

**[D.] The Missionary Hope of Fr. Bertoni:
Hope for the Apostolic Mission for the Assistance of Bishops -
The Increase of the Church**

Presentation

[1] In a number of very difficult assignments, as well as being held back from his world-wide apostolic missionary dream by sickness and the events of his times, Fr. Bertoni maintained an unshakable hope until the end of his life. After 25 years of community life, he set to write the Constitutions of a community which was always small, but at the time of his writing was in “a state of decline.” Throughout, he kept alive his unquestioning trust in the Power of God’s Mercy:

“... When the time does come for the chosen minister to begin his work, he will use a strong charity, without weakness. He will no longer look to the effects of his efforts, whether his words are well or badly received. Rather, he will rivet his concentration on the order of God and to carry out his task, leaving the effect to God, he will speak strongly to hardened sinners and ministers of a merely human spirit, without any human fear to wake them up...” [cf. Mss B # 5533; Nello, II, p.242].

[2] There is some indication that he may have experienced some fear, or lack of self-confidence in his work, as we read:

“... I should not listen to the fears and excuses which nature might inspire to me. For it is in these that the enemies of my salvation and of my perfection would like to hold me back. I may have lost the right to be Your son, but You have not given up Your role as Father...” [cf. Mss B, # 2444; Nello II, pp. 629, ff.].

[3] Fr. Bertoni was deeply convinced that God would meet anyone more than half way, once He was assured of at least the effort to respond to His grace:

“... Instead of a severe, implacable God, I will find Him full of goodness and tenderness for me. I can make use of His own promises that He Himself will come to meet me, to assist me in the return that I am proposing to make to Him. He will grant to me a ready remission of sins and will cede infinitely above the satisfaction that is due. He will assist me with His ever new graces in all the efforts that I have to engage in to review my life, to sustain me to persevere. He will not be content merely to see me to return to a priestly way of life, but will dedicate Himself to lead me to perfection, so that it really does not depend on me to regain all alone what I have lost, but He will see to it that I join company with the more perfect..” [cf. Mss B # 2445; Nello, II, pp. 629, ff.].

[4] Something of Fr. Bertoni’s method of persuasion might be noted - he identifies himself with the priests sent to the seminary by the Bishop for a disciplinary renewal, in the hopes they might one day return to full ministry. Fr. Bertoni’s message was a firm one, but always full of hope:

“... In responding to His election of us, we have to count on His strength and not on our own...” [cf. Mss B # 3238; Nello, II, p. 707].

[5] Fr. Bertoni’s hope may be traced particularly in those areas in which he was inspired to manifest particular apostolic interest. The hope of the Apostolic Missionary may be seen in those “various and proper ministries” [cf. CE # 185] of the “arduous and difficult vocation” of “any ministry of the Word of God whatsoever”:

1. Hope for the Apostolic Missionary in the Preaching Ministry:

a. Preaching is indeed one of the basic and principal ministries toward which the Stigmatine Founder directed his community:

“... God will raise up individuals in the Church, illustrated by His Spirit. He will call preachers to correct, repair and eliminate the scandals, the disorders, the weaknesses in prelates...” [cf. Mss B # 5310].

b. He dreamed of a community whose abiding purpose [along with being founded to offer competent service to the bishops] - was that of serving as a witness to the Church. So, he thought of a community that could offer the example of the Apostolic Mission:

“... Through the Magisterium of the Church there is made known the divine will of sign, in all that pertains to the reprobation and destruction of a merely human spirit and also for that which pertains to the renewal or restoration of the divine spirit in His ministers...” [cf. MSS B # 5302].

c. The most convincing witness of all for the dedication of the Congregation to the Apostolic Mission of Preaching is the example of the Founder himself and the early community gathered around him. From his earliest years in the priesthood, and throughout the better part of his life, Fr. Bertoni excelled in his dedication to “the Ministry of the Word of God”, also under the form of preaching.

2. Hope for the Apostolic Missionary in the Assistance to the Clergy and those of Consecrated Life:

once again, it is the life that the Stigmatine Founder and his first followers lived personally - far more than their words - that shed the greater insight into this aspect of their Apostolic Mission

a. The Apostolic Missionary to the Clergy and Seminarians:

1.] Once he found himself at the head of a small community at the Stimmate, the charism progressively developed in dialogue. The group through the spirit alive among them, was dedicated, at the beck and call of the bishops, to the spiritual renewal of the diocesan clergy of Verona [cf. G. Ceresatto, CSS, Biography, p. 266].

2.] The early Stigmatines were invited by a line of bishops of Verona to assist them in diocesan renewal. Fr. Bertoni worked out a rather bold plan for helping priests in this direction. His idea for the reform of his priestly ministry was as

providential as it was daring. His ideas were thoroughly agreed to by those who had chosen to follow him, a lived expression of his saying that a united force is always stronger! [*virtus unita fortior* !]. These first followers of his: priests, brothers and seminarians - had also joined him to share in his challenging life of holiness [cf. Nello II, pp. 228, ff.].

3.] The bishop entrusted to Fr. Bertoni's spiritual direction those priests who had been assigned to the local seminary for their spiritual renewal, in the difficult times after the fall of Napoleon. From his sermons of those days that have come down to us, we see him still as a relatively young priest preaching to men many years his senior in age and experience in the priesthood. There is at times evident a nervousness, yet with all - a forthrightness and courage. His apostolic heart and hours of prayer inspired him with the more suitable expressions to shake his listeners from their apathy and lethargy, but not to discourage them. His plan of procedure seemed to have been a very frank review of the situation of their priesthood, in the hopes of moving them to seek the healing power of God's grace and a return to the priestly way of life. [cf. Nello, II, p. 626].

4.] For the Diocese of Verona, long the "buffer zone" between the two great powers of the time, France and Austria, these were particularly difficult times for its spiritual life. A good number of religious orders had been suppressed and its members either exiled or sent out of their communities. The state of the diocesan clergy left much to be desired at the time, and the general situation of the diocese was rather disheartening.

5.] A series of Benedictine Bishops was sent to the Diocese, with the express mandate of healing old wounds, repairing the damage, and renewing the Diocese. It is in this context that Fr. Bertoni was called by the Bishop to take over the spiritual care of the seminary. This included the few seminarians studying there, as well as those priests who were sent there by their new Bishop in accord with the canonical discipline in vogue at the time. [cf. Nello 1975, pp. 122, ff.].

6.] Some reflection of these times has found its way also into the personal spiritual diary of Fr. Bertoni. He wrote under the date of May 24, 1810:

... [A text from St. Thomas of Villanova, then these words:] ...Let us pray for our civil leaders so that the Lord might inspire them with words of peace for His people (cf. Ps 85), and may He inspire peace among them. May He also inspire our Shepherds who are working for the reform of the Church - because, as you see, all is now in ruins. And if there is not a reform forthcoming, then there is no hope for a better state..."

[Thus, Fr. Bertoni became the "bishop's right hand man" in this effort of renewal of the diocesan clergy, at the age of 33 [cf. Nello, 1975, p. 126].

7.] It is quite possible that the attention of the Bishop was drawn to Fr. Bertoni also for the fact that even while he was still an assistant at his home parish of San Paolo in Campo Marzio, he already began organizing meetings with priests in his own home. They would gather evenings for theological discussions, prayer and

friendship. This little group, perhaps not uncommon in the troubled Europe of the times, had as its purpose a deepening of spiritual and cultural values. We have this testimony from an erudite scholar of the Church of Verona, Sommacompagna. It is also from these gatherings that initial steps toward the formation of a community of priests and religious may be noted. From the outset, it was clear that they would share common life together, in the hopes of serving both the local and the universal Church for its renewal and increase, through a truly competent, docile group of Apostolic Missionaries.

b. The Apostolic Missionary for those of the Consecrated Life

1.] In more recent times, Pope Paul VI [in: *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of 1975] has stated that the first ministry of religious is their “**witness**.” Fr. Bertoni’s own life has been described as his being “An Angel of Counsel” especially for those engaged informing new religious communities as part of the Church renewal. Also because of the thrust given by the Bishops, a number of new religious communities came into being with the express purpose of keeping alive, of institutionalizing the reforms that were so sorely needed. The interest that Fr. Bertoni showed in other communities was so great that this even became a question in his own process of Beatification: how is it that he gave so much attention to other communities, and apparently so little to his own? The response is that his ideal was clear, evident in his own daily life in the community and in the Constitutions he wrote for it in the last years of life. In his early sermons, he offered the Sacred Stigmata as an object of contemplation for “faithful souls”.

2.] In his early sermons, he also meant this ideal for the laity of his home parish listening to his sermons. In some way, however, these sermons do offer much insight into his interests for the whole Church and also for those who follow the consecrated way of life:

“... Christ has entered into His Reign with the scars of His Wounds. ‘This is the price that I have paid for this Kingdom’, He tells us, ‘and it cannot be had for any less!’ [cf. his Sermon on “The Passion”, already cited under the section of Fr. Bertoni’s Christology. In: PVC, p. 272].

3.] Fr. Bertoni personally had a sublime idea of people consecrated to God. In the common symbolism of the times [as well as our own [cf. Can. 607, § 1] he thought of religious in nuptial terms, using a text from St. Paul, a kind of “test” of union with God:

“... To what beauty could I ever compare a soul whom God has endowed to make of it, His Spouse? I simply do not have the colors to paint such a portrait. I will only say this, filled with the same wonder of the Apostle himself, that whoever is united to God with such an intimate adherence, becomes through a loving transformation, one and the same spirit with Him (cf. 1 Co 6:17)”.

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3. **The Apostolic Missionary to the Youth**

a. In the aftermath of what might be thought of as a “world war”, as is usual, those who suffered the most were the poor, the innocent and the defenseless. Already in his early years as a priest, Fr. Bertoni was assigned by his superior, in this case, his first Pastor - Fr. Louis Girardi - to be the Apostle of Youth. This added still another facet to his gradually developing charism as a Founder of a religious community. We are told the specific incident: it was a First Communion day in the Parish and the Pastor gave him the responsibility of its youth. Fr. Bertoni began gathering them in the confines of the parish grounds, but gradually shifted the meetings also to his own home. The little group was placed under the protection of Mary, the most Holy Virgin. This initial foundation eventually came to be the Marian Oratories, and the Stigmatine Founder was the first to bring the idea into the Diocese [cf. *Memorie intorno ai Padri e Fratelli* , p. 18]. Even these would be suppressed in the hard days following the war. It is to Fr. Giacobbe that we owe this information from the early years of Fr. Bertoni’s priesthood.

b. One of the characteristics of the Stigmatine Founder’s Original Constitutions is the fact that while there is very little codification of the other central apostolates of the Congregation, such as: retreats, or parish missions; any specifics regarding these, or concerning the care of religious and seminarians - there are relatively abundant references to the care of youth. The following are a few of the Original Constitutions composed by the Stigmatine Founder, dedicated to the care of the youth:

“Each confrere will be committed, according to his capacity, and keeping in mind the circumstances of places and times, to the explanation of Christian Doctrine to the youth, and the uneducated.” [CF # 37].

”Without omitting any particular studies of those matters which the confreres might excel the more, or which are the more - gradually the young confreres will be exercised in preaching in our Churches, in catechizing the young and the other uneducated individuals, in hearing the confessions of the young men and children” [CF # 72].

”The Christian education of children and young men, and of other uneducated persons, is to be promoted with every effort through the Oratories, with the teaching of Catechism, and also even with private instructions” [CF # 164].

“The special occupations of the Professed Fathers are the following: it is their duty not only to teach the truths necessary, or useful for the obtaining of eternal life with preaching, retreats, lectures - but also by explaining the first elements of faith and morals, especially to the young, and uneducated persons, through the Oratories and in public and private catechism lessons. This, too, is of supreme use to the Church; therefore, it is to be supremely recommended” [CF # 182]

“To hear confessions of all classes of people, but especially of the poor and the youth, and to encourage the due frequency of the Sacraments...” [CF # 183].

c. There is much insistence here even on private conversations and lessons to the poor, to the uneducated, to the youth. These 'lowly' tasks are presented by the Founder as pertaining to the very heart of his charism.

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CONCLUSION

[1] Hope and Growth

a. Here we might apply Fr. Bertoni's principle of the possibility of limitless development, provided no obstacle is placed in God's way:

"... Jesus once said to a Saint: if only I could find individuals who would give themselves to Me without reserve, all that you read in the lives of saints as having been accomplished in them by Me, I would do the same with these and I would furthermore contribute to miracles being accomplished. My hand in no way has been shortened! (cf. Is 59:1). I am still the Same...!" [cf. Mss B # 2463].

This idea is in full harmony with the Ignatian principle that God would do great things in the lives of believers, if only they would not put obstacles in His way in what He would really want to accomplish [cf. Nello, II, p. 144].

b. As has already been noted above, this Ignatian principle is a fundamental point in Fr. Bertoni's personal life and in his preaching:

"... How very few are they who really understand what God would do with them if He were not impeded by them in His plan ..."

[Another variation:]

"... We cannot even think what God would do with us, and how much He would accomplish in us, who are the pupils of His eyes, if we did not place obstacles in the way of His grace, but if only we would commit ourselves freely and totally into His hands..." [cf. Mss B # 5480; Nello, 1975, p.232].

c. This principle is found on the lips of Fr. Bertoni in all kinds of situations: in his words to others, as well as in his own examination of conscience:

- in his own Spiritual Diary [cf. Dec. 2, 1808; May 18, 1811];
- in his Retreat to priests [cf. Mss B ## 2180; 2463; 4047];
- in his Letters of Spiritual Direction [cf. Ep, pp. 61; 66; 68];
- in a letter to Fr. Briaghi [Feb. 19, 1832].

[2] Hope and Joy

a. Despite all his afflictions and personal defeats, it can be said that Fr. Bertoni was a very hope-filled and even joyful person. The theme of joy is a frequent one, flowing as it does from his hope and charity:

"... This is true happiness, true joy, in recognizing God as one's Master, in serving Him with fidelity, in living together with God. This sentence is found in the Scriptures...

