this is a serious challenge to formation. But, this should also interest the entire period which follows, that of long years of fidelity! The texts of the Council should be read with great attention in this regard:

- **PC 12 c:** since the observance of **perfect continence** touches the most profound inclinations of the human nature, the candidates to the profession of chastity, do not embrace this state nor should they be admitted to it, until after a trial genuinely sufficient and after which there has been achieved by them a fitting psychological and affective maturity. These should not only be pre-advised concerning the dangers to which the living of chastity will be subjected, but they ought to be educated in such a manner to embrace the celibate consecrated to God also as a good for the integral development of his personality.
- **OT 10 c:** seminarians ought to be advised concerning the dangers to which, particularly in the society of today, their chastity is exposed. By helping themselves making use of the suitable divine and human means, they will come to learn to integrate in their own person the renunciation of marriage in such a manner that their life and activity should not in any way have to suffer harm from celibacy, but rather they might acquire a more perfect dominion over their bodies and souls, and come to a more complete maturity, and that they might better be able to taste the beatitude of the Gospel.

A personality that is developed is that which is orientated and unified by a grand and noble love: this is the normal situation of the committed religious. This was in a supreme manner the lived situation of Jesus Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary as the Council recalls<sup>271</sup>. It is necessary then to be boldly chaste, without hesitating, and without compromise. The chaste Religious, but 'only by half' [if such a state were even possible, which it is not!] would present an abnormal situation, because he would be deprived of those **authentic human riches** and yet, without ever finding those **true supernatural riches.**

Loyal and vigorous chastity does not mean, of course a chastity without trials. The religious remains a sexual being, masculine, and the religious sister remains a woman. Each consecrated person is called to conduct his spiritual and chaste life according to the normal curve of human life. We know that the destiny of a marriage has its own story, its stages. The first years sometimes constitute an initial delicate phase for the young couple: they ought to harmonize their lives, one with the other, give stability to their home. At times, after a series of good years, sometimes around age 40 there arises a new trial: this may be the temptation to monotony and a mutual tiredness. They still have sufficient strength and a future ahead in order to undertake a

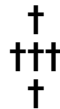
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<sup>271</sup> Cf. LG 46 b.

**real renewal:** either they rediscover their life as a faithful couple, or they betray one another in extra-marital adventures, or even divorce.

It would not be useless to indicate that an analogous evolution could also take place for religious. In the early years, they may still be coping with a very strong conjugal urge - then around 40 years of age, it might seem that the parental instinct is very strong: it could also happen that some would long for the life as a lay person, each one enjoying the intimacy and freedom of his own home, of a place even more immersed within the earthly city. There should be no wonder at this normal temptation: It allows the religious to come to know himself better, and this experience reveals himself to himself! He is called to respond to all this with a clear conscience of the very meaning of one's own vocation, and with an even more re-formation of one's own will of fidelity. And perhaps around 40 years of age, it is the proper time for a religious to pronounce his vows authentically, with all one's 'might.'

**c. The Role of Community:** the Council also made one more, very important comment: all should know, especially the superiors, that chastity can be kept more surely if the religious in their common life would know how to practice a genuine fraternal love among themselves [cf. PC 12 b]. Chastity is creative of fraternal charity. However, in its turn fraternal charity sustains and fecundates chastity. A religious has need of the love of his brothers in the Community for his own affective balance: if one is not loved, he will most likely go in search of other compensations. This means that each one has in some manner the task of sustaining the struggle that breaks out in the heart of each of his confreres. Blessed are the pure of heart: they will see God! How good and joyful it is for brothers to dwell as one! These two 'beatitudes' are achieved and sustained in order to insure the joy of those who have given themselves over to God.



## EXCURSUS

### Recent Reflections on Priestly Celibacy

#### A. CELIBACY IN IMITATION OF JESUS CHRIST

***“...Peter said: ‘We have left all we own to become your followers.’ His answer was: ‘I solemnly assure you, there is no one who has left home or wife or brothers, parents or children, for the sake of the Kingdom of God who will not receive a plentiful return in this age and everlasting life in the age to come...”***  
(cf. Lk 18:28, ff.)

**Introduction: “Contemplation...Study...Magisterium...Experience”** (DV 8)

- [1] There is emphasis in this passage on the totality of the Apostles' surrender in following/ imitating Jesus Christ in the early Church. In their “surrender” they also sacrificed those human bonds that men and women everywhere would hold the most dear: the ties of a loving family. In “putting on the mind

of Christ Jesus” (cf. Ph 2:5, ff.) the Apostles also imitated Jesus’ own surrendering of these bonds. It was not only house, or lands - which is already difficult enough. It is interesting to note that St. Luke’s Gospel adds wife<sup>272</sup>. (cf JP II, 7/17/93).

[a] This passage from St. Luke states in positive fashion what he also included earlier in negative form, using a harsh “Semiticism” - “hates”, or: “turns one’s back on”, as in this passage:

***“... If anyone comes to me without turning his back on his father and mother, his wife and his children, his brothers and sisters, indeed his very self, he cannot be My follower. Anyone who does not take up his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple...:*** (cf. Lk 14:26, ff.).

[b] These words about the Cross in the context of the apostolic following of Christ bring to mind a totality, a completeness in surrender in the imitation of the Lord. In Lk 8:29, Peter speaks of how he and the others in the apostolic band had indeed left all they had to follow Jesus. The Kingdom of God will demand leaving behind much more than material wealth - this will sometimes include the handing over for the interests of Jesus Christ and His Gospel the most sacred and binding human loyalties<sup>273</sup>.

[c] Whether with the much stronger Semiticisms - or, positively and simply stated: this is strong language indeed to express the character of allegiance demanded by Jesus of the disciple who would follow Him. Christ’s followers have to be ready, if necessary, to act towards all who may be dearest to them in this world, as if these were an object of “hatred”. With no doubt, Jesus does state His principle of the demands in following Him in startling fashion - His listeners will discern with the help of the Church what will be demanded of them in their level of response to the call of imitating Jesus Christ. Matthew softens the demand of Jesus by this wording: if anyone loves these more than Me...<sup>274</sup>

[2] Celibacy has been studied from almost every dimension in recent years: doctrinally, historically, sociologically, psychologically and pastorally<sup>275</sup> - and all of these fields do have something to offer. There is a considerable bibliography that one might consult - our goal here is much more modest.

[a] The effort here will be to reflect on the place celibacy has/will have in the spiritual life of the priest of the New Millennium. We will present it here as a very positive value, based on its presentation in the tradition of the Church. The hope is that this might contribute mightily to both the *being* and all the

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<sup>272</sup> cf.

Jp II, 7/17/93/.

<sup>273</sup> Cf. John Nolland, *WBC Commentary on Luke II*, pp. 892, ff.

<sup>274</sup> cf. Joseph Fitzmyer, SJ, *Luke II*. Anchor Bible, p. 1063.

<sup>275</sup> Cf. Paul VI, *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*, 6/24/67.n. 5.

*doings* of the priest for the New Evangelization, so needed for the new thousand year period dawning in the life of the Church.

[b] A careful reflection on the biblical background to celibacy shows a participation in the ministerial priesthood of the Catholic Church with the unique Priesthood of Jesus Christ. Those called to be priests, as Jesus was during His earthly sojourn, and is for eternity - find that the Catholic Priesthood is modeled on the “principle of totality” evident in the life of Jesus Christ and His dedication to the salvation of the world. Priests are assimilated through grace to share in that same charity and sacrifice which were Christ’s very own.

[c] The vision offered to the Catholic Church through revelation and preserved as a Sacred Tradition within the Church, invites careful and continuing contemplation, study, a heeding of the Magisterium in this matter, and then the call that it be lived (cf. **DV 8**). The Holy Father, Pope Paul VI, in ***Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*** of June 24, 1967, invited his brother bishops, all eager students of Christian doctrine and all priests to deepen their supernatural insight of the vocation to the Priesthood. The Pope appealed for perseverance in the study of this sublime supernatural vision of the vocation - there is need to fathom it both collectively within the Church, as well as individually for each priest, or student of the sacrament. The Holy Father spoke of the “clear logic” of the bond between the Priesthood in the Latin Church and celibacy (cf. **n. 25**).

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## 1. METAPHORS SHED LIGHT ON THE MYSTERY

If the researcher has faith, he/she could accept the fact that the celibate Priesthood in the Latin Church is something of a “mystery” in the truest sense of the word - as an evident choice made by Jesus Christ. Prayer is needed for the grace of understanding even something of this mystery - perhaps even a certain “boldness” as when we pray “Our Father”. In reflecting on the Person of Jesus Christ, there has to be noted His own detachment from the goods of this world - among which were included some of those most profound and meaningful relationships that make up human life. Jesus suggests celibacy and admits that not everyone will understand it (cf. Mt 19:10-12)<sup>276</sup>. To assist one to understand the Priesthood as lived by Jesus Christ, there are several metaphors, or analogies that the tradition of the Church often uses:

### a. The Good Shepherd [Jn 10]:

1.] **Good Shepherd as Pastoral: Pastoral Dimension:** these may be noted within the text perhaps and also from commentaries:

***The Good Shepherd walks in front of the sheep and they follow Him... I am the Gate, whoever enters through Me will be safe ... I know My sheep and they know Me... in the same way that the Father knows Me and I know the Father...***

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<sup>276</sup> Cf. John Paul II, Discourse. July 17, 1993, p. 86.

When the Shepherd brings the sheep out into the open, he goes before them... The expressions “to follow” and that His sheep “know” Him, as He “knows” them, all have a deeper significance in John<sup>277</sup>.

