

Chapter 3

The Third Secret: The Communal Gift of God

The first two chapters talked about dispositions Catholics need to cooperate with to sacramental grace personally. This chapter and the next talk about the dispositions pastoring must foster if Catholics are to help the Church carry on Jesus work of saving all humankind.

Receiving Jesus's grace makes Christians members of a community, the Church, that is the Trinity's extended family. Somewhere in a hierarchical list of Christian truths will appear crucial truths about the Church's institutional structure. Not everyone in the Church has the same function. Some members have social roles with distinct spiritual powers and responsibilities that others do not have. Where does that truth belong in the hierarchy? The fact that the Church has an organizational structure logically presupposes other, more basic truths. In order for us to even make sense of truths about the Church's structure, we must first know the truths that there is such a thing as a Church and that the Church carries on Jesus's work by distributing his grace.

But in the hierarchy of truths, should truths about the community's structure follow immediately after the fact that Christ founded a saving community? Pastorally the answer is no. Despite the obvious importance of truths about the Church's structure, there is a more important truth that precedes it. What kind of life is that community supposed to live as a community? What kind of life must all the members of the community share regardless of their positions in the institutional structure? Every community has some sort of life shared by its members; otherwise, it is not a community. Unless we know the nature of that shared life, we cannot understand the reason for the community's institutional structure; for the purpose of that structure must be to support and nurture that life. So unless pastors understand the nature of the Church's life as a community, they cannot direct their ministry toward the purpose for which it exists.

The life of the Church is the life of sanctifying grace, divine Trinitarian life, lived not just in individual Christians but among and between brother and sister Christians. The life of

the Church presupposes that individual Christians have the same faith and hope. But most importantly, the life of the Church, which it is the purpose of the ordained ministry to foster, is the love between the members of the Trinity and so between the members of Trinity's extended family. I believe that another reason for our present pastoral crisis is that we have kept secret this pastorally fundamental truth: The Church is a brother/sisterhood whose members have a special call to love their fellow members as Jesus and his Father love each other and love each one of them.

1.

We know that Christ calls us to love all people without favoritism, but we also know that we should not love everyone in the same manner. For example, we are obligated to show love to our families in ways that we are not obligated to show love to our neighbors' families. Still, how many Catholics know that Christians have a special obligation to love their fellow Christians based on the nature of the Church itself? "Do good to all men--but especially to those of the household of the faith" (Gal. 6:10). This is not an offhand remark. The love of Christians specifically for other Christians is constantly on the mind of the New Testament writers. But in case you are afraid that I am going to give you an unenlightened interpretation of Scripture, after looking at the New Testament, I will confirm everything I am going to say about mutual Christian love by the documents of Vatican II.

Sometimes the New Testament writers refer to love for the "saints" or, as we can also translate, love for the "holy ones." As you know, the New Testament never uses the term "saint" for anyone but baptized Christians.

Because I have heard of . . . your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you (Eph 1:15-16).

I thank my God always . . . because I hear of your love . . . toward . . . all the saints (Philem 4).

We always thank God . . . because have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love which you have for all the saints, because of the hope laid up for you in heaven

(Col 1:3-5).

God is not so unjust as to overlook . . . the love which you showed for his sake in serving the saints (Heb 6:10. See also 2 Cor 9:12; Eph 6:18; Rom 12:13; 1 Tm 5:10.).

Sometimes the New Testament refers to the love of Christians for other Christians as "brotherly" love or love of the "brethren."

Having purified your souls . . . for a sincere love of the brethren, love one another earnestly from the heart (1 Pt 1:22).

Have unity of spirit, sympathy, love of the brethren, a tender heart and a humble mind (1 Pt 3:8).

Peter expects his readers to know that love of the brethren does not refer to love for all people. For he and other New Testament writers specifically distinguish between Christian brother/sisterly love and love for all people.

Honor all men. Love the brotherhood (1 Pt 2 :17).

Do not wonder, brethren, that the world hates you. We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren (1 Jn 3:14; see also Jn 20:17).

Those (slaves) who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brethren; rather they must serve all the better since those who benefit by their service are believers and beloved (1 Tim 6:2).

May the Lord make you . . . abound in love to one another and to all men (1 Thes 3:12).

The love "to one another" in the last quotation is not the same as its love "to all men." Here and elsewhere in the New Testament, the words "one another" mean what they say: They refer to the people the author is addressing, who happen to be believing Christians, not to people in general.¹ For just a few verses later Paul says:

But concerning love of the brethren . . . you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another, and indeed you do love all the brethren throughout Macedonia (1

Thes 4:9-10).

What they were doing with respect to “all the brethren throughout Macedonia” is to “love one another.” So when Paul begins by announcing that the words to follow concern “love of the brethren,” he is specifically referring to Christians’ love for fellow Christians, not the love for “all men” in the preceding passage but the love for “one another” in that passage. Paul repeats this distinction in 1 Thes 5:15.

And all the exhortations to love in the first epistle of John are exhortations for Christians to love their brother and sister Christians. For immediately after one of the exhortations to love our “brother” (4:21), he defines who our brothers and sisters are, the “children of God” in the sense of believers:

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten of God. Now everyone who loves the father loves the child he has begotten. We can be sure that we love God’s children when we love God and do what he has commanded Everyone begotten of God conquers the world, and the power that has conquered the world is this faith of ours. Who, then, is conqueror of the world? The one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God (5:1-5, NAB).

In these places and others like them the New Testament authors are in no way denying that we must love all people as ourselves. They knew that there is only one love, the Holy Spirit, in the Christian’s heart. And they knew that the Holy Spirit loves all people equally. But the Holy Spirit gives us different obligations to different people, and among those obligations is our obligation to love our fellow Christians in a special way worthy of being called brother/sisterly love.

The New Testament authors also knew that this special way of loving is very important; otherwise, they would not have kept reminding Christians about it. The fourth gospel explains why the early Church considered mutual Christian love that important. In the priestly prayer of chapter 17, Jesus is speaking to his father, “I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me” (Jn 17:9). The author

could hardly make it clearer that this prayer is for Christians only, not for all people. Jesus distinguishes everyone else from a particular group of people, his disciples. And he goes on to ask his father that his disciples "may be one, even as we are one" (Jn 17:11).

Jesus is calling His disciples to the kind of unity that He and the Father have. What kind of unity is that? Doctrinal unity? Doctrinal unity is necessary, and we must certainly seek it. But if we had complete doctrinal unity, we still would not be one as the Father and Son are one. That unity hardly stops at agreement on doctrine.

Their unity is a unity of love. And in the context of the priestly prayer, their love is characterized as familial love. The very names Jesus uses in this prayer, "Father . . . Son" (Jn 17:1), tell us that: "Father . . . (I pray) that they may be one as we (Father and Son), are one" (Jn 17:11). The Christian God is a family of persons ecstatically in love with each other, and Christ's disciples are to display a familial love among themselves (love of Christians for fellow Christians) that reflects the Trinity.

Jesus is calling His disciples to a way of loving that specifically concerns His disciples' relations with other disciples, not with the whole world. He assumes that the apostles know that we must love all people without discrimination. But it just happens that love for all people is not what is on Jesus's mind here. He is answering a different kind of question. Consider the reason Jesus gives for unity among His disciples:

I do not pray for these only but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me and I in you . . . so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory which you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one . . . so that the world may know that you have sent me (Jn 17:20-23).

