

Catholic Church. Synodus
Episcoporum. Rome
The Ministerial. 1967
c.2 ACJ 1216

SYNOD OF BISHOPS

THE MINISTERIAL PRIESTHOOD



JUSTICE IN THE WORLD

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

SYNOD OF BISHOPS

THE MINISTERIAL PRIESTHOOD



JUSTICE IN THE WORLD

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

RESCRIPT
OF THE AUDIENCE GIVEN BY THE HOLY FATHER
TO THE CARDINAL SECRETARY OF STATE
30 NOVEMBER 1971

The Holy Father has carefully examined the two documents containing the proposals expressed by the Second General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the themes, "The Ministerial Priesthood" and "Justice in the World", which had been put before the Assembly for study.

As he has already announced in his address at the General Audience of 24 November, the Holy Father desires that the aforementioned documents be made public.

His Holiness now accepts and confirms all the conclusions in the two documents that conform to the current norms: in particular, he confirms that in the Latin Church there shall continue to be observed in its entirety, with God's help, the present discipline of priestly celibacy.

The Holy Father reserves to himself to examine carefully in due course whether the proposals—and which of them—contained in the recommendations of the Synodal Assembly should be convalidated as directive guidelines or practical norms.

JOHN CARDINAL VILLOT
Secretary of State

THE MINISTERIAL PRIESTHOOD



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2016

THE MINISTERIAL PRIESTHOOD

INTRODUCTION

In recent times, especially since the close of the Second Vatican Council, the Church is experiencing a profound movement of renewal, which all Christians should follow with great joy and with fidelity to the Gospel. The power of the Holy Spirit is present to illumine, strengthen and perfect our mission.

Every true renewal brings the Church undoubted benefits of great value. We well know that through the recent Council priests have been fired with new zeal and that they have contributed much to fostering this renewal by their daily solicitude. We have before our minds our many heroic brothers who, in fidelity of their ministry, live lives dedicated to God with joy, either among the peoples where the Church is subjected to a harsh yoke or in mission lands. At the same time, however, the renewal also entails difficulties, which are especially felt by all in the priesthood, whether bishops or priests.

We should all scrutinize the signs of the times in this age of renewal and interpret them in the light of the Gospel (cf. *GS* 4), in order that we may work together in distinguishing between spirits, to see if they come from God, lest ambiguity cloud the unity of the Church's mission or excessive uniformity hinder needed adaptation. Thus, by testing everything and holding fast to what is good, the present crisis can give occasion for an increase of faith.

In accordance with its importance, the Holy Father put forward the ministerial priesthood for discussion by this year's Synod. Before the Synod many episcopal conferences examined this theme together with priests and quite frequently with lay people. Some priests were also called to the Synod as "auditores", to assist the bishops in dealing with important questions.

We wish to fulfil our duty with the evangelical simplicity which befits

pastors who are serving the Church. Considering our responsibility before the fraternal community of the Church, we desire to strengthen the faith, uplift the hope and stimulate the love both of our brothers in the ministerial priesthood and of all the faithful. May our words bring solace to the People of God and the priests dedicated to their service and renew their joy!

DESCRIPTION OF THE SITUATION

1. The extent of the Church's mission was illustrated at length by the Second Vatican Council. Indeed, the Church's relationship with the world was the subject especially of the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. Many good results followed from a closer consideration of this matter: it is more clearly seen that salvation is not an abstract category outside, as it were, of history and time, but that it comes from God and ought to permeate the whole of man and the whole history of men and lead them freely to the Kingdom of God, so that at last " God may be all in all " (*1 Cor 15:28*).

However, as is understandable, difficulties have also arisen: some priests feel themselves estranged from the movements which permeate society and unable to solve the problems which touch men deeply. Often too the problems and troubles of priests derive from their having, in their pastoral and missionary care, to use methods which are now perhaps obsolete to meet the modern mentality. Serious problems and several questions then arise, especially from real difficulties which they experience in exercising their function and not—although this is sometimes the case—from an exasperated spirit of protest or from selfish personal concerns. Is it possible to exhort the laity as if from the outside? Is the Church sufficiently present to certain groups without the active presence of the priest? If the situation characteristic of a priest consists in segregation from secular life, is not the situation of the layman better? What is to be thought of the celibacy of Latin-rite priests in present-day circumstances, and of the personal spiritual life of the priest immersed in the world?

2. Many priests, experiencing within themselves the questionings that have arisen with the secularization of the world, feel the need to sanctify worldly activities by exercising them directly and bring the leaven of the Gospel into the midst of events. Similarly, the desire is developing of cooperating with the joint efforts of men to build up a more just and fraternal society. In a world in which almost all problems have political aspects, participation in politics and even in revolutionary activity is by some considered indispensable.

