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EDITORIAL:

“ONE IS YOUR TEACHER, CHRIST” (MT. 23:10)

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T GREGORY NAZIANZUS PRAISED THE VOCATION OF TEACHING AS “THE ART OF ARTS.”

The Fathers of the Church exalted the teacher second only to the priest. (Quoted from Catholic Encyclopedia: “Moral Obligations of Teachers,” by F.J. Connell, Vol. 13, p. 958.) Among the Jews, in the Old Testament, and even today, to become a Rabbi, namely a teacher of the law and the prophets, was considered to have received a divine calling. And this sacred teacher was expected to receive from the people, as is stated by Our Lord in the Gospel of St. Matthew, “honor in men’s eyes, the chief places at table, the first seats in the synagogue and their hands kissed in the market place.” (Mt. 23:6-11) St. Augustine comments that we should not call anyone on earth Teacher, since there is One in Heaven who is the Teacher of all, Christ the Power and Wisdom of God. (St. Augustine, *Ancient Christian Writers: The Teacher*, c. 11, p. 177.) The Church has always taught that there is a noble, humane attribute to teaching and an even far nobler, divine glory in the office of the teacher who is explaining to the students the realities of revelation. When Our Lord spoke the following words to the multitude: “You are not to claim the title of Rabbi,” He was warning His listeners that they were not to give divine honors to men, or usurp exclusively for human teachers a title that belonged formally and absolutely only to God, as the Teacher par excellence, but which is given to men only analogically and accidentally. As St. Thomas writes: “We are forbidden to call man a teacher in this sense, that we attribute to him the pre-eminence of teaching which belongs to God alone, and his incarnate Son, Jesus Christ.” St. Thomas Aquinas, *The Disputed Questions on Truth*, Vol. II, Question 11: 1, The Teacher, p. 77.) For God, in the Person of His Divine Son, Jesus Christ, who is the substantial Wisdom of the Father, sent the absolutely perfect Divine Teacher as the Son of Man to enlighten every man that comes into the world and to lead all persons to truth and holiness. But man can truly be called a teacher inasmuch as he teaches the truth and enlightens the mind. (Aquinas, *Disputed Questions*, p. 85.) St. Paul says of himself: “To me the least of all the saints is given this grace.. .to enlighten all men.” (Eph. 3:8-9)

But Jesus, in His infinite love and compassion, when He became the perfect Teacher of the human family, willed to share many of His divine attributes with those redeemed by His sacred blood and who accepted Him as their divine Teacher. Thus such faithful, from having been enemies of God, now became members of the family of the Holy Trinity. St. Peter, testifying to this ineffable mystery of divine love, wrote to the first Christian communities thus: “You are now a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people God means to have for Himself; it is your glory to proclaim the exploits of God who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light. Time was when you were not a people at all; now you are God’s people; once you were excluded from mercy, now you have received the mercy of God.” (1 Peter 2:9-10)

But besides giving man participation in His divine family, His royal priesthood, His consecrated kingdom, His favorite people set aside for sanctity and glory, another of the riches of divine life that God shares with men is the

office of the teacher of truth and of sacred realities. Christ, as the Son of God and the Son of Man, is the perfect paternal utterance, the sublime paternal teaching and Self-Communication of the Holy Trinity to mankind. Thus the New Testament tells us that He began to do and to teach so as to attract all men to Himself, the Light of the world and Splendor of holiness and thereby present humanity, enlightened as a community of saints through His Holy Spirit of truth and love, to the heavenly Father.

REASONS FOR CELEBRATING OUR FAITH

There are many reasons why Catholic educators should celebrate our faith with deep enduring joy. I propose to consider a few of the most fundamental and inspiring ones.

