

Christ Our Leader

INTRODUCTION

Everyone is interested in developing personality. Catholic leaders (and indeed, all Catholics) are no exception, nor should they be. Through perfecting their own personalities they can more frequently lead others to Christ.

Some persons think that they can, by imitating someone else, make their personalities the same as the one who is admired. This is not only difficult, it is a practical impossibility because each individual's personality is totally different from everyone else's.

Personality is not a mere matter of one quality or another; it is (not to become too technical) the sum total of the characteristics, tendencies, abilities, background, culture - in fact, of everything that makes up or constitutes an individual - and the way these things and the composite of these qualities impress other people.

If it were possible to find a perfect personality, then it would be not only desirable, but sensible and intelligent to try to acquire the characteristics of that person.

There has been one Personality Who throughout two thousand years has been found perfect. This Person is so attractive that, He has drawn others to Him, has inspired others to follow Him. If we, then; as Catholics and Catholic leaders, would wish others to be attracted to us and to follow us in our aim to extend Christ's Kingdom, we should try to be perfect, to be like Him.

THE PERFECT PERSONALITY BELONGS TO CHRIST

1. Christ is the perfect model for all personalities: Christ practised all virtues even to the point of heroism. His motives were always perfect.

Christ was in perfect accord with the wishes and the will of God: He loved His fellow-men with a love greater than any other man: He loathed sin and all approaches to sin, even while loving the sinner: His Personality still holds a universal appeal. All classes, all nations, all ages of both sexes, find Him attractive. Christ's Personality is magnetic, drawing all people to Himself, as a powerful magnet. His Personality is capable of powerful imitation, permitting the most learned and the most ignorant, the humble, the poor, and the sick - all to learn to imitate Him because He is all-perfect.

2. Christ is capable of imitation. In becoming Man. Christ became like to us in all things except sin. For thirty years He led an ordinary and hidden life. He was subject to His parents, Mary and Joseph, and to the authority of the State. He was a wage-earner, a toiler. He knew lack of sleep, and fatigue. He knew successes and reverses. He had to exercise great patience. He knew physical and moral torture. He was a Man of the most delicate sensibilities; yet, because He loved God and His fellow-men, He persevered in spite of rebuffs and rebukes.

He was a man with pure intentions, admirable fervour, limitless generosity, firm determination and constancy. His charity exceeded the charity of all the rest of the world. His thoughtfulness in taking the initiative, in doing things for us and for our welfare, even before we knew they had to be done, is unparalleled.

3. Catholic leaders, then, must follow Christ if they would be perfect. We must ask ourselves whether our motives are pure, whether our intentions are honest and direct, and whether our method of working has been like Christ's. We must strive to do as He did, do as He would do if He were working with us, visibly, on earth today. We need Christ's characteristics if we are to succeed in His work.

We must pray for guidance, then, for courage and for perseverance. We must give ourselves to Him and let His magnetism draw us to Him that we may know Him more perfectly and intimately.

CHRIST THE KING

In considering the Kingship of Christ we recognize the fact that Christ was a King. He came from the royal household of David. His human nature was descended from that long line of noble men and women who were the forebears of Mary and Joseph.

Catholic leaders may take courage from meditating on some of the virtues shown by Christ, the King, the Ruler, the Leader, the Man.

1. The purpose of a ruler is to balance liberty with law and order. Christ gave to everyone a liberty that was real; it was a matter of permitting people a free choice. Christ preached the law of God, the Father, and gave to all men a set of definite precepts by which they should be guided in that law. He accepted the Ten Commandments of God and interpreted them. His Sermon on the Mount defined definitively what men should do for the general and special good of mankind.

In the human order men cannot be expected to fulfil laws if they are ignorant of them. That all might know the laws in order to follow them. Christ promulgated them widely. He preached to the multitudes. But He did more; He left behind Him a teaching body that everyone throughout all ages might know the law.

But Christ did not force the acceptance of these rules. He allowed men to choose freely. He had given them a noble freedom of the will and permitted them the nobility to exercise their choice. Even in the case of Judas, when Christ's Sacred Heart must have bled for one who had turned against Him and His Father. He left him the liberty to choose whether he would be loyal or traitorous.

2. Christ's Kingdom is of the spiritual order. This was not because He did not know or because He overlooked human nature and the handicaps thereof. He took into account all of the foibles and jealousies and selfishness of man; yet He constantly preached and prayed and acted spiritually. He offered the Kingdom of His Father to all who would take up their cross and follow Him. He showed the misery that would result from those who dealt in the things of the material order alone, those who are the children of Mammon. The beatitudes, which are Christ's promise of a sure and eternal reward, are all of the spiritual order.

Above all else, Christ prayed His prayer and taught His Apostles how to pray: "Our Father, Who art in heaven . . . Your Kingdom come . . . on earth as it is as it in heaven." The Apostles then and now are commissioned to bring, with God's help, that Kingdom to earth.