And if those who hope to be the heirs of much money, of a rich inheritance, or to come into the possession of a principdom - are so happy in the prospects of their inheritance: how much greater should not the real joy be of a believer who waits with a firmly founded confidence, for the inheritance of an eternal realm, a heavenly reign! If, in the meantime, such an individual should raise his eyes to heaven, and if Faith should show him the other honors, the extraordinary wealth, the most pure delights of that happy homeland, then Hope would immediately respond deep within his heart: and these goods are all for me, indeed they are mine! What comfort this brings! What exultation!..." [cf. Sermon 22, 1804, in "PVC, pp. 17; 19].

[3] Hope and Perseverance

a. The connection between these two Christian values is found explicitly in St. Paul:

"... These sufferings bring patience, as we know, and patience brings perseverance, and perseverance brings hope, and this hope is not deceptive because of the love of God that has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us..." [cf. Rm 5:5, ff.].

b. For Fr. Bertoni, the theme of perseverance was an important one, a key means for the Imitation of Christ:

"... The lack of perseverance is that of never bringing to a conclusion the good that has been begun. Each one should flee such a vice even more than death, for the simple reason that even though death does deprive a man of the present life, nonetheless, for the just, it is merely the end of tribulation: 'The virtuous man, though he die before his time, will find rest!' (cf. Ws 4:7).

"But, the lack of perseverance deprives a man of the crown of eternal life, because only to those who persevere in the good they have undertaken until death, is eternal life due ...: 'the man who stands firm to the end, will be saved!' (cf. Mt 10:22)..."

c. As throughout his own entire spiritual journey, the figure of Jesus Christ in Fr. Bertoni's daily 'experience' of Him, remains the ultimate motive for it all:

"... For this reason, Christ our Teacher by disregarding all offered honor, accepted instead all confusion... (cf. Heb 12:1-3)..." [cf. Mss B # 4488].

d. The example of Jesus on His cross is the real model for the believer struggling with perseverance:

"... He never chose to come down off the Cross, but willed to die there, rather than failing in any way in the work of our redemption which He had undertaken (cf. Mt 27:42, ff.). This was also to show us how displeasing is the lack of perseverance, the ruin of all good work..." [cf. Mss B 4489].

e. Fr. Bertoni saw God as the promised “Emmanuel”, our true Companion on the Pilgrimage of Life:

“...Along the pathway of virtue, God is always with us. God not only is content in showing you the route, but He also offers Himself to lead you by it: ‘I will lead you by the path of justice!’. Reflect well on this, because in such a way I respond to those fears that disturb you deeply. Nonetheless, the sheer number of them may even have you fail in your resolutions.

“No matter how long is the journey that you still have to go, and even though the struggle to stay on it will never end, and the fact that all along this way, real dangers have to be met, and powerful enemies rise up in one’s way, and the fact that real traps are set in one’s path - yet, with all this, if the Lord is with you, of whom can you be afraid? If the Lord is right there, along-side you at all times, how can you be discouraged? How can you be afraid of failing? (cf. Ps 16:8). And if it is true that He is in your midst, and if He Himself takes up arms to struggle against your adversaries, how can they ever make you afraid? (cf. Dt 7:21). And finally, if it is true that He watches over you and guides your every step, and will free your feet from any trap they may wander into, how can you not make progress? (cf. Pr 3:26).

“The Psalmist prays: ‘May Your good Spirit guide me to level ground!’ (cf. Ps 143:10). What greater security can you have?...” [cf. Sermon 17, “Perseverance”, April 11, 1803, in: PVC, pp. 116, ff.].

As in his Christology, so also in his Hope, St. Gaspar Bertoni’s deep inspiration was the Cross, the Glorious Stigmata, the “source” of the Apostolic Mission [cf. J 20:21, ff.] and the Resurrection of the Lord. Before anyone can be found worthy of this, he reasoned, all are called to prior “resurrections” in God’s grace. The following, to conclude this section on the Stigmatine Founder’s Hope, is one of his early sermons as a young priest, on an Easter Sunday morning:

“... Now, though, that we are once more in this Easter risen in grace and dead to sin, how could we ever want to abuse such mercy? How could we not want to employ every possible means to persevere? ... It is just right, my listeners, that you should use all manner of means to persevere with every diligence in your holy resolutions, and to strive in a lively manner towards Heaven, without returning your gaze toward this earth. If you have indeed risen with Christ, then seek those things which are above earth, where Christ is indeed sitting at the right hand of God. Seek out the heavenly things, and not those of this earth (cf. Col 3:1)...” [cf. Sermon 38, “Holy Easter: The Spiritual Life”, in: PVC, pp. 294-297].

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PART THREE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

[A.] The Old Testament: Ps 131 [Total Abandonment into the “Arms” of God]

[cf. Louis Jacquet, *Les Psaumes et le coeur de l'homme. Etude textuelle, litteraire et doctrinale.*
Belgique: Ducuolot 1979, Vol III, pp. 510-523, passim]

Text:

“Yahweh, my heart has no lofty ambitions, my eyes do not look too high. I am not concerned with great affairs, or marvels beyond my scope.

“Enough for me to keep my soul tranquil and quiet, like a child in its mother’s arms, as content as a child that has been weaned.

“Israel: rely on Yahweh, now and for always!”

[The **JB** note: The soul at peace abandons itself to God, laying aside anxiety and ambition. The same child-like trust is demanded [cf. v. 3] of the People of God.

Introduction:

[1] This Ps 131 is one of the shortest in the entire collection, the 12th of the Psalms of Ascents, takes up again the discreetly didactic theme as was found in Pss 123; 125; 127 & 128. That which it strives to do, however, is not so much to insinuate, for the instruction of the Pilgrims a practical directive for the moral and religious life of the way-farer - but, rather to determine the mentality’ according to which the faithful should respond to Yahweh and how to act in His regard all through life. This Psalm wishes to remind them of that “spirit”, “mysticism”, to respond in every occurrence to the demands of the Mosaic-Davidic Covenant - this is its object and scope - not just during the annual pilgrimage. This is the “every-day” spirituality for the soul of Israel.

[2] For this Psalmist, the fervent Israelite would never - without denying his divine vocation, hand himself over in the manner of non-believers, to good as well as in bad fortune, to restless and passionate calculations, from which one awaits a betterment, or a change of situation -nor, should the Israelite cultivate that attitude for the overly enthusiastic aspirations of a patriotism that is by far too human.

[3] It is rather necessary for the faithful, instructed by passed reverses they have suffered, to give up restless “activity”, or frantic “re-acting”, striving ever more tenaciously to do over one’s existence. This Psalm bespeaks an opening of oneself to God, in a limitless confident **Holy Abandonment**. The Soul of ancient Israel had as its ideal as expressed in this Psalm to hand oneself over in all things, in calm serenity of soul, to the One Who has constituted Himself, in heaven, the Purveyor of His faithful. This is the condition of **spiritual poverty**, which Yahweh demands of all his faithful followers.

[4] What is true as the ideal in the individual sphere, on the personal plane, is also true on the collective level - for the entire Israelite community in its totality, for the nation itself. This Holy Abandonment, Spiritual Poverty, needs to be taught to the pious Pilgrims as models of Israelite behavior.

[5] The “Liturgical Character” of the Poem - and this is readily noticeable - results here from an adaptation - even if v. 3 might be a Levitical addition. There seems to be little doubt that originally this Psalm transmitted **the spiritual experience of some individual** - and more precisely one of Israel’s “Greats” - who, after having sought out and experienced great joy and pride, and perhaps other delights, finds him/herself one day cured from some terrible ordeal, or perhaps some deception - or, without knowing why, to be under the effects of Grace. This seems to have been the experience of some person who would not try any more than this - a person who has come to **understand the irrefutable logical of Holy Abandonment.**

[6] Therefore, the Psalmist has been brought back from all illusions. He is far from turning this experience of the way of the Yahwist, into despair, or even discouragement. He has come to find out first by himself - and then by the instruction of others, to take refuge, resignation in a virtuous silence. Here, there awaits for him a spiritual rejoicing - and for his brothers and sisters, a deepening of the idea of that which is the authenticity of Israel, still being built up. This seems to be the poetical description of an authentic mystical experience.

[7] There is no other writing, perhaps, which surpasses this short poem that describes the core of **Spiritual Infancy**. The literary form, with its imagery - remaining all the while difficult to translate - has enjoyed across the ages its own enduring allure. Its underlying idea, without neglecting its sublimity, offers its own wonder and charm. This is a literary “jewel”, perhaps without equal in interiority, discretion and emotion.

[8] There is an enchantment here for the religious-minded person, of finding here presented and expressed in poetic manner, one of the most original sentiments of the Christian spirituality [cf. J. Steinmann]” **‘unless you become as children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven** [cf. Mt 18:3]. In his *Spiritual Exercises*, St. Ignatius of Loyola recommended a very special practice... where solitude is indispensable to discover communion with the Will of God, sought for in silence, and to find there the pathway of a full and free insertion into the world... This is immortalized in his Prayer, the *Suscipe* : All is Yours, let us say to God, dispose all in accord with Your Will. Give me Your love and Your Grace: this is enough for me! [# 234]. This is a Prayer formulated in accord with the concrete circumstances of a human life. [cf. Fr. Courel, “The Retreat according to the Spiritual Exercises”, in: *Christus* 1966, Jan. n. 49, pp. 35, 47].

[9] There have always been those who will proclaim that this is “the most beautiful Psalm in the Bible”. The TM, followed in part by the LXX, but not by the Targum - nor by the Jerusalem, or Syriac texts - accompanies here the indication of a dedication to: “Jesus, son of Joseph, the High Priest of the Return from Exile” [cf. Zc 3:1; 6:11]. This Psalm is attributed to David. One would like to believe that in its primitive tenor

[describing the spiritual experience of some individual], this Psalm conserves the echo of the humble sentiments, testified to by the High Priest, following the entry of the Ark into Jerusalem [cf. 2 S 6:10-12]. At different times, this is his recorded attitude [cf. 1 S 26:10-12; 2 S 18:5; 24:17]. While this specific historical attribution is extremely doubtful for most interpreters, there is hardly anyone who is not impressed by the beauty of the ideal presented here, and the general rhythm of the poem.

Exegetical Notes

1. **The Profession of Humility:** “Yahweh, my heart has no lofty ambitions, my eyes do not look too high. I am not concerned with great affairs, or marvels beyond my scope.”

a. The Psalmist professes not to nourish any sentiment of pride, of presumptuous self-sufficiency, or of the ambitious research of riches, thanks to which glory is acquired [cf. Ps 18:28; 101:5; Pr 6:17; 21:4; Mi 6:8]. He has no personal ambition, nor pretension in such a situation [cf. Ezk 31:5, 10,14; Jb 42:3]. The ascendant gradation of the text is to be noted: the total absence of pride in the heart [intelligence - desire - will] - then, in the exterior attitude, and finally in active efforts. This entire thought seems inspired by Is 2:11-17: “...human pride will lower its eyes, the arrogance of men will be humbled ... Yahweh alone will be exalted!”

b. Maimonides, citing Si 45:4, where it is said that Moses was chosen by God because of his **fidelity**, his **humility**, and comparing this text with Nb 12:3, which likewise celebrates his profound humility - points out that this “humility” pertains to that category of virtues whose perfection is not situated in some middle point of mediocrity. One is never too “humble” - anyone who is inflated with pride in his/her heart, really denied God [cf. his Book of Knowledge].

c. There is besides here the foundation of the theological virtue of **Hope**. The only authentic Hope is that which does not depend on us, the point of reference for which is humility, and not pride [cf. G. Marcel]. St. Thomas Aquinas [cf. II-II, q. 19, a. 12] and St. John of the Cross [cf. *Mount Carmel*, III, c. 6, 10, 14; *Dark Night*, XXI] also treat extensively of Spiritual Poverty as the foundation for Hope. The sole point of support of the religious believer on this earth ought to be the hope in celestial grace, chants the Christian Liturgy [cf. Collect of the 5th Sunday after Epiphany; the Prayer over the People, of Saturday, the 2nd week of Lent].

d. The over-all theme here allows it to be understood that in a few words there is conveyed the idea that the acts and the plans of this Psalmist [cf. Ps 1:1] have not always been sage and moderate in the past. Without any doubt, he has struggled too much and worked very hard - either to recover his earlier situation, that seems to have been particularly flourishing - or, to acquire such an important advantage before legitimately ameliorating his condition. Perhaps, if one takes into account the verb used in v. 1 c in the LXX translation, would avow that some lose their view in the clouds [cf.

Ob 4; 2 M 5:17; 7:34], because of having tried to look too high [*meteorizein*]. Some seem to have been tempted to living a life in the elevated areas of dreams. At any rate, one soon learns that life just does not bring what one might have earlier expected from it. One must then, change his/her tactics with Yahweh.

e. This Psalm seems to have in mind some major personality of Israel's history. One might usefully note these verses:

"...Now I am knocking down all that I have built, tearing up what I have planted ..." [cf. Jr 45: 4, ff.]. - "... for great though the power of the Lord is, He accepts the homage of the humble ... Do not try to understand things that are too difficult for you, or try to discover what is beyond your powers. Concentrate on what has been assigned to you. Do not meddle with matters that are beyond you; what you have been taught already exceeds the scope of the human mind. Many have been misled by their own presumptions, and wrong-headed opinions have warped their ideas..." [cf. Si 3:17-27].

f. St. John Chrysostom will note: humility is the vehicle of prayer [cf. PG 55, col. 130]. As a spiritual director, St. Augustine would state: For this exaltation of the abundance of graces, how this is to be feared, so that one would not take pride in the gift of God - but, would the more greatly serve humility, and do as it is written: the greater you are, the more humble should you act towards others, and before God you will find grace (cf. Si 3:20) [PL, col. 1708].

g. The NT Echo is:
"...My food is to do the will of the One Who sent Me, and to complete His work [cf. Jn 4:34].

"...Jesus, Who could see they were about to come and take Him by force and make Him king, escaped back to the hills by Himself.." [cf. Jn 6:15].

"... Not that I come for My own glory, there is Someone Who takes care of that and is the judge of it..." [cf. Jn 8:54].

