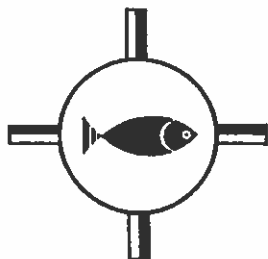


# LIBERAL CATHOLIC INSTITUTE OF STUDIES



## Unit 7

PRACTICE : PASTORAL WORK

## Paper 1

A PASTORAL PRIMER

by the Rev Tony Washington



070.001

Printed in Australia





## CHAPTER 1

### NOT I BUT CHRIST IN ME

This book is not directed primarily to experienced clergy, though perhaps because of its concern with only simple matters it may remind them of things they may well have forgotten. It hopes to be of use to those in minor orders, and to subdeacons and deacons, as they approach the mysterious moment when they are admitted to that onerous degree which makes them "priests forever, after the order of Melchisedek."

"I cannot give to others what I haven't got myself" is true. So let us proceed from within to without, from "God with us" to his loved people, which is to say, from within myself out to the whole world.

One has said "If God did not exist it would be necessary to invent him if only for the sake of prayer." By this we are to understand that daily personal conversation with God is essential to the spiritual health of us all, and must be vital to any who would live the priestly life.

It is clear that we should be ready at all times to exercise the powers given in ordination, to bless silently when for example we meet someone obviously worried, or in pain. You will not be able to do this unless each day begins and ends with some form of communication with the source of all grace.

I am not talking necessarily of conscious explicit prayer, though this is an aspect you should not ignore. Prayer can arise without words whenever we have evidence of the ordered world around, or receive an expression of friendship or kindness: a spontaneous response should arise in us which will radiate outwards, increasing the value of the moment. This is a form of prayer. So also is an act deliberately undertaken to help with the work of the world. St. Benedict said "To pray is to work." The reverse is equally true. Liberal Catholics are healthily suspicious of pious-looking people, they do not like posturing, the clasped hands and upturned eyes, and they are right. The people we would reach out to will be put off by the outward signs, but attracted strongly by the inward reality, so we must live the life, not act it.

Since our family life as a Church is centered on the Blessed Sacrament, the best way to begin each day is by a private celebration of the Eucharist. You do not need an elaborate oratory for this purpose, and most of us can arrange for a small table in a quiet room, on which can be placed two small candlesticks, a cross, and a small portable altar stone. You will need to have a good alarm clock, and you will need to go to bed at a reasonable hour, so you can arise before the rest of the household. If you cram the mass in whilst others are showering, dressing, cooking and so on, your work will suffer and you yourself will not obtain the benefit you surely will need that day. More will be said later about your preparations before celebrating. Suffice here to say you should leave good time for a quiet, almost leisurely, celebration after you have shaved, washed, and vested. My own experience is you should add not less than one hour to your day if you are to say mass decently and with due reverence.

Where a celebration is not possible, a spiritual communion always is. You will develop your own method for this, but the following suggestions may help: formal prayer should normally include:

Adoration  
Confession  
Thanksgiving  
Supplication

but not necessarily in that order, though the crutch helps the memory. As well, find collect, epistle, and gospel, for the day and use such parts as you find useful. The purpose of the exercise is union with Our Lord at an equivalent level to that of the sacramental kind. This can be achieved in a very short time, but (again) is more valuable to Him and to you if undertaken slowly and peacefully. One side-effect will be that often a line or two from say, the collect will lodge in your subconscious mind to be recalled again during the day, invariably with increased meaning for you.

The prime advantage, however, for you personally (and remember we are not discussing the aspects beyond this) will be more evident by contrast if for such reasons as laziness or carelessness you omit to begin a day this way. But all this you will discover for yourself.

These methods--celebration of the Holy Mysteries, or Spiritual Communion--could be termed the formal methods, but they are not exhaustive: others may find any of the many kinds of meditation equally valuable. The rule is "Whatever suits me best," though I would personally feel that all priests who are able to celebrate frequently and do not, are exposing themselves to failure and a loss of that constant sense of vocation which is so necessary if we are to be centers of grace.

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Since all Liberal Catholic priests are privileged to be worker-priests they will need to exercise great care in the matter of their whole presentation to the ordinary world around them.

You will be known at work in your district for what you are, and you will be the subject of much discussion and criticism. You will therefore need to be on your guard at all times lest you bring discredit on the good name of our Church. It may not be quite fair that people will expect more from you than others, though if you reflect on the position you have been given I doubt whether you'll feel this, and if you are a good man as well as a good priest you will not wish to disappoint those hoping for a good example from you.

To this end you will be bound to be meticulous in such mundane matters as paying your bills promptly, ordering your family life in affection and cheerfulness, and without being priggish, watching your conversation, your appearance, and your efficiency at work and loyalty to your firm and your superiors. As an example, imagine the effect on a young couple coming to your house to discuss their forthcoming marriage, if they find the lawns uncut, the house in an uproar, you yourself in untidy or careless dress. Things like these are not likely to inspire in them a respect for your office or a desire to be more closely associated with us. The point I'm trying to make is that failure to show Liberal Catholicism at its best always is not merely an act of uncharitableness to the rest of us, but much more importantly may be a disappointment to those seeking what we have to offer, and a barrier to their spiritual evolution.

Another way to increase your efficiency as a priest is to seek out the company of those who have grown wise in the Order. Where possible do your utmost to attend synods, conventions, retreats and quiet days. Make yourself available to your bishop and seek his advice frequently. Senior clergy will never rebuff you because it is a joy to them to see a younger man grow into the fulness of the calling. There will be times when you feel you are failing. If you allow yourself to become despondent, then and only then will you be ineffective. This feeling can be made salutary. Of course you fail, sometimes quite miserably, but the glory of the faith is that it is never too late to begin again. This is true even of the Great Ones, for only God is perfect and we with all his sons will one day achieve Him. So never ever feel there is anything you cannot take to the bishop or the older priests. They in dealing with you will act in love remembering their own failings.

The one canker which can eat out the heart and soul of a priest is a bad conscience, and this is made more difficult to deal with when we consider that unlike simpler ages we can no longer be content with any such code as the Ten Commandments. What may be right for you may be wrong for me. Again what is right for you today may be wrong tomorrow. Too often, also, the choice is not a clear-cut one

between this right and that wrong, but a choice of the lesser of two unsatisfactory decisions. Hour by hour, almost minute by minute we are faced with decisions, and we need great resources of will-power and God-given grace to choose firmly and courageously. Only as our lives are rooted and grounded in divine power, fed and developed by the love of our own family and the wider church family, and based on an ordered disciplined daily round, will we become fit to face these decisions, and having made them, to put them out of our minds. Jealousy and worry are two quite useless emotions. A bad conscience has elements of both, and we will never quiet a bad conscience of ourselves. This is where God and his priests, our brothers, can be totally necessary.

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Let us sum up our thoughts on what Paul calls the inner man. Love is a word much misused, frequently debased, yet love is the reason for priesthood. Love quite simply is self-forgetfulness. Its opposite is selfishness. (Hate is merely a perversion of love.) We cannot forget self until we have self straightened out and functioning smoothly. An analogy is a car engine; if we wish to go on a journey we want to be free to forget mechanical troubles so we can concentrate on the right track, get there in good time, and do whatever it is we went there for. So we have the engine looked after, we check water, oil and petrol, get it tuned up, and then rightly forget it. So with us as priests.

Without unnecessary introspection, assuredly without selfish concern for our own individual advancement, but in the essential interests of functioning officially as priests, we must keep the inner man disciplined and fed, and then lose ourselves and self-consciousness in an ever-widening endeavour for the whole of life around us. It isn't easy, but then no one told you it would be.