3. The Council emphasized the pre-eminence of the proclamation of the Gospel, which should lead through faith to the fullness of the celebration of the sacraments. But current thinking about the religious phenomenon fosters doubts in many minds concerning the sense of a sacramental and cultic ministry. Many priests not suffering from a personal identity crisis ask themselves another question: What methods should be used so that sacramental practice may be an expression of faith really affecting the whole of personal and social life, in order that Christian worship should not be wrongly reduced to a mere external ritualism?

Since priests are very concerned with the image of herself that the Church seems to present to the world, and at the same time are deeply conscious of the singular dignity of the human person, they desire to bring about a change within the Church herself in inter-personal relationships, in relations between person and institutions, and in the very structures of authority.

4. And still, relationships between bishops and priests and between priests themselves are growing more difficult by the very fact that the exercise of the ministry is becoming more diversified. Present-day society is divided into many groups with different disciplines, which call for differing skills and forms of apostolate. This gives rise to problems concerning brotherhood, union and consistency in the priestly ministry.

Happily the recent Council recalled the traditional and fruitful teaching on the common priesthood of the faithful (cf. *LG* 10). That, however, gives rise, as by a swing of the pendulum, to certain questions which seem to obscure the position of the priestly ministry in the Church and which deeply trouble the minds of some priests and faithful. Many activities which in the past were reserved to priests—for instance, catechetical work, administrative activity in the communities, and even liturgical activities—are today quite frequently carried out by lay people, while on the other hand many priests, for reasons already mentioned, are trying to involve themselves in the condition of life of lay persons. Hence a number of questions are being asked: Does the priestly ministry have any specific nature? Is this ministry necessary? Is the priesthood incapable of being lost? What does being a priest mean today? Would it not be enough to have for the service of the Christian communities presidents designated for the preservation of the common good, without sacramental ordination, and exercising their office for a fixed period?

5. Still more serious questions are posed, some of them as a result of exegetical and historical research, which show a crisis of confidence in the Church: Is the present-day Church too far removed from its origins to be able to proclaim the ancient Gospel credibly to modern man? Is it still possible to reach the reality of Christ after so many critical investigations? Are the essential structures of the early Church well enough known to us that they can and must be considered an invariable scheme for every age, including our own?

6. The above-mentioned questions, some of them new, others already long familiar but appearing in new forms today, cannot be understood outside of the whole context of modern culture, which has strong doubts about its meaning and value. New means of technology have stirred up a hope based excessively on enthusiasm and at the same time they have aroused profound anxiety. One rightly asks whether man will be capable of being master of his work and directing it towards progress.

Some, especially the young, despair of the meaning of this world and look for salvation in purely meditative systems and in artificial marginal paradises, abandoning the common striving of mankind.

Others dedicate themselves with ardent utopian hope devoid of reference to God to the attainment of some state of total liberation, and transfer the meaning of their whole personal lives from the present to the future.

There is therefore a profound cleavage between action and contemplation, work and recreation, culture and religion, and between the immanent and the transcendental aspects of human life.

Thus the world itself is obscurely awaiting a solution to this dilemma and is paving a way whereby the Church may go forward proclaiming the Gospel. Certainly, the only complete salvation offered to men is Christ himself, Son of God and Son of Man, who makes himself present in history through the Church. He joins inseparably together love for God and the love which God has until the end for men as they seek their way amid the shadows, and the value of human love whereby a man gives his life for his friends. In Christ, and only in him, do all of these become one whole, and in this synthesis the meaning of human life, both individual and social, shines forth. The mission of the Church, Christ's Body, far from being obsolete, is therefore rather of the highest relevance for the present and the future: the whole Church is the witness and effective sign of this union, especially through the priestly ministry. The minister's proper task

in the Church's midst is to render present, by the word and sacrament, the love of God in Christ for us, and at the same time to promote the fellowship of men with God and with each other. All this of course demands that we should all, especially those who perform the sacred office, strive to renew ourselves daily in accordance with the Gospel.

7. We know that there are some parts of the world in which that profound cultural change has hitherto been less felt, and that the questions raised above are not being asked everywhere, nor by all priests, nor in the same way. But since communications between men and peoples have today become more frequent and more speedy, we judge it good and opportune to examine these questions in the light of faith and to give humbly but in the strength of the Holy Spirit some principles for finding more concrete answers to them. Although this response must be applied differently according to the circumstances of each region, it will have the force of truth for all those faithful and priests who live in situations of greater tranquillity. Therefore, ardently desiring to strengthen the witness of faith, we fraternally urge all the faithful to strive to contemplate the Lord Jesus living in his Church and to realize that he wishes to work in a special way through his ministers; they will thus be convinced that the Christian community cannot fulfil its complete mission without the ministerial priesthood. Let priests be aware that their anxieties are truly shared by the bishops, and that the bishops desire to share them still more.

* * *

Moved by this desire, the Synod Fathers, in the spirit of the Gospel, following closely the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, and considering also the documents and addresses of the Supreme Pontiff Paul VI, intend to set forth briefly some principles of the Church's teaching on the ministerial priesthood which are at present more urgent, together with some guidelines for pastoral practice.