Let us not lose sight of Jesus Who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection: for the sake of the joy which was still in the future, He endured the Cross, disregarding the shamefulness of it, and from now on, He has taken His place at the right hand of God's throne.." [cf. Heb 12:2].

"...The greatest among you must be your servant. Anyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and anyone who humbles himself, will be exalted..." [cf. Mt 23:11].

"...He has shown the might of His arm, He has routed the proud of heart. He has pulled down princes from their thrones, and exalted the lowly ..." [cf. Lk 1:51, f.].

"...Take yourselves, for instance, brothers, at the time when you were called: how many of you were wise in the ordinary sense of the word, how many were influential people, or came from noble families? No, it was to shame the wise that God chose what is weak by human reckoning; those whom the world thinks common and contemptible are the ones that God has chosen - those who are nothing at all to show up those who are everything. The human race has nothing to boast about to God..." [cf. 1 Co 1:26-29]

2. Profession of Abandonment to God [or, of "Poverty" in the Biblical sense of the word - cf. Ps 34]: "Enough for me to keep my soul tranquil and quiet like a child in its mother's arms, as content as a child that has been weaned.." [cf. also Is 30:15; Mt 18:3, par.; Is 66:12, ff.; Ho 11:4].

a. Instructed by experience and worked on by Grace, the Psalmist has even come to renounce any and all vindication in his condition of the most legitimate rights that he may have. At any rate, he has leveled off all the reactions of soul [cf. Is 28:25], simply refusing all reaction: and he has established himself in a climate of calm and interior silence [cf. Ps 37:7; 62:2], of waiting in peace [cf. Is 30:15]. This is a state apparently described by Raissa Maritain: He does not say anything to me, the dear Lord, but He receives me so strongly that I prefer these moments of silence to everything else in this world [cf. "Journal"]. As agitated as it was, the sea of the soul is calmed! Peguy has written poetically: The world is always at the 'opposite', says God - and in the 'contrary' sense. Happy is the one who would remain as an infant. And the one who is like an infant would retain that innocence of earlier times.

b. As spontaneous as the image of the "infant" might be, that of the weaned infant seems even more eloquent. The author declares that he has come to sever his soul from all its natural aspirations; so much so that it remains in him no more like the avid yearning for nourishment that he received from his mother who weaned him - and that image indicates all the avidity of which infants are capable. But, he is now like the infant who has already been weaned [cf. Ho 1:8; Is 28:9]. The image, then, seems here to be that of the Infant of 2, or 3 years [cf. Ps 8:3; cf. also 2 M 7:27; 2 Ch 31:16; Ex 2:9; 1 S 1:22-24; 1 K 11:19,f.]. After the weaning, the primitive instinct is calmed, and the infant abandons him/herself to the mother's care, to the sweetness of peaceful repose as an infant who does not desire any more. The weaned child is the subdued, contented child.

c. The soul is at peace, as would be an infant - the image of the child asleep on its mother's shoulder. This is reminiscent of some art depicting 'Our Lady of the Way', hurrying along with the Child at peace and asleep on her shoulder: the work of our redemption is underway.

d. Having come to understand that all things are really nothing, and that God is everything, the Psalmist has become the master of the appetites of his soul, and placing finally confidence in divine providence, he commits himself to it in everything. He has won this serenity of soul, which is a calming of the one who has learned to seek God in and for Himself, and not for the grandeurs which His favor might procure.

e. The image, in the acceptance that has just been described is found already in equivalent terms in the Prayer of the Poor of ancient Egypt to Amon [cf. A. Gelin, in *The Poor Whom Yahweh loves*]: 'You are Amon, the lord of the silent, who comes to the voice of the poor. I do not place my hope in the power of humans ... it is my lord who will be my defense. Two times happy, who reposes blessedly in the arms of Amon, he who takes care of the silent, who aids the poor, and gives breath to the one he animates...' One will find at Qumran also this expression: 'You are a Father for all your faithful sons; You have exulted over them as a mother over her infant...'

f. This image would also serve as the base for the entire spirituality of Edith Stein. There exists a state of repose in God, of total suspension of all activity of spirit,

in which one can no longer even formulate plans, nor make decisions, nor do anything; but where, having remitted the entire future to the Divine Will, one abandons him/herself entirely to his/her destiny. One has emptied human reason from all frantic research and excessively natural reflection in directing toward God **the simple regard of faith**. The rising up from this emptiness of plenitude, and enveloped by a sentiment of intimate security... a new life begins little by little to take one over. The person, thus giving of him/herself, obscurely proven, that St. Thomas assigns to the Gifts of the Holy Spirit. This line of thought can still be developed further.

g. Bergson, on his part, would recognize the well-founded goodness of this mystical state: the soul stops, then it allows itself to be taken, to be led forward. It does not perceive directly the Force that moves it, but it feels itself before an undefinable Presence. This is the mystical “repose”, if one would like to call it by that name. And it is in this that the philosopher would make use of a concept dear to the thinkers of India: The one who has the faith, according to the proposal of one of them, the one who has mastered and conquered the mental state and his senses, who has fixed his entire conscious being on the supreme reality, this one awaits and achieves knowledge; and having attained knowledge, he goes rapidly to the supreme peace [cf. *Bhagavad Gita*].

h. There is likewise this enthusiastic exclamation of St. Bernard: O Place of veritable repose, in which God does not appear any more as overwhelmed, or charged with preoccupations, but where He manifests His perfect and sweet benevolence! This view does not overwhelm, it charms; it does not awaken restlessness, it brings peace; it does not fatigue the spirit, it brings it repose. The tranquil God pacifies all - and considers them tranquil, this is what is meant to taste peace! [cf. Sermon 33 on Canticles].

i. Still it is good to emphasize that such peace, and lack of concern, have nothing to do with a disincarnate “Quietism”, permitting one to evade all responsibilities, slip away from commitments. The Hope that is based on one’s repose in the Lord is in no way a flight, or dismissal in regard to the demanding human condition, and from the real responsibilities imposed by this.

1.] All will have to answer the Creator’s question: Where is your brother/sister? Holy Abandonment includes the handing over of all things into the hands of a God, Who now takes charge of everything. The challenge is to be committed intensely, peacefully, to this real world, and the real human condition, and counting on the Lord who clarifies and assists. There is no attempt at any self-sufficient solution to the complex challenges of modern Church life. Abandonment will always ask for the integral accomplishment of the duties of one’s state in life, under the light and movement of God, in full docility of intelligence and soul, far from being a manner of mystical infantilism.

2.] Abandonment constitutes that which is the most “adult” in the living of Faith. To utilize all that one is, and all that one has, in the limits and the routine of the human condition, will always mean conformity to the Divine Will. Consequently, there is always the putting to death of one’s personal desires in the light of Christian

Hope, in a daily response to the imperatives of grace. This demands a highly developed religious maturity and intensity.

3.] In Abandonment, there is no awaiting, or expectancy for the spectacular, out of the ordinary, solutions to challenges - there are no pseudo-miraculous interventions that could interest one truly “abandoned” to the Wisdom and Mercy of God. The qualities of Spiritual Childhood, as described in Ps 131, deserve the utmost praise.

j. Therefore, and it is necessary to repeat this: the Psalmist has made a profession of definitive abandonment to his God: he has been once and for all “weaned” on the word of God, his thirst has been slaked by the fountains of salvation. However, the traditional exegesis of the verse is oriented toward a slightly different meaning. According to this version, the translation would not be “weans”, but satisfied, i.e., the thirst, hunger have been “satisfied”. The notion of “Abandonment” would thus be coupled with that of “comforted”:

“... For thus says Yahweh: Now towards her I sent flowing peace, like a river, like a stream in spate the glory of the nations At her breast will her nurslings be carried and fondled in her lap. Like a son comforted by his mother, will I comfort you. And by Jerusalem, you will be comforted...” [cf. Is 66: 12, ff.].

k. This notion of abandonment is indeed touching and very “natural”, but quite singularly less virile and really, from a doctrinal point of view, less rich: the emphasis shifts to the Mother, with no “conscious” response on the part of the child. The notion of virile abandonment would be much recommended by the Fathers of the Church, particularly St. Jerome. He understands Ps 131 not as enjoyment ‘in full’ of God - but more as an appeal to religious maturity, to spiritual energy.

l. On the use of *nefesh*, the emphatic personal pronoun is to be noted: “... why so downcast, o my **soul**, why do **you** sigh within me? Put your hope in God: I shall praise Him yet, my savior and my God...” [cf. Ps 42:5, 7]. The NT Echo might be:

“...Father, he said, if You are willing, take this cup away from Me. Nevertheless, let Your will be done, not mine! [cf. Lk 22:42].

“... Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit.” [cf. Lk 23:46; Ps 31:5; Ac 7:60].

“...Then He said: I tell you solemnly, unless you change and become as little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. And so, the one who makes himself as little as this little child, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven..” [cf. Mt 18:3, 4].

“... It is only on account of this that I am experiencing fresh hardships here now; But I have not lost confidence, because I know Who it is that I have put my trust in, and I have no doubt at all that He is able to take care of all that I have entrusted to Him until that day...” [cf. 2 Tm 1:12].

3. Liturgical Adaptation: Israel, rely on Yahweh, now and for always!

a. The lesson that had been learned by some individual is now applied to Israel [cf. note Ps 130:8]. Without seeking “human glory”, or “success”, with feverish

activity to repair reverses, or to satisfy desires for vengeance, or for political supremacy, the People of God ought to be content with its lot, to have total confidence in God, Who is like a parent [mother !] with loving care for Israel [cf. Ho 11:4; Is 66:12-13; Ps 62:9; 115:9-11]. That Israel should become the weaned infant in the loving arms of Yahweh, in full abandonment to its God. This is the lesson that pilgrims should be reminded of in their pilgrimage [cf. Ps 125; 127].

b. This is a lesson that would give inspiration to the beautiful Midrash following the Book of Job: “Do not seek that which is beyond you. That which is far from you, do not try to sound its depths. That which is more marvelous than you are, you should never try to know what it is. That which is hidden, do not try to discover. That which God has given to you as a heritage, try to contemplate it. You should not occupy yourself with ‘mystery’”. The KORAN would make mention of something like this: the one who professes the most beautiful religion is the one who is totally abandoned to God!

c. Where could one find a poem that responds more fully to the mystical concerns of the true children of God. than in this canticle of complete humility? This is not some speculative recognition of our smallness, but it is a full acceptance of the limits of life which are a consequence of it, and of filial abandonment to the conduct of Paternal Providence which governs us. ‘What is necessary to be done, O Lord, for us to render faith to You? One day in silence before you...: Blaise Pascal in his profound intuition of the things of God, is most correct when he notes: all of the misfortune of human beings comes from a single source, which is not to know how to remain quietly in a room! [Pensees # 136].

d. This is the Psalm of Spiritual Childhood which anticipates the evangelical doctrine of the Kingdom of God, and of the Divine Paternity. This is the Canticle which introduces one to “the Spirituality of Holy Abandonment” to the Father in heaven, which Jesus recommended in the Cenacle: “... My peace I bequeath to you, My own peace, I give you, a peace the world cannot give, this is My gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid...” [cf. Jn 14:27].

e. This is an eminently biblical spirituality, as in St. Paul, where he heard: “...My grace is enough for you: My power is at its best in weakness.” [c. 2 Co 12:9]. And we should never forget the words of Jesus Himself inculcating trust in Divine Providence: He seems to be appealing against any anxious quest of the goods of this earth, in failing to understand the solicitude of the heavenly Father [cf. Mt 6:25-34; Lk 12:22-31].

f. The consistent teaching of the Saints:

1.] St. Augustine marveled at the beauty of this Spirituality and discovered one day at the end of one of his long quests for human grandeur: **O, my God, our heart is always restless until it finds repose in You!** [cf. *Confessions*, 1,c. 1]. The *Imitation of Christ* puts it this way: “I wish to teach you the path of peace and true liberty ... choose to possess less rather than more; take always the last place, after all others; desire always and pray that the Will of God be perfectly

accomplished in you. The man who does this has entered into the domain of Peace and repose [cf. III, 23:1-3, cf. 22: 4-5].

2.] St. Benedict makes this Spirituality the foundation of his Rule and he develops it at some length in his celebrated Chapter on Humility, which he opens with a citation from Ps 131: 1,2: 'Basically, one loses God by self-exaltation, the fruit of egoism and of pride - the exaltation of one's own thoughts, or pride; the exaltation of one's own words, by bragging; the exaltation of one's own actions through disobedience; the exaltation of one's own desires, through ambition; the exaltation of one's efforts through presumption- it is most necessary to be attached to God as an Infant to its mother, and to allow Him to work in us His progressive abasement from pride through the ascension, even to the most high summit, of the degrees of humility.'

3.] St. Hildegard makes this declaration about this Spirituality: 'I count myself as nothing; I turn towards the living God, so that He might deign in all things to keep me from harm...'

4.] This spirituality led St. John of the Cross in his *Spiritual Canticle*, to fashion with every effort of which he was capable, his spirit a divine milieu, where his terrestrial existence could become mute; in sweet silent music and in harmonious solitude.

5.] St. Bernadette Soubirous stated: I love all that is small!

6.] St. Therese of Lisieux speaks of this Spirituality, which she made her own, and whose depths have been sounded in recent years by many scholars.

a.] Remain small, means to recognize one's own nothingness, to await all from the good God, not to be too much afflicted for one's fault, not to seek one's own fortune, not to be upset by anything... never to wish to be self-sufficient ... to feel oneself incapable of gaining one's life, eternal life...' [cf. *The Story of a Soul*, p. 154].

b.] For me to think too big, it is impossible. I have to maintain that my imperfections are beyond counting. But I wish to seek the means of going to heaven by a small way that is straight and short. We are living in an age of inventions: there is no longer the fatigue of marking one's steps on a stairway; for the rich, there is an 'elevator', such as I would like to have to reach Jesus, for I am too small to climb the harsh stairway of Perfection.

c.] Then I sought in the lives of the Saints the indication of this Elevator, the object of my desires... This is what I found: As a Mother caresses her infant, so I will console you. I will carry you on My bosom, and I will bounce you on my knee [cf. Is 66:13]. The Elevator that will carry me up to Your arms, O Jesus! Therefore, I do not have to grow up; it is necessary on the contrary, that I should remain small, that should become more and more so...

