

## CHAPTER TWELVE: FOLLOWING JESUS: OUR LIFE OF CHRISTIAN ACTS

A. Introductory considerations

5 Traditional treatises in moral theology examined human acts and free choice, since human acts are the stuff of moral life. In this part, I have provided an analysis of the usual topics, but then proceeded to consider original sin and the redemptive act of our Lord Jesus. The reason for these considerations is that both original sin and the redemptive act of Christ affect every act of Christian life. The present study must  
10 take account of this situation, since this work is concerned with Christian moral principles, not simply with the abstract principles of human moral life in general.

The present chapter is the fruit of the previous four. In the previous chapters I have explained human acts, the sin of Man, and the redemption achieved by the Son of Man. Now I will consider in outline the acts which constitute Christian life. The remainder of the volume will consider Christian life in greater detail and from several  
15 points of view. These will be outlined at the end of section B.

The human situation in consequence of original sin is one of misery. The extent and depth of this misery intensifies the desire of every man and woman, every society and humankind at large, for human fulfillment. From the face of the earth rises the  
20 universal sound of groaning and sobbing: Will not something or someone help us? Humankind lives socially. Everyone who aspires to good longs for a community of like-minded persons, who will provide one another with moral support and make possible a decent life together.

Throughout history and all over the world today people have yearned for a good  
25 leader, for someone who could shape them into a communion of justice, freedom, peace, and meaningful, fulfilling life. Good leaders are few and far between. Even where the people can choose their own governments, few people ever feel that the candidates really are fit for the work; when the mass of people now and then does rally behind some charismatic leader, they are usually quickly and bitterly disappointed. A Napoleon leads his  
30 nation to Moscow and to Waterloo; a Roosevelt leads his nation into the era of nuclear disaster.

We believe that our Redeemer lives. Humankind has been redeemed by the blood of Christ (cf. Jn 19.34; Rom 5.9; Heb 10.19; 1 Pt 1.19; 1 Jn 1.7; Rv 5.9; and so on). He entered the heavenly sanctuary, not with the blood of an animal sacrifice, "but with His  
35 own blood, and achieved eternal redemption" (Heb 9.12). The kingdom of God--the communion of truth and life, of justice, love, and peace--is established. Admission is free for the asking; one need only accept it as a child accepts a gift (cf. Mk 10.15; Lk 18.17). "He who believes has eternal life" (Jn 6.47). The only thing necessary is communion with Jesus (cf. Lk 10.38-42). By faith in Him we become children of God, and  
40 share in the fullness of life present in Him (cf. Jn 1.12-16). In accepting Christ, one dies to sin and begins to live in Him (cf. Gal 2.19-20).

B. The basis of Christian responsibility

45 One ought to accept Christ Jesus with faith. Why ought one to do so? Is one confronted with an order, threatened with harsh punishment if one disobeys it? Not at all. Any such idea totally misconceives the human situation. One is in misery and is offered liberation. It is as if a criminal condemned to die in the morning were visited at  
50 dawn by someone who unlocked the death cell's door, rolled out a carpet to a waiting space ship, and gave him or her a chance to begin life in a new and friendlier world. One would be a fool not to accept such an offer. What has one to lose?

More precisely: In part two I described the fulfillment of all things in Christ and the role which human persons are called to enjoy in this fulfillment. To accept the redemption which God has carried out in Christ is to accept liberation from the misery  
55 of sin and to receive fulfillment forever in Christ. One ought to accept. Ought--because one owes it to oneself. One would be a complete fool to refuse such a gift.

I make so much of this ought because it is the ultimate foundation of every other  
60 ought in Christian life. A Catholic has absolutely no obligation to Christ or to His Church, no duty to obey the magisterium, no special responsibility for the salvation of others or to bear the burdens of one's fellow Christians--no Christian moral obligation at all that is not reducible to this fundamental ought. If one accepts redemption in Christ, one undertakes the responsibilities of life in Him. But no one forces anyone to accept redemption in Christ. And so it makes no sense for anyone to resent any of the responsibilities of Christian life.

65 As God first led the Israelites out of Egypt and only then proposed a covenant, so our Lord Jesus first redeems humankind and then offers Himself to us as a new and everlasting bond of communion with God (cf. Ex 19-24; the Consecration of the Mass).[1] St. Paul writes:

70 The grace of God has appeared, offering salvation to all men. It trains us to reject godless ways and worldly desires, and live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age as we await our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of the Great God and of our Savior Christ Jesus. It was he who sacrificed himself for us, to redeem us from all unrighteousness and to cleanse for himself a people of his own, eager to do what is right (Ti 2.11-14).

75 Redemption does not mean that one is translated at once to glory, nor does it mean that one is put to sleep. Life must go on, and it should be both humanly fulfilling and suited to one's new status. We had lived foolishly, disobediently, as slaves of passion.

We went our way in malice and envy, hateful ourselves and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our savior appeared, he saved us; not because of  
80 any righteous deeds we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the baptism of new birth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he lavished on us through Jesus Christ our savior, that we might be justified by his grace and become heirs, in hope, of eternal life (Ti 3.3-7).

We are not slaves, working for our own liberation. We are freed by the grace of God,

freed to live a humanly fulfilling life: "We are truly his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to lead the life of good deeds which God prepared for us in advance" (Eph 2.10). Christian life is part of God's gift.

5 By baptism one receives the gift of living faith; one is created anew as another Christ, as a child of God (cf. Gal 6.15). Dying to sin, one rises with Christ to new life; therefore, sin must be expelled from one's whole person, which should be devoted to upright life (cf. Rom 6.1-15). The acceptance by one's act of living faith of God's proposal of communion has been discussed briefly in chapter six, section I, and chapter seven, section B. Faith will be considered more fully in part four. Baptism and conversion from sin will be discussed in part seven.

10 The vital point to keep in mind at present is that by the gift of living faith one becomes a child of God with a hope of sharing intimately forever in His life. "Everyone who has this hope based on him [Jesus] keeps himself pure as he is pure" (1 Jn 3.3). One ought to live a life worthy of the calling one has received, a life worthy of a child of God (cf. Eph 4.1).

15 Unfortunately, we human persons are not very consistent. We accept the gift of redemption and the hope of glory, yet continue to act as if we still were slaves of sin, of death, of the law, and of the devil (cf. Gal 3-5). Thus we must be warned, even by Jesus Himself: "None of those who cry out, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of God but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Mt 7.21).

20 We are comforted to read that when one believes that Jesus is the Son of God, "God dwells in him and he in God" (1 Jn 4.15). We conveniently forget that faith without works is dead, that "such faith has no power to save one" (Jas 2.14). We are comforted--and even charismatically ecstatic--to read that "no one can say: 'Jesus is Lord,' except in the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12.3). We conveniently forget the words of our Lord Jesus: "Why do you call me "Lord, Lord," and not put into practice what I teach you? Any man who desires to come to me will hear my words and put them into practice" (Lk 6.46-47).

25 The demand to live the life of the child of God which one is, and to live the life of human fulfillment for which one has been liberated is not an arbitrary demand. It is a logically necessary consequence of one's acceptance of redemption and new life in Christ. If we do not live the life of good deeds which God offers us as part of His loving gift, then we are foolishly and tragically untrue to ourselves. The ought of every Christian moral norm is the same as the fundamental ought in "One ought to accept redemption." It appeals to one's reasonableness, because it is a guide to one's own true self-interest.

30 The living of the Christian life is the fulfillment of oneself, a fulfillment which also is a contribution to the ultimate fulfillment of all things in Christ. In part two I described this ultimate fulfillment, and the place of human acts in it. In the remainder of this chapter, I will consider the acts of Christian life once again, looking now at them as we live them in this world. But one must remember that these are acts, this is a life, which will last forever.

35 In addition to their eternal significance, and as part of this eternal significance, our present Christian lives have three additional dimensions of meaning. They knit us into Christ and allow us to share in His redemptive work; they unite us with Christ in His human life of self-sacrifice to the Father; and they allow us to share with Christ in His very work of redeeming ourselves. The first of these additional dimensions will be treated at length in part four, the second in part five, and the third in part seven. (Part six will be devoted to the unpleasant business of studying sin and its effects.) But before proceeding to these detailed treatises, I will show the unity in our present Christian lives of all three of these aspects. For everything else depends upon the fact that by our Christian lives we share in the fundamental commitment of Christ: to do the Father's will.

### C. The following of God and imitation of Him[2]

55 In leaving Egypt, Israel responded to God's call (cf. Hos 11.1). The people were led by Yahweh and they walked along behind Him (cf. Ex 13.21). The experience of following God hidden in the pillar of cloud or of fire is never forgotten. Israel always is called to follow her Lord, as a betrothed to follow her bridegroom (cf. Jer 2.2), as a flock to follow its shepherd (cf. Ps 80.2).

60 The concept of following is language which belongs to covenant relationships. A vassal follows in the retinue of his lord. To love one's lord is to be ready to fulfill one's covenant undertakings. One walks along with the leader under whose command one must be prepared, if necessary, to do battle. When the people commit themselves to living in accord with the covenant, their promise is not to "follow other gods" (cf. Dt 6.14), but to follow Yahweh, "and follow his ways exactly" (Dt 10.12). Like an army which must carry out orders, God's people "follow him faithfully; keep his commandments" (Jos 22.5).

65 When Israel is unfaithful, it is like a whore who follows the enemy's army (cf. Hos 1.2). The people should turn back to their true lord and follow Him faithfully as they did in the exodus (cf. Hos 2.17). Then they will enjoy fully the power of His protection and the gentleness of His love.

70 To be safe is to stay close to God, to walk with Him (cf. Mi 6.8). He takes the orphans, widows, and others who specially need help into His own family; he shakes the earth with His steps and makes rain fall when it is needed (cf. Ps 68.6-9). To such a protector, Israel prays: "Your ways, O Lord, make known to me; teach me your paths" (Ps 25.4). Being kind, the Lord helps back to the safe path those who stray (cf. Ps 25.8-9). "When a man fears the Lord, he shows him the way he should choose" (Ps 25.12). "Fear" here means readiness to listen and follow.

80 The Law is "all the way of understanding" (Bar 3.37). It is a guide to survival:

She is the book of the precepts of God, the law that endures forever;

All who cling to her will live, but those will die who forsake her.

Turn, O Jacob, and receive her: walk by her light toward splendor (Bar 4.1-3).

"Happy are they whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord" (Ps 119.1). God marches with His people, and they have nothing to fear; they go off on their own and experience disaster (cf. Dt 31.8, 17). When they abandon God, His people are forced from their inheritance into exile (cf. Lv 26.40-41). But even then, a voice cries out  
 5 in the desert, calling for a superhighway to be constructed for God and His people:  
 "Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill shall be made low" (Is 40.4).  
 Yahweh will lead His people back from exile.

