

# Faber Est Suae Quisque Fortunae

An Encyclical on the Value of Self-Responsibility  
Addressed By the Sovereign Pontiff  
TAU IOHANNES III  
to the Bishops, Priests, and Deacons  
Men and Women Religious, Lay Faithful,  
And All People Of Good Will

Peace, Health, and Apostolic Blessing.

## INTRODUCTION

1. I am the One Hundred and Twelfth direct successor to the Throne of St. John, the Beloved Disciple of our Master Jesus Christ, the Logos. I have received the Holy Spirit in Baptism and Confirmation; I have received the sacerdotal powers of the Priesthood of Melchizedek, and been elevated to its fullness by consecration to the Episcopacy; I have practiced many spiritual exercises for many long years, fanning my inner divine spark into a Sacred Flame; I have pursued the rigors of intellectual dianoia to the blossoming of that noetic apprehension we call Gnosis- and if you abdicate your spiritual responsibilities to me, you are a fool.

2. During the Feast of Pentecost, we celebrate the Birth of the Church, and the reception of the Holy Spirit- the Gift promised to the Church by the Master Jesus. This Indwelling aspect of the Holy Trinity grants each of us the ability, the power to commune directly with the Fullness of the Godhead. We need no intermediary to know the Will of the Divine, only the patience to listen, and the discipline to be responsible for ourselves.

## ON THE HIERARCHY

3. For this reason, the idea of a “Gnostic Pope” or Universal Gnostic Patriarch like unto the Bishop of Rome is absurd, flying in the face of the very teachings we transmit. The Throne of St. John ultimately is not singular. In essence, every Gnostic Bishop holds this Throne, symbolically representing by this very fact both the individuality of all Gnostic Christians of all times, and the multitudinous paths taken towards the goal of Reintegration; for as the Master has said “in my Father’s house there are many mansions.”

4. A Gnostic Bishop may no more claim sole spiritual authority over the entire spectrum of the Gnostic Christian Church, than can one individual Gnostic Christian claim spiritual authority over another. Were one so to attempt, it would indicate a serious lack of understanding of the very framework of our metaphysics and religion.

5. What then, is the role of the Gnostic Bishop? The Bishop guides. The Bishop teaches. The Bishop ensures the continuation of the Sacraments by the Ordination of new Priests and consecration of new Bishops.

6. Yes, the Bishop holds a special place in the Church as a successor to the Apostles, but that place is Magisterial rather than Imperial; Guiding, rather than Commanding; Encouraging the spiritual independence of others, rather than fostering dependence upon Church or person. The Bishop is responsible- both to him or herself for their own spiritual progression, and to the World in general and the Church in specific to be model, guide, administrator, and curator.

7. The notion developed by some of our ecclesiastical “cousins,” of the Episcopal hierarchy as “Princes of the Church” is preposterous and offensive to the liberating responsibility of the Sacred Flame of holy Gnosis. While certainly held in high esteem and a place of honor- it should be because of their excellence in pursuing their own spiritual quest while fulfilling the duties of their office- not merely because of the office itself, like some medieval feudal Lord.

8. As a Bishop within the Apostolic Succession, the Gnostic Bishop is a representative of Christ, and this role is not dependant upon the ability/piety/morality of the human holding the office. We must not, however, confuse the honor and respect due to the office, with any honor and respect due to the person holding the office. Where our dear cousins err, is to allow one to bleed over to the other, blurring the lines of distinction until it would seem that the person holding the office did so by some intrinsic right of his or her own.

9. When a Bishop feels they hold the office by right of their own deserving, they are in perilous danger of becoming their own demiurge.

10. All of this is not to say that the Gnostic Bishop or the Gnostic Christian Church is without authority- rather it is to delineate the difference between “Spiritual” and

“Ecclesiastical” authority. Much as there is a difference between “secular” and “Ecclesiastical” authority, each pertaining to its own sphere and subject matter.

11. Spiritual authority is held by the individual alone. It is sacred, and inviolate. The usurpation of another’s spiritual authority, even with consent, is tantamount to metaphysical rape. The gift of the Sacred Flame, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the gift of Free Will all call us to a life of radical spiritual self-responsibility, giving each of us a self-determination which places the joyful burden of spiritual authority squarely upon our own shoulders.

12. Ecclesiastical authority is given to the Church in general, and her custodians the Bishops in specific. Ecclesiastical/administrative authority ensures the continuation of the structure of the Church; it ensures the particular vehicle wherein individuals may pursue their individual quest for gnosis and the reintegration of their Being in accordance with the Divine Will.

