

## EDITOR'S PREFACE

**T**he President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, Archbishop Socrates B. Villegas, issued a circular letter advising his fellow bishops to urge their congregations to go back to the practice of kneeling from the Consecration to the Great Amen of the Eucharistic Prayer. The letter elicited mixed reactions not only from the bishops but also from those who got to know about it; some bishops implemented it in their dioceses, others did not. The Liturgy Directors of Metro Manila, with some professors of the Graduate School of Liturgy of San Beda College, opted to retain the *status quo* of standing in this part of the Mass and wrote to the CBCP to explain their position on the matter. Who is right?

**Leo-Martin Angelo R. Ocampo** (*"Astare coram te et tibi ministrare: On Standing after the Consecration to the Doxology of the Eucharistic Prayer"*) argues that standing in this part of the liturgy is in fact the established rubric of the Roman Rite since 1969 and has remained in force in the Philippines. He also explains why "[f]rom the side of history and theology, [standing] has been the ancient and constant practice of the Church, and to make a return to 'established practice' is to remain standing and perhaps rediscover its rich significance" (28–29). Moreover, from a pastoral viewpoint, such a posture is more conducive to active participation in the liturgy.

**Enrico C. Eusebio, Jr., S.J.** (“The Restoration of the Catechumenate: Some Voices from the Peripheries in the Redaction of *Ad Gentes* 14”) retraces the evolution of the Second Vatican Council’s decree that restored the catechumenate and the discussions that took place at various stages in its drafting. He notes that its restoration was necessitated by the missionary thrust of the Church in *Ad Gentes*. His investigation shows that

the Fathers of Vatican II wanted to demonstrate three things regarding Christian formation: that Christians are born into the communion of the Church; that their faith-life is guided towards maturity ... within the Christian community through an inculturated itinerary of faith called catechesis; and that evangelized ... through catechesis (CT 18f) with the use of Sacred Scripture, tradition, the liturgy, magisterium, and the life of the Church (CD 14), they are sent forth in turn to the world as evangelizers. (68)

**James H. Kroeger, M.M.** (“The Cebu International Eucharistic Congress: Its Missionary Challenges”) discusses five mission themes in the basic theological text of the 51<sup>st</sup> International Eucharistic Congress in Cebu. These are: 1) dialogue as the privileged mode of mission—this particular approach to mission is necessary because of the multiracial, multi-religious, and multicultural reality of Asia; 2) mission in dialogue with peoples and cultures—the Christian faith must take root in the various cultures of the people in Asia; 3) mission in dialogue with religions and religious traditions—even as the Church tries to keep the Christian faith strong, she also seeks to understand the life, tenets, and rituals of other religions “in order to engage them in a mutually enriching and respectful encounter” (77); 4) mission in dialogue with the poor—the Church must increasingly be “the Church of the Poor” with its implications for living a simple life and for liberating and alleviating the poor from unjust situations and structures; and 5) mission in dialogue with the youth—with 60% of the world’s youth in Asia, the Church’s mission needs to focus on the pastoral care of young people.

**Joseph B. Johnson** (“Lay Preaching at Eucharistic Liturgies: The Law and Its Critiques”) discusses the law presently in force on lay preaching at Eucharistic liturgies. First, he examines the 1917 Code of Canon Law and other pertinent legislations, including the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and post-conciliar documents on liturgical reform. He then investigates the 1983 Code of Canon Law provisions together with dicasterial documents and particular legislations enacted by the national conferences of bishops in the Philippines and the United States. After expounding on the prevailing law, Johnson presents the “nominal” and “functional” objections raised by some canonists. These objections are found deficient on theological grounds—since the Eucharistic liturgy is an official act of worship by the Church, “it is carried out ... by persons legitimately designated and through acts approved by the authority of the Church” (canon 834, §2). This means the homily at Mass can only be given by a person capacitated by sacred ordination to preach in the name of the Church. Such theological rationale, however, raises questions regarding the principle of equality articulated in canon 208: “... there exists among all the Christian faithful a true equality regarding dignity and action by which they all cooperate in the building up of the Body of Christ according to each one’s own condition and function.” When status rather than competence determines who can give the homily, how does that serve the purpose of building up the Church?

**Reginald Alva, S.V.D.** (“Mercy and Christian Mission”) retraces the role of mercy in Jesus’ public ministry and reflects on the importance of this virtue in the Christian mission. He recounts many episodes in the Gospels which clearly show that Jesus’ life and ministry are permeated with acts of love and mercy. The mission of the Church is primarily to reveal the love and mercy of God—at the opening of the Second Vatican Council, St. John XXIII said: “Now the Bride of Christ wishes to use the medicine of mercy rather than taking up arms of severity ...” (MV 4). Pope Francis echoes a similar sentiment in *Misericordiae Vultus*:

The Spouse of Christ must pattern her behaviour after the Son of God who went out to everyone without exception. ... It is absolutely essential for the Church and for the credibility of her message that she herself live and testify to mercy. Her language and her gestures must transmit mercy, so as to touch the hearts of all people and inspire them once more to find the road that leads to the Father. (MV 12)

As a final point, Alva discusses the relationship between justice and mercy: “Mercy is not opposed to justice but rather expresses God’s way of reaching out to the sinner, offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert, and believe” (MV 21).

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