When all is said and done, there are only two ways. One is the way of the Lord. It is straight (cf. Ps 101.2, 6); it is the way of truth (cf. Ps 119.30), and of peace  
 10 (cf. Is 59.8). This is the way of life which the wise person follows (cf. Prv 2.19;  
 5.6; 6.23; 15.24). The other way is crooked (cf. Prv 21.8); it leads fools (cf. Prv  
 12.15) to disaster (cf. Ps 1.6) and death (cf. Prv 12.28). God has endowed human persons  
 with free choice. His challenge is: Choose life (cf. Dt 30.15-20). In chapter  
 15 eight, sections A-C, I explained how fundamental and important is this belief: Men and  
 women choose their own way, whether it be life or death.

Humankind is made in the image of God, with a share of responsibility for creation  
 (cf. Gn 1.26-29). Even after sin, the children of Man share in the glory of God and  
 enjoy a status almost godlike (cf. Ps 8.5-10). Not as noble as God's own wisdom, who is  
 20 perfectly "the image of his goodness" (Wis 7.26), God's people nevertheless are chal-  
 lenged to be like Him: "Be holy, for I, the Lord, your God, am holy" (Lv 19.2). Created  
 in God's image and recalled from sin to His friendship, human persons are expected to  
 begin to be in their lives pure and holy as God is in His own life.

#### D. The relationship of the Christian to Christ

25 The Christian is an adopted child of God (cf. Rom 8.15). He or she has been begot-  
 ten by God, having received the power for this rebirth from the Incarnate Word (cf. Jn  
 1.12-14). Jesus can bestow this power because He is the "only Son coming from the Father,  
 filled with enduring love" (Jn 1.14). Having been made a member of God's own family, we  
 30 confidently pray: "Our Father" (Mt 6.9). We have been "predestined to share the image  
 of his Son, that the Son might be the first-born of many brothers" (Rom 8.29).

Being like Jesus, the Christian in prayer immediately expresses the fundamental  
 commitment of Jesus: "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven"  
 (Mt 9.10). The new family of God is based not upon membership in a national group, but  
 35 upon moral commitment. One must do the will of the Father; one must hear the word of  
 God and keep it (cf. Mk 3.31-35; Mt 12.46-50; Lk 8.19-21; 11.27-28). Thus, the prayer  
 that God's will be done is not a prayer that something happen automatically, or only  
 that others do God's will. The apostolic writer prays that God will "furnish you with  
 all that is good, that you may do his will" (Heb 13.21). "It is God's will that you  
 40 grow in holiness; that you abstain from immorality" (1 Thes 4.3). God brings about the  
 good He wills us to do: "It is God who, in his good will toward you, begets in you any  
 measure of desire or achievement" (Phil 2.13).

The imitation of God the Father is a principle of the life of each Christian:  
 45 As obedient sons, do not yield to the desires that once shaped you in your ignor-  
 ance. Rather, become holy yourselves in every aspect of your conduct, after the  
 likeness of the holy One who called you; remember, Scripture says, "Be holy, for  
 I am holy." In prayer you call upon a Father who judges each one justly on the  
 basis of his actions. Since this is so, conduct yourselves reverently during your  
 sojourn in a strange land (1 Pt 1.14-17).

50 The principle of the call to share in divine perfection is that one is redeemed by Christ,  
 through Him believes in God, and so has hope centered upon Him (cf. 1 Pt 1.18-21). It  
 follows that one must love one's neighbor as the Father does (cf. 1 Pt 1.22-23). One  
 must be merciful as the Father is merciful (cf. Lk 6.36). One must love enemies, as the  
 Father loves enemies, forgiving them everything (cf. Mt 5.43-45). In a word, one must  
 55 be perfect as the Father is perfect (cf. Mt 5.48).

If one begins to take this challenge seriously, it is breathtaking. Called to be  
 children of God, we are expected to be like our Father. From one point of view, the de-  
 mand seems reasonable enough: A child should be like its father. Yet how can we possi-  
 bly fulfill such a demand?

60 In the book of Acts, Christianity at first is distinguished from the traditional  
 faith by the simple title: "the way" (Acts 9.2; 18.25; 24.22). Under the Law, "the way  
 into the sanctuary [of heaven] had not yet been revealed" (Heb 9.8). Jesus Himself is  
 the way, and at the same time is the faithfulness and life of God which bring one along  
 the way and reward one at the end of it. And Jesus is unique: "I am the way, and the  
 65 truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me" (Jn 14.6).

Since Jesus is the light of the world, no follower of His need walk in darkness;  
 He is for Christians the new pillar of fire, the light of life (cf. Jn 8.12). If we  
 think we are in communion with Jesus while we continue to walk in darkness, we lie; but  
 if we walk in His light, we are in communion with Him and one another (cf. 1 Jn 1.6-7).  
 70 Jesus is a way of love. "This love involves our walking according to the commandments,  
 and as you have heard from the beginning, the commandment is the way in which you should  
 walk" (2 Jn 6). The way of Christ is dependable teaching: "Anyone who is so 'progressive'  
 that he does not remain rooted in the teaching of Christ does not possess God;  
 while anyone who remains rooted in the teaching possesses both the Father and the Son"  
 75 (2 Jn 9).

Jesus is a living lesson to be learned: "Take my yoke upon your shoulders and  
 learn from me" (Mt 11.29). St. Paul takes up this idea and points out that pagan lust  
 has no place in Christian life: "That is not what you learned when you learned Christ"  
 (Eph 4.20). Jesus is taught and learned; He is proposed as a norm. One must grasp the  
 80 truth in Him: "You must put on that new man created in God's image, whose justice and  
 holiness are born of truth" (Eph 4.24).

E. The following of our Lord Jesus in redemptive work

The imitation of God becomes the following of Christ; to follow Christ is to take up cause with Him, to join Him in His redeeming work:

5 Be imitators of God as his dear children. Follow the way of love, even as Christ loved you. He gave himself for us as an offering to God, a gift of pleasing fragrance (Eph 5.1-2).

Being redeemed by Jesus, one who accepts Him in faith loves Him with gratitude. This love requires one to keep His commandments (cf. Jn 14.21). His command is that we love  
10 one another as He loves us--that is, with a redeeming love (cf. Jn 15.12).

In one who truly follows Jesus, the love of God is brought to fulfillment. One must remain in Jesus, to bear much fruit through the life which He communicates from the Father (cf. Jn 15.1-8). The only way for a man to make good his claim to be a Christian, to be one with Christ, is "to conduct himself just as he did" (1 Jn 2.6). To follow  
15 Christ is to make one's own His commitment to redeem:

"If a man wishes to come after me, he must deny his very self, take up his cross, and follow in my steps. Whoever would preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will preserve it. What profit does a man show who gains the whole world and destroys himself in the process? What can  
20 a man offer in exchange for his life? If anyone in this faithless and corrupt age is ashamed of me and my doctrine, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes with the holy angels in his Father's glory" (Mk 8.34-38).

Jesus did not come to be served but to serve, to give His life for redemption. His followers must do likewise (cf. Mk 10.43-45; Mt 20.25-28). A commitment to Jesus, to share  
25 in His life, and ultimately to be united with Him in heaven is a commitment to help Him do what He does: to communicate divine love by redemptive, apostolic activity (cf. Jn 13.12-20).

The redemptive commitment of Jesus is a social act, a community-forming commitment which one joins by making the act of living faith. God has not redeemed us passively,  
30 but in Christ has provided a way by which we can accept redemption freely, become His child, and share in the dignity of the Son of God by becoming a co-worker in redemption.

This fundamental commitment of each Christian and the acts which carry it out in the whole of one's life are important, not only because they contribute even now to the building up of the body of Christ, but also because they make heaven visible upon earth  
35 and extend the kingdom in this world, so that God's will also is done here. One first believes in Jesus and takes up cause with Him. One becomes His disciple and for the sake of salvation in Him one marches along with Him, ready to take His orders. One keeps the commandments. The implication of doing so is that one is loved, and one loves in return.

40 One still is living in a world which is sinful and largely unredeemed. One has only three choices: to join it (and abandon Christ), to seek to destroy evil or to segregate oneself wholly from it (and betray Him by becoming a zealot or a Pharisee), or to try to convert the world with the love of Christ (and so share in His fate). One will share His fate because not all of the sinful world accepts salvation and that which  
45 rejects it hates Christ and His followers (cf. Jn 15.16-18; 16.1-4).

Initially, the demand does not seem so great. Since one's needy neighbor is identified with Christ, one must do works of love, because whatever fulfills a human need contributes to the fulfillment being accomplished in Christ (cf. Mt 25.31-46). Christians must bear one another's burdens, and in this way fulfill the law of love (cf. Gal  
50 6.1-2). Because Christ did not live a pleasant life of self-satisfaction, neither may we: "Each should please his neighbor so as to do him good by building up his spirit" (Rom 15.2).

One need only avoid serious sin, by which one would separate oneself from God's love, and freely undertake some works of love. Guided by the Spirit, the Christian is  
55 not constrained by the Law (cf. Gal 5.18). But a Christian who marries and has a family must fulfill his or her responsibilities in a world in which marriage and family life are culturally adapted to practices which are sinful; a Christian in business must face dishonest competition; a Christian in any responsible position must carry out his or her responsibilities even though others become slack about theirs. Eventually it becomes  
60 clear: No one can live a Christian life in this sinful world without living redemptively, because the way of Christ is the only way to live without evil. One must be with Him or against Him; one helps in His redemptive work or interferes with it (cf. Lk 11.23).

It follows that one may not love one's closest family in preference to Jesus (cf.  
65 Mt 10.37; Lk 14.26). One must sacrifice anything, even a part of one's body, if it is necessary to avoid temptation (cf. Mk 9.43-48). The kingdom is so precious that one must give up one's whole livelihood for it (cf. Mt 13.44-46). Living thus, one becomes a reflection of Christ and one spreads His savor throughout the world (cf. Mk 4.21; 9.50; Mt 5.13-16; Lk 8.16; 11.33; 14.34-35). Are you a Christian who happens to be a slave?

70 If you do wrong and get beaten for it, what credit can you claim? But if you put up with suffering for doing what is right, this is acceptable in God's eyes. It was for this you were called, since Christ suffered for you in just this way and left you an example, to follow in his footsteps (1 Pt 2.20-22).

Having been redeemed by Jesus, you must live redemptively; such is your vocation.

