

COLLOQUE

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Congregation of the Mission

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Editorial

The current edition of Colloque is composed mostly of work first presented in other locations but which seems apposite to our life as Vincentians here in the Irish Province. To all those authors and editors who have given permission to reprint, I am most grateful. It is my hope that such reprinting will make these remarkable pieces available to a wider audience.

Jon Van Til, like Alison Forrestal in the last edition, is someone who has come to understand Vincent by a wholly different route to many of those who read this journal. It is a reminder that Vincent's insights and endeavours attract many and that we share together a charism that is multi-faceted and far-reaching in its manifestations.

Van Til refers to Joe McCann's article on Sr Genevieve Farrell and it is reproduced not only for that reason but because of the work that is being undertaken, here and in other places, in cultivating ethical, just – and Vincentian – leadership. And it is good to remember the work of Sr Gen herself and her indomitable spirit.

The Irish Province has responded creatively to the needs of various ethnic groups in London and Fr Austin Garvey's report and commentary on that work is given.

This past summer of 2008, the Province also gave expression to its commitment to the 'formation of the clergy' by hosting and sponsoring a day on 'The Core of Priesthood' in St Patrick's Training College, Drumcondra. The texts of some of the presentations are given here.

And it is good for us to remember the more personal, intimate community matters also; we thank Con Curtin for his contribution, we celebrate (albeit belatedly) with Hugh McMahon and we remember, with love and affection, John Doyle.

On The Boundary; Are We All Vincentians Now?

Jon Van Til

This article is reproduced by kind permission of the author, Professor of Urban Studies at Rutgers University, Camden, and also of the Editor of The Non Profit Times, the journal in which it first appeared in May 2008

I recently had the honor of lecturing at DePaul University, and prepared myself to present a version of the “usual road talk” – growing civil society, the need for all four sectors to work together, blurring of the sectors, and the like. On the plane out, however, I read through the materials I had been sent by my hosts, Patrick Murphy and Tamara Nezhdina, colleagues in DePaul’s School of Public Service.

Among these materials was a special issue of a journal published at the university (*Vincentian Heritage*; ed). The issue showcased a set of papers presented at a retreat conference in 2003, and I set about thumbing through the volume as the plane droned on.

The first thing that struck me about the papers was that many of them were written by priests, and that’s not a profession that often finds its way onto my “must read” list. Even Patrick Murphy, the head of the school that would host me, was a priest (among other accomplishments, as well). So I started to read the paper by him, which bore the intriguing title, “We Want the Best.”

I was immediately struck, in perusing this paper, by the many familiar references that were made to a fellow called “Vincent.” That’s all, just “Vincent.” This authority turned out to be the university’s patron saint, Vincent DePaul. But he was almost never referred to as “Saint Vincent” or “Vincent DePaul” or even “DePaul” – just “Vincent.” As I leafed through the rest of the paper, I discovered that the author was making a clear and powerful case for the persistent application of leadership in human affairs.

I leafed ahead in the volume and noticed a paper on Ireland, a part of the world I’ve tried to write about as well, and was struck by its title: “Sister Gen: A Case Study of Vincentian Leadership.” Apparently this was a more informal religious tradition than the staid Catholic parishes I remember from my childhood in Illinois and Tennessee. And this paper opened with an intriguing quote from an Irish politician to the effect that

things are often “very well in practice,” but the real question involves how they “work in theory.”

And then I came across a third paper that quoted Vincent in its title. This one was written by the executive director of community and government relations at DePaul, and was titled “There is Great Charity, But...” As I turned through this paper I came across a six-page section on the organization of charity in the 21st century that was as clear and crisp a description of the work of the third sector as I have ever read.

Now I was hooked. This intellectual tradition, new to me, contained real substance. These followers of Vincent knew where the nails were, and hit them square on the head. I began to reorganize my thinking about the forthcoming talks. I knew I wanted to talk about the ways in which a diverse group of third sector leaders I had written about in Northern Ireland had approached their work. I planned to talk about Glen Barr, and the development of his public life from electrical worker to union leader to elected official to paramilitary commander to chief executive of Londonderry’s Ebrington Centre. The center is a business-like third sector organization that serves its Protestant Unionist community with a restaurant, pub, community theater, and health club, among other facilities.

And, I wanted to talk about Paddy Doherty, and his journey from businessman to leader of the “Free Derry” insurrection to the rebuilders of his riot-torn city as the chief executive of Derry’s Inner City Trust. Finally, I planned to conclude with a discussion of the way in which Eamonn Deane quietly guides Derry’s Holywell Trust, a remarkable blend of cultural and social innovators from both sides of Derry’s walls.

But the question was how to bring the lessons together for a group of hard-working graduate students, especially in a session scheduled from 7:30 p.m. until 9 p.m. after they’d put in a full day at their various employed positions? My colleague Tamara Nezhina had asked them to read from my *Growing Civil Society* as a basic text for her course. I wanted the students to see that the field of nonprofit organization research was one that welcomed contributions from students and practitioners, as well as academics.

I began by projecting a representation of productive civil society on the screen – it had been developed by my students in a seminar last summer at the University of Colorado. It depicted a figure with a head for business, two arms willing to make the work happen as volunteers or paid staff, two legs to keep the plan in motion, and a large heart at the center, representing the mission of the organization.

As I described this figure, it began to dawn on me that I was talking about none other than Vincent himself. I recounted to the students the

way Patrick Murphy concluded his article in the *Vincentian* conclusion, deriving a list of “Lessons for Leaders” he drew from Vincent’s career as a pioneering nonprofit executive in 17th century France:

- First, get our house in order. Vincent said, “There is great charity, but it is badly organised”.
- ...Having a common mission and vision gives meaning to the work of everyone. “Great work is its own reward.”
- Create a culture of values; tell organizational stories to communicate values and mission...
- Every great group has a strong leader... (T)here is always “one person who acts as maestro, organizing the genius of others.”
- Match people to mission and values...
- Grow from within. Build a web of people. Set high expectations.
- Model the way. Vincent was always generous, he was “always the first to give.”

Move over, Peter Drucker, John Carver, Joel Orosz – Vincent figured out the tricks of the trade nearly 400 years ago. Now it’s up to us to put that wisdom to work.

‘Sister Gen’: A Case Study of Vincentian Leadership

Joseph McCann CM

*This article was first published in Vincentian Heritage
and is reprinted by kind permission of the Editor.*

Introduction

A former Prime Minister of Ireland, Garrett Fitzgerald, once complained: ‘That’s all very well in practice, but how does it work in theory?’ Theory and practice represent the opposite poles of knowledge and experience. Saint Vincent de Paul famously advocated the primacy in time of experience over knowledge, in imitation of Jesus, who, he said, first began to do, and then to teach. Saint Vincent de Paul always salted his advice with an anecdote illustrating how it was true in practice. This is a very Christian urge. We rely on exemplary people to show us how to put ideals and ideas into practice. Heroes and saints point the way, define the possible, and motivate the follower.

Sister Genevieve O’Farrell, Daughter of Charity of the Irish Province, was principal of Saint Louise’s Comprehensive College in Belfast from 1961 to 1988. She was unquestionably a leader. Everyone who dealt with her, students, staff, fellow educators, priests, civil servants, parents and fellow Daughters of Charity will attest to the fact that she made a mark on Catholic education in Belfast and in Northern Ireland. All who knew her will also attest that she did it out of religious conviction. She herself often articulated what she was doing in explicitly Vincentian terms. The tale of Sister Genevieve is moving, exemplary, and inspiring; it is also challenging, problematic and paradoxical. It raises questions from which all can learn.

For these reasons, the career of Sr Genevieve is worth examining as a case study of Vincentian Leadership. This article is divided into five parts:

- A description of Genevieve’s leadership achievement,
- Her leadership *ad extra* (outside) as an educator for the community,
- Her leadership *ad intra* (inside) as a principal of the school,
- Genevieve’s formation as a Daughter of Charity and educator,
- And finally, lessons drawn from her story.

I. LEADERSHIP ACHIEVEMENT

John Rae, a headmaster of an English public school himself, was so fascinated by meeting Sister Genevieve that he became a personal

friend, When she died, he wrote her biography because 'her story was too interesting to be left untold'.(1) His book will provide much material for this presentation. The British Broadcasting Corporation was also attracted by the success of Saint Louise's principal, and planned a television documentary about her. The date arranged for the school visit coincided with the death of the first hunger striker, Bobby Sands, in 1981. So the camera crew was present for more dramatic events than they had bargained for. Accordingly, the programme records Sister Genevieve's leadership 'under fire' from an unusually close vantage.(2) Sister Nuala Kelly, a Daughter of Charity and long-time companion of Sister Genevieve, supplied me with her talks, papers and articles. I discussed Genevieve's career with Nuala, other Daughters of Charity and secondary school teachers, and a former student of St. Louise's. Lastly, obituaries on the occasion of her funeral in 2002 were another comment on her achievement and impact.(3) The conclusions are, of course, my own.

Foundation of Saint Louise's 1958.

Sister Genevieve O'Farrell was appointed to Belfast in 1956 to teach in Saint Vincent's Girls Primary School on the Falls Road. The Falls Road is a Catholic enclave between Protestant areas and then, as now, was a humanly and economically depressed area of Belfast. At that time, Sister Vincent Wallace was the principal of Saint Vincent's Primary. She believed that the local women could pick up the area, through their resilience, energy, strength, and hope. Sister Vincent inducted her new teacher quickly into her policies and methods. These included home visitation to meet the families, a sustained effort to improve the reputation of the school, determination to raise the expectations of parents and pupils, and an energetic commitment to the interests of the pupils, even the more difficult ones.

In 1957, the Ministry of Education in Northern Ireland and the Catholic Diocese proposed, agreed, and built a new secondary school for Catholic girls – Saint Louise's Girls Secondary Intermediate School – on the Falls Road. Sister Ita was appointed principal and Sister Genevieve, the new vice principal.

Expansion and 'The Troubles' 1968-1988.

From the start, the two sisters formed a partnership that amounted to a 'good cop-bad cop' team. Ita presided over the school, Genevieve was the one who made things happen in classroom, corridor and courtyard. When Ita took sick in 1961, 'Sister Gen' was her natural successor as acting principal, and then as principal. Recovered, Ita returned as vice principal to resume the partnership until her formal retirement in 1977.

After that she stayed on in a pastoral and teaching capacity, and finally left the school at the same time as her partner in 1988.

850 students had turned up on the first day. By 1961 there were 1000. In 1968, two events happened that would affect Sister Genevieve and Saint Louise's. Both events were surprises. The first was the decision, by the Diocese and the Ministry, to double the size of the school from 1000 to 2000 students. The second was the outbreak of violence marking the beginning of the Northern Ireland 'Troubles'.

Through the succeeding years, Sister Genevieve's prime purpose was to keep the school going and the remarkable thing was that the school did keep functioning. Nothing was allowed to upset the routine. Standards were set high, uniforms were insisted upon, punctuality and homework was demanded. Outside in the streets, there was riot and chaos, but inside was a haven of learning. Keeping discipline, purpose and direction in such political conditions was difficult enough, but at a time of rapid expansion, it was an extraordinary achievement that a school at the heart of Northern Ireland violence grew to be the 'largest second level girls' school in Europe'.

Saint Louise's maintained the vision from the old Saint Vincent's (the primary school closed in 1989). A sixth form started in 1962. It became usual that students stayed past the compulsory age of schooling. In 1981, the year of the BBC programme, Mary O'Hara, the daughter of an unemployed bricklayer from the Lower Falls, entered Saint Louise's, having failed the Eleven Plus qualifying examination for a grammar school. In time, she became head girl, an excellent debater, actress and dramatic producer, passed her Advanced Level subjects, entered college, and in 1991, earned a First Class degree. Sister Gen (now retired from the principalship) proudly attended on the occasion of Mary O'Hara's graduation – at Cambridge University. A decade later Mary O'Hara would write an obituary for her former principal in the *Guardian* newspaper.

Assessment.

Nobody is neutral on the subject of Sister Genevieve. She was – her own words – 'a sign of contradiction', attracting both tribute and criticism. She had her admirers, but she had her enemies too. Her critics and her admirers included Sinn Fein and IRA supporters, British soldiers, principals in surrounding schools, students and parents and teachers, and parish priests and clergy. Everyone unites in agreeing that she was a formidable presence. You could ignore neither her nor her school. She made sure of that. People called her various things, 'Margaret Thatcher with a spiritual dimension', 'a marvellous person', 'a ruthless saint'. A former Protestant paramilitary called her 'the greatest person I ever met

in my life’. A British Minister of State called her ‘the nearest to a saint that I have ever been privileged to meet’. The Dean of Education in the University of Ulster praised her as ‘the best man on the Falls Road’. John Rae came to the following conclusion: ‘It is not unusual for persons in authority, particularly when the authority is exercised over the young, to divide opinion and inspire very different emotions... The weight of opinion is firmly on the side of admiration for her achievements.’ One of her students made probably the fairest comment: ‘the things that made us love her, made others hate her’.(4)

2. LEADERSHIP AD EXTRA

Sister Genevieve’s term as principal of Saint Louise’s had implications both for the school and the community in which it was situated. Genevieve was aware of that. She had to act in a highly charged educational and political atmosphere. How she dealt with these complications is the subject of the second section.

Education on the Falls.

When Saint Vincent’s Primary School was established, the Belfast linen mills were the traditional employers for girls. The system was half-time work for the young girls. The school educated the ‘half timers’ on their days off. The policy of Saint Vincent’s was to give the girls a basic education so that they could find a job outside the mills. By 1958, the mills had closed, and the Falls Road area was depressed.

The tradition of the mill girls however had continued. The Falls Road girls were uncultivated, rough at the edges, and defiant. Those from the Upper Falls had a lower middle class background, but those from the Lower Falls, though possessing a strong sense of community, were caught in a grinding poverty trap. For Sister Genevieve and the Daughters of Charity, education was the answer. But there was no point getting the girls past their school examinations if there would be no real respect in the world of work.

Opposition to Grammar Schools.

The 1947 Education Act made universal schooling to second level United Kingdom educational policy, and that included Northern Ireland. There were already second level schools, called ‘grammar schools’, largely a middle class preserve. After the Education Act, that situation continued because the newly established schools, including Saint Louise’s, were less prestigious and the road to preferment was still the grammar school route.

Sister Genevieve set herself against that. Much of the establishment, civil service, and even the Catholic clergy were products of the grammar

schools, and did not understand Genevieve's objection. The Northern Ireland education system had an examination at the end of primary school that decided whether a child could proceed to a grammar school or go to a secondary school. Genevieve opposed the selective system (the Eleven Plus exam, as it was called) on educational grounds, on justice grounds, and on Vincentian grounds. Her opposition caused conflict with priests and religious educators who were supporters of the status quo, and she brought an edge that many priests were unused to experiencing from a nun. Her forthright views on selective grammar schools were a cause of much criticism.

Challenging Grammar Schools.

The grammar schools, especially the local Catholic girls' grammar school on the Falls Road, were in direct competition to Saint Louise's. But that competition could be overcome. Sister Genevieve imitated grammar school externals at every turn. School uniforms were 'an outward and visible sign of inward grace', and the brown blazers, berets, blouses and skirts were an important reminder to the community of what was going on. Ironically, the students became known as 'the brown bombers'. The girls were continually inspected – like soldiers – to ensure that they presented a smart and well-groomed appearance. Genevieve even took to the car on patrol up the Falls to check on them going home. Early on in her regime, she established that uniforms mattered.

Discipline also mattered. Sister Genevieve took pains to stamp her authority on the school. Students from the first decade of the school's existence were in no doubt as to who ran the show. Genevieve projected an aura around the classrooms and corridors that ensured excellent discipline for students, ancillary staff and teachers alike. Discipline led to hard work and real learning; but it was also an important marker for the community. The girls from Saint Louise's were to be taken seriously, as responsible young educated women. The community knew that they were being made 'to toe the line'.

Saint Louise's Comprehensive College.

At first, Genevieve opposed the decision in 1968 to double the size of Saint Louise's. She considered that expansion would put all the discipline and hard work in jeopardy. She was persuaded to change her mind by a number of things: the extra resources that the Ministry promised to make available, and the opportunity to show by example what a truly inclusive school could do for an area like the Falls Road. This last reason was in fact decisive, but she extracted concessions from both Church and State: St Louise's would take girls from the Falls, *and* be permitted to recruit outside the immediate area for potential

grammar school candidates. She demanded that the school be called 'Comprehensive' and a 'College', a title not in official use in Northern Ireland, but she had her way. In 1969, Saint Louise's was renamed 'Saint Louise's Comprehensive College'.

Parity with Grammar Schools.

The programme at Saint Louise's was comprehensive, that is, it treated equally both academic and vocational students. The ideal of the comprehensive school is that each ability band of students would be equally represented in the school population, in practice, difficult to realize because parents, naturally enough, would send their more able children to more prestigious selective grammar or independent schools. To counter this, Genevieve recruited energetically to attract able students. She 'marketed' the school widely, projecting its image (and inevitably her own image) firmly into the public limelight. Predictably, this aroused much resentment, and is the second major source of criticism of her leadership.

Genevieve ensured that the students received no cut-price education: for instance, just like some grammar schools, Saint Louise's became famous for music and musicals. She encouraged her girls to pursue academic subjects whenever she judged that they could. By 1980, 20% to 25% of the senior students were in the academic band, and 75% of the cohort finished the sixth form.

The IRA and British Forces.

There is no need to rehearse the political events during these decades, except to say that the Falls was the front line in a guerrilla war. Twenty fathers of students at Saint Louise's died violently between 1958 and 1987. Students and teachers had to negotiate a road as dangerous as any in the world, on which heavily armed soldiers, shootings, explosions, check points, searches, riots, civil disturbance on a grand scale and fire fights were familiar. On one side were Republican supporters and participants, on the other side, the British Army and security forces. Genevieve steered the ship of her school between these two hazards. She contrived to preserve her school, its grounds and its buildings, from interference and intimidation from both.

She was against violence, and that pitted her against the Republicans. Some parents and community residents questioned whether she was nationalist enough. She opposed any involvement with the paramilitaries, especially on the part of her students. Some did join, a handful was imprisoned, and two former students killed on active service. But in general, she managed to persuade her students to steer clear of paramilitary involvement.

Genevieve was always concerned with the safety of her pupils. Often checkpoints blocked their way manned by edgy and unpredictable young soldiers. Genevieve on occasion assembled a column of girls going home from school, and then, in full nun's regalia, led her procession through the barricade by force of personality.

Intimidation was always a concern in a Republican area. Sinn Fein-IRA ruled the Falls, enforcing closures of shops and schools for Republican funerals or protests. Genevieve ignored them. Whatever was happening on the streets, the school was open for business, and the pupils and teachers were expected to be doing their job. This led to heated meetings, but Genevieve stood firm. Even her sternest critics will credit Genevieve with maintaining a normal educational atmosphere inside the school through the worst of the Troubles. This was not unique, for many schools – Catholic and Protestant – were centres of peace and tranquillity in a troubled time, but few were doing this at the very eye of the storm.

Mary O'Farrell OBE

Republicans criticized Genevieve for being too close to the British establishment. She certainly knew the key players in education, especially the ministers in the Northern Ireland Office responsible for schools. Some shared her dislike of the selective system and made common cause with this nun in the inner city. The queen honored Sister Genevieve (under her own name of Mary O'Farrell) with the Order of the British Empire in 1987 at Buckingham Palace. Republican Belfast was not impressed. She had taken the queen's shilling. When she undertook two Government-sponsored speaking tours of the United States, republicans accused her of 'selling out', or at least, of being naively used by the British Government. This stance of Genevieve's is the third major source of criticism against her. Her critics regard the award and the high profile she adopted as self-promotion; but she said simply that they were necessary for the good of the school and of the students.

3. LEADERSHIP AD INTRA

In this section, we consider the style of leadership Genevieve exhibited internally to the school. While Saint Louise's was a comparatively small institution, she was able to personally bring her influence to bear on class, corridor, and common room. Expansion however posed a challenge to her 'hands-on' style.

New Structures

Genevieve was well aware of the difficulty, and had opposed the doubling of the school in size, judging that a very large school would militate against the educational outcomes that the school was beginning to accomplish. Then she was persuaded to acquiesce in the decision to enlarge the school, '...gambling that she would be able to run an efficient administration while retaining her personal influence over her girls'.(5)

Up to 1969, Sister Gen had put her personal stamp on the school. In the new circumstances, her response was to change her methods by becoming more of a manager, while still retaining the reins of leadership. She established an Administration Team consisting of herself, the deputy principals and five other colleagues. Working parties were responsible for particular parts of the school administration. Each had a formal agenda, met weekly and reported to the administration in formal minutes because 'communication cannot be left to chance as it so often was in the past'. We know Genevieve's ideas because she described her re-organization to student teachers in a talk in 1983.

Of course, nothing in her system was original. She copied best practice in UK schools. She combined delegation and consultation with frequent staff meetings, pupil assemblies and corridor 'walk-about's'. What made the difference between Saint Louise's and some other large comprehensive schools was the systematic tenacity that Genevieve brought to its operation.