## CHAPTER 2

### THE CABBAGE PATCH

Mrs. Wiggs' husband was the original Follower of the Impossible Dream. Mrs. Wiggs was left with a tribe of children, one of whom was sick. Her house was a poor shanty and there was no money. But she had her Cabbage Patch, and that was enough. She never referred to her husband as other than "Mr. Wiggs", and with an almost infuriating love and pride justified to herself and to others his need, holding up to the children their father as example and bond between them, and the one who had blessed them with the inestimable Cabbage Patch. Mrs. Wiggs was right, and in spite of heartbreak and the landlord, they were happy.

Other churches around us may have grand buildings, large incomes, masses of workers, paid clergy, and importance in the world.

We may have none of these things, or nothing on such a scale, and there may be times when we rather wonder, with our mini-congregations, and perhaps some of the pathetic figures we see in the pews, whether we are on the right track after all.

Then is the time to remember we are called to be Mrs. Wiggs and to follow her shining example. We have our Cabbage Patch parishes. They may not be anything much in the eyes of others, but if we learn to see them for what they truly are, we will wonder how the dear Christ came to select us for such a rewarding satisfying task.

Precisely because we have no great numbers and little money, we need to husband both with even greater care than, say, our Anglican and Roman counterparts. It avails *nothing* to say "If only I had a large beautiful church I could attract hundreds, and then we could do such and such." If you did have, you would find you had other worries you don't have now, and you would discover that a great deal more money would be needed. No; at present our Church is comprised of quite small cabbage-patches spread out very thinly across a still large world, and although succeeding generations may see accelerating changes to this, the fact is what it is, and as Mrs. Wiggs knew so well, fulfillment lies in meticulous care to every detail, and in thanking God for all the blessings which are there if we have eyes to see them.

For a time I attended a Roman Catholic church in a country parish in Queensland. It was nothing special by Roman standards yet its average acts of communion on an ordinary Sunday totalled 2,100! In such a parish it is near impossible for the parish priest to know the christian names, style of life, and personal needs of every parishioner. Here *we* have the advantage and we not only can but should. It has been said that a priest can be either one of the busiest men of all, or one of the laziest. This was said in the context of the paid priest, in that he can take a couple of services on a Sunday and loaf through the other six days, or else he can be a true pastor and teacher and be exercising his priesthood sixteen or seventeen hours out of twenty-four. Now this is not the situation with us, nevertheless part of the criticism could apply: if our priests concern themselves only with matters liturgical they do in fact fall into the same condemnation. I'm not suggesting for one second that the provision of ceremonially and ritually well ordered services is not one of our prime concerns. Clearly it is, and needs a lot of study, self-criticism, and observation added to extensive training. It's just that exactly these qualities need also to be applied to much more than matters liturgical.

Let us think briefly (and here we can only summarize at best) about some of these areas of concern:

#### Care for the Sick

It should be announced at regular intervals, say during the notices, that in case of sickness the vicar should be given as full details as possible. Either he or his delegate is thus able to visit the home or hospital, see the sick person, offer the sacraments if advisable, and remember the person at mass and private prayer. Incidentally, it takes practice to assess whether or not to suggest a sick communion and/or healing. In some cases sick people will take fright, or their relatives may object. If the person is a regular communicant you'll be on fairly safe ground. Otherwise be extremely careful even about praying with the sick one. Sometimes just a simple "social" call is all that is beneficial. After all, you can always pray internally and bless secretly during your visit. On the other hand to neglect administration of the sacraments where this is clearly indicated is a grievous error. Encourage your people to tell you of sick and elderly people who are not being cared for, and who are not numbered in the congregation. Because of our small numbers most clergy are not overworked in respect of sick calls, and do have time to include such people. If you do, be careful to ensure the person visited is not under the impression you are merely "trying to get them in." It's a fine balance indeed to visit simply for the sake of the one sick, and yet at the same time let him or her know without saying so that they'd always be welcome among us.



Sometimes where there is a needy case you would do well to encourage a sympathetic layman or woman to pay an initial visit, but you must only use someone you know is the soul of discretion, and who in paving the way for your visit will not frighten him or her in any way. Although vitally concerned, anyone lay or cleric visiting the sick must appear relaxed, cheering, and have a very positive attitude. We have to remember that healing doesn't *always* mean recovery of the physical body, and also that fear of death can be a very destructive thing. If possible develop a relationship with doctors and nurses, and always ask permission to visit an hospitalized patient. Be ready to stand aside if a doctor or nurse needs to treat or confer with the patient. If you arrange to bring communion or give a healing, arrange it for a time that suits the staff, if in hospital, or the family, if at home. If you are careful never to disrupt sickroom routine you will invariably find yourself welcome, called promptly when needed, and often a clean cloth and water will be set out for you. Unobtrusive, efficient and quiet ministrations are welcomed in most hospitals, but bustling self-important and demanding clergy are anathema. Do not neglect relations and friends. Sometimes their distress is greater than that of the patient. Bring them on side if you can, and above all *never* visit the patient during normal visiting hours. A wife or husband has priority, and to a lesser degree so do children and relatives or friends, except in cases of dire emergency. Practice will teach you to be available without being either obtrusive or intrusive. As an example in a simple way, when I was a young Anglican priest I became careless of protocol and the necessities, and took to wandering the wards of certain northern hospitals without checking out with the ward sister, until I barged in on two nurses "laying out" an elderly lady. That was embarrassment enough, but the lesson was thoroughly rubbed in when the deputy matron called me into her office and gave me a polite but thorough chewing out. It is effective, but not the best way to learn.

On the question whether a terminal case should be told to prepare for death, you will often meet with frustration. My personal theory is that if most patients are told quietly by a sympathetic doctor or priest they may well go through a short period of panic, distress or hysteria, but quickly rally and become relaxed and ready for the adventure (for this is what it is to the believer). If the doctor or relative decides this is not to be done, try gentle reasoning after thought and prayer, but if they insist it is not your duty to go against such a refusal. Continue your work in the sure and certain hope that the Holy Spirit is helping you. So also are the angels, especially St. Raphael, and invoke their aid. But do remember our Church is non-authoritarian. We work with the divinely ordained tools provided and through love, which "suffereth long and is kind."

Let me stress again, we are only attempting outlines in the various areas of priestly work we are considering. In this as in

the other aspects we will think about there are quite literally thousands of minor features, but if you keep the general approach in mind and continue to converse with the Christ, you need have no worries. Let things happen to you, because that is the real way we learn, and always keep in mind you are merely the agent of your Master, his hands only, and if you let him work through you, rather than in spite of you all will be well. Let us now turn to:

### Visiting

The old saw says "a visiting priest makes a church-going people," and under this head we include non-liturgical parish functions defined as discussion groups, business meetings, committee meetings, social gatherings and outings. The priest must always listen to the prompting of intuitions and you will develop this so that you strike the fine balance between living in your peoples' pockets on the one hand, and neglecting them on the other. Common sense should also strongly inform you: for instance, it's just no good if you sail in and arrange a function only to find that the majority are not interested. You should be frequently sounding out the parish to discover what the needs and desires of your people are. Since no two parishes are the same, never fall into the error of saying "When I was at Saint So and So's we did this, or that." This irritates many, and if they weren't polite they might say with justification "But you aren't there now." By all means put experience to work, but don't make it sound slightly second-hand. Remember, too, in planning parish activities, that some people are extremely busy. If you expect them to leave their other obligations too often, they through loyalty will probably not disappoint you, but they will be reluctant at first, and if you persist may remind you with some asperity that they have homes, jobs, and other social matters which they are not prepared to neglect. Learn to listen in when your people are chatting together, and do so unobtrusively. Priests tend to talk too much and listen too little. The temptation to "say a few words" is one to which we are prone, and are often unwittingly encouraged in (none more so than myself!). If you learn to listen well, you will always be aware of what your people want, and how and when they want it.

