

Good Shepherd: Living Christ's Own Pastoral Authority

Keynote address presented by Most Rev. Samuel J. Aquila, Bishop of Fargo
at the 10th Annual Symposium on the Spirituality and Identity of the Diocesan Priest
co-sponsored by The Institute for Priestly Formation and Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary
Philadelphia, PA – March 18, 2011

Christ's Authority in the Gospels

As we begin this morning, let us quietly in our hearts turn to Jesus and let him speak to us. "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep (Jn 10:11)...I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep (Jn 10:14-15)...For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father (Jn 10:17-18)...I and the Father are one (Jn 10:30)."

Jesus identifies himself as the good shepherd who is in union with the Father. We know in faith that his mission comes from the Father. He reveals the love of the Father for the world by laying down his life for all humanity (Jn 3:16). Jesus is **the** fulfillment of the promise given by God in Jeremiah, "I will give you shepherds after my own heart" (Jer 3:15). Jesus is **the** shepherd whose heart is one with the heart of the Father. His very food is to do the will of the Father (Jn 4:34). Jesus is the shepherd who teaches, us as bishops and priests and future priests, how to shepherd, how to live his own pastoral authority bestowed upon us by him and the Holy Spirit on the day of our ordinations.

We know from the Gospels that Jesus conferred his authority on the twelve. "[Jesus] called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out and to heal every disease and every infirmity" (Mt 10:1 and see Mk 3:14-15; Lk 9:1). Further, in Luke's Gospel Jesus shared his authority with the 72, who rejoiced upon returning from their mission that "even the demons are subject to us in your name" (Lk 10:17)! While Jesus acknowledges the authority he has given to them, he also reminds them "...do not rejoice in this, that **the spirits are subject to you** (emphasis added); but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Lk 10:20). He takes their eyes away from themselves, "the demons are subject to us", and places them on heaven, on the Father, from whom all authority comes because their names are written in heaven. He reminds them to keep their eyes on the gift they have received, their salvation and communion with the Father in heaven.

Jesus' authority comes from his Father. In John 14, when Philip asks him, "Show us the Father" (Jn 14:9), Jesus replies, "The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves..." (Jn 14:10-11). The authority that Jesus exercises is received from the Father. He is at the service of the Father.

Jesus faithfully proclaims what he has received from the Father. His teaching comes from the Father. "My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me; if any man's will is to do his will, he shall know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority. He

who speaks on his own authority seeks his own glory; but he who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and in him there is no falsehood” (Jn 7:16-18). The teaching authority of Jesus stems from his intimate union with the Father. Even Jesus, the Son of God, did not act and speak in his own name, but in the name of the Father. His authority is received from the Father.

The New Testament uses the word *exousia* to indicate that the authority of Jesus is one received rather than inherent. His authority is not simply a self-sufficient authority but rather one which recognizes the sovereignty of the Father. While Jesus has the authority of God to lay down his life and to take it up (John 10:18), in humility and obedience, he recognizes that the power is from the Father. In his death and resurrection, his ultimate act of love and obedience, all authority in heaven and on earth is bestowed on him (Mt 28:18). Jesus recognizes that authority is a received gift from the Father in the Spirit.

In his book, **A New Song for the Lord**, then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger speaks of the “authority of obedience” as Jesus seeks to do only the will of the Father. Jesus completely surrenders himself to the will of the Father. Ratzinger first cites Romano Guardini’s reflections on Jesus’ obedience, “‘Obedience is not secondary for Jesus, but forms the core of his being...’ For his power there is therefore ‘no limit coming from the outside, but only from the inside...: the will of the Father freely accepted’” (page 42, **A New Song for the Lord**). Jesus, interiorly united to the Father in his human heart and will, receives and accepts the will of the Father and is not constrained by it. Thus Jesus freely exercises his authority in loving union with the Father in the Holy Spirit.

Ratzinger declares as a part of his reflection on the authority of obedience that, “...Jesus’ power is power based on love, love becoming powerful. It is power that shows us the way from all that is tangible and visible to the invisible and the truly real of God’s powerful love. It is power as way that has as its goal setting people on their way: into the transcendence of love” (page 43, **A New Song for the Lord**). Love is always obedient as it always looks to the beloved, not the self. Jesus authority of obedience is grounded in his eternal unconditional love of the Father.