Simple Message

For the students, there was a simple message: 'You're as good as anybody else'. This theme was dinned in at assemblies, constantly stressed as the motive for excellence, and changed with the situation. 'This isn't a second class school for second class people.' 'Shoulders back. Heads up. Be proud of your school.' 'Don't think those people wearing red uniforms down the Road are any better than you.' The Road was the Falls Road. The red uniformed school was the opposition grammar school. The message was clear.

With the expansion, Genevieve began to depend on the sixth form girls and the prefects to convey the spirit of the school. She undertook to train them for leadership themselves. But her elite was not to be an academic elite; the ideal in this school was service. 'There is no better way for developing character than to get involved with others, to feel responsible for someone less fortunate than yourself.'

Genevieve always took pains to recruit from the original two parishes that the school had served. She certainly spread her net far and wide in an effort to attract bright students, but fully two-thirds of the girls in the

eighties were daughters of former pupils. John Rae notes that this is a far higher proportion of children of pupils than in the public schools of England. Genevieve had a 'selective' school, but the elite came from the Lower Falls. This ensured that the pupils themselves transmitted the ethos of the school – its upward mobility, inner city reality, high expectations, community pride and religious motivation.

Religious Spirit

'Religion is about the transmission of values,' said Sister Genevieve, 'and therefore, religion is the cornerstone of a school. Education is definitely not a question of examination result and career success, there is an important and central place for values and spirituality.' The characteristic spirit of Saint Louise's was based on an explicitly Vincentian and Christian mission. Sister Genevieve expressed this as 'Respect for the Individual', above all, respect for 'the least of these'. This principle was spelt out in school assembly homilies as respect for anyone, Irish, English, Protestant or Catholic. It involved particularly the Christian duty of forgiveness, and she cited especially the plight of interned paramilitaries, with names like Niall and David. They were young men who had no chance to make something of their lives in West Belfast no matter which side they were on. She returned again and again to Christ's parable of the talents, and in particular, his criterion of success: 'Trade till I come.' She put the words and ideas together in 'Slogans' – educational sound-bites: 'Think before you act', 'Don't ever be part of a mob', 'Have the courage to say "No"' and 'Get out and change the world, and remember you can do it'.

Religious commitment and leadership were inseparable. It involved caring for others, making tough demands on oneself with an undertaking to achieve equality of opportunity and esteem for everyone. No group in the school exemplified this more than the Marillacs, a society named after Saint Louise de Marillac, patron of the school and founder of the Daughters of Charity. 'The spirit of the Marillacs is one of joyful charity, of being always willing to serve, of undertaking happily, humble, even unpleasant tasks for the old people', Genevieve instructed them, and she had story after story of what happened when the girls did that. Service was organized around the Marillac membership, as well as three Marian sodalities (Children of Mary, the Aspirants, and the Holy Angels corresponding to the seniors, the middle years, and the juniors). The Marian girls had distinctively colored blue and green neck ribbons with the Miraculous Medal attached, a public sign of service and commitment for the rest of the school. Genevieve used the words 'character' and 'leadership' to carry this message. Service, commitment and idealism was celebrated in the variety of religious holydays,

devotions, assemblies and ceremonies which dotted the school calendar in the course of which the message was driven home.

‘Revolutions do not generally emanate from the middle classes, but from the frustrated unemployed’, Sister Genevieve analyzed later. Examinations were important, but for all students, not just for the high flyers. Students were entered for as many public examinations as they could handle. The objective was clear: each student must achieve to the best of her ability. When the educational authorities barred the school from running academic tests (as unsuitable for an intermediate secondary school) Genevieve entered the girls privately, providing the entry fees herself. When they similarly excluded the school from the Junior Commercial Certificate (not a commercial college), she looked for London agencies to accredit the program. On these matters, like Lydia, the dealer in purple whom Saint Paul encountered, ‘she would not take “No” for an answer’.

Genevieve herself, as they say, worked ‘all the hours God made.’ She demanded equal commitment from her staff. She communicated the idea that Saint Louise’s was a place on the move. If a teacher was up to it, Genevieve supported her to the hilt. If she detected reluctance or lack of enthusiasm or laziness, she was ruthless. ‘Ruthless’ is the word most commonly used of Genevieve. John Rae glosses it as ‘exceptionally single minded’, not ‘pitiless.’ She commented briefly on this herself in a talk to student-teachers: ‘A head of department must at all times be conscious that the children may suffer if she fails to meet her responsibilities, and this may call for “a touch of ruthlessness”’. She cannot remain “one of the girls.”’ The quotation marks were hers.

4. FORMATION

Encouraging leadership was what Sister Genevieve said she was about. What was the education that made her a leader? Born in County Offaly in 1921, she attended the Mercy Convent School in Tullamore and then, at 18, entered the Daughters of Charity novitiate.

Preparation

On the surface, her formation was the same as that of any other Irish Daughter of Charity. The elements were the vocational choice to enter, a spiritual year in the Seminary, a simple and systematic prayer life, energetic and tough physical discipline, close supervision and screening by superiors, probationary assignment, professional training, and a mentoring relationship with older and experienced sisters. Mary O’Farrell entered the congregation in 1941. She became a sister with the name of Genevieve in February 1942, received her habit in spring of 1943, and was then sent to Manchester to gain teaching experience.

She then entered Victoria University Manchester in 1944 to study for a degree in French and History. Final vows in the Daughters of Charity followed in June 1947. Her teaching certificate was gained in Sedgely Park College, Manchester. She taught at Mill Hill Orphanage, London, and from 1950, in Saint Mary's, Lanark, Scotland. There was question of Genevieve becoming a teacher in a Dundee secondary school, but the authorities decided otherwise. In 1956 she was sent to Saint Vincent's School, Belfast where our story began.

This sounds very conventional. But there were two distinctive features in the story of Genevieve's formation.

The Will of God

The first distinctive element in Genevieve's formation is her vocation. 'The Will of God', in the lives of many, seems to be a function of vision or talent. In other words, their natural dispositions incline them in the directions that God wants them to go. God almost seems to tell them to do what they would have wanted to do anyway. Genevieve, however, was fascinated by the opposite predicament – when God calls someone to go *against* natural inclination. She cited, on a few occasions, the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, which she noted had a happy ending in the Bible but sometimes, not so happy an ending in real life. This fascination is, I think, a clue to her personal vocation story.

Initially, she did not want to be either a nun or a teacher.

We know this from an open and frank article she wrote for the *Furrow* magazine in 1990.⁽⁶⁾ She described her vocation as 'something that still baffles me.' She had already decided against following a vocation with the sisters from her own Convent Secondary School at Tullamore (even though they had actively recruited her) because she hated teaching. But God spoke to her through Anna Daly, a classmate at secondary school, during a casual conversation at school about vocations. Anna had a Downs-Syndrome brother with the Daughters of Charity hospital at Cabra in Dublin. After a family visit she remarked: 'Those French Sisters really do serve the poor.' That comment stuck in Mary O'Farrell's mind. She knew very little about the Daughters of Charity, but despite the opposition of her family, and the advice of a Jesuit priest (who considered the order too tough) she entered, as she confessed later, half hoping to be sent home. The seminary life was a penance; she described it as dehumanizing, tough, and unrelenting. But she caught the passion for the service of the poor. Though she had hated the idea of teaching, she would later accept an assignment to teach because it was to be teaching the poor.

Life Crisis

There is a second distinctive element in Genevieve's formation that may be a surprise to many. She failed her degree at Manchester University.

John Rae proposed several explanations for her failure: lack of educational background, a failure in application to study, or the reluctance to enter a teaching career. None of them is probable. The authorities intervened and arranged an extra year in a training college to gain a teaching qualification. She faced failure, both in academics and in life. Did that student failure, reassessment and late conversion to teaching have anything to do with the woman who came to Belfast and had such an effect on Northern Ireland Catholic education? Did the suffering, confusion and uncertainty of her formation in youth provide the foundation for the power and commitment of the educational leader we meet on the Falls Road two decades later?

5. LESSONS

There are many theories of leadership. Some look to the natural traits of the individual, claiming that 'Leaders are born, not made'. Other theories look to the leader's behaviors and skills, affirming that 'Everyone can be a leader'. Still more study the situations in which leadership is exercised, with the slogan: 'Come the hour, come the man' (person). Recent ideas view leadership as transforming people, concerned with the personal as well as the organizational, the internal as well as the external, the spiritual and emotional as well as the effective and efficient, the leader as well as the led. These writers consider the personal aspect as crucial to leadership. Greenleaf's 'servant leadership' is an example, as is Kouzes and Posner's 'shared vision' and Bolman and Deal's 'leading with soul'.⁽⁷⁾ Hence, it is interesting to reflect on the career of one who was both effective and efficient, who possessed a clearly articulated philosophy of leadership, who submitted to a thorough formation, and who is generally recognized as a visionary leader.

Learning to Lead

How does one learn to lead? Leadership formation is certainly personal. Gregory Bateson's Categories of Learning (Theory of Logical Types) provides a useful model for people-centered or personal approaches to education.⁽⁸⁾ Bateson was interested in the differences between the learning of a machine, of an animal and of a human. The first of the Categories is 'Zero Learning': this amounts to instinctive, mechanical behavior, thoughtless action, involving no choice and no challenge. Education at this level is mere imitation and habituation. 'Learning One' involves problem solving, learning to choose from a single set of clear options. Education at this level consists of didactic methods,

information-transfer and conditioning. 'Learning Two' involves learning to choose from many sets of options, including experience of trial and error. Education at this level comprises experiential methods, action research and reflective practice. 'Learning Three' places even the self in question: no longer does an independent self choose from external strategies and discrete actions; now the self might have to change itself, matching its identity, purpose and action to reality. Bateson says that the level of 'Learning Three' 'occurs from time to time in psychotherapy, religious conversions, and in other sequences in which there is profound reorganization of character.'⁽⁹⁾ He further suggests that progress takes place on the developmental ladder when one is forced off a rung to ascend to the higher one by a contradiction to one's previously learned convictions. In other words, learners must risk what they know to learn something new. Furthermore, it is only when learners place their own character and disposition in question, can they progress to the third level of learning, and be capable of confronting severe challenges, withstanding serious crises and achieving high goals.

An illustration suggests itself to explain the Levels of Learning. Were one to propose learning how to go to California, 'Zero Learning' would involve following someone there who knows the way, and retaining, remembering, or reducing to habit the turns and maneuvers necessary to accomplish the journey. 'Learning One' would mean studying maps and timetables to digest the implications of different routes, assessing the advantages of each option, before applying one's own choice. 'Learning Two' would incorporate the experience of trial and error, including the possibility that one might decide to remain in St. Louis and not bother to complete the journey. 'Learning Three', however, opens the possibility of the individual changing more than his or her physical location. The traveller could become a miner (like the 49ers who followed the Gold Rush to California) or a hippie (like a 1960 dropout heading for San Francisco) or a swallow (like those returning annually to the mission church at Capistrano on the feast of St Joseph)! This level of education is truly Transformational, the level appropriate for learning leadership.

Content of Leadership Learning

Dennis Mussig suggests possible content for this kind of personal formation (which he calls Value-Driven Leadership Training). He draws its theory and research on Spiritual and Emotional Intelligence. Emotional Intelligence is made up of Personal Competence: including self-awareness, self regulation, and motivation, and Social Competencies: including Empathy and Social Skills. Spiritual Intelligence, according to Mussig, is concerned with seven facets:

Capacity to be flexible.

High degree of self-awareness.

Capacity to face and use suffering

The quality of being inspired by vision and values.

A tendency to see connections between diverse things (Holistic).

A marked tendency to ask 'Why?' or 'What if?' questions to seek 'fundamental' answers.

Being what psychologists call 'field-independent' – possessing a facility for working against convention.(10)

Mussig identifies the common ground between his content and Kouzes and Posner's Credibility model(11) as Honesty, Sustainability, Commitment and Understanding. Central to the concept of Honesty, he suggests, is a 'high level self-assessment and self regulation by facing our own emotions and failings and using the knowledge to create better relationships.'(12) More work needs to be done on the content of Leadership Formation. It is already clear, however, that serious attention to followers, their individual dispositions, talents, motivations and situations, as well as dealing with the leader's own qualities, especially his or her limitations and failures, is necessary for developing leadership ability.

Life and Leadership Crises.

Anna Neumann, in the process of researching the life stories of academic women, remarks how closely their lives and stories are entwined. She finds that 'professors tell stories of themselves and their lives through the medium of their work, notably through their scholarship, and that their scholarship often stands as a statement of personal identity'.(13) The same applies to other careers. It is an interesting perspective with which to view the life of Sister Genevieve, discerning her personal life-story in the untold story of a career, discovering the place of suffering and failure lying behind enormous achievement, and realizing that the 'silence may bear the story'.(14)

It is remarkable how often suffering and failure figures in stories of leaders. Richard Ackerman and Pat Maslin-Ostrowski have investigated how crisis experiences and personal disasters have affected the professional and personal lives of educational leaders.(15) They describe a crisis experience as an event that wounds 'a person's essential being... integrity, identity, fallibility, and spirit'.(16) They seek in their research to reach the 'story within the story' in leadership. They emerge with three 'lessons' from their research:

1. Learn to trust the unattended areas of your leadership- especially your feelings.

2. Listen honestly and deeply for the questions that are feared or left out of your work life altogether.
3. Find folk to talk to whom you really trust.(17)

Leadership is not a skill exercised only externally. A leader is so vulnerable that the person and spirit and soul of the leader must become deeply involved. How the leader deals with the internal, as well as the external struggle will define success. Leaders lead, that is, they go in front, they put themselves on the line, they stand on their own sandals. They must be prepared for that place.

Capacity to Suffer.

A Vincentian leader is not just any leader with a social conscience. There is motivation to serve the poor, indeed, but there is also a more personal, spiritual, and interior (one hesitates to say 'religious') quality to following Christ in the manner of Vincent and Louise. Perhaps it can be seen in the encounter with suffering. Vincent's spirituality is Christocentric, discerning the face of Christ in the suffering poor, and aligning one's own suffering, puny though it be, with Christ on the cross. Dennis Mussig speaks of 'capacity to face and use suffering' as a quality of Spiritual Intelligence, and Christian understanding can be nothing less than a powerful aid to do just that. Sister Genevieve remarked that she could not have survived the pressures of her leadership position without her daily prayer, Mass, and the support of her local community of Daughters of Charity. Richard Ackerman, for one, will agree with her.

The lesson for developing Vincentian leadership is less easy to articulate. For three hundred years, Vincentian leaders were formed in permanent communities that could call on the total life commitment of members. Sister Genevieve, and her sisters in the Daughters of Charity, were deployed in obedience to their superiors, with little consultation, or allowance for personal preferences. This was not unusual; it was true for all religious orders up to the Second Vatican Council. It made, in many cases, for pain and frustration, waste of talent, inefficiency in using resources and ineffectiveness in mission. But it provided also an invaluable ascetical training in single-minded and deep commitment.

When lay people become the carriers of Vincentian ideals, and Vincentian leadership passes from religious to lay people, it is difficult to see how the same formation can be employed without a permanent community and a life commitment. Certain elements, including a sense of the will of God, an attention to personal spiritual growth, prayer life, community support, a mentoring role, and an appreciation of failure, suffering and sin in Christian life, must somehow be factored into the

formation process. The way of achieving this is not easy to see, but radical service of the poor, serious immersion in poverty and substantial time-commitment should supply some structure for lay Vincentian formation.

Conclusion

Leadership theory and idealist leadership in particular, needs the grounding of actual experience to specify, illustrate and delineate what theory might prescribe. Equally, practice needs theory to provide structure and understanding. Garrett Fitzgerald's plea rings true. 'How does it work in theory?'

Our case study suggests certain themes: opposition, contradiction, determination, community, spirituality, personal suffering and failure. Rather than settle for a view of Vincentian leadership that is an amalgam of management techniques and social awareness, this has been an attempt to tease out the Christian features of a very personal struggle for meaning.

Leadership is concerned with innovation. The leader is the one who strikes out in a new direction. Leadership relates to fresh missions, creative enterprises, novel approaches. At times of particular difficulty, we need a leader to chart a new course and to keep a steady hand on the tiller. It is important in crisis to retain the confidence of followers, and so leadership relates also to motivation.

Motivation has two aspects: the reason why people do things, and the intensity with which they do them. 'Why?' complements 'How much?' A leader has to persuade followers why a course of action is being decided, how important an outcome may be, and what is its significance in the great scheme of things. The leader needs to know how much people are prepared to pay, which sacrifice can be demanded, what suffering can be borne. This calls on a leader's grasp of ultimate meaning, force of communication, and credibility. Leaders who can successfully deploy these powerful elements are happy indeed. Such leaders might even convince themselves. Sister Genevieve obviously did.

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Becoming Priests for the First Time

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Keynote Address for
A Symposium Organized by the Vincentian Community entitled:
The Core of Priesthood

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The Priesthood is Suffering

The priesthood is suffering. Vocations are down drastically. In 2007 there were only nine ordinations in all of Ireland. By 2028 there will be fewer than 1500 priests. And media coverage of late has been devastating. The word "priest" is instantly connected by many with loneliness, isolation, and at times, with sexual problems.

Not long ago, I was facilitating a conversation among religious priests and brothers of a particular community in the United States. At one point, a religious in his sixties stood up in front of the entire community and said, with a sour look on his face, "When I joined this community, I expected that we would expand. We were going to build more schools and more hospitals. We would become a large order that had a major impact on society and the Church. Now," he said with a sneer on his face, "Just look at us."

He had become a bitter old man. He began with such great expectations. And his hopes were dashed. But I am wondering what religion he signed up for? It surely wasn't Christianity. He expected success by worldly standards: expanding, bigger, more influential, more powerful. This is how Wall Street defines success. It is a subtle trap for the Christian.

At his end, Jesus was abandoned on the cross by all except his mother, a few faithful women and his beloved disciple John. Most of his disciples deserted him. One of his closest followers betrayed him. The very people he ministered to screamed for him to be crucified.

Jesus told us what would happen to us. "The cup I drink of, you shall drink" (Mk 10:39). It wasn't a maybe; he didn't say, "You might drink it." No, he said, "You shall drink it." Maybe now, we are finally starting to become priests. When the priesthood is hailed by all; raised up and praised in the public mind, we have to ask ourselves if we are really being honest and preaching the Gospel of Jesus.

“If they hated me, they will hate you” (Jn 15:18). God knows that we have justly deserved some of the hatred leveled at us. Our weaknesses have been smeared all over the front page of the paper. And with no let-up in sight. Whatever the weakness is: sex, money, women, men, whatever, it will be front page news for the foreseeable future. Whenever a priest falls, it will be loudly trumpeted in public.

When we speak about the core of the priesthood in a lecture such as this, it is tempting to wax eloquently about the sanctity of priesthood. This is not a bad starting point. It is, indeed, a sacred vocation. But for our reflections today, I’d rather we start with the human weakness of the men who are these generous priests.

“Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me” (2 Cor 12:8). I have spent the last 19 years working directly with priests whose human flaws have brought them to their knees. These priests, like all of us, are flawed but noble; they have feet of clay but hearts of gold. Even in their most flawed states, there is something different about these men. Many of the laity who minister at our treatment facilities for priests know that there is something unique about their clients. It is a grace to minister to them. We who care for these priests and religious are richly blessed.

One of our long-standing psychotherapists, who was not Catholic, retired after working many years in our programme. She personally worked directly with some of the most wounded of our men. After she retired, word came back to us: she had converted to Catholicism... Perhaps even in our most wounded and vulnerable state as priests, the Gospel is being preached. Perhaps it is *only* in such a state, that Jesus is truly proclaimed.

Beyond Narcissism to the Cross

One of the great dangers to society today, and priesthood, is narcissism. We Westerners live in a self-focused, “me” generation. One might sum up this modern narcissistic attitude, tinged with materialism, with the words of one recent television commercial: “I want it all and I want it now.” This narcissism can and has, at times, affected us. It is very easy to stand on the altar dressed in flowing robes with our phylacteries widened and say, in so many words, “Look at me” (cf. Mt 23:5). We, too, love places of honor at banquets and to be treated with honor and respect, as it seems to befit our state. But “so marred was his look beyond human semblance...He was spurned and avoided by people, a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity, one of those from whom people hide their faces, spurned, and we held him in no esteem. Yet it was our infirmities that he bore, our sufferings that he endured” (Is 52:14, 53:3-4).

Sometimes our people forget, and we priests do too, it is not ourselves whom we preach. We do not stand up and say, "Follow *me*." We say, "Follow *him*." Perhaps these recent years can help us to focus more clearly on who and what it is that we are called to preach. "He must increase, I must decrease" (Jn 3:30).

Our lives should point to Jesus. Jesus is the center. "Do whatever *he* tells you" (Jn 2:5). Maybe now, in the wake of the crisis, we can become real priests, whose lives are filled with, and point to, the person of Jesus.