PART ONE
PRINCIPLES OF DOCTRINE

1. *Christ, Alpha and Omega.*

Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the Word, "whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world" (*Jn* 10:36), and who was marked with the seal of the fullness of the Holy Spirit (cf. *Lk* 4:1, 18-21; *Ac* 10:38), proclaimed to the world the Good News of reconciliation between God and men. His preaching as a prophet, confirmed by signs, reaches its summit in the paschal mystery, the supreme word of the divine love with which the Father addressed us. On the cross Jesus showed himself to the greatest possible extent to be the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep in order to gather them into that unity which depends on himself (cf. *Jn* 10:15ff.; 11:52). Exercising a supreme and unique priesthood by the offering of himself, he surpassed, by fulfilling them, all the ritual priesthoods and holocausts of the Old Testament and indeed of the pagans. In his sacrifice he took on himself the miseries and sacrifices of men of every age and also the efforts of those who suffer for the cause of justice or who are daily oppressed by misfortune. He took on himself the endeavours of those who abandon the world and attempt to reach God by asceticism and contemplation as well as the labours of those who sincerely devote their lives to a better present and future society. He bore the sins of us all on the cross; rising from the dead and being made Lord (cf. *Phil* 2:9-11), he reconciled us to God; and he laid the foundation of the people of the New Covenant, which is the Church.

He is the "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (*1 Tim* 2:5), "for in him were created all things" (*Col* 1:16; cf. *Jn* 1:3ff.) and everything is brought together under him, as head (cf. *Eph* 1:10). Since he is the image of the Father and manifestation of the unseen God (cf. *Col*

1:15), by emptying himself and by being raised up he brought us into the fellowship of the Holy Spirit which he lives with the Father.

When therefore we speak of the priesthood of Christ, we should have before our eyes a unique, incomparable reality, which includes the prophetic and royal office of the Incarnate Word of God.

So Jesus Christ signifies and manifests in many ways the presence and effectiveness of the anticipatory love of God. The Lord himself, constantly influencing the Church by his Spirit, stirs up and fosters the response of all those who offer themselves to this freely given love.

2. *Coming to Christ in the Church.*

The way to the person and mystery of Christ lies ever open in the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures understood in the living tradition of the Church. All the Scriptures, especially those of the New Testament, must be interpreted as intimately inter-linked and inter-related by their single inspiration. The books of the New Testament are not of such differing value that some of them can be reduced to mere late inventions.

A personal and immediate relationship with Christ in the Church should still for the faithful of today sustain their whole spiritual lives.

3. *The Church from Christ through the Apostles.*

The Church which he had declared would be built on Peter, Christ founded on the Apostles (cf. *LG* 18). In them are already manifested two aspects of the Church: in the Group of the Twelve Apostles there are already both fellowship in the Spirit and the origin of the hierarchical ministry (cf. *AG* 5). For that reason, the New Testament writings speak of the Church as founded on the Apostles (cf. *Rev* 21:14; *Mt* 16:18). This was concisely expressed by ancient tradition: "The Church from the Apostles, the Apostles from Christ, Christ from God"¹

The Church, which was founded on the Apostles and sent into the world and is a pilgrim there, was established to be a sacrament of the salvation which came to us from God in Christ. In her, Christ is present and operative for the world as a saviour, so that the love offered by

¹ TERTULLIAN, *De Praescr. Haer.* XXI, 4; cf. also I Letter of CLEMENT *Ad Cor.* XLII, 1-4; IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH *Ad Magn.* VI and passim; IRENAEUS *Adv. Haer.* 4, 21, 3; ORIGEN *De Princip.* IV, 2, 1; SERAPION, Bishop of Antioch, in EUSEBIUS *Hist. Eccl.* VI, 12.

God to men and their response meet. The Holy Spirit stirs up in and through the Church impulses of generous free will by which man participates in the very work of creation and redemption.

4. *The origin and nature of the hierarchical ministry.*

The Church, which through the gift of the Spirit is made up organically, participates in different ways in the functions of Christ as Priest, Prophet and King, in order to carry out her mission of salvation in his name and by his power, as a priestly people (cf. *LG* 10).

It is clear from the New Testament writings that an Apostle and a community of faithful united with one another by a mutual link under Christ as head and the influence of his Spirit belong to the original inalienable structure of the Church. The Twelve Apostles exercised their mission and functions, and “they not only had helpers in their ministry (cf. *Ac* 6:2-6; 11:30; 13:1; 14:23; 24:17; *1 Th* 5:12-13; *Phil* 1:1; *Col* 4:11 and passim), but also, in order that the mission assigned to them might continue after their death, they passed on to their immediate cooperators, as a kind of testament, the duty of perfecting and consolidating the work begun by themselves (*Ac* 20:25-27; *2 Tim* 4:6 taken together with *1 Tim* 5:22; *2 Tim* 2:2; *Tit* 1:5; Saint Clement of Rome to the Corinthians 44:3), charging them to attend to the whole flock in which the Holy Spirit placed them to shepherd the Church of God (cf. *Ac* 20:28). They appointed such men, and made provision that, when these men should die, other approved men would take up their ministry (cf. Saint Clement of Rome to the Corinthians 44:2)” (*LG* 20).