3. Christ's platform was based on love. Never did Christ preach, act, or recommend hatred. Constantly He showed the love of His Father and gave us repeated examples of Christian charity. He showed love of His neighbour, of His enemies, of those who loved Him and of those who despised Him. Even on the Cross, when He was being crucified for man, He prayed to the heavenly Father for those who were putting Him to death. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." It was on the Cross, too, that He forgave Dismas and promised him paradise. Dismas admitted his crime, accepted his punishment, and showed sorrow. Christ forgave him.

4. Christ's Kingdom is for all. In this world, disparate as it is, Christ offered His Kingdom to the rich and the poor, to the healthy and the sick, to the just and the unjust. He gave His message to individuals and He gave it to the multitudes. He told His Apostles how precious was one human soul. He grieved over the loss of one person and, through homely parable, reminded us of the shepherd who would seek one lost sheep. Constantly He was that Shepherd ready to seek and bring home one of His lost flock.

Through His lowliness, His mildness, His obedience, as well as through His wisdom, His majesty and His beauty, Christ appealed to all men. He left Food for His subjects, the Living Water and the Bread of Life, that all might be saved to His Father. He showed no partiality, no injustice. While firm always, He was gentle. Was He not willing to sit without the gates of Jerusalem weeping and hoping that He might gather the people to His Kingdom, even as a hen would her chicks ?

5. Christ founded His Kingdom on the virtue of obedience. He came down into the world in obedience to His Father. He lived His life according to the Will of God. He preached not His own law, but the law of His Father. He constantly enjoined deep, internal obedience, a willing submission of the individual will to a Higher Will. He acted, and left for our emulation, the most perfect acquiescence of His freedom when He said, "Not My Will, but Yours, be done."

Christ was obedient to the civic laws. He showed how they contributed to right order. But the greater obedience was always that heroic obedience of the mind and heart and will to God.

Christ was obedient even unto death. Knowing that the law would persecute Him for it, He answered Pilate (when he asked, "Are You a King, then?") with: "You said it. I am a King. For this was I born, for this came I into the world, that I should give witness to the truth." Truly this was heroic obedience!

6. Catholic leaders then, imitating the Personality of Christ, take to themselves the model of Christ the King, the Ruler, the Leader. To be given power in His cause is a glorious thing. If we would be good leaders we must be as like to Him as we can be in order that we can serve Him best. We give glory to Him and to His realm in order that Christ will reign in our hearts; then we can give Christ to the world.

CHRIST THE PRIEST

With the rebirth of the liturgical movement in the Church almost synchronously with the call to the laity for participation in the apostolate of the Hierarchy, Catholic leaders have become more conscious of their co-priesthood (the priesthood of the Faithful).

While Our Blessed Lord had three great offices to fulfil while on earth, that of a Prophet or Teacher, that of the High Priest of the New Dispensation, and that of King, Catholic leaders, whether priests or co-priests, give consideration to the personality of the Priesthood of Christ if they would imitate Him in their leadership.

A priest is one whose chief function is that of worship.

This worship takes the unique form of sacrifice.

Christ, the Priest, gave perfect worship. He gave complete sacrifice.

While the literal meaning of "priests" comes from the word meaning "elder," the liturgical expression of bridge-builder (pontifices) is one recognized by all students and familiar to Catholic leaders who are trying to live the life of the Church fully and completely.

1. The Priesthood of Christ was necessary after the fall of man. In order to re-instate man in the supernatural order after Adam had deliberately fallen from grace in the Garden of Eden, it was necessary for One to offer perfect homage of obedience to God the Father. It was necessary for a Mediator (Bridge-builder) to show His complete dependence upon the Creator, God, the One Who had been infinitely offended by Adam's turning from Him.

2. Since God was the One offended, it was impossible for anyone but a perfect being to bridge the chasm between sinful man and a sinless God. Yet the person also had to be a man, and like to every other man in all things save sin. Hence it, was the God-Man, Christ. Who had to repair the original refusal of worship of our first parents by becoming the Mediator, the Bridge-builder, the Priest. It was He Who had to sacrifice His all.

3. Yet, though He was God-Man. Christ's preparation for the sacrifice, which had to be complete, was one of prayer, mortification, humility, and obedience. He established a norm of perfection because He knew how deeply God had been offended. and He wished to offer to the Creator a perfectly pure oblation or sacrifice - His own most perfect Being.

4. Christ, mercifully thoughtful, extended His Priesthood. As our Elder Brother, Head of the Mystical Body, Christ established a priesthood for the sanctification of the world for all times. At the Last Supper He declared the perpetuation of the Sacrifice by telling His twelve apostolic priests to continue with the offering of His Body and Blood, the only true Sacrifice for the redemption of mankind for all eternity.

5. Almost beyond all else, the Priesthood of Christ designates hope. As all sacrifices are made with the hope that good will be produced, so Christ's Sacrifice was made with the hope that God would accept the redemptive act. That He did so was evidenced in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, when He who "was delivered up for our offences . . . rose again for our justification."