And where does it all lead us? Always, always, it leads to the cross. Cardinal Vanhoye's presentation on priestly holiness in 2007 said that Jesus, and we too, learn obedience from suffering (Heb 5:8). Of course, Jesus' learning of obedience is not strictly the same as ours; he who is the perfect Son of God. Nonetheless, it is in the passion that we grow in humility and obedience to God. Likewise, the Cardinal suggests that it is in the passion that we come more deeply to a "solidarity with wretched human beings," as he called them. There is something worse than a priest who has fallen prey to sins of the flesh. What is worse is an arrogant, self-serving man. In recent days, we are hopefully beginning to carry our cross, learning what a real priest possesses, that is, humility and obedience.

Faced with the flawed humanity of our priests, it is easy to dismiss Catholicism. Some have done so in recent days. I suspect this was the case from the very first days. The Gospels do not paint a flattering picture of the twelve apostles. Peter sinks in the water due to a lack of faith. Thomas doubts. And then there is Judas. I do not think that it is an accident that their failings have been recorded and displayed for all time. We priests and bishops are not successors of an original group of super disciples who were greater than us, more than us, stronger or better. No, they are *just* like us. This should give some comfort. The first disciples, those weak men whom Jesus called, fulfilled their vocations and witnessed to the Son of God. So, too, do we, weak disciples who are called in these latter days. As the Word was faithfully proclaimed in early times, so is it being proclaimed today. And it will be thus until he comes again.

Winnowing of the Priesthood

The expression: "Becoming a priest for the first time," strikes a chord. I first heard those words at Saint Luke Institute. Our programme is a difficult one; as all true healing programmes must be. There is a lot of hard personal work and not a little emotional toil. Wounded priests and sisters inevitably face much inner pain that is buried within. This inner pain must be attended to; it is often the fuel that drives pathology. Thus,

this process is most certainly a passion. But the subsequent resurrection is just as real.

Years ago, a priest had just finished our programme. For him, it had been an amazing transformation, a real paschal journey. At the end of it, he looked up at me and said, "I feel like I am ready to be a priest for the first time." He went on to explain that the programme had enabled him to recognize his human weakness. He came face-to-face with his flaws and sins. He realized that he needed God and he prayed for forgiveness. And God touched his life in a direct and profound way.

This priest had become, in short, a real Christian. He now knows that he is sinner who has been loved and forgiven. He, himself, has experienced the truth of the Gospels. He himself has become a follower of Jesus. It is not simply something he read in a theological textbook; it has become real in his life. Now, in his newfound humility and compassion, he is finally ready to minister as a priest. Since that encounter, many others, who have finished our programme, have used the same expression: *I am ready to be a priest for the first time.*

The priesthood is going through a winnowing; an intense purification. In 2002, John Paul II spoke to the American Cardinals gathered in Rome to discuss the sex abuse crisis. He said the Church was going through a time of purification, a purification that he said was "badly needed."

For too long we have not held ourselves sufficiently accountable for errant and scandalous behavior. Now, the time has come. The passion of Christ is a purifying fire. In it we shed the dross in our very human priesthood and the dross in each of our lives. It calls us to be cleansed of our shame and to live lives of integrity. Reflecting on the crisis, Pope Benedict told the press: "It's more important to have good priests than many priests." One could make the case that all these years we have had too many priests.

It is a hard road to walk, this priestly purification. We do not like to face our own weaknesses. This winnowing process is blowing through the priesthood with gale force. Unless our feet are set on solid human earth, unless our eyes are fixed firmly on Jesus, the wind will sweep us away.

There is, in us, some fear. What will become of the priesthood? What will become of the Church? There are not enough of us. But there has always been a shortage of priests, at least by worldly standards. There has never been enough of us to go around.

The parable of the sower and the seed might be instructive in this regard. I believe the key to understanding the essence of the parable, as it was originally told by Jesus, is not so much what happened to the seed that fell on bad soil but that which fell on the good. That small

amount of seed that managed to make its way onto a patch of good ground blossomed into a great abundance. It yielded grain one hundred, sixty or thirtyfold (Mt 13:8). That's all it takes. Just a little good soil and a little seed, and the Kingdom will blossom. If you had the faith the size of a tiny mustard seed that would be enough. There will never be a sufficiency of priests, at least from our calculations. But maybe just a handful are enough. Such is the power of the Word. Such is the power of the priesthood of Jesus.

Yet we lament. Look at what we priests and the Church have lost. Wasn't it so much better before? Wouldn't it be great to go back to the way it was? ...We should be careful what we wish for. If God were to visit you today, and give you the option to go back to any time of the Church's history and live there permanently, what time would you pick? Be careful. Remember, you have to take the whole package, not just a thing or two that you liked or thought was there.

A friend of mine is an older Capuchin priest. He described the assignment process in the 'good old days'. He said the Provincial would lock himself in his room alone for an afternoon, write down all the new assignments, put them into envelopes, mail them out and then take a two-week vacation. That was the assignment process. In the dry, realistic wit of my old Norwegian grandmother: "What do you mean, the good old days," she told me, "*These* are the good old days."

Priests are Happy Men

Despite the fact that we priests are suffering, this is actually a wonderful time to be a priest. This statement may seem rather counterintuitive, a bit oxymoronic- a suffering, happy priesthood. "Everyone knows," I hear it said, "That priests today are not doing well." They are said to be lonely, isolated and dis-spirited. I was chatting with a priest from New Zealand a while ago and he talked about vocations to the priesthood in his country. He said that two young men recently expressed an interest in becoming priests. Unfortunately, two older lay people told them what a sad life it is and talked them out of it. The public perception in his country and most of the Western world is that it is a sad and lonely life. As one mother said when asked if she would encourage her son to become a priest, "I don't want my son to live like that."

But is that true? Are priests a sad and unhappy lot?... I always enjoy priest gatherings. There is a lot of laughter, joking around, and a certain uplifting spirit which is infectious. Oftentimes, lay people, when they are present at a priest gathering, will be impressed with the spirit in the room.

Many years ago, a lay friend came with me to the seminary. He did not have a very positive view of the Catholic Church or the priesthood.

He presumed it was all a rather dour affair. He walked into the main room and a pensive look stole over his face. He pointed to the priests and said, "Those men, there, they are priests?" "Yes," I responded. "Hmmm," he said. "And those people over there, they are seminarians?" "Yes," I said again. "Well," he said with a surprised tone in his voice, "They seem pretty happy."

It is probably one of the best kept secrets in the world: priests are actually happy men. And this observation is backed up by strong and consistent research, study after study, year after year. In 2003-2005, right after the height of the sexual abuse crisis in the US, I conducted a survey of 1,286 priests throughout the United States. 90.2 percent of the priests said that overall, they were happy as priests. 80.2 percent said their morale was good, even in this painful period. 89.2 percent said their life and ministry as a priest made a difference in the world. And 81.6 percent would do it again if given the chance. Only 6.1 percent were thinking of leaving the priesthood.

The strongest confirmation of a study is a separate study done by another group that yields the same results. In fact, the National Federation of Priest Councils (NFPC) sponsored a similar study in 2001, before the crisis, and the results were statistically identical. The results are replicable, consistent, and clearly show that the great majority of priests are happy to be priests, find it a very satisfying life, and have no intention of leaving. These numbers compare very favorably to people engaged in a variety of secular occupations. Priests are some of the happiest and most satisfied people in the world.

A few priests have gotten angry with me when they read these figures. They say, "It's not true." But the survey says that it is; you priests said it was true. And, in fact, I hear it when I travel from country to country meeting with priests from Ireland, England, Canada, France, Italy, New Zealand, South Africa and beyond. Sure, they have their struggles. And they suffer from the same maladies as everyone else, often to their great consternation. But the tone and tenor of these priest gatherings confirm what they have said in survey after survey-- priesthood is a great life and the large majority are happy and grateful.

It is true that when priests get together in small groups, they usually begin by doing a lot of griping. I belong to a priest support group and one of the guidelines we have, when it comes time for our review of life, is to stick to personal sharing and not to lapse into griping. Before entering the seminary, I spent ten years in the US military. Anyone who has spent any time in the military with a bunch of guys know that that's what troops do when they get together. They gripe. The conventional wisdom in the military is that the troops are fine as long as they are griping. It's when they stop, that's when things are bad.

It is easy to gripe. On the other hand, sitting down and sharing from the heart, telling others what is really going on in the core of our lives and priesthood, that is much harder. When I am facilitating a convocation of priests, at the end, I often invite them to speak about what they are grateful for in their priesthood. I ask them what graces they have received through their being priests. The heartfelt revelations are often quite profound.

Dean Hoge from Catholic University conducted the priest satisfaction surveys for NFPC and asked priests what they found most satisfying and nourishing. The resulting list reads like the mission statement for diocesan priests. They found the most satisfaction in administering the sacraments and presiding over the Eucharist, preaching the Word, the opportunity to work with people and be a part of their lives, and being part of a community of Christians working together. (*Evolving Visions of the Priesthood*, Dean Hoge). When priests speak from the heart they will tell you that they find priesthood satisfying; they enjoy the ministry of a priest; and they'd do it all over again.

And I know that the people are grateful to hear their priests speak about what their vocations have meant to them. A number of priests I know have given Sunday homilies about priesthood and have spoken from the heart about how they have been blessed and how grateful they are for the gift of priesthood. The response from the people to such a sharing is overwhelmingly positive. Sometimes the congregants will spontaneously break into applause.

Priests are happy and satisfied men. This is one of the best kept secrets in our Church today. It is time to break the silence.

What Makes A Happy Priest?

I think it is important not only to understand priestly satisfaction as a whole, but even more important to dig down deep and try to figure out, "What makes a happy priest?" As we understand the factors that go into a satisfied priesthood, we will also better understand the core of priesthood.

By doing a factor analysis on the survey I conducted and bunching the survey questions into larger variables or factors, the study was able to identify major themes in priestly life. These variables were then put into a multiple regression equation and regressed on the larger variable of priestly satisfaction. I found the results to be stunning, and, at the same time, comforting.

The first surprising result was that this research was able to predict about 41% of what makes a happy priest. For social science research, this is very high. But we should also keep in mind that there is 59% of morale that I cannot predict. So, there are other important factors

beyond what we will identify here today.

Nevertheless, we now have our hands on 41% of what makes a happy priest. I would summarize these variables in the following five categories:

1. Satisfaction with one's bishop and church leadership
2. Relationship to God and spiritual life
3. Relationship with other priests
4. Personal workload and stress
5. Satisfaction with material compensation and living arrangements

As one looks at these variables and peers into them a bit more deeply, I think there is a fundamental lesson embedded here. These variables all touch something important and essential to priestly life. And the conclusion I inescapably come away with is this: those priests who are able to live priesthood with integrity, to live it as it is meant to be lived, are happier men. *Integrity leads to happiness.*

Satisfaction with One's Bishop

The first variable, "Satisfaction with one's bishop and church leadership" was a strong predictor of priestly happiness. At first, I was surprised at the statistical strength of this relationship between the priest and the bishop. But as we look more deeply, it makes clear theological sense. The relationship between a diocesan priest and his bishop is more than that of an employer and employee. We are sacramentally bonded together in a very close connection.

Having a solid relationship with one's bishop, or religious superior, is part of the very lifeblood of the priest. I see this rather clearly as I travel from diocese to diocese. When the Bishop and the priests have a strong, positive relationship with each other, then priestly morale, cohesion, and energy are much higher.

When I am giving talks at priestly gatherings, I usually offer a word of advice to the priests. Do not judge your bishops too harshly. They are frail human beings just like yourselves. Each one comes with a variety of gifts and some limitations. The fact is: the overwhelming majority of our bishops today are hard-working, faith-filled men who are giving their all and trying their best to do what is right. Love them, obey them, encourage them, forgive them, just as you want them to love, encourage and forgive you. We are fortunate today to have such good bishops.

The good news is: the strong majority of our priests are very happy with their own bishops. Of the 1,286 priests in my survey, 75 percent said they have a good relationship with their bishop; 68 percent approve of the way their bishop is leading the diocese; and an overall 77 percent

are satisfied with him. To put this in proper context, a survey of 5,000 Americans was conducted around the same time and less than half were satisfied with their current secular bosses or supervisors. Contrary to popular opinion, our bishops get high marks from their priests.

Nevertheless, the relationship between bishops and priests has suffered in the wake of the sexual abuse crisis. In his recent address to the American bishops, Pope Benedict said, “At this stage a vital part of your task is to strengthen relationships with your clergy, especially in those cases where tension has arisen between priests and their bishops in the wake of the crisis. It is important that you continue to show them your concern, to support them, and to lead by example.”

The relationship between bishop and diocesan priest, between major superior and community member, transcends a secular business relationship. It is an integral part of our vocation and the quality of this relationship profoundly impacts our well being. Time and energy spent on nurturing this relationship is well spent. The Pope has asked the Bishops to work at nurturing this relationship more intently in the wake of the crisis; we priests should do the same. A relationship is a two-way street.

Relationship to God

Next, for the second major factor, it was interesting to me that a computer-generated equation could demonstrate that those priests, who said they experienced a relationship to God or Jesus that was nourishing to them, were happier. Similarly, those who worked at this relationship by engaging in personal prayer, the sacrament of penance, praying the liturgy of hours and private prayer, spiritual reading and retreats were similarly more content. While one would naturally surmise that such things of the Spirit are important to priestly well being, it is another thing to actually demonstrate it statistically using a computer equation. Our results were strong and clear: a priest is a man connected to God and someone who spends time using classic Catholic spiritual aids to nurture this relationship.

This is regularly demonstrated at Saint Luke Institute. Twelve-step lore tells us that “Spirituality is the first thing to go and the last thing to return.” This is true. The fastest way I know of for a priest to crash is to stop praying. When the inner core of the priest’s spiritual life dries up, he can go through the motions for a while, but something unpleasant will eventually happen.

The Western world has entered an atheistic era. There are a few who are militantly atheistic, such as Christopher Hitchens who authored *God is Not Great*; or Richard Dawkins who wrote *The God Delusion*. They unabashedly and loudly proclaim that there is no god. There is no next

life. “Christianity,” as I heard Mr Hitchens say in a lecture in London, “is evil rubbish.” Perhaps more dangerous are the millions who may profess some nominal Christianity or a belief in God but who live their lives completely as if there is no god. I have come to believe that this, too, is really a form of atheism.

The priestly witness is needed now more than ever. When he stands up in front of a congregation or simply walks down the street, the message is clear: God does exist. There is a creator of this universe of ours and it is He, not we, who is in charge. Moreover, this reality is urgent and pressing... it demands a response.

The growing conflict between an expanding societal atheism and the stark witness of the priest suggests that our lives will come under greater public scrutiny in the days ahead. We are likely to experience an even greater public hostility. No opportunity to expose our weaknesses will go unnoticed. When I sat in that audience and heard Christopher Hitchens expounding his angry atheistic message to the cheers of the crowd, I felt as if I had experienced a bit of hell.

Relationship with other Priests

The third variable that affected priestly happiness was “relationship to other priests.” Celibate priests are not meant to be loners. In fact, most have a solid network of relationships with other priests and with the laity. But for the few who are loners, their lives are stunted and their priesthood is limited.

In his landmark work, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, John Paul II said the priesthood is “radically communitarian.” He called the priest a “man of communion.” Of course, this communion or connection is true on many levels. First and foremost, a priest is a man of the Eucharist, what we popularly call communion. As John Paul II said, “there can be no Eucharist without the priesthood, just as there can be no priesthood without the Eucharist” (*Gift and Mystery*, 77-78).

This communion spreads out to encompass the priesthood and the body of the faithful. The priest, as a man of communion, is an instrument to build up the Church. He is an instrument through which the Body of Christ, initially fashioned in baptism, is strengthened and coheres even more strongly.

He cannot be an isolated man. One of the most common ailments that priests in difficulty bring with them is a disconnection, a lack of healthy relationships in their lives. This isolation may express itself in alcoholism, drug addiction, depression or in meaningless sexual contacts. He is not truly living as a priest.

It should not be surprising to us then that the third important variable in predicting the happiness of a priest is his relationships with other

priests. Those who were in solid, healthy chaste relationships with other priests were happier men.

I often stress to young priests that the annual priestly gatherings whether they be meetings or socials, chrism masses, diocesan convocations or the like, are not just nice gatherings to attend if you have the time. Rather, they are expressions of and times to nurture a unique sacramental reality. Just as baptism binds us all together into the Body of Christ, the sacrament of orders is a real and permanent bonding together.

The priesthood is not yours or mine. It is ours and it exists for the sake of the entire Body. When it is fragmented, it loses much of its efficacy. When we are together in mind and spirit, in one body, we are a powerful witness.

During these days, when the priesthood is undergoing the passion in a most direct and painful way, we need each other all the more. Let us make this priestly communion a priority. We need to spend time with each other, praying together, sharing the graces we have received, gathered around our major superiors and bishops in harmony.

When I go from diocese to diocese, from one religious order to the next, one of the most consistent needs the priests express to me has nothing to do with the crisis, at least not directly. Nor is it about the lack of vocations. One of the strongest felt needs among priests today is for greater priestly communion. They can feel the need. They have a deep sense that it is part of the core of priesthood. And today, it is sometimes lacking.

Personal Workload and Stress

The other issue I hear so much about today and the next major contributor to priestly happiness or unhappiness, is “personal workload and stress.” The more a priest feels overworked and overstressed, the unhappier he tends to be. This is not particularly surprising but what is news is that far too many priests in this survey felt overwhelmed. This is the word I used in the survey – “overwhelmed” and, unfortunately, 42 percent of the priests in the study felt overwhelmed with their workloads.

This is an unacceptable level. And as I travel around the United States I hear the same refrain again and again. Our priests are simply swamped with work. Some have multiple parishes, a number of additional duties, and the future in this regard looks even worse.

I do not know if it is exactly the same in Ireland. But the reduced number of priests is having a broad impact in the Church and first and foremost on our priests themselves. I suspect your experience is similar.

Ministry has always been a bottomless pit. It has always been a challenge to be an empathetic person and yet carve out a balanced life that one can endure for the long haul. This challenge has become even more acute today.

Frankly, I do not know why we don't tackle this problem in a more head-on fashion. There is a presumption that priests will automatically learn how to deal effectively with the emotional drain of ministry. Actually, most priests do, but a few do not. And as the number of priests continues to decline and the workloads continue to rise, the tendency will be for us to become more isolated, stressed and distressed.

A happy priest is a man who can cope with the challenging emotional demands of ministry and roll with them, and sets boundaries in a flexible and healthy way. I'd like to see us address the challenge of priestly workloads and stress more directly. Our priests would like this too.

Compensation and Living Arrangements

The final variable that helps to account for the study's predicting 41 percent of priestly happiness is satisfaction with one's material compensation and living arrangements. Priests who were more satisfied with their material compensation and their living arrangements were happier men.

I think we can understand these findings on two levels. The first level is the more mundane. Simply put, our priests have real human needs. When trying to understand morale in any way of life, social scientists have consistently found that compensation and living arrangements, while not necessarily enough by themselves to make people happy, are an important baseline. With these material needs met, people might be happy; but without them, they definitely won't be.

It is easy to forget the human needs of our priests. Are they eating right? Are they getting enough exercise? Are their living quarters comfortable enough? Do they have a bit of money in their pockets so they can afford some modest recreation when they have time off? Fortunately, the large majority of priests are content with where they live and how they are compensated.

But this question can be understood on a deeper, theological level, which again sheds light on the core of priesthood. When we look at most of the men who come to priesthood, they are usually bright and talented people. They know, these days, that they could make a lot more money and be much better off, in a materialistic sense, in the secular world. The priests we have today are definitely not in it for the money. There was a time when priesthood was a ticket to a better life. This is not true in the First World today.

Thus, the survey results suggest that our priests are mostly not caught up in the materialistic excesses of today. They are paid a modest amount. They live in modest quarters. Yet, they are happy. They know that priesthood is a life of service and sacrifice. They are willing to spend their lives in serving the people and find their reward not in what they are paid or how much they can accumulate.

Thus, this last variable, while seemingly mundane, actually points to a deeper spirituality of priesthood. And it affirms the moral fiber of our priests today. The vast majority of our priests are dedicated, hard working men who get up, day-after-day with the thought of serving, of helping others, of preaching and teaching the Word of God, and finding their reward not in a paycheck, but in the grateful eyes of their people, and in a God whose love they have come to know and cherish.

A Priesthood of Peace and Joy

Once again, the truth that this study leads to is inescapable: integrity, that is, living one's life with a deep inner congruence to one's true identity, leads to happiness. My experience working with wounded priests affirms this conclusion. I chat with each of our residents as they begin the programme and again when they leave. Oftentimes, when someone is struggling with an addiction to alcohol, sex, drugs or whatever, I ask them, "What was your life like when you were in the midst of your addiction?" They will invariably say, "I was miserable. My self esteem plummeted. I was anxious all the time and discouraged. I felt like a miserable failure." "And now," I ask them, "Now that you have experienced sobriety for six months, how do you feel?" They answer, "I feel light, happy. I feel good about myself and I know that God loves me. I have hope for my life and I am grateful." "Well," I conclude, "There's your two options. If you return to your addiction, you know where it will end up. If you live sobriety and recovery, you know where that leads. The choice is yours."