On the matter of house visits you will find you benefit more than do those visited. You will be amazed at the abilities, interests, and connections you will find your people have of which you had no idea, and you will find ways of putting this knowledge to good communal use. If we only see people at church we see only one small side of them.

Be sure you arrange to visit at an acceptable time, that you have an explicit purpose (invent one if necessary), and that you do not drag the visit out: "Dear Father Tom. Such a nice good man, and a conscientious priest, but what a bore! Sits there for hours on end " til we have to invent excuses for getting rid of

him." Never let that be said of you. While on the subject of house visits there is an increasing practice on an ecumenical basis of having home celebrations of the Eucharist. This should be considered carefully if you intend trying this. In the case of a death in the family it can be very salutary to hold a house Requiem at some suitable time after the funeral. In this case the family will feel that the personal side is rightly being stressed, and they may feel more free to express natural grief. However, in some cases this *could* be undesirable especially where very emotional people are concerned, and who might be more controlled at a public service. You must in any circumstances of a home mass be assured of the undivided attention of the household, or at least silence from those in the house not attending the celebration. You should also have prior approval from the vicar or priest-in-charge, who will have obtained episcopal authority on such matters. Provision of other services, such as marriage in the home should be made with the same principles in mind, but if you are asked to baptize in this way remember that in normal circumstances the church family (i.e., the parish at this level) should usually be allowed to be present to welcome the new member, infant or adult, and to add their prayers to the sacrament. Naturally, in emergency these rules are waived.

Parish business meetings can be the cause of real trouble if not very carefully prepared for and adequately advertised. You must ensure the distribution of agenda (preferably in advance), that the secretary has minutes and correspondence to date, that the treasurer has a proper financial statement, and that necessary information on any matter to be discussed has been collected in advance. If you are to chair the meeting be thoroughly aware of the generally accepted rules of procedure. If you don't you may well lose a valuable motion on a technicality. It is no easy task to allow all to have a proper say on each subject, whilst keeping discussion to the subject and not on irrelevancies, and to maintain an unemotional atmosphere. We have our share of bush lawyers and people with quick tempers, so be very sure of yourself, your own temper, and your facts. Matters purely liturgical are of course reserved for the bishop. The vicar as the term implies represents him in the parish, and these must not be allowed to be discussed at formal meetings, though queries or objections should of course be registered and referred to vicar or bishop for a ruling. They must not be allowed to become the subject of debate, but make sure when ruling on this that the subject *is* a direct liturgical matter. For example, the best time to hold a Sunday morning service is at eleven thirty or at noon. Liturgically it must take place before noon), and so far as circumstances permit the views of the majority would normally be acceded to.

Study groups can be very useful indeed. This is particularly true for younger members, but don't leap in and start something unless you are sure will have time to conduct sessions regularly, that you ~~are~~ in fact competent to do so, and that you will have a reasonable number in the group. It may be that you can delegate

leadership to someone else. If so, you should at least look in on each session if you don't intend to sit in fully. You should also indicate that you are available for additional advice, help etc., and you should ensure that young people are sent home at a reasonable hour. Young girls, for example, should be driven home by a responsible adult, and not be allowed to put themselves into situations where they are unsupervised or likely to be in trouble. While parishioners and especially their children are attending any church-sponsored function it does not matter who is running it, the priest will still have to bear final responsibility. The church is not immune from scandal, and you must therefore be on guard, without becoming a Mrs. Grundy. Once again, if you cultivate the habit of attentive listening you will often be able to forestall trouble. You are *not* the guardian of the community morals, but you *are* the FATHER of a family, hence your rightful title, and as such stand in relation to the church family in the same way as the father of a human family does to his.

If you arrange a parish outing, such as a night out together at a show, a picnic, a sporting function etc., be careful to plan everything down to the last detail. If people don't turn up in time, get lost, or fail to meet at an agreed rendezvous, it will nearly always be because you have failed to make arrangements properly. Of course each parish has the odd person who will always get things wrong. Identify anyone of this nature and detail someone else to keep a close watch on him or her. Neglect details and you will spend your time rushing hither and yon, and so get nothing out of it yourself. This may even so obscure the reason for the outings as to render the whole exercise a waste of time. All of this may seem so obvious as to be unnecessary, but anyone who has been associated with church matters will agree that it is most often in practical common-sense matters that clergy are most deficient. Let us now thing about:

#### The Church and its Appurtenances

An old sea-dog used to say that at sea cleanliness wasn't so much *next* to godliness as a photo-finish with it. This is equally true in church. A dusty building, dirty altar linen, unpolished brass-ware, inadequate supplies of purificators, corporals, lavabo towels, and so on, cluttered vestries, much whispering, all those things and some others, are the clear sign of one thing--a slovenly careless priest. I have actually heard of pocket handkerchiefs being whipped out of pockets moments before mass when it is discovered that there was no purificator or lavabo towel available. This sort of thing is not to be tolerated. Bishop Leadbeater's "Science of the Sacraments" stresses over and over the absolute necessity for total cleanliness, and the proper provision of the right equipment, and is unfortunate that too often this is forgotten. I am not intending any criticism of the majority of our

churches, but that these things do occur no one can deny. No chasuble or cope need ever be grubby. Dry cleaners are everywhere.\* Frayed and damaged linen and vestments can easily be repaired as soon as they need it. Our ladies are most cooperative in this way. The answer generally is the appointment of a sacristan. This is a task which a good sub-deacon could do well, and he would benefit personally as experience gained would be valuable to him as he progressed. But there is no reason why, with certain limitations, a layman or laywoman should not be trained for the job, and do it very well. There should also be someone responsible to ensure that servers do not appear in public with dirty or un-ironed cottas or surplices, or with ill-fitting cassocks, and that finger-nails and hair are decent. Nor should clergy be allowed to enter the church with albs caught up, chasubles awry, or copes dragging along the ground. Tact is very necessary to ensure that these points are attended to, but somehow or other you will have to see it is done.

Each of the clergy in major orders in any parish must be provided with an official Ordo so that they know well in advance where and in what role they are listed to function on Sundays and high days. A priest who is unavoidably prevented from attendance where he is rostered, is required so far as he is able to give as much warning as possible and to provide a suitable substitute. Clergy should also be quite clear about what equipment they should take to any given church, and this will often vary widely.

Churches must be protected from vandalism, and the much more serious matter of care of the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, and the holy oils cupboard, is a matter of great concern. Yet at the same time your church should be available to passers-by to slip into, to pay a visit to the reserved Sacrament, or merely to rest awhile. Therefore the matter of locking up should be discussed by the parish council and suitable arrangements made.

Male parishioners can and should be invited to help with general cleaning and tidying duties, and not relegate these tasks solely to the women. Care of the grounds, and specially the lawns, should be arranged for on a regular basis. This also applies to sidesmen and servers, and to the provision of cups of tea after services. Nothing is more conducive to well-ordered services than a thoroughly organized distribution of functions, so that you don't have people falling over themselves one Sunday and no one available the next. Also newcomers will be impressed and much more ready to take us seriously if they are welcomed, shown a seat, given hymn-book and service-book, and are able to see that all is ordered and punctual. Time is vitally important to most of us, but even if it isn't, most people expect a 10:30 a.m. service to commence at the time and

\* Vestments must be blessed after each dry-cleaning.

not at 10:28 a.m. or 10:33 a.m. This is no more than common courtesy.

I have noticed that our Rectory is most meticulous in all those matters, especially in the matter of punctuality. If he who has so much more to look to than the rest of us can attend to these details, then surely we can "go and do likewise."

Let us now list without comment some lesser matters which need looking after:

Provide a card in the vestry with vesting-prayers typed out.