## 2.] Good Shepherd as Redeemer: Soteriological Dimension:

*... I am the Good Shepherd, who lays down His life for the sheep...The Father loves Me for this that I lay down my life for My sheep...*

The Shepherd who had led His sheep to pasture, now proves Himself to be their true keeper - their Good Shepherd in time of danger is in clear contrast with the hireling. It is in terms of solicitude that the shepherd metaphor is applied in the OT to God - the NT Good Shepherd goes much further as He dies that they may have life<sup>278</sup>.

### b. Spouse of the Church (cf. Ep 5): “The Principle of Totality”:

*“...Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved His Church, and gave Himself up for her...”* (cf. Ep 5: 25-27).

The Cross of Jesus Christ is the ground on which the Church stands, the source from which her life flows, the instrument by which her status as Christ’s beloved is demonstrated. Jesus Christ proves the reality, the actuality, and invincibility of all **total self-giving** love, here and now<sup>279</sup>.

In his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, dated March 25, 1996, on Religious Life, entitled *Vita Consecrata*, n. 39 describes the “Principle of Totality” as ‘a thirst for the absolute’. The term seems to have come from Pius XII, cited by Pope Paul VI in his Encyclical Letter *Humanae Vitae*, of July 25, 1968. Pope Paul described the qualities of successful, truly Christian married love. Along with showing it to be “*fully human ... faithful and exclusive... fruitful...*”, the Holy Father states his “Principle of Totality” in two separate articles”

**“...Then, this love is TOTAL, i.e., it is a very special form of personal friendship, in which the husband and wife generously share everything without undue reservations or selfish calculations. Whoever truly loves his marriage partner loves not only for what he receives, but for his partner’s self, rejoicing that he can enrich his partner with the gift of himself...”**

(n. 9).

**“...if the mission of generating life is not to be exposed to the arbitrary will of men, one must necessarily recognize the insurmountable limits to the possibility of man’s domination over his own body and its functions; limits which no man, whether a private individual, or one invested with authority, may licitly surpass, And such limits cannot be determined otherwise than by the respect due to the integrity of the human organism and its functions, according**

<sup>277</sup> Cf. Schnackenburg, Vol. II, pp. 282, ff.

<sup>278</sup> ib. pp. 294, ff.

<sup>279</sup> cf. Markus Barth, *Ephesians II*, pp. 684, ff.

to principles recalled earlier and to live according to the correct understanding of the PRINCIPLE OF TOTALITY, illustrated by our Predecessor, Pope Pius XII..." (n. 17).

c. The Compassionate High Priest: Offers Himself:

*"... unlike other High Priests, He has no need to offer sacrifice day after day - first for His own sins, and then, for those of the people: He did that once and for all when He offered Himself..."* (cf. Heb 7:27).

Every priest shares in the Priesthood of Jesus Christ - this needs to arouse in everyone a certain **sacrificial spirit**, a type of *Pondus Crucis*, that expresses itself in a life of mortification. This is the "Spiritual Combat" that is required of everyone baptized **INTO** the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (cf. Rm 6:1, ff.). If this is essentially true of every follower of Christ, the priest needs to show his pastoral/soteriological leadership also here. He needs to deepen the image of Christ the High Priest and become as He is: **Sacerdos et Hostia**<sup>280</sup>. In his consecrated life, each priest is called to reproduce those sentiments ("Put on the Mind of Christ Jesus ..." - cf. Ph 2:5). Jesus Christ shares not only His power with each Priest, but also His **state of Sacrifice** to work out the Father's Plan of the Redemption of the world: **Sacerdos et Hostia!**<sup>281</sup>.

As is evident to every instructed believer, Jesus Christ has no need to offer atonement for His own sins - which were never committed. The Levitical High Priests had to make such an offering each and every day - whereas Christ's unique sacrifice was "once and for all." Christ's act of atonement for all People was achieved through His self-offering. Here for the first time the sacrificial act of the Heavenly High Priest is brought to the fore: He offered His very Self. In the Document to the Hebrews, the High Priestly sacrificial action will be explored through a reflection of the imagery of the *Yom Kippur* ritual<sup>282</sup>.

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## 2. TRINITARIAN RELATIONSHIPS

Repeatedly, the modern Magisterium teaches that all Christian identity has its ultimate source in the Most Blessed Trinity. This is true for the priest as well as for the laity, in their essential and Christ-centered service of the Church, as a mystery, as a communion and as mission (cf. **PDV n. 12**).

The II<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council shows that the gift of celibacy has sublime Trinitarian connections. The Council teaches that perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the kingdom of heaven was taught explicitly by Jesus Christ (cf. Mt 19: 12). Based on the mystery of Jesus Christ and His Mission, this legislation of celibacy was confirmed by the Council. There is every reason to be confident that the Holy Spirit will

<sup>280</sup> cf. John Paul II, May 26, 1993. pp. 53, ff.

<sup>281</sup> ib., pp. 53, ff.

<sup>282</sup> cf. Harold A. Attridge, *Hebrews*. Hermeneia, pp. 213, ff.

indeed bestow this gift on the Church, so appropriate for the priesthood. Those who participate in the very priesthood of Jesus Christ need to ask for this gift in prayer. The Trinitarian dimension of this vocation and its requirement in the Latin Church is brought out in the trust needed in God's grace, following the example of Jesus Christ, the Spirit's Gift of celibacy will be sustained. There are great mysteries both signified and fulfilled in and through celibacy (cf. **PO 16**).

The **relational dimension** of the priestly being flows from the fact that this identity arises from the depths of the ineffable mystery of God Himself, from the love of the Father, the grace of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit's gift of unity. In communion, the priest is called to serve the People of God – and all are always the beneficiaries of the great prayer of Jesus Christ for His Apostles: Holy Father, keep them all in your name, and may they be one (cf. Jn 17:11, 21) (cf. **PDV n. 12**).

All the other relationships that enter a priest's life need to find their way back, and be measured with, that basic relationship that arises from the Most Blessed Trinity. The communion of the Church prolongs these as Christ's sign and instrument. There is a sign of the Trinity in the communion with God and the resulting unity of all human beings (cf. **PDV ib.**).

There is an enormously close relationship with Jesus' own Mission and the Apostolic Mission: whoever would receive/hear the Apostles would be receiving Him (cf. Mt 10:40; Lk 10:16). In manifesting His glorious Stigmata after the Resurrection - Christ identifies the Mission He received with that the Apostles continue (cf. Jn 20:21; 13:20; 17:18). (cf. **ib, n. 14**).

With all the **doing**, activity of the priest so intimately connected with Jesus Christ, it only stands to reason that the entire **being** of the priesthood stands in intimate unity with the Lord. The Priest participates uniquely in the consecration and anointing of Jesus, that unites the priest so intimately to the Church. The priest's entire life of relationships is joined in this mutual immanence. As the priest is so personally related to Jesus Christ, this of its very nature unites Him to the Church. The **sacramental representation** to Christ is the basis of the priest's bond to the Church. (**ib., n. 16**).

These reflections open up all kinds of further contemplation: the sacramental anointing of every priest alters his very being and inspires his activity, mission or ministry. In virtue of this participation in the anointing of Jesus Christ, the priest in a unique manner actually continues Jesus' prayer, word and sacrifice. The priest serves the Church as mystery in this way, in activating the Church's sacraments as signs of the Risen Christ present within her. The priest uniquely serves the Church as communion, with his union and harmony with the bishop and other priests, in building up the reality of the Church community in the harmony of diverse vocations. The priest is the Servant of the Church as mission, in making the community the witness and herald to the gospel. (cf. **ib., n. 26**).

The Trinitarian dimension so beautifully presented by the Holy Father in his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Priesthood is a development of what the

IInd Vatican Council had already taught. In the reception of this sacrament of Holy Order, marriage is renounced for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven (cf. Mt 19:12). In this, the priest holds fast to the Lord with an undivided love. The priests bear witness to the future life (cf. Lk 20:36), and obtains much grace for the exercise of an ever more perfect charity. All this makes of celibacy far more than the carrying out of a precept of Church Law - it is a precious Gift of God. Celibacy needs to be prayed for in great humility, and can be lived under the inspiration and with the assistance of the Holy Spirit (cf. **OT 10**).

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### 3. Christological and Sacrificial Dimension

In his very important doctrinal/spiritual Encyclical Letter on Priestly Celibacy (***Sacerdotalis Caelibatus***, June 24, 1967), Pope Paul VI developed at some length the relationship of celibacy to the Priesthood in the Latin Church. Through the Incarnation, Jesus is sent by the Father as Mediator between God and humanity. In complete harmony with His Mission, Jesus remained celibate throughout His entire earthly sojourn. This signified His totality in dedication to the service of both God and humanity. Thus, in the New Covenant, all who are called to share in the dignity and mission of the eternal High Priest, will also ponder and live the deep connection between celibacy and the priesthood of Jesus Christ. This participation will be the more perfect the freer the sacred ministry is from all ties of flesh and blood.

The Church has always considered that celibacy belongs to the “logic” of priestly consecration. It is also an outstanding manifestation of a total belonging to Jesus Christ, so that one might fulfill the mandate of evangelization and the spiritual life. There is a special appropriateness of celibacy for the living and the exercise of the priesthood: this is the “logic of consecration”. Jesus Christ Himself is both the ideal and the example of priestly consecration. He lived His earthly life as a celibate, thus committing all His energy to the kingdom of His Father and the service of His People. His heart was open to all People without exception - and His choice was motivated for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven.

His words are full of mystery and also of hope: whoever leaves home, family, wife and children for the sake of the kingdom of God (cf. Lk 18:29,f.) will receive a more than abundant recompense. This “more perfect” consecration (cf. PO 16) is a special gift of God, offered for these motives:

- the Kingdom of God; “this” Kingdom (cf. Mt 19:12; Lk 18:29, f.);
- the Gospel (cf. Mk 10:29, f.);
- and for the Name of Jesus Christ (cf. Mt 19: 29).