6. To us, then, as priests and co-priests, in imitation of the Priesthood of Christ several things are made clear:

(a) Catholic leaders, co-priests with ordained priests and with Christ, offer God the worship and sacrifice that is due to Him in as Christ-like a way as possible. They understand and appreciate the fundamental worship of our Catholic Faith, the Sacrifice of Calvary and of the Last Supper, renewed daily in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. As co-priests they participate in the Sacrifice, Christ's Sacrifice. Through His generosity Catholic leaders, as members of the Mystical Body of Christ, may co-operate in redeeming mankind.

(b) Yet Catholic leaders are not asked to sacrifice their will as Christ so completely had to sacrifice His in Gethsemane, nor as He had to offer His precious Body and Blood on the first Holy Thursday and on Calvary; they do, however, give their will and their minds and their bodies to the service of Christ and for the furtherance of His teaching and for the sanctification of souls. In all that they do, they must, as true followers of Christ, render homage to God, their Creator. They must obey His commands. They must use their intellects and their hearts for His greater glory and for the purpose of helping others to know and to love Him.

(c) In preparation for their priesthood which is begun at baptism in a passive way, and in confirmation in an active way when they become soldiers of Christ, Catholic leaders try to be examples of Christ's virtues "that meditating on Your law, day and night, they may believe what they read, teach what they believe and practise what they teach. . . . They show forth in themselves justice, constancy, mercy, fortitude and all other virtues."

They become poor in spirit. They exercise great zeal for souls. They practise charity, devotedness, patience, humility and meekness. They must truly aim at perfection, for theirs is the great privilege of serving Christ and with Christ, and he was all-perfect.

(d) That the sacrifice be made possible and lasting, Catholic leaders must give their service with a great abundance of love. They aim at a close and intimate union with Our Divine Lord and meanwhile practise self-abnegation. Each must try to deserve the name “alter Christus” and, as CHRIST-ians, all must declare to the world that they are of His group, that they are each an “alter Christus.” (another Christ). The hope that was given to all men through the Priesthood of Christ can and must sustain Catholic leaders, and while aiming at this most intimate association with Christ they may have perfect confidence that Almighty God will permit them to participate in the redemption of all men in the sanctification of souls.

7. With humility, then, as well as with hope, Catholic leaders remember always the function of their co-priestly work and build their own interior lives to conform with the spiritual perfection of the First Priest. As one great spiritual writer has said, they must never forget the God of good works in their promotion of the good works of God. It is this spiritual life that will refuel the zeal which is imperative to the co-priesthood.

CHRIST AND AUTHORITY

All leaders must at some time, and usually many times, exercise authority. As Catholic leaders they must respect definite authority, too. Therefore, a clear concept of authority and the attitude of the great Leader Christ towards it, is of important moment to those who are striving to imitate the Personality of Christ.

If there was ever a man who did not need to respect authority that Man was Christ Who, though Man, was God. He could have thrown over all man-made laws. Being God, He was not bound by the law which He had Himself imposed upon man. Yet Christ did recognize the authority:

1. OF GOD: When the devil took Him up into a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them he said to Christ: “All these will I give You if falling down You will adore me.” Christ answered Satan “Begone, Satan, for it is written, the Lord your God shall you adore and Him only shall you serve.” Christ recognized the power which belongs to God alone to command the universe and made others aware of it.

That Christ further recognized the authority which God has over man is proved when He said, “Not My Will but Yours be done.” His whole life was given over to a service of His Father in a conscious recognition of the right which God holds to demand that service. “All things are delivered to me by My Father.”

2. OF THE COMMANDMENTS: “Do not think I am come to destroy the law or the prophets,” said Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. “I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. For Amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot, or one tittle shall not pass the law till all be fulfilled. He therefore that shall break one of these Commandments and shall so teach men shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. But he that shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” Christ recognized the teachings of God to Moses in the old law and further urged His followers to fulfil that law.

3. OF THE CHURCH: To insure the power of the Church He said: “All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth . . . and behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world.” It was an authority given for all times and Christ promised that He would remain with it. Further, when establishing the Church, He said: “You are Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” No power, therefore, could supersede that of the Church. Its authority is all-powerful next to God.

4. OF PARENTS: Christ spoke reprovably to the scribes: “For God said: ‘Honour your father and your mother. And he that shall curse father or mother, let him die the death’.” In carrying out the practice Himself we know that He went down to Nazareth and was subject to His parents. Only once did He leave them and then it was to do His Father’s business.

5. OF CIVIC AUTHORITY: Christ, with His parents, regularly registered and paid taxes that were decreed by civic law. We recall, too, that on His way to Capharnum with Peter they were stopped to pay the toll, the didrachma. Christ ordered Peter to do so in order that they would not scandalize those who were collecting, even though Christ was the Son of the Father of the Universe. At another time, when asked about tribute to Caesar, He answered by saying, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

6. Catholic leaders find an encouraging example in Christ's attitude towards authority and in His practising the laws that come within the scope of divine and human authority. Like Christ they recognize the supreme authority of God. Because the authorship is certain they observe the Commandments of God and of the Church.