I remember years ago an Irish priest telling me at their annual convocation, in front of all the priests of his diocese and his bishop, about his struggles. He said he had been suffering with anxiety and decided to see a psychiatrist. I asked him what the psychiatrist said and the priest answered, "He suggested I go out and have an affair." If this is what he really recommended, it is incredibly stupid. Besides being immoral and harmful to the other person, the priest would find himself not only suffering from anxiety but also emeshed in a relationship that would cause him even more angst and conflict.

To put it succinctly, sin makes you miserable. The only true joy and happiness is found in Christ. Satan would like us all to believe that sin is

fun and it's only God who wants us to deny our humanity and to be miserable. Did any of you see the movie: *The Devil's Advocate*? Al Pacino plays the Devil and in the end gives a dramatic soliloquy in which he says: God gives us all these desires and tells us not to use them. "I," said Satan, "I am the last great humanist."

This is pure rubbish. Sin makes you miserable. True humanity finds its complete fulfillment only in Christ. We, as Catholic priests, are purveyors of that joy and peace. And it is a gift that we ourselves have been given. Christ himself promised it. He said, "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give you" (Jn 14:27). He also said, "That my joy might be yours, and your joy might be complete" (Jn 15:11). We should not be surprised at how happy priests are, even in the midst of the public pounding we have taken in the last few years. The Spirit of Jesus resides in our hearts which radiates its fruits including joy that fills our eyes and a penetrating peace that lies deep within.

I began by saying that priesthood is suffering. Indeed it is. I end by speaking of priesthood as being filled with Christ's joy and his peace. Just as suffering and joy are not incompatible in Christ, so they coexist in us. We are members of a priesthood that bears the marks of his passion; we also are filled with the fruits of his Spirit.

Toward a New Evangelization

I would like to move toward concluding this address by laying out a new challenge for the priests of this wonderful island. A most dangerous thing for the Church today, perhaps even more than the abuse crisis, as painful and upsetting as that is, is to fall in upon ourselves in shame and to engage in endless, negative self-scrutiny. There are some signs of this. There is a time for self-scrutiny. But there is also a time to move forward.

Recent popes have each written a major encyclical on evangelization. Pope John Paul II called for a new evangelization which was echoed by Pope Benedict.

The people of Ireland have a long and illustrious history of evangelization. For example, anyone who knows anything about the Catholic Church in America is well aware of the tremendous gift that the faith of Ireland has been and continues to be for the US. And the Church throughout the world continues to enjoy the presence and witness of the sons and daughters of Ireland in every corner of the globe.

In fact, I recently returned from Antarctica, where I was a Catholic chaplain for a few weeks. When I got off the plane in McMurdo Station in a frozen wasteland at the end of the world, I was greeted by Father Thomas O'Connor with a lovely Irish lilt in his voice. There is no place I could go where an Irish priest has not been before me.

But your task for the days ahead may be becoming missionaries at home, re-evangelizing your own people. The seeds of the post-modern decline in faith and vocations, however, are not to be found solely in recent events. They were growing below the surface for decades. Now, these forces have erupted with a vengeance, as inevitably they would have.

Your country, too, is caught up in the Western world's affluence, secularism, materialism and spiritual decadence. When our mouths are full and the threat of violence recedes, the centrality of God easily disappears from our thoughts.

But this is not the case everywhere. The Congregation for Education in the Vatican has noted that there are more men studying for the priesthood now than in any other time in the Church's history. Vocations are booming, but not in the wealthier nations. "It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven" (Mk 10:25). It was ever thus.

This is not to disparage the role of the wealthier nations in the Catholic Church of the future. But we will not be providing the bulk of future priests or religious. The center of the Church's dynamic growth and focus will no longer be on us. We will have to adjust to this new reality. The Church's skin will mostly be brown and it will be black.

Nevertheless, we, I believe, will have an important role to play. Like elder sons and daughters, our Western churches will not have the numbers nor the vibrancy of youth. But we will have the patience, insight and wisdom of maturity. Our role will be no less important. We must engage in this role with all the energy and enthusiasm we can muster.

One day those nations who are younger in the faith will pass our way, their societies too will face the demons of materialism, secularism and atheism. We ought to pave the way for them, giving them a blueprint of faith in a secular age.

A Final Note of Hope

I end with a great feeling of hope. This hope is not optimism; optimism holds out a positive future in worldly terms. Our future as priests necessarily leads to the cross. This, Our Lord, promised.

However, in faith, we taste a tiny bit of a glorious future. As Pope Benedict told us in *Spe Salvi*, we already have a taste in our hearts of the glory of what is to come. And this foretaste causes a feeling of joy to well up in our hearts. We can truly say with confidence what Julian of Norwich said so long ago, "All shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well."

The day I was ordained was a great day for me. But it was the *second* greatest day in my life. The greatest day will be the day when the Lord

calls me home. Then, the hope that resides in the heart will burst forth into full blossom.

But that day is not here yet. Today, we priests are suffering. I thank God for it. We should worry when we are not. The passion is a sign that we are truly acting in the person of Christ, in persona Christi. And this passion is producing a stronger priesthood that is more able to live its sacred vocation with a renewed and vital integrity. Today, perhaps for the first time in our lives, we are becoming real priests.

Response to Monsignor Rossetti's Address

Leo O'Reilly, Bishop of Kilmore

I thank the organizers of this Conference for the invitation to respond to Mgr Rossetti's paper: *Becoming Priests for the First Time*. I thank Mgr Rossetti for a very wide-ranging and inspiring reflection on priesthood today. Apart from his many other qualifications, Mgr Rossetti's long experience in the St Luke Institute gives him a unique insight into priests and priesthood. He is well aware of the failures of priests, particularly their failures in abusing children, but for all that he has not lost faith in priests and that is encouraging.

Those failures have changed the landscape of priesthood in Ireland forever. And we are still painfully learning how to deal with the new reality. We have to acknowledge the harm that has been done by some of our brother priests. As bishops we have to acknowledge our failures to deal with these matters properly and effectively. All of us have felt anger and shame when cases of abuse by priests were paraded in the pages of the newspapers and rehearsed nightly on our TV screens. We will feel that shame again when the report of the Dublin enquiry comes out, possibly before the end of the year. But we must not allow these things to overwhelm us. To paralyse us or make us bitter.

Shattered Dreams

The dangers of anger, bitterness and cynicism are all too real. Few of us could say we have not been tempted, or touched by bitterness or cynicism at some stage in our ministries, even long before the revelations of recent years. Priests of my generation started off with high hopes and heady expectations. In that we are no different from any other generation, except that we thought we were different! The changes brought about by Vatican II made anything seem possible. Churches were full then, vocations were abundant, and we assumed that with renewed theology, new liturgy and fresh pastoral approaches things could only get better. But it didn't quite turn out like that. The priest-poet, Pádraig Daly, captured the euphoria and the subsequent disappointment in his poem *The Last Dreamers*:

We began in bright certainty:
Your will was a master plan
Lying open before us.

Sunlight blessed us,
 Fields of birds sang for us,
 Rainfall was your kindness tangible.

But our dream was flawed;
 And we hold it now,
 Not in ecstasy but in dogged loyalty,
 Waving our tattered flags after the war,
 Helping the wounded across the desert.

That poem was written before the wave of scandals broke over us in the early years of the new millennium. We have all the more reason now to feel like the tattered survivors of a war and to experience the landscape of our ministry as something of a desert. The society we serve does not provide much nourishment for faith, and the atmosphere in it is often hostile and inhospitable to things religious.

Perhaps the dream was a bit flawed, the vision of ministry too optimistic. Was it too much of a Palm Sunday priesthood that acquiesced in the affirmation of the crowds and the hosannas, and quietly enjoyed its place on the pedestal? Not enough of a Good Friday priesthood, a priesthood modeled on that of Jesus, who heard the same crowds who shouted 'hosanna' later shout 'crucify him'?

Modelled on Jesus

The talk we have just heard challenges us to embrace a vision of priesthood that is rooted in the New Testament and modeled on Jesus. The experience of priesthood today is much more like the priesthood of Christ, described in the Letter to the Hebrews, than what I was ordained into in the late sixties: 'During his life on earth, Christ offered up prayer and entreaty, aloud and in silent tears... and submitted so humbly that his prayer was heard... He learned to obey through suffering...' (Heb 5:7-8)

Priesthood today is, much more than it used to be, a following of Christ on the way of the cross – the way of humility, obedience and suffering. It's not easy being a priest today, but we are in the right place and it was good to hear that affirmed by Mgr Rossetti at the end of his talk: 'Today, we priests are suffering. I thank God for it. We should worry when we are not. The passion is a sign that we are truly acting in the person of Christ...And this passion is producing a stronger priesthood that is more able to live its sacred vocation with renewed and vital integrity'.

Priests are happy

So what of the dream? 'We hold it now, not in ecstasy, but in dogged loyalty' Mgr. Rossetti challenges us to move beyond dogged loyalty and to recognize and experience the joy of priesthood – to use the title of one of his books. His survey of priests and other surveys show that the vast majority of priests are happy as priests. But that is not how we are perceived. At an Assembly in our diocese last October one of our youngest priests – and I might add, one of our happiest – was talking about his experience as a priest. I forget his exact words, but the gist of it was: People look on us priests with a certain pity, living lonely lives and cut off from real life.

Some of our most active and supportive parishioners share the view that priests are miserable and lonely. I have heard them express it myself when visiting parishes. But I can also say with some confidence that it is not true. It doesn't mean that they not concerned about the shortage of vocations or other issues in the Church. It doesn't mean that their morale is as high as it used to be or as it should be. But in my experience priests are generally a happy group of people and I don't know any place you will hear gales of laughter as often as in a gathering of priests. The danger for us is that, as people who read a lot of newspapers and listen a lot to radio and TV discussions, we begin to believe the stereotypes and the caricatures that they present to us.

Living the Dream

The dream may have been flawed but it's important that we continue to dream dreams. It's important that we still have a vision of priesthood that will motivate us and empower us in the difficult times that we live in. One of our retired priests embodies that vision for me. In his eighties, he still has the idealism and enthusiasm of his youth. He is humble and joyful and he would die of embarrassment if I mentioned his name. He stepped down as a parish priest of a large parish when he was about seventy and went willingly to a small curacy in the other end of the diocese. He worked there for several years before he retired. He is still active and involved. He is available to help out anyone who needs a supply. He visits and cares for his fellow retired priests who are not as healthy as he is. He is gracious and generous and hasn't a trace of cynicism or bitterness in his body.

He has held on to the dream. He is a model of the relationships that are crucial to happiness as a priest that Mgr Rossetti has listed – relationship with God expressed in a deep commitment to prayer; regular contact with his fellow priests and a real interest in their welfare; a great respect for people; and he gets on reasonably well with his bishop too! He illustrates the truth of what Mgr Rossetti has suggested: that priests

who are able to live priesthood with integrity, to live it as it is meant to be lived, are happy men. And the man I speak of is certainly a happy man.

Relationship between Priest and Bishop

It was rather disturbing, as a bishop, to hear that the first factor influencing the happiness of priests was his relationship with his bishop and with Church authority. I hope the fact that it is first does not mean that it is the most important. Either way, it is certainly a challenge to us bishops. We must do all in our power to ensure that we have good relationships with our priests and facilitate and encourage them in having good relationships with each other. The revelations about sexual abuse by priests in the Church have certainly put a strain on the relationship between priest and bishop. The bishop finds himself caught between the need to be just and fair to his priest whom he has known for years and a complainant whom he may never have met before, but who also has a right to be heard and to be treated justly and fairly. The priest is bound to his bishop by a special sacramental bond. But in the eyes of secular society, talk about the sacramental bond, or about the brotherhood between priest and bishop, is seen as special pleading to justify the cover-ups and exploitation. Despite that, there is a special bond and it must be maintained. There is a value there that must be preserved. I know from experience how difficult it is to balance the demands of loyalty and support of clergy with justice and care for those who make complaints against priests. The bishop has to be scrupulously fair to both sides, and the only way to achieve that is to make both aware of their rights and to encourage them to avail themselves of all the supports they are entitled to.

The Quiet Success

We have heard a lot about the failures of priests in the last decade. For much of it we have heard very little about their successes. Happily that is beginning to be rectified. Recently I detect a greater appreciation of the tremendous work priests do, and there is more attention given to that in the media. I don't think our diocese ever had such a body of devoted and hardworking priests as it has today and I'm sure that is true of every other diocese in Ireland. I have been in dioceses in many countries and met a lot of priests and I have to say that nowhere have I found priests with so little interest in honours or promotions or money than here in Ireland. Our priests are primarily interested in their people. We have something precious and we should value it and honour it.

Some priests are hopeless at routine administration. I often despair of getting replies to letters or financial returns in on time. But even if those

things annoy me, I realise they are peripheral to priesthood. Our priests work very hard and are very good in the things that matter. They are good where it is anything to do with people. They are there for the great and small occasions of people's lives. They are there at times of joy and celebration, on occasions of sickness and tragedy, and at all the times in between. They know their people and they serve them well. At times I wonder do we serve them too well. The temptation for priests who are committed to service and who are respectful and available to people is that they will work too hard, and sometimes at the wrong tasks.

Nowadays we deal with many people who have little or no involvement in Church, but who can be the most demanding on our time and energy. We must still respect them, but resist being sucked into a consumer concept of service, rather than a gospel understanding of it. We have to gently, but firmly help all our people, practicing or not, to understand that we are not company officials but apostles of Christ: that they themselves are not customers but disciples. We must remind them that their role in the Church is not to be passive recipients of services but active agents of evangelisation. This concerns our most faithful church attenders as well as those who only visit now and then. We can get too caught up in maintenance and not enough in evangelisation. We need to resist the temptation to stay in the comfort zone of ministering only to the converted and allowing them to dictate completely the parameters of our ministry.

Role of Lay People

Monsignor Rossetti spoke about the challenge for priests of the new evangelisation. It is a challenge for our people as well as our priests. That challenge was laid down clearly in a document from the Congregation for Clergy called 'The Priest of the Third Millennium'. It says:

New evangelisation has to underline the importance of bringing to maturity the meaning of the baptismal vocation of the faithful, thereby bringing the faithful to an awareness that they have been called by God to follow Christ and to collaborate personally in the Church's mission (Chapter 2.2).

As we celebrate this year of vocation in Ireland a very important task, as well as promoting vocations to the priesthood and religious life more effectively, is that of 'bringing to maturity the meaning of the baptismal vocation of the faithful.' It is only in the context of a more vibrant living out of the baptismal vocation of all Church members that we can hope to nourish vocations to priesthood and religious life.

Becoming a Priest for the First Time

The title of his paper comes, Monsignor Rossetti told us, from the words of a priest who had just finished the programme in St Luke's and who said, 'I feel like I am ready to be a priest for the first time'. It's like a new vocation, like the second call of Peter in chapter 21 of St John: 'When you were young you put on your own belt and went where you wished. But when you get old you will stretch out your hands and someone else will put a belt around you and lead where you would rather not go' (John 21:18). This is not the naïve Peter who rushed to follow Jesus in Galilee. He is an older and a wiser Peter who now knows what is involved in his call. He is the Peter who fell but yet rose again. He denied three times, but he professed his love three times too. When Jesus says, 'Follow me', Peter is now ready to be led where he would rather not go. He is ready to embrace the cross he once wanted to save Jesus from. He might have said: 'I fell like I am ready to be an apostle for the first time.'

When I heard the phrase, 'becoming priests for the first time' it immediately reminded me of the oft-quoted lines from the poem, 'Little Gidding' by TS Eliot:

With the drawing of this Love and the Voice of this Calling
 We shall not cease from exploration
 And the end of all our exploring
 Will be to arrive where we started
 And to know the place for the first time.

Becoming priests for the first time is a challenge for each one of us. Conversion is a permanent requirement for all who wish to reach maturity in priesthood and in life. I am grateful for this opportunity to explore together what is central to our priesthood and to set out again on the road where we started five, ten, or fifty years ago, so that we can come to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the wonderful vocation that we have received and, more important still, learn to live it more faithfully.

Presbyteral ministry and priestly holiness in the New Testament

Cardinal Albert Vanhoye

An address given at
Ars Colloquium 2007

[We are grateful to Myles Rearden CM for this translation of
Cardinal Vanhoye's address which is reproduced
by kind permission of *Parole et Silence*, Paris]

*Should the holiness of diocesan priests
be of a specially sacerdotal type?*

The traditional answer to that question would be affirmative, but today it is being challenged. It is pointed out that priesthood is never ascribed to the Church's ministers in the New Testament. There is nothing sacerdotal in the way they are described.

New Testament Church Leaders are not priests.

The First Letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians calls them 'those who labour among you, and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you' (I Th 5:12);

First Corinthians speaks of 'those who have devoted themselves to the service of the saints' (I Cor 15:15) The Letter to the Romans mentions 'the leader' between 'the giver' and 'the compassionate'. In the Acts of the Apostles, we see that the first Christian communities in Judea were led by 'elders' (Acts 11:30; 15:2,4, etc), in Greek *presbuteroi*, meaning 'older' or 'senior', which was used by the Jews to designate a group responsible for leadership.

This title had no sacerdotal connotation. It was adopted subsequently by all the communities of Christians (see Acts 14:23; 20:17) it is found in the pastoral epistles (I Tim 5:17; Tit 1:5, in the Letter of James (Jas. 5:14), and in the First Letter of Peter (I Pet 5:1). The English word 'priest' derives from that Greek term, but it acquired a sacerdotal meaning and is no longer a possible translation for *presbuteros* which has to be translated as 'presbyter' or 'elder'. Literal fidelity to the New Testament has led some to refrain from speaking of 'priestly ordination' but only of 'presbyteral'. Those who do so consider that the holiness of priests should be a pastoral holiness, but not a sacerdotal holiness.

Christ is a priest

This literal fidelity overlooks an important point, namely, the priestly Christology to be found in several books of the New Testament, and which is magisterially developed in the Letter to the Hebrews. Christ was not only the good shepherd (Jn 10:11-14) but became at the same time a 'high priest' (Heb 4:14; 5:10; 8:1; 9:11) It was in a priestly way that he was good shepherd, for he not only pastured his sheep, but led them to God. The title of shepherd does not by itself express this essential aspect of the work of Christ, which is expressed by the title of high priest, provided this is understood in the light of the paschal mystery, as it is presented in the Letter to the Hebrews.

Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that by basing itself on the paschal mystery of Christ, the Letter to the Hebrews has radically affected the way priestly holiness must be understood, by leading us beyond the idea of a sanctification attained by ritual separations to one attained by way of communion. In my view, the challenge I spoke of regarding how priestly holiness should be understood arises from overlooking this radical change of perspective. It remains at the level of the priesthood of the Old Testament.

Old Testament priesthood

The Old Testament contains a very lively awareness of the holiness of God. It can be said that the whole organization of the Old Testament cult was based on the idea of holiness and on the conviction that in order safely to approach the devouring fire of the divine holiness, it was necessary to be sanctified. But sanctification or holiness was conceived very differently then from our way of understanding it today. For us, holiness is closely linked to moral perfection. In a process of canonisation, the first stage consists in verifying that the person had reached an 'heroic' level of the practice of the Christian virtues. The Old Testament mentality saw things quite differently. It did not link holiness with moral perfection. For it, 'holy' was not opposed to 'imperfect' but to 'profane'. Between the divine fire of divine holiness and the fragility of human existence it saw a terrifying difference of quality, and realised that in order to enter into relationship with the thrice-holy God, a transformation was needed.

This transformation was understood as passing from the profane level of ordinary existence to a holy or sacred level, corresponding to the requirements of the relationship with God. To bring about the transition, it was not in the first instance moral effort that was required, because this leaves a person at the human level. What was needed was a divine action of separation and elevation to traverse, at least to some extent, the distance between the human person and God, and to diminish

the qualitative difference.

In this perspective, Old Testament cult provided a system of sanctification by means of a series of ritual separations.

Since the vast majority of humanity did not possess the sanctity required to present itself before God, a people was set apart, the people of Israel, to whom Moses declared: 'You are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession.' (Dt 7:6) To demarcate this separation and maintain it, Israel received a whole series of precepts which created a barrier around it, in particular laws regarding pure and impure food. When imposing these observances, God declared: 'You have sanctified yourselves and become holy, for I am holy; do not make yourselves impure.' (Lv 11:44)

Despite this basic sanctification, the people of Israel was not as a body capable of enduring the immediate proximity of God. Had they approached him, they would have been annihilated by the devouring fire (see Ex 19:12; 33:3; Nb 18:22) A particular tribe was chosen, that of Levi, for consecration more directly to the service of the sanctuary. This tribe was separated from the others, it was not counted when a census was taken (Nb 1:49); unlike the other tribes, it did not receive a portion of the land of Israel (see Nb 18:23-24); it ensured the service of the sanctuary. Within this tribe, one family was given special consecration. The members of this family were separated from the people so as to be introduced into the sphere of the sacred and charged with the cult. They are priests for God. (See Ex 28:1; 29:1) Their consecration is described in detail in the Law of Moses (Ex 29; Lv 8-9). The holiness attained by means of these rites should be thereafter conserved and preserved by way of the observance of minute prescriptions which separated priests from other Israelites: not to touch anything impure, not to approach a corpse, not to mourn the dead. (see Lv 21:12) Priests should guard themselves carefully against falling again into the profane world, as this would have rendered them incapable of presenting themselves before God.