The letters of Saint Paul show that he was conscious of acting by Christ’s mission and mandate (cf. *2 Cor* 5:18ff.). The powers entrusted to the Apostle for the Churches were handed on to others insofar as they were communicable (cf. *2 Tim* 1:6), and these others were obliged to hand them on to yet others (cf. *Tit* 1:5).

This essential structure of the Church—consisting of a flock and of pastors appointed for this purpose (cf. *1 Pt* 5:1-4)—according to the Tradition of the Church herself was always and remains the norm. Precisely as a result of this structure, the Church can never remain closed in on herself and is always subject to Christ as her origin and head.

Among the various charisms and services, the priestly ministry of the New Testament, which continues Christ’s function as mediator, and which in essence and not merely in degree is distinct from the common priesthood of all the faithful (cf. *LG* 10), alone perpetuates the essential work

of the Apostles: by effectively proclaiming the Gospel, by gathering together and leading the community, by remitting sins, and especially by celebrating the Eucharist, it makes Christ, the head of the community, present in the exercise of his work of redeeming mankind and glorifying God perfectly.

Bishops and, on a subordinate level, priests, by virtue of the sacrament of Orders, which confers an anointing of the Holy Spirit and configures to Christ (cf. *PO* 2), become sharers in the functions of sanctifying, teaching and governing, and the exercise of these functions is determined more precisely by hierarchical communion (cf. *LG* 24, 27-28).

The priestly ministry reaches its summit in the celebration of the Eucharist, which is the source and centre of the Church's unity. Only a priest is able to act in the person of Christ in presiding over and effecting the sacrificial banquet wherein the People of God are associated with Christ's offering (cf. *LG* 28).

The priest is a sign of the divine anticipatory plan proclaimed and effective today in the Church. He makes Christ, the Saviour of all men, sacramentally present among his brothers and sisters, in both their personal and social lives. He is a guarantor both of the first proclamation of the Gospel for the gathering together of the Church and of the ceaseless renewal of the Church which has already been gathered together. If the Church lacks the presence and activity of the ministry which is received by the laying on of hands with prayer, she cannot have full certainty of her fidelity and of her visible continuity.

5. Permanence of the priesthood.

By the laying on of hands there is communicated a gift of the Holy Spirit which cannot be lost (cf. *2 Tim* 1:6). This reality configures the ordained minister to Christ the Priest, consecrates him (cf. *PO* 2) and makes him a sharer in Christ's mission under its two aspects of authority and service.

That authority does not belong to the minister as his own: it is a manifestation of the "exousia" (i.e. the power) of the Lord, by which the priest is an ambassador of Christ in the eschatological work of reconciliation (cf. *2 Cor* 5:18-20). He also assists the conversion of human freedom to God for the building up of the Christian community.

The lifelong permanence of this reality, which is a sign, and which is a teaching of the faith and is referred to in the Church's tradition as the priestly character, expresses the fact that Christ associated the Church with

himself in an irrevocable way for the salvation of the world, and that the Church dedicates herself to Christ in a definitive way for the carrying out of his work. The minister whose life bears the seal of the gift received through the sacrament of Orders reminds the Church that the gift of God is irrevocable. In the midst of the Christian community which, in spite of its defects, lives by the Spirit, he is a pledge of the salvific presence of Christ.

This special participation in Christ's priesthood does not disappear even if a priest for ecclesial or personal reasons is dispensed or removed from the exercise of his ministry.

6. For the service of fellowship.

Even if he exercises his ministry in a determined community, the priest nevertheless cannot be exclusively devoted to a particular group of faithful. His ministry always tends towards the unity of the whole Church and to the gathering together in her of all men. Each individual community of faithful needs fellowship with the bishop and the universal Church. In this way the priestly ministry too is essentially communitarian within the presbyterium and with the bishop who, preserving communion with the Successor of Peter, is a part of the body of bishops. This holds also for priests who are not in the immediate service of any community or who work in remote and isolated territories. Religious priests also, within the context of the special purpose and structure of their institute, are indissolubly part of a mission which is ecclesially ordered.

Let the whole life and activity of the priest be imbued with a spirit of catholicity, that is, with a sense of the universal mission of the Church, so that he will willingly recognize all the gifts of the Spirit, give them freedom and direct them towards the common good.

Let priests follow Christ's example and cultivate with the bishop and with each other that brotherhood which is founded on their ordination and the oneness of their mission so that their priestly witness may be more credible.

7. The priest and temporal matters.

All truly Christian undertakings are related to the salvation of mankind, which, while it is of an eschatological nature, also embraces temporal matters. Every reality of this world must be subjected to the lordship of Christ. This however does not mean that the Church claims technical competence in the secular order, with disregard for the latter's autonomy.