Just as Jesus, in exercising his authority, has the desires of the Father in both his divine will and human will, we, as Jesus’ disciples are called to have Jesus’ desires in our human wills in order to exercise his authority. The source for the desires of Jesus comes through contemplative prayer, where, in loving surrender we enter into the heart of the Trinity. Intimate prayer with our eyes on our beloved leads us to obedience. “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, **just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love** (emphasis added). These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” (Jn 15:9-11). Obedient, abiding love, leads us to die to ourselves so that we may have the joy of Jesus in our hearts. Only if Jesus and the Father make our hearts their home (Jn 14:23), will we be able to cry out as St. Paul, “...it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20).

Four Ways to Develop Receptive Hearts in Seminarians to Exercise the Authority of Christ

In listening to the voice of Jesus, we observe that at the heart of authority are obedience and love. In this light, let us now turn to the present day formation of seminarians. Seminaries must be those places that form receptive hearts in seminarians, hearts ready to enter into intimacy with each person of the Trinity in order to receive love and to desire obedience to the will of the

Father. This formation of the seminarian's heart will help them to receive the desires of Jesus in their own hearts, and prepare them to receive, in obedience, the authority that Christ will hand on to them on the day of their ordination. Let us look at four practical ways for seminaries to form hearts receptive to the desires of Jesus. The four are *lectio divina*, the school of Nazareth, the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the daily celebration of the Eucharist.

Lectio Divina

The first way to develop the desires of Jesus and nourish intimacy with the Trinity for future priests is through *lectio divina*. Pope Benedict XVI, in last year's Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Verbum Domini*, urged that seminarians "must learn to love the word of God" which should be the soul of their theological and spiritual formation (82). Seminarians must develop a deep growing love for the Scriptures, for they are the place where the Father has revealed himself to us, most especially in his Word, Jesus.

In speaking on *lectio* for the spiritual formation of seminarians, soon to be Blessed John Paul II reminded us in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (47) "Familiarity with the word of God will make conversion easy, not only in the sense of detaching us from evil so as to adhere to the good, **but also in the sense of nourishing our heart with the thoughts of God** (emphasis added), so that the faith (as a response to the word) becomes our new basis for judging and evaluating persons and things, events and problems." He further stated that the seminarian must experience prayer, "as a living and personal meeting with the Father through the only-begotten Son under the action of the Spirit, a dialogue that becomes a **sharing in the filial conversation between Jesus and the Father** (emphasis added)." Sharing in this "filial conversation" the seminarian grows as a son in the Son, and through Christ makes himself a gift to the Father (PDV 47). The seminarian through *lectio* comes to know in his heart the words, actions and desires of Jesus, deepening his awareness of his true identity as a beloved son of the Father. The seminarians' desires will become Jesus' filial obedience to the will of the Father and in freedom will lay down his life for those whom he serves.

The School of Nazareth

A second way to nourish the desires of Jesus is for the seminarian to experience the school of Nazareth. Pope Paul VI spoke of the silence and simplicity of this school in 1964 when he visited Nazareth and the Church of the Annunciation. "Nazareth is a kind of school where we may begin to discover what Christ's life was like and even to understand his Gospel. Here we can observe and ponder the simple appeal of the way God's Son came to be known, profound and yet full of hidden meaning. And gradually we may even learn to imitate him" (Office of Readings, Holy Family, Address by Paul VI, January 5, 1964).

At the school of Nazareth seminarians learn to desire to imitate Jesus and learn too from Mary and Joseph. Prior to the birth of Jesus, Mary and Joseph are docile and receptive to the Word of God. Mary, in Gabriel's invitation, becomes the Mother of God. Through her obedient receptive love the Word is made flesh in her womb. She carries Jesus for nine months, gives birth to him and teaches him. She silently ponders in her heart all that is said about her Son (Lk 2:19 and 51). Her pondering on the word leads to a deeper, more receptive love, which eventually places her at the foot of the Cross, making a total self gift to her Son in his death.

Joseph, at first reluctant because of his unworthiness, after all he was a man like us, a sinner, opens his heart in loving surrender to the message of an angel in a dream, and takes Mary as his

wife (Mt 1:24). He protects Jesus and Mary, cares for them, and teaches Jesus a love for the Passover, the Hebrew Scriptures, and his trade, so that Jesus is known as “the carpenter’s son” (Mt 13:55). The seminarian learns from Joseph what it means to be a husband and father in chaste celibate love, and how to “father” Jesus present in the souls of the baptized, who will be entrusted to his pastoral care.

