

Father Lebbe's Principles of spiritual Life

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PREFACE

Thirty years ago, many of my friends suggested that I write on the life of Fr. Lebbe and his principles of religious life. I have written more than 200 articles in the religious magazines using the title "Ten Years Time." On the occasion of Fr. Lebbe's birth centenary in 1977, I published a book entitled "Ten Years Time" which was the collection of all those articles on Fr. Lebbe.

All the same, many people felt that the book did not give enough details of his principles of spiritual life. Meanwhile many religious organizations requested me to give lectures on Fr. Lebbe was very intelligent and learned, he was not a scholar. He was a busy practical priest. He did not have time and technique to write a systematic and scholastic series on spiritual principles.

His spiritual principles were known as "TOTAL, TURE and CONSTANT" which is the abbreviation of total sacrifice, true charity and constant joy. Many people called this the nine emphasize the basic outline of his spirituality.

These three words also became the guidelines for the spiritual life of the members of the congregations he founded such as S.A.M, C.S.J.B, C.S.T, and A.F.I.

After his death many of his good friends like Cardinal Yu Pin., Niu, emphasized Fr. Lebbe's three principles in their writing and lectures.

Some of the works of this book may be found in other writings. But the main purpose of this book is to summarize and give the readers a taste of his basic spirituality.

In our spiritual study, we should go for the spirituality that is based on the teachings of our Lord who is the "Way, Truth, and Life." Therefore the basis of our spirituality is the gospel of Christ and the teaching of the apostles. And these principles are the legacy that Fr. Lebbe completely based on the teaching of our Lord. They are in his own words: "Total renunciation which Jesus put forward as the condition of salvation; True love of men which is the heart of the law and the distinguishing sign of a Christian; Constant joy which is the outcome and result of the following of Christ."

Rev. Alexander Tsao. CSJB

SECTION ONE

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- Chapter 1. Basic Theory Of Spiritual Life
- Chapter 2. An Original Method Of Ascetical Life
- Chapter 3. The Evolution Of This Basic Outline Of Spiritual Life
- Chapter 4. "Total, True, Constant" And The Bible
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Chapter 1

Basic Theory Of Spiritual Life

Although we can say that Fr. Lebbe emphasized the practical basis of his spirituality, this does not mean that he did not have any theoretical basis to this principles of spirituality.

He said: "The basis of our spirituality is the gospel of Christ and the teaching of the Apostles.". He also told us that the source of the spiritual life is the Bible. Although people can draw food for spiritual life from the rivers, meaning the various schools of spirituality, is it not ture that the nearer one gets to the source of the river, the purer and fresher the water is"?

Father Lebbe rarely used and particular text book of asceticism in order to instruct us. Instead, he gave every one of us a copy of the New Testament and taught us the most noble theory of spiritual life based on the Sermon on the Mount. He spent many hours explaining to us the beatitudes and showed us clearly the spirit and the basis of spiritual life as we find it in the beatitudes.

Fr. Lebbe named each of our monasteries "Monastery of the Beatitudes". For Instance we have "Ankuo Beatitude Monastery" "Peiping Chingho Beatitude Monastery" and so on. In the rule of the Congregation he explained that he did this because he wanted these monasteries to be the places, where religious life was lived according to the beatitudes. So our Congregation needs to model it life style according to the Beatitudes. And the Little Brothers should make it their aim of a lifetime's spiritual labour to carry out the teaching of our Lord on the mountain. After this Fr. Lebbe would take an even longer time to explain their functions in spiritual life: faith, hope and charity, and the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit. Along with his he would teach us the Church's traditional ascetical means of spiritual life such as: liturgy, prayer, meditation etc.

I shall now write about Fr. Lebbe's original creation on basic outline of spiritual life. He calls it: TOTAL, TRUE, and CONSTANT.

Chapter 2

An Original Method Of Ascetical Life

As far as I know, this basic outline of ascetical life did not come to him as a sudden inspiration. It was, on the contrary, the result of long reflection and many years of living through these methods as he taught us the Holy Scripture and preached retreats.

When he began to state and emphasize "Total Sacrifice, True Charity, Constant Joy", people began to show great interest with approval. Some people called it "the three maxims of spiritual life"; while others called it "the 9 characters for managing life on this earth". But Fr. Lebbe called it "The basis outline of Spiritual life."

The first time this phrase appeared in his writing was probably in 1931 when he wrote on August 26 to Fr. Boland superior of the S.A.M. (Societe Auxiliaire Des Missions). The essential contents of the letter are as follows: "Beloved brother in Christ,

So you want me to write to the young seminarians a basic outline of spiritual life. The method of spirituality for some one who especially wants to follow our Lord, and who is determined to be a missionary, is no different from the method of an ordinary Christian. We all have only one basic program of spiritual life. Christ is our way, truth and life. So there is only one spirituality and that is to put the gospel message into practice. It is not a hardened ideal, but practical and lively gospel values that should influence our life.

But how is it in practice? It is very simple. I am not saying that it is very easy.

1. The first step is "total renunciation". Nothing matters outside God. Our Lord Himself has given us an essential condition for following him: "None of you can be my disciple if he does not renounce all his possession." (Luke 14:33) These words of our Lord give us a clear message and leave no room for any doubt as to the condition for discipleship. He has repeated this several times. Moreover, by his life and death, he has left a shining example for us. "What I just did was to give you an example : as I have done so you must do." (Jn. 13:15)

Therefore, in practice, the moment we want to follow Christ we should devote our whole effort to the work of "total renunciation".

Father Lebbe's Three Principles

I constantly insist on this point, especially with our dear "apprentice saints". that it is absolutely essential as a first step never to miss even the smallest opportunity for self-sacrifice in every aspect of life. Be attentive to offer up oneself at all times and in all places. For instance in the seminary, to leave the best things for others and use the less good things for oneself; or while traveling on the train to give one's seat to others.....

You have asked me the special points for the people who want to serve in the mission: Now my dear children, let me tell you that if you want to come to the mission area, especially to China, you have no right to want this or want that. "After all, you have died! Your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Col. 3:3) Oh! How beautiful it is. How I wish I could put on wings to fly over to you and talk to you personally. But it is not necessary. Your superior, Father Boland, will do it better than I. If this first lesson of spiritual life is well learned and has entered into one's bloodstream and is seen into practice, then the second step will not be difficult to carry out.

2. The second step is "True love of others". "I give you a new commandment: you must love one another as I have loved you...because of this the world will know that you are my disciples".

This second activity of spiritual life is an even more necessary condition for becoming holy. No matter what it costs us, we must at all times and in all places practice charity. We must truly and sincerely love others. It is the absolute command of our Lord.

The Special character of your vocation is to go to the mission areas to serve the native hierarchy. Ah! What a beautiful ideals! What a glorious mission! If you have true charity and love Christ in the Chinese people, serving them for Him, you will not only have the appearance of true Christians, but also behave in a way that will give the people a big surprise.

3. In order to sanctify oneself and become a real saint (not just a good priest) the third step is the commandment that God proclaimed through Saint Paul: "Rejoice in the Lord always! I say it again. Rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4)

When the Lord Christ announced the constitution of the Kingdom of Heaven, he first proclaimed the eight beatitudes! So to be a Christian, one should always be full of happiness and rejoicing... and all the more so in order to be a good missionary for "God loves a cheerful giver" (II Cor. 9:7) "Constant Joy" is an necessary to a man's heart as sunshine and air are to his body. I could go on talking for ever about this particular point. But it is not necessary as you all have some knowledge and experience in the spiritual life.

To sum up, the program of spiritual life can be reduced to three points: Total Renunciation, True Love of Others, and Constant Joy.

You will say that I don't give enough details. But I think it is certainly enough to make your work bear much fruit and make saints of you.

What remains now is to put this spirit into practice and apply it in your daily life. What is even more important to notice is that the force of this program will depend on the adjectives: TOTAL, TRUE, CONSTANT. Even the barkeeper sometimes does a little renunciation here and there. Even the most wicked unbeliever sometimes acts with little charity or does a good deed. As for Joy, Is there any one who doesn't admit that his joy is not lasting? The main difference between a saint and an ordinary human being is in those three adjectives. Try this sincerely and you will find that the whole gospel is contained in it.

Wishing you God's assistance,
Vincent Lebbe.

In addition to the above letter Fr. Lebbe on a different occasion wrote a much simpler and clearer "program of spiritual life" which I quote :

"As regards to methods of spiritual life, we do not choose any school of spirituality or debate on any ascetical theories, even less do we set up any new ones. We follow Jesus for he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Therefore our principles and methods of spiritual life are the Gospel of Christ and the teaching of the apostles. A comprehensive survey of the whole of the Gospel's and epistles of St. Paul can be reduced into three central thoughts: i. e.

1. Total renunciation: Jesus has several times stated this as a condition for salvation.
2. True love of others: this is the heart of the law, and the distinguishing mark of a Christian.
3. Constant joy: this is a necessary result of the following of Christ, and the mark of a Christian.

In addition to this, we have the principles "total, true, and constant" in the rules, which he himself wrote for the Little Sisters of St. Theresa of the Child Jesus and the Little Brothers of St. John the Baptist. Although these are simple phrases they are precious example of his calligraphy. I have them photocopied and used it on the cover of this book for everyone to appreciate it.

Chapter 3

The Evolution Of This Basic Outline Of Spiritual Life

As I have said it earlier, these three principles did not come to Fr. Lebbe as a sudden inspiration, but it came from long reflection and years of putting them into practice in his life. He gradually shaped this complete summary of spiritual life. I do not remember at what date or in what circumstances he first spelled out these three central thoughts of the gospel to us. It could not have been later than August 16, 1931 as we see it in the letter to Fr. Boland previously mentioned where he writes about "Total, True and Constant". Very likely he talked to us for the first time about the 3 principles at our annual retreat, in August of that year.

To make Fr. Lebbe's "Basic principles of spiritual life" easier to understand, and especially easier to put into practice, I will now give a short account of the development of these principles.

In the beginning Fr. Lebbe did not use the phrase "Total Sacrifice". In the first months after I entered the Congregation of St. John the Baptist, he used to say "renounce everything" or "lay aside everything" and particularly he liked to say "down with myself". This was the way he described the basic task of ascetical life. When the Ankuo Beatitude Monastery was first established, a giant sized scroll hung on the wall of the study room on which were written horizontally the Chinese characters quoting the warrior prince Tsu's famous saying was written: "Bent over wearily I serve to the limit; only after death will it be ended". All those who came to see the monastery, were surprised and delighted when they saw these scrolls.

"Down with myself" was the fundamental principle of Fr. Lebbe's personal discipline and a vital element in his teaching of his disciples. Everyone who knew him well will testify that all his life's work and his spirit moved the people. This principle sounds so simple, but everything is contained in it and putting them into practice is like climbing a high mountain which cannot be done at one stride. During many years, I was able to hear him explain those three words and I saw him practicing them very diligently. In the beginning he practiced these principles in a simple way and worked gradually toward depth and maturity.

The process of growth of these principles can be divided into these

stages: Attack myself; down with myself; and death to myself.

1. Attack myself: Although this is not the phrase that was used by Fr. Lebbe when he talked about the ascetical life, all the same I am writing this to remind us that we must constantly battle because even after we have mastered "down with myself", the "myself" can still rise up again.

Jesus tells us to "renounce oneself" (MK. 8:34) and St. Paul speaks of "put off the old man" (Eph. 4:22) The early books of asceticism use the term abnegation and the ordinary man while talking about personal discipline uses the term "give up selfishness". All these are the Fr. Lebbe's first steps towards the control of the self.

Fr. Lebbe said that the "ego" and the "old man" is the mortal enemy of our spiritual and ascetical life. It is very difficult to deal with it as it is an interior force. When ever it gets an opportunity, it moves in quickly. Even after it is knocked over, it rolls back on to his feet again like a round-bottomed wooden doll.

Although I shall be sixty years old (and Confucius said at sixty, my ear was an obedient organ for the reception of truth) I still feel that the "old man" frequently spoils my spiritual life and my apostolic work. I must ceaselessly be "attacking myself".

All those who met Fr. Lebbe knew that he had a fiery character and that he was a very strong individual. People considered this as an asset for a successful career for one's life. But he did not deny that his fiery character was a great threat to his spiritual and ascetical life. He considered this character as representing the "old man". Only heaven knows how much hard labour he had put in to control this. During the ten years that he and I were together, I saw him battling with his "old man" practically every day of his life. For instance if some one would come to meet him while he was writing an important letter, he would instinctively frown with anger in his eyes. But then we would see him suddenly welcoming that person with a smiling face and ask him gently: "What is the matter?" I can remember, at least thrice when after he had lost his temper with a subordinate, I saw him kneeling down in front of the person to apologize for his temper. His determination and energy in attacking the "old me" truly made people sign with wonder and admiration. In our Beatitude monastery every time a novice made his first vows, Fr. Lebbe in the "welcoming the newcomer ceremony" was sure to warn the newly professed that one must be careful not to let the "old self" rise up again, thus carelessly letting the fruit of two years efforts just go down the drain. "In the novitiate" he said, "one

builds the foundations to "down myself" and learns the techniques to "attack myself". But the real test of this principle comes after profession, when one is living under the three vows.

2. Down with myself: Readers may ask why should we take pain to "down myself" when Fr. Lebbe knew that in this life it is not easy to eradicate the "old self". And after we beat the "self" down, it always gets up again like a "roll-over doll" as he called it? Fr. Lebbe had his own way of explaining it. He said : "If we are thinking of completely eradicating the sinful tendencies of our passion, it is impossible to accomplish it in this life. The true meaning of "down with myself" is our determination to "put off the old man" and our continual efforts to get rid of the evil in our behavior. St. Paul says "When we are baptized we went into the tomb with Christ and joined Him in death" (Rom. 6:4) "When Christ died He died once for all to sin. So He lives now with God. (everlasting life). In the same way you too must consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus. (Rom. 6:10 - 11)

To save us from the hold of sin, Christ offered one sacrifice for sins (Heb. 10:14), but we, in order to share in the grace of salvation, have to "carry the cross daily" and carry on a ceaseless battle against the powers of sin and evil. And one of them is the "old me". This kind of ceaseless "fight against oneself" makes the "old me" unable to lift its head, and that is the equivalent of "down with myself". It is something like what happens in the farm or in the garden. If the weeds are pulled out in time, there will be no weeds. This requires a bit of hard work on our part. It is the same with regard to the spiritual life. "The old me", like the weeds keep shooting up. We should not be discouraged. If we can control and subdue the "old man" energetically and keep on doing so, pulling out the sprouts each time they appear, it will mean that the old me is beaten down.