And he adds that the saving unity he is talking about is the result of love:

. . . so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. . . . I made known to them your name . . . that the love with which you have loved me may be in them (Jn 17:23-26).

How important is Christian brother/sisterly love for other Christians? Somehow, non-Christians coming to know that Jesus is from the Father depends on Christians having a special familial love for one another. So Christian love for other Christians is not in spite of non-Christians; it is for the sake of non-Christians.

Concerning this interpretation of Jesus's priestly prayer, recall that before looking at the priestly prayer, we had already seen how important Christian brother/sisterly love was to the writers of the epistles. The only thing the priestly prayer adds is the reason this love is so important.

Now, what does Vatican II say? The very first paragraph of the Constitution on the Church says, "The Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very close knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race." So the unity of which the Church is a sacrament is not discriminatory. The Church is a sign of the unity of the whole human race. But it is the Church that is the sign of that unity, not the whole human race. For later the Constitution on the Church says:

God has gathered together as one all those who in faith look upon Jesus as the author of salvation and the source of unity and peace, and established them as the Church that for each and all it may be the visible sacrament of this saving unity (9).

If the Church is a sacrament of unity, how does it signify that unity? The sign of baptism is water; the sign of the Eucharist is food and drink. If the Church is a sacrament, what is the visible sign that corresponds to water in baptism and food and drink in the Eucharist? Does the Church signify unity by our agreement on doctrine, membership in the same organization, submission to the same authority or participation in the same sacred services? From the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World:

It is the function of the Church . . . to make God the father and his incarnate son present and in a sense visible. . . . What does most to reveal God's presence, however, is the brotherly charity of the faithful who are united in spirit . . . and who prove themselves a sign of unity (21; emphasis supplied).

The council here distinguishes “the brotherly charity of the faithful,” as what “does most to reveal God’s presence,” from a number of other ways the Church witnesses to God, including “justice and love, especially regarding the needy.” So the council is saying exactly what we have just seen in Jesus’s priestly prayer. The visible sign that makes the Church a sacrament of unity is primarily the brother/sisterly love that unifies the faithful with each other. The unity that makes the Church a sacrament is not just unity of doctrine, organization, authority or public worship. These are very important but they are means to another end, the end of the Church being a loving extended family and being so visibly; if those other things do not achieve that end, they are not fulfilling their purpose.

We are now in a position to correct a widespread and serious misunderstanding of another New Testament passage on love:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another (Jn 13:34-35).

Every Scripture scholar I have read on this passage recognizes that Jesus’s New Law distinguishes all people from a particular group of people, the disciples, and does not say that all people will recognize the disciples for loving all people. It says everyone will recognize his disciples for loving their fellow disciples (love “one another,” that is, the specific group that Jesus is addressing). So, Jesus’s New Law is talking about the same thing that Paul’s epistles, 1st Peter, 1st John, and “Hebrews” call love for the saints or love for the brothers.

Scripture scholars point out that in the discourse at the last supper, the author frequently repeats himself, saying the same things in different ways. If so, we should conclude that in the New Law the author presents Jesus expressing as a commandment what he later expresses in the form of the priestly prayer, the need for loving unity between his disciples.

2.

Although I have never read a Scripture scholar who does not admit that Jesus’s New Law is talking about the disciples’ love for their fellow disciples, not for all people, you often

have to read scholars very closely to see that. They can de-emphasize Christian brother/sisterly love so much that, unless you are looking for it when you read them, you can miss it.

Perhaps the scholars and others are embarrassed by the New Law's apparent "discrimination" between Christians and non-Christians. As a result, the importance of Christian brother/sisterly love has been watered down to the point that it is not even in most people's consciousness. When I have asked priests, deacons and lay persons who the "one another" are in Jesus's New Law of love for one another, never has anyone identified the "one another" as the disciples.

We know that Jesus's earlier command to love our neighbors as ourselves is a call to love all human beings as our equals in dignity. And that certainly means that we cannot discriminate by treating some people as more worthy of love than others. But we are also obligated to love different people in different ways, and those different ways of practicing love do not amount to unjust discrimination under normal circumstances.

For example, in normal circumstances we are obligated to show love to members of our families differently from the ways we show love to others. Parents are obligated to show love to their own children in ways they do not normally show it to the children next door. And rather than being discriminatory in an unjust way, it would be a violation of love, in most cases, for parents to show love to the children next door in the same ways that the parents next door do, for example, to spend as much time with them as with their own children.

But nondiscrimination is not the only issue here. Showing love in special ways to their own children is an obligation parents owe to other parents. Parents depend on other parents to bring their respective children up. Society depends on each set of parents to show love in special ways to their own children, because that is how younger members of society are best brought up.

Nor is this obligation to show special love legalism. It only concerns what is true in

normal, day-to-day living. In an emergency, parents can be obligated to take in the children next door and treat them just like their own.

Christian love for other Christians is no more unjustly discriminatory than our love for our own families. Our obligation to love all people is consistent with our obligation to show love in special ways to our natural families, and it is consistent with a special obligation to love our Christian brothers and sisters. Beyond mere consistency, if parents fail to love their children in special ways, they are being unloving to the rest of society, which relies on parents to give children the care children need. Likewise, our obligation to love non-Christians includes the obligation to have a special brother/sisterly love for fellow Christians, because non-Christians coming to know Jesus depends on it.

Like the obligation for normal familial love, the obligation for Christian familial love is not legalism. We should meet any human being's needs with the same kind of love Jesus showed for the disciples. He was not telling us to go around giving people tests before we decide how much to love them. Again, Jesus was answering a different kind of question. The question Jesus was answering is one that we do not even think of (which tells us a lot about our pastoral culture; see section 4 of this chapter). He was telling the apostles what kind of Church he wanted. He was concerned about the interior life of the Church as a society, not just about the individual lives of the members of the society. He wanted a Church that would function as an extended family, a brother/sisterhood. And he was telling the apostles what kind of family he wanted the Church to be. In the normal, day-to-day life, not just of individual Christians but of the body of Christians, the Church, the relations of Christians to other Christians should be marked by a brother/sisterly love, and should be marked so strongly and so visibly that the Church would show the way he and the Father love one another and love us.

Charity presupposes justice. The New Law does not tell us to practice unfair favoritism toward Christians. For example, if you are a medical doctor treating several patients equally in need of care but one of the patients is your child, you must not give preferential

care to your child at the expense of giving each patient the care they need and deserve. Similarly, preferential treatment for fellow Christians would be wrong if it deprived non-Christians of justice. It would also be wrong if it created scandal by unnecessarily giving the appearance of injustice. (To the extent that the appearance of injustice can be in the eye of the beholder, however, not everything called scandal need be wrong; Christ crucified was a "scandal to Jews" who did not believe [1 Co 1:23-24; literal translation].)

God's thoughts are not our thoughts. Jesus's pastoral plan is not the one we would have come up with. Jesus's pastoral plan is that the world be saved through the brother/sisterly love of Christians for fellow Christians. The Church's life is supposed to be fraternal.

But why should the love of Christians for other Christians be what brings non-Christians to know that Jesus was from the Father? When the author of the fourth gospel says that non-Christians will come to know Jesus through the loving unity of Christians, he is probably saying that that is how non-Christians will find salvation. But we realize that people who do not know Jesus can be saved. Does that lessen the importance of the Church being a brother/sisterhood?

No. Consider this passage:

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions and thanksgiving be made for all men This is good . . . in the sight of God our Savior who desires all men to be saved (1 Tim 2:2-4).