The actual encounter of the priest with God required further acts of separation. The worship offered to God took place in a holy place, that is to say one separated from profane space, to which only priests had access; the people were completely excluded from it. The Book of Numbers specifies: 'Every lay person who approaches it shall be put to death. (Nb 1:51; 3:10,38; 18:7) The separation could not be more complete. The priests themselves could not go everywhere within the holy place: the holiest place, the Holy of Holies, was forbidden to them. Only the high priest could go in there, and only on one day each year, the Day of Kippur (Lv 16). On other days, even for him, the ban was

absolute, on pain of death (Lv 16:2) Moreover, it was only by means of immolations of animals that he could enter the Holy of Holies, that is, by way of a rite that constituted the most radical separation.

In this whole system of sanctification by ritual separations, the profound respect shown for the sanctity of God is to be admired, and yet it must be questioned whether it effectively assured a genuine relationship with God.

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews raised this question and his meditation on the mystery of Christ leads him to give it a negative answer: although the Old Testament system expressed a religious aspiration worthy of respect, it was not really valid and the priestly holiness which it tried to communicate to the high priest was not authentic. The only authentic holiness is that of Christ, which, instead of being based on a system of ritual separations is based on the dynamism of communion.

In point of fact, the author of Hebrews does not use the expression 'priestly holiness', but rather priestly 'perfection'. However, it means the same, because it is the vocabulary used in speaking of the priestly consecration of the high priest in the Greek translation of the Old Testament. To say that Aaron was consecrated high priest, the Greek Bible says that he was 'made perfect' and the sacrifice of his consecration is called 'the act of making perfect'. The Greek verb *teleioun*, which means 'render perfect', and the corresponding substantive *teleiosis* have only this meaning in the Pentateuch. So it is priestly holiness that is meant here.

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews has reflected on this way of expressing priestly consecration and found it apt. In order to exercise priestly functions, an imperfect human being indeed needs to be made perfect. Otherwise, he is not worthy of approaching God and is incapable of leading his brothers and sisters to God.

How different Christ's priesthood is

Continuing this reflection, the author has seen that in the Old Testament the ceremonies of the priestly consecration of the high priest did not actually render him perfect. They are not worthy of their name, because they do not produce a profound transformation in the one whom they concern. They are only external rites that do not reach the conscience of a sinful man nor communicate divine holiness to him. The most important of these rites were sacrifices, which consisted in the immolation of animals. The author observes that sacrifices of this kind are not capable of making the one offering them perfect in his conscience (Heb 9:10), because, as he says, it is 'impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take sins away' (Heb 10:4) The Old Testament itself affirms on

several occasions that God does not want this kind of cult. The author cites in this connection one of the most radical of those texts, from Ps 40, which addresses these words to God: 'You do not want sacrifice or oblation [...] You are not pleased with holocausts or sacrifices for sin' (Heb 10:5-6) Definitively, the ancient system of sanctification by way of ritual separations did not work, because, as the author says, 'the Law did not bring anything to perfection' (Heb 7:19), 'it established as high priests men affected with weakness' (Heb 7:28). They were imperfect before their priestly consecration, and they remained so afterwards: it did not make them perfect. In the Old Testament, priestly holiness was only external, conventional. In the mystery of Christ, it has on the contrary become interior and existential: it is a holiness of the heart and of life.

Christ's priestly dispositions

Christ has in reality been 'made perfect'. His priestly holiness is authentic. It consisted in perfecting two essential dispositions in him, by the sufferings of his Passion. These dispositions are: his filial docility towards God and his fraternal solidarity with us. But this implies priestly perfection and not simple moral perfection, because these two dispositions have to do with the two relationships necessary for the exercise of priestly mediation.

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews is fully aware that this priesthood is essentially mediation. It differs in this respect from that of the Old Testament, which concentrates its attention on the relation of the priest with God. The Old Testament priest is a priest *for God*. God says to Moses 'Have Aaron your brother come to me... so that hem ay be a priest *for me* (Ex 28:; 29:1) In the letter to the Hebrews it is said, on the contrary, that 'every high priest... is established *for human people* in what concerns relations with God' (Heb 5:1). Both sides of the mediation are referred to. Christ the high priest is called 'mediator', 'mediator of a new covenant' (Heb 9:15), which is 'worth more' than that of Sinai. His priestly holiness corresponds to this mission. According to the splendid prophecy of Jeremiah, the 'new covenant' should be established in hearts (Jer 31:33); Ezekiel, later on, had announced that God would give us a 'new heart' (Ez 36:26). In consequence, the two dispositions that defined the priestly holiness of Christ are the two dispositions of his heart.

In this connection, it is interesting to note that when the author, at the beginning of Ch 5, gives a definition of what every high priest is, what he requires in him corresponds in substance to the two qualities of the Heart of Jesus, gentleness and humility According to the Letter to the Hebrews, 'every high priest' should be gentle regarding his brothers and

sisters and humble before God. The author even declares that ‘every high priest’ in relation to those like himself is ‘capable of understanding those who are ignorant and who go astray’ (Heb 5:2), and that in relation to God ‘he does not take the honour on himself’ (5:4), but receives it humbly, if God grants it.

Christ in his priesthood fulfils this definition perfectly. The author shows that at once by declaring that ‘Christ did not glorify himself to become a high priest’ (5:5) but that he learned obedience from his sufferings, (5:8) very humbly. At the same time, he was full of gentleness, because he accepted ‘making himself like his brothers in everything’ and being ‘tested in all things like us’ (4:15) so as to ‘become a compassionate high priest’ (2:17) and to ‘take away the sins of the people’ (2:17).

The two dispositions that characterise the priestly holiness of Christ and should therefore be present in the heart and life of his ministers correspond to the two qualities of his heart, when referred to the two dimensions of priestly mediation: docility towards God and solidarity with us.

Christ learns obedience

As regards docility in relation to God, the author is surprisingly audacious. He is not content, like St Paul in the Christological hymn of the Letter to the Philippians, to say that Christ was ‘obedient unto death, even death on a cross’, (Phil 2:8), but affirms that he ‘learnt obedience by his sufferings’ (Heb 5:8) Certainly, the author does not at all wish to suggest that Christ was first indocile towards God and his sufferings later led him to become obedient. This interpretation is unacceptable because the author has explicitly excluded all fault from Jesus (see Heb 4:15) and has affirmed that, from the moment of his entry into the world, Christ showed a disposition of perfect docility regarding God, when he said: ‘Behold, I come to do your will, O God.’ (Heb 10:7,9) But, in a human existence, there is room to distinguish a basic disposition of docility and the virtue of obedience acquired in the course of trials. They are two quite distinct realities. Only the one who faces and overcomes the most severe trials acquires in all the fibres of his being the virtue of obedience. That is a law imposed on human nature, and Jesus accepted this law. His divine person had no need of painful trials to reinforce his union with the Father, but the human nature that he had assumed did have this need, for it was not an already glorified nature, but on the contrary one like ours, bearing the consequences of original disobedience and requiring to be transformed and as it were recast in the mould of suffering accepted in obedience and love. St Paul tells us that Christ’s human nature was found in the ‘condition of a slave’ (Phil 2:7),

that 'it was flesh like the flesh of sin' (Rom 8:3). It needed to learn 'obedience through suffering' (Heb 5:8). The Son of God assumed it precisely so as to transform it and renew it perfectly in conformity with the plan of God.

This aspect of the acquisition of the virtue of obedience towards God by way of the trials of human existence seems to me particularly inspiring for the sacerdotal holiness of priests. It puts this holiness in a dynamic perspective, which is at once a gift and a requirement; a gift, because it is Christ who communicates to priests the dynamism of his apprenticeship in obedience; and a requirement, because this dynamism needs to be welcomed in the concrete realities of priestly existence.

Compassion

The second essential disposition of Christ's priestly holiness is no less surprising than the first, by comparison with the Old Testament. I have called it 'fraternal solidarity with us': the Letter to the Hebrews speaks more precisely of 'compassion' (Heb 4:16; see 2:17), because it is a question of solidarity with wretched human beings. This close link between compassion and priesthood is in sharp contrast with important aspects of the Old Testament tradition. As I have said, the latter considers before all else the privileged relation of the priests with God, and, the better to safeguard this relationship, it demanded on the part of priests a pitiless severity against the enemies of God, namely sinners.

This is the teaching given in the Book of Exodus when the Levitical priesthood was established, after the episode of the Golden Calf. The people had fallen into idolatry. On coming down from the mountain Moses called to himself those who remained faithful to the Lord. The Levites presented themselves. On behalf of God, Moses ordered them: Take your sword. Go round the camp and kill, one his brother, one his friend, and one his neighbour. The Levites executed this order. Then Moses told them: 'You have today received priestly consecration for the Lord, one at the price of his son, another at the price of his brother, so that today he bestows his blessing on you.' (Ex 32:29) In Deuteronomy the blessing pronounced by Moses over Levi echoes this episode when he says to Levi: 'His brothers he did not acknowledge, his sons he did not know.' (Deut 33:9) The Book of Numbers recounts a similar episode in connection with Phineas, a levite who by massacring an Israelite and his idolatrous accomplice, obtained from God 'a covenant that assured him the priesthood in perpetuity' (Nb 25:13)

The Old Testament never speaks of compassion in connection with the priesthood. It must however be noted that in fact the offering of sacrifices for sins corresponded to an act of mercy; certainly, the object of these sacrifices was to make reparation to God, but at the same time

they obtained God's forgiveness for those who had incurred guilt (see also Nb 176-15; Wis 18:20-25). The power to bless the people (Num 6:22-27) had the same effect. But this aspect was secondary in the cult and attracted little attention.

The ministry of Jesus by contrast exhibits compassion to an unheard-of extent. Far from showing pitiless severity towards sinners, like the Levites of Exodus and Phineas, Jesus welcomes them, pardons them, sits as a guest at their table (Mt 9:10-11) to the point of being ironically spoken of as 'the friend of tax-collectors and sinners' (Mt 11:19). His mercy had no limits; he showed it to the sick, the possessed, people in distress, the poor, the little ones, the abandoned crowds and sinners. While hanging on the cross he prayed that his executioners be forgiven. (Lk 22:34)

With all that said, it must be noted that it is not to Jesus during his earthly life that the Letter to the Hebrews applies the title 'compassionate high priest', but to Christ in his glory, and it says that it is by his Passion that Christ acquired his inexhaustible mercy. The first text to express this conviction is that of Heb 2:18: 'It is because of what he suffered in his trials that he is able to come to the aid of those who are tried.' This affirmation is taken up again at the end of Ch. 4: The high priest whom we have 'is not incapable of feeling our weaknesses; he has been tempted exactly like us, sin alone accepted.' (4:15) From this it follows that we can 'approach with full assurance to the throne of grace, so as to obtain mercy and to find grace to help in time of need' (4:16)

The priestly mercy of Christ is therefore not a superficial sentiment, whereby one is easily touched by the suffering of others; it is, on the contrary, a capacity acquired by way of his personal sufferings. To share fully in someone's suffering, one must have suffered personally. Christ underwent his Passion. The author describes him in the grip of extreme agony, which makes him 'pray in supplication, with a loud cry and tears, to him who is able to save him from death' (Heb 5:7) God's mercy had already been shown in many ways in the Old Testament, but one dimension was lacking, that of being expressed by a human heart that came into it through the sorrowful experiences of human existence. It is Christ who gives to the divine mercy this consoling further dimension.

What is in question is a priestly mercy, because it mediates between human persons and God. It reaches the very depths of human misery, that of those condemned to death, but it rises up to the heavenly throne of God, which it makes into 'the throne of grace' (Heb 4:16) And if it is priestly, it is so also because it is the result of a priestly offering of a completely new kind, that transcends the seeming conflict between mercy and sacrifice, because this sacrificial offering was an act of supreme mercy.

It is this mercy that pastoral ministry should communicate. It does so in baptism, which purifies those baptised from all sin and admits them into the family of God, something that is completed later by the sacrament of reconciliation, which can be called the sacrament of merciful love.

Moreover, the whole ministry should be imbued with priestly mercy, which means the presbyter himself being personally imbued with it, first by sacramentally receiving himself the merciful love of the Saviour; then by receiving it in prayer and contemplation to pass on to other people; and finally, by practising it generously, in union with the Heart of Christ. This union is absolutely necessary, because the source of pastoral and priestly mercy is the Heart of Christ. It sprang forth from his Heart at the conclusion of his Passion, which was the perfect priestly offering of filial obedience to God and of fraternal solidarity with us. Union with the Heart of Christ impels the priest to live fraternal mercy in an attitude of offering his sufferings to God, so as to receive his love in the same way as Christ did.

We have now established that the holiness of diocesan priests, a priestly and pastoral holiness, has two principal orientations, which correspond to the two dimensions of their mission of mediation: filial docility towards God and fraternal compassion. Let us note in passing that docility to God means in the first place ‘the obedience of faith’ (Rom 1:5; 16:26)

Apostolic holiness according to Peter and to Paul

I now wish to offer you a consideration of how Saint Peter and Saint Paul understood and lived pastoral holiness. The text of St Peter is sober and gives a precise definition of presbyteral holiness. That of St Paul is more extended; it describes the pastoral holiness of the apostle himself and his collaborators, Sylvanus and Timothy.

Peter

In his First Letter, Peter addresses the ‘presbyters’ of the Christian communities of Asia Minor to whom he wrote. He presents himself fraternally as a ‘co-presbyter’ with them, and he places his exhortation in the perspective of the mystery of Christ, Passion and glory. (I Pet 5:1)

He defines the ministry of the presbyters as a pastoral ministry. The risen Jesus said to Peter, ‘Feed my lambs’, ‘Feed my sheep’ (Jn 21:15,16). Peter says to the presbyters, ‘Feed the flock of God which is among you’ (I Pet 5:2) and then specifies what can be called the holiness of the presbyteral ministry. For that he uses three antithetical expressions, each of them rejecting a defective attitude and then inviting positively to the attitude of pastoral holiness, an attitude that he says is ‘according to God’, that is, one of perfect docility towards God. It is a

generous attitude, one of 'devotedness', as a French ecumenical version translates it, and of fraternal devotedness, free of any spirit of domination. It seems to me that the three attitudes to be rejected correspond to the three bad tendencies of human egoism, the three concupiscences, so that it can be said that presbyteral holiness calls for a struggle against these three tendencies, in the forms that threaten the pastoral ministry. The three tendencies can be designated by three verbs: 'to enjoy', 'to possess' and to 'dominate', because they drive people to seek out pleasure, wealth and power.

Those who seek comfort show this when they find pastoral ministry too tiring, requiring too much effort, not sufficiently gratifying, so that it is only done reluctantly, by men unwilling to be continually disturbed. Against this this tendency, Peter tells the presbyters: do not exercise your ministry 'by constraint', that is, reluctantly, but willingly, 'generously, according to God'; renounce your desire for enjoyment, and freely put yourselves to trouble in the service of God and your faithful.

Those who yield to the desire of self-enrichment arrange their pastoral work with this in mind; they require to be well paid for every service; they will select the best remunerated ministries; they will show more interest in people who are wealthy, and less in the poor. Peter denounces this tendency, using an adverb that literally means 'for shameful profit'; he tells the presbyters 'Do not seek shameful profit, but devote yourself generously [to your task]».

Anyone who holds a position of responsibility is tempted to satisfy the desire he has to dominate. The thirst for power is in many people's hearts. Jesus warned his apostles against this egoistical tendency, the enemy of humility and of charity: 'You know that those who are considered leaders among the nations rule over them like masters and their great ones make their power felt. It is not to be so among you' (Mk 10:42-43); and 'let the greatest among you conduct himself as the youngest and he who rules like him who serves' (Lk 22:26)

Faithful to this lesson, Peter tells the presbyters, in the words of Jesus himself in the gospel: 'Do not behave *like* people who *command as masters* in their domain, but become models for the flock'. (I Pet 5:3) This phrase is usually translated incorrectly, failing to bring out the comparison. Its first part – as I have just said – is inspired by the words of Jesus in the gospel. Likewise its second part, because Jesus presents himself as a model, both in the just-quoted synoptic passages and in the Fourth Gospel, where, after the washing of the feet, he says explicitly: 'I have given you the example, so that you may do as I have done' (Jn 13:15) Instead of saying 'Do as I tell you', the presbyters are invited to renounce every spirit of domination and to lead their faithful by their example, the example of humble service, which is evidently

more difficult.

Completely inspired by the gospel as they are, these few phrases of St Peter trace out a well-lit path of holiness for presbyters.

Paul

In his letters, St Paul says a great deal about pastoral holiness. It is priestly, because Paul understood his ministry as a priesthood, though one of a new kind, very different from that of the Old Testament. It is for this reason that Paul does not call himself a priest, but employs a long expression that conveys the difference between them. 'The grace that has been given to him by God – he writes – is that of being a minister of Christ Jesus for the nations and of accomplishing the sacred work of the gospel of God, so that the nations may be an agreeable offering, sanctified in the Holy Spirit.' (Rom 15:16) By expressing himself in this way, Paul places his ministry at once in a relation of similarity and of contrast with the sacrificial activity of the former priests. They placed the immolated bodies of animals on the altar of the Temple, for them to be sanctified by being consumed by the fire of the altar, a sacred fire coming from God (see Lv. 9:24; 2 Ch 7:1). In an analogous but very different way, the apostle's ministry consists in bringing it about by the preaching of the gospel and the grace of baptism that pagans become a 'living offering', pleasing to God (see Rm 12:1), having been sanctified by the true fire of God, which is the Holy Spirit.

Since it is a 'sacred work', a work of 'sanctification', Christian ministry requires holiness in those to whom it is confided. There is a text in the First Letter to the Thessalonians that illustrates particularly well this holiness of the new priesthood. It should be noted that this letter is a collegial one, sent collectively by 'Paul, Sylvanus and Timothy' (I Th 1:1) This means that it does not concern only the privileged case of the apostle Paul, but can be easily applied to all the pastors of the Church, and to diocesan priests in particular. The aim of the letter is to confirm the faith of the Thessalonians, who were recent converts, by directing their attention to the holiness of the conduct of the three missionaries. 'You are witnesses, it says, as is God, of how our attitude to you believers has been holy, just and without reproach'. (I Th 2:10) This holiness is a gift of God and has been lived in docility to God. It is a gift of God, because before bestowing it on Paul, Sylvanus and Timothy, God has made them pass through trials that have purified them interiorly, have set them free from their egoistical tendencies and from every lack of goodness; and have qualified them for the apostolate by placing in them a disposition of purely disinterested and generous love. The Greek word used by Paul, *dokimazein*, means both to test and to qualify.

This gift of apostolic holiness coming from God was then lived out in docility to God. St Paul's words say that literally: 'Just as we have been tested and qualified by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts.' (I Th 2:4) The three missionaries took great care to maintain themselves in the dispositions of holiness in which God had placed them with a view to their mission, and in which he continued to place them.

Speaking in the name of all three members of his missionary team, Paul describes apostolic holiness first in a negative, and then in a positive way. In this respect, what he says resembles the teaching of Peter, though it is much fuller.

Put negatively, apostolic holiness is defined by Paul as rejecting reprehensible attitudes. 'Our appeal, writes Paul, does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery.' (I Th 2:3) Implicitly, the apostle is contrasting Christian missionaries with the numerous popular speakers of the day, who went from town to town claiming to promote some philosophical system or to initiate people into mystery religions. For the most part, these were people aiming to make money; they were sometimes confused in their motivation, tending to pedastery, and were cleverly manipulative. Paul is well aware of the need to differentiate evangelisation from such ambiguous propaganda. Evangelisation is carried on on a holiness marked by truth, purity and uprightness.

Accordingly, Paul rejects any preoccupation with popularity, any avoidance of criticism of prevailing opinions and ways of living, which would conflict with the demands of the gospel. An apostle must have the courage to displease, like Jesus, who when people, excited by his miracles, wanted to 'seize him and proclaim him king', left them and 'retired alone to the mountain'. (Jn 6:15) Having the courage to displease is part of apostolic holiness. The apostle lives in the presence of God and seeks to please God. Paul specifies that he has never spoken a flattering word so as to court popularity and derive satisfaction from it.

He adds: 'nor any thought of cupidity' which is another way of seeking personal advantage. Like Peter, Paul opposes any seeking of financial gain by way of the ministry. The Pastoral Letters contain the same expression as the First Letter of Peter, for this matter. Deacons ought not to be 'anxious for shameful profit' (I Tm 3:8) and likewise bishops. (Tit 1:7)

Continuing this line of thought, Paul excludes the quest for human praise (I Th 2:6). Neither in their dealings with the Thessalonians nor with anyone else have the missionaries sought admiration or praise for their talents or their qualities. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warns against this very natural tendency to seek admiration and praise:

‘Beware of practising your piety before others, in order to be seen by them...’ (Mt. 6:1) Such seeking of praise is particularly tempting for anyone who has to speak in public and proclaim an important message, but it undermines the preacher’s relationship with the people and with God. It conflicts with apostolic holiness. The apostle does not seek admiration for ‘lofty words or wisdom’ (I Cor 2:1), but to arouse faith in God, hope and charity; he thinks only of the welfare of his hearers, and firmly sets aside any other interest.