1. *The Catholic Teacher is a Herald of Truth* sent by the Son of God through a vocation he follows within the Church, in order to provide the intellectual and moral training for the transformation of man and woman, especially of youth, in Christ. Christ sent the Apostles to teach: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Mt. 28:20) And the Church has always joyfully, faithfully accepted this mission. It has been, and still is, carried out by the Magisterium of the Pope, by the bishops, priests, religious, parents and laity, all of them dedicated to the apostolate of bringing Christ to the whole world. Addressing the cardinals and members of the Roman Curia at their traditional audience before the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul in June 1984, the Holy Father took as his theme "The Church as Teacher." He said:

I address myself to the teachers, to the laity involved in Catholic schools, to the parents and the beloved students, that they might consider it a very great honor to belong to these schools. All the components of the Church feel responsibility for maintaining their high prestige even at the cost of sacrifice, convinced of the great role they play in the future of the various ecclesial and civil communities. (*The Pope Speaks* magazine, Vol. 29, No. 4, pp. 335-336.)

2. *The Catholic Teacher is a Witness to the Faith.* The Church entrusts to the Catholic instructor a share in the mission Christ gave Her when He said to Peter: "Feed my lambs, feed my sheep." (John 21:16) There is here a witness to the faith that involves a three-tiered service. *First*

service to man. For the teacher leads pupils upward towards God; this is the vertical dimension that enlarges the mind of students to know God more deeply, love Him more intensely and serve Him more faithfully. And in Catholic schools, no matter what subject is being taught, secular or sacred, a Christian atmosphere pervades all teaching. Moreover, the Church in Her hierarchy and laity will fight to maintain this atmosphere. For example, recently the Socialist government of France attempted to nationalize all private schools, especially all denominational schools. This law would have wiped out all Catholic institutions of learning. But the French people, led by bishops, priests, teachers, students and thousands of members of other denominational schools formed a peaceful marching protest of over a million witnesses against the government's attempt at seizure. The Holy Father himself spoke out against this injustice. The Socialist government had to back down in the face of this zealous opposition. Here was a courageous witnessing to the religious liberty which is the right of the Church and Her schools. But there was an even more inspiring example of Catholic courage and zeal in Poland. You recall that not so long ago the Communist government there ordered all crucifixes taken down from classroom walls in an attempt to remove the presence of Christ and His Church in the sacred work of education. Teachers and students came to class wearing crucifixes around their necks to protest this atheistic violation of religious liberty. The Communist tyrants there had to back down. The teachers and students gave this splendid witness to the faith, knowing full well that their names would be recorded in the black books of their atheistic tyrants and that they and their families would be harassed by many political, economic and educational punishments. Recently too, the murder of the Polish priest, Jerzy Popietuszek, who was teaching against the evils of atheism and strengthening the faithful in their Catholic religion, is another inspiring example of the willingness of teachers to sacrifice even life in the religious service of their fellowmen. All of these are witnesses who were willing to lose political, economic, family, educational rights and even to sacrifice their lives to preserve for all men the right to a religious education in the realities of revelation as given to his Church by Christ and the Apostles.

Moreover in their service to their students Catholic teachers take the place of parents. They accept joyfully the primary obligation that comes from such delegation of parental authority. In their quasi-parental office, they exercise the virtue of piety towards those committed to

their guidance. This piety entails the duty of love, to teach, to correct and to give good example. St. John Bosco, that magnificent teacher of students, detailed in his letters the secret to the successful teaching of students towards union with Christ:

If you want to prove your concern for the true happiness of students, and to persuade them to do their duty, never forget that you are acting as parents to beloved children.

...How often during my long life I have had to learn and unlearn this great truth! It is much easier to get angry than to be patient, to threaten a child than to persuade him. Our impatient pride prefers to punish the headstrong rather than to correct them with firm and tender patience. I urge upon you the example of Paul's love for his new converts; his love led him to tears and prayer when they were less docile and resisted him.