Catholics recognize the authority of parents and imitate the filial devotion of Christ as well as giving obedience to the Commandments of God. They pay respect to the authority of the State because Christ has decreed that a State, because of its essential functions, has power to effect certain good for mankind.

In all things Catholic leaders remember that Christ taught His Apostles: "The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord." Following Christ's example, leaders may enjoy the security, then, that comes with recognition of those who have been placed in position of power and pay them the respect that their positions demand. As leaders observe the commands and direction of the rules of their societies, of their directors, of their pastors and of their bishops, they may appreciate that that authority is rightful and is productive of right order. So, too, Catholic leaders recognize the authority of their civic officers, city, State and Federal, and they will respect those who have been elected to places of official capacity; they will also benefit by their guidance and direction.

Exemplary as they grow in following Christ in this respect. then, leaders will be more responsible guardians of rules and laws and will use their own authority with rightful purpose.

CHRIST AND CHARITY

Every Catholic leader is called upon to practise the virtue of charity; yet their human nature is often severely taxed. Serious reflection on Christ's charity and the constancy with which He practised it in His own personality will create a greater desire for increasing the virtue in imitation of Christ.

1. Ideas of charity are often confused. Too frequently they are limited to notions of alms-giving. An understanding of the full meaning of charity is helpful to every Catholic leader. Charity is a supernatural virtue that causes us to love God above all things for His own sake and to love our neighbour for God's sake. To exercise charity or to love perfectly, one must have a knowledge of the object loved. If we are to love God perfectly, we must know Him. If we are to exercise charity towards our neighbour we must know him, know and appreciate that he is one of God's children and that he is a member of the Mystical Body of Christ.

2. The elements of love or of charity can be classified into four notions:

(a) One must feel sympathy for another not necessarily because "we are exactly alike," but rather because we may "complete" each other, because a harmony exists between and among persons. In common parlance we say that there is a dove-tailing or a fitting-in of each other's virtues and attributes.

(b) One must wish to share and be willing to share a communion of heart and mind. There must be a desire for union and the willingness to effect that union.

(c) One must feel an impulse of the soul to draw close to another in order that there may be mutual enjoyment in the presence of each other.

(d) One must experience a sense of joy, of pleasure and of happiness in the possession of the love of another.

3. Christ knew what charity is, understood its full implications, and He exercised the virtue. He loved God above all things. His love was a selfless love. His only desire was to do what God wished. He united His mind to God by frequent thought of Him and by prayer to Him; repeatedly, we learn from the Gospels, Christ sought quietude in which to speak to His heavenly Father. Thomas a Kempis says, "In silence and in solitude the devout soul makes progress." Certainly Christ lost no human opportunity for making progress in the development of His "human soul" because He continuously gave His reverent esteem and thought to God.

Christ also gave the full submission of His will to God. "Not My Will, but Yours be done," is historic evidence of this. Loving the Father of heaven and of earth, above all things, even above self, He surrendered the faculty of His Will to God the Father.

The Man-Christ loved other human beings. Some He loved very particularly and dearly, as John, Mary and Martha, and His own beloved mother. Yet He was willing to and did subordinate all His human affections to the Divine Love of His Father.

During His whole life Christ dedicated all of His energies, His strength and His talents to the service of souls. He spent His time on earth doing good to souls by tirelessly helping others to a greater and more intensive knowledge of God.

4. Christ gave us and continues to give us love or charity. The numerous examples of Christ's charity to the poor, the weak, the crippled, and sinners are familiar to all intelligent people. Furthermore, Christ left us the Sacraments of the Church and the means of acquiring sanctifying grace through a Church that is infallible and cannot be wrong. He gave us the cleansing Sacrament of Baptism, showing His love by making us members of His True Church. He gave us the Sacrament of Penance whereby He perpetuated in a systematized way His forgiveness of the wayward children of God. But His great sacrament of love is the Sacrament of the Eucharist. In that He left us His own precious Body that we might live more closely in union with Him and that we might give Him to the rest of the world. He permits us to feel the effects of that love through added strength and courage and patience. "To be with Jesus is a sweet paradise," truly.

5. Catholic leaders in their desire to be Christlike ask themselves how they can practise charity. It is assumed that they are striving for personal sanctification. Yet, to love perfectly is a grace given immediately only to a few; perfect love must be sought for and worked for. One of the first and most important steps is to overcome personal faults. We must unite ourselves with the God of love and imitate Christ as He loved God.

CHRIST AND HIS FATHER

Christ's relationship to His Father is worthy of special study. The two great interests of His life were to do the Will of God and to save souls. Recurrently in Holy Scripture we find references to His perpetual and ever-constant love of and desire to strive for the glory of God the Father. It is well for Catholic leaders to know how He felt and what their Model Personality did.

1. As a boy of twelve Christ was lost to His parents. The Gospel story is familiar to everyone. When found by His mother and foster-father, we recall, Christ answered: "How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" We know that the Boy-Christ had consecrated His play, His work and His studies to God; but that was not enough.