The proper mission entrusted by Christ to the priest, as to the Church, is not of the political, economic or social order, but of the religious order (cf. *GS* 42); yet, in the pursuit of his ministry, the priest can contribute greatly to the establishment of a more just secular order, especially in places where the human problems of injustice and oppression are more serious. He must always, however, preserve ecclesial communion and reject violence in words or deeds as not being in accordance with the Gospel.

In fact, the word of the Gospel which he proclaims in the name of Christ and the Church, and the effective grace of sacramental life which he administers should free man from his personal and social egoism and foster among men conditions of justice, which would be a sign of the love of Christ present among us (cf. *GS* 58).

PART TWO

GUIDELINES FOR THE PRIESTLY LIFE AND MINISTRY

Considering the priestly mission in the light of the mystery of Christ and the communion of the Church, the Fathers of this Synod, united with the Roman Pontiff and conscious of the anxieties which bishops and priests are experiencing in the fulfilment of their common role today, present the following guidelines to clarify certain questions and to give encouragement.

I. PRIESTS IN THE MISSION OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

1. *Mission: Evangelization and sacramental life.*

a) "By their vocation and ordination, the priests of the New Testament are indeed set apart in a certain sense within the midst of God's people. But this is so, not that they may be made distant from this people or from any man, but that they may be totally dedicated to the work for which the Lord has raised them up" (PO 3). Priests thus find their identity to the extent that they fully live the mission of the Church and exercise it in different ways in communion with the entire People of God, as pastors and ministers of the Lord in the Spirit, in order to fulfil by their work the plan of salvation in history. "By means of their own ministry, which deals principally with the Eucharist as the source of perfecting the Church, priests are in communion with Christ the Head and are leading others to this communion. Hence they cannot help realizing how much is yet wanting to the fullness of that Body, and how much therefore must be done if it is to grow from day to day" (AG 39).

b) Priests are sent to all men and their mission must begin with the preaching of God's Word. "Priests have as their duty the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ to all ... For through the saving Word the spark of faith is struck in the hearts of unbelievers and fed in the hearts of the faithful" (PO 4). The goal of evangelization is "that all who are made

sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of his Church, to take part in her sacrifice and to eat the Lord's supper " (SC 10). The ministry of the Word, if rightly understood, leads to the sacraments and to the Christian life, as it is practised in the visible community of the Church and in the world.

The sacraments are celebrated in conjunction with the proclamation of the Word of God and thus develop faith by strengthening it with grace. They cannot be considered of slight importance, since through them the word is brought to fuller effect, namely communion in the mystery of Christ.

Let priests then perform their ministry in such a way that the faithful will " have recourse with great eagerness to the sacraments which were instituted to nourish the Christian life " (SC 59).

An enduring evangelization and a well-ordered sacramental life of the community demand, by their nature, a *diaconia* of authority, that is, a serving of unity and a presiding over charity. Thus the mutual relationship between evangelization and the celebration of the sacraments is clearly seen in the mission of the Church. A separation between the two would divide the heart of the Church to the point of imperilling the faith, and the priest, who is dedicated to the service of unity in the community, would be gravely distorting his ministry.

Unity between evangelization and sacramental life is always proper to the ministerial priesthood and must carefully be kept in mind by every priest. And yet the application of this principle to the life and ministry of individual priests must be made with discretion, for the exercise of the priestly ministry often in practice needs to take different forms in order better to meet special or new situations in which the Gospel is to be proclaimed.

c) Although the pedagogy of faith demands that man be gradually initiated into the Christian life, the Church must nevertheless always proclaim to the world the Gospel in its entirety. Each priest shares in the special responsibility of preaching the whole of the Word of God and of interpreting it according to the faith of the Church.

The proclamation of the Word of God is the announcement in the power of the Spirit of the wonders performed by God and the calling of men to share the paschal mystery and to introduce it as a leaven into concrete human history. It is the action of God in which the power of the

Holy Spirit brings the Church together interiorly and exteriorly. The minister of the word by evangelization prepares the ways of the Lord with great patience and faith, conforming himself to the various conditions of individuals' and peoples' lives, which are evolving more or less rapidly.

Impelled by the need to keep in view both the personal and social aspects of the announcement of the Gospel, so that in it an answer may be given to all the more fundamental questions of men (cf. *CD* 13), the Church not only preaches conversion to God to individual men, but also, to the best of her ability, as the conscience of humanity, she addresses society itself and performs a prophetic function in society's regard, always taking pains to effect her own renewal.

As regards the experiences of life, whether of men in general or of priests, which must be kept in mind and always interpreted in the light of the Gospel, these experiences cannot be either the sole or the principal norm of preaching.

d) Salvation, which is effected through the sacraments, does not come from us but from God; this demonstrates the primacy of action of Christ, the one priest and mediator, in his body, which is the Church.