7.] Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity: this spirituality of the Little Flower has been profoundly lived by a number of contemplatives, such as Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity: I have only to recollect myself to find Him within me, and this is what brings me happiness. He has placed in my heart an infinite thirst and a great need to love that He alone can achieve. Then, I go to Him, as a small infant to its Mother, so that He might fulfill, He might supply me with all that I need, by taking me in His arms. It seems to be that it is necessary to be most simple with the Good God...'

g. Pope Pius XII has excellently characterized this spirituality in the name of the contemporary Church: Just as in the natural order, an infant growing up gradually comes to understand, that he can never be self-sufficient, that he has to live in a superior docility [cf. Letter of August 7, 1947, to the National Congress of St. Therese studies]. Along these lines, Fr. C. Spicq, OP, states: while the malicious are hard, haughty and arrogant - the biblically 'poor' is a person who is defenseless. Conscious of his weakness and his misery, he submits docilely and without rebellion to the events which may even hurt him, or those who oppress him [cf. Ps 147:6]. In conformity with the ordinary custom of little people which he experiences, such a person is affable in his efforts, and modest in his conduct ... The habit of undergoing an unfortunate lot and of accepting the decisions of Providence favors the humility, and this attitude of religious submission is perfect, it develops into a kind of serenity and sweetness.

h. The Christian could come to know at what point this little Psalm could easily serve as a point of entry with the Heavenly Father - as it is described, in very few words, the state of the soul that our Father has set out for us. Burn your bridges - see just how many useless things you have!. It is surprising. Bind yourselves to poverty, to obedience. That blessed poverty which is that of the soul which seeks neither praise, nor estimation, success - but solely the Will of God. To be One with Him, not having but one Will with Him. This is a Vocation - this is His appeal to us.

i. A rhetorical question: am I towards my Heavenly Father, as "filial" as perhaps a child of five years, who climbs upon the knees of his grand-pa, plays on him like a horse, with his arms around his neck...? O my God, give me to understand more deeply the mystery of your paternity.

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[B] The New Testament: Christ's Life and Prayer

Presentation: The Example of Our Lord Himself in His Paschal Mystery

[1] As all Christian virtues, abandonment has its source in the Gospel - in the teachings and examples of our Lord Jesus Christ. On a number of occasions, St. Francis de Sales presents Christ as the Model of Holy Abandonment in the various stages of His mortal life:

- in the Crib [cf.. *Entretien* XXI];
- in His Infancy [Love of God, Book IX, c. 14];
- in the Flight into Egypt [cf. *Entretien*, III]'
- and above all, during those terrible sufferings that concluded His earthly sojourn: “.. Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit...!” [cf. Love of God, Book IX, c. 15].

[2] This imitation of our Lord is the great challenge of believers: He teaches all who would follow Him how to be abandoned to the Will of God in suffering - all are challenged to repeat His Self-giving words - which Mary used in responding to the Angel in her Annunciation; and again as her message in Cana of Galilee: Do whatever He tells you!. Christ first offered them in His Instruction on the Lord's Prayer: Thy Will be done! - and finally, the phrase culminates in Gethsemane and Calvary: Your will be done, not Mine! [cf. Lk 22:42] - Not what I will, but as You will it! [cf. Mt 26:39].

[3] The supreme example, of course, would be His expression on the Cross: into Your hands I commend My Spirit! Through the doctrine and by the experience of the saints, each believer- assisted by special grace - can in some way, imitate Jesus Christ in His abandonment: for some, it is life's vocation. In the trials of human life, the Lord's grace can lead the faithful through a variety of levels, or stages of the faith, lead one to the oblation of their deepest self-interest: make of your bodies an oblation to God's Mercy [cf. Rm 12: 1, ff.] - join your spiritual sacrifices to Christ's oblation [cf. 1 P 2: 2, ff.].

[4] For many thoughtful believers, such sacrifices cannot be done with ordinary grace - but, that each of the faithful is called to pass through stages, each of those more intense and more purifying than what went before. As for the perfection of Holy Abandonment, no one could reach that level without the special assistance of God. In the supreme level, the sacrifice - in imitation of Jesus Christ - is consummated.

[5] Here the reflection will center around Jesus' instruction regarding the Will of God in His prayer - and then His actual living of this in His own Prayer:

- [I] the Lord's Prayer;
- [II] the Prayer in Gethsemane.

[I] The Lord's Prayer [cf. Mt 6:7, ff.]

{A} General Considerations [cf. also CCC ## 2759-2865]

1. On Christ's lips, this invocation had a profundity of meaning that it seems the disciples only discovered with time. With the Lutheran scholar, Joachim Jeremias, many interpreters believe that every time Jesus refers to His Father in direct address, most likely He would have used the affectionate, intimate term *Abba* .

a. The original term is found in three texts:

1.] The source might indeed have been Mark's rendition of the scene in Gethsemane: "... *Abba* ! [Father], He said. Everything is possible for You. Take this cup away from Me. But, let it be as You, not I, would have it. [cf. Mk 14:36].

2.] It is also found in two Epistles attributed to Paul: "... it is the Spirit of sons and it makes us cry out: *Abba* ! The Spirit and our spirit bear united witness that we are the children of God..." [cf. Rm 8:15] - "... The proof that you are sons is that God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts - the Spirit that cries *Abba*, Father..." [cf. Ga 4:6].

b. For Christ Himself, this term is the expression of the Mystery of His own Divine Filiation within the bosom of the Most Blessed Trinity - shared now with all who would accept Him through His oblation of the adoption price of His own Most Precious Blood, shed through His Sacred Stigmata. The first Christians used this same term to express **adoptive filiation**, that associates them to the Person and Prayer of Jesus Christ.

c. The early Church was convinced that a prayer of this nature could be formulated only with the help, and through the activity of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, even in the Early Church, this term: "Father, *Abba* - had profound theological implications:

- for Christ Himself, it means His **"natural" Trinitarian Filiation**;
- for Believers, it implied **Adoptive Filiation**.

2. The Introductory **"Our"** in the Lord's Prayer here is clearly extended to all His disciples of all times - to all who would accept a share in His Divine Filiation, and all that that would imply for their lives.

a. Some would hold that Christ would be excluded here, in the strength of His clear statement addressed to Mary Magdalene, after His Resurrection: "... He said to her: 'But go, and find the brothers, and tell them: I am ascending to **My** Father and **your** Father, to **My** God and **your** God..." [cf. Jn 20:17].

1.] A number of careful interpreters find the background for this statement deep in the OT: "... Ruth said to Naomi: 'wherever you go, I will go - wherever you live, I will live. Your people shall be my people, and **your God, my God ...**'" [cf. Rt 1:16].

2.] However, the context of Jn 20:17, seems clearly to be that Jesus is returning to the One Who is at one and the same time, His Father and our Father, to His God and to our God. Yet, it is true that:

- never before, or elsewhere does Jesus use a formula that would risk confusing the Filiation of His Divine Person with the Adoptive Filiation of His disciples;
- precisely, however, in Jn 20:27, God is presented at one and the same time, as Christ's Father and the Father of all disciples.

3.] These two distinct divine "Paternities" seem carefully distinguished in the formula: "My Father and your Father". This precision seems that it had for its purpose that of avoiding any ambiguity in the "Our Father".

a.] If one would consult a Biblical Concordance, it would appear that Jesus often distinguished between "**My** Father" [18 times in Mt; 4 x in Lk; 25/26 x in Jn] - and "**Your** Father" [13 x in Mt; 2 x in Mk; 3 x in Lk 2/3 x in Jn] - without ever bringing together the two formulae in one common **Our** Father.

b.] In the present case, then, one is led to conclude that the "Our Father" pronounced by the disciples brings them together, all in one collective invocation to their Common Father - but, still does not include Christ in it. Furthermore, one of the Petitions of the "Our Father" which concerns the pardoning of sin, would not apply to Jesus Christ. Thus, many interpreters see in the "Our Father" as that Ecclesial, eschatological Prayer taught by Jesus to the disciples for their collective usage, for the Church - but that this could not have been the Personal Prayer of Jesus Himself.

c.] **But**, one response to this might be that most interpreters still maintain that this was indeed Jesus' own, Personal Prayer that He has handed on to all who would follow Him: the **us** of the "Our Father" does not exclude Him: He was pierced through for our faults [cf. Is 53] - He identifies with sinners, by being "cursed" through hanging on a tree [cf. Ga 3:13] - sin was put to death in the innocent One on the Cross [cf. Rm 8:3+; 2 Co 5:21 +; Col 2:14 +].

d.] For Jesus Himself, God the Father is at the same time, the Father of all Disciples, all the Faithful in a unique sense. This can be established by a great number of variations of Matthew's texts [cf. 18:14] concerning the divine Paternity. This permits the conclusion that the conscience of the Early Church had no hesitation in affirming that the "Our Father" was the Prayer - both of the Disciples, as well as that of Jesus Himself, addressed to their common Father.

3. Thus, the Lord's Prayer is not merely - nor even primarily- a collective, vocal, eschatological, ecclesial Prayer for Christians. It is the echo of the very personal prayer that Jesus would offer throughout His mortal life - by His Mission, He made this personal prayer that was His very own, to be the personal prayer for each and every disciple, as He taught it personally to His "own", whom He loved to the very end.

a. Most would seem to see the "Our Father" in this light: it is the Lord's own prayer, the echo of His Personal Prayer - and He has made it the personal prayer of all who would follow Him.

b. The gospel precision that carefully clarifies the distinction between Jesus' unique, "natural Filiation" - and the "Adoptive Filiation" for everyone else - needs not also to be insisted on here, in the "Our Father." Our Adoptive Filiation is indeed a personal share in Jesus' own Natural Filiation, in His "Essential" Filiation. In like manner, we can say that our filial prayer is as an analogous participation in the Trinitarian Prayer of Jesus. This seems to be behind St. Paul's words: the proof that you are children is that God has sent His Spirit, the Spirit of His Son into our hearts - it is the Spirit that cries out *Abba* [cf. Ga 6:4]

c. All the Fathers of the Church and early commentators have insisted on an evident consequence of this common, divine Paternity. Since all have the same Father, then all human beings are really "brothers and sisters", divinely called to love one another, and to treat each other as such. This is the fundamental principle that inspires all of the morality and the spirituality of Christianity. The Gospel presents this explicitly: "... you are all brothers [cf. Mt 23:8, ff.] ...since you have only one Father, and He is in heaven..." This theme has been eloquently developed down through the centuries - with evident implications for the theology of charity.

d. There will always be need to clarify the more the true nature of this Divine Paternity and the broader amplitude of this human fraternity. Some questions that need prayerful reflection are: God is indeed our Father because He has created us. Hence, as far as fraternity is concerned, this could not be limited then, only to those who explicitly accept God as "Father." God is also "Father" to those far from Him, choosing sin over grace.

e. It is very clear that creation does indeed constitute the divine Paternity to some extent - all human beings are indeed brothers and sisters to one another, as is already made clear by the Evangelist: "... But, I say this to you: love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you - in this way, you will be sons of your Father in heaven, for He causes the sun to rise on the bad as well as the good..." [cf. Mt 5:44, ff.].

f. There has been some discussion of the rendition of the "Our Father" in Lk's presentation - in that it seems to be addressed to the followers of Jesus Christ, perhaps in some contrast with the followers of John the Baptist: "Lord, teach us to pray - just as John taught his disciples..." [cf. Lk 11:2]. In Mt's rendition [cf. Mt 6: 7, ff.], another contrast is made: "In your prayers, do not babble as the pagans do - for they think by using many words they will be heard..."

4. Christian prayer is essentially **a share in the life and mission of Jesus Christ** - all become brothers and sisters in what He has accomplished for the world - in a most particular manner, when one can say authentically, in faith, hope and love: "Our Father" with the sentiments Christ had in offering this prayer. Some would want to extend this kind of fraternity even further - surely to all Christians, even those "anonymously" [if that is the right word!] following Christ. All those who sincerely seek the truth, and to all those who sincerely do what they can, God does not deny the grace

[cf. St. Thomas, I-II, q. 109, a. 6, obj. 2; LG 16;17' GS 22; AG 7-9; RMI # 10; CCC ## 1257-1261].

a. There is a particular value in sharing in Christ's own life of Filiation - adoption is transmitted to us by Christ Himself. There is already a natural fraternity among human beings - Pope John called *socialization* [the inter-national gathering for various motives, as culture, sports, business, recreation] - as one of the promising signs of our time. So, there is no attempt here to deny the natural fraternity of all human beings - or, to make juridical membership in the Church some kind of an exclusive saving Noah's ark for the storms of our times, just for a privileged few - Jesus died "for the many", i.e., "all", the Universal Savior.

b. The only real solution to every possible difficulty here would be to extend the "Our" in the "Our Father" to include every human being - all are called, invited to come "follow" Him, "imitate" Him, put on His Mind [cf. Ph 2:5, ff.]. All are being extended the call to become His disciples, to listen, and to put into practice His Beatitudes. Indeed, already "blessed" are the pure of heart, the poor in spirit, those who mourn, suffering persecution in the name of His Justice.