3. Death to myself: It was on Christmas day 1933 for the first time that any member of our Congregation took perpetual vows. Instead of the usual 8 day retreat we had a 10 day retreat with a new program. Among the subjects for meditation, the most impressive was the meditation on "total death". In the study room the scroll hanging on the wall below the slogan "down with myself" had been altered from "only after death will it be ended" to "even after death it isn't ended". On another wall a new scroll appeared with the caption "death to myself" In the newly composed liturgy for our congregation's perpetual vows ceremony a new song called "Grant me total death" was included. In the perpetual vows ceremony of the Little sisters of St.

Theresa too there is a song called: "You have already died!" All of this was the result of a gradual development in Fr. Lebbe's thinking on principles of spiritual life.

After profound thought and reflection of many years of experience in the ascetical life, Fr. Lebbe felt that "down with myself" was not sufficient enough. He thought that we must go on till we reach "Death to myself" if we want God's grace to be able to exercise its power more completely in us. He had very high hopes on the ascetical life of the brothers of our congregation. At one time on the model of some of the monastic orders, he even thought of adding "total death" as the fourth vow to the existing three vows. But as it was not in accordance with the Canon Law, he could not get the necessary permission for the same. However he included the meaning and the spirit of "Total death" in the vow of obedience.

Fr. Lebbe explained the meaning of "Total death" to the members of our Congregation as follows: What ever work the brothers did, or which ever place they went, or whether they received Holy Orders or not, were all decided by the superiors. But when he explained the spirit of "Total death" He widened the scope to make it much more. For instance he said that although the brothers had the right to use the things necessary for life, nevertheless the spirit of "Total death" means that when a brother is using that right, he should, in his heart, "consider himself as not having the right".

When he was talking about the grain of wheat that must die (Jn. 12:24) or death to the old self (Col. 3:4 - 10), he already had conceived the idea about the spirit of "Total death" in a less distinct way. So when the first group of Brothers made their perpetual vows, the concept had matured sufficiently to be spelled out clearly and preached.

When asked by some of the brothers to give a concrete explanation of the spirit of "Total death", Fr. Lebbe showed the example of two saints. The first example was that of St. Paul the Apostle, who said: "I have been crucified with Christ, and the Life that I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me (Gal. 2:20). The second example that he gave us was that of St. Francis of Assisi, disowned by his own father, who preferred his wealth to his son, left home even without clothes. As he left he sang God's praises crying out in a loud voice "My father in Heaven" (Mt. 6:9).

A little incident about Fr. Lebbe will give you a deeper understanding of what is involved in "total death". In Spring 1935 when Fr. Lebbe was away from the monastery on some business, there was a "storm of

misunderstanding" in the monastery. Hearing that, Bishop Sun sent a letter to Fr. Lebbe with instruction as to what to be done. Fr. Lebbe was so upset about it that he returned from Peiping to Ankuo. He went to the Bishop's curia, and did not want to go back to the monastery of the Beatitudes. In fact he declared his intention of having no further connection with the Congregation of St. John the Baptist. This gesture stirred a great commotion among the brothers and they at once sent three representatives who with tears begged Fr. Lebbe to return to the monastery. The brother who had caused the "storm" was full of repentance. In three days' time, everything was peaceful and the monastery of Beatitudes was full of sunshine. Fr. Lebbe had forgotten all the bad behavior of that particular brother, who had started the trouble. He was even more affectionate than before. While we were all full of surprise and admiration at Fr. Lebbe's supernatural spirit of forgiveness, he himself said to me privately: "You can see that I have not yet reached authentic "Total death" I haven't even attained "Death to myself!"

As an appendix to this chapter, I will list the subjects Fr. Lebbe preached on each day of the 10 day retreat. The list can help us to understand his "Principles of spiritual life."

| | |
|----------|---|
| 1st Day | God's life - sanctifying grace (basis of spiritual life). |
| 2nd Day | Faith (a function of the spiritual life) |
| 3rd Day | Hope (a function of the spiritual life) |
| 4th Day | Total, true, constant. (General account) |
| 5th Day | Renunciation of property - poverty (application of total renunciation) |
| 6th Day | Renunciation of sexual pleasure - chastity (application of total renunciation) |
| 7th Day | Renunciation of one's will - obedience (application of total renunciation) |
| 8th Day | Total death - nothing but God (highest degree of total renunciation) |
| 9th Day | Charity - true love of others |
| 10th Day | Constant Joy |

Chapter 4

"Total, True, Constant" And The Bible

Not only Fr. Lebbe's basic theory of spiritual life but also his ascetical method of three principles of the spiritual life "total, true, constant" were all based on the Scriptures.

Although the exact phrase "total renunciations" is not found in the Bible, many a Verse in the Scripture has the same idea expressed in a slightly different way. "Give up all you possess" (Mt. 19:27; Mk. 10:28; Lk. 14:33); "Put off the old man" (Eph. 4:22) and "Kill the old self" (Col. 3:5) are enough to justify what Fr. Lebbe calls "Total renunciation".

St. Paul puts it in a positive way when he says, "true love of man" or "Love must not be a pretense". St. John says: "Little children, let us love in deed and in truth and not merely talk about it." (1 Jn 3:18)

As a matter of fact the first and the greatest commandment is "Love the Lord your God with all your heart", and love of neighbor is only the second. (Mt. 22:38)

The reasons why Fr. Lebbe had love of neighbor and love of God included in his basic principles of spiritual life are as follows:

1. He arranged it this way not because he thought that loving others was more important than loving God, but considering the concrete situation of our lives, we love God in loving other people; or in other words we love God in them.

2. He reminded us that more than 90% of Jesus' words on love are about loving others. Jesus' prophecy about the Last Judgement, which is a key text to the question of "obtaining salvation", there seems to set only one vital condition: "the love of other people." (Mt. 23:35 - 45)

3. St. Paul also emphasizes that "love of others is the fulfillment of the law". (Rom. 13:10)

4. St. John seems to emphasize "love of others" even more strongly. According to his report not love of God, but love of one another was to be the special characteristic of the disciples of Jesus (Jn. 13:35).

With regard to Fr. Lebbe's "Constant Joy" not only the meaning and the spirit, but also the words are taken from the Bible. As you know the phrase "Constant Joy" is taken from St. Paul's letter: "You must always be Joyful in the Lord; I repeat, you must always be joyful" (Phil. 4:4). Moreover in his first epistle to the Thessalonians, the same words occur: "You must

always be joyful" (Thes. 5:16). When Jesus announced the eight Beatitudes, he concluded the sermon saying: "Rejoice and be glad! For your reward is great in heaven." (Mt. 5:12)

We can surely say that these principles of "Total, True and Constant": are basically taken from the Bible. He had studied the Beatitudes attentively, and found that the three ideas "Total, True, and Constant" could neatly be fitted into the framework of the Beatitudes in the same order. He explained it thus: "The first Beatitudes - Spiritual poverty, meekness, mourning - teach us to renounce the desire for material things, and not to strive against others for power and reputation. We need to wash away our sins and evil passions constantly with tears of repentance. This is what "Total renunciation" means. The middle two Beatitudes - Thirst for justice and mercy tell us the attitude of love - true love of others, loving them because of God - and show us what is implied by love. The last three Beatitudes - Purity of heart, peace making and suffering for justice - teach us the attitude of a Christian's heart and the way one should treat this world in joy and peace. A man whose heart is pure and who works for peace naturally feels joy at heart. When one meets with persecution, he will still feel that life is meaningful provided he lives for the lord. He does not give up. This is the spirit of "Constant Joy" and the way it is expressed is in its living.

Chapter 5

"Total, True, Constant" And The Three Ways Of Spiritual Life

In the traditional asceticism of the Church there are three grand - sounding names: The Purgative Way; the Illuminative Way; and the Unitive Way. These are the three paths that the ascetics must travel. These are three kinds of works done in the ascetical life.

1. The Purgative Way : This is the path in which sin is cleansed away and bad habits are removed. It is the work of "purification". Christians, through prayer, meditation and mortification, must purify their thoughts and desires. They should turn their hearts away from evil and free themselves from worldly desires. This is what St. Paul calls "putting off the old man" (Eph. 4:22) and "putting the old self to death" (Col. 3:5). This kind of work in the soul is the same as Fr. Lebbe's "total renunciation".

2. The Illuminative Way : This is the path in which the Christian understands and follows the words and example of Christ. It is the work of "becoming Christlike, or becoming another Christ". We may also say that it is the work of "being enlightened". The Christian spiritual life combines two kinds of activity: On one side the negative - removing the evil life of sin and on the other side the positive - imitating Christ, "putting on Christ"(Rom. 13: 15); "be clothed in love" (Col, 3:14), This is Fr, Lebbe's "true love of neighbors".

3. The unitive Way: This is the path in which one is united with God. It is the state, in which "God and man are one".

The spiritual life means living God's life. And God's life is a life of bliss and joy. Therefore the more our life resembles God's life, the more are we closely and deeply united with God, we will experience greater joy and bliss in the union. So Fr. Lebbe included "Constant joy" as the third kind of labour of asceticism. This is the situation of anyone who lives constantly in a state where "God and man are one".

Chapter 6

"Total, True, Constant" And Chinese Moral Teaching

Fr. Lebbe's Three Principles are not only based on Holy Scriptures and in conformity with the 3 ways of spiritual life, but they also agree very well with the traditional teaching of China.

In the classical book "Ta Hsueh" (Great Learning), Kai Tsung Min, 1 sect. chapter 1, we read: "The way of great learning are: understanding shining virtue, renewing the person, so reaching the highest good". If we make a slight change in the order of the words, putting "renewing the person before "understanding shining virtue", then our country's traditional moral teaching and Fr. Lebbe's principles of spiritual life become even more similar. Let me explain it thus:

1. "Renewing the person" and "total renunciation": When we say new, or renew, we naturally contrast it with "old". Therefore Chu Hsi explains the meaning of the phrase "get rid of the old", or "remove the old and renew oneself". This is the first task in a moral culture, to be practiced unceasingly all through life. We also read in another place: "If you can, renew yourself continuously everyday of your life. This principle is the same as Fr. Lebbe's "Total Renunciation".

2. "Understanding shining virtue and "True love of others": On one hand, man's thoughts and actions not only need constant purification to get rid of evil desires and bad behavior, but on the other hand he must actively cultivate virtues too. So the "Ta Hsueh" also teaches us to "understand shining virtue". It means that man must understand the significance of human life and the moral standards to aim at, and put this into practice. Now since the purpose of human life is the "service of others", Jen (benevolence, charity) is the center of all virtues - good manners, righteousness, honesty, sense of shame, filial piety, goodness to brothers and comrades, loyalty to rulers, and reliability. All these virtues are forms of "do good to others", which is "Jen". Just as "Love of others is the fulfillment of the Law (Rom. 13:9-10) so Fr. Lebbe included the whole of morality under "True love of others".

3. "Reaching the highest good" and "Constant joy": After one has "reached the highest good" the five results are: Determination, Tranquility, Peace, Forethought, and Attainment. In other words, when one has "reached the highest good" neither worldly desires and unruly passions can easily disturb the heart again, nor can outside changes upset his will. He has in fact reached

the state in which no force can bend him, wealth cannot deprave him."

Fr. Lebbe's Constant joy: is very similar to these, for its principal meaning is not in emotional happiness, but in "cheerfulness and optimism" of the will". In adversity, it is the spirit of acceptance; and when confronted by countless trouble, one is undisturbed".

More than 50 years ago Dr. Ting Tsoshaio, who was the editor of the Peiping Morning Post reported an interesting lecture given by Fr. Lebbe on the subject of "Total True, Constant". I was surprised at the way Dr. Ting, who was not a Catholic, was able to grasp the deep teaching of the Catholic Church on "asceticism" and how well he managed to express it in words that could easily be understood by ordinary people.

Dr. Ting, who was a student of Fr. Lebbe told me that his greatness lay in the fact that he could talk about the Catholic Church's doctrine in language suitable for any sort of person to understand. So when he spoke to non-Catholics about "Total, true, constant" he did not use any technical terms that might have mystified them, but talked in simple way, fitting to the listeners of traditional Chinese culture. Listening to him talking about it was like hearing a Confucianist explain the principles of personal ethics.

The late Prof. Fang Hao who was a monsignor in the Catholic Church used his profound learning and understanding of Chinese culture when he explained Fr. Lebbe's three principles. He talked about them in a way perfectly adapted to the thought and expression of Chinese people. For instance he said: "Everything Fr. Lebbe wrote and said, in fact his entire life, was just the one word "Kung" (public, the community.) Forgetting himself, he did "everything for the good of the public so that he could practice "Total renunciation" and "truly love neighbors" and "always be joyful". His third slogan, "Down with myself" means forgetting or ignoring the self completely, which is total unselfishness. If one cannot forget the self, then even if one practices renunciation, it cannot be total. If one cannot ignore oneself, then even if one loves others, that love cannot be true. If one cannot completely be unselfish, then even if one is joyful, that joy cannot be constant". (Quoted from Fang Hao's text on "kung")

In 1977 Mr. Chiang Futsung, writing in a booklet brought out to commemorate the birth centenary of Fr. Lebbe, showed how these three principles could be assimilated to the "Chih, Jen, Yung" (Wisdom, Benevolence, Courage) that Confucius spoke about. When Chinese readers saw this article, they were delighted.

1. "Chih" (Wisdom): Confucius said "The wise man is happy" and "The

wise man is not misled". If one is neither misled, nor doubtful, then one's heart is open and joyful. He will be contented and composed and naturally always be happy. This is just the same as the "Constant joy" that Fr. Lebbe talked about and put into practice.

2. "Jen" (Benevolence) Confucius said "The benevolent man is not anxious". When Fan Chih asked him what is this benevolence, his reply was "It is love for other" Mencius also said: "The Benevolent person loves all men". Fr. Lebbe's "True love of others means really and truly carrying out this essential element of benevolence. And his word "True" means that we must put the five characteristics such as: "respectful, generous, faithful, prompt, kind" into action in our love of others, for this is the real meaning of "Jen".