These are the reasons behind the difficult renunciations in response to the invitation of Jesus Himself.

In his Encyclical Letter regarding Priestly Celibacy noted above, Paul VI developed a very positive presentation of this mystery in the life of the Church. The



great Pontiff presents celibacy as the priest's response to the urgent appeals of love on the part of Jesus Himself, Whose Personal life-choices were all motivated by the Father's and His own love (cf. Jn 3:16; 15:13). This response in love on the part of the priest needs to imitate that of Jesus Christ and have these qualities: it needs to be genuine, total, exclusive, stable and lasting. Celibacy can also serve as a spur to other forms of heroism. The Church has always considered celibacy as a badge of charity and an encouragement to it - it manifests a charity open to all (cf. **n. 24**), and not primarily dedicated to one family rather than to another.

There are many "presences" of Christ (cf. **SC 7**) - in some way, the priest is Christ present. Thus, it is most fitting that in a major choice of life, such as celibacy, that the priest would live the image of Jesus Christ. The priest is a sign and a pledge of a sublime and new reality which the Kingdom of God is. By the priest's being and mission, he nourishes the faith and hope of the flock, and in some way, of all Christians - inspiring them by his way of life to live that chastity that is in accord with their proper state of life (**ib.**, **n. 31**).

Through the life of faith, all Christians imitate that special relationship of Jesus with/toward the Father of loving abandonment. This doctrine is beautifully taught by Vatican II:

**"...The obedience of faith (Rm 16:26; cf. 1:5; 2 Co 10:5-6) must be given as he reveals himself. By faith man freely commits his entire self to God, making 'the full submission [obsequium] of his intellect and will to God who reveals' and willing assenting to the Revelation given by him..." (DV 5).**

The priest is inspired to be like Christ in His personal complete abandonment of his entire self to the Father. As Christ offered Himself, the priest takes on this likeness in a most perfect manner for the sake of the Church. The priest thus cooperates in Christ's own Mission of making the church a glorious, holy and immaculate spouse<sup>283</sup>.

The **United States Bishops**, in one of their consoling Joint-pastoral Letters, in a time of great turmoil in the American Church, wrote of Mary and devotion to her<sup>284</sup>. Their emphasis on the role of the priest was to show how Mary assists every good priest in the difficult hours of struggle with celibacy. This choice is made out of love for Christ. The sacrifice of the natural right for a family is undertaken out of love. In this way, the dedicated priest can feel himself more closely bound to the Mother of the Savior. In this dimension of the Paschal Mystery, the Sorrowful Mysteries of the Rosary can take on a very special meaning for the priest, walking with the Mother of Jesus along the Way of the Cross<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> Paul VI, *Sac. Cael.* n. 26.

<sup>284</sup> cf. *Behold Your Mother - A Woman of Faith.* NCCB, Nov. 21, 1973.

<sup>285</sup> *ib.*, n.121.

#### 4. The Ecclesial and Apostolic Dimension of Celibacy

There is a **Missionary** dimension to celibacy. The Council teaches that it is meant to be a sign of pastoral charity, an incentive to it- as well as being a source of spiritual fruitfulness in the world<sup>286</sup>.

While one could never develop a positive theology of priesthood by describing the Sacrament of Matrimony in a negative manner - it is at the same time true that by living celibacy, one can be more readily be close to Christ with undivided heart (cf. I Co 7:32-34), and be more freely dedicated to Him, and be less encumbered in the service of God and humanity (cf. PO 16). By not being charged with the responsibility of one family, the priest can manifest his willingness to be dedicated with undivided loyalty in espousing the faithful to their one true husband, Jesus Christ (cf. 2 Co 11:2) - (PO 16).

After considering the sublime Trinitarian and Christological Dimensions of celibacy, this fact of one's being "more free, less encumbered" for the works of the Lord, might be somewhat secondary by comparison. In the long tradition of the Church, however, the way of celibacy, as the way of the evangelical counsels for religious, has always been considered "special" - even a "higher" form of vocation - noting the many comparatives that describe these ways of life in the Council documents.

The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church puts it this way:

**"...Likewise, the Church's holiness is fostered in a special way by the manifold counsels which the Lord proposes to His disciples in the Gospel for them to observe. Towering among those counsels is that precious gift of divine grace given to some by the Father (cf. Mt 19:11; 1 Co 7:7), to devote themselves to God alone more easily, with undivided heart (cf. I Co 7:32-34), in virginity or celibacy. This perfect continence has always been held in high esteem by the Church as a sign and stimulus of love and as a singular source of spiritual fertility in the world ..."** (LG 42).

Pope Paul would insist on this special way of following Jesus Christ - as a vocation wherein one is called "more easily, (to do this) with undivided heart". After extolling Marriage to be in accord with the Will of God in the first creation, Jesus Christ has given it a new meaning, a new value. The Holy Father then continues:

**"...But, Christ, Mediator of a more excellent testament, has also opened a new way, in which the human creature adheres wholly and totally to the Lord, and is concerned only with Him, and with His affairs; thus, He manifests in a clearer and more complete way, the profound transforming reality of the New Testament..."** ( cf. Sac. Cael. , n. 20).

***...The consecration to Christ, by virtue of a new and lofty title like celibacy, evidently gives to the priest, even in the practical field:***

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<sup>286</sup> cf. LG 42; PO 16.

- the maximum efficiency and the best disposition of mind, psychologically and affectively, for the continuous exercise of a perfect charity (cf. OT 20);

- this charity will permit him to spend himself for the welfare of all, in a fuller and more concrete way;

- it also guarantees him obviously a greater freedom and flexibility in the pastoral ministry, in his active and loving presence in the world, to which Christ has invited him, so that he may pay fully to all the children of God the debt due to them..." (ib., n. 32).

Celibacy, as a mystery, is indeed a "paradox" - consecrated celibacy shows forth the virginal espousals of Christ with His Church - a most extraordinary "virginal fecundity" (ib., n. 26).

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## 5. Eschatological Dimension

The II<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council insists in a very important paragraph, what the Church's priorities need to be:

"... The Church is essentially both human and divine, visible but endowed with invisible realities, zealously in action and dedicated to contemplation, present in the world, but as a pilgrim - so constituted that in her the human is directed and subordinated to the divine, the visible to the invisible, action to contemplation, and this present world to the city yet to come, the object of our quest (cf. Heb 13:14)..." (cf. SC 2).

The Priesthood as established by Christ belongs to a new order, understood only in the newness of Jesus Christ - it is a participation in Jesus' own priesthood. Through His entire consecration to the Will of His Father, Jesus Christ brought forth the **New Creation** - and introduces into the world a new form of life, one which transforms the earthly condition of human nature<sup>287</sup>.

The Priest, therefore, not only shares Christ's priestly office, but also his very condition of life. This is a particular manifestation of grace, springing directly from the depths of the Paschal Mystery: all of this renders the choice of celibacy most desirable on the part of those called to this vocation<sup>288</sup>.

Jesus' mystical espousals with the Church will only be fully revealed in the future, Christ, indeed, is the Church's only Spouse (cf. **LG 42, 44; PC 12**). The celibate priests are called to be a living sign of the world to come, already present through faith and charity. In this new world, "the children of the resurrection" will neither be married, nor take wives (cf. Lk 20:35,f.). (**PO 16**).

<sup>287</sup> Cf. Paul VI, *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*, n. 19.

<sup>288</sup> Cf. ib., n. 23.

The Kingdom of God is present in the Church both as mystery, and as in a seed, an embryo. It will be perfect only with the coming of Jesus Christ. She grows slowly, but surely. This makes of all Church People a Pilgrim People heading homeward (cf. Ph 3:20). Divine filiation will only be fully revealed and attained by the transformation brought to all who will be disposed for it by the Lamb of God (cf. **LG 48**)<sup>289</sup>.

The divine gift of perfect continence stands out as a special token of the rewards of heaven (cf. I Co 7: 29-31; PC 12). We are in the "final stages" of the old world - celibacy anticipates the fulfillment of the Kingdom. It stands out as a witness to the necessary progress of the People of God, tending forward, upward toward their final goal. It is meant to serve as a stimulus to all to raise their eyes to the things above (cf. Col 3:1-4)<sup>290</sup>.

## CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

### [1] A Mystery to be pondered in Prayer

The priesthood is a dedication to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ and to His Mystical Body. This is best accomplished by the priest's total offering. In this way, he will experience more fully the harmony in his priestly life (cf. PO 14). It is the Pope's contention that this complete self-dedication will realize for the priest an increased ability for listening to the Word of God and for personal prayer. In preaching the Word, the Priest is called to meditate on it every day, to live it - through his preaching, there will be profound echoes in his own life<sup>291</sup>.

The essential meaning of the pastoral charity guiding his life is the radical gift of each priest of himself to the Church. In this ideal, the gift of celibacy is seen less and less as a matter of discipline - but, is rather considered to be an ecclesiastical treasure to be carefully guarded. It is indeed a sign of contradiction for a society that needs to be called back to the higher and definitive values of life<sup>292</sup>.

### [2] A Consecration to be offered in the Eucharist

Scepter Publishers have brought together a series of discourses of Pope John Paul II on the Priesthood for the year 1993<sup>293</sup>. On a number of these occasions, the Holy Father associates intimately the offering of celibacy and the consecration of the Eucharist. On May 12, 1993, the Holy Father pointed out that the celebration of the Eucharist is the perfect worship given to the Father - representing the entire created order. The presbyter more and more sees his life deeply lined to the Eucharist - his

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289 Cf. Paul VI, *Sac. Cael.* n. 33.

290 *Ib.*, n. 34

291 cf. Pope Paul, *ib.*, n. 27.