So much for the series of negative observations which Paul makes regarding holiness in pastoral ministry. He then moves on to its positive aspects. What he describes is pastoral charity, the soul of every apostolate, and he describes it first in terms of a mother’s and then of a father’s love.

Maternal and paternal love

The apostle’s love is a tender and generous maternal love. Paul writes: ‘Though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ, we were gentle among you like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children.’ (I Th 2:7)

Inasmuch as they were apostles of Christ, the three missionaries had the right to financial support from their Christians (see 2 Th 3:8-9; I Cor 9: 11-15.) They have renounced this right; instead of asking for help they have given it; instead of making demands they have shown themselves full of gentleness and tenderness, like a mother. Paul does not here use the word ‘mother’, though many translations do, but the expression he uses effectively means ‘mother’, because it is a question of someone ‘who nourishes her own children’. A mother is full of attention for her children, she caresses them, she ‘looks lovingly at them’, and carries them in her arms. It was in this way that God promised to care for his people in the Old Testament. The Book of Isaiah contains the lines: ‘You shall nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child so shall I comfort you’. (Is 66:12-13) Paul and his companions have fulfilled this divine promise for the Thessalonians.

But it is not a question of a superficial tenderness. It is a really maternal love, capable of sacrifice, as the text shows when it continues: ‘So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God, but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us. (I Th 2:8) His word here is an unusual one, ‘to share the gospel’: normally he would write ‘announce’ or ‘proclaim the gospel’. It is an expression of mother-like affection on the part of the missionaries that Paul means by ‘share’: a mother does not proclaim, she shares what she has with her children. Paul presents the gospel like

bread shared lovingly with the faithful. He knows that this bread is a gift of God, it is 'the gospel of *God*,' not a human product.

But the love of the missionaries for the believers is so deep and sincere that they are not content with handing on the gifts of God to them. They also wish to give their whole selves, not grudgingly but with a generosity so complete as to involve the sacrifice of their lives. This is what the text says literally: 'to share also their own souls', which means, to lay down their lives.

In his letter to the Philippians, the apostle Paul expresses the same disposition, at a time when he was in real danger of being condemned to death. He is in prison, and does not know whether he will come out alive or dead. What he writes to the Philippians is: 'Even if I am being poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you'. (Ph. 2:17) The missionaries give proof of their sacrificial love. Maternal love easily becomes possessive, like other human affections which have a generous side, but also seek their own satisfaction. True maternal love is sacrificial, ready to give all for the good of the child. It is that love that animates the missionaries, a love impregnated with holiness.

The three missionaries did not in fact have to sacrifice their lives, but they gave concrete proof of their affection by facing into many difficulties. They write: 'You remember, brothers and sisters, our labour and our toil; we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the gospel of God.' (I Th 2:9) Again, the letter appeals to the memories of the Thessalonians; they have seen the missionaries at work. The words leave no room for doubt; they speak of 'labour' and 'toil'. They suggest that what is in question is manual labour. Other texts confirm this. In the First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes: 'we grow weary from the work of our own hands'. (I Cor 4:12) In Acts St. Luke specifies that Paul worked as a tent-maker (Act 18:3), an unattractive task, since the material worked on was rough and hard on the hands.

In the following verses, Paul expresses the paternal aspect of pastoral charity. He writes: As you know, we dealt with each one of you like a father with his children, urging you and encouraging you and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.' (2:11-12) Paul had a strong sense of his spiritual paternity. The most significant passage in this respect is that where he says to the Corinthians: 'I admonish you as my well-beloved children. For though you may have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers. Indeed I became in Christ Jesus your father in the gospel.' (I Cor 4:14-15) This is a genuinely *spiritual* paternity, because it comes about 'through the gospel'. New life is transmitted through the Word of

God. In his short letter to Philemon, Paul asserts his paternity again; he calls Onesimus 'his child' whom he has 'engendered in prison'. (Phm 10)

It is interesting to note the distinction the apostle makes between paternal and maternal affectivity. He describes the latter in terms of tenderness, on the one hand, and sacrificality on the other. A mother 'watches over' her children and sacrifices herself for them. Paternal affectivity on the other hand he describes in terms of educational preoccupations. Christian priestly holiness involves both these kinds of affectivity, as well as fraternal affectivity and even, according to II Cor 11:2 spousal affectivity as regards the community.

As regards paternal affectivity, Paul specifies that his educational effort is not just general and addressed to the whole community, but refers to the exhortation of individuals also. He uses three verbs to express what he does: 'we have, he writes, been 'urging and encouraging you, and pleading that you lead a life worthy of God.' (I Th 2:12) The education given by the missionaries is not presented as a series of authoritative interventions – he does not use the word 'command' – but a patient and persevering effort to guide and encourage people in the right path. On certain occasions however it is necessary to strengthen his tone by 'adjuring' them. Only Paul used this word in the New Testament (Ga 5:3; Eph 4:17, and two discourses in Acts, Ac 20:26 and 26:22.)

It is significant that the education given does nor refer to a moral code, but to a personal relation: the Christians are invited insistently to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the God who calls them.'. By means of the gospel, God has entered into a personal relationship with every Christian, he has called them and continues to call them. The dynamism of Christian conduct aims to correspond with this personal call. St. Paul never preaches a morality of legal observances, but seeks to have people take account of the requirements that flow from their personal relation with God and of the ever-renewed call of God.

Closeness to God and Vocation

This call aims at a very high reality: God 'calls you into his own kingdom and his glory' (I Th 2:12). The hope of Christians is not only the hope of being saved , great though that would be; it is the hope of a participaton in God's own glory, a hope that evidently brings with it a requirement of great holiness, because God's glory is the glory of his holiness, a holiness of love.

In this whole passage, it is clear that pastoral and priestly holiness for the apostles of Christ does not involve any renunciation of affectivity in the name of virtue, but on the contrary, it welcomes and developes all the capacities of the human heart, placing them at the service of a love that comes from God. Affectivity is not repressed; it is only purified

from every egoistical seeking for satisfaction and it is broadened to the dimensions of the divine plan, it is intensified. Pastoral charity is characterised by a dynamism of communion.

While it brings great clarity to the holiness of the pastors of the Church and is very stimulating for the ministry, this text of the First Letter to the Thessalonians is not complete. It lacks an essential dimension of Christian holiness: its relation to the person and to the mystery of Christ. His person and his mystery are mentioned in this letter, at least briefly, but without being brought into relationship with the apostolic ministry.

Other letters of St Paul show to what an extent Christ and his mystery were present in the life of the apostle. He wrote: 'I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord... I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.' (Ph 3:8-11) In the Letter to the Galatians, Paul goes so far as to say: 'I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.' (Ga 2:19-20) However, these texts are not directly to our purpose, because what they define is the personal holiness of St. Paul and not his specifically pastoral holiness.

It is in the Second Letter to the Corinthians that we can find a text that expresses the relation between pastoral holiness and the mystery of Christ. Unlike the passages just quoted, this text is not a personal sharing of the apostle's experience, but a reflection on the apostolic ministry. In it Paul speaks in the plural.

He begins by saying: 'It is not ourselves that we proclaim but Christ Jesus, the Lord' (II Cor 4:5). That is certainly a fundamental trait of pastoral holiness: refusal to preach oneself, to proclaim one's own personal ideas and tastes, but genuinely to preach Christ, his gospel and his mystery. He goes on: 'we are your servants for Jesus' sake', which is another fundamental trait, to have the spirit of service, to serve the Christian community, in union with Jesus, who 'came not to be served, but to serve.' (Mt 20:28; Jn 13:14).

Paul then declares: 'It is the God who said, «Let light shine out of darkness» who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.' (II Cor 4:6) That is the source of pastoral holiness, an inestimable gift of God, a gift of light in the heart, which places one in a profound relationship with the divine person of Christ and gives the capacity to make him known authentically.

He adds: 'We have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come

from us.' Recognising that one is not a conduit worthy of the treasures one transmits is an indispensable humility, an integral part of pastoral holiness.

Paul then describes the apostolic condition, a humiliating condition but one protected by God, and he expresses its spiritual value when he says: '[We] always carry in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies.... so [that] death is at work in us and life in you. (II Cor 4:10-12) That indeed is the highest definition that can be given of pastoral holiness, a holiness that is at the same time priestly, because it consists in union with the priestly offering of Jesus, who, as the Letter to the Ephesians says, 'loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering to God. (Eph 5:2) Pastoral holiness involves at the same time union with the priestly fecundity of Christ: by death, it transmits life, the new life of the risen Christ, in his relation with the Father.

This text from the Second Letter to the Corinthians completes in a powerful way the perspectives opened up by the First Letter to the Thessalonians.

I would not wish to add anything to that.

Core of Priesthood – Being Pastoral

Fr Robert Whiteside, All Hallows College

John Moriarity, philosopher, writer and storyteller, used to say that to ask “How are you?” and really mean it is more important than saying “I love you”. It is certainly a central question for those of us who are in ministry to ask ourselves and those whom we are called to serve.

Being pastoral, while involving the acquisition of skills and tactics, is essentially about attitudes and approaches – ways of being with ourselves and with other people. In his comments about the theatre, actor, Simon Callow seems to catch something of a pastoral attitude in the piece below:

“The essential attitude to the audience is one of compassion... into the auditorium they stream, battered, dislocated, alienated, unhuman – feeling the loss of their humanity, the erosion of their human parts. Our job is to restore them, to massage or tease or slap the sleeping parts back into life again.” (Simon Callow, *Being an Actor*, p 205)

Being a pastoral minister is very much about being a creator of compassionate space where people can enter in, be held, restored and transformed as they face the major issues in their lives. We ministers create space for transformation to happen, for grace and love to enter in. Seeing ourselves as “containers” helps us avoid trying to change people from a position of superiority which is nearly always oppressive and violent. Avoiding the extremes of liberalism and condemnation we minister to others with the twin pastoral functions of acceptance and challenge. “Jesus stood up straight and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?” She replied, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said, “I do not condemn you either. Go, and from now on do not sin any more.” (John 7: 10-11). We are called to open our arms in total acceptance of people who are wounded and burdened and at the same time challenge individuals whose behaviour is destructive to themselves and others. This is a delicate task that calls us to create a safe space where people feel accepted and can hear the challenge.

In order to be the people who can create and maintain this kind of compassionate space we need to look compassionately at ourselves. These are some of the approaches that may be helpful to us in our quest:

Being truly contemplative – taking time, as Walter Burghart puts it, to take “a long loving look at the real”

Moving gently towards greater honesty with self – being self-reflective to a degree that helps me befriend my strengths and limitations – using supervision to develop confidence in self-evaluation.

Having the ability to work as a member of a team and to assume a

leadership role when necessary.

Realizing that being pastoral is a communal not a personal responsibility. I don't have to do it all myself – that I am called not to be responsible FOR people but to be responsible WITH people.

Being able to distinguish between my personal identity and pastoral identity – not allowing myself to be so absorbed in my ministry that I have no time for a personal life. Allowing myself to be nurtured, loved and cared for.

Developing a keen sense of justice and building bridges to people of differing values and faith systems. Always trying to work towards a society that is truly just.

Coming to terms with the fact that a lot of ministry is of its nature “non-productive” – a ministry of simply sustaining, of being able to “stand by” in the face of suffering/death/loss.

Valuing the relevance of the work we do. “At this time, I am also thinking of the work you do every day, work that is often hidden and, without making headlines, causes the Kingdom of God to advance in people's minds and hearts. I want you to know of my admiration for this ministry, discreet, tenacious and creative, even if it is sometimes watered by those tears of the soul which only God sees and “stores in his bottle” (John Paul II)

Having a flexibility in attitude, a spirit of inventiveness and playfulness and sense of humour

Being aware of the basic wonder and mystery of all life and growth

Developing an intimate relationship with self, others, God, and being able to befriend one's inadequacies in this regard.

It is difficult to define accurately the exact nature of being pastoral. What is written below is merely an attempt to express how I see it today. The experiences of life keep impinging on me and adjusting my perspective. Consequently, this attempt (as all future attempts will be) is biased, tentative and incomplete.

Being pastoral would seem to be about moving towards having the ability to create and maintain compassionate space into which others can enter and have the opportunity to review, relish and develop their relationship with God, self and others. Of its nature this space will be supportive and challenging at both a personal and community level.

One of the things that can undermine us and our ministry is the guilt we feel about the gap that can exist between what we preach and how in practice we live out lives and ministry. I find these words of theatrical director, writer and philosopher Tadashi Suzuki helpful, “I can preach my dreams precisely BECAUSE I am incapable of carrying them out myself.”

Even more helpful are these words “Come to me, all you who labour and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest”. (Matthew 11:28)

Offering Hearts To Heaven

Tom Lane CM

The way to heaven

For the past half century, I have been talking a lot about priesthood. From time to time, I have put some thoughts to paper. Each time, I did a lot of new homework and I refreshed myself on some old reading. This time, I stopped after just half a page of fresh reading. Along with this, I have been reflecting a lot on a beautiful piece of sculpture to which I was introduced in 2005. That year, I was one of a very large group of priests who did our annual retreat at Ars. One of my reasons for going there is that St John Mary Vianney is the patron saint of all priests in pastoral ministry. If there were a vote among priests today, I don't think many of us would give him our first preference. We would hardly be drawn by the Curé's austere lifestyle. Not many of us would rush to blame Satan for the struggles that were so much part of his life. Even if there is to be a widespread rediscovery of the riches of the sacrament of reconciliation, few of us would see ourselves spending hours and hours daily in that great ministry. We could easily miss the Curé's ever-growing emphasis on the love of God, as he advanced in years. The prayer in which he longed for a greater and purer love of God and of people could hardly be surpassed. Here, indeed, was what today we call pastoral charity at its very best.

One of the highlights of the retreat was a visit to a spot where the Curé is said to have asked a famous question and to have made a famous promise. He had travelled many miles, in very wearying conditions. He stopped a young boy and asked him the way to Ars. The boy obliged. "Thank you", said the Curé; "you have shown me the way to Ars. I will show you the way to heaven". It was to immortalise this exchange that the sculpture was commissioned. As I looked at the Curé pointing to heaven and at the boy in receptive mood, I got material for much of my prayer for the rest of the retreat. The two figures were beautifully silhouetted against the evening sun. From the rising of that sun to its setting, St John Mary spent several years, day after day, in the service of the Lord who is the Sun that knows no setting.

To show people the way to heaven. Could there be a better description of ministerial priesthood? In seeing his life-work in terms of this showing, the Curé must have been familiar with the statement in many catechisms that the Son of God became man to show us the way to heaven, by his instructions and example. More important than the

Curé's preaching and the catechism teaching is the message of the great scriptural letter on the priesthood of Jesus Christ. The Letter to the Hebrews tells us that our great High Priest has gone before us into heaven. It provides us with several names for heaven. These include the holy place (9:12), God's right hand (10:12), the throne of grace (4:16), the sanctuary (10:19). We are encouraged by the assurance that our High Priest became in all things like us without sinning (4:15). Following him, we are to approach the throne of grace, with confidence (4:16). Encouraging us in our race and cheering us on is "a great cloud of witnesses" (12: 5).

In harmony with all these words of encouragement, the author of the Fourth Gospel was later to write that Jesus had gone to prepare a place for us in what he calls not heaven but his Father's house (John 14:2).

The Curé taught countless people the way to heaven. But where, or what, or when, or who is heaven? The answer that covers all answers is that heaven is God. Jesus, St Matthew's Gospel tells us, went about announcing the coming of the reign of heaven. It was his way of inviting us to do everything in heaven's way, in God's way. God does not merely live in heaven. God is heaven. God's chosen people, in their many testings and puzzlements, as well as in their moments of light, learned to image God in a great variety of ways. The author of the First Letter of John distilled the wisdom of them all in telling us simply that "God is love" (1 John 4:16). We are fortunate to be living at a time when this truth of truths is being re-discovered. By writing his first encyclical letter on the God who is love, Pope Benedict XVI has given us his agenda for his whole ministry of shepherding. To show people the way to heaven is to show them the way to God, not just eventually but now. To show them the way to God is to show them the way to love.

We all want to go to heaven, but, in the spirit of young Augustine, not yet. One recalls the story of the evangelical preacher who asked his congregation how many of them wanted to go to heaven. He was surprised when the most devout lady in the group didn't put up her hand. When he questioned her afterwards, she said "I got you wrong; I thought you wanted us to go now"! The good news is that the God who is love wants us to be in heaven, right now. He wants us to be immersed in love, right now. He wants us to be a little bit of heaven to each other, right now. St Catherine of Siena put it beautifully when she said that all the way to heaven is heaven, because Jesus said "I am the way" (John 14:6). Even in the midst of the most painful testings, he wants us to have a taste of heaven, right now. Jesus wishes every man and woman who ministers in his name to show every man, woman and child how they can be in heaven at every step on the way to the final flowering of heaven, when we will see the God who is love, not in a mirror dimly but face to face

(1 Cor. 13:12). He calls us to help people to lift us their hearts and to respond “we have lifted them up to the Lord”.

In the *Ars* sculpture, the Curé is pointing up to heaven. The heavens above, in biblical times, and indeed in Christian times, have usually been regarded as the source from which the glory of God comes down to our earth to shine on us. In our own times, a prominent Carthusian teacher of prayer led people to look nearer and nearer for God. Several searchers for God came to him asking him how they should pray. “Pray in, not up” was his constant and incisive answer. He didn’t deny that God dwells in the high heavens. He was inviting people to enter deep into the tabernacles of their own hearts. Blessed Teresa of Calcutta taught her sisters and others that, in order to find the God of love, they were to look in the most unlikely places, in all of life’s gutters. St Paul got it all in focus in his invitation to be in touch with the God in whom we live and move and are (Acts 17:28). For the Carthusian teacher, for Paul, for Teresa, heaven is above us, in us, and around us. They wished us to be immersed in the God who is love, the God who is heaven.

Offering up

In “My Fair Lady”, Eliza Doolittle gives a plaintiff cry: “Show me!” Priestly ministry exists in order to awaken and sustain in people a cry of the heart: “show us the way to heaven!”: heaven within, heaven all round us, heaven now, heaven then. Having lived for three years in the memory of the *Ars* sculpture, I read Pope Benedict’s encyclical on hope. The encyclical became strangely alive when I reached what is intended to be an aside. In this aside (par.40), the Pope refers to a form of devotion which, he says, is perhaps less practised today but was quite widespread not so long ago. It is the practice of offering up what he calls by various names: minor daily hardships, jabs, little annoyances, small inconveniences. Gently, and indeed tentatively, he wonders whether something essential is being lost as the practice is diminishing. He gives an implicit answer to his wondering and questioning. He speaks approvingly of those who believe that the small trials we offer up become part of Christ’s great treasury of compassion which, he says, is so greatly needed by the human race. The small inconveniences of daily life, he says, in this way, acquire meaning and contribute to the economy of good and of human love.

I found Pope Benedict’s aside very powerful and very evocative. With humble respect, I am left wondering why this paragraph in the encyclical comes as an aside rather than as something central. We are here being given a delightful glimpse of heaven. Is there anything more essential than putting our daily offerings into the treasury of Christ’s compassion which is the throne of grace? Is there any better

daily expression of what it is to be a priestly people? The Letter to the Hebrews (13:16) describes our very ordinary daily sharings as sacrifices that please God. The author could also have described them as offerings that please God.

It all brings me back to my mother's knee where I first learned to know, love and serve God. Whether she was putting a poultice on my sore leg, or giving me delicious goody for a bad bout of mumps, or helping me to make peace with a neighbouring boy, she kept saying, with a smile and a hug, "offer it up!" She had a lovely blend of words and action, saying and doing. As the years went on, I came to realise that every new act of offering up is an extension of the morning offering which I make in union with the heart of Jesus and the heart of Mary. This is the Christian version of King David's "I have freely offered all" (cf, 1 Chron 29:17). In my morning offering, it took me some years to realise that it was precisely in his prayers, works and sufferings Jesus had offered his perfect sacrifice to the Father: his prayers, "with loud cries and tears" (Hebrews 5:7); his works as he went about doing good (Acts 1:38) and eventually saying "I have finished the work you gave me to do" (John 17:4); his suffering in which he learned to obey (Hebrews 5:8).

Later in life, I began to link all my daily offerings with the offering which is the Mass. My great eureka came when I began to look on every part of every Mass as offering – from the tuning up in the liturgy of the word, through the great Eucharistic prayer of thanks, and into the sacred banquet in which the risen Lord offers us his flesh to eat and his blood to drink. We are left wondering what we can offer to the Lord for all he keeps offering to us. All our attempts at offering merge with the offering of Christ which continues at his Father's right hand. All our offerings and the offering of Jesus himself are a response to the Father's offering. We are not used to looking on the Father as an offerer. Yet that is how we address him in the Second Eucharistic Prayer. We thank him for having offered us a covenant, again and again. In every Mass, he makes us part of the covenant that crowns all covenants. He offers us the "unsearchable riches" (Eph 3:8) of his Son.