3. "Yung" (Courage) To be able to feel shame is similar to courage, for the courageous man is not afraid. For this we must learn to "keep cool even if mount Tai collapses in front of you". This is also what Mencius expressed when he said: "keep the heart unmoved". Only a "Total renunciation" can be truly be courageous. In other words if one wants to attain "Total renunciation" one must have incomparable courage. (Chiang Fut'ung's article on "Fr. Lebbe's three characters")

Chapter 7

The Mutual Relationship Of "Total, True, And Constant"

Total renunciation, true love of others and constant joy are not separate independent activities that go parallel without any mutual relationship. They are not only complement, and influence one another, but together they form one single spiritual principle.

Fr. Lebbe used to explain their mutual relationship like this: The aim of man's life is to "give glory to God and bring salvation to men", which is the center of spiritual life. Total renunciation is the condition for attaining true love of others and constant joy, for we cannot attain them unless we walk the path of total renunciation. On one hand "constant joy" is the result of "renouncing oneself for the sake of others", on the other hand it is a sort of force that breaks down our difficulties and carries us towards our goal. We can also say that renunciation without love is "Wu wei" (insipid); Any renunciation marked by resentment against heaven and grudges against men, or any service done with a frowning or gloomy face are not only meaningless actions, but they also insult God and man. They even sinful.

The late Cardinal Yu Bin, commenting on the mutual relationship of Fr. Lebbe's three principles, said that "renunciation expresses one's love of others. Love of others is the basis of joy, while helping others is the root of happiness. This forms a group of interrelated elements in the ascetical life and if one advances step by step in this way, one can then reach the heights". (Cardinal Yu Bin "Collected Speeches" page 79)

The late Msgr. John Niu gave us a more detailed explanation saying: "Fr. Lebbe's three principles also are mutually connected. If some one refuses to sacrifice a hair even if it will benefit everyone else, he is incapable of loving others. If a man cannot love others he will spend all his time in jealous suspicions, criticizing others behind their back, and he certainly cannot obtain true happiness. The reason why people have vexations is because they think too highly of themselves, and treat themselves as too important. They refuse to give in to others. If anything happens they have to be content with others, and if they are content with others, trouble follows. This is what we experience in our daily lives. If a man is willing to renounce himself completely, there can be no vexation for him as there is nothing left of himself. A man who is ready and willing to renounce himself completely, not only loves others as himself, but loves them more than

himself. He will not be vexed or annoyed. The whole life of Fr. Lebbe was like that: although everyday he was living a life of tension and hardship, yet one never saw him in anything but in a joyful mood" (John Niu's "Essay on the 14th anniversary of Fr. Lebbe's death")

In reality, these basic three activities of the spiritual life - total renunciation, true love others and constant joy, - are not only mutually related to one another, but they cannot be separated, and certainly should not be separated. If I offer some kind of a gift to a good friend of mine, I not only feel gladness in my heart, but I also have a smile on my face. "Offering" combines two sorts of activity that cannot be separated: "renunciation" for myself and "love" towards my good friend. At the same time, inseparable from the action of giving, there is a joy, which is both interior and exterior. If this is true when we give to human beings, how much more will it be when we give to God.

When Fr. Lebbe was alive, he used to direct the annual 10 day retreat of our Congregation and he would without fail allocate three full days for discussion of his "three principles". When he was talking about "total renunciation", he would also talk about "True love" and "Constant joy". Similarly when he talked about "True love", he would talk about the other two; or he would talk about the other two when explaining "constant joy". If some one heard it for the first time he would feel that the ideas were all mixed up and not at all clear. But if one studies the question carefully, he would realize that there was no other way to say it as they were truly inseparable. If any one of the three principles is isolated or considered apart from the others, it would lose its meaning.

I will give you an example to illustrate what I am saying: When the Sino-Japanese war broke out, Fr. Lebbe at once issued an order to the two congregations which he had founded himself-Little Brothers of St. John the Baptist and the Theresian sisters-requiring the members of the two congregations temporarily to stop part of their daily work so that some of the Brothers and Sisters could be made available for medical and relief work. He also proclaimed the phrase "We will drive the enemy out of our country or die in the attempt".

After Fr. Lebbe had issued this order, a friend who was not a member of the congregation said to him: "Are you crazy? Are you thinking of breaking up your two new-born congregations?" "Yes" answered Fr. Lebbe without hesitation "I'll use up the family and all the fortunes to relieve distress. (He was quoting a Chinese saying.) Using up fortune was "total renunciation"

and relieving distress to help the nation was "True love of men". By declaring that they would fight to death he showed his magnanimous spirit of "Constant joy" - "undisturbed by a hundred troubles"

Consider what Fr. Lebbe had to go through because of the campaign he had started for "Chinese dioceses". Because of this campaign, he had lost the favor of his superiors and lost the affectionate respect and support of his fellow brothers in the congregation he had entered. He even lost the honor of being the Vicar General. He was compelled to leave Tienstsin, which was such a promising place for apostolic work. He said sadly : "It is all finished!" Why did he want to do that? He did it for the Chinese people to be converted to Christ.

Neither did he lose heart nor take it in a negative way. He did not even complain against Heaven or blame other people. Instead he fought on actively and went boldly forward with a smile. All through out we could see that he marched "shedding each step" (total renunciation), "giving love at each step" (true love for men) and fighting to the end with enthusiasm (constant joy).

Not only in those two incidents, but in fact every spiritual activity, every apostolic task, all his social work was started and carried on in the spirit of the three characters - "total, true, constant".

Chapter 8

The Spirit Of Completeness

In the beginning when Fr. Lebbe used the three adjectives "total, true, constant" to represent the three phases of his spiritual principles, he did it because it was a clear, short and striking way to talk or to write. But later on with further insight and experience he discovered their special significance and completeness and the radical spirit that the gospel asks of us. He said: "Even bad people have partial sacrifice, self-interested love of others, and short-lived joyfulness. There is nothing marvelous about it. But "total" sacrifice, "true" sincere love of others, and "lasting" joy can be done only if one has the true spirit of Christ.

The impression of all those who met Fr. Lebbe was that he was a thin little man with a fiery spirit. He was a "powerful man" in a small body who faced the truth with determined will and penetrating mind. While speaking he used a great deal of strong expressions like: absolutely, completely, on no account, totally, truly, always. He upheld the truth in his words, work, and personal discipline. When he spoke, he was clear and distinct. Neither did he waver between two opinions nor sided with an idea that was to his advantage.

Innumerable times he taught us that the spirit of Jesus is a spirit of completeness. He told us that although Jesus' stern words "pull out your eye" "cut off your hands" were of symbolic nature, it shows us that Jesus' attitude towards a bad example. It is drastic, thorough-going and complete.

In the front entrance of the monastery of the Beatitude at Ankuo there was a big Chinese character "Ture" 10 feet high hung on the wall. Each time Fr. Lebbe interviewed a new postulant for our congregation, he invariably asked the new comer: "Did you see the big "True" on the wall?" And when he had answered "yes". Fr. Lebbe would tell him that he must be determined to be a "true" good a religious, and "truly" put the spirit of the Gospel into practice.

Fr. Lebbe very much disliked falsehood and insincerity. In his dealing with others, he would rather be criticized as "foolishly truthful" than treat any one with insincerity. Although he was modest and unassuming, he was very assertive and treated people and dealt with them with invariable honesty.

In the testament that he left to his followers, he uses a striking phrase "generous, unfeigned, true spiritual poverty". During his life time, when he instructed us on the question of "spiritual poverty", he did not use

the traditional term for it, but called it "true poverty". This term is similar to the phrase used by Vatican Council II concerning the vow of poverty taken by religious, emphasizing that it must be "effectual poverty". Fr. Lebbe did not approve the way many people explained spiritual poverty as "to love poverty in one's heart while living in abundance". He advocated "true poverty" as being as poor as Jesus was: i. e. having nothing at all except the necessities of life.

The old time hero Chu Kellian said: "Bend over wearily I serve to the limit; only after death will it be ended". Fr. Lebbe thought this was very noble and heroic, but did not go far enough. And so he changed it to "even after death it will not be ended". This radical spirit of his way of doing things makes one gasp with admiration.

In the monastery at Ankuo there was a peculiar sentence hanging on the wall: "I do not want to be a 'half-hung' saint". "Half-hung" is Huapei Chinese dialect which means half baked or incomplete. Fr. Lebbe often said: "I will not be satisfied to give 99 when I can give 100".

Soon after the Sino-Japanese war broke out, Peiping and Tientsin were invaded by the Japanese and the big newspapers were stopped. To remedy this "spiritual famine" of the people in the Ankuo area, Fr. Lebbe started printing a small paper, called "Daily Rearguard" at the monastery. He himself wrote the editorial each day called "A talk on each day". One day the subject was "What kind of a man is need today?" And the answer was direct and concise: "A man who can sacrifice everything!" The Chinese expression he used for "sacrifice" was "Huo-ch'u" which is a Huapei slang that is often used and is very forceful. It has now got into the Kuoyu Dictionary (p. 450, the Kuoyu New Dictionary, p.784) and is found in theatre librettos. Its meaning is: to sacrifice, to abandon, to go boldly forward without clinging to anything.

In that editorial he uses the expression "huo-ch'u" nearly a dozen times. He says: 'there is no longer any hope of peace between China and Japan and so we must sacrifice everything and fight a decisive battle with the Japanese as long as we have breath left in us....Fellow country men, we must be determined to sacrifice everything; for it is now a matter of life
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and death....fellow countrymen, arise! Sacrifice all you have to save our country. You sacrifice your all. You yours, I mine...we must give

everything else. We do not want our possessions, we have abandoned our joys, and if necessary we will lay down our lives. The final victory will certainly be ours."

He was so resolute and un-yielding, a man with a through going spirit. Even in day to day life his language was extreme as he spoke. Very often he said to us: "A man who will not sacrifice all that he has, better give up the idea of becoming a saint!" And when the country was in difficulty, his phrase "sacrifice everything" and "give up everything" carried a greater force.

SECTION TWO

TOTAL SACRIFICE

The first part of this book was a general discussion on Fr. Lebbe's three principles of spiritual life and a brief account of their origin and development. Although I have touched on their meaning and relationship to the spiritual life, it is neither thorough nor complete. I shall now discuss these three principles separately to enable the readers to obtain further understanding of their content and spirit and the right way to approach them.

Although Fr. Lebbe understood perfectly well that the center of spiritual life is "love", he often emphasized "true love of others" as the pivot of his three principles. Nevertheless when he was talking about these spiritual principles he seemed to give even more emphasis, both in quantity and quality of explanation, to "total sacrifice". That is why more importance was attached to "total sacrifice" in the above chapters with regard to the development of these principles.

Fr. Lebbe had his reasons for this approach. He said: "Not only is sacrifice an essential condition for loving the Lord and others, but sacrifice and love are also two aspects of the same activity and they are inseparable. Most people would explain "love" as "giving to others instead of possessing." "Giving to" means taking all that one has, whether it is spiritual or material possessions and giving it all for the benefit of other people. And that is indeed a "sacrifice." This is the reason why I shall be writing at greater length about "total sacrifice" than about "true love of others" or "Constant joy."

- Chapter 1. The Meaning Of Total Sacrifice
- Chapter 2. What Total Sacrifice Applies To
- Chapter 3. The Motives Of Total Sacrifice
- Chapter 4. Putting Total Sacrifice Into Practice

"Sacrifice" means to give up one's own for the sake of others. The basis meaning of the two Chinese characters: Hsi-sheng is objects offered to the gods (in China older people used to make offerings to Heaven; the Jews in the Old Testament days made sacrifices to God, mostly using cows or sheep. Therefore both these two Chinese characters include the character of "cow" in their construction.) The meaning of Hsi-sheng is also extended to include the action of offering to God. To put it in another way: when a sacrifice is offered to the gods, the sacrificial victim must be destroyed which meant that the people who offer the sacrifice incur some loss.

Later the word hsi-sheng got a wider meaning to include giving up one's own for the sake of others and giving up one's life for one's country. Fr. Lebbe's "Total sacrifice" is concerned with "giving up one's own for others." And he emphasized the term "Total" which has far reaching consequences. For example when talking about sacrifice to God, he said: "Total sacrifice is this: to desire nothing; look forward to nothing; wish nothing; beg for nothing except for God. And on sacrifice for others, he said: "In serving others, if we can give, we should not be satisfied with ninety, when we can give a hundred percent. Or in other words, when it comes to serving for the glory of God and the salvation of others, one must not holding anything back."

"Sacrifice is an offering" Fr. Lebbe said: "it is not a goal, it is merely a necessary condition for attaining the goal. If its aim is not the glory of God and the salvation of others, or has no connection with the aim, then it simply becomes an activity of no value. It becomes what ordinary people call a "pointless sacrifice."

Had Fr. Lebbe lived until Vatican Council II, he would certainly have used the term "offering" instead of the term "sacrifice". As is generally known, Vatican Council II has advocated an appropriate renewal and has used many positive terms, dropping the usual negative ways of speaking. And in fact this is in line with the spirit of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let us take sacrifice as an example: In earlier days it was usual to express making sacrifice in negative terms such as "destroy", "burnt offering", "get rid of self", "deny myself", "mortify" etc. Of course positive meanings were added when these terms were explained, but all the same when one heard or read those negative terms, one at once felt that they were difficult to be practiced. But when we use the term "offering" in order to explain sacrifice, it cannot give rise to such a negative feeling. Because "sacrifice

of myself" is included in the action of the offering. It is not a question of "destroying" or "mortifying", but "offering up oneself in service for the glory of God and the salvation of others. "Similarly in the gospel accounts of the poor widow (Mk. 12:41-44; Lk. 21: 1-4) we find that she sacrificed all that she had to live on, yet she was not destroyed. She "dropped" her offering into the temple treasury for an even better use. (to glorify God and save others.)

I am using the term "offering" to explain sacrifice in order to make the meaning of the "total sacrifice" clearer. I do not mean that 50 years ago, Fr. Lebbe did not explain it clearly, in fact he made it clearer by using other expressions. He said: "total sacrifice seems to be a negative kind of behavior, but in fact it is full of positive meaning. It means giving up what is insignificant and secondary to obtain things of greater value: "A grain of wheat is no more than a single grain unless it is dropped into the ground and dies. If it does die, it produces many grains. (Jn. 12:24)

Man is like a grain of wheat. Man's supernatural life is like that of an embryo. His earthly life is like the husk of the grain. The part of the grain that has to die is the husk and not the embryo. However when the husk dies and rots, it becomes the manure, and gives a positive service for the growth of the embryo. There are certain requirements for maintaining man's life here on earth, such as love, possessions, amusements, reputation, authority etc. They are only means to help us to obtain eternal life. We should make use of these things only as life requires them. But they are often harmful to eternal life (Mt. 16:26). The second Vatican document would say: "those human energies that the spirit of vanity and malice transforms into an instrument of sin" (Gaudium et Spes 37). So we must curb them. And this "curbing" often involves a lot of sacrifice on our part.