292 Cf. Pope John Paul II, October 22, 1993, p. 135.

293 Cf. *Priesthood in the Third Millennium. Addresses of Pope John Paul II 1993*. Scepter: Midwest Theological Forum 1994.

spirit is broadened to a global scale, and sees his own life more and more in the light of the whole spiritual good of the Church<sup>294</sup>.

The priestly soul cannot be closed in on itself. It is the Eucharist that draws on the charity of Him Who gives of Himself as food - thus, the priest will be led more and more to give himself to the faithful to whom he distributes the very body of Christ.

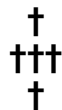
All priests need to be in harmony with that image of the Compassionate High Priest of Hebrews, Who is also the most pure Victim of the salvific sacrifice. Jesus Christ Himself served the Church as Priest and Victim. The reproduction of this image in priests is attained primarily through their life-giving participation in the Eucharist. Trent already emphasized the necessary bond between priesthood and sacrifice. In the power to offer, consecrate and distribute the Body of Christ, there is a mystery of Communion with Christ's BEING and DOING, His very nature and His Mission for the Father<sup>295</sup>.

Each Priest shares in the unique Priesthood of Jesus, in the offering of His own sacrifice, offered once and for all on the Cross. It is necessary for each priest to be more and more aware of the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist, of which they are the ministers. Priestly identity shines forth in a very special way in the Eucharist. Assimilation to Christ hinges on this<sup>296</sup>.

**“...At this time, when some question the desirability of maintaining the discipline of priestly celibacy, bishops must courageously teach the fittingness of linking this ‘sign of contradiction’ with the ministerial priesthood. On the basis of her experience and reflection, the Church has discerned with growing clarity through the ages, that priestly celibacy is not just a legal requirement imposed as a condition for ordination...”<sup>297</sup>**

There is an essential link between the nature of the Eucharist and the ordained Priesthood - and there is a profound connection between the ordained priesthood and celibacy.

**[3] BIBLICAL BACKGROUND TO PRIESTLY CELIBACY** - this would be a lengthy study on its own<sup>298</sup> - there are clear Rabbinic Reflections from the *TORAH* : but, this would be a study apart.



<sup>294</sup> *ib.*, pp. 41, ff.

<sup>295</sup> *cf.* June 9, 1993, pp. 63, ff. and 66, ff.

<sup>296</sup> *ib.*, pp. 133, ff. - October 22, 1993.

<sup>297</sup> *ib.*, Nov. 8, 1993, pp. 142, ff.

<sup>298</sup> Jacob NEUSNER, “La purita’ e il sacerdozio nelle scritture ebraiche e nella tradizione rabbinica:”, in: *Solo per Amore. Riflessioni sul celibato sacerdotale*. Milano: Paoline 1993, pp. 122-130, passim

## B. CELIBACY FOR THE REIGN OF GOD

### Christ as Spouse <sup>299</sup>

**Introduction:** Texts from Pope John Paul II's Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, March 25, 1992:

**# 3:** ...The concern of the 1990 Synod of Bishops and its discussion focused on the increase of vocations to the priesthood and the formation of candidates in an attempt to help them come **to know and follow Jesus** - as they prepare to be ordained and to live the Sacrament of Holy Orders, which configures them to Christ, the **Head** and **Shepherd**, the **Servant** and **Spouse** of the Church..."

**# 12:** "... the nature and mission of the ministerial priesthood cannot be defined except through this **multiple and rich inter-connection of relationships, which arise from the Blessed Trinity**, and are prolonged in the communion of the Church as a **sign** and **instrument** of Christ, of **communion with God and with all of humanity...**"

**# 22 c:** "...Christ's **Gift of Himself** to His Church, the fruit of His love, is described in terms of that **unique Gift of Self** made by the **Bridegroom** to the **Bride**, as the sacred texts often suggest. Jesus is the true **Bridegroom** who offers to the Church the wine of salvation [cf. Jn 2:11]. He Who is the **Head** of the Church, His Body, and is Himself its savior [cf. Ep 5:23], 'loved the Church and **gave Himself up for her**, that He might satisfy her, having cleansed her by the washing of water, with the Word, that He might present the Church to Himself in splendor, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish..."

**# 22 d:** "...Hence, Christ stands 'before' the Church and 'nourishes and cherishes her' [cf. Ep 5:29] giving His life for her. The priest is called to be the living image of Jesus Christ, the **Spouse** of the community as a believer along-side his other brothers and sisters who having been called by the Spirit, but in virtue of his configuration to Christ, the Head and Shepherd, the priest stands in this **spousal relationship** with regarding to the community. 'Inasmuch as he represents Christ, the Head, Shepherd and **Spouse** of the Church, the priest is placed not only in the Church, but also in front of the Church' (Seoul). In his spiritual life, therefore, he is called to live out Christ's **spousal love** toward the Church, His **Bride**. Therefore, the priest's life ought to radiate this **spousal character**, which demands that he be a witness to Christ's **spousal love** and thus be capable of loving people with a heart that is new, generous and pure - with genuine self-detachment, with full and constant and faithful dedication and at the same time with a kind of '**divine jealousy**' [cf. 2 Co 11:2] - and even with a kind of maternal tenderness, capable of

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<sup>299</sup> cf. Gianpietro DePaoli, CSS, *Spiritualita' del Presbitero. Riflessioni sul Pastores Dabo Vobis*. June 12, 1993, pp.39-56

bearing ‘**the pangs of birth**’ until ‘Christ be formed’ in the faithful [cf. Ga 4:19].”

**# 23 c:** “... the **Gift of Self** which is the source and synthesis of pastoral charity, is directed toward the Church. This was true of Christ who ‘loved the Church and **gave Himself up** for her’ [Ep 5:25], and the same must be true for the priest. With **Pastoral Charity**, which distinguishes the exercise of the priestly ministry, as an **amoris officium**, [St. Augustine], ‘the priest, who welcomes the call to the ministry, is in a position to make this a loving choice, the result of which the Church and souls become the first interest and with concrete spirituality he becomes capable of loving the universal Church, and that part of it entrusted to him with the deep love of a **husband for his wife**. This **Gift of self** has no limits, marked as it is by the same **apostolic** and **missionary** zeal of Christ the Good Shepherd, who said: ‘Other sheep I have that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So, there will be one flock and one shepherd...’[cf. Jn 10:16].”

**23 e:** “... the **Gift of self** to the Church concerns her insofar as she is the **Body** and the **Bride** of Jesus Christ. In this way, the primary point of reference of the priest’s charity is **Jesus Christ Himself**. Only in loving and serving Christ, the Head and **Spouse** will charity become a source, criterion, measure and impetus for the priest’s love and service to the Church, the **Body and Spouse** of Christ...”

**23 f:** “...Pastoral charity, which has its specific source in the Sacrament of Holy Orders, finds its full expression and its supreme nourishment in the **Eucharist**. As the Council states ‘The pastoral charity flows mainly from the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is the center and the root of the whole priestly life. The priestly soul strives thereby to apply to itself the action which takes place on the **altar of sacrifice**’ [cf. PO 14]. Indeed, the Eucharist **re-presents, makes present once again**, the sacrifice of the **Cross, the full Gift of Christ to the Church**, the Gift of His Body given and His Blood shed, as the supreme witness of the fact that He is the Head, Shepherd, Servant and **Spouse** of the Church. Precisely because of this, the priest’s pastoral charity not only flows from the Eucharist, its highest realization - just as it is from the Eucharist that he receives the grace and obligation to **give his whole life a sacrificial dimension...**”

**# 27 d:** “... For all Christians, without exception, the radicalism of the Gospel represents a fundamental, undeniable demand, flowing from the call of Christ to follow and imitate Him by virtue of the intimate communion of life with Him brought about by the Spirit [cf. Mt 8:18, ff.; 10:37, ff. Mk 8:34-38; 10:17-21; Lk 9:57, ff.]... A particularly significant expression of the radicalism of the Gospel is seen in the different ‘evangelical counsels’ which Jesus proposes in the Sermon on the Mount [cf. Mt 5-7], and among them the intimately related counsels of obedience, chastity and poverty...’ [Proposition # 9 of the Synod].”

# 29 a: "... Referring to the evangelical counsels, the Council states that 'preeminent among these counsels is that precious gift of divine grace given to some by the Father [cf. Mt 19:11; 1 Co 7:7] in order to more easily devote themselves to God alone with an undivided heart [cf. 1 Co 7:32-34] in virginity or celibacy. This perfect continence for love of the kingdom of heaven has **always** been held in high esteem by the Church as a sign and stimulus of love, and as a singular source of **spiritual fertility** in the world. In virginity and celibacy, chastity retains its original meaning, that is, of human sexuality lived as a genuine sign of the precious service to the **love of communion** and **gift of self** to others. This meaning is fully found in virginity which makes evident, even in the renunciation of marriage, the '**nuptial meaning**' of the body through a communion and **personal gift to Jesus Christ and His Church** which prefigures and anticipates the perfect and final communion and **self-giving of the world to come: 'in virginity or celibacy**, the human being is awaiting, also in a bodily way, **the eschatological marriage of Christ with the Church, giving himself/herself completely to the Church** in the hope that Christ may **give Himself** to the Church in the full truth of eternal life [cf. FC # 16]..."

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### 1. These Texts are to be Pondered:

a. This perfect continence for the reign of heaven has always been held in high regard by the Church:

- as a sign and stimulus to charity;
- and, as a special source of fecundity in the world [cf. **LG 42**].