The prayers of Christians must be needed for fulfilling God's desire that non-Christians be saved; otherwise Paul would not give that desire as the reason for asking us to pray for all human beings.

Those who do not know Christ in an explicit sense are saved by accepting whatever grace God gives them. But explicitly or not, all grace comes through Christ. Therefore, must it not come through the prayers and sacrifices of Christians, since the Church is the body of Christ continuing to live and work in the world? But for Christians to live up to this exalted

calling, they normally require loving support from fellow Christians, Christian brother/sisterhood, and that is what Jesus's New Law commands.

Jesus knew that love of our neighbor would be anything but easy. So why should we not conclude from the New Law that Jesus meant Christian brother/sisterhood to be the place where we learn how to love all people, where we are healed of impediments to that love, and where we are motivated to persevere in that love in spite of all the temptations not to? It is in our natural families that we learn how, and are enabled, to love all humankind, including those who are outside of our natural families; it is in our supernatural family, the Church, that we learn how, and are enabled, to love our neighbors as ourselves, including those who are outside of the visible Church.

Natural families teach children how to behave not just by instruction and discipline but even more importantly by showing children the love they need to appreciate their own value as persons. From that children learn the value of other persons. Likewise, the Church is supposed to teach us how to love all humankind not merely by instruction and discipline but by allowing us to experience the brother/sisterly love that confirms our own incomparable worth as children of God. And from that Christians learn the value of non-Christians, since they learn the incomparable dignity for which non-Christians are created.

With the best of pastoral intentions, namely, to foster love for all our neighbors, but with the worst of pastoral wisdom, we have de-emphasized Christians' love for other Christians, thinking that by doing so we were enhancing the likelihood of achieving Christian love for all humankind. But ignoring Christian brother/sisterly love to achieve universal love defeats its own purpose. We need love between Christians as a stepping stone to get universal love. No wonder our pastoral attempts to foster social action have failed so often. But fortunately, we have a divine pastor who understands human psychology a little better than we do. And fortunately, his thoughts are not our thoughts.

The fact that the salvation of others depends on the prayers and sacrifices of Christians is an important reason why we need to evangelize others even if people can be saved

without knowing Christ. Since their salvation depends on the prayers and sacrifices of Christians, the Church needs every person it can get. The need of people to pray for the salvation of others was one of the messages of Fatima. We do not have to believe private revelation, but that message is perfectly consistent with Paul's instruction on prayer in First Timothy.

However, there is an even more basic reason for Jesus's New Law than mutual Christian support. God is present in every human being, but not every human being shares God's life the way those who are visibly incorporated into Christ's body, the Church, share that life. Baptized Christians have literally entered into the family life of the Trinity. The Church cannot fulfill its vocation to witness to a God Who is a family of persons, and Who loves us so much that He includes us in his extended family, unless Christians visibly relate to other Christians as if they really believe that Christians are indeed members of the divine family.

There are some very practical reasons why brother/sisterhood is necessary for the mission of the Church. But they are not the deepest reason. The deepest reason is that the Church is witnessing to a God that is a family of persons ecstatically in love with each other. We all can witness to the God of Christians as individuals. But Christian witness to the Trinity can never be complete unless the way the Church lives as a community witnesses to the Trinity's love for each other and for each of us.

The life of sanctifying grace, in other words, is not just a life lived interiorly and privately by Christians. It is not just the life of individuals; it is the life of the Church. It is lived between and among persons; for it is the very life of the Trinity of divine persons. And the life of the Church, the communal dimension of the life of sanctifying grace, is so important to the Church's witness to the Trinity that the salvation of non-Christians depends on it. That is why Jesus made it a command, not a recommendation. Christian brother/sisterhood is not an option like being a member of a community of religious.

3.

Only the apostles, Jesus's future pastoral leaders, were present when he proclaimed the New Law. Yet, he certainly did not intend to include only the apostles in the "one an-

other” whose mutual love he was commanding. “I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one” (Jn 17:20-21). Jesus proclaimed the New Law when only the apostles, and not all those to whom it applies, were present because he was telling the future pastoral leaders of his Church what kind of Church it would be their pastoral responsibility to build. He was giving them the pastoral goal they should strive for and by which the results of their pastoral work should be measured. And he gave it to them as a commandment lest they have any doubt about the gravitas of that pastoral responsibility.

Notice that unlike the command to love your neighbor as yourself, the New Law is not addressed to individuals only. By myself, I can love my neighbor. By myself, I cannot love one another. If I am trying to show brother/sisterly love to my fellow Christians but no other Christians are making that effort, the Church is not going to be a community of brother/sisterly love. If I love other Christians as Christ did but they do not love me, the world will not see love for one another and so will neither identify Christians by their love for one another nor come to know Jesus through Christian unity. All members must mutually understand that they are supposed to love one another.

Common effort requires leadership. Since the need for Christian brother/sisterhood has to be mutually understood by individual Christians, only pastoral leadership can bring about mutual Christian love. In the ministry of bishops, the Constitution on the Church includes the duty “to instruct the faithful to love for the whole Mystical Body of Christ” (23). And by the mystical body they mean the Church, not all human kind, as you know. The constitution also says of the local congregations under the bishops:

In them the faithful are gathered together . . . and the mystery of the Lord’s Supper is celebrated, that by the food and blood of the Lord’s body the whole brotherhood may be joined together (26).

And Vatican II’s Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests says:

Exercising the office of Christ, the Shepherd and Head . . . priests . . . gather the

family of God together as a brotherhood enlivened by one spirit (6; emphasis supplied in both these quotations).

Jesus announced the New Law only to the apostles because he was giving his future leaders a pastoral vision of what the Church should be: a visible family, a brother/sisterhood. That was the reason the authors of the pastoral documents we call the epistles emphasized Christians' love for other Christians so often. Those authors certainly wrote and acted as if it was their responsibility to achieve the pastoral goal of the Church's life being fraternal, so that every Christian can experience Christian brother/sisterly love. Those men were not writing theological treatises or even writing "Scripture." They were pastors writing to flocks. They must have believed that emphasizing Christian brother/sisterly love so much was necessary for them to fulfill their mission as pastors. In other words, they must have believed that Christian brother/sisterly love is a very important part of Jesus's's pastoral plan.

Immediately before giving the New Law, Jesus had given the apostles their Eucharistic ministry. So there must be a significant connection between their Eucharistic ministry and the Church being a brother/sisterhood. The power for the Church's life comes principally through the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. The purpose of the apostle's pastoral ministry was to enable the grace that comes through their sacramental ministry to bear fruit in the Church. Therefore, Jesus's New Law implies that, to achieve the goals of their Eucharistic ministry, their pastoral ministry must bring about familial fellowship among Christians. Without Christian brother/sisterhood, we lack something very important that sacramental grace is meant to achieve.

To put it another way, Jesus is saying that the meaning of the apostles' Eucharistic ministry extends beyond the act of celebrating the Eucharist. To achieve the goals of the Eucharist, it is not enough to celebrate the Eucharist well. The apostles were meant to draw the members of the Church into loving brother/sisterly relationships that extend beyond the act of celebrating the Eucharist, relationships that not only flow from their participation in

the liturgy but also prepare for it.

If you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before the altar and go; first be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift (Mt 5:23-24).