Since the sacraments are truly sacraments of faith (cf. *SC* 59), they require conscious and free participation by every Christian who has the use of reason. This makes clear the great importance of preparation and of a disposition of faith on the part of the person who receives the sacraments; it also makes clear the necessity for a witness of faith on the part of the minister in his entire life and especially in the way he values and celebrates the sacraments themselves.

To bishops and, in the cases foreseen by law, to episcopal conferences is committed the role of authentically promoting, in accordance with the norms given by the Holy See, pastoral activity and liturgical renewal better adapted to each region, and also of determining the criteria for admission to the sacraments. These criteria, which must be applied by priests, are likewise to be explained to the faithful, so that a person who asks for a sacrament may become more aware of his own responsibility.

Let priests, with consciousness of their office of reconciling all men in the love of Christ and with attention to the dangers of divisions, strive with great prudence and pastoral charity to form communities which are imbued with apostolic zeal and which will make the Church's missionary spirit present everywhere. Small communities, which are not opposed to

the parish or diocesan structure, ought to be inserted into the parochial or diocesan community in such a way that they may serve it as a leaven of missionary spirit. The need to find apt forms of effectively bringing the Gospel message to all men, who live in differing circumstances, furnishes a place for the multiple exercise of ministries lower than the priesthood.

2. *Secular and political activity.*

a) The priestly ministry, even if compared with other activities, not only is to be considered as a fully valid human activity but indeed as more excellent than other activities, though this great value can be fully understood only in the light of faith. Thus, as a general rule, the priestly ministry shall be a full-time occupation. Sharing in the secular activities of men is by no means to be considered the principal end nor can such participation suffice to give expression to priests' specific responsibility. Priests, without being of the world and without taking it as their model, must nevertheless live in the world (cf. *PO* 3, 17; *Jn* 17:14-16), as witnesses and stewards of another life (cf. *PO* 3).

In order to determine in concrete circumstances whether secular activity is in accord with the priestly ministry, inquiry should be made whether and in what way those duties and activities serve the mission of the Church, those who have not yet received the Gospel message and finally the Christian community. This is to be judged by the local bishop with his presbyterium, and if necessary in consultation with the episcopal conference.

When activities of this sort, which ordinarily pertain to the laity, are as it were demanded by the priest's very mission to evangelize, they must be harmonized with his other ministerial activities, in those circumstances where they can be considered as necessary forms of true ministry (cf. *PO* 8).

b) Together with the entire Church, priests are obliged, to the utmost of their ability, to select a definite pattern of action, when it is a question of the defence of fundamental human rights, the promotion of the full development of persons and the pursuit of the cause of peace and justice; the means must indeed always be consonant with the Gospel. These principles are all valid not only in the individual sphere, but also in the social field; in this regard priests should help the laity to devote themselves to forming their consciences rightly.

In circumstances in which there legitimately exist different political, social and economic options, priests like all citizens have a right to select

their personal options. But since political options are by nature contingent and never in an entirely adequate and perennial way interpret the Gospel, the priest, who is the witness of things to come, must keep a certain distance from any political office or involvement.

In order that he may remain a valid sign of unity and be able to preach the Gospel in its entirety, the priest can sometimes be obliged to abstain from the exercise of his own right in this matter. Moreover, care must be taken lest his option appear to Christians to be the only legitimate one or become a cause of division among the faithful. Let priests be mindful of the laity's maturity, which is to be valued highly when it is a question of their specific role.

Leadership or active militancy on behalf of any political party is to be excluded by every priest unless, in concrete and exceptional circumstances, this is truly required by the good of the community, and receives the consent of the bishop after consultation with the priests' council and, if circumstances call for it, with the episcopal conference.

The priority of the specific mission which pervades the entire priestly existence must therefore always be kept in mind so that, with great confidence, and having a renewed experience of the things of God, priests may be able to announce these things efficaciously and with joy to the men who await them.

3. *The spiritual life of priests.*

Every priest will find in his very vocation and ministry the deep motivation for living his entire life in oneness and strength of spirit. Called like the rest of those who have been baptized to become a true image of Christ (cf. *Rom* 8:29), the priest, like the Apostles, shares besides in a special way companionship with Christ and his mission as the Supreme Pastor: "And he appointed twelve; they were to be his companions and to be sent out to preach" (*Mk* 3:14). Therefore in the priestly life there can be no dichotomy between love for Christ and zeal for souls.

Just as Christ, anointed by the Holy Spirit, was impelled by his deep love for his Father to give his life for men, so the priest, consecrated by the Holy Spirit, and in a special way made like to Christ the Priest, dedicates himself to the work of the Father performed through the Son. Thus the whole rule for the priest's life is expressed in the words of Jesus: "And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be consecrated in truth" (*Jn* 17:19).

Following the example of Christ who was continually in prayer, and led by the Holy Spirit in whom we cry, "Abba, Father," priests should give themselves to the contemplation of the Word of God and daily take the opportunity to examine the events of life in the light of the Gospel, so that having become faithful and attentive hearers of the Word they may become true ministers of the Word. Let them be assiduous in personal prayer, in the Liturgy of the Hours, in frequent reception of the sacrament of penance and especially in devotion to the mystery of the Eucharist. Even if the Eucharist should be celebrated without participation by the faithful, it nevertheless remains the centre of the life of the entire Church and the heart of priestly existence.