75 To live one's Christian vocation is to live in Christ. "In Christ" the whole new creation exists (cf. 2 Cor 5.17). "He died for all so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who for their sakes died and was raised up" (2 Cor 5.15). Every Christian shares in and contributes to Christ's single redemptive act, which I discussed in chapter eleven, section M. In one's own life one completes what is  
80 lacking in Christ's sufferings (cf. Col 1.24). But is the redemptive act of Christ not sufficient? Certainly, but as Christ is in Christians and they in Him, so His redemptive act is in their lives and by their own commitment their lives are in His redemptive act.

Because of this communion in commitment, the everyday life of the Christian is a surrender made in Christ (cf. Eph 1.1; 1 Tm 1.14); a fulfillment of truth and

truthfulness (cf. Rom 9.1; 2 Cor 1.19); a testimony of faith (cf. 2 Cor 2.17; 1 Thes 4.1); a service of love (cf. Rom 8.39; 1 Cor 16.24); and courage to endure (cf. 1 Cor 15.58; 2 Cor 13.3). Everything of Christian life is in Christ. Thus, when Paul repeats seemingly conventional moral advice but urges that duties be fulfilled in Christ, he is not merely commending the morality of the day. Rather, he is directing Christians to transform this morality into a redemptive life.

The life of every Christian not only contributes to Christ's fulfillment in heaven, but also helps to fulfill His redemptive work on earth. Vatican II teaches:

The apostolate is carried on through the faith, hope, and charity which the Holy Spirit diffuses in the hearts of all members of the Church. Indeed, the law of love, which is the Lord's greatest commandment, impels all the faithful to promote God's glory through the spread of His kingdom and to obtain for all men that eternal life which consists in knowing the only true God and Him whom He sent, Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 17.3). On all Christians therefore is laid the splendid burden of working to make the divine message of salvation known and accepted by all men throughout the world (AA 3).

A bit later, the Council adds that the Church's apostolate and that of every member is primarily to manifest the message of Christ by one's words and deeds--by one's own revealing life--and to communicate His grace (cf. AA 6).

#### F. Personal vocation -- the concept

If all members of the Church share a common vocation, insofar as they are united in a commitment which is primarily the redemptive commitment of Jesus, each member also has a personal vocation of his or her own. Immediately after the passage quoted above, Vatican II continues:

For the exercise of this apostolate, the Holy Spirit who sanctifies the People of God through the ministry and the sacraments gives to the faithful special gifts as well (cf. 1 Cor 12.7); "allotting to everyone according as he will" (1 Cor 12.11). Thus may the individual, "according to the gift that each has received, administer it to one another" and become "good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pt 4.10), and thereby build up the whole body in charity (cf. Eph 4.16). From the reception of these charisms or gifts, including those which are less dramatic, there arise for each believer the right and duty to use them in the Church and in the world for the good of mankind and for the upbuilding of the Church. In so doing, believers need to enjoy the freedom of the Holy Spirit who "breathes where he wills" (Jn 3.8). At the same time, they must act in communion with their brothers in Christ, especially with their pastors. The latter must make a judgment about the true nature and proper use of these gifts, not in order to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good (cf. 1 Thes 5.12, 19, 21) (AA 3).

Here the Council lays out the great principle of personal vocation. Each Catholic receives his or her own gift from the Spirit, and each gift is to be used to the fullest in making one's personal contribution to the whole, coordinated life and work of the Church.

Very often St. Paul's beautiful chapter on love (1 Cor 13) is read as if it stood by itself. It does not. It is the centerpiece and principle for solution of a serious problem which Paul treats with great care (cf. 1 Cor 12-14). He does not state the problem clearly and explicitly, but from the argument he gives toward its solution, the difficulty apparently was that many of the Christians at Corinth thought that his or her particular contribution to Christian life was the most important--was almost everything important in the whole life of the Church. Like children putting on a show, each of these people wished to dominate the assembly (the church gathered for liturgy or prayer) with his or her own favorite type of active participation.

Paul explains (cf. 1 Cor 12) that the Spirit gives Christians many diverse gifts. These gifts are all one in coming from the Spirit, but all different in the personal capacities and roles they lead to. The situation is like that of an organic body. The parts of a body do not all have the same function. Each does its own thing. But each is vital for the good of the whole. None of the parts of the body can get along without the rest. Even a lowly foot has its irreplaceable role. Consequently, the welfare and fulfillment of every part of the body is bound up with the welfare and fulfillment of the whole. So it is with Christ. The Church is His single whole body; we are its many diverse members.

The hymn to love (1 Cor 13) carries the argument to its completion. As I explained in chapter six, sections B and D, love solves the problem of unity and multiplicity. Although St. Paul does not articulate the unity and distinction of the divine Persons, the Holy Trinity is the very model of love, as I explained in chapter six, sections E-F. Paul states some of the implications of love clearly and unforgettably: It generates all the virtues and heals all the vices which affect interpersonal relationships; moreover, love is always in season and never will become unnecessary. The analysis in chapter six above helps to explain why this is so.

Paul follows his chapter on love with a practical discussion of the various gifts; he provides directions for rightly ordering the Church of Corinth. Significantly, he states near the end of this chapter of directives what its binding force is: "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or a man of the Spirit, he should know that what I have written you is the Lord's commandment" (1 Cor 14.37).

Pope John Paul II refers to the teaching of St. Paul in emphasizing the principle of personal vocation:

For the whole of the community of the People of God and for each member of it what is in question is not just a specific "social membership"; rather, for each and every one what is essential is a particular "vocation." Indeed, the Church as the People of God is also--according to the teaching of St. Paul mentioned above, of which Pius XII reminded us in wonderful terms--"Christ's Mystical Body." Membership in that body has for its source a particular call, united with the saving

action of grace.

Therefore, if we wish to keep in mind this community of the People of God, which is so vast and so extensively differentiated, we must see first and foremost Christ saying in a way to each member of the community: "Follow Me" (Redemptor hominis, 21).

One's commitment to share in the redemptive act of Christ is a commitment not merely to share in it in general, but to follow a particular vocation. One's response to Christ in faith must be a commitment to take up one's own personal cross, a cross which will have a unique shape and form according to one's own unique gift.

The Gospels tell of Jesus' calling of The Twelve. To them He said: Follow me (cf. Jn 1.35-41; Mk 1.16-20; Mt 4.18-22; Lk 5.10-11). But as the story unfolds, Jesus clearly wishes to make use of the personal gifts of each of these men, as well as to have them share the common responsibility of serving as His witnesses. For example, although the Twelve are a band of brothers joined in what we would today call "collegial" unity, Jesus makes Simon their leader and marks his role with the new name "Peter" (cf. Mt 16.17-19). So Jesus calls all of us to follow Him and calls each of us to make a personal and unique contribution to His work. Personal vocation is not an optional extra in Christian life, reserved for some special categories of persons. Personal vocation is of the very essence of each one's living out his or her own act of faith.

#### G. Personal vocation -- further considerations

As man, Jesus accepted all the conditions of human existence except sin. One of the conditions of human existence is that in making choices one limits one's life to a very narrow and partial fulfillment of human possibilities, as I explained in chapter eight, sections H and N. Under the condition of sin, this aspect of self-limitation, inevitable in choice, makes moral goodness very unappealing, as I explained in chapter ten, section J. In chapter eleven, section Q, I pointed out how impoverished a human life Jesus accepted for Himself. He was not a well-rounded man.[3] And though He perfectly fulfilled His personal vocation, His earthly life did not immediately touch the human lives of all men and women in all times and places, which are to be redeemed and brought to fulfillment in heaven.

For His own human completion, Jesus depends upon His Church (cf. Eph 1.23). As the members of the Church receive human completion by sharing in Jesus' human life, so He receives His human completion by sharing in the human life of each one of us. Together we build up His body and "form that one perfect man who is Christ come to full stature" Eph 4.13). In doing this, members of the Church also complete one another. No Christian by himself or herself should seek to be a well-rounded person, any more than Jesus did. Only all together, united with one another in Him, do we form the one complete human Son of God. (Of course, even in this human unity, He remains God's only natural Son, and we God's many adopted children.)

God creates to manifest His infinite goodness. The multiplicity and diversity of created entities is important, because each catches a glimmer of perfection absent in all others. Therefore, God creates no mere duplicates. The humanity of Jesus is the most excellent of creatures, but it is very limited. Just as Jesus needs the Father and the Spirit to complete the uncreated part of the total fulfillment which centers in Him, so He needs each of us and each of our lives, in all its uniqueness, to complete the created part of this total fulfillment.

Moreover, Jesus needs each of us and our unique gifts and opportunities to carry out the universal work of redemption. Christ comes to people of our time through us. The human goods to be realized in our culture are gathered up and redeemed in our lives. The sacrifice which Jesus offers to the Father is an unsurpassable gift. But without our self-gift united with the sacrifice of Jesus, both the homage of creation to God and the gratitude to the Father of redeemed humankind is incomplete. We share divine life through Christ by His gift to us of His own Holy Spirit. The work of the Spirit is to sanctify the whole of creation--utterly to renew the face of the earth. The Spirit's work can be finished only by our reception of His gifts and our use of them to attain sanctity within each of our own unique vocations (cf. LG 41).

The preceding points are of far more than theoretical interest. Many problems in the Church today--as in St. Paul's time--are due partly to the anxiety of everyone for personal and individualistic fulfillment. So some women wish to be priests, some priests wish to marry, many clerics and religious wish to engage in secular occupations, many laypersons wish to carry on properly clerical and even apostolic activities (such as determining issues of doctrine), and so forth. All of these desires, it seems to me, manifest selfishness rather than charity. Fulfillment is to be found not in individual completeness, but in the communion of love which is the whole body of Christ.

Jesus committed Himself to doing the will of the Father, to revealing the Father, and to responding to God's love as a man should respond to it. To this basic commitment of Jesus, we Christians are united by our acts of faith. Jesus also committed Himself to living a redemptive life, to offering the Father the gift of love which humankind should offer to Him, and to dedicating Himself utterly to His unique personal vocation. In this unfolding of His basic commitment, we Christians are united with Jesus in the Eucharist.

But Jesus also had a personal vocation. He melded into one the roles of the Son of Man, the Messiah, and the suffering Servant of Yahweh, and in this combined role He became the new Man, the saving King of humankind, and the unique sacrificial Lamb who reconciles in His blood all humankind to God, and forms us into God's own human family. This personal vocation is not ours. Rather, with our personal gifts and in our unique situations, we must accept a vocational commitment--a personal set of commitments made in the light of faith--which will be executed in particular acts very different from the particular acts which made up the life of Jesus. We must try to do what He would do if He were in our place.

The question of the discernment of one's personal Christian vocation and one's commitment to it is not a question which belongs to Christian Moral Principles. Rather,

vocational commitment is among the particular responsibilities of every Christian, which I will examine in volume two. However, considering the importance of this topic, I make a few remarks about it here.