There is a temptation to think of the unity Christ wants as something purely spiritual, the way, for example, all of us are spiritually united with the suffering Christians in Sudan. Many of our beloved Protestant brothers and sisters think that the unity of the Church stops at our spiritual, and so invisible, unity. For Catholics, this would be a very unsacramental way of thinking. If the Church is like a sacrament, it must be a visible sign. Christ prays for a unity that will be visible to non-Christians. If it was not visible, it could not be the way that Jesus planned for non-Christians to come to "know" Jesus and to "know" that we are his disciples. So the Church must be a brother/sisterhood in a visible, not merely spiritual, way.

Where do you see more of a visible sense of brotherhood today, among Catholics or among our beloved Jewish friends? Rather than seeing the Church as an extended family, do not non-Catholics see it as a religious organization, an institutional structure, just as they see other religious organizations?

The full effectiveness of the liturgy depends on its having the proper context in which to be celebrated. From the fact that Christ's New Law and priestly prayer were given at the first Eucharist, we can conclude that the Eucharist will most fully bear fruit when it is celebrated as the chief act in the life of a Christian brother/sisterhood visibly living as such, or at least consciously attempting to live as such.

That the full effectiveness of the Eucharist depends on Christian brother/sisterhood does not mean there is anything lacking in the Eucharist. It means the opposite. The liturgy, especially the Sunday liturgy, is the source and summit of the Church's life. But of what kind of life is the liturgy the source and the summit? Eucharistic grace is meant to empower the Church to live as a brother/sisterhood. And that means Eucharistic grace is meant to em-

power the pastoral work needed to draw us into a brother/sisterhood.

But Christian familial unity can only come about through the work of ordained ministers, and their lay associates, who share the pastoral vision that Jesus gave our first pastors. The ultimate goal of pastoring is the salvation of human kind. But what concrete intermediary goals should pastoral leaders aim at in pursuit of the ultimate goal? The Church must teach priests and deacons that they have the responsibility to foster the kind of brother/sisterhood between Christians that is the key to the salvation of all. It must teach that the goal of baptism is to create, and the goal of the other sacraments is to support and perfect, that kind of loving fellowship. If it doesn't, it is keeping Jesus's pastoral plan secret. In fact, it would not be too much to call the New Law Jesus' "Pastoral Commandment," his command for his pastors to fulfill, as long as we remember that pastoring in the sense of fostering fraternal Christian love presupposes something even more fundamental: personal evangelization.

4.

If Christian brother/sisterly love is the main way people will come to know Jesus, must not our neglect of Christian brother/sisterhood have much to do with the pastoral problems the Church is facing today? Here is something necessary for the full efficacy of the sacraments yet largely missing in today's Church: Christian environments. Many of our problems exist because Catholics are more influenced by their secular environments than by the Church. Almost all of our environments promote anti-Christian values to one degree or another. Through the media, anti-Christian values even invade the Christian home. Consequently, our behavior too often reflects anti-Christian values. If we had Christian brother/sisterhood, however, we would have Christian environments that counteract this problem.

Secular society has very much that is good; not all of it is anti-Christian. Moreover, to shun secular environments and retreat into Christian enclaves would be contrary to our mission. But to deal with the pastoral problems that we now have, we need to understand

those features of our society that do in fact create obstacles to the Christian life. Christian environments do not require the whole society to be Christian, but because society is not Christian, we need Christian milieus in addition to our secular milieus.

We should view our actual pastoral practices as being a pastoral strategy, a pastoral plan, for dealing with our spiritual needs. For even if our ways of pastoring were not consciously designed as a pastoral plan, they are what the Church is doing to meet our needs; so they constitute a de facto pastoral strategy in default of a consciously designed one. If we ask how the Church plans to overcome the influence of non-Christian environments and view the life of the average parish as an answer to this question, the answer must be: The Church's main remedies for this influence are sacramental celebrations, especially the Sunday liturgy, which is the Church's primary pastoral contact with the faithful.

The sacraments, however, are not intended to free us from the influence of environments. Being influenced by our milieus is part of the nature God gave us; He intends us to be social beings who ordinarily need the support and acceptance of others. Doctrinally, the Church teaches that sacramental grace cooperates with nature, but pastorally, it inadvertently acts as if grace suppresses nature, by expecting the sacraments to be fully effective without Christian environments. One reason our leaders did not notice that our practice conflicts with our doctrine is that, while they were concerned with certain problems, they failed to see the world creating new problems. Vatican II brought the Church up to date with the modern world, but at that very moment, the western world was undergoing profound changes that the Church has yet to respond to.

Today, Christian environments no longer exist where they once did. From a pastoral perspective, the most profound change in contemporary life has been the decline of natural community. For example, the extended family and the ethnic community, which until recently formed the basis of the experience of American Catholics, no longer exist. Until the generation preceding Vatican II, most people in western society spent their lives in close contact with the same relatively small group of people. The Church's pastoral methods pre-

supposed those stable communities, communities that provided the support systems for people's lives, especially for their marriages. While those communities existed, the Church could concentrate on Christianizing pre-existing communal structures. The pre-existing communal structures then became environments that influenced people to live Christian lives and supported their attempts to do so.

Contemporary society, however, isolates people and deprives them of community. Instead of living in close proximity to an extended family, people find their families widely scattered. Instead of establishing close, supportive personal relations with the same relatively small group throughout our lives, we are forced to form superficial relations with a shifting population of those who cross our paths and then move on. The Church can no longer count on Christianizing the natural communal structure because that structure no longer exists. As a result, Christians who need the support that can only come from a Christian environment do not have it.

The reason, for example, why in the past the Church did not have to give training leaders for personal evangelization a high priority was that we could assume that the nuclear family would do the basic evangelizing. Families could succeed in evangelism, however, because of two kinds of support that natural community provided them. First, there was the help for the marriage itself provided by the proximity of parents, siblings and other relatives, and the proximity of strong friendships that relieved the marriage of the impossible task of fulfilling all the spouses' needs for enriching relationships. Second, even if all the children's peers were not Catholic, there were a sufficient number of them to re-affirm the training the children received at home. Today, not only do parents lack support from their own and their children's peers, but also their efforts to form their children as Christians are opposed by secular media right in the home. (As the example of media influence illustrates, environment and community are not identical. Any genuine community is an environment, but even communityless postmodern people find themselves in environments that influence them for good or ill.)

The decline of natural community and the pervasiveness of secularism's influence have the same cause: technological progress. That is why countries where the Church's pastoring is effective are usually places where the technological dismantling of natural community is still to come. But when those countries industrialize, there is no reason to think that natural community and the Christian environments it now supports will survive. To prevent secularism from becoming dominant where the Church is now thriving, therefore, the Church must learn how to compensate for the decline of natural community, something it has not yet learned in the first world. On the one hand, our pastoral problems are in great part the result of our not having yet caught up with changes nobody could have predicted. On the other hand, now that those changes have occurred, we can reasonably predict that the same kind of changes will take place elsewhere in the world as industrialization and technology spread. So it is also reasonable to predict that in those places where the Church is now thriving, it will soon become as weak and ineffective as the first-world Church has already become, if we do not learn how to remedy the problem. Formerly, Christian environments could result from the conversion of people in geographic areas where strong communal structures already existed. Today, the creation of contexts where Christian fellowship can flourish has to be a pastoral strategy.