The total sacrifice that Fr. Lebbe spoke of is to take the whole of one's earthly life, without keeping anything back and offer it up to glorify God and save others, in order to obtain everlasting life.

Chapter 2

What Total Sacrifice Applies To

Fr. Lebbe wanted us to grasp the meaning of what total sacrifice involves in practice, and not just drift along in mere talk. So he divided the applications of its contents into lectures and explained them one by one. His method of classification was according to Scriptures and to the Church's traditional teaching.

We know from Scripture that the devil used kinds of traps to tempt Jesus: "turn stones into bread", "cast yourself down from the temple", and "covet riches" (Mt. 4:1-10). These three traps were designed and set up by the devil to fit three great passions. Jesus' beloved disciple, John, calls them, the sensual body, the lustful eye, pride in possessions." (1 Jn. 2:16) In the Church's tradition they are called "desire for material goods, (lust of the eyes)", "desire for bodily pleasure, (lust of the flesh)", and "vain glory (proud and luxurious life)"

The importance these three passions play in the lives of human being throughout human history has been emphasized not only by the Fathers, Doctors and theologians of the Church, but also by the poets, writers, and philosophers in general, such as Dante, Pascal, Goethe, the Russian novelist Dostoevski and many others.

All the insoluble contradictions, the tumults and the wickedness of the people in general can be included under these three headings: eagerness for wealth, desire for bodily pleasures and striving for power.

Although these three passions or carvings are not sin in themselves however "desire give birth to sin" (James 1:15) Moreover these carvings are an effective tool that the devil uses in tempting us to sin, and they are a bait with which worldly life traps our heart. We call them "powerful for sin."

That is why the Church from the earliest times has considered these three passions as matter for the "Purgative way" of ascetical life. And the three elements of religious life: poverty, chastity, and obedience are aimed at controlling these three great passions of human life.

Chastity gives the religious the responsibility of sacrificing bodily desires (renunciation of lust). Poverty is meant to restrain the desire for possessions (renunciation of material goods), taking away the right to use things, even so-called personal possessions, just as he likes. Obedience

restrains the desire for vain glory (renunciation of the will), so that we may not choose freely what work we do, may not strive for reputation or rank.

Jesus not only talked about the "doctrine of death to attachments", and the "grain of wheat dies..." but also more than once beat back the devil who was using the three sorts of desire to tempt him (Mt. 4:1-10). More over Jesus lived all His life with a pure heart, free of superfluous desires. The second Vatican Council uses the example of Christ to stimulate the members of the religious communities to fight against their passions and faithfully to keep their three vows. The Council says: "Religious should devote themselves in a special way to the Lord, imitating Christ, the Virgin and the poor man, who was obedient even to death. (Decree on Religious Life 1)

Therefore Fr. Lebbe also took the three passions as subject matter for total sacrifice. As I have already said, when he was directing our retreat, he gave a general account of "total sacrifice" on the fourth day and then for the next three days he would ask us to mediate and examine ourselves on the basis of the three passions. He took the renunciation of material goods (Spiritual poverty) to oppose the desire for possessions; renunciation of sexual pleasure and desire (chastity), and the renunciation of one's will (obedience) to control the desire for vain glory. Afterwards on the eighth day he made a synthesis, taking "complete death" to explain the highest level of "total sacrifice".

There are so many things that Fr. Lebbe said and did concerning the "governing of our three passions that it would be difficult to write them all down. In fact one may say that in every word and action, he was teaching us how to put the passions to death so that the life of God might be able to reach its full power in us. I shall now relate just a few examples of what he said in order to guide us in "governing the three passions".

1. Controlling the desire for possessions: To prevent our heart from being pulled by the desire for possessions, he established a norm for our use of material things. "Things: the fewer the better" and the less valuable they are, the more they are to be loved he said. And he did not allow us to say "my thing", we had to say "our thing".

Fr. Lebbe did not merely tell us in words as to how to control the desire for possessions and strictly practice spiritual poverty. But he also confirmed his words through his actions. He lived a frugal life at home, without any surplus goods. We could see him on his journey carrying just a small haversack in which there would be a Bible, a diary, a pocket

edition of the Four Books, a brush pen, and ink box made of hard wood, a towel, and a toothbrush.

2. Victory over bodily desires: Although the religious vow of chastity is called the renunciation of sexual pleasure, it is in fact control of not only the desire for sexual pleasure, but also every kind of desire for bodily enjoyment. St. John speaks of "carnal allurements, enticements for the eye" (1Jn. 2:16) and St. Paul writes that "those who live according to the flesh are intent on things of the flesh" (Rom. 8:5) and "We are debtors, then my brothers - but not to the flesh, so that we should live according to the flesh. If you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the spirit you put to death the evil deeds of the body, you will live. (Rom. 8:13-14)

As is generally known, Fr. Lebbe's personal life was outstanding for its degree of asceticism. His sacrifice of personal pleasure filled people with surprised admiration. Somebody once summed up his asceticism in this sentence: "In Fr. Lebbe's eyes, food and drink, heat and cold, fatigue and pain just don't exist. He was only concerned about the glory of God and the happiness of other people." He also wanted his disciples - the Little Brothers of St. John the Baptist, and the Theresian Sisters to live a life of mortification, giving up tobaccos wine and meat till the end of their days. He very often quoted the old Chinese Saying: "Born in hardship and trouble, die in peace and joy" to encourage his disciples to control their physical desires so that God could live in their hearts.

3. Restraining the desire for Vainglory: Fr. Lebbe considered the matter of this third kind of sacrifice, i. e. desire for vain glory more difficult to be controlled than the other two. But he said that if it could be subjugated, it would be very good for the development of one's spiritual life. To attract the attention of his disciples, in addition to using the oath of obedience to restrain the desire for Vainglory, he also brought up the idea of total death, to strengthen the power of the oath. The spirit of total death advocated by him required that we religious, in all questions of the work we do, or the places we go, let our superiors make the decision. The individual just obeys it unconditionally.

He not only spoke about total death, but practiced its spirit to an astonishing degree. Sixty years ago, although his superiors were dissatisfied with his extreme love for China and his advocacy of a Chinese episcopate, they could find no fault at all with his obedience.

In 1977, marking the centenary of his birth, The Vatican Congregation

for the propagation of Faith praised his spirit of obedience in these words "Fr. Lebbe exemplified perfect obedience to the Church. Cardinal Van Rossum, who was at that time head of the propaganda, praised this fervent apostle for the obedience he showed to his superiors." (port. 2278/77) Cardinal Van Rossum, speaking to Father Lebbe, once thanked him for his self-sacrifice and perfect obedience, which make it possible to establish a Chinese Episcopate 50 years earlier. (see Chinese Biography of Fr. Lebbe p. 366)

Chapter 3

The Motives Of Total Sacrifice

Only when we have understood the meaning of total sacrifice, shall we know the reason why we should act this way. Fr. Lebbe clearly stated many reasons for accepting and putting it into practice so that the people will understand its importance. I call this the motives of total sacrifice.

These motives were not systematically given by Fr. Lebbe at any one time or in the order in which I have listed them here below. They were given on various occasions. I have collected them and prayed over them.

1. Sacrifice is based on human nature: Everyone knows that Fr. Lebbe was not only familiar with the Bible and theology, but was well acquainted with philosophy and Chinese learning as well. Many a time he quoted well-known sentences from the Four Books to remind us that sacrificing irregular passion is something the human nature requires.

In the early days, he taught that the way of the Mean-control of one's passions, without prejudice or partiality, was the "basis" and the "way" for all on earth (Doctrine of Mean 1). Confucius too said: "The gentleman lives according to the doctrine of the Mean, but low down, man lives the opposite way. The gentleman lives according to it, because his passions are always kept in the middle, without extreme; but low down man lives the opposite way, because he has no restraints or scruples. (Doctrine of the Mean 2).

If we have a closer look into human history, and the life that we live today, we get a clear and definite impression that the happiness and tranquility of the individual and the order of society are in direct ratio to man's control of his passions. Similarly man's sufferings and the disturbances in society are in direct ratio to his indulging in his passions. It is not surprising that the philosophers say that all the insoluble contradictions of mankind's existence can be found to arise from free indulgence of the three desire, namely, for wealth, physical gratification, and vain glory. This clearly shows that the "Way of the Mean" i. e. keeping the passions under control, is an essential factor in man's natural moral rectitude. He who obeys this natural law will flourish and the others, who oppose it will perish.

Fr. Lebbe very much appreciated the words of Confucius about the

way of personal discipline - control oneself, and return respect (Analects. part 12). "Control oneself" is the same as Fr. Lebbe's "total sacrifice". As I have already said to you earlier, the "sacrifice" he talked about is not a negative renunciation and destruction, but it is offering up oneself to serve for God's glory and the salvation of men.

After saying "Control oneself", Confucius at once goes on to say "return to respect". This "return to respect" means fulfilling our obligations toward Heaven, towards other people and towards ourselves, which in other words is the same "true love of men" that Fr. Lebbe talks about. When Confucius says: "Control oneself and return to respect." that is benevolence. When Yen Yuan asks Confucius for details as to how to put this "control oneself, return respect" into practice, his answer was: "Whatever is not respectful or not according to proper behavior, must not be looked at, or listened to, or spoken, or done. Fr. Lebbe commenting on this, used to say that these phrases by Confucius are very clear and simple and need no explanation. What should be noted is that Confucius emphasizes that the reason for controlling oneself is to develop benevolence. In other words if one wants to become a benevolent person, one must learn to control oneself. Because of this Fr. Lebbe said that the total sacrifice is a basic condition for true love of men. It is based on the requirements of human nature and must be put into actual practice.

The Second Vatican Council also issued a similar statement: "The very dignity of man postulates that man... forbid his body to serve the evil inclination of his heart" (Gaudium et Spes 14)

2. Sacrifice is the road to salvation. Fr. Lebbe said that when sacrifice is looked at from the Christian point of view, it becomes even more important. He pointed out that as soon as Jesus came on this earth, he began to live a life of sacrifice, saying to his heavenly Father: "You wanted no sacrifice or oblation, you prepared a body for me... to obey your will, ...offering total sacrifice" (Hebrews 10:5 - 10). And in fact he was born in an icy cold cave outside Bethlehem (Lk. 2:4 - 7). After his birth, he was at once menaced by an evil king and so he had to flee to Egypt as a homeless exile (Mt. 2:13 - 14). Later in Nazareth, for 30 years he lived a poor, hard life (Lk. 2:5, Mt. 13:55) and then taught the gospel living in endless hardship. He was persecuted by hypocrites and finally died a bitter death on the cross.

To sum up, Christ's way to save the world and to enter into glory

was "through suffering (sacrifice). (Lk. 24:26) Our way to salvation cannot be different. For he has said it many many times with much emphasis: "If any one wants to be a follower of mine, he must take up his cross daily" (Lk. 9:23)

Everybody knows that "take up his cross" is a metaphor. The phrase mean: everyday, every hour, every instant we must sacrifice and renounce the unrighteous demands of our passions and do the will of God, constantly trusting in Christ, and following him of the end.

Christ marked out only one way for us to gain salvation (one sort of training for our soul) and that is the way leading to the source of salvation, the hard road to Calvary. At the end of that hard road is total sacrifice, and the fruit of the sacrifice is salvation - eternal life.

3. Sacrifice is the mother of success: Sacrifice is not only the way for the individual person to obtain salvation, but also is the foundation of the apostolate, i. e. bringing salvation to others. Several times Fr. Lebbe told us that the capital Jesus used for the great work of saving the world was not talent or money or authority, but it was his own sacrifice. Jesus said: "When I am lifted from the earth (sacrificing myself on the cross), I shall draw all to myself." (Jn 12:32)

Fr. Lebbe did this not only in words, but showed us by his actions. I do not deny the fact that the success of his life's work was due to his talents and ability, but it was mainly due to his spirit of sacrifice. I will not be exaggerating if I say "drop of blood for each step" was the way how he went along his road to success. In obedience to the command of Bishop Cheng of Hsuan Hua, once he gave a speech to the staff and students of the major seminary telling them the story of his struggles for the establishment of a Chinese episcopacy. The speech was called "a drop of blood in obedient revolution". No wonder that Cardinal Van Rossum said that the establishment of Chinese episcopacy was made possible by Fr. Lebbe's obedience and his complete self - sacrifice.

Lastly, let me quote a phrase from Mencius which Fr. Lebbe much appreciated. "When Heaven is going to give a man great responsibility, first he will be given sorrows for his heart, labor for his bones, hunger for his body, weariness for himself... and then he will know that he is born in hardship and trouble, to die in peace and joy. (Mencius, end of Kaotze section)

Chapter 4

Putting Total Sacrifice Into Practice

In order to accomplish a business, a job, work, or even a simple action, one must be able to fulfill three conditions: a) mental knowledge i. e. know clearly what is involved in the work and the importance of getting it done. b) decision of the will, i. e. he must be determined and draw up a plan and arrange to execute it. c) energy in action. i. e. set to work with diligence. Even though there are difficulties we must find ways and means to overcome them and press on to the goal.

The above sections on the meaning and the motives of total sacrifice were written to give the readers an accurate knowledge and the determination to carry it out. We will now speak as to how to carry it out.

In the Gospel, Jesus tells us in a straight forward way to how to complete one important job like entering into the kingdom of Heaven. He says: "None of those who cry out, 'Lord, Lord', will enter the kingdom of my Father in heaven but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven." (Mt. 7:21) He also says: "The Kingdom of God has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force." (Mt. 11:12)

Fr. Lebbe used to tell us that the "violent" are those who inspire of all the difficulties, act with energy and enthusiasm and get the job done. He took this idea of "violence" as a slogan for our congregation and wanted the members to cultivate a spirit of practical, energetic and hard work to accomplish any given job.

If any one asked Fr. Lebbe how one can accomplish a total sacrifice and become a saint, he would answer unhesitatingly: "Just one word - work". If they asked him to explain in more detail, he would say the same thing in another way: "Get down to it, then you will find the way; if you don't get down to it, there is no way."