He knew that the doctors in the temple, sincere of purpose and struggling for truth, needed enlightenment. So He went to them, boy though He was and very youthful in the eyes of the venerable doctors of the law. He began His Father's business by teaching the truths of His Father, that all might know Him.

2. Of the rest of the hidden life of Jesus little is known from the Scriptures. Of His relationship to His Father during that time, however, much could be conjectured by recalling that after John had baptized Christ, God Himself was heard to declare. "This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." His had been no open display of leadership. Had it been, the early writers would have trumpeted aloud His deeds during this period of His life. No, it was a hidden homage and service. But His Father was "well pleased" with His Son.

3. Christ knew that the world could not know God if He led only a hidden life. He entered upon His public life and encouraged others to do so. He told His followers: "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father Who is in heaven." Again. He said, "In this is My Father glorified that you bring forth very much fruit, and become My disciple." It was an authorized direction, a close following of the Son, that He urged upon the disciples. To assure them that it was the work of God, He said: "If I do not the works of My Father, believe the works: That you may know and believe that the Father is in Me and I am in the Father."

4. Christ showed His utter dependency upon God the Father in the prayer He left to the world from the Mount: "Our Father . . . Who art in heaven, hallowed be Your Name, Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven . . . Give us this day our daily bread . . . And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us . . . And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil." In praying for Himself, in supplication to God, He showed us how to pray. It was "Our" Father, not "My" Father. He prayed for the glory of our Father on earth and in heaven. That was of first importance. He taught us how to ask for the material things of the earth, to ask even for our daily bread. He pleaded for forgiveness and intimated the necessity for us to forgive our trespassers. He taught us to ask to be delivered from temptation, not just sin, but from the temptation to do anything that is wrong.

5. Submission to the Will of God and the desire to accomplish the Will of God is all important. To quote from a few instances in Christ's Life: In Gethsemane, three times He prayed, "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will." "For whosoever shall do the Will of My Father, that is in heaven, he is My brother, My sister, and mother." With that relationship came the promise of family loyalty, of regard for those who are members of Christ's family. To them He further promised: "Not every

one . . . shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that does the Will of My Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

6. To those who are trying to follow Christ and to carry on His apostolate great consolation and strength and courage are given in Christ’s own words: “And I will ask the Father and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever.”

He also said, “. . . And whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in My Name, He may give it you.”

7. Catholic leaders may sometimes find it difficult to remember the greater honour and glory of God. Dwelling on the innumerable examples left to us by Christ in which He showed us so specifically what His own attitude was and what ours should be, we surely may persevere until the great day dawns when we hear Him say, “Come, all you blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you.”

CHRIST AND HIS MOTHER

Christ was the Son of God. His human mother was Mary. It is not our purpose to give proof here of this accepted doctrine. Suffice it to recall but a few comments: “Is not this the carpenter’s Son ? Is not His mother called Mary ?” “Behold a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel.” (Isa. 7; 14.) “When His Mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with Child of the Holy Ghost.” (Matt. 1; 18.) That Christ was truly born of Mary, and that His Father was God has been given credence from the world for two thousand years.

1. At the birth of the Infant we know that Mary “wrapped Him in a manger.” (Luke 2; 6.) The Baby was given the care, the love, and the attention that is given to human sons, with the added affection and sweetness that encompassed His Blessed Mother’s heart. From then on, continuing through His boyhood days, the relationship between Mary and her Son must have been a most intimate one. That Christ learned His religion as other Jewish boys did from their mothers, is inevitable. That He learned a graciousness of manner, of courtesy, of manliness, and of obedience, is also undoubtedly true. This Son for Whom there was no room at the inn, was happily welcomed into the bosom of the Holy Family. Their very poverty helped to keep them close, in the human way of things.

2. That the Holy Family was poor is without doubt. “I am poor and in labours from My youth; and being exalted have been humbled and troubled.” (Ps. 87; 16.) Christ voluntarily accepted the poverty of earth with the exalted poverty of work. Under His foster-father He learned His trade; He knew the importance of dignified labour and was prepared to meet the economic exigencies of the day. That He supported His widowed mother, after the death of St. Joseph, is an accepted belief. That He cherished this filial duty towards His mother is apparent. For thirty years He gave of His dutiful and loving personality to the mother who gladly and obediently followed the dictates of God the Father.

3. The realization that He must cause grief to His mother must have added unbearable weight to the already heavy burden which Christ carried to Calvary. Yet, though He passed her on the way to His execution, and the sorrow of that meeting of mother and Son is sufficient to tear the heart strings of any human being, one of His chief thoughts on the Cross was for His mother. “When Jesus therefore had seen His mother and the disciple standing whom He loved, He says to His mother: ‘Woman, behold your son’.” Christ had to leave His mother. He was doing the work for which God sent Him on earth; He was giving His life that we might have life eternal. But such was not the case with His sweet mother. She had borne Him, nurtured Him, taught Him, loved Him, and now He, the object of her love, was to leave her. Yet he did not leave without trying to assuage her loss. He would entrust her to the care of His most loving and gentlest disciple, John. He would even ask her to consider John as her son from now on that she might give of the fulness of her heart to this new son.