5. The Early Church included the "Our Father" in its Baptismal Liturgy, as well as in the celebration of the Eucharist. This is surely because the newly baptized are plunged deep into the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ, and His Trinitarian Mystery, though the regeneration afforded by the Sacrament of Baptism. Surely the baptized, those who specifically follow Jesus Christ, have a special right/obligation/challenge/ vocation - to pray the Lord's own Prayer. With Christ present in the Eucharist, Christians can certainly echo in a more resounding way, uniting their voices to the very Person of Jesus Christ, present in a most special manner, in the Eucharist.

a. A good number of the Fathers might have restricted the privilege and the right to the "Our Father" to the "saints" - to those who indeed try to conduct their lives as sharing in Christ's own Filiation. Around the year 250, St. Cyprian wrote: the new man, regenerated and given over to God by the grace of baptism, can now indeed pray: "Our Father" - simply because such a person has just become a son/daughter of God in a new more complete manner. In appealing to God as "Father" in heaven, such a person attests in his/her first stuttering utterances that he/she has surrendered earthly relationships in favor of the heavenly.

b. For St. Augustine [± 450] one could not pray the "Our Father" if he/she were not yet "born". In his Sermon 59, he stated that the "Our Father" is not yet the prayer of the Catechumens - but will become so only after their new birth of Baptism.

c. Much closer to our own time, Karl Barth wrote that the "Our Father" is not just any ordinary prayer: there is much emphasis to be given to the "Our" and to "us." God is indeed "Our Father" in a particular manner" by bestowing the privilege of this Prayer, He can then make some real demands. It is through the mediation of Jesus that we indeed have become His children, and He has become "ours." It all depends on whether or not we will follow in His footsteps, living His life. This prayer implies communion with Jesus - that we enter into His discipleship, mission. It is Jesus Who

invites us, permits us - commands us to come and follow Him. It is Jesus Christ Who permits us to use His very own Prayer in addressing His very own Father. This Prayer invites us to adore Him, to pray to God as His children - to make the words of His only-begotten, most beloved Son - "our" own.

6. In a most unique manner, the Heavenly Father is Jesus' "own" - Jesus is His unique Son. Only through adoption, does the follower of Christ receive His Father. God becomes the Father of those Who become His disciples, imitate His way of life. To be a follower of Christ, one must accept the total Christ, be a vital, living part of the community He died to establish.

a. To modern ears - rightly attuned to ecumenism and socialization, in the sense that Pope John XXIII understood this - it might seem too exclusive to limit the "Our Father" in this way. Because of creation, in some way God is already the "Father of all", in that He gave life, nourishment, up-bringing. Humanity does seem to be the glorious crown of the created universe - so some would limit the Divine Paternity to His creative function. However, even the created universe is open toward - has a natural [passive] capacity also for Jesus Christ. There are levels of the Divine Paternity, depending upon the extent that one would accept Adoptive Filiation. In this sense, we are not children of God by nature alone - but enter into the more intimate relationship with the Father through grace, a unique share in the Filiation of His own Son.

b. In 1960, Romano Guardini insisted much on the distinction between the Prayer that Jesus addressed to His Father personally - and the one addressed to Him through His disciples. We can only come to the Father with the Lord's Prayer, when we are brought there by the Spirit of Filiation, that enables all to say *Abba* ! From the moment the believer gives back His extended greeting - and when we try to establish our personal relationship with God, all distance dissipates. Jesus has made a gift of His own relationship to the Father to each and every person who will agree to come and follow, imitate Him, putting on His "mind." Yet, Jesus' own personal prayer to the Father remains a mystery - one that we can never penetrate in comprehensive fashion, even when we pray His prayer, and express ourselves in the terms of His "Natural Filiation."

c. Surely Christians and non-Christians alike are not excluded from the Divine Paternity. Nonetheless, in order to become the adoptive children of the heavenly Father, it is necessary for us to become truly the adopted children, and to take up the Cross of Jesus Christ every day, and follow Him.

d. To live the final density of the "Our Father", the following biblical challenge is laid before the believer:

- the Son is One with the Father [cf. Jn 10:30; 17:21];
- the Son's Prayer is one of adoration for the Father's Glory [cf. Mk 14:36; Jn 17:4];
- Jesus has come on earth specifically to give to human beings the power to become the children of God [cf. Jn 14:12];
- He has come to gather the dispersed children of the Most High [cf. Jn 11:52];

- Jesus' coming has made of all human beings brothers and sisters and in a more intense and elevated manner [cf. Jn 20:17];
- the "Our Father" is a formula that expresses the new relationship uniting human beings to God;
- by the Incarnation, God, the Creator, offers to all the possibility of re-birth to a new life [cf. Jn 3:5-16; 10:10];

e. While it is true that the formula: "Our Father" can be in common with anyone who thinks of God as Creator - on Jesus' lips it expresses His unique relationship, which is offered to all as a participation. The fullest meaning of the "Our Father" would be living in some way, within the life of the Trinity.

{B} The Third Petition: "Thy Will be done!"

1. The Third Petition of the Lord's Prayer is that His Will be done. This has deep and extensive OT background:

"...you asked no holocaust, or sacrifices for sin; then, I said: Here I am! I am coming! [cf. Ps 40:7 - cited by Heb 10:9].

'Bless Yahweh, all His angels, heroes mightily to enforce His Word, attentive to His Word of command ..servants to enforce His Will ..." [cf. Ps 103: 19, ff.].

"... I have fled to You for shelter; teach me to obey you, since You are My God; may Your good spirit guide me..." [cf. Ps 143: 9, ff.].

"... But now give thanks to Yahweh, the God of your ancestors, and do His Will..." [cf. Ezr 10:11].

"... the Lord's Will is sovereign..." [cf. Ps 135:6].

"... I am God, unrivaled, God Who has no like ... I say: My purpose shall last... [cf. Ps 46]10].

"...My Beloved will perform His pleasure..." [cf. Is 48:13, ff.].

"... Cyrus, my shepherd... he will fulfill My whole purpose... [cf. Is 44:27, ff. - cited by Ac 13:22].

"...Whatever will be the Will of God, He will perform it ..." [cf. 1 M 3:60].

2. Perhaps the Semitic languages are much clearer in this distinction regarding the Will of God:

- the subjective sense: the divine faculty of willing;
- the objective sense: the "content", what it is that God wills.

a. The divine faculty of willing is sometimes to as 'innards' "guts" [the Italian *reni*] - the divine "heart". In the objective sense, it is not so much the product of some abstract decision - but, much more, the rather spontaneous and instinctive tendency. The faithful are called upon to give this preference, to seek out the "divine good pleasure."

b. In the classical prayer, the central concern seems to be not so much the psychological power of choice, but much more **the concrete object willed by God** - that which He desires, loves. The "**content**" is what is understood by the Greek word

thelma . In most modern languages, the divine "will" perhaps most commonly is understood in the sense of what it is that God would want in these circumstances. The term: "the divine good pleasure" smacks of a certain 'condescendence', haughtiness - totally absent from God. If the word "will" is rendered in the plural, the sense might be more in accord with the intentions of prayer - but, it might also open the door to caprice, with a multiplicity of objects.

c. Some would want to translate the word: "... may Your holy desires be realized...". However, "desire" seems much too weak to apply to God in that it is often contrasted with "Hope", which is a future good, difficult, but possible. It is "difficulty" that separates from desire, which is much closer to "velleity."

3. The NT often speaks of the Divine Will and it is found often in connection with "to do", "become". The Synoptics praise particularly those who "do" the Father's Will: "... Who are My mother and My brothers? ... Here are My mother and My brothers. Anyone who does the Will of God, that person is My brother, and sister and mother...!" [cf. Mk 3:45]. - It is not those who say to Me: Lord, Lord - who will enter the Kingdom of heaven - but, the person who does the will of My Father in heaven..." [cf. Mt 7:21].

4. In the **Prayer of Gethsemane**, there are some interesting variations:

"... But let it be as You, not I, would have it ..." [cf. Mk 14:36].

"... My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass Me by. Nevertheless, let it be as You, not I, would have it ... if this cup cannot pass by without My drinking it, Your will be done!..." [cf. Mt 26:39, 42].

"... Father, he said, if You are willing, take this cup away from Me. Nevertheless, let Your will be done, not Mine ..." [cf. Lk 22:42].

a. In a different way, the 4th Evangelist insists on the intimate tie between Jesus and His Father's Will: "... My food is to do the will of the One Who sent Me..." [cf. 4:34] - "... My aim is not to do My own will, but the will of Him Who sent Me ..." [cf. 5:30]. - "... I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but to do the will of Him Who sent Me ..." [cf. 6:34]. - "... anyone who does the will of God, remains forever..." [cf. 6:38].

b. The Epistles contains similar insights: "... be obedient .. as to Christ ..." [cf. Ep 6:16] - "... God, here I am! I am coming to do Your will (cf. Ps 40: LXX). You will need endurance to do God's Will and gain what He has promised..." [cf. Heb 10:6, f., 36]. - "... may He make you ready to do His will in any kind of good action..." [cf. Heb 13:21].

c. Hence, the NT emphasis as well is on just what is the "content" of the divine will: "... Now, the will of Him Who sent Me is that I should lose nothing of all that He has given to Me, and that I should raise it up on the last day. Yes, it is My Father's will that whoever sees the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life and that I shall raise Him up on the last day..." [cf. Jn 6:39, ff.]. - "... What God wants for you is to be holy..." [cf. 1 Th 4:3] - "... keep away from fornication - [It is indeed the will of God that makes people holy ...]" [cf. Mt 6:10; cf. 2 Th 2:13; Ep 1:4]. - "... Be happy at all times; pray

constantly; and for all things, give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus..." [cf. 1 Th 5: 17, ff.]. - "...God wants you to be good citizens..." [cf. 1 P 2:13, ff.].

d. In synthesis: it seems that the Will of God for the NT writers is to keep the commandments - and the will of God for Christ is to lead all to everlasting life. In petitioning that God's Name be hallowed, we pray that we might be led through the divine good works to extend His glory: "... your light must shine in the sight of men, so that seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in heaven ..." [cf. Mt 5:16].

5. In asking for His Kingdom to come, we are asking that it might also come for us - in the hope and prayer that the Divine Will, the Kingdom, might find no obstacle that we might indeed be governed in accord with His Will.

a. So, "They Will be Done" - is in perfect harmony with the two preceding petitions of the "Our Father": "Hallowed be Thy Name" and "Thy Kingdom come". The Will of God is, in brief, His reign, and His Reign ought to procure all glory for His Name. As in the earlier Petitions, there is no subject to these verbs - and this intended omission, allows the Church to make the most broad application possible. The intense prayer of the Church is that the Will of God might be done everywhere, always, and by all. We do not pray, therefore, simply that creatures carry out the Will of the Creator - but, we are asking that God Himself carry out His Will. We are asking God, as in a Prayer of Abandonment, that we be made docile and obedient in bringing our wills in harmony with His. This is why not a few translations read this passage: that the Divine Will **be** carried out - **be** accomplished - **be** fulfilled, "realized" in us. Such a translation is not necessary - as the open style of the original would imply this already.

b. There is no implicit fatalism in this term: in the sense that since God is already omnipotent, and that His will will be done anyway - then, let it be done! Such a spirit, however, may not be terribly far from the sentiments of Judas Maccabbaeus: whatever be the will of heaven, He will perform it - it is better to die in battle than to watch the ruin of our land [cf. 1 M 3:60]. This is similar in spirit as well as to the appeal made to Paul, not to go to Jerusalem: "... For my part, I am ready not only to be tied up, but even to die in Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus. And so, as he would not be persuaded, we gave up the attempt, saying: The Lord's will be done!" [cf. Ac 21:14].

6. It is perhaps in **Gethsemane** that we learn the full weight of the formula employed in the "Our Father": if it is indeed not possible for this cup to pass away from Me unless I drink it, then Your will be done [cf. Mt 26:42]. On the lips of Jesus, there is no fatalistic resignation but the **free Filial submission** of His human will to the Divine Will of the Father, as Jesus had already professed, three verses earlier: not as I will, but as You would have it! [cf. v. 39].

a. Despite the horrible natural repugnance over what was waiting for Him, Jesus positively chooses that which His Father wills, and He will contribute to the

realization of this Divine Will. The Greek imperative of the “Our Father” indicates a human will that demands that the Divine Will be efficacious, cost what it may.

b. Hence, the Petition: **Thy Will be done** is the prayed hope that the will of God might indeed be effectively realized. One prays - and almost “commands” God - that He carry out His Will and that each of us might collaborate to bring that about. In its context, this 3rd Petition continues the first two: the Second Petition [“Thy Kingdom Come!”] - adds to the First [“Hallowed be Thy Name”]. The coming of the reign of God for all implies sanctification, a consecration to the service of God. This sanctification transforms us, elevates us in a fundamental manner - but, at the same time, this being raised up to a new life gives us the capacity, and imposes the obligation to render an effective service, that we might undertake duties animated with this new spirit of the Risen Lord.

c. Thus, the Third Petition: “Thy Will be done” - adds to the Second: “Thy Kingdom come!” The Reign of God that is already within us, and which is still coming - is the ultimate bearer of the divine will. God comes to accomplish in us His Will, which is our sanctification. He comes to endow us with a superabundance of the messianic goods. It is these blessings of the New Covenant which constitute us as pertaining to His Reign. There is required of us, however, that we be opened up to this divine “advance”. Through the Reign of God that we receive, the divine will takes full possession of us, leads us, draws us, with His own inner inspiration.

d. Our challenge is to follow this divine impulse through an effective Abandonment of each moment. This sublime obedience - in imitation of Christ’s own loving relationship with His Heavenly Father - is but a prolongation, a lived attitude of inner correspondence through which more and more the divine will becomes a concrete and vibrant reality within us. It becomes a truly active presence, as we begin seeing Jesus as **A Value** - then, grow some, and see Him as **an Important Value** - the ultimate ideal is that He be **the Only Value!**

Summary: The intimate and close relationship between the 2nd and 3rd Petitions of the “Our Father” shows the most profound tie between the Reign of God [heaven] and the Will of God. For some interpreters, this is why St.. Luke has not reproduced the “Our Father” in much detail, enumerating all these Petitions that are already so closely inter-connected. His tendency, “style”, is to suppress that which appears superfluous. For Lk, once one has asked for the coming of the reign of God, one is implicitly asking at the same time for the full realization of the Divine will.

For many Rabbis, however, it is the Will of God that is tantamount, and which constitutes the essential prayer here. There is a citation in Samuel and Chronicles that is close to this thought”... Eli said: He is Yahweh; let Him do what He thinks good [cf. 1 S 3:18] - “...Joab said: Take courage and stand firm for the sake of our people and the towns of our God. And May Yahweh do as He thinks right....” [cf. 1 Ch 19:13].