To see the necessity of Christian environments, however, we do not have to study secular social history. Basic Christian spirituality requires the Church to provide supportive environments. The Church is supposed to be a fellowship (Acts 2:42), a family (John 17:11, 21), a brother/sisterhood (1 Pet 2:17). And it is supposed to be that not only in a "spiritual" or invisible way, but in a visible way. Training in sociology and psychology can be very useful. But the most important step in learning how to cope with our pastoral crisis is to relearn the pastoral principles the Good Shepherd himself taught us.

You may be tempted to respond here that no matter how little the Church may look like a family, it always remains a family spiritually and invisibly, since that is its essence. If this is your response, you are espousing perfectly good Protestant doctrine, not Catholic

doctrine. In reaction to the concept of Church unity as the unity of an organization or institution, many Protestants hold that the unity Christ spoke of was an invisible, strictly spiritual, unity. Catholic doctrine has always been that the unity Christ asks the Father for is visible unity; the Church itself is a sacrament.

The choice between an invisible unity and a visible unity that is principally organizational and institutional is a false dichotomy. The unity Christ commanded and prayed for is a visible familial unity. The irony is that we unintentionally practice Protestant doctrine by making the familial aspect of the Church spiritual and de facto invisible. What kind of visible unity do we present to the world? Not the unity of a brother/sisterhood, but the unity of an organization or institution, as if we were a family only in a spiritual sense. Many, perhaps most, church-going Catholics do not experience the Church as a family but as a place where they go to get religious services performed, somewhat as they go to the doctor or the market to get secular services performed. Weekly attendance at a sacred out-patient clinic, no matter how intrinsically holy the clinic is, is not going to overcome the influences of our secular environments.

5.

One reason for viewing the Church principally as a provider of religious goods and services is that the decline of natural community taught us to view human groups other than the nuclear family individualistically and functionally — not as communities united by and existing for the sake of personal relationships, but as organizations that exist for the sake of performing functions for individuals. Instead of principally being sites for supportive and fulfilling relationships, groups outside of the nuclear family seem to exist for the sake of tasks and services that are de facto for the private benefit of isolated individuals, individuals who do not live in communities that foster supportive personal relationships among their members.

In the past, when people spent most of their lives in close proximity to the same people, they formed many strong personal relationships, and their relationships of a signifi-

cant and supportive character were not confined to the nuclear family. Even their sense of personal identity was to a great extent identity as a member of a particular community. As natural community has declined in the postmodern world so has the value we place on personal relationships. Today, our personal relationships of a close and significant nature are confined almost exclusively to the nuclear family — which is an important cause of the weakness of the family, since it puts a unreasonable demand on the nuclear family to be the sole source of supportive relationships. Most often, our dealings with people outside of the isolated nuclear family are not based on our personal relationships with them; instead, we associate with them primarily for the sake of the performance of tasks and the providing of services. For example, most people spend their whole work day associating with people, not because of any personal relationship between them, but for the sake of performing tasks with them, providing services to them, or having services provided for us by them.

No wonder it is so difficult today for us to understand the what the New Law actually commands and the reason for it. Individualism is so ingrained in our perspective that it does not occur to us that the phrase “one another” in the New Law means what it says and so refers to the specific community of people who are being addressed. If that idea does occur to us, we do not see the law’s purpose to be that of defining the life of a community, not of individuals, because our experience of natural communities and extended families is so limited. We experience groups other than the nuclear family as having only a functional, pragmatic value, as opposed to the kind of value constituted by loving personal relationships.

This view of groups outside of the nuclear family seems to influence the way Catholics view the Church. Often clergy and laity appear to view the Church the way society teaches us to view associations outside the immediate family, as an institutional structure providing sacred goods and services the way other institutions provide secular goods and services. This tendency is inevitable because outside of the nuclear family we have almost no experience of any way of associating with people other than by functional, or otherwise

superficial, relationships. Younger generations may even think it has always been that way because they have no idea of what they are missing and can hardly imagine anything else.

As a result, both clergy and laity seem to expect priests and deacons to be leaders of a religious service organization. In New Testament terms, they view a priest's vocation as that of a "hiereus," a performer of sacred acts and conductor of religious services, but not that of a "presbyteros," an elder within an extended family, a clan or a village, one to whom the other members look in matters that concern the well being of the family, clan or village as a whole.

The institutional aspects of the Church are absolutely necessary but as means to an end. That end is another kind of unity, familial unity. The institutional aspects of the Church do not serve their purpose if they do not lead to familial unity. The familial unity, moreover, must be visible. If it remains invisible while the only visible unity is organizational, the institutional aspects of the Church fail to achieve one of their most important reasons for being. And achieving that end would satisfy our need for Christian environments.

Today, priests often pastor as if the life of the Church is meant to consist mostly of sacramental celebrations and the pastoral dimension of their ministry is meant to consist mostly of the exercise of their sacramental powers. Does this attitude come from traditional spirituality or from the individualism and functionalism that views groups as existing for the sake of performing tasks, even sacred tasks? We should define the Church's life in terms of the Church's nature as a sacrament, a sacrament whose life is meant to be visibly communal and so must extend beyond its official public worship. The goals of the sacraments require that Christians have a life together as a Church, as a body, beyond gathering for sacramental celebrations. We need environments where we live the fellowship that the sacraments call us to and prepare us for.

At the same time, we must avoid the danger of romanticizing the Church's nature as a community of love. Communities need structure, just as the natural family does. The institutional aspects of the Church will always be necessary. The experience of many

Protestant groups shows that, without the institutional Church as the backbone, communities that are mere fellowships will not only be "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph 4:14), but with every wind of trouble, friction, misunderstanding, disagreement, personal offense and unforgiveness.

Priests and deacons sometimes give the impression that their pastoral goal is the laity's faithful attendance at Sunday Mass. Maintaining the laity's connection to the institutional Church, the sacrament delivery system, is necessary but is far from sufficient. (And if seminary training is aimed at the goal of keeping Catholics connected with the institutional Church, that training is no longer achieving its goal; far from it.) Vatican II correctly taught us that the effectiveness of the sacraments requires their proper celebration, but even more important for their effectiveness is that they have the proper context, a communal context of faith. The full efficacy of the sacraments requires Christian environments.

Much of the activity in a Christian environment will be social and personal, as opposed to being ritual, but not "social" in the secular sense, as opposed to being explicitly religious. Scripture gives us pictures of sisters and brothers building each other up by acting in ways that are personal yet specifically religious. For that is what Christian environments are, namely, contexts in which brothers and sisters can fulfill the scriptural exhortations to:

Stir up one another to love and good works (Heb 10:24).

Teach and admonish one another (Col 3:16).

Encourage one another and build one another up (1 Thes 5:11; Heb 10:25).

Admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak (1 Thes 5:14).

Comfort one another (with God's words) (1 Thes 4:18).

Here is a glimpse of one way in which environments in the early Church accomplished these things:

When you come together (often in someone's home), each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification (1 Cor 14:26; see also Eph 5:19).

Furthermore, it is especially important that we have environments where these things are not done solely by professionally religious people. Those scriptural exhortations were meant for all Christians, so that ordinary Christians could see other ordinary Christians doing such things and profit from their example.