There is a proverb that is often used and much appreciated by ordinary people today. "Actions move people more than words". So instead of writing at great length on what he said about total sacrifice, it will be better if I relate some of his actions for our consideration.

1. A drop of blood for each step: Fr. Lebbe said that since the life of Jesus was a life of sacrificial offering, we must follow him his footsteps along the hard road to "total sacrifice."

When he was exiled to Ningpo diocese, he wrote on September 18,

1917 a long letter to the bishop of Ningpo, Msgr, Raymond, a "constitution for the apostolate". In that letter he admits candidly that his life had been full of long and hard days. He says: "I have left blood on many brambles." (lettres du P. Lebbe p. 157) On July 16th of the same year he wrote a letter to his mother: "This blow - exile to Ningpo - is more painful than death....! I have shed the blood of my heart."

It can be said that the most serious of the happenings that caused him to "shed blood" was his exile to Ningpo. On other smaller occasions when he "dripped perspiration and shed blood: was when he understood as to what is involved in the spiritual and societal life. I have already said that all the spiritual activity, apostolic work and social work of Fr. Lebbe was conceived and carried out in the spirit of the three principles. It would be no exaggeration to say that his whole life, like that of Jesus, was lived with the sacrifice of "one drop of blood for each step".

I would narrate a small incident as an example: When Fr. Lebbe was sent back to Europe (he called it "banishment to Babylon") he sacrificed (offered up) all his energy in the serve of the Chinese students in France, Belgium and Switzerland. He used to be so busy helping the students, that he did not care for meals or rest. It often happened that he dozed off in the tram, or took a small nap waiting to give a speech. Once it happened that after giving a speech in Brussels, he was going to Liege for another meeting. He fell asleep and by the time he woke up, the train had already reached Achene in Germany. When he was in Europe working for the Chinese student, although he did not behave quite like the celebrated Yu of the Hsia dynasty who is said to have "passed the door of his home very often. One year he had promised his mother that he would come home for Christmas. On Christmas eve, he arrived home with three Chinese students. Entrusting these students to his mother's care he said: "Mother, I have too much work to do. I cannot spend Christmas with you. Therefore I have brought these students to take my place. His mother replied: "Freddy (his childhood name), I have entertained enough of your Chinese friends, Today I want to spend some time with you!" But Fr. Lebbe, sacrificing his comfort and the comfort of the loving care of his mother, went back to serve others.

Before Fr. Lebbe founded the congregation of the Little Brothers of St. John the Baptist, he used to like wine and tobacco. But on the day the Congregation was officially established, he gave up drinking and smoking, which are forbidden for the members of the congregation by our rule. He

once told someone that in the first months of this giving up, he often felt the urge for smoking. It was very hard to resist and this caused him such suffering. But he went ahead and sacrificed it for the glory of God and salvation of men. When ever this kind of sacrifices came up, he offered it to God.

2. Plough one patch, harvest one patch: sacrifice is painful in practice and not easy to carry out. Although Fr. Lebbe had thought of the ploughing (sacrifice) he had not calculated what the harvest might be. In order to encourage us to make, the necessary sacrifices with generosity, he often told us that no sacrifices is ever wasted. He not only motivated us for the sacrifices, but told us that the fruit of our sacrifices will bring salvation to others.

He pointed out that Christ said: "When I am lifted up (sacrificed on the cross) I shall draw all to myself." (Jn. 12:32) The first one to be converted was the thief who was crucified with him on the right hand and he was at once taken with Christ into Paradise - the Father's embrace. (Lk, 23:39 - 43) At the end "all the people who had gathered for the spectacle, went home beating their breasts". (Lk. 23:48) 50 days later, most of them - 3000 people - received baptism at the hands of the Apostles and became Christians.

Here is another story narrated by Fr. J. Leclercq, author of the French biography of Fr. Lebbe: One day when I asked him what important business made him hurry back from Louvain to Paris, his reply was he had made this journey to say good-bye to a Chinese student who was going back to China. When I asked him whether wasn't it a waste of time and money to travel so far just to say good-bye, his reply was that it was not a waste to save the soul of one person.

Fr. Lebbe also told us this story of sacrifice to save someone's soul: When he was in Europe working for the Chinese students, Mr. Lui Chia, one of the founders of the Sino-French association strongly opposed the Catholic Church and often wrote articles attacking Fr. Lebbe and his work for the Chinese students. Fr. Andre Boland, who was assisting Fr. Lebbe in his service of the students, asked Martha, a 14 year old girl who was suffering from cancer to offer her suffering for the conversion of Mr. Liu. She prayed to God and was ready to give her life for the conversion of Mr. Liu. Within minutes of her death the miracle took place. Mr. Liu told Fr. Boland that he wished to become a Christian and learn the teaching of the

Catholic Church. Before long he was familiar with the Church's Doctrine and received the gift of faith. He was baptized and received the name of Francis. Having finished his studies when he was returning to China, Fr. Lebbe gave him as a souvenir the picture of the girl who had offered her life for him.

Although this incident cannot be claimed as a miracle, we cannot say that it was a mere coincidence. But surely enough, the girl's sacrifice was not in vain.

Sacrificing the congregation! At what price? When the Sino-Japanese war broke out, the whole country was mobilized. Fr. Lebbe took a group of Little Brothers and Theresian Sisters along with several hundred Christians to the front line to take part in the war effort, by helping the wounded soldiers and giving assistance to the refugees. I remember that a year later when Fr. Lebbe came back from the Front to collect medical supplies for the wounded soldiers and relief supplies for the refugees, a few elderly and scrupulous brothers and some of his friends who were not members of the congregation did not agree with the un-precedented way he was taking part in the war. They asked him: "Fr. Lebbe, are you crazy? You have been working for a year at the front. What good has it done for the war? What use is it to the Church? How many people at the front have you baptized as yet? Are you not sacrificing two new-born congregations for nothing in return?" Fr. Lebbe replied frankly and with humility: "I admit that this action of mine looks a great blow to the two congregation I have just started. It is no small sacrifice for us to make. As far as we concerned, we are thinking only of ploughing the land without not calculating the harvest. I believe that this sacrifice will not have been in vain for the nation and the Church. The real value is not in the number of people we baptize but the number of wounded soldiers whose lives we have touched by our care and saved by our medical help.

3. A single planting but a hundredfold harvest: Fr. Lebbe also told us that God never allows us to outdo him in generosity. Whether in the natural or supernatural sphere, God seldom lets us experience "plough one patch, harvest one patch". It is always a single planting but a hundredfold harvest. Jesus in his parable of the grain of wheat did not say that a grain dies and then produces another grain, but that it dies and produces "many grains" (Jn. 12:24) He himself candidly stated that his sacrifice would draw "all to Him" (Jn. 12:32) St. John says that Christ's redeeming sacrifice

forgives not only our sins (those of a few people) but the sins of "the whole world" (1 Jn. 2:2)

Although Fr. Lebbe never during his life time worried about getting any personal recompense through his sacrifice, it seemed that God could not wait till the next world. He wanted other people to see right now the plentiful fruits of Fr. Lebbe's sacrifice. I shall relate a few examples:

Fr. Lebbe's tears of joy: In 1971 the people of free China enthusiastically commemorated the 60th anniversary of the Republic of China, the Chinese Bishop's Conference organized a great "thanksgiving meeting" to celebrate the occasion. The Holy Father appointed Cardinal Kim of Korea to attend the meeting as the papal delegate. In his address Cardinal Kim made special mention of Fr. Lebbe's presence in St. Peter's Rome at the ceremony of the consecration of the first 6 native Chinese bishops. Fr. Lebbe was shedding tears of joy and said: "This moment has wiped out of me the whole lifetime of suffering." Fr. Lebbe was happy that 20 or more years of sacrifice had not been in vain, but had produced a harvest of priceless value.

I am not now speaking of the results that had world wide consequence such as the establishment of Chinese dioceses which was the beginning of a new climate for the local Churches in Asia. I am talking about Fr. Lebbe's personal achievements.

As you all know, in order to promote the establishment of a local Church in China (Chinese dioceses) Fr. Lebbe had to battle single-handedly for more than 20 years. He was ready and willing to sacrifice his position and personal satisfaction. He was thinking only of the ploughing and not worrying about the harvest. He knew that God in his generosity would not let his sacrifices go in vain, but bear much fruit in the season. The Bible says: "Those who sow in tears shall reap with songs of joy." (Psalm 126:5)

October 28, 1926 was the day fixed for the consecration of the first 6 native Chinese bishops. The 6 future bishops were waiting in Rome for the consecration. Cardinal Van Rossum, the Prefect of the Congregation of the Propagation of Faith, began to get worried as there was no sign of Fr. Lebbe's coming to Rome for the occasion. When he knew for sure that he wasn't coming for the occasion, he said: "It doesn't matter even if no one else attends the ceremony, but Fr. Lebbe has to come". A telegram was sent to him with an urgent request to come for the ceremony. His reply was very simple: "Without the permission of my superiors I cannot come to

Rome to attend the ceremony." His superiors suddenly and unexpectedly went back on the orders they had given, and instead urged Fr. Lebbe to go to Rome at once. Later on, talking about his reaction he said: "As soon as I got the instruction, I shot off like an arrow to the Holy City."

At the consecration ceremony, Fr. Lebbe was given the front seat among the guests of honor. Recalling the event he told us: "As soon as the ceremony started, I felt that I was in a dreamland. It was as if I had ascended to Heaven. I cannot say that I saw nothing of the ceremony. My eyes were full of tears and so I could not see it clearly. There were moments when I was so excited, while there were also moments when I felt completely at ease and peaceful. I felt as if I were a little intoxicated. I was not aware of where I was. Although the ceremony went on for 4 hours, I felt that it was just for a few minutes. At the end of the ceremony it was a thrilling experience for me to see the new bishops with their episcopal regalia blessing the crowd. The people shouted at the top of their voice: "Long live the Chinese Bishop". The sound was like thunder which shook the basilica of St. Peter. It was for the first time that I saw the white race kneeling in front of the yellow race. My heart almost stopped beating. My eyes were filled with tears again and I couldn't see anything. Yes it was as though I was intoxicated."

"Suddenly I saw Mr. Stacts, who was sitting beside me nudged me (note: Mr. Stacts was a prominent Catholic in the banking world and had helped Fr. Lebbe with a large amount of money to help the Chinese students in France and Belgium). So I wiped my eyes. Oh! There was Cardinal Van Rossum right there standing in front of me. He grasped my hand firmly and said: "Fr. Lebbe, rejoice!" In answer to him, I quoted from the scripture: "Lord, now you may let your servant go in peace!" (Lk. 2:29). But the Cardinal hastily said: "No! No! You must go on living! There is still a great deal to be done."

Everywhere has students can be seen: (Chinese proverb: Peaches and plums everywhere under heaven): Due to the "Lao Hsi Kai affair, Fr. Lebbe had been sent back to Europe and was working in the service of the Chinese students in France and Belgium. He always acted according to the principle stated by Confucius: "In teaching, no discrimination". He did not discriminate between students on the basis of religion. Fr. Lebbe would open his purse to any students who need it whether he was a catholic or no religion at all. (quite a number of them were communists). Because of

this Fr. Lebbe sacrificed seven to eight years of precious time and used up his financial and spiritual resources; he accumulated a large debt at the bank and an incalculable debt of human kindness received from those who helped in the work. Although he received lots of satisfaction for his work through the gratitude and appreciation of some people, there were instances when he received all sorts of complaints and even hatred. And some of the communists even attacked Fr. Lebbe publicly in the newspaper saying: "Lebbe is not sincere in his intention."

Although he was saddened and discouraged with all this, he did not lose heart. On one occasion he held the crucifix in his hand and said: "Lord if it was not for your sake, I could not go on with this!" Then, with sorrow in his heart and a smile on his face, he continued working in the service of the students with greater energy..... This shows that he was ploughing and not calculating the harvest; however God did not allow his sacrifice to go to waste.

Now the sacrifice he made at that time is bearing fruits. There are more than 300 people well settled in different walks of life. We see them well placed in government, military and economic circles, in agriculture, in field of education. Two of the outstanding students who became famous in religious and educational circles are: Mr. Ying Chienli, chief secretary of Fu Jen University, and Mr. Chang Huai, principal of the College of Education. What was particularly rewarding and surprising is the fact that some of the communist students whom he had helped were converted and baptized and two of them even became priests.

Looking at the results, we find that his personal achievement was also considerable. Wherever he went, and no matter what trouble he was in, one or the other former student was always there to help him. When there was trouble for "I Shih Pao", the newspaper Fr. Lebbe founded, one of his former students, Dr. Sheng Pao T'ang came forward and took over the management thus saving the situation for Fr. Lebbe. And during the Sino-Japanese war, when Fr. Lebbe was at the front organizing medical help to the wounded soldiers, he needed a capable doctor to be the director of the mobile hospital. One of his former student, Dr. Hsiao Ch'i, hurried to Shenhsi and came forward to help him out. This was the case with other things too like food, transportation etc. Wherever he went with his team of medical aides and ambulance, people were there ready to help him. When he himself was ill, his students, Wang Sanyu, Chang Weip'ing

and Ma Shoucheng's were beside him personally taking care of him. And finally when he died in Dr. Ma Shoucheng's country villa on Mount Kolo, Chungch'ing, he was buried on Dr. Ma's land there.

One man labours, two thousand are converted to Christ: The 2nd Chinese native to become bishop of Ankuo diocese was John Wang (Wang Tsengyi). Once he said: "If one fervent hermit sweeps the floor (sacrifice) just once, it can bring salvation to one man's soul." Although this was said jokingly, nevertheless there is lot of truth in it. Here is the story from Fr. Lebbe's life as evidence of that truth:

In the autumn of 1931, the crops around Tik'ou and several other villages of Kaoyang country in the Ankuo diocese (Hopei Province) were severely damaged due to river flooding and so the autumn harvest was very poor. Nearly 10,000 people were affected and if no help was given in time it was doubtful whether they could be able to live through the winter. The villagers sent 5 representatives to visit Fr. Lebbe at Ankuo asking him to appeal to charitable organizations and kind hearted people for relief work. They also said that if they would get the necessary help during this period of difficulty, then they would all join the Catholic Church. However Fr. Lebbe replied: "I will certainly do all I can to help you get through the winter unharmed, whether you become catholic or not. Expect to hear the good news in 10 days time." Within a matter of one week, contributions started pouring in from all sides. The Huayang Assistance Society, a Charitable organization in Shanghai, sent up to 2000 silver "yuan" for the relief work. Thus the afflicted population of the Tikou got the much needed help to see them through the winter safety that year.