I like to see my work in ordained ministry as an orchestration of all these two-way offerings, human and divine. It seems a tall order, especially in these days of ageing and greying. But the grace given at the laying on of hands (cf. 2 Tim 1:6) does not grow old or grey. I can be "an example to the flock" (1 Peter 5:13) as long as I can say the *adsum*, the "present" of ordination. That "present" gets a whole new life every time I call on the Holy Spirit to come on the people's gifts. As long as the breath of life is in me, I can raise my hand in blessing, in anointing with oil, in forgiveness. I can keep putting into the treasury of

compassion of our great High Priest. I can keep offering up, offering in, offering out, for the life of the world.

A people of heart

We are called to be a people of heaven. We are called to be an offering people. Both are calls to become, more and more, a people of heart. Heart is very much as in word. As with all in-words, one could easily miss out on some of its depths. Over the years, I have been discovering something every day about the depths of the human heart. And I have learned that our God is a God of heart. When I speak of my heart, I speak of what is most uniquely myself. I know that my heart is only a muscle, but I also know that there is no more important muscle in my body. In the days of very basic physiology, the pages of the Bible recognised its importance. For the Bible, the heart is central. It is the place of our deepest thoughts, our deepest desires, our deepest longings. We have inherited a lot of these biblical approaches to the heart. When I pray to God out of my heart, I am praying out of all the depths of which Psalm 130 is a cry. When I ask the real John Brown to stand up, I am asking John Brown to speak straight from his heart.

We are used to talking of the heart in what I would call the romantic way, largely because it was promoted in the period of history we call romantic. In this setting, the heart came more and more to be seen as the exclusive domain of love. Lord Byron put it well when he said that the heart was made for loving and the moon was made for light. We have also inherited and we make a lot of use of the language of Blaise Pascal who saw a certain competition between heart and head. Our devotion to the Sacred Heart of Christ is, like all devotion, coloured by the particular culture in which it flourished. When the Lord opened the secrets of his heart to St Margaret Mary in the seventeenth century, the words heart and love were already showing signs of becoming interchangeable. Some medieval mystics had spoken powerfully that way. The tendency got new impetus from the advance of the Romantic Movement. The emphasis on the affective side of the human heart was growing. The heart of Christ was presented as a heart burning with love. It was seen as sending out a glow that we do not normally associate with the biblical heart. But, if you go patiently through the countless references to the heart in the Bible, you will find space for all knowing, all loving, all the most sensitive of human feelings, all the traits that we have come to call by head words and heart words. It is with the whole range of these that we are to love our God, the God of heart, the God who eventually came to be revealed simply as love.

All our offerings to God are a response to God's offerings to us. In the older liturgy of Good Friday, there was a highlighting of the words

in which God, through the mouth of Micah (6:1-11), listed some of the many offerings he had made to his people and asked "O my people what have I done to you"? Through Isaiah (5:4), God asked "what more was there to do for my vineyard that I have not done in it?" The full answer to God's question came when Jesus told the parable of the vineyard (Matt 21:23-41). The high point of the parable comes in the decision of God to send his son, saying "they will reverence my son". This is surely the cry of an offering God, the God of heart. It is the cry of the God who reaches out generously to our hearts and looks for a generous response. There are boundless riches in John Henry Newman's motto: "heart speaks to heart". The Curé of Ars could have said to the boy "I will show you the way into the heart of God". The heart is heaven; heaven is the heart. No human life is long enough to explore the human heart and the heart of God. That is why I like Pope Benedict's words: "the geography of heaven is the geography not of space, but the geography of the heart". It is no wonder that, in its call to respond to the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ, the Letter to the Hebrews appeals strongly to the heart. In chapter ten, after a number of references to Christ's offering, we read of the covenant written in hearts (v 16). There is a call for hearts that are "true", hearts "sprinkled clean" (v 22). The reason for all this must be that the whole of creation is somehow in every human heart, and God likes to dwell not just in the heavens above but in the human heart within (cf. Rev 3:20). In the Bible, and in the tradition that grew out of it, there are countless equivalents of the word "heart" and "heaven". There are also countless variations on the language of offering.

A new heart: a daily call

All our offerings, all our reaching out from heart to heart, call for a new heart and a new spirit (Ezek 18:31). We need to keep calling on the God who is all heart to take away our hearts of stone and give us hearts of flesh (Ezek 11:19). The human heart is a jungle. Overwhelmed by the struggles and the contradictions in human living, Oscar Wilde once complained that he had not been told that the brain can hold, in a small ivory cell, God's high heaven and hell. He could have said the same about the human heart. Indeed the hardest words ever said about the human heart were said by the Lord himself. From it, he said, "come evil intentions... wickedness... deceit... folly" (Mark 7:21, 23). As a result, said the Lord, the human being is defiled (v 23). It is for the cleansing out of human hearts that Jesus made his great self-offering. His incarnation was an act of divine love, love for the sinful human family. As he walked the walk with us, he showed how we had lost our way to heaven. In summarising what he had "received" from the Lord, Paul made it very clear that Christ died for our sins (1 Cor 15:3). In Romans he tells

us that Christ died for our sins and rose to make us just (4:23). “We were reconciled to God”, he says, “through the death of his Son” (5:10).

In this reconciling sacrifice, to the all-holy God, on behalf of a sinful people, we are at the core of all Christian priesthood. A sacrifice is the offering of a gift to God. Not every sacrifice is offered for sins. Jesus offered the perfect gift to his Father. It was the offering of his whole self. His Father wasn't interested in the conventional sacrifices and oblations. That is why Jesus offered nothing less than his own body (Hebrews 10:5). In doing so, he did the perfect act of at-one-ment, to undo, as only he could, the massive rupture in our relationship with God, the rupture that had been caused by sin. He was the Lamb of God, coming to take away the sin of the world (John 1:39). It all cost him not less than everything. As a result of this costing, the word sacrifice has become widely understood as the readiness to offer a gift at any personal cost, even the cost of laying down one's very life. It is as a result of the costly sacrifice of Jesus that all our good deeds are a sacrifice pleasing to God (Hebrews 13:16).

To come back to St Paul. He tells us that, according to the Lord Jesus, it is better to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). I am sure that both Paul and the Lord would wish us to be generous in both giving and receiving. The human heart is made for receiving, as much as it is made for giving. It is significant that, in the days of fewer holy communions, there was something very special about the day on which people said “I am receiving”. The storyteller John Moriarty liked to tell in a variety of ways of a lady who loved to give big gifts but found it difficult to cope with receiving gifts. She was confounded when she received a large Christmas present from a friend whom she had forgotten even to put on her list. A good neighbour said “Mary, calm down; you are a very generous giver but a very mean receiver”. Our Christian life is largely about learning to take-and-receive and to give in the spirit of the Lord who took blessed, gave and invited to receive. Only our gracious God can help us to be humble in taking, magnanimous in receiving, and generous in giving.

Offering and ordination

Most of what I have been saying about offering and related topics applies to all the baptised, all the priestly people. My work as an ordained servant of the people is one of a daily orchestration. At ordination, I was authorised to keep calling on the Holy Spirit to make present the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. It is no surprise that the sacrament of Holy Orders is the great climax to the preparation of good shepherds for God's people. Neither should it surprise us that, in the earliest Christian communities, authorisation to preside over the sacred mysteries took

much simpler forms. As the number and diversity of Christian communities increased, and as the second coming of Christ was no longer seen to be imminent, a more finely textured rite of authorisation began to take shape. With the centuries came an ever richer teaching on sign and sacrament. Every Eucharist came to be more and more clearly recognised as a making present of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. Presiding at the Eucharist came to be seen as a very special vocation. The president was to be eucharistic in a growing variety of senses. Being “an example to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3) became a call on all of one’s energies. In these days, with a growing number of Christian communities without a regular Sunday Eucharist, there is a lot of concern about the shortage of vocations to ordained ministry. The topic gives rise to some honest and open discussion. New questions are being asked about the place of men and women in ministry, about the call to celibacy and the call to marriage, about full time and part-time ministry. As we pray for the gift of wisdom in dealing with these questions, we also pray that we will avoid any short-sighted ways of dealing with the vocations shortage. The recommendation in 1 Tim 5:22 about not laying hands hastily on anyone remains valid. The Church’s hard-learned expectations for those who preside at the Eucharist cannot be jeopardised. Not every gathering in the name of the Lord, not every eating and drinking in the name of the Lord, is an authentic Eucharist. Only a short time after the Last Supper, St Paul had to tell the Christians at Corinth that, in spite of appearances, they weren’t really celebrating the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor 11:20). These words of Paul have much to teach us. In the growing complexity of contemporary culture, the eucharistic presider needs a lot of resources to help people “discern the body” (Cor 11:29).

Authorised servants

These days, we don’t like to describe ordained ministry in terms of power. For this I thank God. And still there is a true sense in which ordination is a receiving of Gospel power. The Gospels speak of two wholesome forms of power. One is the power which is God’s creative energy at work, through fragile human instruments (as in Luke 5:17). The other is being authorised to act in the name of the Lord (as in Matthew 28:18). Ordination is a call to exercise both forms of power. They are entirely different from the power by which the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over people (Luke 22:25). Jesus strongly rejected that power.

At every Eucharist I use the energy of ordination to lower the ceiling between heaven and earth. Every Eucharist is an hour of heaven, an hour of offering, an hour of heart. The veil that separates us from the holy of holies of heaven is rent in two (cf Mark 15:38). The offering community

is united to Christ the Priest who is forever interceding for us at the right hand of the Father (cf Hebrews 2:25). Since the Second Vatican Council, a favourite way of describing ordained ministry is in terms of acting in the person of Christ, the Head. The headship in question is described beautifully in the Letter to the Ephesians. It is a headship not of control but of life-giving from Christ the Head. All the members of his body are to be built up together, growing into the Head, knit together in love (4:16). The building up goes on quietly in every proclaiming of the word, in every act of reconciliation, in every sacrament, in every act of pastoral charity. What unites all these is the energy that comes from the word of God. All ordained ministry is somehow a ministry of the word. In every sacrament, the word of God comes alive in a new and distinctive way. Every act of pastoral charity brings a living word into a new human situation, of joy or of sorrow, of hope or of the dimming of hope. St Vincent de Paul said that love is infinitely inventive. Pastoral charity keeps drawing on this ever-inventive love.

All my ministry as an ordained priest is a ministry of nourishment. It is a nourishment of human hearts from what Francis Thompson might call the red pavilion of God's heart. It is a nourishment of human hearts in their desire to keep offering themselves to heaven. It is a nourishment of human hearts in whatever pertains to God (cf Hebrews 5:1), in what pertains to other people, in what pertains to the whole of creation. There are many "heart devotions" in the Church today. There have been many calls for a consecration to the hearts of Jesus and Mary, of countries, of communities, of individuals. It is important that all these calls be made in a way that is central to our faith, not peripheral, not sentimental. Like the morning offering, the consecration to the united hearts is a daily cry from the heart, not a prayer made once-for-all.

What have I to say about priestly spirituality? Am I going to give it just one last sentence? Certainly not! Everything I have been saying so far is about priestly spirituality. All my daily prayer and worshipping, all the well-tried exercises that help to make priests holier, are a continual exploring of the world of heaven, of offering, of the heart, of Gospel love.

Statement of the Vincentian position on some questions regarding the ministerial priesthood

1. Do the Vincentians think that women should be ordained?

The Vincentian tradition has always sought the advancement of women. It is also central to our tradition to follow the Church's teaching. It seems to us that the reason for women not being ordained in the Catholic Church, or in the Orthodox Churches, is the uninterrupted traditional practice on the point since the time of Christ, plus the central place tradition has in the transmission of divine revelation. Whatever changes came about in the matter of women's ordination would be preceded by deeper understanding of Church tradition in such matters. That is the primary issue to be examined and carried forward.

2. Do the Vincentians think that mandatory celibacy for the clergy in the Roman Rite should be continued?

The Vincentians accept the priesthood as we find it, either open to married men as in the Eastern Catholic rites or restricted to celibates as in the Roman Rite. We are convinced of the value of celibacy for priests, and of the need for careful preparation for anyone living a celibate life. We are happy to be engaged, as we are, in the formation both of married priests in the Eastern Catholic churches and of celibates in the Roman Rite.

*The Organizers,
Core of Priesthood Symposium,
Drumcondra, Dublin.
21.06.2008*

On Ministry to Migrants

An address given on
Monday 30th April 2007
to Vincentian Priests in Mill Hill

Fr Austin Garvey

I have been asked to address you on the chaplaincy work of Vincentians here in London from the perspective of the Church and from the perspective of the Archdiocese of Westminster. I propose therefore to describe first Pastoral Work with Migrants in the Perspective of the Church, secondly Work with Migrants in the Perspective of the Archdiocese of Westminster and to end with some reflections on Vincentian Involvement in the Pastoral Care of Migrants in London.

Pastoral Work with Migrants in the Perspective of the Church

The rights of migrants have a long history in Church discipline. They were enshrined in Conciliar decrees in the same year to which we trace the beginnings of our own rights as British subjects in Magna Carta. The 4th Lateran Council decreed in 1215: “We find in most countries, cities and dioceses people of diverse languages who, though bound by one Faith, have varied rites and customs. Therefore we strictly enjoin that the Bishops of these cities or dioceses provide the proper men who will celebrate the liturgical functions according to their rites and languages.”

The current arrangement whereby migrants ordinarily benefit from specially commissioned priests or chaplains dates from the year 1918, the year following the publication of the Code of Canon Law. By the Decree *Magni Semper* the Sacred Consistorial Congregation was given competence to authorize clergy for work among migrants. The status of such was clarified in 1952 when Pope Plus XII issued the Apostolic Constitution *Exsul Familia*. The pastoral care of migrants had become a matter of concern in the post-war conditions in Europe with its millions of what we then called “displaced persons” while more and more people in over-populated countries were being forced by famine to seek refuge in other lands.

Pius XII decreed that every local Ordinary must make an earnest effort to entrust the spiritual care of aliens or immigrants to priests, whether secular or regular, of the same language or nationality, i.e. to missionaries to migrants. These authorized missionaries to migrants

were to be considered equal to parish priests. For receiving the sacraments, including marriage, every alien would be free to approach the missionary to migrants or the parish priest of the place

In 1969, Pope Paul VI gave new developments in migration fuller attention in his *Motu Proprio Pastoralis Migratorum Cura*. His over all concern was to bring the special care of migrants within the pastoral vision of the Second Vatican Council and to provide appropriate structures for its exercise. The result, as you might expect of that most sensitive of Popes, was a delicate balancing act between the rights and duties of the Sacred Congregation for Bishops, the new National Conferences of Bishops, local Ordinaries of the Place of the Migrants' Departure and the local Ordinaries of the Place of their Arrival.

From 1918 to 1969 it may be said that the mind of the Church towards migrants was being formed through the framework of Canon Law. Migrants were seen to form a particular category of the faithful requiring special legislation to provide for their protection since the canons were framed with stable populations in mind. Paul VI, in a perceptive paragraph of his *Motu Proprio*, shows how the Church viewed the migrant:

Migrating people carry with them their own mentality, their own language, their own culture and their own religion. All of these are parts of a certain spiritual heritage of opinions, traditions and culture which will persist outside the homeland. Let it be prized highly everywhere. Not least in its right to consideration is the mother tongue of emigrant people, by which they express their mentality, thoughts culture and spiritual life. Since these last are the natural media for knowing and opening the inner man, the care of migrating people will indeed bear fruit if it is carried out by persons who know them well (i.e. their mentality, thoughts, culture and spiritual life) and who are fully proficient in the people's language. Thus is confirmed the already obvious advantage of caring for people who migrate through priests of their own language and this as long as usefulness indicates.

Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi

The Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, with its Instruction *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi* of May 2004, has introduced a wholly new dynamic into the development of the Church's mind on migration. This new dynamic does not come so much from the Pontifical Council's recognition of migration in our time as a structural phenomenon of nearly every country, as by putting migration in its scriptural context at the beginning of its reflections. Just so,

at the 2nd Vatican Council the Church broke loose from its Canon Law blinkers to see itself in *Lumen Gentium* first and foremost in the light of God's plan outlined for us in the Scriptures.

The key to *Erga Migrantes* to be found in three subsections of Part 1:

- Migration and the History of Salvation
- Christ the 'foreigner' and Mary, a living Symbol of the Emigrant
- The Church of Pentecost.

This brief survey from Abraham to the Apocalypse shows how the reality of migration has served the revelation of God's plan for humanity. The Scriptures do not tell us the economic or sociological reasons for the migration of Abraham's family from Ur to Haran nor of Abraham's departure as a nomad to circle the outer plains of Palestine, they do tell us that in this migration he came to know the one, true God who is not tied to any particular country. They do describe the ecological reasons for Jacob's transference to Egypt and the political constraints which gave rise to the Exodus and the hope it engendered of a land of freedom for God's people. Super-power politics gave rise to the Exile to Babylon and the return in which the Jewish people learned to shed their hopes of conquest and to treasure the Law which kept them close to God.

Jesus, God's word made flesh, was an emigrant in infancy and in his public life continually on the move, a domestic migrant between Galilee and Judaea. The crowd at Pentecost, from which the first 3,000 converts were baptized, was made up of men, Luke tells us, 'from every race under the sun'. And the Church, in its infancy, was saved from becoming a Jewish sect when persecution turned the Greek-speaking believers, at least, into migrants. Migration today cannot be seen by the Church as a passing problem but as the key to its present task and its glorious future when "people from east and west, from north and south will come to take their place at the feast in the kingdom of God."

The vision of *Erga Migrantes* would not have been possible without the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council which described the church as existing in Christ "as a sacrament or instrumental sign of intimate union with God and of unity for the whole human race." It has benefitted also from Pope John Paul II's development of the spirituality of communion. Communion is the sign which our world needs since in every country migration is causing problems rousing fears of upsetting the labour market, of overloading social security systems, of diluting the national identity to the point of disappearance.

Communion brings enrichment when we broaden our sense of values to appreciate those of other nations, when we add the strengths of their

spirituality to those we already cherish, when we welcome their collaboration in striving to become the Church Christ wants us to be rather than settling for the Church we have grown comfortable with. The Letter to the Hebrews tells us, “Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” Angels are not necessarily agreeable guests to welcome into our homes they are messengers from God when he has something to tell us. The following extract from *Erga Migrantes* sums up the mind of the Church today on Migration:

The entire Church in the host country must feel concerned and engaged regarding immigrants. This means that local Churches must rethink pastoral care, programming it to help the faithful live their faith – authentically in today’s new multicultural and pluri-religious context.

Migrant chaplains are the help each local church needs to exercise its mission of welcome. *Erga Migrantes* reminds us that welcome has its stages: “assistance in a general sense (a first short term welcome), true welcome in the full sense (longer term projects) and integration (an aim to be pursued constantly over a long period and in the true sense of the word).”

The true sense of integration is seen best in contrast with assimilation. Integration occurs when migrants are brought into the life of the local Church enriching it with all the wealth of their native tradition and putting it at its service. Assimilation is much less demanding; it happens when migrants are encouraged to shed their religious and liturgical traditions the more swiftly to conform to the pattern of the life and liturgy of the local Church which will have its numbers swollen without the enrichment and renewal integration brings. Integration is a long term project, it cannot be rushed. But integration will never be achieved unless it is seen by migrant chaplains as their final goal and local clergy are prepared to adapt to the changes it must bring.

Work with Migrants in the Perspective of the Archdiocese of Westminster

The original organization of the Diocese under Cardinal Murphy-O’Conor put Ethnic chaplains under the care of Bishop Hopes, the Vicar General, and their pastoral activity under the care of Bishop Longley, the Bishop with responsibility for pastoral affairs. In a more recent reorganization, the Cardinal has recognized the importance of the migrant constituency in the diocese by putting the Ethnic Chaplaincies under the sole care of the Vicar-General, while at the same time relieving him of other responsibilities

Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor has also recognized the need for inter-diocesan cooperation for the pastoral care of migrants by authorizing the London Ethnic Chaplaincies Group, made up of Bishop Hopes, Canon Cronin (with responsibility for ethnic chaplaincies in Southwark) Mgr Armitage (Vicar General in Brentwood) and myself (as Bishop Hopes' advisor) to supervise and promote work for migrants throughout London.

Last year, the Cardinal showed an active preoccupation for the social needs of our migrants by celebrating with the Archbishop of Southwark and the Bishop of Brentwood at a Mass to inaugurate a campaign for Justice to Migrants. He also commissioned a research project from the Von Hugel Institute at St Edmund's College, Cambridge into the needs of the migrants of the Catholic community in London. Their report, with disturbing conclusions of widespread injustice, was published in February and the response of the Bishops to its recommendations is expected soon.