Ensure that the proper collects, epistle, and gospel for the day are available to the celebrant. If possible the hymn-board should show which Sunday or high day is being observed.

See that a slip with hymn numbers is handed to the celebrant, and visitors in the sanctuary. They may not hear hymns announced, or be able to see the board.

Be sure lists of sick and departed names are placed near the missal stand.

Make sure a celebrant of a marriage has a slip of paper with the bride's and groom's christian names on it. The same is advisable at funerals where the officiant is not well known to the departed.

Have adequate supplies of all necessary forms always on hand.

Make sure sacramental wine and breads are hygienically stored in a cool dry place.

Arrange for water, soap and towels in the vestry.

Have a clear simple rule over the selection of hymns, and see to it that both organist and choir-leader are at least consulted, especially with regard to tunes.

Brief visitors clearly on local practices, and variations.

Ensure that for at least 15 minutes before a service no one disturbs the celebrant unless absolutely unavoidable, and that chattering is eliminated entirely.

Try to arrange practices where a new or infrequent ceremony is to be used, and ensure no one is admitted as server without proper training.

Have properly authorized officers take charge of collections, count the money, and make suitable entries in the Register.

Ensure that celebrants and preachers write up and sign service registers, and that proper records are scrupulously kept.

Never rely on your memory. It will let you down every time.

There is one rule for the good running of a church: *Do it now.* If you attend to things on a regular ordered basis your task will become easy and almost automatic, and you will obtain great satisfaction from watching the results in the parish. One good example of a delightfully regulated and therefore effective church is that of St. George's, Hurstville. May they and the rest of us always realize how much this contributes to the Founding Fathers' vision of the parish church as a center of divine grace and power, radiating outward God's blessing on the district in which it is set. In our own special way let us make our churches little jewels, flawless in every way.

We now turn to a function in which God the Holy Spirit is particularly concerned:

### Preaching

It is convenient to divide the subject into two parts: (a) subject, and (b) method.

(a) *Subject* The Liturgy provides in addition to collects, epistles, and gospels for the year, an intention for each Sunday. Taken together these provide enough matter for sermons to last the most talkative preacher a life-time at least, even if he preaches twice every Sunday. There are, it is true, times when, say after a Convention, a practical non-meditative talk in place of a sermon is called for, but generally speaking a sermon is an adjunct to a particular service. It is meant to direct our hearts and minds as well as our bodies to the work at hand. (Remember "liturgy" is the "ergos" or work of the "laos", the holy people of God.) Practical instructions should generally be looked after in other ways. The sermon should be more in the nature of a conducted meditation so it is unfair to expect people to listen to a sermon in the same way as they would to a lesson or lecture.

It is ~~not~~ a forum at which you may air your view on a wide range of topics, nor is it a means of working off grudges. I hope no Liberal Catholic would ever do what I've heard in other places where a priest gets up and abuses those present for not attending more frequently, or when sermon time becomes twenty minutes of begging for money.

At the Eucharist, the sermon can be the pinnacle of the fore-mass (the teaching part up to the offertory) and if well used results in the Creed being recited with new conviction and fervor which of course is precisely what is intended by the positioning.

(b) *Method* Under the sub-heading we include length, method of delivery, use of notes, etc. Probably the ideally planned sermon considers a text or topic from three different angles each of approximately three minutes duration, with a final summary of three minutes. Twelve minutes in all is neither too long nor too short. Unless you are quite brilliant fifteen minutes is maximum length, so do keep your eye on your watch. Better still, read your sermon through beforehand pacing yourself at your normal reading speed, including pauses for emphasis, and time it to check that it stays within acceptable limits. If it is over fifteen minutes in duration you will usually gain by a little judicious surgery.

If possible memorize your sermon thoroughly so you don't have to read it, but always have a skeleton outline with you in case of mental failure or nervousness, or disturbance.

If you encourage lay-folk, or men in minor orders, to preach, check their sermons thoroughly in advance at least until you are sure it is quite safe not to do so, but if you criticize, be terribly careful to do it tactfully without hurt, and constructively. Sermons gain from an ever-so-slight addition of histrionics but don't for goodness sake don't over-act or ham. Keep the head still and held well up so you project. Muttering onto your chest will result in mass attacks of sleeping sickness in the pews; and remind yourself frequently to open your mouth well in saying words.

Select your subject days in advance, and think all around it at odd moments, so that when--no later than the Thursday before the Sunday--you will write it out, your sub-conscious will have grown a crop of fresh clear notions which you can marshal into a neat progression of thought.

Above all remember that the Holy Spirit is using you as a medium in this matter. If you receive compliments afterwards they don't belong to you but to God, so don't begin to think you are a bit special, though a good sermon is usually an indication that your contact with the Master is open and expanded and that therefore your daily prayers and Eucharists are being properly used, so on this score consider yourself favored.



To sum up, you preach so that you may share the joy of the faith with others, and to help them contribute more fully to the service you are joined in offering. Since it is thus an act of love, forget yourself by giving yourself fully in this way and you will find that thus "casting your bread upon the waters it will return to you after many days." "He that hath ears to hear let him hearken what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."





## CHAPTER 3

### LOTS OF CASSOWARIES

There is a silly jingle:

"If I was a cassowary  
On the banks of Timbuktu,  
I would eat a missionary  
Skin, bones, and hymn-book too"

Quite simply a missionary is one who is sent on a mission, therefore you and I and all dedicated christians are missionaries. The word has accretions suggesting far off climes, and white cassocks, but in fact anyone who has been admitted to our Church, or any other church, whether christian or otherwise, has a mission. Our Lord gave two very imperative commands: "Do this in remembrance of, (i.e., to recall) me!" and, equally strong: "Go ye into all the world baptizing!" And so we must. But you are going out with special responsibilities so you need special preparation.

Let us turn back again to you personally. You'll remember that in the first chapter we thought about the priest's daily conversations (on a two-way stretch basis) with his Master and how they are necessary if he is to do his daily work. We then looked in a basic fashion at the place where that work takes place, the parish. Now we shall think about the training which fits him to avoid the beak of the dreaded cassowary which would gobble him up, when he sets out on his mission.

In this area our Church has a task greater than that of any other. We reject as at best irrelevant and at worst as damaging whole blocks of traditional dogma. But how can one reject something unless he has examined that something very thoroughly and knows he is right in rejecting it? You simply cannot, and yet by our very existence as a definable part of the church Catholic we are a challenge to those who still accept the traditional teachings. It follows that our clergy must be ready to meet (sometimes very competent) theologians and be able to defend our position reasonably and charitably. I am fully aware that some among us will strongly deny this to be so. I can only reply that any man with a true vocation to the priesthood of our Church who is placed in a position where his *raison d'être* is challenged and who cannot make adequate answer, cannot fail to question his right to continue as an official representative of us all.

Bishop Leadbeter had extensive experience as a priest in a typical traditional church, and there is much evidence of this in "The Science of the Sacraments." It is doubtful to say the least whether that book would have been quite the monumental work it is if he had not been thoroughly schooled in traditional theology. I am not referring to the many now "dated" references to the Roman Catholic liturgy. These are in the main no longer relevant and yet this does not materially affect the main tenor of the book. I am referring to his ability to answer in advance either explicitly or implicitly critics of his positions. Hence my belief that an adequate comprehension of traditional theology is necessary to our clergy if they are to attract the many spiritually displaced persons who refuse to accept the traditional approach without quite knowing why, and yet who are suspicious of us because we seem a bit too good to be true. It is also necessary if our clergy are to meet with their brothers of other denominations and not feel inadequate.