5 First, there is no question of personal vocation unless one considers one's life in the light of faith, and with at least some awareness that one's fulfillment lies, not in individualistic well-roundedness, but in communion with Christ and one's fellow Christians. With these suppositions, one also must know one's own talents and limitations--the special gifts which the Spirit has given one. Further, one must think about the opportunities for service which are offered by the world in need of Christ; one must attend to the points at which the life of Christ in the Church can use one's hand and one's talents.

10 Second, the question of personal vocation does not arise once and for all. Each Christian usually must face questions about whether to marry or to remain single, whether to offer oneself to clerical or religious life, and so on. Such options have monopolized the concept and language of "vocation." These are important aspects of personal vocation, but there are many others. Whenever a Christian has a choice to make which has the character of commitment (described in chapter nine, section I), personal vocation is at issue. One builds up one's personal vocation (and identity) gradually through one's entire, ordered set of commitments.

20 Third, every commitment which contributes to one's personal vocation has a direct relationship to one's act of faith, for each of these commitments carries out one's act of faith and gives this act its concrete and personal actuality. One's personal vocation, therefore, has a finality absent from many day to day choices. One's vocation ought to be followed out faithfully until death, come what may. For this reason, it is vital that the series of commitments which constitute one's acceptance of one's vocation be a progressive and consistent articulation of the identity one begins by one's first vocational commitment.

30 Fourth, one should not expect a private revelation about one's personal vocation. Prayer to bring the light of faith to bear, study of the relevant data, consultation with wise and holy persons--these are the ways in which the Spirit normally speaks to us. In many cases, options which occur to one can be ruled out quickly and easily. But in some cases, two or more positive possibilities remain after one has used all of the reflective means at one's disposal.

35 When this occurs, one must attempt--for example, by intense prayer, special devotions, ascetical practices, and so on--to actuate those aspects of one's personality which are most fully and directly affected by one's basic commitment of faith. Having done this, one can consider the "feel" of the options among which one cannot reflectively judge. In due time, only one possibility will continue to seem a live option. One has reached this point by allowing one's Christian sense of one's own self-integration to come into play. Now one need only accept the final remaining option as the will of God and firmly commit oneself to it.

40 Because this process takes one beyond general rules and even beyond reflection which one can articulate propositionally, it seems mysterious. A great deal has been written about it, under such headings as "discernment of spirits" and "being led by the Spirit," as though the Spirit were at work in instances of this sort but not in cases in which one sees the intelligible demands of duty and fulfills them or sees the intrinsic evil of certain kinds of acts and avoids them. Actually, when one proceeds in the light of faith and strives to choose and act out of love of God, the Spirit of God is fully at work in one's heart. He does not come to work only to fill the gaps between reflective acts of the mind.

50 Conversely, a process very similar to what one uses in eliminating options to arrive at one's proper vocation is conducted in many ordinary choices. For example, one might consider taking a vacation, and after eliminating many possibilities for various reasons, have two left between which to choose. At this point, one imagines oneself taking each vacation, and chooses the one which has the best "feel." (The Spirit is at work here as truly as in one's discernment of one's vocation, provided that one's choice of a vacation befits a Christian and one's particular Christian vocation.)

#### 60 H. Various categories of personal vocation

65 Within the common Christian vocation, the Church recognizes certain important distinctions among kinds of personal vocation. In particular, tradition teaches that the status of the religious--which involves a communal life and the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience--is especially suitable for those who are called to it; this form of life has been called a "state of perfection." The conception of state of perfection often has been misunderstood, with bad effects for other types of personal vocation. However, the unique value of the religious state ought to be recognized. Nothing I have said in stressing the common vocation of Christians and the personal vocation of every Christian is inconsistent with full appreciation for that special gift of Christ to His Church: the religious state of life.

70 There are several misunderstandings of the religious state which need to be set aside.

75 First, the religious is not special in living a life entirely shaped by a fundamental commitment to the good of religion. The redemptive commitment of Christ, in which every Christian shares as the fundamental commitment of his or her own life, is to the human good of religion--of friendship with God and the fulfillment in communion of divine and human persons. In contrast with secular humanists, who might organize their lives by a morally upright fundamental commitment to justice or by a selfish commitment to certain aspects of personal self-integration, every Christian is primarily a religious person.

80 Second, as Vatican II has pointed out very clearly (cf. LG 39-42), every Christian is called to holiness. God's will for all is sanctity (cf. 1 Thes 4.3; Eph 1.4). What is central to holiness is the love of God; it "rules over all the means of attaining holiness, gives life to them, and makes them work" (LG 42). The precept of charity is

radical and total: One must love God with one's entire mind, heart, soul, and strength (cf. Mk 12.29-30; Mt 22.34-40; Lk 10.25-28). If one fulfilled this precept, one would be perfect. Thus, since this precept is addressed to all, all are called to personal perfection.

5 Third, the religious is not special in living a life which is more divine, while other Christians live a life which is more human. Everyone who lives in God's love lives a life which is truly divine, and every human person lives a life which is altogether human. Moreover, every Christian is called to be one with Christ both in revealing God's love to others and in responding to God as humankind should.

10 Fourth, the religious is not special in living a life which is more other-worldly, leaving to others the task of living a this-worldly existence. All Christian life is lived in this world and must contribute something to the realization of human goods--which include the great good of religion--here and now. At the same time, everything one does out of love of God is destined to last forever, and contributes even now to the hidden but real growth of the invisible kingdom of Christ.

15 The true distinction between the religious state and other Christian states of life is hinted at by Vatican II when it says that there are diverse gifts of the Spirit: "He calls some to give clear witness to the desire for a heavenly home and to keep that desire green among the human family. He summons others to dedicate themselves to the earthly service of men and to make ready the material of the celestial realm by this ministry of theirs" (GS 38). Again, the Council teaches that the religious state "more adequately manifests to all believers the presence of heavenly goods possessed here below" (LG 44). Life in the religious state provides a kind of preview of the "resurrected state and glory of the heavenly kingdom" (LG 44).

25 As I explained in chapter four, section F, the whole of Christian life is marked by a tension between fulfillment-already-realized and fulfillment-not-yet-realized. These two are not contraries--that is, qualities incompatible with one another. Rather, they are the relative opposites inherent in the fact that Christ is risen and the new creation already is being built up in Him, yet life goes on in this world and sin with all its effects still must be overcome. Christ has come, yet Christ is still to come. Christian life has its meaning from both comings.

30 What Vatican II says about the religious state, I think, amounts to this: Those in the religious state live, so far as possible in this world, in accord with fulfillment already realized. By contrast, some other Christians live much more in accord with the reality of the kingdom as a project still to be completed. The difference is one of polar (or relative) opposition, like that between north and south. If this way of looking at the distinction is right, there would be various degrees of the religious state and its opposite--a conclusion which seems to be verified by the data of Christian experience and the Church's liberality in approving various modes of religious and semi-religious lifestyles.

40 The explanation just given of the specific character of the religious state can account for the three vows. In heaven, the work of creation will be complete, and no new members of the communion will be called for. Hence, there will be neither marriage nor begetting (cf. Mk 12.18-27; Mt 22.23-33; Lk 20.27-40). Consecrated virginity is appropriate insofar as the heavenly situation already is real. In heaven, the need for means to achieve ends will no longer obtain, and so there will be no problems of property. A life of communal poverty, without private ownership of goods, seems eminently suited to manifest this aspect of heaven (cf. Mt 19.16-22). Finally, in heaven God's will is perfectly done, and individuals will have no major decisions to make. The obedience of religious life can be regarded as a sign of this situation.

50 Still, there are other aspects of the gift of the religious state. In addition to its specific character--already indicated--the religious state involves a commitment to imitate the earthly life of Jesus, so far as possible, in many or all of its morally significant aspects--for example, His virginity, poverty, docility, self-sacrifice, and intimate closeness to the heavenly Father. In this respect, those who are called to the religious state share in the specific content of the commitment of Jesus more completely than do other Christians (cf. PC 1).

60 Another aspect of the gift of the life of the religious is that it is a less complicated form of Christian existence than are other Christian lifestyles. St. Paul teaches that it is good for one who is unmarried to remain so, better to devote himself or herself to the Lord (cf. 1 Cor 7.25-35). Similarly, the remark of Jesus that Mary of Bethany, who was not busy about many things, had chosen better than Martha (cf. Lk 10.36-42) traditionally has been understood as a commendation of religious life for its greater simplicity.

65 In this vein, St. Thomas Aquinas elaborates a theory of the superiority of Christian life lived under vows in accord with the counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. According to Thomas, the counsels point to a life which is superior to other forms of Christian life only in the means which are adopted for seeking perfection. For those with the gift, religious life is an easier situation in which to grow in charity. [4]

70 One might wonder why attention to one's spouse is likely to be a distraction from Christ, as St. Paul suggests it is, and why in general the religious state should be a state of perfection--that is, a better way to holiness--as St. Thomas argues it is. Cannot Christian married persons attend as thoroughly to Christ, although at times they must attend to Him in their spouses and children, not in His individual humanity? Our Lord Himself demands that we serve Him in others. Why should it be more perfect to engage in less such service?

75 My answer is that it is not more perfect to engage in less such service. The religious also serves Christ in others, although perhaps with sweet prayers rather than with dirty diapers. Moreover, what is at stake is not personal perfection--as if the religious were automatically holier than other Christians--but the means to perfection. The person who would not be a misfit in the religious form of life--who really has the gift for it--is able to simplify the problem of loving God totally, precisely by undertaking a much less complicated life. Ideally, complexity in itself would not be a bar to sanctity or even an obstacle to it. But in our sinful condition, the more complex

one's life is, the more complex the effects of sin one must wrestle with.

If this analysis is correct, the religious state enables those who have the gift for it to live more easily a truly Christian life. At the same time, the blessing a religious enjoys in having an easier route to holiness also is a blessing for the Church, since the religious is freed for service to others and can live as an inspiring sign of the present reality of God's kingdom. In general, if there is no heaven, Christian life makes no sense. Those in the religious state manifest our common belief that there is a heaven; the worldly life of the nonbeliever, not the cloistered life of the Carmelite, makes no sense.

#### I. A note on the secular priest and the layperson

Sometimes it has been suggested--altogether erroneously--that the life of the cleric who is not in the religious state is only a tolerable compromise with the ideal of the priest-religious, who does priestly work and also strives for personal perfection. The Holy See categorically rejected this suggestion even before Vatican II.[5] The seminarian who is preparing for the diocesan priesthood and the secular priest, no less than the religious and every member of the Church, is called to perfection and enjoys his own appropriate way (within Christ, the one Way) for attaining holiness. Vatican II has taught in rich and clear detail about the spirituality appropriate to the priestly life (cf. PO 12-17). (Every seminarian ought to study this teaching.)