This attitude is part of **Matthew’s rendition of the “Our Father”** - he is the most “rabbinical” of the Evangelists- the committed believer wills only the Father’s Will. There is involved in this the **obsequium** of our own personal will, and the

elimination of what would be all self-centeredness. The effort here is to base our lives on the will of God. There is in this the firm decision in this will in accord with our possibilities.

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[II] The Prayer of Gethsemane and Salvific Suffering

[cf. A. Feuillet, *L'agonie de Gethsemani. Enquete exegetique et theologique suivie d'une etude du 'Mystere de Jesus' de Pascal*. Paris: Gabalda 1977, pp.238-248, passim].

1. The problem of human suffering “embarrasses” the order of creation, as well as the brilliant technological advances of our own time. In this perplexing torment of humanity, the need of a sound “philosophy” - and even more, of a profound biblical contemplation, show themselves to be of the utmost importance. In our faith, we believe that divine revelation - understood in its global message, culminating in the Person of Jesus Christ, is the ultimate explanation of human life.

2. As part of our contemplation of Gethsemane, some coming to grips with this mystery of human pain seems to be in order. All the more perplexing is the mystery when s it the “Suffering”, or the ”Slaughter of the Innocents”, commemorated liturgically so soon after the Nativity of the Lord.

a. Some attempts to “explain” the mystery of human suffering are the following:

- suffering does remain an “evil”, and should be alleviated at all costs;
- nonetheless, it can afford one the possibility of deepening one’s understanding of the human condition. In this sense, “**Suffering is the School of God**” - it enables one to make progress in the understanding of the whole mystery of God: Suffering is *paideia*, wisdom.
- Suffering **purifies, it is redemptive**;
- it enriches, brings one into greater **solidarity** with others: it can deepen one’s relationship with humanity;
- it can open up one toward **eschatological realization** - we do not have here a lasting home!
- for believers, it can have a **Christological** dimension.

b. Philosophy advances the rather surprising statement that evil, in general, is not simple absence, but it is a deprivation of a good that should be found in being, as existing. Considered just as a “privation”, then, evil really does not “exist”! However, anyone who confronts it has a profound experience of this “deprivation” - for the many such as these, life offers a profound, even daily “experience of deprivation.” Corporal suffering, moral pain, crowned then with death, are among the most terrible realities that human beings have to face. Certain prolonged sufferings have led to rebellion [e.g., the Maccabees]; for others the loss of faith. The problem of massive evil of the innocent provokes terrible questions that do not allow “easy”, “off the cuff”, “shooting from the hip” answers [cf. Elie Weisel, *Night*.]

c. In a lived experience, the philosophical idea that evil is really an “absence” and that it does not have an “efficient”, but only a “deficient” cause, would not offer much consolation. In our faith, we do not believe that God is not the Cause of Evil.

d. Abraham HESCHEL : recent attempts to explain the riddle of suffering “involve” God in it to some degree. Heschel has written:

1.] “... Impressive as is the thought that God is too sublime to be affected by events on this insignificant planet, this stems from a line of reasoning about a God derived from abstraction. A “God of Abstraction” is high and mighty, “First Cause”, dwelling in the lonely splendor of eternity. Such a God will never be open to human prayer, nor be affected by anything which He has caused to come into being. This would all be beneath the dignity of an “Abstract God” . This is a dogmatic sort of dignity, insisting upon pride, rather than love - upon decorum, rather than mercy.

2.] “In contrast with the *primum movens immobile* , the God of the Prophets cares for His creatures, and His thoughts are about the world. He is involved in human history and is affected by human acts. It is a paradox beyond compare, that the Eternal God is concerned with what is happening in time [cf. Is 57:5]. The grandeur of God implies the capacity to experience emotion. In the biblical outlook, movements of feeling are no less spiritual than acts of thought...” [cf. *The Prophets*, Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society. pp. 259. cf. also *The Theology of Pathos*, o.c., pp. 221, ff.].

3. **The Book of Job** is consecrated to the Wisdom Tradition and to the struggle with the vexing problem of evil, the suffering of the innocent. The conclusion, at least a partial one - is the fact that human reasoning - even that steeped in Sacred Scripture - can never appease certain human sufferings: “For huge as the sea is your affliction, who can possibly cure you...” [cf. Lm 2:13].

a. In extremely “bold” language, Job [and others] curse the day of his birth [cf. 3:1, ff.]. His friends try to calm him down, using the traditional explanations, often based on earlier divine revelation, and the usual earlier interpretations. However, Job still cannot understand his own situation. His revolting experience in no way, is alleviated, using all the traditional “remedies” and “explanations.” Suffering remains, humanly speaking, an intolerable enigma, if one expects that his/her explanations of it are meant to alleviate it. It is a common experience that human beings are powerless to offer consolation in the times of terrible distress. This is a drama of salvation that goes on between the individual sufferer and God: **hope** is that virtue by which the individual meets his/her human limitations, by abandoning one’s existence into the hands of God.

b. The Book of Job has been read with immense profit through the ages: for the suffering and distress of the innocent continue to plague human consciousness. Job proclaims the emptiness of all human reasoning to the learned of his own time, and of all times: “...How often have I heard all this before! What sorry comforters you are! Is there never to be an end to your airy words? What a plague your need to have the last word! I, too, could talk like you, were your soul in this plight of mine. I, too, could overwhelm you with sermons... and speak words of encouragement until my lips grow tired. But, while I am speaking, my suffering remains - and when I am not, do I suffer any the less? And now, ill-will drives me to distraction...!” [cf. Jb 16:1, ff.].

c. One “astonishing” aspect of Job is that even after these “tirades” of Job, God still comes to respond. While the divine answers are not directly in response to the problem of suffering, neither are they abstract reflections on the beauty of creation. It is still necessary that even the sufferer should admit that he/she may be talking more out of ignorance [cf. Jb 38-41]. If there is any divine “condemnation”, it might be the more directed toward those who would try to offer consolation from their own position of strength, health, wealth, power. To be pardoned, they have to appeal to the one who has suffered: “...I [the Lord] burn with anger against you and your two friends [Job’s “consolers”], for not speaking truthfully about Me as My servant Job has done... he will offer prayers for you...!” [cf. 42: 7, ff.].

4. **The Suffering Servant** [cf. Is 42; 49; 50; 52:13-53:12]: the Jerusalem Bible would associate this Suffering Servant with Job - probably composed later. In truth, the image of Job is only one type of the future Passion and Death of the Lord. What they may all have in common is that **their trial has made their intercession efficacious**. Both of these OT figures indicate clearly that God is close to His suffering servants. He is part of their daily human experience. The abyss of “creaturality” calls out to the rest of human minds and hearts, to come to a greater solidarity with this world, and the majority of people in it.

5. **Jeremiah** the extreme cruelty that he experienced is also among the OT attempts to “explain” the suffering of the innocent. It is possible, at least in the view of some interpreters, that Is 53 reflects the recently martyred Jeremiah, “led like a lamb to the slaughter...” There are evident comparisons made between Jeremiah and Job:

- Jr 20:14-18 = Jb 3:1-16; 10:18, ff.;
- Jr 12:1-3 = Jb 21: 7, ff.

Job seems to echo the complaints of Jeremiah: “... My brothers have been fickle as a torrent, as the course of a seasonal stream...” [cf. Jb 56:15; Jr 15:18 - applied to God].

6. **The People of God** need NT revelation to take them further along this unveiling of the perplexing mystery of human suffering:

a. However, it should be noted from the outset that the Son of God did not become Incarnate, simply to resolve the age-old riddle of human suffering, or to give some totally satisfying explanation for it. The Incarnation is much more the revelation of divine love, in response to human sin and need - but basically, it is inspired by absolutely sovereign Love.

b. It is true that the God of Love has “set up His tabernacle among us”, and is like us, in all things “save sin”. The Lord Himself has become part of this immense tragedy of human history, bringing to it a sanctifying and elevating sublimation.

c. St. Augustine offers an extraordinary insight [although his authorship is doubted by some] in a Commentary on the “Good Thief.” He manifests astonishment that the Good Thief could have recognized the Savior of the World, hanging from the Cross, sharing his plight.

1.] His “recognition” of Jesus does not come so much from the studies of the sages, but far more from the recognition that Jesus gave to him sharing his fate: Jesus has looked at me, and in His look, I understand everything! The Good Thief was able to “see” what had been denied Jeremiah. He is thus offered as a “model” for all suffering Christians and human beings, in general.

2.] In their trials, human beings are never alone. Baptism gives us the faith that to “be crucified with” Jesus does not mean “along side of”, or merely: “in the company of.” This was the situation of the Good Thief. In Baptism, we are indeed “con-figured- formed” to Christ, and truly live “in” Him, and He “in” us. The Christ of the Agony of Gethsemane and of Golgotha has made His “own” all the sufferings of all time. He is mysteriously ‘present’ in the joys and anguish of His People. Jesus gives to all suffering, all life and all death - a particular meaning of immense value.

7. **The Advent of Jesus Christ:** it is true that with His coming, the NT offers an incomparably richer teaching on the sufferings of human beings, far beyond the most sublime heights of the OT. However, far more than this, the NT places one in intimate personal contact with Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and truly man. The Jesus of Gethsemane and Calvary is in some way, “united to every human being” [cf. GS 22] and He invites each person to respond to this coming of His into our world. In a good sense, it can truly be stated that all the physical sufferings and the moral agony of human beings, are present to Jesus in His Agony.

a. “Jesus knew and loved us each and all during his life, his Agony and his Passion, and gave himself up for each one of us: ‘The Son of God ... loved me and gave himself up for me.’ [Ga 2:20] He has loved us all with a human heart. For this reason, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, pierced by our sins and for our salvation [cf. Jn 19:34], ‘is quite rightly considered the chief sign and symbol of that ... love with which the divine Redeemer continually loves the eternal Father and all human beings’ without exception” [cf. CCC # 478; D-S 3812; 3924 - Pius XII].

b. The OT Psalms that treat of the anonymous just persons who have suffered throughout the OT centuries of preparation, all culminate in the Person of Jesus Christ. They were all figures preparing the way for the Suffering Servant/Messiah, Who would take on Himself the burdens of the world, and all its wounds into His own life. Beginning perhaps with the “peak point” of OT suffering, the Servant Poems with extraordinary clairvoyance speak of One Who was yet to come, Who would make of His own life the *Asham* , the Atonement Holocaust [cf. Is 53:10].

c. This Servant has taken on Himself our maladies [cf. Is 53:4: perhaps the full meaning of these “maladies” would be that it is a figure for **sin**]. The Prophet is thinking that this Servant is taking upon Himself the faults of humanity, was being charged at the same time with their sufferings. The over-all biblical idea of suffering is that it does have some connection with sin, either the originating change of orientation, or actual sin. But, this does not mean that all human suffering is “punishment” for some specific sins.

d. Is 53 indicates basically the ultimate Messianic Victory. The Servant promises the definitive victory for humanity over all suffering, all sin. The “Proto-evangelium” had already promised this victory, when the Serpent would be defeated [cf. Gn 3:15].

8. The total victory of Jesus Christ over sin, suffering and death, was already anticipated in various ways during His public life:

a. This victory implies a break with sin [cf. Mk 2:1-2, par.; Lk 7:36-59]. Forgiveness of sin is made manifest in seeing a lame person walk - seeing this, it may be easier to believe that sin has been forgiven. The miracles He performed were also “signs”, teaching expressions. The miracle indicated the power Jesus has to pardon. All His miracles are bound intimately to His Message of Salvation. They express the deeper meaning of His coming, they are the “Reign of God” in act.

b. In healing the sick, and in raising the dead, the implication is that the Redeemer has taken on human suffering and has conquered it. Sickness and death came into the world through sin - by manifesting His absolute power over them, Jesus reveals His power also over sin, which caused them.

c. In the presence of Jesus, death loses its terrifying aspect. It is almost like a “sleep” [cf. Mk 5:39; Jn 11:11-15].

1.] There is a special text from Mt [cf. 8:16, f.], which applies a line from the Suffering Servant to Jesus: “... and yet ours were the sufferings He bore, ours the sorrows He carried (cf. Is 53:4) - through His wounds, we are healed...[v. 5] ... That evening they brought Him many who were possessed by devils. He cast out the spirits with a word and cured all who were sick. This was to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah... He took our sicknesses away and carried our diseases for us...”

2.] The translation found here in Mt is from the LXX which renders “sins” rather than “sicknesses”. It would seem that Mt has taken this translation directly from the Hebrew. Mt does not use the words: “sicknesses and diseases” anywhere as euphemisms to designate the sins of humans. From this, some would conclude that perhaps the idea behind Isaiah’s original text of Is 53:4, the Prophet really meant our “sicknesses”, our physical [and mental] illnesses.

3.] This interpretation of what the Suffering Servant bore offered by Mt seems somewhat surprising. It would not seem to be enough to state that Jesus “took on” our sufferings in this context, merely by some kind of a mental act of “sympathy-empathy.” It is not enough to say either, it would seem, that the motivating force moving Jesus to heal was that He just “felt sorry” for those who suffered.

4.] A deeper insight might be the fact that in every suffering human being, there is the face of Jesus Christ. Mt’s interpretation of Is offers a profound theological reality. Jesus, the Suffering Servant, has come to take on Himself **the expiation of all sin**. Furthermore, He has also come to **alleviate the terrible**

effects of that sin. Jesus has come to “**heal**”. The prophecy may already be present in Is 53:4 - Jesus will also become “one” with all suffering humanity.