Jesus, in his humility, goes to Nazareth where he is obedient to Joseph and Mary, and “grows in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man” (Lk 2:51-52). The silence of Nazareth is the place of contemplation in the heart of the Holy Family, which leads the seminarian to the heart of the Trinity. As seminarians ponder in their hearts Mary, Joseph and Jesus they discover the attributes necessary to be a true disciple and most especially a priest. Those qualities are docility, receptivity, trust and confidence, embracing the divine in the ordinary, real work, cooperation in community life, and most importantly, humility and obedience.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation

A third way of growing in the desires of Jesus is through the regular celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Every seminarian must know himself as a sinner, and my sons who are present here, know that not a one of you will be perfect on the day of your ordination, **nor** does the Lord demand that you achieve self-perfection. Conversion is constant in the life of the faithful priest. This conversion is well assisted through the regular celebration of Confession. When I did my graduate studies in Rome from 1987-1990 I recovered the practice of celebrating Confession once a week. I discovered the beauty of the sacrament, not as a place of judgment, guilt or shame, but rather as the personal encounter with the merciful, loving, forgiving Jesus.

Seminarians, I urge you to learn too about mercy and forgiveness from the encounters of Jesus with Peter. Just one example, after Peter’s denial, Jesus does not condemn Peter, but he asks Peter a question of the heart, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” (Jn 21:16 ss). Love is what Jesus desires of every apostle, and now is the time for you to be trained in love. Each time you go to Confession, even with your habits of sin, the one question Jesus asks you is “do you love me?” Only in receiving ever more deeply the love of Jesus, trusting in his grace, will you become free from your sins, habits, wounds, and hidden lies that you so tenaciously hold on to.

Confession helps the seminarian grow in obedience to the Father as he no longer hides in shame; but, with transparency, brings his personal sin and weakness into the light, love, and mercy of the Father. Self-will and ego are transformed into dependence and communion. In each Confession you make the Father goes to you, his heart filled with compassion, and embraces you and welcomes you into communion with him (Lk 15). Through this experience, the seminarian’s heart will grow more receptive to the unconditional love of the Father, thus leading him to union with the obedience of Christ.

The Celebration of the Eucharist

The final and most important way for the seminarian to grow in the desires of Jesus is to have a deep love for the daily celebration of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the place where obedient love, and therefore authority too, is renewed. The greatest revelation and act of obedient love is found in the Cross of Jesus. In love, Jesus surrenders to the will of the Father while turning away from the preference of his human will, “not my will be done, but yours” (Mt 26:39 and 42; Mk 14:36; Lk 22:42). Benedict XVI reminded future priests on the day of their ordination in 2006, “One enters the priesthood through the Sacrament, and this means precisely: through the

gift of oneself to Christ, so that he can make use of me; so that I may serve him and follow his call, **even if it proves contrary to my desire for self-fulfillment and esteem** (emphasis added)” (Homily at Mass for the ordination of priests, May 7, 2006). The seminarian learns through the Eucharist the desire of Jesus, not a mere desire for self-fulfillment, but true fulfillment in seeking the Father’s will, even if it means completely dying to one’s own personal desires.

In the Eucharist we learn to lay down our lives with Jesus and offer them to the Father. As future priests, when you, the seminarians present here, pray the words of consecration over the bread and wine, while they are Christ’s words, they must also become your personal words. You, in union with Christ’s spousal gift, offer your body and blood with Christ’s to the Father and the Church, to carry on the work of Christ, for the glory of the Father and the salvation of souls. As Christ laid down his life for his bride the Church, you in spousal love are called to lay down your life for those entrusted to your pastoral care.

These four steps and many others prepare the heart of the seminarian to be configured through the Holy Spirit to Jesus Christ, the Head and Shepherd of the Church so that the future priest may act in the person of Christ, Head and Shepherd, Servant and Spouse of the Church (PDV 3). The seminarian, in having the desires of Jesus, is called to desire to make himself a total self gift to the Father and the Church. Thus, “through, with, and in” Christ alone, does he make a total self gift to the Father. Seminary faculty, in preparing receptive obedient hearts and minds in the seminarians, teach them to desire the authority of the Father and to exercise that authority in union with Christ in the Church and world today.

Contemporary Challenges in Exercising Authority

Let us now turn to the third and final part of this presentation, how bishops and priests exercise the pastoral authority of Christ, especially in the triple *munera* of teaching, sanctifying and governing the Church.