And then Christ turned to John and “He says to the disciple, ‘Behold your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her to his own.” Every child, with love in his heart, desires that everyone else know his mother. Every man who cherishes that tender affection for his mother wants his whole world to meet and know and share his mother. He even rejoices when that mother embraces his friends within her generous affection. The example of Christ as personified when He told John that from henceforth onward Mary was to be his mother in a special way readily accounts for this devotion. From His agony on the Cross Christ spoke of the depth of this love for His mother, His pride in her, His joy in wanting to share her affections. He called the attention of John and of all sons and daughters of this world to His mother. So great was His love for her and so fathomless her beauty and

motherliness that He had to share her with us. He was about to die, to retire from the real stage which is life. But He gave to the world His most priceless human possession, His mother.

4. Catholics can never forget that Mary is their mother. Deep as their devotion for their human mothers may be, and Christ certainly gave plenteous example of such a devotion, Catholic leaders cannot forget even momentarily that Mary was given to us by God Himself to be the mother of our big Brother, and that Christ Himself gave Mary to us as the Mother of all humanity when He said to John, "Behold your mother."

True to Christian family spirit, then, it behoves Catholic leaders to deepen their faith in Mary and to look to her for guidance and direction. We must call upon her very frequently with the realization that our heavenly mother in her expansive love will surely lead her loyal children to a love of the Triune God. Surely this is what her Son wishes us to do; it is what our Catholic faith dictates so lovingly.

THE YOUTHFUL CHRIST

"The Call to Youth" has become a shibboleth of the modern youth. Everyone seems to be calling youth for this, that, or the other thing. Some also recognize the call OF youth, and it is of gripping interest to Catholic leaders that they should heed primarily the yearning needs of young people.

Leaders of youth have a strategic responsibility imposed upon them. Catholic leaders realize that the spiritual implications of such leadership are momentous because they must help to mould, develop and inspire the spiritual yearning and cravings of a God-given and God-redeemed soul.

A serious consideration of the Youthful Christ is important for one in a position of responsibility. Christ must become the Model for other youth; His youthful spirit should pervade the interests of Catholic leaders of youth.

1. One of the abiding convictions concerning the Personality of Christ is that He was undoubtedly a CHEERFUL Youth. Little is recorded, it is true, about the early years of the Boy; yet much can be surmised from the historical facts that are recounted in the Gospel.

The Holy Family, as other Jewish families, happily joined in the celebration of the Passover. It was a joyous occasion for all who participated and the long trip to Jerusalem was filled with gaiety. Christ's anticipations of the festivities were undoubtedly those of a young boy, healthy and full of life, travelling along the road with companionable friends, playing games along the way, enjoying the beauties of the countryside as they travelled.

Christ was not a Boy Scout, but Christ knew nature and was observant of its beauties; the birds, the trees and the flowers all appealed to Him. Imagine His spontaneous joy as the birds sang their songs from the tree-tops or played hide-and-seek among the brambles. With what quick appreciation He viewed the lilies of the field lifting their beautiful faces to the sun; the large herds of sheep must have fascinated this Boy as He watched the tender care given them by their watchful shepherds; the occasional fishermen patiently and quietly waiting for their catch drew Him to them as they threw their lines hopefully; and the mustard trees, the vineyards and fig trees all caught His eye and fancy. Christ was in intimate union with God, His Father, and was cheered by the creations of God and the care which He showered upon the glories of nature. As He later shared these things with His followers during His public life, using the things of nature to clarify His teachings, so too in His youthful and cheerful simplicity did He share the joys of His Father with His companions, along the road to Jerusalem.

2. Christ, the Youth, was industrious:

(a) From His boyhood days, Christ studied the Jewish law. As was the case with other children of His race, He learned most from His parents, particularly from His intelligent and learned mother. The Old Testament, the Jewish Law, contained the most important text, books of the era. These contained religious teachings, philosophical truths, and scientific observations. How industrious Christ had been in applying Himself to study of His books was shown when He was twelve years of age. The doctors in the temple, all older men, could not confound the Boy with any of their questions. They were amazed by the facts that He recounted to them from His retentive memory. He had worked hard and well at His studies.

(b) Christ was also industrious in performing manual work. While still a boy He worked in His foster-father's little shop. Through necessity, He learned this manual art which meant sustenance to the Holy Family. The things that He made were the customary furnishings for a home, His own home and the homes of His neighbours. The planing of wood and the piecing of heavy blocks demanded planning, attention, strength, perseverance, and patience. His work by hand was not less demanding of His energies and industry than His intellectual learning. And He did both well.