A few years ago, I attended a funeral at a small Baptist church. The deceased was a woman in her thirties who at one time in her adult life had been a relatively fervent Catholic. Her father, still a fervent Catholic, told me that after connecting with the Baptist parish she stayed with them because they supported her through her divorce. What could she find at the Catholic Church that she could not find at the Baptist? Sacraments of infinite holiness. What could she find at the Baptist Church that she did not find at the Catholic? Supportive personal relationships. Aren't the sacraments more important? Yes, in their independent (ex opere operato) effects. But those independent effects do not exist for their own sake; they are for the sake of lived (ex opere operantis) effects. The lived effects for the sake of which the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, exist are meant to include supportive person-to-person relations among the members of a Christian fellowship of the kind she did not find in her Catholic parish but did find in the Baptist. The Baptists offered her an extended family; we did not.

The Church should be a place where, normally, converts ipso facto enter into supportive personal relationships. Becoming a convert should normally include becoming a member of a loving family in more than a "spiritual" sense. Even if the following promise was strictly meant only for certain believers, the principle behind it should apply, in appropriate ways, to all:

There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life (Mk 10:29-30).

For that to happen we will have to stop viewing the Church in its visible aspects mainly as a

delivery system for sacraments and doctrinal catechesis. An indication of how much closer some Protestant parishes are to being families, and not just institutions for providing religious goods and services, is that when they see newcomers on Sunday, they greet the newcomers and make them feel welcome by personally inviting them in.

Still, let us not idealize the Protestant situation. Do all Protestant parishes offer the kind support that Baptist parish did? Very probably not. Does the Baptist parish still offer that kind of support today? Perhaps, but whether it does and will continue to depend on many contingencies: Does it still have the same pastor; if so, is he or she still providing the right kind of leadership? Etc. The only way to ensure that Christian fellowship and brother/sisterhood occur regularly and survive consistently is to found them on a secure organizational structure. The apostolic churches, Catholic and Orthodox, alone have a sufficiently secure structure. And only the Catholic Church has it to the full degree that all Christians should have the benefit of according to Jesus's pastoral plan.

In sum, Christian brother/sisterhood is necessary not only for the Church's mission of saving non-Christians, but also to enable Christians to live their own Christian lives as they should. We will never know what the power of grace can do in the lives of individual Christians until the Church is a visible brother/sisterhood.

Today, we hardly hear Christians apply the word "brother" to other Christians, unless it is a priest referring to "brother priests." No wonder the life of the parish priest is so lonely. What should be primary in the life of the priest is that he is one of us, a Christian united to the person of Christ and to the rest of us, in the greatest way possible, by the royal priesthood of sanctifying grace. The priest is our brother before he is our elder brother or "father," and his life within the Church, including his ministry, should visibly reflect that. Secondly, the priest shares Jesus's leadership role in the Christian family, a social role that we do not all share. But today there is almost no family, other than in a spiritual sense, for him to have a leadership role in.

How do we create Christian brother/sisterhood? The most important thing to do is to bring each Christian to an awareness of the glory he or she received in baptism. Christians should relate to other Christians as members of the divine family. So the basis of our love for other Christians must be our awareness of the glory they received in becoming Christians, the glory of Trinity dwelling within them. But I cannot appreciate the awesome dignity you acquired in becoming Christian unless I appreciate the awesome dignity I acquired in becoming Christian. If I know the dignity I received at baptism, however, the only just response I can give others who are also visible members of Christ is to love them with a love worthy of the dignity they have received. And only Christians aware of the awesome glory we have received can have a love for non-Christians based on awareness of the awesome glory that non-Christians are called to share.

The pastoral vision of Christian brother/sisterhood cannot even make sense to those who are unaware of the presence of the Trinity within every Christian. In order to communicate this pastoral vision to Catholics, we must be able to ask with Paul "Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?" (2 Cor 13:5). So the first step in fostering Christian brother/sisterhood is to bring Christians to a personal awareness of the glory of God dwelling within them. That awareness is promised to every Christian as a consequence of receiving the Holy Spirit: "In that day you will know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you" (Jn 14:20). Doctrinal faith is necessary but not sufficient for the awareness of God's indwelling that can create brother/sisterly love among Christians. To achieve the goals of sacramental grace, we must have a faith by which we apply truths of doctrine to ourselves at the personal level. The grace to which we respond comes to us through the sacraments because it comes from the person and work of Jesus. Responding to sacramental grace on the personal level requires responding to the personal source of that grace, Jesus, not just to this or that way in which he is sacramentally present. It requires responding to that person because of what he did to become the source of grace: He took away my sins and offers me God's own divine life as a free, unmerited gift.

The absence of Christian milieus is a symptom of deeper problems, including not having the goal of Christian brother/sisterhood. Without that goal, we have missed Jesus's pastoral plan. But since Christian fellowship is based on a personal relation to Jesus, our ignoring of the New Law is not the only — or even the principal — reason for our pastoral crisis. To achieve the goals of the sacraments, our pastoral priority must be to evangelize already sacramentalized and catecheticized Catholics in a way that leads them to make doctrinal faith personal, a way that makes each Christian aware of their personal relation to God dwelling within them. In the advanced world the family is no longer sufficient for successful personal evangelization. (And how much longer will it be sufficient in the third world?)

We acquire the awareness of Christian dignity that is the basis of Christian fellowship by having a particular kind of relationship with Jesus, the relationship of allowing Jesus to live His life within us. We allow Jesus to live His life within us by doing two things: repenting and believing the Great News, turning our intentions from sin (repenting) and accepting the promise that Jesus will freely give Himself to us and accomplish our reformed intentions for us (believing the Great News). Christians need milieus where they are continuously called to repentance and belief in the Great News.

How do we evangelize in a way that will make the sacraments effective on the personal level? And how do we develop environments where we build each other up by sharing our Christianity in personal ways? Throughout history, God has renewed the Church by raising up movements to supply something then lacking in its pastoral life. No one method of evangelizing or of creating community may be right for all times and places. But God knows what our times need. Every movement will be imperfect, but when we find something working reasonably well, we should take advantage of it and nurture it.

Most importantly, however, we have to *learn* from movements about how to make the sacraments effective. But to learn from movements, we have to *let* God teach us. Too often, movements have not gotten the proper leadership because their local leaders had

incorrect pastoral priorities. They used movements for purposes, good purposes, other than what the Church needs most. The Cursillo, for example, was intended to foster evangelization, and when properly led, it often succeeds in doing that. But many local leaders turned the Cursillo into a vehicle for promoting social action. While we unquestionably need more social action, our need of evangelization is greater. So movements can fail to make their full contribution to Church renewal because leaders use them for purposes that are good but are not what the Church needs most at a particular time. I have even seen enthusiasm for liturgical dance and music distract leaders from providing what is most important.

In general, lay leaders of movements get their pastoral priorities through the training they receive, ultimately, from priests. Some of the most powerful and promising renewal movements have accomplished much less than they could at least in part because priests failed to take advantage of them, since their own pastoral goals did not match the goals God was trying to achieve — and trying to show needed to be achieved — through those movements.

To take full advantage of movements, we have to learn from them. To learn from them we have to have our priorities straight or at least be open to letting God straighten them. When are our priorities straight? When they reflect the hierarchy of Christian truths.

Most renewal movements, like the liturgical movement before Vatican II or the Little Rock Scripture program today, can create Christian environments as a by-product, if their local leaders are sufficiently aware of our pastoral needs to use them that way. Some pastoral programs, however, exist specifically for the purpose of being environments where we share Christianity in personal ways. The Cursillo, for example, has its small group reunions and its larger Ultreyas for this purpose. Other such evangelistic programs, like Teen Encounter Christ, Tabor weekends, and Antioch weekends, follow evangelistic activities with ongoing meetings for Christian sharing. Communion and Liberation members share personally in their School of Community. Prayer meetings, both charismatic and non-charismatic, serve a similar purpose.