Within this treatment, the Council considers--as aspects of the lives of all priests--obedience, celibacy, and the proper use of material goods, which can call for more or less voluntary poverty (cf. PO 15-17). This consideration is not an effort to make every priest conform to the style of the religious state. However, it does bring out a dimension of the life of the secular clergy which is similar to that of the religious. For the secular clergy, there is no question of vows or a religious state of life. Still, the means of perfection which are so helpful to persons in the religious state also can have their use in the lives of other Christians, including diocesan priests, although appropriate adjustments must be made.

If one considers this matter in the light of the account I have provided of what is special to the religious state, one can see that all priestly life in one respect approaches very closely to the religious state and in another respect is near its polar opposite.

The life of the diocesan priest is very like that of a person in the religious state in bearing witness to the present reality of heaven. Every Mass proclaims the invisible kingdom and makes it insistently visible in the face of the unbelieving world. At the same time, the life of the diocesan priest, in its dedication to extending the work of the redemption, is far from the religious state. For the diocesan priest strives to make ready the material--the persons--of the heavenly realm; his life serves to bring Christ to those who have not yet received Him and to perfect the life of Christ in those who still must grow to Christian maturity.

Vatican Council II broke new ground in its teaching about the vocation of the laity and their apostolate. In essence, it is the work of the laity both to strive for holiness and to redeem the whole of human life by integrating all the other human goods into their Christian lives (cf. LG 31, 36; AA 7). The values which usually are thought of as secular also belong to Christ and the values which usually are thought of as temporal also belong to heavenly fulfillment, except to the extent these values are contaminated by sin. The work of promoting every aspect of human fulfillment contributes to fulfillment in Christ; the laity properly promote all the aspects of human fulfillment which are not the special responsibility of the clergy and of persons in the religious state.

#### J. The Eucharist -- its institution

The Eucharist can be considered from two points of view: as sacrament and as sacrifice. The two cannot be separated, but can be distinguished. I will consider the Eucharist as sacrament in part seven. Here I am interested in the other aspect: the sacrifice of the Mass. In the Mass Christian life comes together; our lives are united with the life and death of Christ and offered to God as the gift of our love, offered in response to His redemptive love for us.

Scripture presents us with several accounts of the institution by Jesus of the Eucharist at the Last Supper (cf. Mk 14.17-25; Mt 26.26-29; Lk 22.14-20; 1 Cor 11.23-25). These vary in detail, and there is general agreement that they already show the effect of liturgical practice. The new Roman Missal provides a standardized formula:

On the night he was betrayed,  
he took bread and gave you thanks and praise.  
He broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:  
Take this, all of you, and eat it:  
this is my body which will be given up for you.  
When supper was ended, he took the cup.  
Again he gave you thanks and praise,  
gave the cup to his disciples, and said:  
Take this, all of you, and drink from it:  
this is the cup of my blood,  
the blood of the new and everlasting covenant.  
It will be shed for you and for all men  
so that sins may be forgiven.  
Do this in memory of me.

Clearly, in instituting the Eucharist, Jesus expressed--in words and in the very act of distributing the consecrated bread and cup--His human act of freely accepting death. Death would overtake Him on the morrow, not by His own hand, but by the hands of others. He already had done, from a moral point of view, what He had to do. The wheels were in motion and His death was inevitable. (I assume here the analysis of the human act of

Jesus which I gave in chapter eleven, section O.)

The descriptions in the Gospels make clear that Jesus' sharing the Passover in Jerusalem with the Twelve including Judas was the carrying out of a positive choice on His part, and that it was this particular choice which immediately involved His free acceptance of death. For He went to Jerusalem to celebrate this Passover; He did not exclude any of His "family" from it (to do so would have been contrary to His policy of being open to all sinners); and Judas proceeds directly to take the opportunity to betray Jesus into the hands of the authorities who wish to kill Him (cf. Mt 26; Mk 14.1-31; Lk 22.1-38; Jn 13-17; the narratives have to be studied as unified wholes to understand what Jesus was doing). Therefore, insofar as Jesus Himself outwardly does anything which carries out the redemptive commitment (which includes acceptance of death), He does it at the Last Supper. From then on, although He says a few things, there is little He can do but suffer and die. And suffering and dying as such are not actions; they are undergoings.

Of course, when death does come, Jesus has accepted it willingly. In this sense, His suffering and death is His redemptive act. Therefore, the actual events of Friday cannot be separated from Thursday night's Supper, and that Last Supper cannot be separated from its consequences. Precisely this is my point: Jesus makes a choice to celebrate the Passover in a certain way, knowing this will lead to His betrayal, passion, and death. He does what He has chosen to do, and the expected consequences ensue. The whole process is not for Him a series of acts, but one act which includes its foreseen and accepted consequences (cf. chapter nine, section G-J).

The words of the institution of the Eucharist make clear that Jesus was offering Himself in sacrifice, that He was establishing a new covenant by His blood, and that He wished His eucharistic words and deeds to be repeated in His memory. These conceptions need clarification, some of which has been provided in chapter eleven, sections C, M, O, and P.

The notion of covenant had developed through the whole Old Testament. It is based upon the practice of contract or treaty. A covenant is an interpersonal bond with mutual responsibilities. In the Old Testament, God offers the covenant; a human community accepts it. The covenant Jesus is concerned with is offered humankind as a whole in Him and through His Church; this is the offer which one accepts by one's act of Christian faith. (I will discuss the new covenant more fully in part four.)[6]

Blood is very closely identified with life. Life is sacred to God, who is the Lord of life. Blood has religious uses because it is more than an organic substance; it is thought of as having life and life-giving power present in it. The blood of the covenant brings it to life; the bond between the two parties is in force, for the blood shared between them joins them in a common life. The blood of sacrifice is life offered to God. Since one's own life depends upon one's herd, even if one offers an animal, one is offering something of one's own life. The blood of the Passover is a marking of God's own with a sign of life, so that the angel of death will leave them alone.

Jesus gives His life, sheds His blood. It unites humankind with God again, putting the bond of union in force. It gives human life back to God, overcoming the alienation of sin. And the blood of Jesus, shared by His own, marks them with the sign of life. Henceforth, death cannot overcome them.

Sacrifice is the giving of a gift to God. What one gives, one consecrates--sets apart. If one really gives something, one normally gives it up. This fact leads to the idea of sacrifice as giving up and destroying what is offered (to put it beyond one's own further use). But neither giving up nor destruction is the heart of the concept of sacrifice. All gift-giving--even the giving of presents to one another--expresses self-giving. Thus, the heart of sacrifice is self-gift of human individuals to God.

Jesus as man responds to God's love as humankind should. He gives Himself totally. Because God's love is generous and perfective, not acquisitive and enslaving and destructive, giving oneself totally to God results in one's becoming fully perfected as oneself. Jesus demonstrates this fact, as I explained in chapter eleven, sections O and P. Without His demonstration, it would be practically impossible to believe; that one is fulfilled by self-giving goes against much of our experience with one another, because all of our love is mixed with selfishness.

Finally, Jesus commands that the Twelve (and Christian priests forever) do the Eucharist in memory of Him. "Memory" is not just musing recall. In the context of the covenant, one who remembers God and His law lives according to it; one who forgets follows other gods. If a man who is tempted to commit adultery remembers his marriage vows, he is not daydreaming about the day he got married; rather, he is keeping in mind and living up to his own commitment. They who share the Lord's Supper share His covenant-forming commitment; they are to do the Eucharist in memory of Him, for they are to live the identity they have in Him and with Him.

#### K. The Eucharist as the center of Christian life

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (Introduction, 2), recalls that the Council of Trent defines that the Mass is a true sacrifice (cf. DS 1739-1742/938-939). Vatican Council II also is quoted for the point that our Lord instituted the Eucharist to perpetuate the sacrifice of His body and blood through the centuries until He comes again (cf. SC 47). The doctrine is expressed in the prayers of the Mass. The Instruction then states:

In this new missal, then, the Church's rule of prayer corresponds to the Church's enduring rule of faith. It teaches us that the sacrifice of the cross and its sacramental renewal in the Mass are one and the same, differing only in the manner of offering. At the Last Supper Christ the Lord instituted this sacramental renewal and commanded his apostles to do it in memory of him. It is at once a sacrifice of praise and of thanksgiving, a sacrifice that reconciles us to the Father and makes amends to him for the sins of the world.

As I explained in chapter eleven, section P, all of the other aspects of the redemptive act of Jesus can be understood on the basis of the human meaning of His free acceptance

of death. Now I have explained how the Last Supper as a human act was related to the events of the next day. It remains to indicate how the Mass and the sacrifice of the cross, as human acts, are "one and the same, differing only in the manner of offering."

Choices are spiritual realities. As such they last, as I explained in chapter 5 eight, section J. The choice of Christ which was the vehicle, as it were, of His free acceptance of death--an act in itself sufficient to bind humankind to God forever--did not cease with the end of the Supper, did not cease with His death, and still remains as a determinant of His glorious human identity (cf. Heb 9.11-14, 24-28; 10.5-16). Therefore, there still exists the choice of Christ which was carried out by His going to Jerusalem, eating the Passover, and accepting the consequences of doing so.

The eating of the Passover was a sharing together in a cooperative religious act. The Eucharist at the end of the meal also was a religious act in which the Twelve shared. Except for Judas, they were Jesus' friends, and although they did not clearly understand what He was doing, they wanted to be with Him in it. By cooperating with Him, through receiving and consuming the consecrated bread and cup, His own did take part in His redemptive act.

Jesus includes in His eucharistic action the command: Do this. By including this command, He also includes in His own action all of their future acts which will carry out this command.

The eucharistic sacrifice is a sign, for it does symbolize the bloody consequences of Jesus' choice, a choice He made out of redeeming, sacrificial love. But the sign here is not merely a symbol with a purely cognitive relationship to what it symbolizes. The first Eucharist is Jesus' very performance of the choice in making which He concretely accepted death. The sign is based upon the existential reality.

The Mass is a script which in its repeated performances concretely actualizes the eucharistic sacrifice as sign in every time and in every place. By including a command to repeat the sign, Jesus provides a real existential relationship between the act of the priest consecrating in every Mass and the choice of Jesus which led to His death. Therefore, the Mass today continues to carry out the basic, redemptive commitment of Jesus. This commitment is carried out differently than it was on Good Friday, but its present carrying out is really part of what Jesus was doing then. The priest now does what Jesus then said to do.