Some of our clergy have already gained the Anglican Licentiate in Theology, which is not nearly so sectarian as it first seems. The Anglican Communion is not one church, but many, and comprehends pretty well the whole spectrum of traditional thought from a Calvinistic hard-line protestantism to extremes of anglo-catholicism (sometimes even referred to as "pseudo-Vatican II Romanism!"). Hence Th.L, and the lesser qualification Th.A (the associateship) are cast on non-party lines and generally tend to set out the main possibilities on any point without preferring any. It is probably the least biased approach available.

I am not suggesting that we should encourage all aspirants to priesthood to obtain either Th.L or Th.A (though most could if they set their minds to it), but I am suggesting that many of the set books for either of these courses would provide our men with a lot of valuable reading.

If one were asked what are the minimal requirements to fit one to read the average theological journal the following would have to be included:

- (1) Church history,
- (2) Principles and history of philosophy,
- (3) A good knowledge of the Bible with particular reference to form criticism,

- (4) Liturgiology,
- (5) Comparative religions,
- (6) Dogmatic theology,

mostly at tertiary level. None of these should be uninteresting to our clergy, which is *not* to say that a knowledge of them need affect their attitude to Liberal Catholicism. In fact, quite the contrary--it will serve to further convince them of the rightness of our approach. The suggestion being made is that our clergy, especially the junior men, must realize that ordination is only the beginning, and the point at which they are deemed to have encompassed *the barest essentials* necessary to them. In our, and other, churches there is a lamentable tendency for men to think that having achieved ordination they need do no further training. Nothing could be further from the truth: one trains for the priesthood all one's life, and if our interests do not lie in these fields of study we ought seriously to wonder whether we have made the right choice. Nothing, but nothing, could be more "traditional", more medieval, more non-Liberal Catholic, than the "mass-priest", the man who thinks ordination is solely to turn out a sort of "bread and wine magician." He would be the modern equivalent of the chantry-priest who quickly came, even centuries ago, to be recognized as an abuse of the sacerdotal ministry. The notion is grounded in the grossest kind of commercialism, and priestly failures most frequently occur among those who neglect the other aspects of their office to concentrate only on the celebration of the Eucharist. Of course this is the glory of the office, of course it is the joy of priests, and of course, as we ourselves said earlier, priests should celebrate daily, but we never ever say mass just to exercise that power. Nor in fact do we ever say mass: our Liturgy tells us very clearly that the Christ is always and only the celebrant. We merely lend our bodies. But enough has been said, I hope, to convince you that continuous study should be not only your duty but your pleasure, once in major orders. The process of fitting ourselves to serve our people is a continuous and continuing thing. We do not need to spend long hours at a desk but should always be leisurely working through some form of study directly relating to our function as ministers to the holy people.

Naturally the content and requirements of official training conducted by our own Church is a matter outside the scope and purpose of this book, because it is quite unnecessary for me to comment on what has been decreed by competent authority, beyond encouraging all to get the utmost out of it by reading round it, and supplementing it as much as possible. The liturgy talks of the sweet but heavy burden laid upon the priest's shoulders. Ask yourself, what is this "heavy" bit, am I accepting only the sweet, and dodging the heavy? Is not regular study part of the

"heavy" aspect? If so, how do I measure up? Or am I just mentally lazy? Once again: you can't give to others what you haven't got yourself--knowledge, conviction, faith, love--all proceed from within to without.

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Now let's go on to the cassowary bit: because we have been blessed beyond measure we see the priesthood in a very special light. It's hard for us to realize that we are surrounded in the world today by many people who despise what they call priestcraft, who would, had they the power, discredit us and close our churches. They see us as the perpetrators of a form of oppression akin to brain-washing, whose real purposes are our own sense of authority and to get money. They would in a sense eat us up, skin and bones and St. Alban's Hymn-Book too. It is to these that we are sent as much as to our own congregations. If we adopt the "can't" attitude that we are spiritually superior to them, more highly evolved, then we will deserve their sneers because this is in fact priestcraft. In times past such people, who are often courageous, often unhappy, were ostracized, excommunicated, or killed. That can no longer happen thank God. Instead, for the first time in two thousand years there is a Church reasonably well equipped to win them over. It's a very interesting, quite novel situation and a great challenge to us. Hitherto they and the Church have either been in open enmity, or have pointedly ignored each other. Now in spite of their impersonal desire to see us exterminated (nothing personal is involved) we can show them a priesthood which has no power base, has no vested interests, and which functions solely because of experiential convictions. It's a very interesting situation which as yet we are doing very little to explore. In regard to this, our use of the media leaves much to be desired, as does our availability. The sort of people under discussion will never seek us out in our churches. They will meet us only on strictly neutral ground or in such service organizations as Lifeline or A.A. when the need drives, and they will be attracted, if at all, by our quality of life, more than anything else. If we appear as integrated happy people they may well make the obvious inference, and the sign of interest is invariably intellectual attack. It is then that we need to know not only our position, but that of the traditional denominations, as most of this kind of people are amazingly well read. This in itself is a clue, of course. They are people who look for full intellectual proof, which they will never get. But as they contemplate people who are quietly sure of themselves and who can support--if not prove--their faith by sensible reasoning they will draw closer. They profess no belief in God, yet blame Him for so much that goes wrong. They hate God, and this with infinite patience and long care-*can* be turned around and converted into its "positive" side which is love.

Another class of person we are peculiarly fitted to attract, comprises those who are disappointed in the "demystification"-- the anti-occult attitude--which is so much in vogue in some religious areas. The astonishing point here is that a fake occultism is quite the "in" thing in secular life. So people turn from the non-mysterious coffee-lounge atmosphere of modernist churches, to the commercial pseudo-occultism of the newspapers and rock-groups, and are disappointed. Yet if we could only see it, an approach based on a revised edition of "The Science of the Sacraments" could easily be the key. Here again we need a deep assurance and a total honesty of approach, but above all the energy and enthusiasm to go out and seek such people out.

Churchmen, clergy in particular, seem to huddle together telling each other how right they are--I include myself in this-- and how wrong others are. We are afraid of rebuff, afraid we'll be laughed at. We have yet to learn that sneers and ridicule are often the last defense of the yielding soul which longs to come home to "its own true native land." The message of the "Hound of Heaven" is always true for many souls, and they are most difficult just before they give in.

And finally in this area of consideration: a class of person that any priest can reach if only he loves Christ and his people enough. This is the person no one else wants: the drug addict, the psychotic, the drunk, the homosexual, the criminal and so on. No one, that is so far, except the Salvation Army. How truly christian in the best sense of the word are the "Sallies." They need assistance in their work because there are people they cannot reach only because of their evangelical approach. We could easily be a sort of Catholic expression the Salvation Army, and welcome unpatronizingly as our true brothers and sisters those who society rejects or who reject society. Our people would need training to accept this attitude, but this is one reason why priests are ordained, to guide, and to persuade. "In as much as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren ye did it unto me." He really MEANT the LEAST of his brethren, and yours and mine.

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In summarizing, we would do well to remember that at present we are so small that we can quickly come to know each other intimately in a way which is impossible in larger denominations. There is no doubt we are generally using the advantage fully, and putting it to good use. But this is clearly a temptation to all of us to keep it that way, and it is a subtle temptation, and one which must be resisted with all the strength in us. We have the bread of eternal life and if we do not work ceaselessly to share it as fully as Christ did when he shared the few small loaves with the multitudes, then it will surely be taken from us. We must

never allow ourselves to become an ecclesial nuclear family, because standing still, holding on to our present charming intimacy is really going backwards, and we will always fail if we try to keep things as they are. We are not yet conscious of how much we need new life, and there are few signs of any pervading desire to share with the needy the riches of our communal life. The only way to awaken this is for each one to do his utmost in the sphere of his own activities to interest all he meets, without (and this is important) presuming to decide whether any one he meets might be interested. Often the most unlikely people are those in direst need, it may well be of the particular genius of our Church to come to such souls. Equally those we judge most likely may well be not in the slightest interested for reasons well beyond our knowledge. We should remember the parable of the sower, who scatters the seed liberally, and whether it falls on a rocky ground, or is scorched by the sun, or brings forth fruit a hundredfold, is actually not his concern, but that of God who created the sower, the seed, the sun, and the earth--and He alone knows what the harvest will be.