Let no one charge you with acting in anger. It is difficult indeed to punish while remaining calm, but we must manage it or raise suspicion that we act to show our authority or to vent our spleen. Let us regard as sons and daughters, therefore, those over whom we have authority. Be at their service like Jesus who came to obey, not to command. Be ashamed to appear domineering.

This is how Jesus dealt with his apostles. He put up with their ignorance and clumsiness, even their infidelities. (Though he never tired of instructing them by word and deed). (St. John Bosco, *Book of Prayer*, Quotations from his letters, pp. 1495-1496.)

Teachers in using their authority over students must show them true charity and reverence. Authority is not an end in itself, but a means of spiritual service to subjects, of positive regard and guidance for their advancement in wisdom and holiness. Thus teachers are obliged to correct their students in a paternal or maternal manner. Naturally, they must be concerned with academic correction and class discipline. They must serve all well and treat all equally. They must never show rancor or vindictiveness. A good Catholic teacher will avoid the temptation of becoming a respecter of persons; he or she will reject the sin of discrimination because of race, color, creed, nationality or social status, or by cultivating personal favorites. For St. Thomas reminds us that "teaching is a spiritual work of mercy," as it instructs and guides the ignorant to truth and sanctity.

Finally, the teacher in Catholic schools is obliged to give good example. Pope John XXIII observed wisely that where good example does not sustain teaching, there instruction lacks soul. Moreover, Christ called all his followers, in whatever profession they find themselves, to become the light of the world against ignorance, prejudice and untruthfulness, to become the leaven of sanctity against worldliness, to become the salt of the earth against moral corruption. The Catholic teacher is in an excellent position by reason of the teaching vocation to fulfill all three of these desires of the Heart of Christ. If any of their students need special instruction or are negligent in their religious duties, these teachers may help them privately or bring the matter to the attention of the parents or the parish priest. In this way they demonstrate a holy zeal for the spiritual welfare of their students. For by exercising such Christian concern they cooperate as much as possible with the local authorities and especially bring honor to the faith by their exemplary charity. For the Gospel must be the soul of the Catholic school, the norm of its life; its doctrine, its morals are essential for the peace, joy and tranquillity of the school, the parents and its teachers.



3. *The Catholic Teacher is an Ambassador of Christ: Service to the Church.* In this aspect of the teaching vocation, Catholic teachers render a magnificent service to their Church, the Mystical Body of Christ. An ambassador represents and works to attain the greatest political, economic, moral and social goods for his country, among the most important being cordial relations and peace with other nations. The first duty of an ambassador is loyalty to his own country, especially as it is represented in its head and governing institutions. Thus good Catholic teachers are loyal to the Holy Father, to his teaching and that of the full Magisterium in all matters, but especially in matters of faith and morals. They proclaim within their schools, and to interested parties outside the Church, the truths and ideals of the Catholic Church according to the mind and meaning expressed by the official Magisterium. They teach their students, not their own novel religious ideas, but with fidelity, the Christian message as it has come down to us from Christ, the Apostles and the Church. Above all the loyal Catholic teacher never teaches in any subject, whether it be sci-

ence, literature, philosophy or theology, anything he or she knows to be false, nor present theory as fact, or his or her opinion as the only opinion. Such true teachers do not hesitate to correct errors or false rumors against the Church. They do this, however, in a calm, friendly, efficient manner. Prudence and charity are their guides in this delicate matter. They are alert too in correcting errors pupils may have acquired from others or from defective textbooks. A genuine Catholic teacher tries to live up to the ideals St. Paul expressed to the Corinthians:

We are ambassadors of Christ, God appealing to you through us. We are careful not to give offence to anybody, lest we should bring discredit on our ministry; as God's ministers we must do everything to make ourselves acceptable. We have to show great patience in times of affliction, of need, of difficulty ... We have to be pure-minded, enlightened, forgiving and gracious to others; we have to rely on the Holy Spirit, on unaffected love, on the truth of our message, on the power of God. (Cor. 6:4-7)

As ambassadors, they also work for unity in the Church, the Kingdom of God. They work for stability and cohesion between the Teaching and the Taught branches of the Church, adhering to the words of St. Augustine: "There is only One Peter who represents us all, because in the Church unity exists for all." The voice of Catholic teachers is the voice of love, not of raucous dissent or protest.