A month later 3 village chiefs from Tikou and neighboring villages came to see Fr. Lebbe along with some 10 delegates asking him to send the brothers to teach the catechism so that they could become Christians. Seeing their sincerity and fervor for religious instruction, Fr. Lebbe sent 10 Little Brothers and Theresian sisters to start separate classes for men, women and children in nine places in that area. Five months later, on the Feast of St. Joseph March 19, 1932, more than 2000 people were baptized there. This was the beginning of the parish of Tik'ou and the bishop sent Fr. Ch'ang Chuan to be the pastor. Five years later when the Sino-Japanese war broke out and Fr. Lebbe organized his medical work with 300 men, nearly 120 of them were men from the Tik'ou parish. The fruits of sacrifice offered can never be measured in figures.

SECTION THREE

TRUE LOVE OF OTHERS

Although I have said that when Fr. Lebbe was talking about his three principles of spiritual life, he seemed to give more emphasis to total sacrifice, he did not say that this principle was the most important. On the contrary he said that total sacrifice is only a condition and true love of others is the real center of spiritual life. It is true love that gives full meaning to total sacrifice. So we who knew him well, while surprised by his spirit of sacrifice, were astonished and were full of admiration at his love of God and of man especially the Chinese people. We can say that through out his 40 years of life in China, he followed the foot steps of Jesus holding the banner of love, proclaiming the message of love to all the Chinese people. His ambition was that one drop of blood shed for the sake of love should dye the waters of all the seas and the oceans into red; and just one grain of love's seed sown in the heart of a person, will produce a harvest of a hundred fold; and one spark of fire of love still set fire to the entire universe.

Rev. J. Leclercg, the French biographer of Fr. Lebbe, calls him a "man of God". This name is given with reference to love-for "God is love" (Jn. 1:4,8)

Although Fr. Lebbe said many things about love, his loving actions were far more educative than his words. For the sake of convenience, I do not propose to treat his words and actions in separate section, but shall include them in this.

- Chapter 1. What is "True Love Of Others"?
- Chapter 2. Give Love At Every Step
- Chapter 3. Unconditional Love Of Others
- Chapter 4. Naive Love Of Men
- Chapter 5. Heap Burning Coals On His Head

Chapter 1

What is "True Love Of Others"?

When somebody asked Fr. Lebbe what does true love mean or what are the characteristics of true love, his reply was: "True love of others means that everytime and in everything one prefers the other to oneself".

When he was writing to the seminarians of the Society of Auxiliary priests of the Missions about true love, he said: "All through our life, at all times and in all places, we must take care to put true love into practice, never missing the opportunity of sacrificing oneself for the sake of others. For example in the convent: leave the good things for others and the less good things for yourselves. When you go out and take the bus or train, let us offer our seat to others. when asked for any help, either material or spiritual, do everything that you can in order to help the other person."

On October 3, 1931, On the feast of St. Therese of Lisieux, Fr. Lebbe preached an eloquent and beautiful sermon during the High Mass and described the life of this saint in one sentence. He said: "Her life was guided by one spirit." This means that every act of her life showed forth her attitude of "sincere love of God and concern for others."

Soon after this, he hung a scroll on the wall of the lecture room in our monastery on which was written: "What is a saint? Someone who is all one spirit." He explained it like this: Every activity of human life, including the work we do, is not important in itself; what is important is that each activity should be an expression of our fervor towards God and our concern for others. When those who listened asked him "You are always saying" fervor towards God, concern for others. But we see that in your principles, you have left out love of God. He replied: "I do not mean that love of others is more important than love of God; I mean 'love God in others'. You must pay attention to the word "true". In the spiritual life, acts of charity done towards men without love of God are false. St. John says: "If someone says I love God yet hates his brother, he is a liar." (1 Jn. 4:20) So it is not the love of God, but love of others that Jesus said was to be the sign by which his disciples shall be known (Jn. 13:35). On the last judgement day, such love seems to be the only criterion by which we shall all be judged" (Mt. 25:35 - 45)

"Whatsoever you do to the least of my brothers, you did it to me." So said Jesus. The real meaning of the true love of men therefore is to love God in others, to love others for God.

Chapter 2

Give Love At Every Step

Earlier when I was writing about the "total sacrifice", I said that Fr. Lebbe's Life was "one drop of blood at each step." He offered up his whole life generously without keeping anything back. However by his offering, he was not destroying, but investing-making better and greater use of what is offered, i. e. he used it to give glory to God and save others. This is the love that Christ revealed, promoted and put into practice. So we can say that Fr. Lebbe imitated the life of Christ not merely "a drop of blood at every step", but "love given at every step." It was like a candle, which, while burning is not only consumed, but also gives light to the people around it, thus fulfilling its mission; or like a grain of salt, which when dissolved is lost, but makes a good taste, giving flavor to the food, or preserving the food. It was even more like the small quantity of yeast hidden away in three measures of flour-it disappears into the flour, but makes the dough rise (Mt. 13:33).

In the Beatitude Monastery at Ankuo, there was an elderly priest named Fr. Lee Yaojan, who was an invalid. He became a great friend of Fr. Lebbe when they were doing pastoral ministry together at Tienstsin. Now Fr. Lee was helping in the formation of the novices at the monastery. He often used to point out that Fr. Lebbe was like a bright lamp that attracts moths to itself; for wherever he went, not only we brothers, the Theresian sisters, the clergy of Ankuo diocese, the common people in that area, but also people from far away were drawn to him. Ankuo was a remote little village, but as soon as Fr. Lebbe reached there, it became famous. Important people of the Catholic Church and other Churches, intellectuals, learned men of international repute came to visit Fr. Lebbe regardless of the distance or hardship.

My question is why did they want to contact him? The most important of the many reasons is that Fr. Lebbe's spirit of "true love of men" had a great power of attraction. This does not mean that there were no people who disliked him or opposed him. Once Fr. Lebbe himself raised this question to a monsignor as to why some people dislike or oppose him. The reply was: "They say you love China too much."

Cardinal Costantini saw question very clearly. He says: "The Chinese are until now (the end of the Ching dynasty) a people enslaved by foreign

aggression. Are there many Catholic missionaries who have a word of sympathy or who stood up for these Chinese people? Or have opposed the foreign aggression? Yes there are very few of them and they can be counted on your fingers and Fr. Lebbe stands out head and shoulders above them all. The consequence of this was, that colleagues call these selected men sinners!"

When Cardinal Costantini first arrived in China, he was so surprised to notice the old missionaries, even a bishop among them, accusing Fr. Lebbe of serious sin by interfering "native politics" saying: "China should belong to the Chinese." In his book "Missionaries in China" the Cardinal writes: "Oh, my God! Do they really think China should belong to the foreigners? "Those people who were against Fr. Lebbe said that his particular love for China was a sort of narrow nationalism, or even said that he was abnormal. As a matter of fact, his love for China was wholly based on Christ's spirit of universal love. It was based on St. Paul's attitude: "I become all things to all men, that I may save some of them by any means possible." (1 Cor. 9:19 - 23); it was based on the "catholicity" of the Catholic Church.

Cardinal Costantini also wrote in his book "Last Leaves": "After I had been in China for a year, I could see that Fr. Lebbe was a man of God, a missionary of the same mould as St. Paul. "Fr. Lebbe had once said: "Had St. Paul remained a Jew, how could he have spread the Church far and wide? If I remain a European, I am just a stiff corpse! If one wants to save others, one must identify and become like them."

Cardinal Costantini was not the only one to show that every act of Fr. Lebbe's life arose from love and showed forth kindly love of all men (the Chinese virtue of Jen). We could quote innumerable people who bear witness to this quality of Fr. Lebbe. If I say that he "gave love at every step, every step was taken in love", I think it will not be an exaggeration!

Chapter 3

Unconditional Love For Others

Fr. Lebbe called the "true love of others" "unconditional love of others." In his opinion love of others with conditions attached is not love but love of oneself, which is selfish and empty love. It is the same as the commercial advertisement of the traders, who, no matter how much they boast of their loving service to the people, everyone knows the motivation of their service.

Jesus practiced and preached an unconditional love of others. He said: "If you love those who love you, what merit is there in that? Even sinners do as much!" (Mt. 5:46) "Whenever you give a lunch or dinner, do not invite your friends or brothers or relatives or wealthy neighbors. They might invite you in return and thus repay you. No when you have reception, invite beggars and the crippled, the lame and the blind. You should be pleased that they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid in the resurrection of the just." (Lk. 14:12 - 14)

Fr. Lebbe fixed unconditional love of others as the fundamental spirit which must animate the members of our congregation in our social service. (Translator's note: The Chinese verb to "save" used many a times in this book can mean both "save souls" and "give material help to those in need.) When Fr. Lebbe explained the phrase in our Rule "glorify God and save men", he would say to "save men" is to assist them without any condition whether they would join the Church or not. We must not let good people think that the social service we do has a price attached to it.

I shall without going further into the theoretical explanation of this unconditional love, tell some stories as to how Fr. Lebbe loved others without conditions, which I hope will be more interesting and effective.

In the section "Plough one patch, harvest one patch" I have already told the story about the representatives of the village who promised to become Catholics if they would receive the help needed through the period of their difficulties. I was present at that interview with the village delegates. When the delegation had left, I asked Fr. Lebbe why he had not accepted their promise as it would mean that we have the golden opportunity for so many conversions. His reply was: "When we give assistance to anyone, it should be done without any conditions. Conversion is God's work. But to make conversion a condition for the help that we

give will produce undesirable results.

Fr. Lebbe was anxious to serve the people without any expectation or reward. When the Sino-Japanese war broke out, Fr. Lebbe gave orders for the mobilization of all the members of his two congregations. Everybody had to stop his work to give himself wholeheartedly to the counter attack. He asked experts to come and train the Brothers in first aid and the techniques of ambulance work. He himself gave us an example of this by setting aside a part of his usual work and getting things organized to prepare for the medical work among the soldiers who were wounded in the war. He went to the provincial house in Paoting to ask General Feng Chihan, governor of Hopei province for detailed instruction as to how the brothers could go along with the army in the medical work. But due to the military restrictions, General Fens Chihan could not assist Fr. Lebbe who came back empty handed. In the month of August of the same year he got another opportunity to serve during the war. The 12th Division of the Third Central Army came north to the region of the counties of Chutting and Ankuo. With an introduction from the Commander of the 618th regiment, Fr. Lebbe went to the divisional Commander, Tanh Huaiyuan, and explained the reason for his visit. He was delighted with Fr. Lebbe's offered to assist the army to care for the wounded soldiers, because the army ambulance workers had deserted. The officer in charge of the medical affairs, Commander Ho then took document on "organization of sanitary units" to tell Fr. Lebbe the different ranks of ambulance workers and the amount of pay and the allowances according to their ranks. Fr. Lebbe said: "I do not want to look at these complicated documents. We do not want any ranks or positions or pay or allowance. We just want to serve." The two officers, who were prejudiced against the Catholic Church, hearing this were sure that he had ulterior motives or he was a fool. However 6 months later, Tang was so moved by the selfless service of Fr. Lebbe, and the "unconditional love of others" that with tears in his eyes he called Fr. Lebbe "Father of the 12th Division." I can guarantee that every act of love he did towards one or a group of people, was without any condition.

Chapter 4

Naive Love Of Men

It is a well known fact that through out his life he was so sincere and honest that he seemed to be too naive. With regard to his love for others, sometimes it seemed that he was too supernaturally motivated. For example he was so madly in love with China and the Chinese people that many of them remarked that he love China more than the Chinese do. The foreigners who opposed him mocked at him saying that he was "crazy", "a fool", "an idiot". Cardinal Costantini in his memoirs says that sometimes he was over enthusiastic in this regard.

When I first entered the Congregation of St. John the Baptist, I have heard people making fun of us calling our congregation a "congregation of fools." Their contention was that the Brothers were trained not by an intelligent person but by a "fool". I was only 17 or 18 years old and I had the subconscious feeling that reputation and good name were very important especially at the initial stages of any congregation. When I heard someone calling us the nick name for the first time, I went back to the monastery and complained bitterly to Fr. Lebbe. He had a hearty laugh at this. Then he said to me: "My child, I am sorry that I am not foolish enough when I compare myself with the foolishness of Jesus. And you brothers have not as yet entered the door of foolishness. Now that people call you fools, you really qualify to be a disciple of mine." When I heard this, I did not know whether to laugh or to cry as I was embarrassed. I was dumb founded. He went on to say: "My child, is there not an old saying in our country that great wisdom is close to folly? It is difficult to understand foolishness. I am afraid that at this stage you are unable to understand the meaning of this principle. Look at the action of Jesus. His whole life seemed to be foolish for the people of his time. Did not St. Paul rejoice that he had become a "fool for Christ" (1 Cor. 4:10) Society still needs a few fools who have backbone. If everybody drifts along following the crowd, taking the easy way, always thinking of his own advantages, they are incapable of giving up anything for the benefit of others or of serving the people. In this case human society would have ceased to exist long time ago."

There is a passage in the Book of Odes that says: "He sees clearly and is prudent, so that he can protect himself." Fr. Lebbe told me that

although he much appreciated the original meaning of this saying, he did not agree with the highly exaggerated way the people in the world "protect themselves."

When ever people came to him for some financial help. I would always caution him saying: "Be careful! Don't get cheated." But then his reply was always a quote from the Scripture: "Do not judge others." (Mt. 7:1) Once when I was certain that he was really cheated, I told him with self assurance that I knew that this would happen. He rubbed his whiskers, laughed and said: "You are only one third of my age and do you think that I have only very little experience? I have heard many a time your warning to not get cheated." "Do you not realize that were you cheated after all?" I asked. In reply he quoted St. Francis de Sales: "If you are afraid of being cheated, you will never be able to put charity into practice." He continued: "The essence of true love of others is to suffer the loss of ourselves and let others take advantage of us. Although the old saying teaches us to be cautious in dealing with others, we need to be on our guard and repair the damage if we get cheated. Nevertheless we should not be afraid of being cheated or else we are unable to do any charitable actions."