Our duty is simply this: to have seed in abundance for the sowing, and the energy to go into the fields that we might sow it freely. We must learn not to be frightened by sophistication or wealth, or fooled by simplicity. We must not be timid in the face of the world, or supercilious as if we possessed the whole truth. If we dare to consider ourselves in any sense whatever as the elect, the enlightened ones, we can be quite sure we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. Here is one rule: "Freely have ye received, freely give," which is the same saying as "Go ye into all the world." All is the operative word.



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## CHAPTER 4

### THE MAN IN THE MITRE

The hoary anglican joke states that the particular symbol of the bishop is the crook, that of the archbishop the double cross. Bishops have traditionally been the butt of jokes and songs across the ages, and at times in history have given good reason for this. Stories, amusing, incredible, or shocking, are legion, and episcopal behavior has ranged from the obscene, bizarre, ridiculous, through just plain carelessness to total self-giving holiness and sainthood.

None of this affects the truth that to theocentric natures a bishop is a person of enormous occult power. It is for this reason that the office has been so jealously guarded, and at the same time too often considered a prize, or worse, a promotion.

It is unfortunate that we talk of someone being "elevated" to the priesthood, "elevated" to the episcopate. There is a very real sense in which this is true, of course, but it is not usually known precisely to those who use the term. For this reason it is better to talk of being *made* a deacon, *ordained* a priest, and *consecrated* a bishop.

Elevation, in Holy Orders simply means being taken up to an office more spiritually operative than that which was previously occupied. It does *not* mean being vested with greater importance (i.e., power) in the overall scheme; it *does* mean having greater authority. Here let us recall the great difference between the derivations of the words "authority"--(L. auctoritas) and "power"--(L. potestas). It has been well said that the service of the king is a high honor for which nobles contend, but to be servant of the poor and contemptible is to imitate the Christ. It is in this sense and this alone that a bishop's is a high office: he is the servant of all in a deeper way than those of other orders, and he is called (and equipped) to imitate more closely the Christ. We should always remember that the more we are caught up in these deep occult areas the greater the risk of failure both to others and ourselves--I had almost said the greater the danger, since in the realms of the priesthood and episcopate we are intimately involved with forces about which we still only know the barest broad facts, the little or nothing about the details of how they operate. We can sometimes see their effects, but very rarely indeed the manner in which they work.



It follows, then, that he who is called on to use such forces needs to be fully aware of that with which he is involved. This few men are capable of doing, and those that are must quite literally live twenty-four hours of every day in rigorously schooled recollection of this. He who accepts the office of a bishop and is not prepared thenceforward for the rest of his life to put this first--in all things and at all times--places himself in an extremely dangerous position. As has already been said he is at his consecration given considerable and potent aids for the role he is assuming, but as always in the sacramental sphere such aids depend on the use to which they are put for their effectiveness. They do not operate simply because they have been given. As an example: a loaded rifle is a potentially dangerous weapon, but it is harmless until it is pointed correctly and discharged by pressure on the trigger. A bishop is equipped to discharge his functions and he can do so accurately and with infinite benefit, but only if he is continually developing his skill in the use of his special equipment.

Enough has surely been said to emphasize the magnitude of the difference between the office of a bishop and that of any other servant of God--not because of the dignity of glory, but because of the great and continuing demands on the occupant.

But why all this in a book on the basics of pastoralia?

Just this: we who have free and frequent access to the bishop because of our own office ought at all times to remember the demands placed on him and his time. The demands are many including social, civic, secretarial, and administrative, as well as sacramental and psychic.

It is sometimes hard to remember that he has other clergy to help and supervise, other churches than our own to consider. Too often we feel that a letter from us ought to be answered by return mail from him. Worse still we dare to be critical if we don't get the service we consider our due. And this is only the tip of the iceberg! If this were the only way clergy were difficult for a bishop to deal with, his life would be reasonably trouble-free. Tragically--the word is quite deliberate--this is often the least of his worries. Over and over he is forced to justify his actions to clergy who are frankly being busy-bodies, who take it on themselves to comment on episcopal acts which have no bearing whatsoever on them, or their parishes. Too often he is called on to listen patiently to hare-brained schemes or pet projects which could never succeed, and never be of use if they did. Again, he will be required to rebuke personal pride or selfishness where he shouldn't need to, and so risk loss of a priest who, apart from this particular failure in charity, is performing a necessary function in some area of the bishop's charge.

We simply must learn, nowhere so importantly as in our own church, that priest or deacon functions solely as an extension of the bishop. A priest is nothing more than a pair of surrogate hands and feet ordained because the bishop, being human, cannot be in many places at once. Note how in the ordination service the vow of canonical obedience is so placed that all present are vividly aware that it is being made. It is not lost in a group of ceremonial actions, and this is no accident.

I am not suggesting blind obedience which would lead to totalitarianism. I am urging as strongly as I can the absolute necessity for trust. We must at all costs believe we would not have been made subdeacons, deacons, or ordained priests if we were not truly and really beloved sons. Surely we can return this proper love. *Next to the gift of wisdom, which is love, is understanding, which is faith.*

Let us have a wise understanding of our right reverend fathers in God, and in this real and intimate way help them to a greater exercise of their authority.

There are many things in a diocese or a region of which we naturally know little or nothing. The bishop knows, on the contrary, a great deal. He will therefore be bound quite often to take action we are tempted to criticize. We can argue quite convincingly among ourselves on why he should have done something other than he did because we do not know *all* the facts, yet if we had knowledge we too would have done as he did. In the last resort it is not for us to judge. As has been said, the master may make many mistakes and may do much harm, but the servant is certainly of use if he only saves the time of a better man than himself.

If you feel the Bishop is acting in ignorance you have every right, almost a duty, to point out where to him, but the decision must be his. If your own will is involved you should remember that neither he (the Bishop) nor God is bound to consider it, and in any case it is a wise and very unusual man who can say he fully understands himself and his motives. Do not be tempted to think yourself among the select few.

Basically we need to understand that our contact with the Christ is of a different nature to the Bishop's, so that he will be acting to some extent intuitively, guided by injected principles and decisions of a supernatural kind. As demonstrated effectively in the Gospel stories of Our Lord, these will frequently seem to be at variance with accepted norms. Thus the wisdom of the world can all too often be foolishness from the divine point of view. And conversely, seeming supernatural foolishness can be (and in fact always is) divinely wise.

(and best of all), both should speak very frankly with the bishop who will be of great assistance.

(b) The man *already married* should never agree to taking on any position in the church without first discussing the proposal fully with his wife. If she cannot see her way clear to accepting the consequences then he has no alternative but to refuse the step. He took her first, and so she in these circumstances has the first right. It is a clear indication to him that the proposed step is not his true vocation, no matter how strongly he desires it. If a man cannot so conduct his domestic life that there is harmony and contentment with wife and children, he will never make an effective pastor and teacher. Again, the Bishop can always help.

This will seem hard to some, perhaps. They should remember that if God wishes us to assume a special role he will also help make it possible. This is only another way of saying that each man is the family "priest" of his household first, and secondly only after that has been made to work effectively, priest to others outside his own, in the wider family of the Church.

Furthermore, he will remember at all times that his own family's needs are just as great and important as those of others, and so he must first prove his abilities in this area which is so open to him, before he dares assume care towards those whose problems and circumstances must be to a great extent unknown.