3. Christ was devoted to His family. For thirty years of His life He remained in their home. He was happy there. He worked with His parents, learning from them and helping them. He prepared for His future work under their guidance and tutelage. He enjoyed the sociability of His family and of their friends. Their interests in civic things were His interests and He learned early the value of registering, of paying taxes, and of respecting civic authority. He appreciated all that his extended family did for Him and in return He gave them of His affection, His time, His consideration, and His filial obedience. Thirty years may seem an eternity to many young people, but it was a happy, crowded period for Christ.

4. These three characteristics in the personality of the Youthful Christ are only three of many. To Catholic leaders of youth, however, they are sure and definite guides. The cheerful and the observant leader; the leader attuned to the beauties of nature and detached from the discordant perversions of life; the leader who is sympathetic with God's plan of the universe; that's the leader for this age; the personality of that leader will help to lead others to God. The leader who is industrious, both mentally and manually, will accomplish necessary work for his group. He will also arouse a willingness to work in others; he will be capable of showing them how to work.

Next in importance to personal purity and sincerity, the leader who has a true appreciation of family life and who is grateful to his family and devoted to them will be the example of true Christian youth. It will not be amiss for all Catholic leaders to entrench in their own minds a true image of the Youthful Christ and to revive in their personalities the spirit of youth which is ever Christian.

CHRIST AND HIS HUMANITY

It is sometimes difficult for casual thinkers to distinguish between the humanity and the divinity of Christ. For that reason too many well-meaning and sincere Catholics are discouraged from attempting to imitate Christ. They know they cannot imitate the divinity of Christ; they cannot be God. Therefore, in their confusion, they hesitate to imitate Christ, the Man.

That Christ was divine is not the object of this theme. His resurrection from the dead is the greatest proof of that, and well-known to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear. They can read and study the proofs fully elsewhere. Our concern, at this point in our reflections of Christ's personality, is with Christ's humanity. While His whole life displayed His human nature, His passion in a special way offered the world the human side of Christ. The divinity of the God-man could not be extinguished; it was His human nature that suffered violence.

Catholic leaders suffer; there is little doubt of that. They meet with reverses and with hardships, with physical pain and mental torment. Through our meditations on the human nature of Christ and particularly of His suffering, we can see Christ in His most intensively human aspect.

1. Christ suffered the loss of His friends. One of the twelve chosen Apostles, Judas, proved a traitor and sold Jesus to the executioners for thirty pieces of silver. Peter, the stalwart, three times denied his friendship with Christ. Others, whom He had helped and cured and aided and fed, turned from Him and feared to stand by Him when the law called for His life. Imagine the heartaches of that Man Who had given of His love unstintingly, when some of His closest, most cherished, and most confidential friends deserted Him.

2. Christ suffered in making others suffer. He knew that He had to thrust a sword through His mother's tender heart, and that she would undergo deepest grief not only over the loss of her Son, but because of the violent, physical manner of His death. He knew that His beloved friends, Mary of Bethany and her sister and brother, Martha and Lazarus, and John, were loyal friends who would give their lives rather than see Him suffer; yet He had to cause them that suffering. The human heart of Christ must have been wrenched at the knowledge that He would cause so much sorrow to those who loved Him.

3. Christ suffered physical agony. A heavy crown of sharp-pointed thorns was plaited upon His Head until the blood streamed down His Face. He was cruelly beaten with a scourging that tore His flesh. He was loaded down with a mammoth cross that tore and strained His muscles and sinews and taxed the strength of a heart that was already crushed. His Hands and Feet were ripped with the spikes that were driven into them to hold Him on the Cross. And they soaked His bleeding mouth and lips with bitter vinegar.

4. Christ suffered humiliation, too. He was dragged before a civil court and condemned by a pagan world because He was pure and good and righteous. He was publicly beaten and spat upon by the rabble. He was

stripped of His clothing publicly and exposed to the gawking stares and ribald sneers of a blood-thirsty mob. He was treated, throughout the trial and execution, as a fool and was crucified with criminal thieves.

5. Christ suffered loneliness. To be alone with God, in peace and security, is a beautiful accomplishment. But to be alone, and to feel that friends and God have deserted one, is truly to suffer loneliness. Christ's cry from the prophetic Psalm 22(21), "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" stirs us to the depth of our souls. The man who was Christ knew loneliness of the most acute type. That His friends had failed Him; that He seemingly had to fail His friends; that He was tortured physically and suffered humiliations; all of these facts were agonizing. But the height and depth of His passion was reached when He seemed to feel that even God, His Father, had deserted Him.

6. We have seen before that it was necessary for a man to act as mediator between God and men. Christ was that Man; that He suffered in His work as Mediator there can be no doubt as we review and relive the passion. Christ taught us how to suffer. No matter what may be the utter aloneness of Catholic leaders, and very often the greater the leader the more lonely one can be, Christ in His human suffering can be their model. Like Christ, though their hearts are bleeding and their bodies sore distressed, though their very spirit is stifled even unto the point of calling, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" they can keep the crucified Man before their eyes. They can continue to do the work of Our Father until they, too, may say, "It is consummated."