THE NEW SET OF PROBLEMS

His Holiness Pope John Paul II, in his address to the Catholic Educators at St. John the Baptist Basilica, stated

As you pursue your professional and spiritual goals as teachers, or as educational administrators, you experience the ambiguities and conflicts which characterize our contemporary society ... As educators *you must cope with these changes*, since they are the daily experience and fare of your students. At the same time ... teachers and school systems ... must affirm and preserve the meaning and importance of perennial truths and values. Educators must be ready to grasp firmly the challenge of providing a kind of education whose curriculum will be inspired more by reflection than by techniques, more by search for wisdom than the accumulation of information ... Every age presents

a new set of problems as well as *fresh opportunities to witness to the redemptive love of Jesus Christ*. (*Canadian Catholic Review*, Newspaper, Oct. 1984)

What is that new set of problems which the Holy Father himself, as the Teacher of teachers in the name of Christ, is challenging as he travels to every part of the globe, tirelessly teaching countless millions in his apostolate as Super-Witness to the redemptive love of Christ? These problems arise from the crisis of faith that is caused by the escalating atheism which is scourging the whole world. In the enslaved East and some pockets of the West, behind the iron and bamboo curtains, a militant atheism is violently seeking to extinguish faith in Christ and his Church. In the affluent West a soft secularized atheism is leading the nations from a general apostasy from the faith to the idolization of self-sufficient technocratic man. Theological scepticism and moral hedonism is rampant everywhere, even to a great degree among Christians. There seems to be no longer a consistent Catholic mind or spirit. Instead, an open, aggressive, polemical, centrifugal, irresponsible spirit of rebellion against Christ and his Church is misinterpreting the truths and morals of the Gospel message. Let me indicate briefly four areas of Catholic teachings in which this subversion of the Catholic faith is taking place. (Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Interview to Jesus Magazine, "Ecco, Perche La Fede E in Crisi," Nov. 1984)

1. *The Fallacy of Anthropocentrism*: Man, not God, is being made the center of religion. The feminists have reduced God the Father to being God the Woman. Secularized souls see him as man's partner, pal, equal. This is partly the result of overemphasizing the humanity of Christ and placing his divinity in doubt. There is an updated form of Arianism with us today. Freud had already degraded every father, all paternalism, by identifying fatherhood as a sexual dynamic power. Thus with God the Father erased and the Son reduced to being a mere man, then Mary is no longer the Mother of God, no longer the virgin, no longer the Immaculate Conception. The resurrection was not real nor concrete. The entire deposit of the faith is now up for re-examination. Do we sense here the nearness of that general apostasy predicted by St. Paul and implied in the question of Our Lord: "Will I find faith when I return?"

2. *The Fallacy of the New Church*: The new Church is created after a Protestant model, a man-made, free natural organization whose members are entitled to re-

structure her to their whims and the needs of the times. She is no longer God's mystery, no longer Christ's Mystical Body. Her authority comes not from God through Christ to Peter to the Apostles and bishops, but from the consensus of its members. She is now a democracy, no longer a vertical hierarchy, coming down in origin from God and returning in destiny to him in sanctity and glory. Obedience is no longer due to God, Christ, the Holy Father or the Episcopal Magisterium, but to the consensus, after horizontal dialogue counts the votes.