It is of great importance to remember these simple and obvious facts, and too often a man will argue himself around them to achieve the result he desires. If he does he is in danger of being neither an adequate husband nor a satisfactory priest. Anyone who thinks ministry and matrimony are easily combined is a bit simple!

Consider the most obvious point that the weekend is the time workers are best able to attend to family jobs, arrange recreation and generally be available at home. This is the time when a priest is very busily occupied for at least half a day. The same problem arises at Christmas time and Easter, only often more so.

Again, even where both husband and wife have so arranged private and priestly activities so that neither conflict, and both spouses are still able to give their children adequate love and time, the man should be very careful to remember that without exception his wife's sacrifice is always greater than his. I could argue this rather challenging statement to any lengths and still be sure of maintaining my stand. But since I hope I speak to sensitive realistic men (none other should aspire to the sacerdotal office) I should not need to do so. Remember that it is so easy to be the great big hospitable fellow in entertaining visitors and parishioners. It is also dangerously easy to leave your wife to

prepare meals, wash dishes, clean guest-rooms and do extra laundering, while you sail around looking quite majestic in soutane and biretta.

I deliberately adopt this tone because of clear evidence that this is far from unknown among us. The fact that so many clergy wives are almost too forbearing and good-natured should not blind us to some evident resentment at this sort of cavalier disregard. Your wife is neither your assistant curate nor your domestic, and while she will nearly always back you up superbly, remember at all times her comfort and her needs. At the very least consult her before you magnanimously commit her time and labor to the service of others. Should you ever be tempted to think she doesn't understand you or the importance of your office dismiss the thought: what you should realize is that she understands you only too well. Because she humors you, mothers you, and generally does more for you than you know, do not think you can, or need to, fool her.

Finally (without intended cynicism) consciously do some little extra act of love or courtesy, since she continuously does more for you than other wives do for their husbands, and you will invariably be repaid a thousandfold. So will the church. Neglect her or take her for granted and you with your dual vocations are headed for trouble.

St. Joseph put Our Lady on the donkey and walked alongside, himself. He probably had sore feet by the time the Holy Family got to Egypt, but I'd be prepared to bet he also got a lot of grateful kisses. It pays!



Clothes make the man is *not* true of bishops. A mitre doesn't make a bishop. We have to believe divine choice and this alone is what does it. When we see someone *we* think would be a mistake as a bishop being consecrated we can be sure we are wrong. He may not turn out to be the sort of bishop we would like to have, but that is another think altogether. If we knew the whole of the divine plan for the universe we would be quite competent to make the judgment. Only one does, and that is God, and therefore His choice is the only right one for that particular need at that particular time.

Some simple rules emerge:

- (1) If you need to talk to the bishop, save his time and energy by having all your facts marshalled in logical order and check they are correct. Put them as briefly yet fully as possible, and if the verdict is not what you hoped for, accept it as willingly as if it were, knowing that by the nature of your relationship to him he will always strive to treat you with love and consideration. If this is not possible at least do not hurt or offend by a selfish display of pique or anger.
- (2) Do not concern yourself with episcopal actions which have no direct bearing on you, or your parish.
- (3) Pray frequently both privately and in public for him and his intentions. Send him thoughts of strength and understanding, and kill the desire to resent or envy him.
- (4) Make every effort to be available to him personally, or in your official capacity, or as a member of a synod, committee, or work-group.
- (5) Try to anticipate his needs when he calls on you or your parish, and be sure you brief him fully about your affairs and your parishioners.
- (6) Treat him as the Christos, and let your deportment in his presence be governed accordingly.
- (7) If possible, as well as all the above, be his good friend. Ordinary affection is more valuable to him than to others since like the captain of a ship, or the colonel of a regiment, his function isolates him to some extent from the ordinary friendships of life.
- (8) If you should ever be selected as a possible candidate for the episcopacy, ask yourself this one question: If I am consecrated, will I in all honesty, and fully, place my office first in all things and at all times? If the answer is "yes," then accept, if "no," refuse; and--may God help you!





## CHAPTER 5

### FATHER OR DAD

A certain gracious lady of my acquaintance (whose wisdom and friendship are both invaluable) once remarked that most Liberal Catholic clergy would not be half the men they are without their wives. Since she knows most wives and most clergymen not only in this country but in many others it isn't surprising to find from personal experience that this is probably an understatement. Celibacy of course has definite advantages: consider a priest, attending a dying person, and remaining by the bedside from 4 p.m. until 11:30 p.m. unable to leave or to pass word to his wife. He returns home still full of sight and thought on the passing of a soul, to find an irate spouse who justifiably starts up the age-old cry of "If you think I'm going to turn around and cook your tea at this time of night...!" One has sympathy with them both. The celibate doesn't have this problem. Actually in most cases, since we are a worker-priesthood, neither do we, and the case I have quoted is that of the full-time paid priest.

Nevertheless it is an example of the tension which can arise between vocation and duty, or better, between two valid vocations, and where it does it can sometimes be extraordinarily difficult to resolve. A man may easily feel in certain circumstances that he is faced with an impossible choice: the absolute necessity to discharge the priestly office to the best of his ability and at the same time the necessity to be an adequate and loving father and husband.

The approach to this problem is *never* to make a decision between church and family, i.e., to decide to sacrifice one to other, even slightly. The real answer depends entirely on whether a man is married before or after accepting major orders. This attitude has the advantage, if handled properly, of avoiding any tension at all. Let's look at both possibilities:

(a) The man in major orders *before* he marries: One's duty here is quite clear. Before marriage he must level completely with his intended wife. To the best of his ability he must describe without minimizing, the calls on his time and attention which at worst she can expect. If she is genuinely content to accept this aspect of her man, and he can be sure she understands fully what is involved, all should be well. If not, both are faced with the further choice: Should he marry her or should he resign active duties? Alternatively



## CHAPTER 6

### MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THE GLORY

The founding fathers spoke often of Angels. So have other people:

"And when *the ass saw the angel of the Lord* she fell down under Balaam, and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff. And *the Lord opened the mouth of the ass* and she said unto Balaam 'What have I done unto thee that thou hast smitten me these three times?'" (If you don't know the story consult Numbers 22:22-35).

A strong sense of the great unseen world not bound by time or space, inhabited by the shining ones; replete with divine splendor, beyond mortal description, yet impinging on our mortal condition most intimately--this was undoubtedly a major reason why in the early decades of the century so many people were attracted to the movement in which Bishops Wedgwood and Leadbeater flourished (one is tempted to say "reigned"). The fascination lingers on. Then--it seems to us looking back--it would have seemed most natural to have conversed about either angels or talking asses. In 1915, for instance, C.W.L. in addressing a Sydney co-masonic lodge could say that the ritual "recalled exactly similar arrangements which I knew six thousand years ago in ancient Egypt," and I'm sure no one thought it particularly surprising! On the other hand the same C.W.L. could also say "But in the ultimate, every man must stand by himself, and it must be your common sense which is your final guide in all occult matters, and it should be in all matters of the physical plane." (The Liberal Catholic, March, 1926). There seems to be a contradiction here (even allowing for the fact that I've taken two quotations out of context) which highlights a dilemma in which we, as heirs of Wedgwood and Leadbeater, could easily be placed. Is it common-sense to believe in angels, Egyptian lodges personally experienced six millenia ago, or for that matter talkative she asses burdened by prophets? What is one to do when one is told (as I have been) by a parishioner that one was bathed in golden light at a particular point during the celebration of holy mass?

Occultism is now very much the "in thing," and (since "Hair"?) there has been such a resurgence of interest in magic, clairvoyance, ESP, and kindred matters that "Time" magazine has run several serious investigatory articles which have demonstrated that the inter

investigatory articles which have demonstrated that the interest is not limited to any one strata of society but is evident in many countries simultaneously among people in most walks of life.