On the May Bank Holiday next week, another Mass for migrants will be concelebrated by the Bishops at Westminster Cathedral. After the Mass the three prelates will head a procession to Trafalgar Square and a rally in favour of the "Strangers into Citizens Campaign" calling for the regularization of long-term "illegal" migrants.

Bishop Hopes has taken on board the content and the spirit of *Erga Migrantes* and is trying to put its instructions into practice.

Parish Priests are another matter. They are not so easily moved by Vatican documents calling on us to meet "new" challenges since, if immigration is new to Italy, in London ours is largely a Church of assimilated migrants and converts. It only emerged from penal times to become a visible Church towards the end of the eighteenth century with the arrival of priests among the French émigrés fleeing the revolution. The French were followed, in 1807, by German priests who came to look after their dock-workers in London. We ceased to be mission territory in 1850 when the influx of Italians and of Irish fleeing the famine in the 1840s had increased significantly our numbers to justify the restoration of the Hierarchy.

The great surge of chaplaincies began after the Second World War between 1946 and 1970 with the need of pastoral care for immigrants cut off from their homeland by the Iron Curtain: Hungarians, Byelorussians, Czechoslovaks, Croatians, Slovenians. In the same period, the Maltese Hierarchy established a Maltese Mission. Meanwhile, the Irish Hierarchy was setting up the Irish Chaplaincy to accompany labourers from Ireland in their mobile road-building camps.

In a third phase, from 1969 to the present day, we have been responding piecemeal to the needs of successive influxes: the Vietnamese

boat people, Filipino domestic-workers and (more recently) nurses and doctors, Indians expelled from East Africa, Chinese from Hong Kong and now increasingly from mainland China, Lebanese of the Maronite Church, Eritreans and Ethiopians of the Ge'ez Rite from the war-torn Horn of Africa, economic refugees from Spanish-speaking and Portuguese-speaking Latin-America, Tamils and Sinhalese from Sri Lanka, Albanians, Iraqis of the Chaldean and of the Syriac Churches, IT-proficient Indians of the Syro-Malabar Church and of the Latin Rite, Africans from Ghana, Nigeria, and, most recently, Roumanians whose numbers we expect will increase when their country enters the European Union.

Meanwhile, under pre-*Erga Migrantes* thinking, chaplains have appeared among us to exercise pastoral care for the migrants without any clear definition of their specific responsibilities except the conferring of equal powers with parish priests to be exercised cumulatively. That meant that immigrants were free to approach the chaplain or the parish priest for all the sacraments including marriage and leaving a wide field for clashes, if not conflict, and accumulating resentments between rival shepherds competing for the same people.

It is against this background that we have to forge a new understanding between chaplains and parish priests in which the parish priests recognize that assimilation has not been the best way of meeting the needs of the ethnic groups in their congregation and that the migrant chaplains can help them nourish their spiritual roots and so make a richer contribution to the life of the parish community. Migrant chaplains for their part must see themselves as joint-builders of communion. They must acknowledge and recognize that, if integration is their final goal, while it cannot be rushed, it will never be achieved unless a strategy for integration is built into the chaplains' pastoral plan as soon as possible and kept under constant review.

Vincentians in the Pastoral Care of Migrants in London

Twenty-one years ago a joint instruction, dealing with pastoral commitment for migrants and refugees, was published by the Congregation for the Religious and Secular Institutes and the Pontifical Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migration and Tourism. It was addressed to all men and women Superiors General. It made an appeal to religious institutes for a particular commitment in favour of migrants and refugees which was deeply motivated by what could be described as

an affinity between the intimate expectations of these people uprooted from their homelands, and the religious life. Theirs are the expectations, often unexpressed, of the poor with no prospect of security, of outcasts often mortified in their longing for fra-

ternity and communion. When, fraternity and communion are offered by those who have voluntarily chosen to live in poverty, chastity and obedience, this solidarity is not only a support in their difficult situation but also a witness to values that can enkindle hope in sad situations. Here, then, is an urgent invitation to all institutes of the consecrated life and to all societies of apostolic life to be generous in widening the horizons of their work with a truly missionary dimension, an appeal that should be considered especially, by religious congregations whose specific goal is missionary (83).

There is no doubt that today many religious institutes are more and more aware that the migration problem represents more or less a challenge to their charisms. But so that this spiritual awareness and the appeals of the Church's magisterium may take on concrete form, we would suggest here to superiors general that they collaborate generously with pastoral workers for migrants and refugees by assigning some of their own members to work in this sector, backed up by the solidarity and collaboration of the entire religious community. Perhaps they might also make available for this work, either permanently or for a certain period, some part of their buildings that would otherwise remain unused (84)

The Vincentians are, consciously or unconsciously, responding to this invitation with generosity. If the property you have released for this work is not best situated for the purpose, the men you have assigned to the task are of high quality. St Vincent's work among the hulks of Marseilles, your congregation's charism of Retreats and priestly formation give rise to the hope that they will be of special value in obtaining justice for migrants while providing for their spiritual growth and fostering priestly vocations

The house in Isleworth, with its common life, does correspond with a particular concern expressed in *Erga Migrantes*:

As regards the practical life of men and women religious working for migrants, it should be stressed as a fundamental criterion that the religious life as such must be safeguarded and appreciated in its inspiration and in its particular forms. It is in itself the image of perfect charity, a charism whose treasures are of benefit to the whole community. Pastoral care, for migrants undoubtedly needs religious communities, but these in turn must be able to live and work in observance of and adhesion to their own constitutional norms. This is stated quite clearly in *Mutuae Relationes*: "In this hour of cultural evolution and ecclesial renewal, therefore, it is

necessary to preserve the identity of each institute so securely, that the danger of an ill-defined situation be avoided, lest religious, failing to give due consideration to the particular mode of action proper to their character, become part of the life of the Church in a vague and ambiguous way.

Nevertheless, there may be some tension between the demands of common life which is a benefit not only for the priests concerned but also for the people they serve and the needs of the migrant communities which, apart from those from India, are not widely represented in the Western outskirts of London.

Another problem which has yet to be overcome is the financing of this missionary undertaking. While Westminster is paying the salary of two of the priests, it is doing so on the assumption that eventually the communities they serve will pay for the services of their chaplains. How is this to be achieved when, as it has been suggested to me, people who are used to providing for the secular clergy are not used to supporting members of a religious community?

May I end by adding another recommendation of *Erga Migrantes*: “We would further suggest that, in their circular letters to their members and in their meetings, superiors should from time to time focus on the urgency of the problem of migrants and refugees. drawing attention to Church documents and the words of the Holy Father. They might also care to bring up this matter on the occasion of general or provincial chapters and during courses of updating and permanent formation. Future presbyters too should at least consider the possibility of preparing themselves to exercise their ministry or part of it among migrants (84).”

Sing to the Lord, sing intelligently – Psalm 46

Some personal Reflections on the Prayer of the Church

Con Curtin CM

Introduction

I am now 91 years of age and have been praying the divine Office since I was ordained a sub-deacon almost seventy years ago. What has challenged me is the problem: how well do I say the Office? With devotion? It can often be a rushed and very distracted effort. I was surprised when a friend of mine once said to me *I don't say the Office. I don't care for it.*

How can I really pray the Office? There are times when we are preoccupied with many practical problems and our minds are faraway from the psalms. How can I prevent praying the Office from becoming meaningless gibberish?

We want to pray the Office well for three reasons:

- a. it is the prayer of the 'whole Christ' and an important part of our work.
- b. it occupies such a large part of our lives.
- c. it give directs glory to God.

The two aims of the Divine Office are the worship of God and the sanctification of people. There is the danger of adopting the attitude of treating the Office as 'something to be got through' – and said without any real devotion. I may want to rush through it to get on with my real work but the Office is part of my *real* work.

With the reform of the Liturgy by the Second Vatican Council, it was felt that the old Office was too burdensome, especially for priests and others. So the Office was shortened and made simpler.

The Church today invites the whole Church – the laity included – to pray the Office. Nevertheless we priests and Religious are especially delegated to pray the Office for the Church. The people are aware of this. How often are we asked for our prayers? For example "Pray for my

mother who is ill, for my son who is doing his final exams” etc. We are the official delegates of the people to pray before God for the People. Some saint has said “It is often more profitable to speak to God about sinners than to speak to sinners about God.”

The Special Power of the Divine Office

As already remarked the Office is the prayer of “the whole Christ.” It has been said that ‘*When the priest takes up the breviary, God must listen.*’ To quote a Latin dictum “*Vox psalmi est vox totius Christi.*” One could compare it to the a public address system in a stadium such as Wembley or Parkhead...

We pray the Office with Christ. It is Christ who intercedes for us with he Father. Together with Christ, our Head, we – priests monks, religious and laity join the great chorus of praise to God our Father. That is why the Office is such a powerful prayer.

St. Alphonsus states the “the priest who prays the Office well draws down rivers of grace on himself and on his parish.”

A single prayer of the breviary can be worth a hundred private prayers. Blessed Columba Marmion remarks that the Divine Office gives direct glory to God, while other works do so indirectly. Other works give indirect glory to God. Hence St. Benedict states: *No work is to be put before the worship of God.*

Special difficulties

There is of course a psychological difficulty in praying the psalms. My sentiments may not be attuned to the sentiments of the psalm . Our moods are constantly changing, and the sentiments too of the psalmist change according to the circumstances of his culture and time.

An instrumentalist in an orchestra will submerge his or her sentiments to the harmony of the whole. So we submerge our own sentiments to those of the psalmist.

Before praying the psalms we need to recollect ourselves. The practice among monks is to assemble outside their church in their cloister to recollect themselves as a body. It is know as the ‘statio.’

Some helps

Besides studying the individual psalms it is necessary to be acquainted with the whole Bible. The psalms refer to the great themes of the Bible. Without knowledge of the background of the *whole* Bible we cannot understand the psalms. So to pray in the right liturgical spirit, one must have acquired a deep familiarity with the whole of Scripture.

In praying the psalms we must unite with Christ in his prayer to the Father. That is the tradition of the Church. We can unite with Christ in

all his experiences, – now being pursued and persecuted by his enemies, now rejoicing with his Father. *Whatever was written of me in the law, the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.* (Luke 24:25-27)

The question may be asked “Can we apply the psalms to New Testament themes? Is it doing violence to the meaning of the psalms?” No! We have a fuller idea of the true meaning of the psalms than the people who lived in Old Testament times. For example we can apply the Passover to the Passion and death of Christ, the covenant to the new covenant, the Law to the new Law of Christ, Mount Sion to the Church, the Temple to the Temple of Christ’s body, the Chosen People to the Christian People, David to Christ who is the true David.

An example might help. If we visited the native place of Blessed Pope John XXIII – *Sotto il Monte* and we inspected the baptismal register. We would read just the name of a little boy infant, Angelo Roncalli. We now know who he was and the great Pope he became.

Another help is to read the short rubrics that are at the head of each psalm in the book of the Divine Office. It is good, too, to have an intention when we pray the psalms, and to pray them slowly without undue haste.

The Psalms – the most beautiful of prayers

The psalms are perennial prayers. The whole range of human sentiment and emotion are expressed in the psalms. The confidence we are encouraged to have in God finds expression *The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want.* The human longing for God finds voice in “*As the hart panteth for living water, so does my soul long for Thee, my God.* And confidence – *Like a child on his mother’s breast.*

And what of the ‘cursing psalms’? They must be read as the expression of a primitive people’s awareness of God’s displeasure with disrespect being shown to God’s law.

A final help can be found in the Introduction to the meaning and importance of Prayer of the Church which is to be found in the opening pages of the First volume of the Prayer of the Church. It is well worth reading again and again.

The fourth and final part of the Universal Catechism of the Church as well as the Vatican Council’s document on the Liturgy also contain a wealth of theology that is a clear expression of the meaning of all Christian prayer but particularly the prayer of the Eucharist and of the Divine Office.

Let us pray to follow the advice of the psalmist *Sing to the Lord, sing intelligently.* – Psalm 46.

Homily on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of Ordination to priesthood of

Fr Hugh McMahon CM

given on Easter Sunday 2008
in Sacred Heart Church, Mill Hill

Fergus Kelly CM

In our Gospel reading this morning, we read of that first Easter morning. The disciples were frightened – would they be crucified too? They were hiding – keeping their heads down. They did not want to be arrested and tortured and beaten. Maybe some of them were saying things like “Why, oh why did I follow Jesus – look at the fine mess I’m in now.” The future was bleak – no Jesus now – no parties – no parades – no nothing – just running for cover and hoping that after a few weeks or months, things would quieten down and they could get back to the humdrum of making a little living, fishing or farming, or money changing, or looking after the kids.

And then – and then – Mary the Magdalene bursts into the room shouting and screaming: “The Lord is gone – the tomb is empty.” “Run Peter, run – “ and he runs and John runs and maybe the word spread and they all started to run – still maybe keeping their heads down. The bunch of frightened amateurs is running, puffing, and panting. They are gob smacked – the tomb is indeed empty – the body is gone – the sun is rising in the morning sky and what’s that – “the sun is rising...” Slowly, but surely, it begins to dawn on them that what Jesus had told them months before was true: “The Son of God will rise from the dead.”

This is a great day. “This is the day that the Lord has made. We rejoice and are glad.” Yesterday to the day, Fr Hugh McMahon was ordained a priest of God 50 years ago.

At his ordination ceremony in Dublin on 22nd March 1958, Hugh McMahon and the other young men who were ordained with him, lay face down on the ground for some minutes. This was to symbolise their unworthiness and their total dependence on God. They were invited to stand erect and eventually to take their place at the altar of God and celebrate their first Mass.

Hugh McMahon took promises that day and one of those promises was that he would serve God’s people faithfully, for the rest of his life.

That he has done.

From the Antrim Road in Belfast, where he grew up, Hugh McMahon began his training for the priesthood in Dublin and completed it in Arklow, Co Wicklow. As a priest, he has served God in Dublin, Sheffield, Dunstable, Warrington, and Goodmayes and for many years, here in our Mill Hill houses. He has preached the Gospel in parish missions all over these islands. He has anointed the sick, performed marriages, heard confessions, baptised and received new brothers and sisters into the church. However, most of all he has celebrated Mass. His love of the Mass is well known in our community and when he has been ill; his greatest joy has been to receive the body of Christ in Holy Communion.

Fr Hugh, as we all know, is a “people person”. He is a mine of information about people – their parents, their children, their hobbies – he can even tell you the name of their cat or dog, if they have one.

He is a man of compassion, and one of my own most moving memories is seeing Fr Hugh, many years ago, talking with patients with mental problems in Goodmayes hospital – kind, caring, gentle, humorous – a true son of St Vincent de Paul.

It was not easy for those early disciples. The rising of Jesus from the dead was a joke for the pagans and an obstacle for the Jews. How could they believe such nonsense? Give us a break! However, the disciples did not give up. They went from place to place saying, and sometimes shouting repeatedly: “Christ has died – Christ is risen – Christ will come again.” “Gather around – listen. It is true - Christ has died – Christ is risen – Christ will come again.” Some people just laughed, some others tried to shout them down and some others decided that the only way to shut them up was to kill them. And for many of the early disciples that is what happened – they were killed.

It is easy to be a priest. It is not easy to be a good priest – it was not in 1958 and it is not now. Some people will praise you, but others will treat you as a joke – a kind of *Fr Ted* – funny, harmless, and totally irrelevant. However, the good priest, like the good early disciples, will never give up. He will preach the word of God in season and out of season. The good priest is a happy man – a man who can laugh and cry. He can laugh at the great fun we have in life and cry at the pain, which we sometimes inflict on each other.

The Belfast boy, Hugh McMahon is a good priest. He is not a saint – canonisation may come later! He loves being a priest and I know that his greatest desire would be to see a boy from this parish giving his life to God as a priest – maybe a Vincentian priest – to see a girl giving her life to God as a religious sister – maybe as a Daughter of Charity of St Vincent de Paul.

Fr Hugh McMahon loves everyone in this parish. He loves his Vincentian community; he loves his family and his native land. He has a special love and devotion to Mary the Mother of God. But most of all, and above all else, he loves the God he has served so faithfully as a priest for the past 50 years.

May the good Lord give him many more years in the vineyard of the Lord.

Ad multos annos!

Obituary

Father John Doyle CM

John entered St Joseph's in 1944, and I followed in 1946. He had two years over me in seniority and two inches over me in height. He was the tallest confrere in my time, and it seems to have been a sensitive point with him. Perhaps he had been teased about it at school. A common form of lightly teasing a tall boy was to enquire "Is it cold up there?". In May of 1950, coming to the end of the first year of Glenart, the students were up in Clonliffe for the various orders. They came out to The Rock for lunch, and were greeted in front of the house by Fr Johnnie O'Connell, the superior. I happened to be near by when Johnnie asked John if he was up for minor orders. The Dublin ears were obviously not tuned to the Cork lilt, and I distinctly heard John answer "Six foot two, Father". Incidents like that remain in my memory, and clearly in the memories of others as well, but while they are characteristic of John they do not define him.

He was from Phibsboro and had been an altar boy in St Peter's, and was proud of his provenance. He was educated by the Christian Brothers at St Vincent's, Glasnevin.

As he was two years ahead of me we were not together in the seminaire, but we had one year together in St Joseph's before he moved on to Glenart, and it was really not until we were together as students there that I got to know him well.

A lasting memory is of John assisting in the laborious process of producing *Evangelizare* twice a year on the Gestetner duplicating machine. He did a lot of the "art and graphic design" element of the magazine, cutting into the wax sheet stencil with a stylus. A cousin of his told me once that John's father had been a very skilled architect, so perhaps heredity was coming out in the *Evangelizare* office. I used to be amazed to see that as his hand approached the wax sheet it had "the shakes", but as soon as the stylus touched the sheet his hand was absolutely steady. Perhaps that could be interpreted as a sort of parable of his life. He tended to be apprehensive in the lead-up to something, but once into it the trepidation seems often to have disappeared.

Our director in Glenart at the time was Joe Cullen, an enthusiastic bridge player. In the isolation of Glenart in August he used to long for a game, and enquired if any students knew how to play. John was one such, and made up a four with Joe many times. I believe he continued his interest in the game all through his life.

He did an honours degree in History and Latin, and after ordination went on to get an MA in history. He did not write a thesis in the ordinary sense, but edited the Letter Book of the Confederation of Kilkenny. I am not aware, and this could be sheer nescience on my part, of his ever having contributed to any historical journal. His only contributions to *Colloque* were his obituaries on Frank Maher and his brother Gerald. He wrote a short story for *Evangelizare*, which was set in France. This setting was an odd choice as he had never been there and had not done French at school. In spite of his interest in history he did not venture on to the continent for very many years; perhaps the apprehension and trepidation elements were in play. As far as I know, he never tackled any foreign language. But it was not surprising that he chose to write a short story, for he was an avid reader of fiction, particularly detective fiction. I remember being amazed at how much of it he got through, and how quickly. He also seemed to know quite a lot about the authors. Another genre of fiction in which he was interested was ghost stories, and I think he used to make up and tell some to the boys in free classes. I wonder what his own reaction would have been had he ever encountered a spectre!

I phoned my brother Brian, who had been in John's classes, to ask how the boys rated John. His response was immediate and spontaneous: "Fantastic. We thought him great". John had had experience of how a Christian Brother ruled a class, and he would not tolerate any messing in class. "Messing" was an indefinable misdemeanour, but well understood by a prefect of studies or dean. If a boy was veering towards the frontier of "going too far" John would point a minatory finger at him and say "One more crack like that out of you...", with the final syllable prolonged. The boys picked up on expressions like that, or the introductory formula "Listen here till I tell you...", which I often heard him use at table or in the community room.

There was a short period in Castleknock when boys from different years wrote and produced stage sketches, and John was in some way in overall charge. On one occasion, about ten minutes before the curtain went up, Michael Walsh, the president, said to John "I hope there are no references to the confreres in these things". John was flabbergasted, and when recounting the interlude later put his hand over his face and uttered a favourite expletive "Crimers!", the etymology of which I have never traced. His problem was, of course, that many of the sketches relied heavily for the laughs on references to the Vins, but John gambled, correctly, on the probability that the president would not get many of the cracks.

After he was moved to Strawberry Hill, to teach history, I had very little contact with him, and by the time I was appointed there John had

moved on again. He had two superiorships which anecdotal lore would seem to suggest were not the happiest of times.

In his final years, back in Castleknock, I met him many times. In March 1990 the first section of the M50 was opened, and on the day before the official opening the new West Link bridge over the Liffey was open to pedestrians. I went for a walk with John across the new bridge, and we reminisced about previous walks together from The Rock and Glenart forty years previously.

Tom Davitt CM

JOHN FRANCIS DOYLE CM

Date of Birth: 6th October 1926
 Entered the CM: 7th August 1944
 Final Vows: 8th September 1946
 Ordained Priest: 25th May 1952 in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe by
 Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin.

Appointments:

1952-1966	St Vincent's College, Castleknock
1966-1973	St Mary's, Strawberry Hill
1973-1976	St Patrick's, Armagh – President
1976-1985	St Patrick's, Drumcondra – President
1985-2006	St Vincent's College, Castleknock

Died: 7th May 2006
 Buried: Glasnevin