3. *The Denial of Catholic Doctrine and Morals:* Individual theologians are now listened to as if they were the teachers of authentic theology and morals. The Catholic community, with the Pope and the Episcopal Magisterium, are no longer seen as their sole authentic source. Hence there is rampant among us a pluralism that leads to theological individualism, subjectivism and relativism. And many are seduced to adhere to this false current, causing a break with the Apostolic roots of Catholicism. The faith is then fragmented into a series of diverse, opposing schools and currents of dissenting thought and conduct. The confusion of disunity afflicts the faithful as the vision of service to the truth in their behalf is lost. The individual rebels also attack perennial truths of faith and morals as unreasonable restrictions of freedom of thought and conduct. The Teaching authority is no longer regarded as the Defender, Expounder and infallible Evangelizer of revelation, but is depicted as a tyrant, eager to crush all opposition while showing off its might and authority. The result is that a variety of catechisms are extant which change the teachings of the Church in an effort to please those not seeking the truth, but enamored of humanly interesting, convenient, novel doctrines in harmony with their style of life, the neo-pagan trends of the times and the prevailing cultural permissive atmosphere.

4. *The Interpretation of Scriptures in Meanings Opposed to the Magisterium's Teaching About Them:* The new exegetes break the bond of the Scriptures that always held them in the bosom of the Church. Their historical-critical interpretation has rendered the Scriptures independent of the Church's guidance as to their true meaning. The new experts wave the magic wand of science, pretending that only the scientific approach can unlock the sense of the Scriptures. This method challenges the Church's dogmas and morals as being obstacles to understanding the Scriptures correctly. By such an adversary interpretation, both the Church loses members and the Scriptures are

emptied of any divine meaning. But the Church without the Scriptures is an accidental product of history. And the Scriptures without the Church are no longer the word of God. The word of God now comes forth from the experts, from the professors' chairs, not from the Chair of St. Peter. The word of God comes forth from the ever-changing hypotheses and man-constructed philosophies of non-believing experts. Thus a new, heretical, secularized Magisterium, updated to satisfy the needs of the times, prejudiced in origin by evolutionistic prepossessions about the universe and man, is presently striving to replace the Teaching Magisterium of the Catholic Church. And this despite the fact that it was the Catholic Magisterium which unerringly gathered the Scriptures together into the Canon of the Holy Bible. It was this same Magisterium that recognized them as God's divine word to man and has always interpreted them truthfully in the same meaning since the days of Christ, the Apostles, the Fathers of the Church until the present. Let the experts beware of St. Peter's observation. Man left to himself, to his own lights, "wrests the Scriptures unto his own destruction." Many too, following the new theologians, moralists, exegetes and radical dissenters, if they do not return to the True, Infallible Magisterium's interpretation of Holy Scripture, will come to the same tragic end. Indeed we are witnessing today the tragic falling away from the Church of many priests, religious and laity. Why? Precisely because they have been seduced by the politicized, secularized readings of the Scriptures and interpretations of the Church's dogmas and morals. They have refused to obey the Church's order to reject the variousologies of liberation, since they are founded on the Marxist principle of class warfare with its inevitability of the use of violence to attain the utopia of the Godless, classless society.

The atheistic culture of our modern era continues to spread thanks to the loss of the sense of the sacred, the loss of the sense of sin, the denial of demons and the loss of the fear of Satan. The healthy spiritual fears and appreciations of sin and hell were inserted by Christianity into pagan societies to deliver them from slavery to idols and demons. But since this redeeming light of Christ is fading, then despite all the secular wisdom and superb technology thus far achieved in our times, our modern world is falling back into the terror and despair of the ancient, idolatrous pagan civilizations. There are already signs of the return of the forces of darkness, such as satanic cults, witchcraft and occultism of all types which are escalating everywhere in our secularized world. There

is never a no-man's-land in the war between God and Satan. Where Christianity prevails, Satan is driven out; where idolatry prevails, Christ and his Church are driven out. At the First Counter-Cult Congress held in this nation last May in Kansas City, at which I was invited to read a paper, it was documented during the sessions of those six days, that there are already in this country 5000 cults and some 30 million Americans adhering to their doctrines and idolatrous liturgies, mostly youth who became involved by reading the thousands of books on occultism found in college bookstores.



