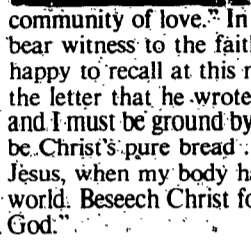


# Confession Should Be Joyous Event

Following are excerpts from a homily given by Pope John Paul II during a Mass he celebrated at St. Ignatius of Antioch Church in Rome

Inspired by the sanctifying presence of Christ, let us address together our thought of veneration and prayer, imploring his intercession, to the great bishop and martyr Ignatius, the protector of this parish of yours, who, the successor of St. Peter in the See of Antioch, and condemned to the wild animals for his Christian testimony, underwent martyrdom in Rome about the end of the month of December of the year 107. His remains rest in St. Clement's Basilica in Via Labicana. Sanctifying the Roman soil with his blood, he thus became one of the most illustrious Fathers of the faith of this glorious Church of ours, which — in his words — "worthy of God, worthy of glory, worthy of being called blessed... presides over the universal



community of love." In connection with his ardent desire to bear witness to the faith and be sacrificed for Christ, I am happy to recall at this moment some famous passages from the letter that he wrote to the Romans: "I am God's grain and I must be ground by the teeth of wild animals in order to be Christ's pure bread... Then I will be a true disciple of Jesus, when my body has disappeared from the sight of the world. Beseech Christ for me, that I may become a host for God."

A fundamental content of the teaching of St. Ignatius concerns the unity of the Church, which is constructed only round the bishop. Let us listen to what he wrote to the faithful of Smyrna: "Obey the bishop, all of you, as Jesus Christ obeys the Father... Let no one do anything of what belongs to the Church separately from the bishop. When the bishop is present, let the multitude of the faithful be present too, just as where there is Jesus Christ, there is the Catholic Church."

In this spirit of unity and charity I address my affectionate greeting to you present here, and to all the 8,000 faithful of the parish; in particular I wish to reach with my thought and good wishes the children, the sick and all those in need.

Today, the Church intends to address to us a firm call to reconciliation with God. The Gospel presents it to us as a fundamental attitude, as the primary content of our life of faith. The invitation to reconciliation must resound with particular forcefulness in our hearts and our consciences. If we really are disciples and confessors of Christ, who reconciled man with God, we cannot live without seeking this inner reconciliation, on our side. We cannot remain in sin and not endeavor to find again the way that leads to the house of the Father, who is always waiting for our return.

The Church calls us to seek this way: "We beseech you on

**'The confessionals in the world, where men confess their sins, do not speak of God's severity, but rather of his merciful goodness.'**

behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." Only by being reconciled to God can we "taste and see that the Lord is good!" discovering it, so to speak, by experience.

The confessionals in the world, where men confess their sins, do not speak of God's severity, but rather of his merciful goodness. And those who approach the confessional, sometimes after many years and with the weight of serious sins, find the longed-for relief when they go away; they meet with joy and serenity of conscience, which they can find nowhere else but in confession.

No one in fact has the power to free us from our sin except God. And the man who obtains this remission of sins, receives the grace of a new life of the spirit, which only God can grant him in his infinite goodness.

"This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles."

By means of the parable of the Prodigal Son, the Lord Jesus wished to impress deeply this splendid and very rich truth not only in our intellect, but also in our imagination, in our heart and in our conscience. How many men in the course of these centuries, how many of those of our time, can find in this parable the fundamental features of their own personal history? There are three key phrases in the story of the Prodigal Son, with whom each of us, in a way, identifies, when he indulges in sin.

The first phase: going away. We go away from God, as that son went away from his father, when we begin to behave with regard to every good that is in us in the same way as he did with the goods he had received as his inheritance. We forget that good is given to us by God as a task, as an evangelical talent. Operating with it, we must multiply our inheritance, and, in this way, render glory to Him from whom we received it. Unfortunately, we sometimes behave as if that good which is in us, the good of the soul and of the body, capacities, faculties, strength were exclusively our property, which we can use and abuse in any way, wasting and dissipating it.

Sin, in fact, is always a squandering of our humanity, a squandering of our most precious values. Such is the actual reality, even if it may sometimes seem that precisely sin enables us to obtain success. Going away from the Father

always brings with it great destruction in the one who does so, the one who disobeys his will and dissipates his inheritance in himself: the dignity of his own human person, the inheritance of grace.