In virginity and celibacy chastity maintains its original meaning, that of a human sexuality lived as an authentic manifestation and precious *service to the love of communion and inter-personal self-giving*.

b. This significance subsists fully in virginity, which realizes, even in the renunciation of marriage, the **spousal** meaning of the body, through a **communion** and a **personal self-giving** to Jesus Christ and to His Church, which pre-figure and anticipate the perfect and definitive communion and gift of the world to come. It is most important that the priest comes to grasp the theological motivation for the ecclesiastical law of celibacy.

c. In so far as it is indeed a Law, celibacy expresses the Will of the Church - even before any given individual might express his willingness to accept it, his availability for it. Furthermore, the will of the Church finds its ultimate motivation in the **bond** that celibacy has with sacred ordination, which **configures** the priest to Jesus Christ, as Head and **Spouse** of the Church. The Church, as the **Spouse of Jesus Christ**, wishes to be loved by the priest in the **total and exclusive manner** with which Jesus, Head and **Spouse**, has loved her. Priestly celibacy, therefore, is a Gift *in and*



*with* Christ to His Church and expresses the service of the priest toward the Church *in and with* the Lord.

d. For a proper spiritual life in the priest it is necessary that celibacy be considered and lived *not* as an isolated and purely negative element, *but* rather as an aspect of a positive orientation, one that is specific and characteristic of the priest: he leaves his father and mother, follows Jesus, the Good Shepherd, in an **apostolic communion**, in the **service** of the People of God.

e. Celibacy is, then, to be accepted with a free and loving decision, that must be continuously renewed:

- as an inestimable gift of God;
- as a stimulus to pastoral charity;
- as a singular participation in the paternity of God and in the fecundity of the Church.

## 2. **Celibacy in the Light of Christ:**

### a. **Ecclesiastical Celibacy:**

1.] As Vatican II declared, virginity is not required by the very nature of the priesthood. This is quite clear in the practice of the Early Church and the tradition of the Eastern Churches... but, it is not just today that one might reflect on the multiple fittingness of celibacy for the ministers of God<sup>300</sup>.

2.] The connection between both charisms is not immediately evident, nor in themselves, nor in the history of Church discipline. However, the Church has chosen and wills this bond with her free, historical, positive, motivated decision. There is no doubt concerning the *legitimacy* in itself of this ecclesial decision, for all those who freely offer themselves for the ministry. Its characteristics have been deputed by Christ to delineate.

3.] For our reflections here it might be more meaningful to ponder on the *motivations* that are behind this ecclesial discipline, that we might live its values in a more convinced and joyful manner. Paul VI's text [of June 24, 1967] in presenting in a very rich manner the reasons for celibacy, treats of its **Christological**, its **Ecclesiological**, as well as its **Eschatological** meanings<sup>301</sup>.

### b. **In the Light of Christ:**

1.] The ministerial priesthood can be understood solely in the light of **the newness of Jesus Christ**. The Minister of Christ and the Administrator of the Mysteries of God has in Him the direct **Model** and the supreme **Ideal**. The Lord Jesus consecrated Himself **totally** to the Father's Will, and carried out through His

<sup>300</sup> cf. Paul VI, *Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*, # 18.

<sup>301</sup> Cf. ## 17-35, in *EV* 2, 1431-1448.

Paschal Mystery, the **New Creation**, introducing into the world a new, sublime divine form of life that transforms the very earthly condition of humanity.

2.] This profound connection between virginity and the Priesthood in Christ is reflected in those who have the destiny to share in the dignity and in the mission of the Eternal Mediator and Priest. This participation will be all the more perfect the more the sacred minister will be freed from the bonds of flesh and blood<sup>302</sup>.

3.] While celibacy as a commitment, and celibacy as a gospel choice may be distinguished in one's reflection they are found joined in his life. It is precisely the comprehension of the reasons behind this ecclesial commitment that opens up the appreciation and the acceptance of celibacy as a gift in the priestly ministry.

**c. Jesus' Choice of Celibacy:**

1.] **Jesus' Celibacy:** why did Jesus remain a celibate? In Jesus' life, nothing is just "casual" - every gesture is a "sign", a choice. This is certainly true in the matter at hand. If it is true that the celibacy of **Jeremiah [cf. 16:1, ff.]** served as a symbol of Israel's desolation, that of Jesus is a sign of the vocation of humanity to communion with God, into communion with its Lord. If the celibacy of Jesus is loaded with signification, it is above all because this is inscribed into a plan of life, which itself is full of meaning to announce the Reign" [cf. Thevenot X]. Beyond the demonstrative value of the individual texts, what is decisive is the value that Christ has chosen for Himself during His earthly life. Jesus is "**Spouse**" and it is this **sponsality** of His that explains His celibacy: **He does not marry, because He is a Spouse.**

2.] **Jesus as Spouse: from a Sign, to Life** [cf. Cardinal Biffi]: it is already quite clear that in presenting Pastoral Charity, the Post-Synodal Exhortation, PDV expresses itself through the image of Christ, as Head, Shepherd, but at the same time: **Spouse**. Christ as **Spouse** is constantly present in the different NT traditions. The **Sponsality** of Christ is a theme that is amply present in the Early Church.

a.] The catechesis found in the **Synoptics** presents this particularly in its parables:

- that of the Nuptial Banquet of the King's Son [cf. Mt 22:2];
- that of the ten bridesmaids [cf. Mt 25:1];
- that of the Master of the household who returns from the wedding in the middle of the night [cf. Lk 12: 36];
- and it is helpful to remember that *loghion* recorded by all three Synoptics in which Jesus is presented as the **Spouse**, and His Disciples are those **invited to the Nuptials** [cf. Mt 9:15; Mk 2:19; Lk 5:34].

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<sup>302</sup> Cf. Paul VI, *Sac. Cael.*, # 21.

b.] The **Fourth Gospel** attributes to John the Baptizer the identification of Jesus as the **Spouse** Who comes to take His Spouse [cf. Jn 3:29: "... the Bride is only for the Bridegroom.. He must grow greater; I must grow smaller..."]

The **Apocalypse** presents the inauguration of the reign of God as the **nuptials of the Lamb** for Whom the **Bride** has been prepared: she has been able to dress herself in dazzling white linen...! [cf. Rv 19:7, f.] Here, too, the text speaks as in the Synoptics of the "invited": blessed are those invited to **the wedding banquet of the Lamb!** [cf. Rv 19:9].

c.] **St. Paul**, still with the **spousal image**, calls the **Christian community the "ride" of Christ** [cf. 2 Co 11:2]. In the light of this figure, he fathoms the depths of the bond that unites Christ to His Church [cf. Ep 5:22-32]. It is precisely this last noted text of Paul that helps us to understand better Jesus' celibacy: Christ gives Himself to the Church **sponsally, in the fullness of truth, to humanity: this is a wondrous sign: this is the Great Mystery!**

d.] Yet, all this is not simply a "sign". One Who is Himself the realization of the **Nuptials of God with Humanity** could ever be held to the limits of human matrimony. This would mean that the One Who is its *reality* would have chosen to take on its *figure*. By the mere fact that the common marriage of all derives its reality from Christ as **Spouse**, Christ then cannot reduce His choice to marriage which is *the sign of His Truth*.

**3.] The Meaning of Christ's Sponsality: for the Church:** in Ep 5:22-30, Jesus indeed is the **Spouse** [cf. Card. Biffi]:

a.] This has broad implications:

- this means that Christ is the **Head** of the Church - which is therefore, His **Body** and hence, subject to Him;

- this means that the Church has been taken out of the corruption of the world; Jesus has given her His Name, and thus He has saved her: He is *the Savior of His Body, the Church*;

- this means that He has loved her, and still does - to the point of **giving Himself** for her;

- this means that He has re-generated her and He purifies her continuously by means of the sacraments and the Word of God;

- this means that He awaits on her work of sanctification, in such a way that she will be without spot and without wrinkle, but she will be holy and immaculate;

- this means that *He nourishes her, and cares for her*, as the Shepherd does for His Flock.

b.] As is clearly seen, the **spousal character** of Jesus Christ brings to mind all these **services** of His: Guide - Master - Shepherd. In His Risen state, He still presents Himself as having the **mandate** from the Father and that He is **the “Apostle” by excellence**. He thus associates the apostles to Himself by bringing them into **His** Mission, by *sending* them Himself, as the Father had already sent Him: as the Father sent Me, I now send you! [cf. Jn 20:21]. The tasks that have been entrusted to them in their priestly ordination are all to be understood under this **spousal light**<sup>303</sup>.

**4.] The Ordained Minister is a “Spouse” for the Church:** therefore, the ordained minister can be presented as **a Sacramental Sign of Christ as Spouse**, in the richness and multiplicity of **His Being-For-the-Church**, nourished at the font of the Pastoral Charity with which Christ **loves His Church-Bride**. For such a man, too, he could not be reduced for seeking out a *sign* when he is already called to live it, even though in its historical dimension. The priest lives this truth through his **configuration to Christ the Spouse, given for His Church, for humanity**. It is not without meaning that both in the Eastern Church [for the deacons and priests, but not for bishops], as in the Latin Church [for the permanent deacons] there is the possibility for the married man to become ordained - but, it is still not possible for one who is ordained to get married.

a.] The **charism of the celibate** is the yearning of the baptized for **spousal communion** with Christ, to be assimilated, without sacramental mediations, to the Church. In her profound reality, the Church is already the **eschatological Spouse of the Lamb**. This is a manner of living, in one’s own person, the mystery of the love which the Church nourishes for her Lord, beyond the sacramental manner of matrimony (which does not signify a different dimension of charity).

b.] The **commitment of the celibate** places the presbyterate in the light of **Christ as Spouse**, in relationship with His Church, sharing in His mediation, making visible the redemptive love of the human-divine heart of Christ Himself. On the theological level, one can defend the *propriety*, the **con-venience** [in the most pregnant sense of the term, and not only its disciplinary legitimacy] that the celibate as a commitment would suppose the charism - one cannot presume to render himself subject of the Pastoral Charity of Christ, if there is not already enkindled within us the will of adhering without reserve to Him and to become with Him one sole reality. This is what the **Church-Bride** is, it has become “one flesh” with her **Spouse**. Anyone who says that Jesus right now gives Himself sponsally to the Church, can be fascinated by the desire to enter as co-principle into this ineffable **self-giving** [Card. Biffi].