9. A passage in Mt [cf. 23:24-36; cf. also Lk 11:49-51] speaks of the suffering of the innocent: “... This is why, in my turn, I am sending you the prophets and wise men and scribes: some you will slaughter and crucify, some you will scourge in your synagogues and hunt from town to town...”

a. In Lk’s rendition of the Agony of Gethsemane, there was implied the union in Christ of the Prophets of all ages, as well as the anonymous “**Innocent Just**” through the OT centuries. All the “innocent blood ”from the beginning of the world, from Abel on down, is re-dressed in the terrible Agony and the ultimate glorious victory of Jesus Christ. Luke places the Passion of Jesus Christ at the center of the religious history of humanity, and sees it as the example, exemplary cause - the “source” of strength and grace for the Martyrs of all the subsequent ages, as well as for those who preceded Him. The Suffering Jesus is the great font of strength for all suffering painful, chronic, incurable diseases.

b. These reflections would lead almost of necessity to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah - he is the culminating poet of both the Martyrs and the Prophets of the OT, a kind of “idealized Jeremiah”. The Agony of the OT centuries finds an extraordinary model in the Suffering Servant of Yahweh.

c. The Passion of the Suffering Servant seems to be some kind of synthesis of the prophetic movement that preceded Him - and perhaps a kind of type for the “**Martyrdom Spirituality**” [of the Maccabees, Daniel] that followed. The Servant was Himself the “**Covenant**”, and also the “**Atonement**” offering the **Expiatory Sacrifice**. His offering would have an unheard of fecundity for sinful humanity. His oblation would be of immense “Messianic Benefit” for the perfect reconciliation of all human beings with God. The suffering of all ages are mysteriously “drawn up” by the Risen Christ into Salvific Suffering [cf. Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Salvifici Doloris*, February 11, 1984].

10. The Apocalypse is to be read in a similar manner as this text of Mt [cf. 23:34-36], but with a broader perspective. Keeping in mind its strictly **eschatological orientation**, it offers a complement to the Gospel perspective. All the blood and suffering of the anonymous just through the ages, shed unjustly, unfairly, and all the otherwise inexplicable human pain, even to the end of the world - all that has even been endured, up through the present - all innocent victims in some sense, are **re-capitulated in Jesus Christ**. He is the Suffering Messiah, the **Lamb Immolated**, prior to the beginning of the world. All the despotic powers [symbolized perhaps by the prostitute, Babylon] - all the pain - all the innocent can find their redress in the Lord Jesus Christ ascended now to the right hand of the Father. John uses the technical word “**Immolated**”: this can describe the Passion of the Lamb, as well as the sufferings of all human beings in union with Jesus Christ [cf. Rv 5:6, 9, 12; 6:9; 13:8; 18:24].

Summary

[1] Christian contemplation notes a two-fold participation in the redemptive sufferings of Jesus Christ:

- the freely chosen, accepted participation of the saints, who made the conscious effort to be associated with their Master;

- the involuntary participation of so many who have to suffer, without ever being able to understand the mystery that overwhelms them [cf. Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Out of Control. Global Turmoil on the Eve of the 21st Century*. NY; Scribener's-Stewart 1993].

[2] The Saints of all ages have entered into this mystery, willingly trying to offer themselves in union with Christ, striving to penetrate the mystery of His Person and Mission. In their minds and hearts, these believers through the centuries have made the conscious choice to renew their Baptism by being immersed into the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the agony of their minds, hearts and bodies, in the abyss of their apparent dereliction, in faith, they cling to their privileged heritage. The Beatitude announced by Jesus Himself: "Blessed are those who suffer persecution for My sake" - these words, and the belief that in some mysterious manner, all suffering, believed to be a closer imitation of the life of Jesus, sustains so many.

[3] Those who experience this terrible endless "Night", or "Spiritual Winter" - those who seem to have been reprovved in their entire earthly existence [cf. Kafka's *Trial*] are called , in faith, to share in the destiny, to drink from the same Cup as the Lord Jesus Himself.

[4] The Redemption of Jesus Christ is already super-abundantly complete. The price of salvation has been paid in the death of Jesus. As Head of the human race, Jesus has **re-capitulated** in Himself all the sufferings of all human beings. In the mysterious divine will, humanity has not been "dispensed" from suffering to win its own redemption. However, the mystery of Jesus Christ has made all human suffering meritorious of eternal life, and for the up-building of the reign of God. Those who do suffer are never really alone.

[5] All human sufferings in some way have already been experienced in the life of Jesus. By the grace of the theological life, all human existence comes to share intimately in the very life of Jesus. Human suffering is a **con-crucifixion**, leading toward a **con-resurrection** in Jesus Christ. The People of God are redeemed and are called daily to participate in this mystery of Redemption, communicating, sharing it, in each passing age. The Cross of Jesus Christ remains central to Christianity:

Ave, Crux! Spes Unica!

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[C] THEOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

The Influence of St. Thomas Aquinas in St. Gaspar Bertoni's Charism"

Missionarii Apostolic in OBSEQUIUM Episcoporum

Abandonment to God, Availability to the Church

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

Introduction:

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

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

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

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

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

“... This authority is even more clearly verified when, gathered together in an Ecumenical Council, they are teachers and judges of faith and morals for the universal Church. Their definitions must then be adhered to with the submission of faith...” [1].

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

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

“... This is still more clearly the case, when assembled in an Ecumenical Council, they are, for the universal Church, teachers and judges in matters of faith and morals, whose decisions must be adhered to with loyal and obedient assent of faith...” [2].

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In the gradual formulation of his charism, St. Gaspar Bertoni [1777-1853] - Founder of the Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ, was canonized on November 1, 1989], the words *in obsequium* are mused most often His charism might be described as “Abandonment to God, Availability to the Church” [3]. Much influenced by St. Ignatius of Loyola, Fr. Bertoni also received deep insights for his spirituality from the Angelic Doctor, as well as from the Word of God.

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1. *In obsequium* in the Vulgate

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

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

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

In his Second Letter to the Corinthians, Paul offers a kind of "apologia" for his ministry, and responds to the accusation that he is weak - he maintains that his every thought is captured, brought into obedience to Christ [13]. Then, in his Letter to the Philippians, there is a reference to faith, their own sacrifice and offering [14]. These texts will have much influence on St. Thomas.

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

love, revealed in His self-giving - this has its ultimate source in His filial docility toward His Father [20].

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

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2. *In Obsequium* in St. Thomas

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

- when it stands for that which is manifested to God's honor, such as sacrifice, genuflections, and the like - this is simply the "material" of the virtue;
- secondly, it can be used for the act of the virtue, its manifestation;
- the term is used to describe that habit by which the *obsequium* is offered - this is the virtue of the *latria*, known by four separate names:

- it is called *pietas*, whenever it refers to the effect of devotion;
- *theosobia*, or *eusebia* refer to the divine worship intended;
- *religio* is the determination of the works of worship offered to God;
- it is called *latria* when it means that service is exhibited in recognition is due to God as Creator [22].

St. Thomas again discusses *obsequium* at some length in his Commentary on Romans 12 [23]. He reflects on these words of St. Paul:

"... Obsecro itaque vos fratres, per misericordiam Dei ut exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem, sanctam, Deo placentem, rationabile *obsequium* vestrum ..."

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

- the good of one's soul: this is offered through the humility of devotion and contrition, as is prayed in the *Miserere* [cf. Ps 51:17]. where the Psalmist's sacrifice is presented as "this broken spirit ... this crushed and broken heart..."

- one's exterior goods, through alms-giving;

- when one exposes bodily life to death for the Reign of God, as Christ offered Himself as an oblation [cf. Ep 5:2] - and when Paul states that he rejoices over the sacrifice, or the **obsequium** of the Philippians; faith [cf. Ph 2:17];

- secondly, when one gives his/her body over to fasting and vigils [cf. 1 Co 9:27];

- thirdly, when the body is committed to works of justice and carrying out divine worship.

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

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

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

a. Models of **Obsequium** :

1.] Christ's **obsequium** redounds to the Heavenly Father: Particularly in his Commentary on John, and the scene of the washing of the Apostles' feet, St. Thomas analyzes profoundly this **obsequium** of humility. In this, Christ shows Himself to be their minister, servant [cf. Mt 20:28] - and on the mystical level, this pertains to the Incarnation and Passion of Christ. He has come to save humanity from tribulation by laying aside His majesty and assuming human smallness. This is symbolically presented in the putting off of the outer garment, putting on the towel. In washing the feet and returning to table, Christ shows the Paschal Mystery, dying on the Cross and raising up again by returning to table [24].

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

So great is the dignity of Jesus Christ that His **obsequia** shown to the Apostles redounds ultimately to the glory of God, and all that will ever be done for the faithful

through Christ redounds to the Father. This is shown in all that is done to the least of Christ's brothers and sisters, is done also for Him [cf. Mt 10:40] - and the **obsequium** exhibited to Christ redounds to His Father [27].

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

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

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

- in Hebrew, in that Christ dominated over all theology, in that the knowledge of divine things was handed over to the Israelites;
- in Greek, to show that Christ dominates over all philosophy;
- in Latin, to show that Christ is the supreme moral principle, as the Romans were known for their moral science.

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

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

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

nobis] reveals the plurality of persons. The prophet offers himself as the oblation [35].

It is in this tradition of faith and service that Mary and Joseph are chosen. In her election, Mary willingly gives her free acceptance for a sedulous and prompt **obsequium** [36]. In her response to the Angel, she offers to God the free gift of her obedience [37]. It was indeed fitting that Mary and Joseph should be married and their Espousals was indeed a true matrimony. In the purpose assigned by God, marriage must also see to the upbringing of children. Mary and Joseph fulfilled the duties of husband and wife, by which they help one another in rearing their off-spring [38]. Furthermore, the Holy Spouses needed to be instructed concerning Christ's birth before He was born, since it was their duty to show reverence to the conceived child, and to serve Him even before He was born [39].

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

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

4.] Other New Testament Personalities: The Magi are described as offering their **obsequium** not to any earthly king, but only to the Heavenly King [48]. In John the Baptist's gesture of humility, stating that he was not even worthy to loosen

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

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

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b. *Obsequium* : An essential Ecclesial Attitude

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

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

Hence, all of nature is *in obsequium Christi* - and, in a special way, was the star of the Epiphany, created and placed at the service of the recently born Christ. This star was made for His *obsequium* [63]. In the Plan of God, even evil itself is at the

service of divine justice [*obsequabatur divinae justitiae*] [64], though even a venial sin [of ingratitude] removes a virtuous act of obedience [*obsequitur*] to God [65].

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In showing that it would be licit, under certain circumstances, for a parish priest to enter religion, St. Thomas teaches that the obligation of perpetual vows stands before every other obligation, and it belongs to bishops and religious to be bound by perpetual vow to devote themselves to the divine service [*ad vacandum divinis obsequiis*] [83]. Clerical monks may also be devoted [**obsequentes**] to the sacred ministry [84]. St. Thomas also asks whether professed religious are held to obey their lawful superiors in all that is directly contained in the rule, and also those matters indirectly contained there, as all those things that pertain to their mutual assistance [*ad mutua obsequia*] [85]. The entrance into religion, then, pertains very much to God, since thereby a person devotes himself entirely to the divine service [**divinis obsequiis**] [86].

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

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

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

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

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

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

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3. *In obsequium* in the Modern Magisterium

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

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

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

b. Vatican II and Post-Conciliar Documents:

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

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

2.] Lumen Gentium 25: has been much discussed since the Council [103], but this is beyond the scope of the present study. A number of Canons also apply the principles of LG 25: Canon 218 speaks of the due allegiance to the

Magisterium of the Church [*servato debito ... obsequio...*] Canon 752 clearly distinguishes between the “assent of faith” and the “religious submission” [*religiosum tamen intellectus et voluntatis obsequium...*] even when the Supreme Pontiff, or the College of Bishops, declare upon a matter of faith, or morals, but do not intend to proclaim that doctrine by a definitive act. The very next Canon speaks of the adherence of the faithful “with a religious submission of mind” [*religioso animi obsequio adhaerere tenentur ...*] to the authentic Magisterium of their bishops in union with the Roman Pontiff. The precise nature of this religious submission is not further specified, but is asked of teachers of sacred doctrine and of all the faithful.

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

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4. *In Obsequium* in St. Gaspar Bertoni

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

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

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

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One of Fr. Bertoni’s own images in the following/imitation of Christ was the persevering effort to “draw a portrait of Jesus Christ” in one’s own life [110]. Fr. Bertoni achieved this in his personal life by offering his service to God, acceptance of long illnesses and his entire life as a Holy Abandonment. For him, *obsequium* is a key expression of this spirituality. As Christ’s own *obsequium* redounded to the glory of the Father - so Mary and Joseph, the Holy Spouses offered their precious *obsequium* to Christ. Fr. Bertoni presented the challenge of offering an ecclesial service, an

availability to the Church, through his *in obsequium Episcoporum*, in the assistance of Bishops. For the Apostolic Missio, the bishops incarnated the divine will for the Stigmatine Founder in the choice of the specific service this community is called to render.

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

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END NOTES

1. *The Documents of Vatican II.* Walter M. Abbot, SJ, General Editor. NY: Herder & Herder/ Association Press 1966, pp. 47, ff.
2. *Vatican Council II. The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents.* General Editor, Austin Flannery, OP, Dublin/Clonskeagh: Dominican Publications/ Talbot Press. 1st Printing, pp. 379,ff.
2. cf. Joseph Henchey, CSS, "Abandonment to God and Availability to the Church: St. Gaspar Bertoni [1777-1853]", in: *ANGELICUM* LXVII (1990), pp. 87-108.
4. "... puellam parvam, quae erat in obsequio uxoris Naaman..." [cf. 4 Reg. 5:2; cf. also Ps 123:4].
5. "... qui delentibus obsequiis eorum acquievit ei..." [2 Par. 24:17].
6. "... ambulare in praeceptis eius et obsequi edictis eius ..." [1 Macc. 6:23].
7. "... qui serviunt, obsequentes erunt sancto ..." [Eccli 4:15].
8. "... bonum est obsequi Domino..." [Eccli 46:12].
9. "... qui interficit eos, arbitretur obsequium se praestare Deo ..." [Jn 16:2].
10. "... legislatio et cultus [obsequium] et promissiones..." [Rm 9:4].
11. "... et ministerium meum pro Ierusalem acceptum..." [or: obsequii mei oblatio accepta fiat in Hierosolymam...] [Rm 15:31; cf. also Ph 2:30: "... erga meum obsequium ..."]
12. "... Obsecro itaque vos, fratres, per misericordiam, ut exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem, sanctam Dei placentem, rationabile obsequium vestrum..." [Rm 12:1; cf. also 1 Pet. 2:5 ff.].
13. "... et in captivitatem redigentes omnem intellectum in obsequium Christi ..." [2 Co 10:5].
14. "... it obsequium fidei vestrae..." - "... deerat erga meum obsequium [ministerii erga me]" [Ph 2:17, 30].
15. Council of Florence, Decree for the Jacobites: "... omniaque sunt unum, ubi non obviat relationis oppositio..." [D-S 1330. Denzinger-Schonmetzr, *Enchiridion Symbolorum Definitionum et Declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*. Editio 36. Barcinone/Friburgi/Romae: Herder 1876 -

“...everything (in them) is one where there is no position of relationship...” - *The Christian Faith in the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church*. Revised Edition. Edited by J. Neuner, SJ, and J. Dupuis, SJ. Staten Island, NY: Alba 1981, n.325, p.11.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

25. ib., n.2. p. 528 b: “... ponit Christi obsequium ...”