Can we expect movements like the ones just cited to solve our pastoral crisis, when their accomplishments to date may seem so modest in comparison with the problems?

There is reason to believe that future movements can do better than current ones, if future movements can learn from the difficulties current ones have had in evangelizing and creating fellowship. We cannot predict the models of evangelization and brother/sisterhood that God plans for the future, but we can and must learn from our past mistakes. And if we provide fertile ground for future communal movements by having personally evangelized Catholics beforehand, who knows what power we will see when God unites already converted Catholics in love?

Of course, every renewal movement in the history of the Church has been imperfect and subject to abuse. Abuses in recent movements have sometimes caused priests to avoid getting involved in them. But to use the existence of problems as an excuse for not getting involved in a movement can be a self-fulfilling prophecy, since the reason the problems exist is usually lack of adequate leadership. A fine priest, call him Fr. Joe, told me he avoided a particular charismatic group because of the way some of its members conducted themselves. Unfortunately, circumstances prevented me from telling him that I had similar problems in my group, but as a lay leader I could not correct them because people will not accept certain kinds of correction from a lay person as easily as from a priest. By declining to get involved with that group because of those problems, Fr. Joe was ensuring that the problems would be much more difficult to solve. Any renewal movement will have failures as well as successes. The question is how much better off spiritually most participants in a given movement are than they would be without it. If potential leaders shun involvement in a movement that has demonstrated, when properly led, the ability to produce personal conversion and Christian fellowship, are they really letting God show them how to unleash the power of the sacraments?

One good purpose that can inadvertently interfere with movements doing the work we most need deserves attention because it is so good and has therefore been so frequently pursued. Leaders of Ultreyas, prayer meetings, and other communal programs often augment, or even replace, very valuable activities with liturgies celebrated with the enthusiasm that the liturgy deserves. But we have to be very discerning about if and when to include a liturgy in a pastoral program. We have to be especially discerning about how to use the liturgy in view of the specific needs for evangelization and fellowship in the Church today. Including the greatest act -- indeed, the greatest conceivable act -- in all creation makes everything else in a pastoral program seem to be secondary. Therefore, providing for our most important pastoral needs can become secondary. So using the liturgy in an inappropriate way can defeat the purpose of the liturgy. For the Sunday liturgy and other sacraments to bear the fruit they should, much pastoral work beyond sacramental celebrations needs to be done. Outside of celebrating the Sunday liturgy and the other sacraments, the pastoral work that is most important today is not to get people to more liturgies but to provide ways of fulfilling the goals of the sacraments we have already received and make the sacraments fruitful at the level of their lived effects.

Unfortunately, we do not live in an era like that of the first Jerusalem community, when people had plenty of time to go "as a body to the temple everyday but meet in their homes for the breaking of the bread" (Acts 2: 46, NAB). There may not be time for Christian environments to do their work, if our principal activity at meetings of renewal movements is a Mass, especially a lengthy, enthusiastically celebrated one. All pastoral decisions must take into account the limited amount of time people have and must aim at using that time for their maximum benefit. For example, how much time should we spend lecturing on interesting scholarly questions like the authorship of the pastoral epistles when we hardly have the time to explain their message?

But something more basic than lack of time is at stake in a decision to include the liturgy in a pastoral program. The Jerusalem community was prepared for the Eucharist by

evangelization that led to personal conversion (Acts 2:37). We have, in effect, done things the other way around, sacramentalizing and catechizing people without personally evangelizing them. The fruits of the Eucharist normally presuppose that personal evangelization has already occurred, and the New Law implies that the Eucharist will bear fruit most fully if it is offered as the chief act of a body at least trying to achieve Christian brother/sisterhood. That is how Jesus used the liturgy. He celebrated the liturgy only after spending years drawing the disciples into a personal relationship to Himself and to one another on the basis of their relationship to Him. Making the Eucharist the main activity in programs whose purpose is to supply our need for evangelization and Christian fellowship can amount to putting up the walls and roof of the building before laying the foundation. It is baptism that creates the Christian community: "By one Spirit, we were baptized into one body" (1 Cor 12:13). The Eucharist perfects Christian community, but today there is almost no community for the Eucharist to perfect.

We may think that our pastoral approach should be different from Jesus's, because Jesus's presence in the liturgy, including His presence through ordained preachers and celebrants, takes the place for us of His pastoral presence with the disciples. The Sunday liturgy must always be the Church's main pastoral contact with the already evangelized. But the Sunday liturgy's full effectiveness requires that Catholics also have contact with Jesus's presence in the other members of the Christian community, who have received gifts through the sacraments for ministering to one another. The full efficacy of Eucharistic grace depends on those gifts, because that grace is meant, among other things, to empower us to use those gifts in love.

Including the liturgy in programs can also reinforce the Church's perceived role as an institution that provides services, rather than as an extended family where brothers and sisters fulfill the goals of liturgical grace by building one another up and evangelizing others. Look at those third-world countries where Catholicism is not thriving. There, we often compete unsuccessfully with evangelical groups for whom preaching acceptance of Jesus as our

personal Lord and savior and developing Christian brother/sisterhood are the main pastoral methods.

From the viewpoint of the independent, ex opere operato, effects of grace, the Church's daily offering of the Mass is the source of any power that renewal movements in the Church have. Realistically, however, how many lay people are our current pastoral practices succeeding in drawing to daily Mass and communion? I believe that the evangelistic/fraternal approach would draw many more people than the few that current pastoral practices draw. I also believe that this approach would foster many more vocations than we have now. If this approach does succeed in these ways, we would be sawing of the limb we were sitting on if we so used the liturgy that it interferes with the pastoral goals of our evangelistic/fraternal programs.

We also have to ask at what point does the liturgy become cheapened by over use? I do not have an answer to that, but can we assume that the reverence due the greatest possible act will not be lessened by too frequent use, which means use in pastorally inappropriate ways? Should the greatest possible act be the way we celebrate every occasion, such as the anniversary of this or that activity? The Eucharist is the principle place from which physical healing comes, but does that mean that healing will not occur unless every healing service includes a Mass? Well, the Eucharist is also the principle source of grace; does that mean we don't receive many of those graces later, when at a conference, praying, reading a book, or whatever? If we answer questions like these in the affirmative, will we ever be without a shortage of priests?

But in no way am I saying that we should always leave the liturgy out of renewal programs. That would be self-defeating. The full development of Christian brother/sisterhoods requires that they celebrate liturgies as their highest activity, just as the liturgy requires brother/sisterhood for its full effectiveness. But the inclusion of the liturgy in a program must be based on discernment of pastoral needs and the means to provide them. The liturgy should not be included just on the grounds that it is the greatest prayer. Its

being the greatest prayer can be a reason for not including the liturgy, since its very greatness can distract from the pastoral work that is most important. The liturgy can appear to be a more important part of a pastoral program than the work needed to achieve the goals of the liturgies we have already participated in. The lived effectiveness of the Eucharist is at stake in our decisions about how we use renewal movements.

8.

The fact that we should make use of the (always imperfect) movements God raises up and that these movements always need good leadership (without which they can sometimes do more harm than good) does not mean that all or even most priests and deacons should become leaders in movements. That kind of leadership involves charisms that are not guaranteed by the sacrament of holy orders. Leadership by an unsuited person would be just another form of poor leadership. But even those ordained ministers who are not called to be leaders in renewal movements should be open to learning from movements about what might need changing in their pastoral vision.