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<sup>303</sup> Cf. Cardinal Biffi, September 12, 1988, to the Priests of Bologna.

### 5.] The Image of the Spouse, an Eschatological Announcement:

a.] In the Resurrection one does not marry! [cf. Mt 22:30; Lk 20:35, f.]. Even if “celibacy”, as such, is not the direct object of the discourse here there is illuminated the announcement of the **future life** that it contains. There is no longer required the service of the life of matrimony when life itself is no longer placed under the mark of death.

b.] It is justified in the perspective of faith: it is important to make clear that while *matrimony* can be lived well, even without any faith, *celibacy for the Reign of Heaven* has sense only in the perspective of faith. Therefore, celibacy opens out to a dimension which transcends the earthly evaluation of values. Celibacy places before the eyes of all the faithful that wonderful **union** established by God that is has been fully established by God and which ought to be fully manifested in the future world by means of which the Church has Christ as her sole **Spouse** [cf. **PC 12**].

c.] St. Paul offers an explicit invitation to celibacy [cf. 1 Co 7:25-40]. This passage must be brought together with others, such as Ep 5:22, ff. The values of the Reign of God can be announced by *every form of life*, in every truly **Christian project**, one that is worked out in the light of the Gospel, by Christ's genuine *disciples* - this is the **Gospel plan** that is achieved in celibacy in an original manner. There is always the real possibility to fail in it, because of the egoism from which observance does not preserve one, because of our being made wretched for the divine capacity of mercy, love and universality.

### 3. Reflections for a proper Choice of Celibacy

#### a. Commitments:

- *celibacy is to take on a commitment* :this is the *positive* aspect of the choice, even if this implies at the same time a *renunciation* - one chooses a kind of life and with this, celibacy constitutes a fundamental element of this;
- *it is a choice made for the sake of Christ and His Realm* - this is its motivation, both mystical as well as apostolic. This expresses the dominating poles of the ordained minister living as a celibate;
- *it does not commit one solely to chastity*, i.e., to the dominion over one's sexual impulses. This is obviously already obligatory for everyone, according to their state in life. The object of the solemn commitment is that manner of living permanent continence, with a view to the fruits that are the liberation from the love, tenderness, compassion, receptivity, the gift, the truth and the simplicity of sexual relations;
- *in permanent continence* : abstention from genital pleasure voluntarily brought about implies a style of life on the global level which would allow this, even a necessary practice of asceticism. Perfection is that ideal that is never achieved, but the pathway toward this ideal is an evangelical demand that commits one every single day.

**b. Demands:**

- not all can grasp this [cf. Mt 19:10-12]. It is a gift from on high, and not only a “choice”, or some human commitment, no matter how feasible this might seem. Celibacy has an evangelical foundation, even in the strict sense, since it is affirmed by Jesus Himself.
- celibacy, chosen for the sake of the Reign of God, is a particular charism, a gift of God, for a special vocation. IT is necessary that this be *recognized and lived* this way. It is not a matter of one’s own commitment of will, but supposes a constant care of values which are its foundation and root. Therefore, for its reception [as for the acceptance of every divine grace] there is needed a climate of prayer, of prudent custody, of asceticism, vigilance over oneself, and especially to nourish a passion for the Reign of Heaven, and this with constancy.
- it is a gift and, as such, it should be invoked and cultivated through assiduous prayer, continuously nourished in communion with Christ.
- the classical preachers would refer to the episode of Hannah, the sterile wife of Elcanah [cf. 1 S 1:1: cf. Classical Commentary of St. Gregory the Great] - and would apply this to the priesthood! How many priests, the classical sermons would go - who never reach the age of mature perfection, so that the might build up the body of Christ [cf. Ep 4:12] - they simply do not have that ability to provide nourishment for others [cf. Sgs 8:8]. The Lord will find fault with them because they do not find their nourishment in prayer: they only “mis-carry”, unable to provide spiritual nourishment for others [cf. Ho 9:14].

**4. Celibacy and Witness:** some “anthropological” reflections are provided by the cultural context of today - adding an entire gamut of further considerations on what is already a vast theme.

a. Sexual conduct has profoundly changed over recent decades. The emphasis on the value of the person and his/her freedom has brought attention both to the human body as well as its pleasure and well being. There is a near cult of the human body as beauty, harmony and attraction. There is a flourishing of new “temples” at the service of human beings for the increase of this harmony and beauty - even more there is the culture of pleasure as a quieting of desire, and each and every kind of desire. It is not even easy any more to find space for spiritual values in a context - where, while it does indeed further some authentic values - is powerfully conditioned and deviated by a culture that is permeated by materialism, hedonism, utilitarianism.

b. This different view reflects also on the life of marriage: after centuries of a view, that many thought negative, finally in the Conciliar teaching there is the recognition of the joyous richness of living, *sharing* on the part of the couple which rightfully expresses the finality of marriage, equal to *fecundity*.

1.] In the joy of the rediscovery of a value, we can *not* be resigned to the loss of others. This value of the inter-personal relationship in the couple can *not* arrive - as, in fact, it seems to be doing - even to the exclusion of the fecundity of love.

2.] *Even less* when the pleasure of remaining together dies down, when the communion of life asks for **sacrifice** and a **courageous re-beginning**, a celebrated marriage is often said that it is 'losing its meaning'. This is often used as the pretext for the desire to recover a freedom that is clearly marked in a plan of life together, but not "for good."

3.] And *even less* can love have much meaning outside of the context of marriage as if it were enough to enjoy a sexual life together with no further responsibilities.

4.] And *still less* is a sexual life even thinkable on the level of a kind of game, or "arrangement", beyond any thought of real love, reduced to the game of pleasure. The Church could never accept any vision of life, such as:

- one in which *instinct* is accompanied simply by a superficial tenderness confused with authentic love;
- where *matrimony* itself is seen as a situation which imprisons and mortifies;
- where *procreation* is seen as a limitation of one's freedom in leading his/her own life;
- where *virginity* is a mis-nomer.

c. When pleasure and desire become the imperative, on the personal as well as on the social level, no limits then are accepted and every ethical dictate is seen as an invasion of one's rights, a limitation of freedom a kind of obscurantism. The *radical culture*, predominant in our context, does not accept any reference to norms which precede a human being and which do not arise in his/her own personal choice. This attitude seems to characterize our social life and in it, in particular manner, the general attitude regarding sexuality.

1.] It would suffice just to reflect on its almost obsessive presence in the buying and selling of sexuality as an "object", and on the collapse of any sense of *shame*: whenever this would be invoked, it is when it is practically laughable. The same might be said in the uncontrolled use of language, so often sinking down into foul language.

2.] The banalization of sex has brought about not only a diverse compartment, but also the obscuring of those values bearing on civility, in terms such as *love, matrimony, fecundity, virginity*.

3.] One example of this might suffice: it is news when one hears of the consecration of virgins [the Order of Virgins], perhaps even more when there is

the consecration of celibacy in priests, or the religious profession in Institutes, which have their commitment on the social and cultural level. These instances lead far less to the appreciation of the individuals making these consecrations of chastity as a "sign" - whereas they are appreciated for the service in society and the field of education which they offer. Their gift of celibacy is negligible, if not contradicted.

d. Yet, even in some of this, there may be some authentic values such as the following:

- the care of the human body - its exercise;
- the surpassing of forms of Pharisaism which delighted in 'exteriors';
- the re-evaluation of the sexual life as qualifying a person in his/her identity and in one's social and professional situation;
- there has been a further theological study on the life of marriage and its own specific spirituality;
- there is a deeper appreciation of love and an education toward its authenticity.

e. These 'positive' aspects are indeed genuine, even though they are often accompanied in the Christian community - and also among religious and priests - there is frequently uncertainty in evaluating trends and in one's own conduct. Even though there has been achieved perhaps a greater serenity - at the cost of great effort, when one thinks of the formation of some time ago - unfortunately there are still not lacking situations of genuine confusion and contradiction - quite far removed from that sense of security of long ago.

## 5. A Witness for the Present

a. The life of chastity in celibacy does not deny the person, his freedom, the appreciation both joyful and operative of one's corporal nature - the appreciation of one's own and others' sexuality, the balance and gratifying experience which accompanies the inter-personal style of life, and relationship. The values which the cultural context places before each one: the human person, freedom, pleasure, the body ... all these constitute a reason also for chastity, as a contradiction of the distorted modalities of these values in some segments of society. There is also brought to the fore the capacity of celibates to assume responsibilities in behalf of the Reign of God, purifying these values and elevating them into the light of the Word of God.

b. In *the choice of celibacy*, as a *consecration*, there is realized a *separate* way of being, set aside, for God. One places some distance in his way of living from that of others, but without giving up the human dimension of living: indeed in consecration, there is proposed a serving of the *new creation*, in which the space for the Lordship of God is given ample leeway. The relationship with this world is presented, therefore, as a kind of *dialectic*, in the refusal of whatever is signed with sin, and witness is given of this newness represented by living in accord with the Gospel. This *distancing*, separation is justified with a *function* of *rediscovering* and



testifying to a humanity that is reconciled, free, in the commitment and tension nourished by the transforming power of the Spirit, from every alienation, rebellion and sin. There is thus opened up the possibility of a new human relationship, in an attitude of balance and harmony of values.

c. There is need to fathom **what it means to be set aside for God**. Already in the light of the OT, the *being consecrated* is understandable as a radical *belonging* to God. This means living in harmony with Him and for His Plan, a belonging to Him. Still in the OT an image renders this sense of belonging quite well: the *temple*. Prefigured already as a Tent of Meeting in the desert, it is the place where there are conserved the signs and the guarantees of the divine promise, the temple is the place of meeting with God. In it, the faithful of Israel noted that they found themselves in the tabernacles of God, of leaving the profane aspects of life. What joy, says the Psalmist, I experienced when they said to me: we are going to the House of the Lord!