As the apostles who ate the Last Supper with Jesus shared in His passion and death by cooperating with Him in His eucharistic sacrifice, so do we. The Last Supper, in a very real sense, did not end. The meal was interrupted, like a family dinner interrupted by a tornado. Perhaps hours later the family returns to finish the meal--the same meal--and perhaps some of its members are no longer alive. In the case of the eucharistic meal of Jesus, He lives, but not visibly. The very same meal goes on. At each Mass we come back to the same table and share the same consecrated bread and cup.

Thus, the Mass really does perpetuate the sacrifice of the cross until Jesus comes again, as Vatican II teaches (cf. SC 47). The Mass makes the sacrifice of the cross present so that we can share in it. The faithful ought to offer Jesus not only through the priest, but also with him, and so learn to offer themselves as well (cf. SC 48). This real union, not merely a sense of belonging, is the reason to encourage the active participation by the people in every Mass. The ordained priest acts in the person of Christ, proclaims His mystery (that is, makes clear what Christ really is doing), and joins the offering of the faithful themselves to that of our Lord (cf. IG 28).

It is in the Mass that persons already Christian by baptism become fully joined to the body of Christ by cooperating in Christ's human act, and thus linking their own lives (made up of their own personal acts) with His. The Eucharist contains Christ Himself, our living bread:

Through His very flesh, made vital and vitalizing by the Holy Spirit, He offers life to men. They are thereby invited and led to offer themselves, their labors, and all created things together with Him.

Hence the Eucharist shows itself to be the source and the apex of the whole work of preaching the gospel. Those under instruction are introduced by stages to a sharing in the Eucharist. The faithful, already marked with the sacred seal of baptism and confirmation, are through the reception of the Eucharist fully joined to the Body of Christ.

Thus the Eucharistic Action is the very heartbeat of the congregation of the faithful over which the priest presides. So priests must instruct them to offer to God the Father the divine Victim in the sacrifice of the Mass, and to join to it the offering of their own lives (PO 5).

Christ's redemptive act was a community-forming act. By faith one accepts God's communication of redemptive love. Faith requires one to live as God's children should live. In the Eucharist Christians unite their own personal lives--which must be redemptive lives like that of Jesus--with one another and with the life of Christ.

From this point of view, all of Christian life proceeds from and prepares for the Eucharist--a point I will discuss more fully in part seven. One lives in order to have prayers and works, joys and sufferings, to bring to the Offertory. And one comes forth from Mass to love and serve the Lord.

#### L. Christian life as liturgy -- Christian acts as spiritual sacrifice

God is not always pleased with sacrifices offered to Him. "I hate, I spurn your feasts, I take no pleasure in your solemnities" (Am 5.21). "Bring no more worthless offerings; your incense is loathsome to me" (Is 1.13). "In speaking to your fathers on the day I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I gave them no command concerning holocaust or sacrifice" (Jer 7.21). One prepares a lovely liturgy, and everything goes beautifully. The music has never been better; the homily is well-spoken; everyone flocks to communion. And God says: Forget it!

"This rather is what I commanded them: Listen to my voice; then I will be your God and you shall be my people. Walk in all the ways that I command you, so that you may prosper" (Jer 7.23). "You have been told, O man, what is good, and what the Lord

requires of you: Only to do what is right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Mi 6.8). "To keep the law is a great oblation, and he who observes the commandments sacrifices a peace offering" (Si 35.1). "Appear not before the Lord empty-handed, for all that you offer is in fulfillment of the precepts" (Si 35.4). The really

5 lovely liturgy is the one to which good works are brought.

Wherefore, on coming into the world, Jesus said:

"Sacrifice and offering you did not desire,

but a body you have prepared for me;

Holocausts and sin offerings you took no delight in.

10 Then I said, 'As is written of me in the book,

I have come to do your will, O God'" (Heb 10.5-7).

Sacrifice is a gift to God. The gift God wants from us is a good life, offered in union with the good life of Jesus. Liturgy is service of God. The service God wants from us is cooperation in the redemptive work of Jesus. Unwanted gifts and useless service are

15 not gifts and service at all. Unless it is the center of genuine Christian living, even the Holy Mass becomes a cheap show without reality. Indeed, like the sacrifices which the prophets condemned, even the Holy Mass can become a hypocritical substitute for Catholic

life, an anodyne which makes us forget our unfaithfulness to Christ and His Church. The epistles sometimes introduce the theme of sacrifice when the transition is made

20 from doctrinal topics to moral exhortation.[7] For example:

And now, brothers, I beg you through the mercy of God to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to God, your spiritual worship. Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may judge what is God's will, what is good, pleasing and perfect (Rom 12.1-2).

25 "Bodies" here means persons and lives as a whole, but perhaps especially connotes particular actions. One is to ignore whatever "new morality" happens to be current, and judge instead by the standards of Christ. Since the Christian has died and lives a hidden life in Christ, he or she should offer everything to God the Father in thanksgiving (cf. Col 3.3, 17).

"You too are living stones, built as an edifice of spirit, into a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pt 2.5). The body of Christ is God's living temple, and the sacrifice called for in this temple is the good lives of the priestly people united with their Priest, Jesus (cf. 1 Pt 1.22-2.10).

35 In Christ we are "being built into this temple, to become a dwelling place for God in the Spirit" (Eph 2.22).

"Looking after orphans and widows in their distress and keeping oneself unspotted by the world make for pure worship without stain before our God and Father" (Jas 1.27). Jesus looked forward to a time when "authentic worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth" (Jn 4.13). Those whose deeds are wicked flee Christ's light, for fear that it will expose the truth, "But he who acts in truth comes into the light, to make clear that his deeds are done in God" (Jn 3.21).

Vatican II teaches the universal priesthood of the faithful, insofar as all are called to offer spiritual sacrifices (cf. PO 2). The ordained priest has a special role and dignity, for through his ministry "the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful is made perfect in union with the sacrifice of Christ, the sole Mediator" (PO 2). Unless Christian life is lived, an ordained priest has nothing useful to do in the Mass, for he offers the Mass in the name of the people (including those who are not present), and their offering must be the living sacrifice of "all those works befitting Christian men" (IG 10).

In speaking of the laity, the Council teaches that Christ gives them the Spirit and urges them on "to every good and perfect work." Christ not only associates the laity with His life as redeeming, but also gives them a share in His priesthood. All the activities of life, if they are done in the Spirit

55 . . . become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Pt 2.5). During the celebration of the Eucharist, these sacrifices are most lovingly offered to the Father along with the Lord's body. Thus, as worshippers whose every deed is holy, the laity consecrate the world itself to God (IG 34).

What is true of the laity is true, of course, of every member of the Church. The whole of every Christian's life, just to the extent that it truly is Christian, not only contributes even now to the growing of the eternal kingdom and continues here and now the redemptive work of Christ, but also completes here and now His perfect sacrifice. The only genuine liturgy is one which centers and completes a genuine Christian life, much as the only true act of marital love is one which consummates a daily life of loving

65 cooperation.

#### M. Christian life as conformity to Jesus

There is yet another aspect to the moral significance of Christian life. Every truly moral person holds before himself or herself an ideal of perfection and longs to realize this ideal. The ideal of the Christian is not an abstraction, but the concrete exemplar: our Lord Jesus. In discussing the theme of imitation and following, the theme of personal redemptive vocation, and the theme of Christian life as liturgy, I already have touched at many points upon the necessity that the lives of Christians be like the

75 life of Christ. But apart from any other consideration, those who love Jesus wish to be morally perfect and holy simply to be closer to Him whom they love.

One who takes up his or her cross and follows Jesus shares in His redemptive work. But often we wish to work with someone less because we wish to get a job done than because we love the person and wish to share his or her company. So it can be with Jesus. Gratitude for what He has done for one grows into admiration for Him as a man, and admiration for Him grows into personal affection. Like a wife who loves her husband or an athlete who loves his coach, one often is more ready to act because of personal loyalty than because one understands and cares about the objective in view.

80

It seems to me that this aspect of the moral significance of Christian life is

essential to its dynamism, to its growth toward perfection. One observes it throughout the writings of St. Paul: "Who will separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom 8.35). "Christ died for us godless men" (Rom 5.6). "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the desires of the flesh" (Rom 13.14). The Greek philosophers have their moral ideal: The wise man, who also is just, courageous, and temperate. Christians have a better one, for Jesus is "our wisdom and also our justice, our sanctification, and our redemption" (1 Cor 1.30). With sanctity who needs temperance; with redemption who needs courage?

The sonship which the Spirit communicates to us includes a share in the sufferings of Christ (cf. Rom 8.17). The Christian is "formed anew in the image of his Creator" (Col 3.10). Christ is the perfect image of God (cf. Col 1.15). A truly mature human person, one who becomes what Man was meant to be, must be like Christ (cf. Eph 4.13). One's attitude must be as humble and obedient as Christ's (cf. Phil 2.6-9). Paul once had other values:

But those things I used to consider gain I have now reappraised as loss in the light of Christ. I have come to rate all as loss in the light of the surpassing knowledge of my Lord Jesus Christ. For his sake I have forfeited everything; I have accounted all else rubbish so that Christ may be my wealth and I may be in him (Phil 3.7-9).

Paul wants to know how to share in His sufferings (cf. Phil 3.10); he has been grasped by Christ (cf. Phil 3.12); the only thing he cares about is life on high in Christ Jesus (cf. Phil 3.14); others should imitate Paul as he imitates Christ (cf. Phil 3.17).

Jesus is compassionate because He is like us (cf. Heb 2.17-18); we are drawn to compassion toward Him the more perfectly we appreciate His true humanity. Then we are not satisfied with keeping the commandments; we sense Jesus' personal love, and wish to follow Him more perfectly, even if it means giving up everything else (cf. Mk 10.17-22). As disciples, we wish to finish the course of study and become like our Teacher (cf. Lk 6.40). We wish this even when it becomes clear that becoming like Him means sharing His entire fate (cf. Mt 10.24,25).

Abiding in Jesus we bear much fruit, but this fruit is not enjoyed in this world (cf. Jn 15.1-8, 18-20). "You will suffer in the world. But take courage! I have overcome the world" (Jn 16.33). The life to which we are called is like that of Christ, which I described in chapter eleven, section Q. How can one face such a life?

#### 35 N. Hope -- an indispensable condition for living a Christian life

After the Lord's Prayer, the priest continues alone with a prayer for that hope without which Christian life is altogether impossible:

Deliver us, Lord, from every evil, and grant us peace in our day.  
In your mercy keep us free from sin and protect us from all anxiety  
as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever.