The exercise of Christ’s pastoral authority is a true gift from God at the service of both personal holiness and the common good of the Church. At different times throughout the history of the Church, and even in the Gospels, authority has been challenged. Since the Second Vatican Council both the world and the Church have lived through times that question authority and make the exercise of authority taxing (John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Gregis*, 43). Today there is skepticism, doubt, dissent and challenges which continue to go against the exercise of authority. Within the Church, this proves especially difficult as the secular culture undermines any authority attributed to God, and makes man into god.

Modern day culture has influenced the Church in the manner in which authority is or is not exercised. While we are in the world, we are not of the world, but of Christ (Jn 17:14-18), and authority must be exercised as Jesus exercised it—in service to the Father, to the truth, and to those entrusted to our care.

In the 2004 *Directory For the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, the bishop is reminded “he discovers the inspiration for his pastoral ministry and for the proper exercise of his triple munera of teaching, sanctifying, and governing according to the model of the Good Shepherd....[T]o bear fruit, the Bishop is called to conform himself closely to Christ both in his personal life and in the exercise of his apostolate, in such a way that the ‘mind of Christ’ (1 Cor 2:16) thoroughly informs his thoughts, words and deeds, and the light streaming from the face of Christ illumines

his ‘care of souls, which is the art of arts’” (*Directory 2*). Hence every bishop, priest and seminarian, and yes theologians and all involved in the formation of seminarians, if they are to be illumined by Christ, must ask the question, “Do I desire to be possessed by the authority of Christ or to have my ears itched by teachers suited to my liking, moving away from the truth, and entering into the myths of the present age?” (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Munus of Teaching

In living the teaching authority of Christ, bishops and priests are called to hand on what they have received from Christ and the Church. Within the hearts of bishops and priests there must be a rapt and attentive listening to Jesus and the Church; a love for truth, who is a person, Jesus; and a deep confidence in the truth that sets one free—“You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free” (Jn 8:32).

Jesus always used clear, direct language in presenting his teaching. In the Sermon on the Mount one can have no doubt about what Jesus teaches in the Beatitudes, in the fulfillment of the law, and in the cost of discipleship. Jesus was patient and compassionate with the sinner, those who were sick, and those who were troubled by demons. Jesus certainly teaches the primacy of love by word and example, yet he also teaches obedience and the truth.

Jesus never backed away from answering questions, nor did he back away from giving an answer that may have been difficult to hear, for example with the man who runs up to him and asks “what must I do to inherit everlasting life?” (Mk 10:17 ss; Mt 19:16 ss; Lk 18:18 ss). The young man leaves Jesus after hearing his answer. Jesus does not run after the man, but goes on to remind the disciples that with “God all things are possible.” I want to make clear that this does not provide us with the excuse to speak quickly without knowledge of the situation or prudence. In teaching, both charity and unhesitating truth must work together for the good of souls.

Pope Benedict XVI reminded priests that they are to be “the mouth piece and heart of Christ.” He went on to declare, “The teaching that the priest is called to offer, the truth of the faith, must be internalized and lived in an intense personal and spiritual process so that the priest really enters into a profound inner communion with Christ himself. The priest believes, accepts and seeks to live, **first of all as his own** (emphasis added), all that the Lord taught and that the Church has passed on...” (General Audience, April 14, 2010).

Bishops and priests in their teaching, preaching, and catechizing are to guide the faithful into the obedience of faith—into the truth guaranteed by God (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* 144). The deposit of faith is most clearly articulated in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. In living the teaching authority of Christ, the bishop and priest have the responsibility to know and love the Scriptures as well as the *Catechism*, teaching with clarity and faithfulness what has been received from Christ and handed on to the Church.

To be “in profound inner communion with Christ” means putting aside one’s personal opinions and seeing with the eyes and heart of Christ. Thus, one can see in the light of Christ that so called “faithful dissent,” when this phrase describes a refusal to adhere to the deposit of faith, is really the work of “the father of lies” (Jn 8:44) and not a docile receptive heart to the objective truth revealed and handed on by the Church. There is a value to theological speculation, which leads to a deeper experience of “faith seeking understanding” and enriches the life of the Church. However, this is much different than dissent, which is not faithful. This distinction, beyond the scope of this talk, is vital!

Furthermore, there is never a reason to apologize or make excuses for the teaching of Christ and the Church. Paul reminded Timothy, "...preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching" (2 Tim 4:2). Our world today is in urgent need of Jesus Christ, and while the world sees Jesus as "out of season," we as the servants of Christ and the Church must teach boldly and without hesitancy. The "new evangelization" means following the example of Jesus! With personal conviction we need to rediscover the vigor and boldness of the teaching authority of Christ exhibited by St. Paul, the Fathers of the Church, and the saints and martyrs who have gone before us.