With his mind raised to heaven and sharing in the communion of saints, the priest should very often turn to Mary the Mother of God, who received the Word of God with perfect faith, and daily ask her for the grace of conforming himself to her Son.

The activities of the apostolate for their part furnish an indispensable nourishment for fostering the spiritual life of the priest: "By assuming the role of the Good Shepherd, they will find precisely in the pastoral exercise of love the bond of priestly perfection which will unify their lives and activities" (PO 14). In the exercise of his ministry the priest is enlightened and strengthened by the action of the Church and the example of the faithful. The renunciations imposed by the pastoral life itself help him to acquire an ever greater sharing in Christ's Cross and hence a purer pastoral charity.

This same charity of priests will also cause them to adapt their spiritual lives to the modes and forms of sanctification which are more suitable and fitting for the men of their own times and culture. Desiring to be all things to all men, to save all (cf. 1 Cor 9: 22), the priest should be attentive to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in these days. Thus he will announce the Word of God not only by human means but he will be taken as a valid instrument by the Word himself, whose message is "living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb 4: 12).

4. Celibacy.

a) The basis for celibacy.

Celibacy for priests is in full harmony with the vocation to the apostolic following of Christ and also with the unconditional response of the person who is called and who undertakes pastoral service. Through celibacy, the

priest, following his Lord, shows in a fuller way his availability, and embarking upon the way of the Cross with paschal joy he ardently desires to be consumed in an offering which can be compared to the Eucharist.

If celibacy is lived in the spirit of the Gospel, in prayer and vigilance, with poverty, joy, contempt of honours, and brotherly love, it is a sign which cannot long be hidden, but which effectively proclaims Christ to modern men also. For words today are scarcely heeded, but the witness of a life which displays the radical character to the Gospel has the power of exercising a strong attraction.

b) Convergence of motives.

Celibacy, as a personal option for some more important good, even a merely natural one, can promote the full maturity and integration of the human personality. This is all the more true in regard to celibacy undertaken for the Kingdom of heaven, as is evident in the lives of so many saints and of the faithful who, living the celibate life, dedicated themselves totally to promoting human and Christian progress for the sake of God and men.

Within modern culture, in which spiritual values are to a great extent obscured, the celibate priest indicates the presence of the Absolute God, who invites us to be renewed in his image. Where the value of sexuality is so exaggerated that genuine love is forgotten, celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom of Christ calls men back to the sublimity of faithful love and reveals the ultimate meaning of life.

Furthermore, one rightly speaks of the value of celibacy as an eschatological sign. By transcending every contingent human value, the celibate priest associates himself in a special way with Christ as the final and absolute good and shows forth, in anticipation, the freedom of the children of God. While the value of the sign and holiness of Christian marriage is fully recognized, celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom nevertheless more clearly displays that spiritual fruitfulness or generative power of the New Law by which the apostle knows that in Christ he is the father and mother of his communities.

From this special way of following Christ, the priest draws greater strength and power for the building up of the Church; and this power can be preserved and increased only by an intimate and permanent union with Christ's Spirit. The faithful people of God wish to see in their pastors this union with Christ, and they are able to recognize it.

Through celibacy, priests are more easily able to serve God with undivided heart and spend themselves for their sheep, and as a result they

are able more fully to be promoters of evangelization and of the Church's unity. For this reason, priests, even if they are fewer in number, but are resplendent with this outstanding witness of life, will enjoy greater apostolic fruitfulness.

Priestly celibacy, furthermore, is not just the witness of one person alone, but by reason of the special fellowship linking members of the presbyterium it also takes on a social character as the witness of the whole priestly order enriching the People of God.

c) Celibacy to be kept in the Latin Church.

The traditions of the Eastern Churches shall remain unchanged, as they are now in force in the various territories.

The Church has the right and duty to determine the concrete form of the priestly ministry and therefore to select more suitable candidates, endowed with certain human and supernatural qualities. When the Latin Church demands celibacy as a necessary condition for the priesthood (cf. *PO* 16), she does not do so out of a belief that this way of life is the only path to attaining sanctification. She does so while carefully considering the concrete form of exercising the ministry in the community for the building up of the Church.

Because of the intimate and multiple coherence between the pastoral function and a celibate life, the existing law is upheld: one who freely wills total availability, the distinctive characteristic of this function, also freely undertakes a celibate life. The candidate should feel this form of living not as having been imposed from outside, but rather as a manifestation of his free self-giving, which is accepted and ratified by the Church through the bishop. In this way the law becomes a protection and safeguard of the freedom wherewith the priest gives himself to Christ, and it becomes "an easy yoke".

d) Conditions favouring celibacy.