The second phase in our parable is that of the return to sound reason and the process of conversion. Man must discover painfully what he has lost, what he has deprived himself of by committing sin, living in sin, in order that the decisive step may mature in him: "I will arise and go to my father." He must see again the face of that Father, upon whom he had turned his back and with whom he had broken off relations in order to be able to sin "freely," to be able to waste "freely" the goods he had received. He must come face to face with the Father, realizing, like the young man in the parable, that he has lost the dignity of a son, that he does not deserve a welcome in his father's house. At the same time he must long to return. The certainty of the goodness and love that belong to the essence of God's fatherhood, must outweigh in him awareness of his guilt and his own unworthiness. In fact this certainty must appear as the only way out, to be undertaken with courage and confidence.

Finally the third phase: return. The return takes place as Christ describes in the parable. The Father of the Prodigal Son, is waiting and forgets all the wrongs committed by his son, and no longer considers all the waste of which his son is guilty. For the Father only one thing is important: that his son has been found again, that he has not completely lost his humanity; that, in spite of everything, he has the firm resolve to live again as a son, precisely because of his awareness of his unworthiness and sin.

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Thinking back, you can probably remember several times in your life when your emotions ran high — times when life seemed truly worth living. The ability to enjoy life — to relax and delight in some of the wonderful things it offers — make up the good times. And sharing this happiness with others makes the experience even richer.

Likewise, we can all remember more troubled moments — perhaps even a time so difficult that we felt life really wasn't worth continuing. These moments, too, are better shared with others.

The death of someone you love is one of those times and, as funeral directors, we have helped many people as they face this hard reality. Our years of experience have made us able to offer genuine assistance at a time when it is much needed. The services we offer extend far beyond the funeral itself — if you have questions we can answer, please call at any time.

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## CRS Establishes Romero Fund

Bishop Edwin B. Broderick, Catholic Relief Services' executive director, announced the establishment of the Archbishop Romero-El Salvador Memorial Relief Fund, according to a CRS press release. CRS has allocated \$10,000 to the fund, which will assist the victims of the civil war in El Salvador.

Romero was assassinated while celebrating Mass on March 24. He was nominated for the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize, and he recently received \$10,000 from Sweden's Ecumenical Action organization along with its 1980 peace prize for his efforts to end the violence in El Salvador.

Bishop Broderick said, "As usual, the poor will suffer the most from the turmoil in the country. Their best spokesman has now been silenced, but our Fund can carry forward his words into further action on their behalf."

new fund for the transportation of food relief to the areas most affected by the fighting.

Donations may be sent to Catholic Relief Services, Archbishop Romero-El Salvador Memorial Relief Fund, 1011 First Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022.

Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo

According to the release

Catholic Relief Services is providing a grant from the

## Bishops' Spring Meeting Begins Tuesday

More than 250 American bishops will assemble Tuesday at the Palmer House in Chicago to consider a number of reports developed from previous discussions.

The bishops will be asked to give preliminary approval to two pastoral letters being prepared by committees — one on Catholic higher education and one on health affairs, "areas in which the Church is heavily engaged," the announcement from Washington points out.

The Catholic Communication Campaign. Five models for reducing the budget, programs and staff of the NCCB and USCC also will be presented. The budget for the two organizations is about \$14.5 million, of which \$4.5 million comes from the dioceses at the rate of ten cents per Catholic.

result of a committee study, Archbishop John R. Roach of St. Paul and Minneapolis will recommend that such a session be held. It would last for 10 or 12 days in mid-1982, probably in a university or seminary setting.

This will be the last Spring meeting of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and their action agency, the United States Catholic Conference. The bishops voted last year to return to the practice of holding one general meeting a year, in November, in Washington, D.C.

The agenda for the April 29-May 1 meeting includes also reports on studies of satellite systems that were undertaken with funds from

The possibility of an extraordinary session to focus on some issues facing the Church in the United States will be raised again. As a

The Hispanic Affairs Committee will air some of its concerns and has invited the bishops to a Mass in Spanish and a fiesta to be held in a Chicago parish.

## Class of 1950

The Class of 1950 at Aquinas Institute will have a 30th reunion May 16 at Sweet's Party House. Any member of the class who has not been contacted is requested to contact Pete Klee at 422-3962 during the day or at 271-5688 evenings, or Bob Gleichauf at 482-8427.

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