Munus of Sanctification

Turning to the sanctifying authority of Christ we must first look at what does "sanctify" mean. It means "to make holy." In both the Old and New Testament, we hear the words given by God, "be holy, as I am holy" (Lv 11: 44; 1 Pt 1:15-16). While God is the only one who is perfectly holy, in his love for human beings his grace makes them grow in holiness, and this is accomplished in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and in the sending of the Holy Spirit. The sanctifying work of the Trinity continues through the sacraments and sacramentals of the Church.

Benedict XVI reminds us, "...each priest knows well that he is an instrument necessary to God's saving action but also that he is always only an instrument. This awareness must make priests humble and generous in the administration of the Sacraments, in respect of the canonical norms, but also in the deep conviction that their mission is to ensure that all people, united to Christ, may offer themselves to God as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to him (cf. Rom 12: 1)" (General Audience, May 5, 2010). Bishops and priests, as humble instruments of Christ, lead those who celebrate and receive the sacraments into union with the Father who is the source of all holiness. We can observe that sanctifying authority is received through obedience.

As a faithful instrument, the priest, in exercising the authority of sanctifying, like St. Paul, must hand on what he has received (1 Cor 11:23). This means that the ordained must be faithful to the liturgical books of the Church and the proper celebration of the sacraments, most especially in the offering of the one Sacrifice of Christ. The motive for a priest's faithfulness is not slavish attachment to rules or rubrics, but love for his bride and his desire to offer his bride the Church, not his own personality, but the person of Christ. The sacraments do not exclusively belong to any individual priest or bishop, but are Christ's and the Church's.

Although time does not permit, we must remember to contemplate within our hearts the sanctifying authority that Jesus bestowed on his apostles and the 72 in the Gospels, and thus upon bishops and priests, to forgive sins (Jn 20:22-23), to preach, to heal the sick and to cast out demons (Mk 3:14-15; Lk 9:1; Lk 10:19; Eph 6:12). All of these are important graces included in the sanctification of the faithful entrusted to our pastoral care. We should never be afraid to exercise the authority of Christ by praying for healing and deliverance when the faithful request us to do so. Every priest has the sanctifying authority bestowed by Christ to be victorious over the power of evil in the spiritual battle.

Munus of Governance

Perhaps most difficult for us who lead in the Church today, due to the influence of the secular world with its rejection of God and the authority of God, along with a real skepticism of authority, is the exercise of the office of governance. Benedict XVI reminds us as bishops and

priests again to turn to Jesus Christ to learn how to exercise this authority. "... [N]o one is really able to feed Christ's flock, unless he lives in profound and true obedience to Christ and the Church, and the docility of the people towards their priests depends on the docility of the priests towards Christ; for this reason the personal and constant encounter with the Lord, profound knowledge of him and the conformation of the individual will to Christ's will is always at the root of the pastoral ministry" (General Audience, May 26, 2010).

Jesus at times was direct in calling people to conversion – to change their way of acting and thinking. This directness makes many of us uncomfortable today. We should follow his example and language, even if we do not use his precise words. His language is good to contemplate and definitely should challenge us to look at how we correct the faithful, including priests and bishops, and speak the truth especially with those who say they are with Christ and the Church but do not accept the teaching of Jesus and the Church.

One has only to read Matthew 23 to hear the forceful language Jesus uses when speaking with the Pharisees and Scribes. He refers to them as "hypocrites, blind guides, and white washed tombs" and towards the end asks them the question, "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell?" In our politically correct world this type of language would never be tolerated today, and yet the Gospel writers were not hesitant to pass on these exhortations of Jesus.

Furthermore, when Peter began to remonstrate with Jesus about going up to Jerusalem, he did not softly tell Peter, "You do not understand." Rather Jesus spoke the vigorous words, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me; for you are not on the side of God, but of men" (Mt 16:23). Jesus speaks these words with force to the apostle he has chosen and the one whom he made first among the apostles. In love Jesus makes these direct statements to open the eyes of those whose hearts and minds are hardened. His straight talk, given in love for the person, desires the conversion and holiness of the person to the ways of God.

Jesus provides the Church and her leaders with the criteria for correcting a brother or sister. "If your brother sins against you; go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" (Mt 18:16-17).