Although Fr. Lebbe was very humble, he often stated that he was a sincere and honest person. He said: "All my life I have treated people and managed affairs with complete honesty." His degree of honesty sometimes was very close to foolishness. He knew that people often talked about him as "foolishly honest". Yet, he was not willing to sacrifice his honesty. Bishop John Wang (nicknamed the King of Saints) once said: "I would rather people call me incapable of any virtue (fool) rather than call me one who is lacking in virtue (virtue of charity)." This sentence can easily be applied to Fr. Lebbe. For all those who knew him, or had any contact with him, knew of his "foolish honesty." We could go on narrating a number of stories to illustrate this. I would just narrate one incident: In 1936, I Shih Pao, the newspaper which Fr. Lebbe had founded had no manager. So he being the president of the board of directors, appointed Mr. Lee Tusan as the manager. As soon as this man took over, he started taking bribes, sold shares un-authorized and brought outsiders into the company which so far had had a very good reputation. When people began to see the malpractice of the manager, they were angry, and wrote letters to Fr. Lebbe to dismiss him. Fr. Lebbe travelled to Tientsin and held an enquiry. and found that all the allegations were correct. Mr. Lee at once apologized

and asked pardon for all the mistakes he had done and promised to reform his ways. Fr. Lebbe according to his principle forgave him and treated him with kindness.

Things continued the same way. Mr. Lee did not reform his dishonest ways. Foolishly honest Fr. Lebbe once more pardoned him and allowed him to continue as the manager. But when things began to get worse, he acted immediately and issued a statement dismissing him from the post. We find that although the people had warned him of the consequences, each time Fr. Lebbe forgave Mr. Lee. The words of the Scripture "Do not judge others" always was ringing in his heart. Fr. Raymond de Jaegher once made this comment about Fr. Lebbe: "He obstinately insisted on looking at the good side of people."

Chapter 5

Heap Burning Coals On His Head

The highest degree of true love of others is to love our enemies. This is the outstanding teaching of Christ. "Love your enemies, and pray for those who mistreat you." (Mt. 5:44) St. Paul explains it even more clearly and in a concrete way when he says: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him to drink; for by doing so, you will heap burning coals upon his head." (Rom. 12:20)

On this point, it was particularly noticeable that Fr. Lebbe was a man of God and deeply influenced by St. Paul. Although many times in his life he told us that he had not enemies, he did not deny the fact that many of the foreign missionaries in China were opposed to the orientation and methods of his apostolate, especially his campaign for Chinese episcopacy. It was debated issue even on an international level. He had no enmity to those who opposed this idea. He had no hatred towards those person, who saw things from a different perspective.

Among those who opposed him for the establishment of the Chinese episcopacy, there was one particular priest, who was strongly against it even after dioceses were established under the Chinese Bishops. He constantly criticized Fr. Lebbe in public and said that sooner or later these dioceses would disappear. In 1932 a French woman came to China for Christmas with the intention of joining the congregation of the Sisters of St. Theresa. When this priest heard this he was angry and full of pity for her; and even offered to pay her the necessary money required for her to go back. But this young woman undeterred by his offer, entered the Congregation took the name of Sr. Luke, and at the time of writing this book, is still an active Theresian sister in Taiwan. However Fr. Lebbe treated this priest with respect and honor and each time he went to Peiping, he would stop at his place and spent sometime with him.

In 1927, when Fr. Lebbe was allowed to return from Europe (Fr. Lebbe used to call Europe "Babylon") he called his former Chinese language teacher, Fr. Hou Chenhai to brush up his Chinese language. As they were talking, a foreign priest Father Yeh, who was a stranger, was then introduced to Fr. Lebbe by Fr. Hou. Fr. Yeh looked at Fr. Lebbe with surprise and then had a long conversation in French. It was the first time they ever had a heart to heart talk, Fr. Yeh's eyes were filled with tears and his lips

began to quiver he said: "I am sorry. I am not seeing the Father Lebbe I had heard about or wrote about, but I am seeing you in a totally different perspective. I am sure that you will forgive me for all that I wrote in the Bulletin de Peiping criticizing you for your campaign for setting up a Chinese episcopacy. Fr. Lebbe as though waking up from a dream took Fr. Yeh's hand and held it firmly and said: "In the past you had your reason for writing what you wrote. We had different opinions on certain issues, which should not come in the way of our being good friends." Both of them remind good friends till they died.

SECTION FOUR

CONSTANT JOY

"Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven." (Mt. 5:12)
"Rejoice in the Lord always! I say it again. Rejoice." (Phil. 4:4)

The third of the three principles taught by Fr. Lebbe is Constant Joy. Whenever I heard him speak of this last principle, I was more fascinated by this than by the other two. Unlike the first two principles, we are familiar with the word "happiness" and we all have a clear idea about it. However Fr. Lebbe made it clear that the first two principles were very important. He said: "Rejoicing is not a virtue but an overflow of the first two principles." Unless we have a deep spiritual life, it is not easy "to rejoice and be glad when we are persecuted." (Mt.5:11 - 12)

- Chapter 1. Meaning Of Constant Joy
- Chapter 2. The Basis Of Constant Joy
- Chapter 3. The Results Of Constant Joy
- Chapter 4. The Practice of Constant Joy

Chapter 1

Meaning Of Constant Joy

Although Fr. Lebbe was very intelligent and had extensive learning, he was not a scholar by nature. Whenever he gave speeches or wrote articles, he was more interested in picking up concrete ways to express his thoughts and feelings rather than going into systematic style, or analysis. When he explained "constant joy", he did not first define and distinguish the literal and practical meaning of "joy", but used simple words and ordinary language to express what he thought about it.

Fr. Lebbe said that when we talk about happiness what comes to his mind is that there are two meanings to it: One is the emotional happiness which may be due to bodily pleasure or emotional delight and excitement. The other meaning is optimism of the will, or we may say it is equilibrium and peace of heart. In the first meaning we find that the joy cannot be constant, because it is a question of feeling and so it is temporary. It is neither completely under our control, nor is it a part of ascetical formation. The other kind of joy is a matter of the will. And because of this we can remain calm and peaceful even in adverse circumstances. Even if numerous misfortunes come in one's way, it will not upset him. One can be fully in control of such joy. And it is this spirit and virtue we need to cultivate in our spiritual life. So when we speak of "Constant Joy" we refer to this kind of joy. It is to use a kind of "supernatural insight and look at the world and human life (especially the misfortunes in life) with a lively interest. Therefore constant joy is not merely a kind of passive enjoyment, but an active battle to get rid of various obstacles arising from human nature and open our hearts and souls to God so that his will can be done in us completely. As the psalmist says: "Lord, you give freedom to my heart; I will run in the way of your commands." (Psalm 118:32)

Fr. Lebbe said that the optimism in our heart should be expressed with a smiling face. A smile on our face, even though it is a forced one, can weaken the sadness we feel inside. Many a times, our smile strengthens and increases the atmosphere of joy in our group.

An attitude of constant joy can be achieved if you see joy in this way. It can be cultivated and developed. Even in adverse circumstances, we can control our feelings and make them quite and stable. On such circumstances, even a forced smile can reduce the mournfulness and

impatience in our feeling and can help us to look at the bright side of things with a spirit of enthusiasm. This is the meaning of constant joy.

I have already said that Fr. Lebbe used strong and extreme language when he spoke to express his hopes and desires. When he talked about constant joy he would use strong and striking language. One of the slogans that was posted just over the door of the main entrance of the hall of the Ankuo Monastery was: "Brother, what have you come here for? Just looking for trouble!" Every visitor who came there would notice it and wonder what this slogan meant. Fr. Lebbe would explain it with great enthusiasm and satisfaction: "Man's life inevitably contains lots of troubles, and often we want to avoid such situations. Things often do not go the way we want them to. Instead of going around all day with a gloomy face blaming and criticizing everyone including God, it is better to cheer up and welcome difficulties with an energetic spirit. In this way we would be able to solve the problems, or at least use them as capital to earn everlasting profit." He would also quote the words of St. Theresa of Avila who said "Aut pati aut mori" literally meaning "either suffer or die". The implication is that if you are not capable of suffering you might as well die.

Chapter 2

The Basis Of Constant Joy

Jesus said to the apostles: "If my joy is in you, your joy will be complete." (Jn. 15:11) In his epistle to the Philippians, several times St. Paul tells them to rejoice in the Lord (Phil. 3:1, 4) St. Paul himself rejoiced in the Lord. I do not quote texts from the Old Testament on joy in the Lord, as they are far too many.

In accordance with those words in the Bible, Fr. Lebbe used to teach us that the basis of constant joy is only in God, who is complete bliss, and only he can give us true and lasting peace and joy. Any other so-called happiness or good fortune etc. that comes from the human world is hollow and cannot be constant and durable. To make his point clearer, Fr. Lebbe would take the example of the round bottomed wooden dolls that always roll back to an upright position when they are knocked over. He said: "The center of gravity of these dolls is not in the head, or in the chest, or in the belly but it is in the deepest part below. Likewise, the power that should give stability to our life is not extensive knowledge (head) or emotional satisfaction (chest) or still less is it in sensual pleasure (belly). None of these, such as, human knowledge, reputation, authority, emotional satisfaction, physical pleasure etc. are complete or stable. They come and go as they are empty, shallow and momentary.

So the writer of the Old Testament book of Ecclesiastes considered that this world's knowledge, happiness, comfort, laughter, enjoyment of riches as transitory and empty, going after these is like chasing after the wind.

St. Paul seems to have more troubles and difficulties in his life than anyone else. He says: "With my many more labors and imprisonments, with far worse beatings and frequent brushes with death. Five times at the hands of the Jews I received forty lashes less one; three times I was beaten with rods; I was stoned once, shipwrecked three times; I passed a day and a night on the sea. I travelled continually, endangered by floods, robbers, my own people, the Gentiles; imperiled in the city, in the desert, at sea, by false brothers; enduring labor, hardship, many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst and frequent fasting, in cold and nakedness. Leaving other sufferings unmentioned, there is that daily tension pressing on me, my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak that I am not affected by it?" (2 Cor. 11:23 - 29) What is the cause of this? Because he found joy in

Christ. He say: "But those things I used to consider gain I have now reappraised as loss in the light of Christ. I have come to rate all as loss in the light of the surpassing knowledge of my Lord Jesus Christ. For his sake, I have forfeited everything; I have accounted all else rubbish so that Christ may be my wealth." (Phil. 3:8)

Fr. Lebbe had found from the Scripture that the Holy Spirit teaches us that wealth, honor, pleasure rank, position, or success should not be the source of one's happiness. In order to prove this point, he used to quote from the prophet Habakuk: "Fro though the fig tree blossom not nor fruit be on the vines, though the flocks disappear from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet will I rejoice in the Lord and exult in saving God." (Hab. 3:17 - 19)

The apostle St. Paul writes in the same way: "Therefore I am content with weakness, with mistreatment, with distress, with persecutions, and difficulties for the sake of Christ; for when I am powerless, it is then that I am strong." (2 Cor. 12:20)

As I have said earlier, the chief meaning of constant joy is to keep our heart and soul turned towards God even when we find ourselves in the midst of sufferings and trouble. Only then shall we experience the true peace and joy. This is what Jesus revealed to us when he said: "Blest are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of slander against you because of me. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is great in heaven; they persecuted the prophets before you in the same way." (Mt. 5:11 - 12)

Someone who was listening to his talk on the basis of constant joy said to him: "If anyone rejoices at his own suffering, then he must either be deceiving himself by putting up a show or else he is not living in reality, but in a dream. Can anyone satisfy one's hunger by painting the picture of food?" Fr. Lebbe replied: "It is like a farmer who works hard ploughing the field, sowing seed, taking the weeds out and so on. In spite of the hard work, he sings and his heart is happy as he thinks of the harvest. That is not an empty dream or self-deception, but a quite certain hope. In the same way, when we suffer for Christ's sake, he lets us feel the joy and enthusiasm because the reward is absolutely certain. For Christ guarantees: "Heaven and earth will pass away; my words will never pass away." (Mt. 24:25) So be sure that God is the basis of our joy, otherwise we cannot take firm hold of joy and it cannot be a lasting joy.

Chapter 3

The Results Of Constant Joy

Fr. Lebbe said that constant joy can make our own life more meaningful and complete. Our smiling face can make other people's life more agreeable. God is pleased with a joyful heart. Constant joy has many effects on our life, especially on our spiritual life. We can examine the results of constant joy from many different angles. Fr. Lebbe considered it under three heading; in relation with God, with others and with ourselves.

1. God loves a cheerful giver; When I was talking about the basis of constant joy, I said that the phrase, rejoice in the Lord occurs in many places in the Old and New Testament. It goes on to show that God is the true cause of our constant joy. We can also look at this from a different angle and say that our joy can also be pleasing to God, for "God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9:7) The psalms are full of these phrases such as: be glad, rejoice, exult, sing praises, cry out with joy to the Lord. "I rejoice and exult in you, I sing praise to your name, Most High." (Ps. 9:3); "My heart exults, my soul rejoices; my body too will rest securely." (Ps. 16:9); "Shout for joy to Yahweh..give thanks to Yahweh on lyre sing a new song in his honor." (Ps. 33:1 - 3); "Clap your hands, all you peoples acclaim God with shouts of joy." (Ps. 47:2); "Acclaim Yahweh, all the earth, serve Yahweh gladly, come into his presence with shouts of joy!" (Ps. 100:1 - 2); There are many other phrases like these urging us to be in constant joy. Fr. Lebbe used to tell us that the Psalms are the best prayers taught to man by the Holy Spirit. So we see how pleased the Blessed Trinity is with our constant joy.

In the New Testament St. Paul says: "Rejoice always, never cease praying, render constant thanks; such is Gods will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thess. 5:16) So we can see that God wants us to be constantly joyful, and feel contented with what God arranges. When St. Paul lists the "fruits of the Spirit.", he includes "joy and peace" which shows us that God likes to be in the company of people who are constantly joyful and not those that the gloomy.