CONCLUSION

We are all creatures of our environment. The social fallout from conditions, events and persons encountered daily affects us more than we sometimes wish to acknowledge. We are conditioned not, of course in a fatalistic way, but rather in a subtle, subconscious manner. The trends of the times influence, to an alarming degree, the cultural, moral and theological dimensions of our way of thinking, and thus, of acting.

As we have just seen, no one will reasonably deny that we are living in an age of escalating atheism and exploding immorality. It is an age in which enemies outside the Church have found allies against the Church among members of our own household. We are witnessing today the worldwide secularization of Catholic doctrines, values and institutions. A post-Christian civilization that is contesting God and his revelation in Christ is simultaneously presenting man with a new, apocalyptic adventure in a rivalry calculated to rob God forever of the allegiance of men's minds and hearts. Thus we are living in an age when the fight for the faith is weakening and the number of renegades from the banner of Christ is alarming. We find that even in Christian schools the fallout from the cloud of atheism is producing a subtle, subconscious perversion and corruption of Gospel doctrines and morals in the minds of teachers and students. The Holy Father, Pope John Paul II and the whole Magisterium is striving tirelessly to provide the light and courage needed to call back the nations to their divine destiny.

They are concentrating on the mission of leading the embattled Church and the world through the chaos, dissent, infidelity, treason and violence of our times. Quite naturally, the Magisterium and Faithful, are looking eagerly to Catholic schools and Catholic teachers to provide supporting leadership and guidance in this crisis. Indeed, they have entrusted into the care of Catholic teachers the all-important spiritual, cultural and scientific formation of their children in the hope of restoring, through the future leadership of these witnesses for truth and holiness, all things in Christ. The Church realizes very well that in this revolutionary age, when thanks to the marvellous means of communication, the control of the many by the few is a practical, effective, often tragic technique. It can become quite easy to conquer a people through the conquest of their teachers, through the undermining and subverting of their religious, political and educational institutions.

How essential it is for teachers to reveal to their students on a daily basis that they are living the truths they believe and are teaching. The Gospel relates that "day after day Christ sat in the temple teaching the people ..." (Mt. 26:55) that "crowds gathered to hear him; and again, as was his custom, he taught them." (Mark 10:1) May it be said of Catholic teachers that day after day they were in the classroom teaching their students in imitation of Christ the Divine Teacher, modelling themselves on his majestic, familiar, impressive and reassuring manner. Scripture teaches that "to serve God is to reign." To serve God by training his flock in truth and leading it to the pastures of holiness is really to reign in peace, joy and blessedness here on earth. The Bible also says: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it." The only way is Christ for all students, for all teachers, indeed for all mankind. Catholic teachers are the trainers and heralds proclaiming the way to Christian wisdom. A teacher affects eternity; a teacher can never limit where his or her influence for good or evil stops. It is, however, the supreme art of good Catholic teachers to awaken joy, enthusiasm and zeal in the hearts of their students to follow the Master Teacher, Jesus Christ. The Teacher of Righteousness is called in the Old Testament both the royal road leading to truth and the Sun of Justice.

As "we celebrate Our Faith" by thanking God for the marvellous vocation he has called us to, and as we courageously take up the challenge to defeat the powers of darkness by the light of our Catholic Teaching and

the sword of our holy lives, let us never fail to thank God for having honored us with the office of teacher. Today, more than ever, we must realize that in the end only Christ can save his flock and provide for his Church. We, as teachers, need only rejoice that our responsibility is to work to the best of our abilities, even if as useless servants, in cooperating with Christ's mission to bring

all men to the knowledge of the truth and the life of sanctity. Victory over the powers of darkness and their false allies inside and outside the Church is guaranteed by Christ, the Invincible Teacher, the Unchangeable Power and Everlasting Wisdom of God.