The steps in this passage are clear and Jesus is teaching us, but do we listen and follow his example? If this criteria had been followed with dissenting theologians, priests, religious and faithful in 1968 with the encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, would we still be dealing with the problem today of those who dissent on contraception, abortion, same sex unions, euthanasia and so many other teachings of the Church?

One must honestly ask, how many times and years may a Catholic politician vote for the so called "right to abortion," "murder" in the words of John Paul II in *Evangelium Vitae* (58), and still be able to receive Holy Communion? The continual reception of Holy Communion by those who so visibly contradict and promote a grave evil, even more than simply dissent, only creates grave scandal, undermines the teaching and governing authority of the Church and can be interpreted by the faithful as indifference to the teaching of Christ and the Church on the part of those who have the responsibility to govern. If we honestly pray with the Gospel we can see that

hesitancy and non-accountability is not the way of Jesus Christ, but rather it is a failure in the exercise of governance.

Bishops and priests, as an act of loving obedience to Christ, must return to a full exercise of the governing authority of Christ witnessed in the Gospel. If we do not exercise that authority, are hesitant to exercise it, or doubt it, then it only leads to the “father of lies” taking hold of the minds and hearts of the faithful, and their continuing to act in the ways of man and not the ways of God.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his conversation with Peter Seewald in the book *Light of the World*, made the following observation concerning the sexual abuse crisis among clergy, after speaking with the Archbishop of Dublin. In their conversation they spoke to a mentality prevalent after Vatican II. “The prevailing mentality was that the Church must not be a Church of laws but, rather, a Church of love; she must not punish. Thus the awareness that punishment can be an act of love ceased to exist. This led to an odd darkening of the mind, even in very good people. Today we have to learn all over again that love for the sinner and love for the person who has been harmed are correctly balanced if I punish the sinner in the form that is possible and appropriate. In this respect there was in the past a change of mentality, in which the law and need for punishment were obscured. **Ultimately this also narrowed the concept of love, which in fact is not just being nice or courteous, but is found in the truth** (emphasis added). And another component of truth is that I must punish the one who has sinned against real love” (Pages 25-26).

As the Holy Father notes love corrects for the good of the person. Correction can be difficult and painful, as parents know, yet as a shepherd I am willing to suffer the rejection and anger of another when I speak the truth for the good of the person and the Bride of Christ. To correct and/or to punish someone who has gravely sinned against real love is an act of servant love and is found in the truth!

In today’s world too many people understand correction or punishment as not loving the other or as dominion over the other, and this is the work of “the father of lies.” A reluctance or hesitancy to correct and properly punish does not invite the other into the truth that frees and ultimately fails in true charity. As servants of truth, of Christ, we will correct those who sin for their own good and for the love of the other, even if it leads to our own persecution and rejection. In the exercise of the governing authority of Christ, we too, if we have the heart of Christ and the love of Christ, will end up on the Cross with Christ. Certainly this was the experience of St. Peter and St. Paul, St. John Fisher, and so many other bishop and priest martyrs throughout the history of the Church.

Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to demonstrate, first, that living out the pastoral authority of Christ is best articulated in the image of the good shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep, and who has come to serve and not be served. Jesus is the shepherd who fulfills the prophecy given in Ezekiel 34 for he, the Son of God, has shepherded his sheep and teaches us by his example to do the same. This is accomplished in the ordained by having the heart of Christ, seeking in obedient love the will of the Father before all else. In the heart of Christ is the “authority of obedience” which comes about through love and intimacy with the Father. Our authority is received through obedience in love. This is not blind obedience; blind obedience

leads us to the impersonal reception of a law given by authority, but Christ listened to the truth in love, and it was this kind of listening that gave power to his authority, it was a new authority (Mk 1:27) because of its source: rapt listening in love to the Father.

Seminarians as future priests are called to have the desires of Jesus, seeking first the will of the Father, in order to have the heart of Jesus. That is best accomplished through their spiritual formation in *lectio divina*, the School of Nazareth, regular Confession, and a love for the Eucharist.

While the challenges to living out the pastoral authority of Jesus are great, bishops and priests must contemplate the words and actions of Christ in the Gospel to learn from him the proper exercise of their authority as they teach, sanctify and govern. We must come to accept the fact that the exercise of true authority will be divisive as it was in the time of Jesus. Ultimately living the pastoral authority of Jesus in loving obedience will lead us to the Cross as it led him to the Cross, for we will love the Father with the heart of Jesus.