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

27. ib., n. 9, p. 533 b: “... obsequia eis impensa quoddammodo videantur redundare in Deum ... obsequium Christo exhibitum redundat in Patem...”

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

29. ib., Caput XXVI, Lectio I. Vol X, p. 241 s: "...tertio facto et obsequio ..."
30. In Epist. ad Heb., Caput IX, Lectio III. Vol XIII, p. 740 b: "... sanguis Christi ad spirituale obsequium..."
31. Super Evang. Io., Caput XIX, Lectio IV, 2. Vol. X, p. 618 b:"... in obsequium Christi, ut dicitur in 2 Co 10 ..."
32. Summa Theol III, q. 49, a. 4 c: "...propter aliquod obsequium acceptum quo ei exhibetur..."
33. In Ep. ad Gal, Caput III, Lectio 9.Vol XIII, p. 412 a:"... sine obsequi legis ..."
34. In Epis ad Rom., Caput IX, Lectio 1. Vol. XIII, p. 92: "... et obsequium, quo sc. Deo serviebant ..."
35. In Isaiam, Caput VI, n.2 - Vol. XIV, p. 457 b:"... Secundo ponitur oblatum obsequium ..."
36. III Sent., d. III, q. II, a. 1. Vol VII, 1, p. 45 b: "... ad obsequium...'Ecce ancilla Domini'..."
37. III, q. 30, a. 1 c: "Tertio, ut voluntaria sui obsequii..."
38. III, q. 36, a. 2, ad 2um: "... et obsequii nascituro ..."
39. III,q. 29, a. 2 c: "... sibi invicem obsequuntur ad prolem nutriendum ..."
40. Super Evang. Matt., Caput I, 4. Vol X, p. 16 a: "... ipsius Joseph futurum obsequium..."
41. ib.,n. 4, p. 17 a: "... ipsius Joseph obsequium ..."
42. ib., Caput II, 5. p. 19 b: "... Sequitur obsequium. Lc 2..."
43. ib., p. 25 b: "... ut obsequeretur Unigenito. Is 19,1..."
44. Super Evang. Io., Caput I, Lectio XVI,4. Vol X, p. 329 b: "... Angeli ... inquantum ei adsunt obsequendo et ministrando ..."
45. Super Evang. Matt. Caput XXVI, 6. Vol. X, p. 236 b: "... Quicumque enim obsequuntur Deo, Angeli dicuntur. Ps 103:4 ..."
46. Super Evang. Io. Caput XX, Lectio 2, n.2. Vol. X, p. 626 b: "... omnes Angelorum ordines ... Christo obsequuntur..."
47. I-II, q.102, a.4, ad 6um: "... quasi Deo obsequuntur..."
48. Super Evang. Matt. Caput II,1. Vol X, p. 22 a: "... non praestaverunt [Magi] obsequium regi terreno ..."
49. Super Evang. Io. Caput I, Lectio 13 4.Vol. X, p. 317 b:"... quod est minimum obsequium ..."
50. ib.,Caput XI, Lectio III, 1. Vol. X, p. 491 a, b: "... beneficia et obsequia ..."

51. ib., Caput XII, Lectio I, n. 3, 4. Vol. X, pp. 505, b, f.: "... ponit obsequium Cristo exhibitum..."
52. ib., n.4, p. 506 a: "... [Martha et Maria} ... obsequium ..."
53. ib., p. 507 a: "... caput Christi iungit qui ipsum obsequitur ..."
54. ib., Lectio II. p. 508 a: "... et obsequium hujus mulieris..."
55. ib., n. 6. Vol. X, p. 507 a: "... effusum in obsequium Christi ..."
56. ib., p. 508 b: "... tulit obsequium Christo impensum..."
57. ib., Caput XX, Lectio VI, a. Vol X, p. 622 a.: "... publice obsequendo..."
58. ib., Caput X, Lectio IV, 2. Vol. X, p. 480 a: "... 'Et cognoscunt me meae...' me diligentes obsequuntur..."
59. ib., Caput XIX, Lectio IV, aa. Vol. X, p. 620 b: "... (Apostoli) secuti sunt Iesum... diligenter et reverenter obsequebantur..."
60. In Epist. ad Rom., Caput I, Lectio I. Vol. XIII, p.4 b: "... Paulus servus... servitus amoris ... est beneficere et obsequi amico ..."
61. In Epist. ad Phil. Caput II, Lectio IV. Vol. XIII, pp. 517, a-518 b: "... erga meum obsequium..."
62. Super vang. Io. Caput I, Lectio VIII, n.2. Vol X, p. 307 b: "... Tertio vero ad naturae obsequium..."
63. Super Evang. Matt. Caput II, Lectio II. Vol. X, p.21 b: "... ad obsequium eius factam..."
64. Ad Heb. Caput XI, Lectio VI. Vol XIII, p. 767 b: "... etsi obsequatur ... divinae justitiae..."
65. II-II, q. 107, a. 3 ad 1um: "... homo Deo obsequitur..."
66. IV Sent., d.24, q.3, a.2, q.1a. 3, ad 3um. Vol. VII, II, p. 901 b: "... mancipare aliquid divinitus obsequiis... Episcopus specialiter sponsus Ecclesiae dicitur, sicut Christus..."
67. ib., q. II, a 7, p. 898, b: "... Per benedictionem, divinis obsequiis..."
68. II-II, q. 100, a.5, ad 1um: "... munus ab obsequio..."
69. In Epist. ad Phil., caput I, Lectio III. Vol. XIII, p. 509 b: "... corpus nostrum deputamus ad obsequium eius..."
70. Super Evang. Matt. Caput VIII, Lectio 3. Vol X, p. 86 a: "... per obsequium mandatorum..."
71. III Sent., d.13, q.2, a. 1, obj. 6. Vol VII/I, p.139: "... ut nutrimentum et alia obsequia ..."
72. In Epist. ad Gal., Caput VI, Lectio 2. Vol. XIII, p.438 a: "... inferiores debere superioribus et obsequi ... prompte... perseveranter ... commuiter..."

73. II-II, q. 125, a. 1, ad 2um: "... ne deficiat ab obsequiis..."
74. ib., q. 88, a. 5 c: "... votum ...in divinum cultum, seu obsequium ..."
75. ib., a.12, ad 1um: "... homo totam vitam suam Dei obsequium deputat..."
76. ib., a. 188, a.2, ad 1um: "... ad divinum obsequium spectant..."
77. ib., q. 187, a. 1, ad 3um: "... docere et praedicare pertinent ad ecclesiastica obsequia..."
78. ib., a. 2 c: "... dilectioni divinae obsequuntur..."
79. ib., q. 188, a. 2 c, ad 3um: "... obsequia ... dicuntur esse sacrificia..."
80. ib., a. 4 c, et ad 4um: "... et ad obsequia... gratis ...ministrare..."
81. ib., a.5, ad 3um: "... ad religiosos, quorum tota vita divinitus obsequiis mancipatur..."
82. ib., a. 7 c: "... qui est vacare divinis obsequiis..."
83. ib., q. 189, a. 7 c: "... ad vacandum divinis obsequiis..."
84. ib., a. 8, ad 2um: "... sacris mysteriis obsequentes..."
85. II Sent., d. 44, q. 2, a. 3. Vol VI, p. 789 b: "... quae pertinet ad mutua obsequia..."
86. II-II, q. 189, a. 3 c, et ad 3um: "... per hoc homo totaliter mancipat divinis obsequiis..."
87. St. Thomas several times returns to the matter of religious caring for their own parents, making use of obsequium: 1-II, q. 100, a. 5, ad 4um; II-II, q. 101, a. 2 c; a. 4 ad 3um; q. 189, a. 6 c et ad 1um.
88. II-II, q. 2, a. 2, c, et ad 1um et 4um: "... credere in Deum..."
89. In Epist I ad Tim., Caput II, Lectio I. Vol. XIII, p. 592 a: "... ad cultum fidei, ex orationibus et obsequiis..."
90. III Sent., d.23, q. 2, a. 4, ad 3um. Vol VII/1, p. 252 a: "... captivans in obsequium Christi, ut dictum est in 2 Co 10..."
91. In Ps 40., n.6. Vol. XIV, p.312 b: "... ad familiare obsequium et colloquium..."
92. I, q. 1, a. 8, ad 2um: "... naturalis inclinatio voluntatis obsequitur caritati..."
93. II-II, q. 184, a. 3, ad 3um: "... ut liberius divinis obsequiis vacet..."
94. II-II, q. 82, a. 3 c: "... homo concipit quod se tradat divino obsequio..."
95. In Epist. ad Heb., Caput XII, Lectio 5. Vol. XIII, p. 783 a: "... Maxime autem servitur Deo per obsequium interius, Ps 50, et Lc 1:74..."
96. D-S 3008; *The Christian Faith*, n. 118, p. 42.

97. Sessio VI, Cap.6: "... Disponuntur autem ad ipsam dum excitati divina gratia et adjuti, fidem ex auditu concipientes, libere moventur in Deum, credentes vera esse quae divinitus revelata et promissa sunt ..." cf. D-S 1526; *The Catholic Faith*, n. 1930, p. 557.

98. Roger Aubert, *Le probleme de l'acte de foi. Donnees traditionnelles et resultats des controverses recentes*. 4ieme ed., Louvain/Paris: Nauwelaerts/Beatrice - Nauwelaerts 1969, pp. 157,ff.

99. DV 1: "... Sancrosancta Synodus verbis S. Ioannis obsequitur dicentis ..." Flannery: "... the Sacred Synod assents to the words of St. John..."

DV 5: "... Deo revelanti praestanda est oboeditio fidei (cf. Rm 16:26; Coll. Rm 1:5; 2 Co 10:5-6), qua homo se totum libere Deo committit 'plenum revelanti Deo intellectus et voluntatis obsequium praestando (Vat. I, 3008), et voluntati revelationi ab Eo data assentiendo..." ["... By faith,, a man commits his entire self to God..." - Flannery].

100. cf. Aubert, o.c., pp. 691, ff., especially p. 695.

101. o.c., pp. 703, ff.

102. cf. Jean-Marie Faux, SJ, *La Foi du Nouveau Testament*. o.c., pp. 289, ff.

103. *The Kung Dialogue. Facts and Documents. A Documentation on the Efforts of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith and of the Conference of German Bishops to achieve an appropriate Clarification of the Controversial Views of Dr Hans. Kung [Tubingen]*. Washington DC: U.S. Catholic Conference 1980; cf. also Charles E. Curran, *Faithful Dissent*. London: Sheed & Ward 1987.

104. '*Symposium Bertonianum*' In occasione della solenne canonizzazione del Fondatore degli Stigmatini, S. Gaspare Bertoni. [Sabato, 28 ottobre 1989. Pontificia Universita' S. Tommaso. ANGELICUM] Verona: Edizioni Stimmgraf.

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

106. Jesuit Constitutions, Pars VII, Caput I: "De Missionibus Summi Pontificis":
n. 603: "... quacumque maius Dei et Domini nostri obsequium et animum profectum... ubi magnus divinae gloriae et obsequii proventus speratur..."
n. 608: "... et maius Dei obsequium mittere cogitaret..."
n. 609: "...a Summo Pontifice mittatur ut Eius Sanctitas ad maius Dei et Sedis Apostolicae obsequium fore..."
n. 611: "... sint ad huiusmodi missionem aptiores; ... ad Dei obsequium..."
n. 612: "... missionem suam et scopum ... ut in omnibus ad Dei et Sedis Apostolicae obsequium utilius suum impendat ministerium..."
n. 614: "...sed etiam Summi Pontificis missionibus iuvare poterit; ut melius quod ad Christi Domini nostri obsequium quaeritur, consequatur..."
n. 615: "... qui sanctam intentionem Pontificis in Christi Domini nostri obsequium..."
n. 616: "... divini obsequii poshabebit ..."

107. ib., cf.n. 605.

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

n. 612, n. 2: "... ubi maius Dei obsequium ... speratur..."

109. cf. G. B. Lenotti, "Flnis: Missionari Apostolici in Obsequium Episcoporum", in: *Collectanea Stigmatina. Collezione di documenti e studi riservata agli Stigmatini*. Roma: Curia Generalizia 1961, pp. 408, ff.: "...Si vede chiaro che l'intendimento del P. Bertoni deve essere stato di istituire una Congregazione, la quale, come la Compagnia di Gesu' e' in modo speciale dedicata, indirizzata all'ossequio e alle disposizioni del Romano Pontefice, avesse ad essere dedicata e determinata in modo tutto speciale e segnalato al servizio ed ossequio dei Vescovi ... I Nostri non facciamo il voto di obbedienza al Vscovo, ma cerchiamo in ogni guisa che possano aiutarlo, assisterlo ossequiosamente, in modo particolare a lui dedicati ... Due le principali armi del Missionario: la spada della Divina Parola e la spada dell'Orazione... La Spada della Divina parola: ... nel confessionale, nelle carceri, sul pergamo, sul palco, dagli altari, negli Esercizi, Missioni, Oratori, Ritiri, conversazioni familiari, ecc., animandola dallo Spirito del Signore..."

110. Personal Diary, *Memoriale Privato*, February 26, 1809, in: *Lo Spirito del Beato Gaspae Bertoni*. Verona: Stigmatini 1914. Reprinted 1977, p. 229: "Dobbiamo fare un ritratto i noi stessi di Gesu' Cristo..."

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