2. A spring breeze amongst men: The second result of constant joy is that it makes the life of those around us easier and more agreeable. It is a very old custom in China to use "spring time" as a metaphor for a smiling

face. For example they say: "mountain spring time is like a smile"; or "a face covered with spring breeze." Just as the bright gentle light of spring relaxes and cheers the heart, so a smile makes the whole community happy and at ease. A gloomy or angry face is spoken of as "cold as frost and ice" or "atmosphere" in Chinese phrases. When St. Paul tells us that we must always rejoice, he at once explains the result when he says: "Then God's own peace, which is beyond all understanding will stand guard over your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:5 - 9)

In November 1967 a big Boy Scouts' Camp was organized at the beautiful Chengching Lake near Kaohsiung in South Taiwan. At the end of this camp a very meaningful "Boy Shouts Smile Club" was founded. Its guiding principles was: maintain always a kind attitude; show a smiling face; never lose one's temper; do not quarrel. This movement was to be extended as a way of serving society. Soon after, the girls working in the public buses promoted a similar slogan called "Smile Campaign." This was very effective as this campaign did make the passengers feel at ease and the movement gained widespread approval from the public. I am not able to say as to whether this kind of campaign is continuing or not. But as long as it continued the people appreciated it by returning a smile with another smile. Although Pope John Paul I held office only for 33 days, he left a great impression on the Church which had far-reaching influence on the world. There are people who say that he accomplished more in 33 days than what some popes did in 33 years. Although it is an exaggerated statement, it is nevertheless true that with his captivating smile he was able to draw the attention of the whole world. His smile was so contagious that the newspapers all over the world called him the "smiling pope." The reason why Fr. Lebbe was loved and honoured by the thousands of Chinese was his cheerfulness and his spirit of constant joy. It was the same reason why quite a number of the foreign missionaries who had earlier opposed him on the issue of the Chinese Bishops, later on became his friends. He once used this comparison to describe the relationship between constant joy and community life. He said: "A person who has constant joy in his heart and a constant smile on his face is like a bee making fragrant honey. Such a person makes the life of others happy and easy and he is welcomed wherever he goes. In contrast a person whose character is mournful, with a frowning and anxious face, and who is always grumbling, criticizing, complaining, finding fault, is like a fly spreading disease, making trouble,

annoying everyone he meets. People are happy when this person has gone away from them."

Fr. Lebbe speaking to the members of our congregation on constant joy and its influence on the community says: "No matter whether you are happy or unhappy; sick or healthy; treated badly or unjustly; no matter how many crosses God sends you, a Little brother must always rejoice and smile. We must remember that constant joy is a big virtue and involves great patience. While cultivating it, avoid frowning face and words of discouragement. Such talk and behavior is against charity. It spoils the moral atmosphere and lowers the people's spirit. It directly threatens the life of our community. In a beatitude monastery, such a person has no place."

3. Personal happiness: The third result of constant joy is that it makes the life of the individual more meaningful and fortunate. Fr. Lebbe said: "Human life cannot be without difficulties and troubles. When ordinary people meet with troubles, they always get sad at heart; frown and look unhappy; they draw back; lose hope and sometimes even despair. But those of us who have constant joy are different. We can use our will power to control our emotions and the expression on our face. We look on the bright side and go forward with an energetic spirit and perseverance. We are not defeated by anything but can find the way to push through the obstacles and find the path to success. He who meets with the difficulties with a spirit of constant joy has already won half the battle against them."

So we can say that the spirit of constant joy can make us free from being sad by difficulties. It can bring back our defeated courage, comfort our mournful feeling, stimulate our fallen spirits, and strengthen us in time of weaknesses. The book of Proverbs says: "Being cheerful keeps you healthy; it is slow death to be gloomy all the time." (Prov. 17:22) To sum up: Constant joy is a fountain of good fortune for the individual.

Chapter 4

The Practice Of Constant Joy

As I have already said, although Fr. Lebbe was an intelligent and learned man, he was not a scholar. He was a practical simple missionary without fear of hardship. He was not much bothered about the theoretical explanation of his principles. He showed them what constant joy is by his behavior and his attitude towards others according to the simple teaching of Holy Scripture. When he first raised this question of constant joy in a letter to Fr. Andre Boland, he stated very clearly that they did not need an excessive amount of learning to understand this principle of spiritual life but to pay special attention to carry it out day by day. He wrote: "You will say to me that this program of spiritual life is not very detailed and specific. It is quite enough to ensure that the work will bear much fruit which is enough to make a saint of someone of you. What is more important is to put this spirit into practice and apply it in every small detail. If you really look through it, you will find that the whole message of the Gospel is in fact contained in it." Fr. Lebbe always emphasized the practical application of the principles. His basic teaching was his own example as he would never ask anyone to do anything which he himself was unable to do. Let me give few examples to show just what I have written.

1. Keep smiling: Fr. Lebbe stated that a joyful heart and cheerful outlook should not only be expressed by a smiling face, but also is to be stimulated and brought to completion by our smile. He said that in psychology there are three principles gained from experience: a. thought that influences emotion, b. emotion that influences behavior, c. behavior that influences emotion and thought. According to this third principle, a. constant smile, even if it is forced, can weaken that mournfulness we have in our heart, giving rise to joyful feelings and stimulating us to energetic action.

He also said: "he who cannot smile is stupid, oppressing others and annoying himself, adding sadness to sadness and ill treating himself." When someone would ask him whether a forced smile is an artificial smile, he would reply: "No! It is the will controlling the emotions, an essential part of personal discipline. It is the art of smiling."

Fr. Lebbe not only advised others to keep smiling, had a smile on

his face all the time. He hardly ever had sadness on his face. People often had difficulties, they came back cheerful and happy due to his attitude although no concrete solution was found to their problems. This was possible because of his cheerful spirit and the smile on his face. He saw things in a detached way. Fr. Lebbe saying: "If someone meets difficulties with a spirit of constant joy, he has already won half the battle". This is proved true by the experience of those people.

Fr. Lebbe had enough troubles and trials in his life and suffered a lot during his life time. He also experienced interior suffering. He was very sensitive. When he was hurt, he reacted quickly and sometimes showed it by weeping. But he calmed down very quickly.

Not only did he tell us to use our wills to control our feeling, but also taught us a method to control our physical reaction too. He told us to keep the corner of the mouth raised and not to let it turn down. It is natural for the corner of the mouth to droop down when we are sorrowful. But if we deliberately control them and turn them upwards, we give other people the impression that we are smiling and we reduced the sad feelings we have inside.

2. Eat more: Fr. Lebbe said: "Most of the people get stomachache when they are faced with any difficulties or opposition thus showing that with asceticism and does not help to solve the problem they face. On the contrary it is bad for the health and for one's morale." He advised us that when things did not go as we wished, we should try to eat more. In support of this he quoted from the Bible: "wine to make us happy....Food to give us strength," (Ps. 104:15)

However, when Fr. Lebbe asked us to eat more, his basis understanding was symbolic. Any method that stimulates man's inner energy and increases enthusiasm can be utilized. In January 1917, due to his attitude towards the Laohsik'ai question, Fr. Lebbe was sent to Chingyun county by the Vicar General of the Tienstsin appointing him as the assistant parish priest of Chingyun parish. This was a low position for him as he had already been the Vicar General of the Chungyun area. As the parish priest was away, Fr. Lebbe took over the responsibility of the parish and the parish was soon full of life due to his untiring work.

Due to his missionary zeal and success, the local people wanted to acknowledge this in a public meeting with a felicitation. The Catholics were delighted at this. Everyone was enthusiastic and started to organize the

function. Unfortunately just two days before the function he got the order from his superiors to go to another place immediately. It was very hard for him to leave immediately as the people were organizing the function with all enthusiasm. It happened to be on Passion Sunday. After preaching a wonderful sermon, he went out on a bicycle to his destination with one catechist as though they were going for a ride. After they had reached a certain distance. Fr. Lebbe took Mr. Ho, the catechist to a good restaurant. They both had good meal and only then did he tell him that he was leaving the parish at the order of his superiors. After saying goodbye to Mr. Ho, Fr. Lebbe went to his new place.

3. Joy to make one forget the sorrow; In order to attain constant joy, Fr. Lebbe used to be cheerful even in times of sorrow. This does not mean that we should try to trick ourselves or pretend that we don't know the sufferings that we have. It simply means that we should have an optimistic outlook and energetic spirit to tackle and overcome such obstacles and difficulties and thus eliminate our gloominess. The quotation from Analects of Confucius says: "Through joy forget sorrow." One day Shekung asked Tzulou what kind of man Confucius was. He was unable to reply. Hearing enthusiasm (for learning) that I forget my sorrows, and forget that old age is coming."

All that Fr. Lebbe said and did not only reflected the Spirit of Christ, but was deeply influenced by the thought of Confucius. Everyday he read a part of the Four Books. So we can see the influence it had in his life. The basic principle of human life is to serve others, and to find one's greatest joy in serving others. In following this principle, one may have to forego one's own personal pleasures, and satisfaction. Fr. Leclercq in his biography of Fr. Lebbe says: "Food and drink, cold and heat, comfort and fatigue seem not to affect the life of Fr. Lebbe. His goal was the will of God and bringing salvation to others."

Some people who knew him well always remarked that "Fr. Lebbe never seems to be tired of his work." Fr. Lebbe himself said: "The world is so large, and there is so much work to be done. I don't want to waste a single minute or a second for myself. I do not mind to work for years as long as it is for others. Now I am 60 and I would like to live another 60 years working, doing something that has positive value all the time." (From his feeling on reaching the age of 60) This was the same feeling that Confucius had when he said: "Too busy that I forgot to eat; too cheerful

hat I forgot the sorrow; and did not realize that the old age was coming."

Fr. Lebbe felt that our cheerfulness to forgot sorrow needs to be motivated by our enthusiasm to do something positive. During the Sino-Japanese war in 1938, the Third army, to which Fr. Lebbe's ambulance brigade was attached, was surrounded in the Shiangtan and Wuhsiang area. All communications were cut off and they had to live on food that was available locally. The seriously wounded soldiers could not be transported to other areas for medical treatment as the approach roads were cut off by the enemy. Fr. Lebbe and I were called in by the commander Mr. Tseng. He explained the helplessness of the situation and asked us if there was anything that we could be done. In spite of the very difficult, Fr. Lebbe replied: "Don't worry. Sir, we will do everything we can." The commander sighed with relief and said: "All right, I give you full authority to deal with all the wounded as you think best." When the commander had left us, I was worried and scolded Fr. Lebbe and asked him as to how could he take such an impossible responsibility of caring for the wounded when we knew that nothing could be done. He replied: "The wounded soldiers are our life If we put our minds together, we can always find a way." "But father," I asked him: "Be practical. Is there anything we can do for these wounded soldier?" He replied: "Let us put our minds together to find a solution to this problem. Trust in God. He will show us the way. If we don't do anything, how will we ever find a way to solve it." "What if we don't find any solution to the problem?" I asked. He replied: "We shall all die with the wounded soldiers." As he replied I lowered my head in silence. Realizing that I was not at peace, Fr. Lebbe said: "When I came to this country, I learned two Important phrases that I shall not forget. They are: 'Stand with one's back to the water and fight' and Take up your stand in the most dangerous spot and safety will be behind you. You are worried because I said that we shall die with the wounded soldiers. We shall not only survive, but also shall live more vigorously. The reason is that when we are in mortal danger, we shall struggle harder to find a way to save the wounded soldiers." In a matter of a few days, there was a fierce battle and the roads were free. We were able to take the wounded soldiers to the nearby churches to be taken care of. I sighed of relief saying to myself: "So Fr. Lebbe really did find a solution after all." That was the first fruit of his spirit of joy to forget sorrow.

4. Music to control the heart: In Chinese the character for "yueh" in

"Yinyueh" meaning music is the same as the one we read in "le" in "hsile" meaning joy. The pronunciation is different but the character is the same. This shows that music and joy not only are related but also are the same matter. Harmonious sound that has a certain rhythm is called music and it is pleasing to the ears. Any other sound is just noise. In accordance with this idea, Fr. Lebbe taught us to use music to cultivate joyful feelings and a cheerful heart. He quoted the Book of Rites, saying: "Use music to control the heart." He also said that the purpose of music is to dispel our sadness.

I don't know whether Fr. Lebbe ever had any musical training. He was very talented. He could play many instruments, and read music. Many of the hymns that are sung by our two congregations were composed by him. The music he wrote was very moving. The hymn "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Come back to your God" in the great office for the three days of the Passover was composed by him, who ever hears it will surely be moved to tears.

Once when we were talking about our personal feelings, one Brother candidly said that whenever he felt gloomy or depressed, he would sing the Chinese "Hall Holy Queen", composed by Fr. Lebbe and his heart immediately felt cheerful and open.

There is a well known story in China about their hero Chu Koliang, who was in an empty city surrounded by soldiers led by Ssu-ma yi. Chu wanted to trick Ssu-ma to make him think that there were many of people in the city with no scarcity of water food etc. So he took his lute and went outside the city wall. He sat on the wall playing the lute cheerfully as relaxed as though he was full of confidence. Ssu-ma did not dare to attack the city as he saw someone so confidently relaxed and so he retreated. Chu succeeded because he was not only able to calculate Ssu-ma's psychological reaction, but capable of singing and playing in a calm and happy way in spite of the awareness of his danger.

Jesus tells us to "rejoice and be glad" when we are mistreated. (Mt. 5:11-12). He also teaches us to meet suffering with a joyful heart which will give joy to the suffering.

There are a number of occasions when Fr. Lebbe used music to control the heart. Whenever he met with any suffering, of difficult situation, the first thing he did was to raise his heart to God in prayer. After spending some time in the chapel, he would play the harmonium as

he prayed to get into a cheerful mood. Once I remember that he led us in a grand singing, which completely drove away the cloud of sadness that had been hanging over the monastery for three days. Such singing always brought back former atmosphere of concord and happiness.

Although Fr. Lebbe considered humility an important virtue and practiced it to a very high degree, charity was more important to him. There is a small incident that illustrate this. One year we had composed an ode to congratulate him on his birthday. As none of us could compose music for the same, we hesitatingly approached him and asked him to compose the music.' To make everyone happy and to increase mutual friendliness, he consented and composed a very attractive melody for it.

CONCLUSION

As I read this I feel that what I have written is empty compared to his life and examples. I beg of you, readers, forgiveness if you find no coherence in these pages. However you will surely find that Fr. Lebbe's three principles of spiritual life: Total sacrifice, true love of others and constant joy are certainly an excellent way to discipline oneself in the following of our Lord Jesus Christ. The words of the principles are brief, clear, easy to remember, and the content is rich enough to stimulate us.

The faults in my writing should in no way be an obstacle to grasp the inner meaning of these three great principles. They are the legacy that we have from Fr. Lebbe. Let us all strive to understand them and translate them into our lives. Fr. Lebbe said: "I am afraid that people will say that his summary of spiritual life is not detailed enough. But it is sufficient enough to understand put into practice. I think it is enough to make some one qualify for canonization. Now all we have to do is to put these principles into practice."