If sin is avoided, no other evil ultimately matters. Free from all anxiety we look forward to fulfillment in Christ, a fulfillment sure to come, for God's is the communion which is our goal, His the power to bring us to it, and His the causality which will be manifested wonderfully in it. (To substitute "needless" for "all" in this prayer is to show obtuseness. One might as well pray to be free of "unreasonable" doubts against faith or "unjustified" hatred of one's neighbor.)

In announcing the kingdom of God, Jesus urged that we look forward to it (cf. Mk 13.33-37; Mt 24.44-51; Lk 12.35-47). While waiting, He taught us to persevere until the end (cf. Mk 13.13; Mt 10.22; Lk 2.19). After the resurrection of Jesus, the early Church looked forward longingly to His return (cf. 1 Cor 16.22; Rev 22.20). Christians waited in hope (cf. Ti 2.13). What they hoped for was salvation, eternal life--a share in the resurrection and glory of Jesus Himself (cf. Rom 5.9; 6.22; 8.17; 1 Thes 2.13; 5.8; 1 Cor 15.19; Gal 6.8; Phil 3.21).

If one is faithful to the end, one can be confident that one's hope will be fulfilled (cf. Heb 6.11). The basis for assurance is the faithfulness of God to His promises, and the fact that Jesus already has entered glory (cf. Heb 6.13-18). "Like a sure and firm anchor, that hope extends beyond the veil through which Jesus, our forerunner, has entered on our behalf, being made high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 6.19-20). The blood of Jesus assures our entrance into heaven "by the new and living path he has opened up for us through the veil (the 'veil' meaning his flesh)" (Heb 10.19).

Our hope extends through the Eucharist, the body of Christ, from this world into the invisible kingdom which is growing, and in which the real results of our present lives are being built into fulfillment. Here and now, getting results is of no great importance (cf. Mt 7.21-23). The Christian lays up treasure in heaven (cf. Mt 6.20-21; Lk 12.33-34). The truth of a Christian's life is not apparent; it is hidden with Christ, and will appear only when He comes (cf. Col 3.3-4).

The confidence of the Christian is not in himself or herself. The basis of confidence is that one has experienced God's love, and one knows by faith that the power of the Holy Spirit is available (cf. Jn 14.16-18; Rom 15.7-13). With such confidence, even when one seems most alone, one knows that one is in the company of the Father (cf. Jn 16.23, 32). Present sufferings are insignificant in comparison with confidently expected glory (cf. Rom 8.18). With this confidence, one asks God for all that one needs, but presses Him for nothing as mere token of His love.

Hope is the orientation of one's entire Christian life by the reality of the unseen fulfillment in Christ, which already exists in Him and is being built up even as we live our lives. We look for completion yet to come in our experience, because we wish to be part of heavenly fulfillment and to be aware of being part of it. At present we, like all the saints before us, know what our lives truly mean only by faith. The great cloud of witnesses (cf. Heb 11.1-4) is made up of all those whose lives showed their absolute confidence in God's faithfulness to His promises. They lived by faith, which was effective in shaping their lives, for it told them precisely what they could hope for and

gave them ground for holding the unseen as real.

The world we know is passing away (cf. 1 Cor 7.31). It is like the skin of a snake which is shriveling up and is about to be cast off.

5 Indeed, we know that when the earthly tent in which we dwell is destroyed we have a dwelling provided for us by God, a dwelling in the heavens, not made by hands but to last forever. We groan while we are here, even as we yearn to have our heavenly habitation envelop us. . . . God has fashioned us for this very thing and has given us the spirit as a pledge of it. Therefore we continue to be confident. We know that while we dwell in the body we are away from the Lord. We walk by  
10 faith, not by sight. I repeat, we are full of confidence and would much rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. This being so, we make it our aim to please him whether we are with him or away from him (2 Cor 5.1-2, 5-9).

Our heavenly home already exists. We wait only to be taken into it.

15 The redemptive work of Christ does not simply cancel out sin and restore this world to what it had been. Rather, it makes possible a good life in this world, but a life which cannot be humanly fulfilling in many respects, since it is lived amid the consequences of sin, and it includes suffering the consequences of faithfulness to Christ. Very often it will seem--and worldly wisdom will insist--that the only reasonable thing to do is something evil, chosen to avoid a greater evil or to bring about a greater good.  
20 In such cases, only hope makes goodness possible. For by hope one realizes that one's good act is invisibly fruitful, that the fruit will last, and that one who loses everything in this world for Christ will be most richly fulfilled in Him in heaven.

#### 25 0. Mary and the other saints: examples and companions

Very often we think of the saints as models of Christian life, and we are right to do so, because the Church proposes them for our imitation. We also think of them as intercessors on our behalf and, once again, we think with the Church. But there is potentially much more to our relationship to the saints than we usually realize (cf. LG 48-50).

30 Each of the saints is in heaven because he or she shared in the redemptive commitment of Christ and went on to live a personal life which fulfilled this commitment in a clear and outstanding manner. Like Jesus Himself, each of the saints was trying to do a job, and like His, none of their jobs was altogether done. When we love the saints and thank God for them, the love which perfects the family of God is strengthened (cf.  
35 LG 50). With friendship, we carry on what the saints were trying to do.

For example, one who wishes to do apostolic work is a colleague with the apostles and with apostolic men of all times, carrying on what each of them wished to do, gave his life in doing. One who carries out theological labor for the Church is working  
40 along with St. Augustine and St. Thomas and all the others who have done such work. One who seeks truly to reform the Church works with St. Catherine. One who strives to build up a genuine Christian humanism is a coworker with St. Thomas More.

To the extent that saints not only share with us in the common commitment of following Christ but in a more special form of service in Him, we very appropriately develop special closeness to some of them. In their lives we find many more definite aspects of  
45 goodness and particular ways of holiness to imitate than we can find in the individual, although absolutely perfect, life of Christ. Since we share in their work, it is only to be expected that they do what they can to help us live our lives. These close personal relationships with many real, although invisible, friends give a dimension of concreteness and vivacity to our hope which otherwise would be lacking.

50 One who is sensitive to the communion of saints, which gathers together God's children of every time and place, is not likely to be overly impressed with arguments based on the values of contemporary humankind. The "contemporary" world rapidly passes away; the relevance of today is the straightjacket of tomorrow. Do sixty-three percent of American Catholics disregard the teaching of the Church on some matter? A serious  
55 situation to be sure. Why do these few people imagine their judgment to be a reflection of anything but secular humanist rationalization, when a far larger number of persons already has reached heaven by accepting this teaching and striving to live up to it, often with very great sacrifices which showed a love of Christ not so evident today?

Above all the other saints, we honor Mary, the mother of Jesus, whom He gave us as  
60 our own mother. Her personal vocation is a unique exemplar for all other human persons called to share in the redemptive work of Christ (cf. LG 57). Since Jesus was her human son, when the angel proposed and Mary agreed that she be the mother of Christ, she showed how the work of redemption can depend upon the willing cooperation of human persons (cf. Lk 1.38). Her natural motherhood demonstrated the limited individuality of  
65 Jesus, His dependence upon His human brothers and sisters. Her continuing work for our redemption exemplifies the manner in which all of the holy commitments of Christians contribute to completion in Christ and will last forever.

Mary also provides a special ground for our hope. God's faithfulness is the fundamental ground of hope; the resurrection of Christ is the primary evidence of this faith-  
70 fulness, and is the exemplar of our own resurrection to come. But without Mary one might doubt that God could bring human persons to share in divine glory. Mary is a created person just as are we. Her greatness depends entirely upon God's grace. What He has done for her He can do for us. Our limitations need not make us doubt. Even our sinfulness need not make us despair, for Mary's perfect holiness itself was a gift of  
75 grace. The same redeeming love which preserved Mary from sin and death can heal our sins and raise us from death to life.

Mary stood at the foot of Jesus' cross and joined her own suffering to His as a gift to the heavenly Father. She led a life of obedience and humility. She heard the word of God and kept it, in deed and in truth. By many standards, her earthly life  
80 hardly was fulfilling. She was only a mother and homemaker. She is the queen of heaven. God lifted up the lowly, and all generations call her "Blessed."

Since Mary's personal vocation in a unique way was related totally, and even in a sense inclusively, to that of Jesus, all of us should love her with a special love and share in carrying on her work. Consequently, she is a model for our imitation and a

helper in our lives. Although she was not a liberated woman, she is the exemplar of all truly liberated men and women, for she lived and she lives in the glorious liberty which belongs to God's children--the liberty of a life of love according to the Spirit.

5 P. The Christian lives by the Spirit

The possibility of living one's vocation as a Christian depends upon three things: first, walking by faith in Jesus, and sharing in the companionship of bodily communion with Him; second, hope in God and God's faithfulness to His promises; and third, the gift of the Spirit and the love which He pours forth in our hearts. (Traditionally, these three have been called "theological virtues.") I have said something about the first two, and will say more about faith in part four and hope in part seven. The love of God poured forth in our hearts through the Holy Spirit was considered at length in chapter six, and will be considered again as the vitalizing principle of a Christ-like heart in part five. Here I wish only to consider the gift of the Spirit as the enabling and liberating power of God, who alone makes possible a fitting life for God's adopted children.

St. Paul clearly and forcefully affirms that Christian life is a life of perfect freedom: "My brothers, remember that you have been called to live in freedom . . . . If you are guided by the spirit, you are not under the law" (Gal 5.13, 18). Some Jewish Christians wished everyone to adhere to the law of Moses. Paul passionately rejected this imposition: "It was for liberty that Christ freed us. So stand firm, and do not take on yourselves the yoke of slavery a second time!" (Gal 5.1).

The prophets and holy men of Israel had praised the law of God as a wonderful gift which helped one to walk with God. Paul rejoices that Christians are at last rid of the law: "Sin will no longer have power over you; you are now under grace, not under the law" (Rom 6.14). Indeed, the law was a gift from God, but it was a very limited gift. It did make clear what is right, but to make this clear to sinful people is to aggravate their sinfulness. Not only is evil more serious when it is committed contrary to an express command of God, but sinful people given commands are stirred by their contrariness to rebellion (Cf. Rom 7.7-12). As I explained in chapter eleven, section C, the stages of redemption prior to Christ involved inner tensions which rendered each of them unsatisfactory and required that they be surpassed.

The law had a role for the Jews. It was a jailer or a slave which boxed people in and forced them to learn their sinfulness (cf. Gal 3.23-24). Like a treatment which aggravates a disease to the point of crisis, the law was imposed to bring out all the bitter consequences of sin--to lead to death (cf. Gal 3.10). Christians naturally were glad to be free of all the detailed regulations and observances of the Mosaic law. But Paul is not primarily interested in such details. The example of the law he gives is from the Ten Commandments: "You shall not covet" (Rom 7.7). It is this sort of law which for the Jews was more a burden than a blessing, and it is from this sort of law that Christians are gloriously liberated.