CHRIST OUR FRIEND

Everyone knows that Christ came down to earth because of His love for us. Whenever our thoughts turn to the Sacred Heart we are filled with wonderment and appreciation because the Lord-God left His heavenly Father and the choirs of attending angels to come down on earth to redeem us. Meditation on this one single thought is so awful and overpowering that thinking persons can never doubt, much less deny, Christ's deep and abiding love and friendship.

All Catholic leaders logically must strive for sanctity. They know that holiness, as St. Thomas has said, "does not consist in knowing much, in meditating much, in thinking much. The great secret of sanctity lies in loving much." A fuller realization of Christ's love for us should and will enkindle our hearts with a deeper and more insatiable desire to be friends with Christ in return, to love Him completely.

1. During His earthly life Christ loved all people. In particular instances, He showed His special friendship to a few. The Gospels speak of Mary of Bethany and Martha and Lazarus, of Mary Magdalene and of John, of Peter and James. Christ loved children; He also loved the lepers. Through His companionship, He gave constant example to the whole world of His abiding love for men and of His wish to share His joys and sorrows with His friends. He even addressed Judas, who was about to betray Him, as "friend." He tried to remind Judas of His love for him, hoping to deter him from the dastardly trick with which he would betray Christ. And on the Cross Christ responded immediately to the friendly recognition of Dismas, the Good Thief, by promising him eternal Paradise.

2. From the time of His infancy until He hung on the Cross, Christ's arms were almost continuously extended, showing us in a human way how much He wanted to enfold us in His love. As a mere Babe His arms were held open pleading for our love. On the Cross His arms were nailed wide apart; His loving us and His intense yearning for our love made Him give His life that we might live. The sins of man held Him fast so that, seemingly with ironic symbolism, He could not encircle His loved ones. But His Heart was so full of love that it overflowed; the very lance that pierced His sacred side permitted blood from His Sacred Heart to be shed upon us. Nothing, not even death, could quell His love.

3. Christ's friendship was constant and immutable. Though He fulfilled His earthly mission as Man and then ascended to His Father, He left us His most precious Body and Blood in the Eucharist. He so loves the world and he so empties himself in 'kenosis' that in the tabernacle He remains silent, patient, and a "prisoner" of His own love. He never changes. He is there always. When we call Him forth, He comes joyously into our hearts. When we ignore Him, He just waits for us as a trusting and confident Friend. He, God, could force our love and our friendship, but this He does not do. As on earth He suffered abuse, ignominy, insult, calumny and contempt, so in the tabernacle He suffers "aloneness", insult, contempt and coldness. But whether we be a Mary Magdalene or a Dismas, a Judas or a Peter, whether child or adult, healthy or leprous, Christ remains in the world to satisfy our need for companionship and intimate association.

4. Christ shows His friendship everywhere, at any time. Whether we are walking or riding, in city streets or subways, in automobiles or in the theatre, on the hillside or the ocean, a whispered word, a breathed prayer, will always bring Christ to us. Hardly a wish is felt before Christ, in friendship, is fulfilling it for us. How numerous are the times that we call on Him; how numerous are the times that He answers us. He is so anxious for our love and He loves us so much that there is nothing He will not do if what we ask is for the honour of God and our soul's good. Spiritual favours are showered by Him in abundance; trust in Him will bring our material needs. Confidence in Him will give us strength and courage to do the right thing and to overcome temptations.

He gives us friends here on earth that we may share our love with them. Yet, when people turn from us and scorn us, when they calumniate or scandalize us, Christ remains faithful wherever we are. No wonder the gross world sometimes fails to understand such great love and friendship, for surely He seems to love without reason; He loves almost to the point of folly.

5. Christ is our friend in joy and sorrow. When we are in need, when we have lost dear friends, when hardships and disasters overtake us, we need only to turn to Christ, even though we may have formerly turned against Him. When joys come to us Christ is ready to share them with us. At the birth of an infant in a family Christ is ready, through His Church, to offer the cleansing waters of Baptism. When we have bought a new home, Christ, through His priests, will permit a special blessing on the home. Whether at ordination or profession, at marriage, or at Confirmation, Christ, our friend, is present. Christ is not jealous of our happiness; He will share it and intensify it. Nor is Christ cold and cruel when we are in agony or in sorrow. He will come, as the one true friend, to ease the hurt and calm the irritation.

6. As Catholic leaders we grow more and more alert to the friendship which Christ has given us. We grow in appreciation of His love for us. We give our hearts and minds to the consuming fire of His love. We can let our hearts beat more quickly, more wildly, if we will, because of our love for Him. We can never love Him too much.

In imitation of His personality we love His other brothers and sisters, those whom He loves as we continue with our Catholic leadership. Because of our love for Him we purify our human friendships and make them steadfast and constant.

Christ, our Leader and Lord, youthful and loving, loyal Son of God and devoted Son of Mary, we pray You to hold us fast as Your friends that with You we may extend the Kingdom of the Father.

Amen!