What follows are some further pastoral recommendations, based on the experiences of recent movements, for leaders of programs meant to foster Christian fellowship. Most of these recommendations are for lay leaders of movements as much as for clergy. But among other things, these recommendations may help priests and deacons discern whether they are called to a particular kind of leadership.

There is such a thing as an unhelpful need to serve, a misguided zeal for serving. For example, there have been evangelistic meetings where the musicians used their talents excessively to the point of dominating. I know of cases where the music ministry at charismatic meetings kept adding songs to the point where there was insufficient time left for the other things the meeting was supposed to do. They did so, not out of a desire to dominate, but out of an overzealous desire to contribute, a desire not tempered by perspective. They were letting the means get in the way of the end by not subordinating their desire to serve to the goal for which their service exists, which is to support a community in which many

other things than singing need to be done.

After Vatican II the Church typically sought to head off clericalism by stressing the priest's role as a "servant of the people of God." But that sometimes provided the occasion for priests involved with movements to be especially subject to an excessive desire to serve sacramentally, since that service is so exalted.

Leaders of any kind must always subordinate their desire to serve to the goals for which their service exists, goals which almost always require that other people be allowed to contribute their own services. Human beings are constantly tempted to let means get in the way of ends, and the more exalted the means, the greater the temptation to let them get in the way of the ends. No means are more exalted than the ministries of the ordained, but no end is higher than the end to which those ministries are directed. Consequently, there is nothing more important than for ordained ministers to subordinate their service to the pastoral goals it is intended to achieve, which requires that they have a clear idea of those goals. They should not focus more on their ministry than on the goals for which their ministry exists, goals that depend on the full contributions of other ministries. They should not define the life of the Church in terms of their powers, but define the meaning of those powers in terms of the life of the Church, the life of the Trinity lived within and among Christians, a life that must extend beyond sacramental celebrations. They should view the institutional and hierarchical aspects of the Church and of their ministry as necessary means to the goal of a Church that lives as a visible fellowship. They will be fulfilled as individuals by enabling the Church to be an environment that lives Christ's commandment of familial love.

In all normal circumstances, the message for leaders, ordained or lay, of movements is "Do not dominate!" especially out of a misguided zeal to serve. The most important things any leader does are to discern the gifts of others, to train them in the use of their gifts, and, while providing guidance to ensure that their use of their gifts contributes to the common good, to let them use their gifts. The word "episcopos" means an overseer. Leaders should be overseers, not overdoers. Overseers look after the activities of others; they do not do

everything themselves. The purpose of Christian leadership is to enable all the members of the group to perform their roles; leaders fulfill their call to serve the body by enabling the other members to fulfill theirs. To allow others to contribute, leaders may sometimes have to restrain in certain ways their own desire to contribute.

The Church's social doctrine teaches the principle of subsidiarity: In a hierarchy, the functions that can be performed by the lower parts should normally be performed by the lower parts; for a living organism is fully healthy only if each of its parts is making its full contribution to the well being of the whole. The Church's own practices may not always seem consistent with that principle; where they do not seem consistent, there may be a good reason. But to the extent that movements are free of any Church regulations that might restrict their implementing the principle of subsidiarity, they should do so, except when they specifically discern that there is a sufficient reason not to.

Another thing to remember is that leadership in a movement differs from headship in a parish. The pastor's role in a parish is canonical, and he has an ultimate responsibility for the parish that he does not share with anyone else. A priest or deacon's role as local leader in a movement is usually not canonical and is usually best shared with a team of leaders who make collective decisions. In situations where, for whatever reason, one leader or a small group of leaders must choose the other members of the leaders team, he should be very careful not to just create the team in his own image and likeness.

Communities do need structure at the local level, however, just as they need the backbone of the institutional Church. In particular, they need clearly defined and clearly communicated leadership roles. Everyone in the community with a problem should know who the person or persons responsible for that kind of problem are. If members of the community do not know whom to go to, they may discuss the problem exclusively among their friends, which can create factions in the community.

Since our goal is Christian brother/sisterhood, success in leadership is not measured by the success of a group's programs and activities; it is measured by the quality of the

personal relationships in the group. One of the main obstacles to peace within a group is conflict of expectations about what is supposed to happen, who is supposed to do what, how something is supposed to be handled, etc. Conflicts of expectations result from misunderstandings due to poor communications. Members of a leaders team or service group may have different understandings of what decision they reached; other members of the community may have different understandings of what the leaders told them had been decided; two or more members of a community may have a different understanding of what agreement they had reached among themselves.

Six steps will help avoid conflicts of expectations. First, relate to one another on the basis of explicit decisions and agreements. Do not assume that other people can read your mind. Second, work out the wording of decisions collectively. Third, write the decision down. Do not assume that everyone will remember it exactly the same way. Fourth, once the wording is written down, go over it again to ensure that all of those involved in making the decision understand what it means. Do not assume that "any intelligent person" would understand it in the same way you do. Fifth, when you are announcing the decision to others, go through the written wording carefully with them to ensure that they understand it as you do. Where appropriate, give everyone a copy of the written decision. Sixth, when a prior agreement cannot be kept because of a change in circumstances, let those affected know beforehand that you cannot keep the agreement and why.

These six steps boil down to three words: communicate, communicate, communicate. That is the only way to prevent conflicts in expectations.

The idea of working out and writing down agreements may seem to be sufficiently "unspiritual" as to be beneath the dignity of Christians who are supposed to rely on the Spirit, not on their own efforts. Again, salvation by grace not works does not mean we are excused from making our own efforts. But the pertinent heresy to cite here is not the first Christian heresy, salvation by works of the law, but the second, the denial that "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (1 Jn 4:2). Grace does not make us immaterial beings who have the

power to read other people's minds.

It may not be possible to rank all the truths of Christianity in exact hierarchical order. But I am sometimes tempted to think that the following truth should be at the top of the list: "The sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light" (Lk 16:8). At least, that can seem as indubitable as any other truth on the list, and you do not even need faith to know its truth. How often do we see Christians guilty, by way of omission as well as commission, of trying to relate to one another and to accomplish things in ways that no evil business person or politician with a shred of enlightened self-interest would? If something deserves to be described as "no way to run a railroad," it is probably no way to run a Christian community.

No matter how prudent our precautions, however, communications will always be imperfect and misunderstandings will occur. At those times, the original point of "The sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light" does come to the fore. The dishonest steward's master praised him because he was wise enough to "make friends . . . by means of unrighteous mammon" (Lk 16:9) through forgiving people their debts. For members of a Christian community to love each other as Christ loved them, they must forgive each other as Christ forgave them.

When the six steps above fail, change "communicate, communicate, communicate" to "forgive, forgive, forgive!"

Finally, God could renew the Church without Christian movements. For example, he could create secular social changes that would make our current pastoral methods effective. If we wait for Him to do that, however, we may soon have too few priests to use our current methods. Christian environments, especially environments that support Christian marriage, would foster many more vocations than we now have. But without environments where priests can fulfill their vocation to be presbyteroi, we may not have enough priests to satisfy our need for hiereon.

Notes

¹ If you were addressing a group and asked them to shake hands with "one another," they would not understand you to mean they should go out and shake hands with all other human beings. They would understand you to mean that they should shake hands with the other people you were addressing when you asked them to shake hands with one another.