Paul was not the first to recognize the limitations of the law. Without inner renewal, knowing precisely what is right and wrong is a curse. So the psalmist prays: "A clean heart create for me" (Ps 51.12). "I will run the way of your commands when you give me a docile heart" (Ps 119.32). The prophets look forward to the time when God will give the people a heart to know who He is and who they are, a heart able to live as God's people (cf. Jer 24.7; Bar 2.30).

I will give them a new heart and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the stony heart from their bodies and replace it with a natural heart, so that they will live according to my statutes, and observe and carry out my ordinances; thus they shall be my people and I will be their God (Ez 11.19-20). The law, even the Ten Commandments, is no help at all unless one has the heart to love God. Nothing imposed from without can make a person holy.

Jesus teaches that God will give what we need; we must pray persistently, and the heavenly Father will answer (cf. Mt 7.7-11). One can ask the Father for anything in the name of Jesus and be confident of receiving what one asks so that one's joy may be full (cf. Jn 16.23-24). God knows how to give His children good things; he will "give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him" (Lk 11.13). One who has faith in Christ will be able to live as Jesus did and even will be able to do greater works than His, for Jesus will ask the Father and the Father will send the Spirit to those who wish to walk with Jesus (cf. Jn 14.12-16).

Accordingly, St. Paul teaches that Christians are freed from the condemnation of the law. They enjoy a new law: "The law of the spirit, the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, has freed you from sin and death" (Rom 8.2). The prophetic promise had been that the new law would be placed within God's people, written upon their hearts (cf. Jer 31.33). The dead, dry bones of God's people would be recreated: "I will put my spirit in you that you may live" (Ez 37.14). By His gift of the Spirit, made at the request of Jesus, the Father fulfills this promise.

The new law of Christ is not simply a higher and more perfect ideal, one without compromises with human hard-heartedness. The new law is not a code, not an external imposition. Instead, it is an interior transformation. The Spirit pours forth the love of God in our hearts (cf. Rom 5.5). We are changed from subjects under a law to members of the divine family, with all the rights and privileges which pertain to this status (cf. Gal 4.4-7). Children of God do not have to take orders from anybody; they enjoy absolute liberty and can do just as they please (cf. Rom 8.14-21).

"No one begotten of God acts sinfully because he remains of God's stock; he cannot sin because he is begotten of God" (1 Jn 3.9). Love of neighbor fulfills the entire law (cf. Gal 5.14). One who loves fulfills not only the Ten Commandments but any other commandment there might be (cf. Rom 13.9). Charity is not simply a matter of doing a little something extra now and then. It includes all the virtues and excludes all the vices; one who receives this gift needs nothing else for perfection (cf. 1 Cor 13). One who has the Spirit is free of inclination to do wrong; life in the Spirit bears fruit in every virtue and good work (cf. Gal 5.16-23).

St. Paul teaches that the new covenant is one "not of a written law but of spirit. The written law kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor 3.6). St. Thomas Aquinas teaches that this saying holds true even of the precepts of the Gospel and the law of the Church. Any exterior requirement imposed upon a person is deadly.[8]

5 If all this is so, do Christians still need moral teaching? Obviously, there is moral teaching, throughout the New Testament and the whole tradition of the Church. Nor is it merely some optional guidelines. Paul himself lists sins and then says: "I warn you, as I have warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God!" (Gal 5.21). St. John no sooner asserts that a child of God cannot sin than he  
10 warns his readers against committing murder (1 Jn 3.12). Jesus Himself explicitly insists that the commandments are to be kept and taught (cf. Mt 5.17-20). Why are Christians still confronted with moral law?

The unhappy fact is that Christians can sin, can evict the Spirit from their hearts, as I explained in chapter seven, section E. When we are lawless and unruly, then the law  
15 still serves its excellent function: It makes clear to us what we are (cf. 1 Tm 1.8-11). Moreover, the human personality is complex. Even if we do not evict the Spirit, sin remains in the recesses of our selves (cf. Rom 8.23). We have our treasure in earthen vessels, and death is still at its work in us (cf. 2 Cor 4.7, 12). The unredeemed part of oneself fights the Spirit (cf. Gal 5.16-17). Christian moral teaching marks out the  
20 way we must walk to conform to the perfect image of God which is given us in Christ.

The liberty we receive as Christians is not liberty to do good and evil indiscriminately. Freedom from the law is not a permit for fuzzy thinking in morals, nor for the slackness and laxity which is so common among us. The liberty we receive is the power of the Holy Spirit, the power of God's own love. Using this power with faith, we can do  
25 anything whatsoever. Therefore, we can fulfill perfectly every requirement of perfect fulfillment. We can love enemies, die as martyrs, and even live without sexual orgasms.

For good parents there is no law against murdering children. For good spouses there is no law against committing adultery. For fair-minded people there are no laws against injustice. One who lives by the Spirit finds out what is right and good and will-  
30 ingly does it; for such a person, law might just as well not exist. One who loves God above all things necessarily loves every created thing just as it should be loved, and so necessarily loves every human good properly. For such a person, any act which would violate a human good (any immoral act which would be a sin) is out of the question. Children of God may do just as they please because nothing pleases them which would dis-  
35 please the Father by mutilating the good He wills in them and in creation as a whole.

Christians who live by the Spirit are freed from sin, death, the law, and the devil. But they are not robbed of their humanity. The Spirit does not take away human judgment and choice; if He were to do this, grace would destroy nature rather than heal  
40 and perfect it. As I explained in chapter eleven, section B, God redeems us in a way which respects our dignity as responsible persons. Therefore the Christian who lives by the Spirit and without the law still needs to learn what is right and still must choose it. Even Jesus had to know the Father's will and commit Himself to it, as I explained in chapter eleven, sections H, J, and K.

How does the Christian learn what is right? Just as God redeems us in Christ by  
45 the gift of Jesus' human acts (which He did intelligently and freely), so the Spirit sanctifies us and completes the work of redemption through us by the gift of our own human acts (which we must do intelligently and freely). The Spirit does not replace our thought processes; He gives us the power to think straight and to walk straight, in the way of Christ.

We are members of the Church, a redemptive community. We share a common task: to  
50 communicate God's love by our words and by our lives. The Church as a whole has the sure gift of divine truth; as a whole she cannot evict the Spirit; as a whole she has the mind of our Lord Jesus and a wealth of human experience. We come to know what is right by thinking with the Church. How the Church knows and helps us know what is right  
55 is the topic to which I now turn.

#### Notes to chapter twelve

60 1. See Edouard Hamel, S.J., Les dix paroles: Perspectives bibliques (Bruxelles-Paris: Desclée de Brouwer; Montréal: Les Éditions Bellarmin, 1969), pp. 18-20.

2. See C. Spicq, O.P., Théologie Morale du Nouveau Testament, tm. 2 (Paris: J. Gabalda et Cie, 1965), pp. 688-744. This chapter treats imitation of Christ and the apostles as the way of proceeding from one's natural status as image of God to one's ultimate heavenly destiny.

65 3. See Paolo Molinari, S.J., "Our incorporation in Christ and our participation in his work of redemption," Christ to the World (1970), pp. 388-393.

4. St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae, 1-2, qu. 108, art. 4.

5. See: "Letter of the Sacred Congregation of Extraordinary Ecclesiastical Affairs: Saecular and Regular Clergy," 13 July 1952, in Abbé Gaston Courtois, ed., The States of  
70 Perfection according to the Teaching of the Church (Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1961), pp. 209-212.

6. It would be very helpful to students to read the brief articles on "covenant," "blood," "sacrifice," and "memory" in Xavier Léon-Dufour, Dictionary of Biblical Theology, 2nd ed. (New York: Seabury Press, 1973). Other dictionaries of the Bible may be con-  
75 sulted instead, but non-Catholic ones often show theological bias, and some perfectly sound Catholic ones seem to me less theologically insightful than the articles in Léon-Dufour's.

7. See Raymond Corriveau, C.Ss.R., The Liturgy of Life: A Study of the Ethical Thought of St. Paul in His Letters to the Early Christian Communities (Bruxelles, Paris: Desclée de Brouwer; Montréal: Les Éditions Bellarmin, 1970), who explains how the whole of Christian life is sacrificial--that is, is rational worship. See also Robert J. Daly, S.J., The Origins of the Christian Doctrine of Sacrifice (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), pp. 53-83.

8. St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa theologiae, 1-2, qu. 106, art. 2. On this matter and on the subject of this whole section, see Ignace de la Potterie, S.J., and Stanislaus Lyonnet, S.J., The Christian Lives by the Spirit (Staten Island, N.Y.: Alba House, 1971), pp. 145-174, especially pp. 162-163.

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Questions for study and review

1. Many presentations of Christian morality stress that one must do what is right in order to be saved. In what ways is this stress likely to be misleading?
- 10 2. Clarify what is meant by "following Christ" and by "imitating Christ." How were these concepts formed by Old Testament experiences?
3. Explain in terms of human acts the unity of the lives of Jesus and His followers.
- 15 4. Explain in terms of human acts the distinction between the life of Jesus and that of each Christian.
5. In what senses is it appropriate to say that Jesus needs His followers?
6. How does one discern one's personal vocation? Does what is said here correspond to your own experience? If not, in what ways do you think it needs to be corrected?
- 20 7. What is characteristic of the life of a person in the religious state?
8. Explain why it is false to say that the life of a secular priest is inferior to that of a religious.
9. Explain in terms of human acts the relationships among the first Eucharist offered by Jesus, the events of Good Friday, and the Mass offered today.
- 25 10. Explain the relationship between the Mass and the remainder of Christian life.
11. From a liturgical point of view, what is the importance of Christian moral life? How can liturgy, even the Mass, be abused and become an empty gesture?
12. What is added to the other dimensions of Christian life by one's effort to conform to Jesus as to a concrete ideal?
- 30 13. What is hope? What is its basis? Why is it essential to Christian life? Why does the Church pray that we be free of all anxiety?
14. Explain how we cooperate with the saints, and how such cooperation explains other aspects of our relationship with them.
- 35 15. Summarize the special importance of the Blessed Virgin Mary for Christian moral life.
16. Criticize the following: "Legalism belongs to the Old Testament. We have the freedom of the children of God. So I'm going to follow my own conscience on sexual morality."
- 40 17. If Christianity is not really incompatible with human fulfillment (as was argued in chapter seven), then why does Christian life require self-emptying (as is indicated in the present chapter)?
18. Criticize the following: "Jesus redeemed us. That takes care of sin. Now it is up to us to live good, full, well-rounded human lives, so that others will be able to see the love and joy of God in us."
- 45