What are we, as priests of the holy mysteries, to think about all this, and what are we to say--remembering that no matter how much we emphasize our non-authoritarian attitude, we are still assumed to be in some sense spokesmen for the Liberal Catholic supernatural family? It is *not* unimportant.

My own opinion is that in matters of such a necessarily subjective nature one had best adopt the attitude of Gamaliel: If this is of God it will inevitably triumph, if not it will not benefit from either our support or opposition. This is not, I feel, unduly skeptical, and in fact in substance is what C.W.L was saying in 1926. This is not, furthermore, the attitude of the city of Canberra Patron, St. Thomas, but even if it were, his life after seeing the resurrected Christ would be sufficient answer.

Clairvoyants are undoubtedly convinced of the validity of their own experiences, but how can they prove them? In fact, why should they? It is not the operation of clairvoyance, the mechanics of it so to speak, which should concern us, but whether their experiences add to our knowledge of the occult in a meaningful way. Whether visions of any kind (St. Joan's voices for example) are self-induced or are injected from without into the subjects' consciousness is really quite immaterial, since it is God who is in control both of the individual and of the world beyond. How he chooses to send us information is irrelevant: our alertness ought at all times to be directed to the message rather than the messenger. Let us get down to some facts. We know on irrefutable evidence that this world we currently inhabit is merely one aspect of a multi-dimensional universe, and that traffic passes both ways, between the time/space continuum and eternity. If this were not so it would be quite futile to pray, more so to celebrate the Eucharist. So for a starting point we have the witness of the church Catholic to the occult. (We are using "occult" as a baggage-term for all aspects of the supernatural.) For some of us our experiences will be mainly limited to these two modes of contact, prayer and the mass. When I say limited I mean in terms of the spectacular, but this is already a great deal, and whatever other forms of communication may exist, these two have the virtue of being divinely approved. The Christ strongly encourages both. Meditation is probably the next step as it trains us to concentrate our consciousness outside ourselves, and to open our various centers to external stimuli. If we would seek to travel beyond this it is certain that unless we accept a quite rigorous self-discipline we place ourselves in grave danger. We in the flesh, and particularly priests, should understand that all our endeavours, whether very pedestrian and ordinary, or concerned with high and mysterious matters, must be totally orientated to cooperation with the Christ.



We cannot wander off on side tracks however fascinating unless we are convinced by certain and sure signs, other than personal desire, that we are being called and equipped to do so. We should also as a Church be extremely careful about publicly claiming any sort of occult expertise since the current interest in these matters is far from being always directed to those ends which we would see as being right and safe. We do well to remember that irresponsible tinkering with the occult has landed many a person in a lunatic asylum. Again hear C.W.L.: "Do not be carried away by this presumed spiritual inspiration; it is a dangerous thing and along that line many promising people have been shipwrecked. We have had sad cases where such communications have led to total loss of intellect."

On the other hand a healthy skepticism is not timidity. It is one thing to be cautious and to test carefully any spiritual communication, and quite another to be frightened that perhaps some occurrence may well be genuine. In this realm as in everything else in life, and specially in theology it is the intention which is paramount. Intention is everything. This cannot be stated too often. If you are in doubt about a seeming spiritual communication, look to the intention behind it. If you wonder whether you ought to take any action, ask yourself what is the intention of the act. This seemingly simple rule cuts through all the bother and heat about matters liturgical and reveals the true divine laws about anything you can think of. We may well be afforded a glimpse of the glory beyond. We may well be lifted out of ourselves and sent ajourneying: "I was in the spirit on the Lord's Day, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet." But if this happens it won't be for anything less than a high divine imperative, probably not in the least for our own selfish edification, and the choice of such a revelation will be governed by the divine decision that the burden of the vision cannot be adequately communicated by any other more usual mode.

What, then, of the parishioner who saw the golden light? What shall our analysis be? So far as I am concerned, and using the rules set out I have to believe that the experience was real enough to the subject, but that the light had no objective reality in the sense of, say, that shining from the altar candles. Nevertheless, having said this, one is bound to assume that here was one parishioner who was doing a fine job of joining in the celebration. Here was a person really truly forgetful of anything else but the spiritual pageant, wherein bread and wine come to contain the very miracle of the body and blood of Love. Such a person could never again doubt the reality of Christ-God with us. The intention was there alright, to meet the Christ of eternity at a specific place in time, and because this is what mass is for (in part), we have to believe that a special communication, i.e., the celebrant enveloped in supernatural light, was unnecessary, and therefore did not occur. Seen aright the fact that Christ is really truly conveyed to us under the forms of bread and

wine while the tastes remain those of flour and grapes is a far greater mystery than any visible emanation no matter how enchanting. Nevertheless, whatever our judgment of such a case (your's may very well differ from mine) if we ourselves are always aware of the forces at work around and through us we will as pastors find something to say which neither spoils the experience for the subject *nor yet* encourages reliance on such things, but which, ideally, refocuses attention on the undoubted (because Christ-ordained) reality which the subject is seeking.

The person I have spoken about is no crank or oddball, but we do meet people who are, and they can have a very negative influence on others who are not, and can, to put it mildly, be very discouraging to those who come to us as seekers. For this reason we cannot afford to encourage the occasional nut, but we must at the same time recall that we are pastors and priests to the weirdos just as much as we are to everyone else. Our performance in this area becomes critical: on the one hand to safeguard our ecclesial families against pseudo-occultism, and on the other to help direct aright the spiritual evolution of those whose subjective imaginations and self-preoccupation could easily lead them into dangerous paths.

To sum up, *special* spiritual communication is quite, rare, and where it appears must be tested with great care. If it is genuine its necessity will be immediately obvious, and will be evidence of something quite serious. *Normal* spiritual communication goes on incessantly through the mass, by prayer and meditation, and by the work of the angels. The former (special communication) may or may not be accompanied by special phenomena such as visions, loss of normal consciousness, sudden awareness of distant event, and so on; the latter will be evidenced by more "normal" processes within our own intelligence. In either case the "communication" will be validated by other circumstances known to us, in much the same way as a piece from a jig-saw puzzle falls neatly and revealingly into place; but whatever happens the purpose always far outweighs the content and method.

Finally, Balaam's reaction seems relevant: "Have I any power at all to say anything? The word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak?"





## CHAPTER 7

### A PRIEST FOREVER

In the days of the Big Bands there was a hit-parade number which said inter alia "forever is a long long time." (It's surprising for much theology can be extracted from pop music.) The Church whence we receive our orders has always insisted that orders convey an indelible character. Once ordained you can never be "unordained." True, the Bishop may revoke your licenses, and then though still *capable* of officiating you are unable to do so. Put it this way: if you are forbidden to function your hands are tied, not cut off. Once a priest always a priest, with priestly obligations.

Because of these facts it is vital that you be quite sure you are called to take up the "sweet but heavy" burden. It is extremely dangerous to seek the priesthood for purely personal reasons, since it is only safe to handle holy things if you have a genuine vocation.

I am aware that vocation is to many a dirty word, but it should not be. There is a great need for many unselfish priests who have a clear call to the onerous duties of this office, and there is no requirement whatsoever for those who are selfish reasons see themselves as preferred before others in what is undoubtedly an august role.

There are many tests of vocation, but it is sufficient for the purposes of this very basic primer to follow only one line of thought. A priest is an ordained minister who:

Celebrates the Holy Mysteries daily, unless impediments are present to make this impossible. It is *not* an impediment to fail to say mass because you were too lazy to get up in time. It is *not* an impediment that you don't have an elaborate oratory. A very simple set-up will suffice, such as can be taken down and set up each day. It is *not* an impediment to say it would upset the family. If you cannot arrange your family life to allow you to fulfill your function then your family comes first and you should not offer yourself for ordination.