1.] The great pilgrimages, the festivals, the gradual psalms all make reference to the temple, built on the rock of Jerusalem. The people would leave behind their villages, their normal way of life, purify themselves, offer their sacrifice and would encounter God. In this, they would find themselves renewed in their faith of being the "People of God", the People of the Promise.

2.] Even more specifically, in the temple the priesthood was exercised, the offering in the name of the people the victims of expiation, so that in the life of the faithful there would be canceled every space denied to the presence of God, to the availability to His will. The people walked in the way of God. All this was so, even though there returned permanently the temptation of the desert, to make for themselves a god they could carry about on their own shoulders, along those paths that they were more familiar with, and no longer toward that unknown for which their faith would no longer seem sufficient.

3.] This availability for new *paths* opened up towards a future coming from God, not of their own story. This availability opened toward a new fraternal and human relationship, one that was universal, generous and free, opening up on that oblation way of life that qualifies their living and serving as apostles.

4.] We can say that such consecration finds in the dialogue between God and His People the coordinates of self-understanding, *within the divine initiative*, in the *jealousy* of God Who asks for, and bestows *fidelity* upon His People, in the concrete situation of a *going toward* and of a *staying with* Him in His dwelling. All this is the expression of the divine proprietorship over His People and over His land, over every primacy of being born of woman, and land, over every reality and other ownership. The offering in the temple of the first-born and the first-fruits is the expression of this belonging, of this consecration to God.

a.] In the term *consecrated*, there is the motive of being set apart as something sacred, without reference so much to the reality, or the person him/herself, but rather to the role, the vocation and the mission to which one is committed.

b.] Consecration is inseparable from the mission: rather we might even recall the trilogy: *call-consecrated-sent*, where the contents call out to each other and progressively complement one another.

**d. Love in a new dimension:**

1.] To live the choice of celibacy for the Reign of God means to leave behind that earlier manner of loving this *world*, for a dimension of **spousal love** which characterizes the world of the **new creation**: to love with the love with which *Christ* has loved His **Spouse**. the **Church**.

2.] In this path, as in the make-up of each person, sexuality and love are decisive and qualifying elements in the personal and relational harmony: so, it is obvious that a choice of celibacy would involve these aspects in giving new meaning to one's own life.

3.] The *celibate for the Reign of God* does not mean absence, but super-abundance - it is not a vow with which one *renounces* loving - but rather a vow by which one *loves in a radical manner*. It is testimony to the new life given by Christ, a witness to the love of Christ for His Church in the total dedication for her [cf. Jn 13:1; 15:13; 1 Jn 3:16].

4.] The newness to which the celibate opens toward is manifested:

- in service to human beings [cf. Mk 10:42-45];
- in the witness of peace and joy of this new world [cf. Jn 20:19-21; Lk 10:5-6, 17-20];
- in the commitment for an effective liberation on the personal and community levels [cf. Lk 11:39, 42, 46, 52].

**e. Newness in Christ:**

1.] in the NT, there are no longer temple, sacrifice, altar, priesthood according to Aaron - now, *priest, altar, victim* all are Jesus Christ! The God with us is the "Emmanuel", born of the Virgin Mary, the fulfillment of every expectancy and every promise. It is the reception of the Son which gives life, which opens up unto truth. It is no longer the following a God Who speaks through Moses and the Prophets, but a God Who speaks in His Son, Who makes Himself present and Guide, sharing in the human reality immersed in the truth full of its history.

2.] Consecration was had in His becoming incarnate, to do the Will of the Father, even to the culmination of the Paschal Mystery. This *consecration* is in its height the Passion and Death on the Cross - but it is at the same time the entire existence of Christ, lived out in full harmony with the Father, pertaining to Him - *permanently* consecrated. This *being consecrated in a permanent form* is then transferred to the disciple and constitutes an indispensable reference for every form of consecration, including that of celibacy for the Reign of God.

## 6. Sublimation, not Repression

a. In the life of the celibate for the Reign, should there be lacking a perspective of fecundity, chastity would be reduced:

- to a ritual purity;
- to a disengagement that could easily be selfishness;
- to a satisfaction in the living a legal fidelity, in the pride of a certain dominion over oneself;
- to the risk of attitudes of superiority, judgment, harshness.
- If the over-riding reason for all this is ever lacking: for the Reign of God - there might be some success in the keeping of continence, but those so doing would be little more than “old maids”, or “bachelors”.

b. In *sublimation* which accompanies the celibate the sexual manifestations of human love - but, not the sexual nature of every human being - would be *sacrificed*. Sublimation channels affectivity, placing it at the service of one's over-all commitment and spiritual duties, for the furthering of the Reign of God - by promoting it, not repressing it! Whoever consecrates himself must be made conscious of making himself a *eunuch* for the Reign of God. This is a matter of an acceptable sacrifice, with a view to a possibility sought with all one's heart: this does not imply repression, and it can never be reduced solely to *continence*.

c. *Repression*, however, is the attempt to remove the instinctive sphere of affection. This effort involves the alienation of a part of oneself. *Continence* is the voluntary control of the instincts, for their restraint. Repression almost always leads to a degeneration of affectivity which translates then into *aggressivity, intolerance, fanaticism, authoritarianism*.

d. *Celibacy is a gift which opens up on a **spousal oblativity** toward all :*

- it is a matter of a gift gratuitously received - it is a *charism*, whose presence is requested in those who show themselves available for the ordained ministry; this is accepted by a person in availability and gratitude;
- it is a gift which comes from the love of God the Father, known through the Heart of Jesus Christ, which measures itself and is grasped only in the light of that love with which Christ, constituted Mediator between heaven and earth, is *Head, Shepherd, Spouse*, for His Church. It is received in the light of Christ Who inaugurates His **Nuptials** with humanity in the Incarnation and consummates this in the **Bridal Chamber of the Cross**.
- it is an experience of consecration which is activated by choosing to be exclusively *for Him and with Him* for this world, in a complete mind of oblation, body and soul, for His Glory and for the love of one's fellow

human beings: *in availability to love all without binding oneself to anyone.*

- it is a charism that is sustained, as a strength and guarantee, by a fraternity among the priests, sharers in the same mission of rendering Christ present. This opens up to another chapter of spirituality and priestly identity: 'The presbyterate thus appears as a true family, as a fraternity, whose ties do not arise from flesh and blood but from the grace of holy orders. This grace takes up and elevates the human and psychological bonds of affection and friendship, as well as the spiritual bonds which exist among priests. It is a grace that grows ever greater and finds expression in the most varied forms of mutual assistance, spiritual and material as well..' [cf. PDV 74; PO 8].

### **CONCLUSION: A Divine Call**

**"... Jesus, Who selected the first ministers of salvation, wished them to be introduced to the understanding of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to be co-workers with God under a very special title, and his ambassadors. He called them friends and brethren, for whom he consecrated himself so that they might be consecrated in truth. He promised more than abundant recompense to anyone who should leave home, family, wife and children for the sake of the kingdom of God. More than this, in words filled with mystery and hope, he also commended an even more perfect consecration to the kingdom of heaven by means of celibacy, as a special gift. The motive of this answer to the divine call is the kingdom of heaven: similarly, the ideas - of this kingdom, of the gospel, and of the name of Christ - are what motivate those invited by Jesus to the difficult renunciations of the apostolate, by a very intimate participation in this lot. This, then, is the mystery of the newness of Christ [Sac.Cael.#22,f.]**

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### **C. A FEW POINTS FOR CONTEMPLATION**

**for the Gift of Celibacy**

#### **A WEB OF RELATIONSHIPS**

"... the fundamentally '**relational**' dimension of priestly identity can be understood. Through the priesthood which **arises from the depths of the ineffable mystery of God**, that is, from the **love** of the Father, the **grace** of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit's gift of **unity**, the priest sacramentally enters into **communion** with the bishop and with other priests in order to **serve the People of God who are the Church** and to draw all mankind to Christ in accordance with the Lord's prayer: **...so that the world may believe that You have sent Me...**' (cf. Jn 17:11, 21) [PDV 12 c].

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### A Trinitarian Gift

- a **Call to Friendship**
- **Nuptial Dimension**
- **Community - Family**
- **Contemplative**

### Christological

- **Paschal**
- **Sacrificial:** total dedication
- **Anthropological**

### Pneumatological exclusive love

- **Eucharistic:** - in Persona Christi
- **Mariological:** purity - chastity - continence - service

### Ecclesial Dimension

- **Apostolic Form of Life**
- **Missionary**

### Apostolic: New Evangelization

### Eschatological Dimension

The Thirst of the Absolute - this present world, the visible, action: all *subordinated* to the world yet to come, to the invisible, to **contemplation: [cf. SC 2]**

- **contemplatives in action;**
- ***ora et labora* ;**
- ***contemplata aliis tradere.***

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□

[J] ... and grant that I may not do anything TODAY displeasing to God...