13. In their Magisterial role, a Bishop may suggest, guide, advise, or instruct in a manner which directly relates to the spiritual responsibility and authority of another individual. Respecting the position of the Bishop, and their own progress along the path- seeing them as a guide who has gone before- should lead to the faithful, sincere, and contemplative consideration of all the Bishop has to say: but the ultimate choice/decision/responsibility lies ever with the individual.

## ON THE PRIESTHOOD

14. What we have been stressing above, by various terms and implications, is the doctrine of personal illumination: that each individual Gnostic obtains the salvific Gnosis directly and personally from the transcendent realm. This idea, central to the Gnostic system, has led many to question the role or need of "Priesthood" within the Gnostic Christian Church. This misunderstanding comes from viewing a Gnostic Priest as some sort of intermediary between the Individual and the Divine. While perhaps this is the role of other Christian Priests, the Gnostic understands the implications of the self-determined spiritual authority and responsibility.

15. Gnosis and the Sacred Flame lead to the personal conviction that one's own true nature is divine. This information, however, is meaningless to the person unless it is truly a deep "knowledge of the heart," as opposed to a purely intellectual belief or "faith." A Gnostic Priest is one who aids those in pursuit of this experience: as a source of theoretical and technical information, of spiritual guidance and reassurance, to answer their questions, resolve their doubts, and help them through their studies and meditations to come ultimately to the full personal realization of the Gnosis.

16. The real distinction between the clergy of the Gnostic and other Apostolic Christian systems is that the non-Gnostic priest attempts to take the part of Christ (by an extension of authority granted by the Bishop) in intervening on behalf of the individual, assuming upon himself the spiritual responsibility for the "flock," whereas it is the duty of the Gnostic Priest to assist the individual toward accomplishing this for him or herself.

17. This function is primarily through the regular and correct administration of the Sacraments of the Church. Those Rites which, when properly performed by one properly prepared and Ordained, are an effective means of interacting with what St. Gregory Palamas identified as the "Energies" of the divine.

18. Like the Bishop, the Gnostic Priest is responsible for his or her own spiritual progression, and through their own Quest, they find the means and examples whereby they may be a help to others upon their own paths.

19. In summary, the Gnostic Priest holds two main functions. The first is as a guide and assistant to others along the way. To fulfill this task, the Gnostic Priest draws upon his or her own Gnosis, understanding, experience, and resources. The second function is as a representative of the Apostolic Ecclesiastical authority of the Bishop in the administering of the Sacraments.

## ON THE LAITY

20. It is incumbent upon every human being to pursue his or her own spiritual development. Each individual holds personal responsibility for his or her own efforts in this endeavor.

21. This sense of responsibility is sadly lacking in today's world. Individuals rarely seem to take responsibility for themselves, for their actions or the results thereof- whether spiritual, personal, social, or political. This sense of responsibility will remain lacking in virtually all arenas until it is accepted in the spiritual. Once spiritual self-responsibility is taken, that self-determination will, perforce, extend to all other areas of personal influence and interaction.

22. In this modern age of liberty and information, when in most countries individuals live free from any fear of religious persecution and with ready access to teachings and practices both ancient and current, many are answering that call of the heart. Those who start on the Mystic Path are almost guaranteed to be able to progress farther and faster than our ancient predecessors were. We are, on the whole, healthier, wealthier, and have more leisure time for our spiritual pursuits.

23. Because of this, the model of the "worker priest," who maintains a secular job, has a family, and pursues a rich spiritual life as Gnostic clergy, is increasingly common. In fact, that many Gnostic Christian Parishes consist more of clergy than laity is in no way a fault- rather, it is an indication of this radical self-responsibility and spiritual authority at work.

24. As individuals progress farther along their own spiritual path, dialoging with their clergy as peers and co-workers, co-travelers- the more they become their own Gnostic Priest, ready to be that friendly guide for the next generation of Knowledge Seekers.

25. Is it expected that every lay Gnostic Christian will seek out ordination? No, of course not. Each individual chooses his or her own path, and how best to express it. Is it possible that each lay Gnostic Christian would seek out ordination? I would think so.

26. The Apostolic Johannite Church has recognized this growing recognition of the laity's own personal spiritual authority and responsibility, and responded to it by creating two "modes" of ordained Priesthood- private, and congregational.

27. Not every Gnostic who feels called to deepen their spirituality through sacerdotal ordination also feels called to be a leader of a community. Each person's path is different. The private members of the Priesthood exercise their sacramental ministry for themselves, and perhaps their loved-ones and close friends. Frequently they are also part of a larger faith-community where again their role is self-determined.

28. I suspect that eventually, as we continue to wake up to the requirements and potentials of our own spiritual authority and responsibility, there will be as many modes and methods of Gnostic Priesthood as there are Gnostics.

*Given in Cincinnati, at Saint John's, on 19 May, the Feast of Pentecost, in the year of our Lord 2002, the second of my Pontificate.*