### TODAY AND *DIES DOMINI*

1. **The Offering of 'TODAY':** Even a rapid survey of **Dt** would show its great insistence on **THIS DAY** (cf. 4:1, 8, 38-40; 5:3; 6:6; 7:11; 8:1,18; 9:1,3; 11:2,8,13,22,26,28,32; 26: 17,18; 27:9,ff.; 29:8-15; 30:18,19; 32:6). These texts most likely had a particular festival in mind, as has been noted, but the sheer repetition would have the reader enter into the spirit of **the offering of this present day**, this very moment. This is reflected in the Lord's own prayer: "Give us **this day** our DAILY BREAD..." Perhaps Dt is the offering of YOM, this day, this year, the present instant!

a. **THIS DAY:** the spirit behind the Liturgy of the Hours is the blessing of the whole day: morning, noon, even-tide and night. In the General Instruction for the "Liturgy of the Hours" (February 2, 1971), it is stated:

"... **10:** Christ told us about the need to pray continually and never lose heart (Lk 18:1). The Church has faithfully heeded this exhortation by never ceasing in her prayer and urging us to pray. Through Him, let us offer God an unending sacrifice of praise (Heb 13:15). The Church not only satisfies this precept by celebrating the Eucharist, but also in other different ways especially by celebrating the Liturgy of the Hours. Compared with other liturgical actions, the particular characteristic which ancient tradition has attended to the Liturgy of the Hours is that it should consecrate the course of the day and night (SC 83, 84).

"**11:** Because the purpose of the Office is to sanctify the day and all human activity, the traditional sequence has been restored that, as far as possible, they may genuinely be related to the time of the day at which they are prayed.

Consequently, that day may be truly sanctified, and that the Hours themselves may be recited with spiritual advantage, it is best that each of them be prayed at a time which most clearly corresponds with its truly canonical time (SC 94)...

"**34:** The whole Office is normally begun with an Invitatory. This consists in the verse: '... O, Lord, open my lips...And my mouth will announce your praise...' - and then Psalms 95. This Invitatory verse and psalm daily invite the faithful to sing the praises of God, hear His voice and look forward to the 'rest of the Lord' (Heb 3:7-4:16).

"**37:** Lauds is designed and structured to sanctify the morning, as is clear from its many parts. St Basil the Great excellently described its character as morning prayer, in these words:

'Matins consecrates to God the first movements of our minds and hearts; no other care should engage us before we have been moved with the thought of God, as it is written: I have thought of God and sighed...' (Ps 76:4) - not should the body undertake any work before we have done what is said: 'I have said

this prayer to you, o Lord, for at daybreak you listen for my voice; and at dawn, I hold myself in readiness for you...(cf. Ps 5:4,f.) .

This Hour, recited as the Light of a new day dawns, recalls the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, the true Light, enlightening every one (cf. Jn 1:9), 'the Sun of Justice (Mt 4:20), 'arising on high' (Lk 1:78). Thus, the remark of St. Cyprian may be well understood:

'...We should pray in the morning to celebrate the resurrection of the Lord with morning prayer.

**"39:** Vespers is celebrated in the evening when the day is drawing to a close, so that we may give thanks for what has been given us during the day, or for the things we have done well during it (St. Basil). We also call to mind our redemption, through the prayer we offer like incense in the sight of the Lord, and in which the raising up of our hands becomes an evening sacrifice. This evening sacrifice may be more fully understood as that true evening sacrifice which was given in the evening by Our Lord and Savior, when He instituted the most holy mysteries of the Church at supper with the apostles, or which on the following day He offered for all time to His Father by the raising up of His hands for the salvation of the whole world (Cassian). Placing our hope in the sun which never sets, we pray and beg that His light may shine on us again: we pray that Christ may come bringing the grace of eternal light. (St. Cyprian).

"Finally, in this hour we join with the Eastern Churches and invoke the Blessed Christ, the Light of our Heavenly Father's sacred and eternal glory; as the sun sets, we behold the evening light and sign to God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit..."

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**b. A Creation Liturgy:** the Genesis account of creation almost reads like a choral recitation: "... *and it was good...*". There are also what some see as "Versicles and Responses": the work always begins the evening before, and then it was morning - as a kind of **VIGIL** before the great feasts. The impression that is communicated is one of looking forward to the final banquet of rich goods and wines (cf. Is 25; Rv 21) - where there will be no more death, no more separation, no more tears. The day is offered as a segment of the host of daily life:

"... *Seven times daily I praise you for your righteous rulings...*" (Ps 119:164).

"... *His anger lasts but a moment, his favor for a life-time; in the evening a spell of tears, in the morning, shouts of joy...*" (Ps 30:4,f.).

"... *I, for myself, appeal to god and Yahweh saves me: evening, morning, noon...*" (Ps 55:16).

"... *I meditate on you all the night long... for you have always helped me...*" (Ps 63:6,ff.)

*"... The windows of Daniel's upstairs room faced toward Jerusalem. Three times each day he continued to fall on his knees, praying and giving praise to God, as he had always done..." (Dn 6:11).*

c. **The Mystical Tradition of the "Night"**: the darkness has traditionally been looked upon as a time of mystery, both of pain and redemption : St.John of the Cross spoke of the **NIGHT**, as entrance of God into the soul:

*"... Poor, abandoned and unsupported by any of the apprehensions of my soul (in the darkness of my intellect, the distress of my will, and in the affliction of my memory), left to darkness in pure faith, which is a Dark Night for these internal faculties, and with only my will touched by the sorrows, afflictions and longings of love of God, I went out from myself. That is, I departed from my own manner of understanding and my feeble way of loving, and my poor and limited method of finding satisfaction in God..."*

*"...This Dark Night is an inflow of God into the soul, which purges it of its habitual ignorance and imperfections, natural and spiritual, and which the contemplatives call infused contemplation, or mystical theology..."*

*"... Through this contemplation, God teaches the soul secretly and instructs it in perfection of love without its doing anything, nor understanding how this happens..." (Dark Night, II, cc. 4, 5 - tr. by Kavanaugh, OCD & O. Rodriguez, OCD, Washington: ICS Publications 1973).*

## 2. **THE OFFERING OF THE WHOLE YEAR:**

a. **Israel's three major festivals**: the **Pasch**, in the spring-time; **the Feast of Weeks**, in late spring; and **the Feast of Ingathering**, in the fall - were already a kind of offering of the year. Coming before the face of the Lord (i.e., by visiting the Temple) three times each year (cf. Dt 16:16), the cycle of the year, and of life and death, were thus offered to God:

*"... The month (spring) is to be the first of all the others for you, the first month of the year... For seven days, you must eat unleavened bread..." (Ex 12).*

*"... Come, then, my lovely, my lovely one, come. For see, the winter is past, the rains are over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth. The season of glad songs has come, the coming of the turtledove is heard in our land..." (Sgs 2:11,f. - this **Canticle of Canticles**, one of the 5 "**MEGILLOTH**", or "scrolls", was read for the spring-time Passover).*

*"... [**an autumn Lamentation**]: the harvest is over, summer is at an end, and we have not been saved. The wound of the daughter of my people wounds me, too..." (Jr 8:20).*

*"... You are the master of the day and night, you instituted light and sun, you fixed the boundaries of the world, you created summer and winter..." (Ps 74:16,ff.).*



b. The German Dominican, John TAULER, OP: speaks rather of the "winter" in a mystical sense, as John of the Cross speaks of the "NIGHT" - this latter is so named because of its "intensity", while the former (the "spiritual winter") indicates the length of the trial.

1.] The Gospel adds that when the Feast of Dedication was observed, it was winter (cf. Jn 10:22). When, therefore, I ask you, does the winter come to a soul? It is when the cold, the dryness, the hardness, occupy the human heart, so that grace, God, or anything divine, is not able to find a place in it... [NB: Spiritual "dryness" can indicate progress - spiritual "dullness", though, may be a loss of interest in any spiritual life].

2.] However, there is also another spiritual winter: it is the one that the spiritual person, truly dedicated to God, Whom the person seeks and pursues, suffers in its intentions and its love, in avoiding sin with all his/her strength; but, at the same time, this spiritual person is abandoned by God for all that pertains to sensible devotion. The person remains in great aridity, a great obscurity, a great coldness, and does not have the least spiritual taste, sweetness, or consolation.

3.] Our Master suffered this "winter" in His dolorous Passion, when He was abandoned by His Father... He was, of course, naturally united to Him, and yet, in all that concerns the assistance that He had a right to receive from Him, He was abandoned to the point that in all His anguish, in all His dolor, and in all His indescribable torments, His weak and crushed humanity, overwhelmed everywhere by His afflictions did not receive the least drop of divine consolation and the least help.

4.] What am I saying? ... never was a human being so afflicted, and more desolate, never was there anyone so bereft of help... This is the darkness, the rigor and the cold of winter... (cf. Tauler, OP, Sermon for the 11nd Sunday after Easter, as quoted by C. Duquoc, OP. *Christologie* II, "Messie" Cerf 1974, pp. 44, f.)

†††

### 3. THE OFFERING OF LIFE, ONE'S OWN HISTORY:

a. Life itself is an offering, a gift to be returned to the Creator. Like the various hours of the day: morning, noon, even-tide and night - and like the seasons of the year: spring, summer, autumn and winter - in like manner, human life experiences birth, adult-hood, old age, and death: all part of the cycle, the progressive spiral back to the Maker. All is to be given back to God, consecrated to Him. The hours of each day, the recurring cycle of the years, have long serve as a "reminder" to many of the Gift of Life.

b. In the oblation of History (cf. Rm 12:1,ff.) for ancient Israel, there might be noted that the **Exodus** was seen as the **birth** of the nation in the **blood** of the **Paschal Lamb**; the **Monarchy** might be seen as the "high-point" - the **Captivity**, and **Exile** are seen as the decline - but there is the promise of the **breath of new Life** over the field of the dry bones (cf. Ezk 37).

c. **Genesis** speaks of the "God of Creation" - and **Deuteronomy** places before Israel the "God of History":

**"... To You, a thousand years are a single day, a yesterday now over, and an hour in the night..."** (cf. Ps 90:4; 2 P 3:8).

(cf. Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time*. London: SCM 1971; Jean Danielou, SJ, *The Lord of History*. Cleveland and NT: Meridan Books, 5th Printing 1968).

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**CONCLUSION:**

[K] ... I entreat you through your Immaculate Conception and your perfect Virginity. **AMEN!**

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