We know well that in the world of today particular difficulties threaten celibacy from all sides; priests have indeed already repeatedly experienced them in the course of the centuries. But they can overcome these difficulties if suitable conditions are fostered, namely: growth of the interior life through prayer, renunciation and fervent love for God and one's neighbour and by other aids to the spiritual life; human balance through well-ordered integration into the fabric of social relationships; fraternal association and companionship with other priests and with the bishop, through pastoral

structures better suited to this purpose and with the assistance also of the community of the faithful.

It must be admitted that celibacy, as a gift of God, cannot be preserved unless the candidate is adequately prepared for it. From the beginning, candidates should give attention to the positive reasons for choosing celibacy, without letting themselves be disturbed by objections, the accumulation and continual pressure of which are rather a sign that the original value of celibacy itself has been called in question. Let them also remember that the power with which God strengthens us is always available for those who strive to serve him faithfully and entirely.

A priest who leaves the ministry should receive just and fraternal treatment; even though he can give assistance in the service of the Church, he is not however to be admitted to the exercise of priestly activities.

e) The Law of Celibacy.

The law of priestly celibacy existing in the Latin Church is to be kept in its entirety.²

* * *

f) The ordination of married men.

Two formulas were proposed to the vote of the Fathers:³

Formula A: Excepting always the right of the Supreme Pontiff, the priestly ordination of married men is not permitted, even in particular cases.

Formula B: It belongs solely to the Supreme Pontiff, in particular cases, by reason of pastoral needs and the good of the universal Church to allow the priestly ordination of married men, who are of mature age and proven life.

* * *

² Result of the vote on this proposition: *Placet* 168. *Non placet* 10. *Placet iuxta modum* 21. Abstentions 3.

³ According to the directives of the Presidents the vote was taken not by *Placet* or *Non placet*, but by the choice of the first or second formula. The first formula, A, obtained 107 votes; the second, B, obtained 87. There were 2 abstentions and also 2 null votes.

II. PRIESTS IN THE COMMUNION OF THE CHURCH

1. *Relations between priests and bishop.*

Priests will adhere more faithfully to their mission the more they know and show themselves to be faithful to ecclesial communion. Thus the pastoral ministry, which is exercised by bishops, priests and deacons, is an eminent sign of this ecclesial communion, in that they have received a special mandate to serve this communion.

But in order that this ministry may really become a sign of communion, the actual conditions in which it is exercised must be considered to be of the greatest importance.

The guiding principle expressed by the Second Vatican Council in the decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, namely that the very unity of consecration and mission requires the hierarchical communion of priests with the order of bishops, is considered fundamental to a practical restoration or renewal, with full confidence, of the mutual relationship between the bishop and the presbyterium over which the bishop presides. This principle is more concretely to be put into practice especially by the diligence of the bishops.

The service of authority on the one hand and the exercise of not merely passive obedience on the other should be carried out in a spirit of faith, mutual charity, filial and friendly confidence and constant and patient dialogue. Thus the collaboration and responsible cooperation of priests with the bishop will be sincere, human and at the same time supernatural (cf. *LG* 28; *CD* 15; *PO* 7).

Personal freedom, responding to the individual vocation and to the charisms received from God, and also the ordered solidarity of all for the service of the community and the good of the mission to be fulfilled are two conditions which should shape the Church's proper mode of pastoral action (cf. *PO* 7). The guarantee of these conditions is the bishop's authority, to be exercised in a spirit of service.

The Council of Priests, which is of its nature something diocesan, is an institutional manifestation of the brotherhood among priests which has its basis in the sacrament of Orders.

The activity of this council cannot be fully shaped by law. Its effectiveness depends especially on a repeated effort to listen to the opinions of all in order to reach a consensus with the bishop, to whom it belongs to make the final decision.

If this is done with the greatest sincerity and humility, and if all one-sidedness is overcome, it will be easier to provide properly for the common good.

The Priests' Council is an institution in which priests recognize, at a time when variety in the exercise of their ministry increases every day, that they are mutually complementary in serving one and the same mission of the Church.

It is the task of this Council, among other things, to seek out clear and distinctly defined aims, to suggest priorities, to indicate methods of acting, to assist whatever the Spirit frequently stirs up through individuals or groups, and to foster the spiritual life, whence the necessary unity may more easily be attained.

New forms of hierarchical communion between bishops and priests (cf. PO 7) must be found, to facilitate contacts between local Churches. A search must be made for ways whereby priests may collaborate with bishops in supra-diocesan bodies and enterprises.

The collaboration of religious priests with the bishop in the presbyterium is necessary, though their work is of valuable assistance to the universal Church.

2. Relations of priests with each other.

Since priests are bound together by an intimate sacramental brotherhood and by their mission, and since they work and plan together for the same task, some community of life or a certain association of life shall be encouraged among them and can take various forms, including non-institutional ones. This shall be allowed for by the law itself through opportune norms and by renewed or newly-discovered pastoral structures.

Priestly associations should also be fostered which in a spirit of ecclesial communion and being recognized by the competent ecclesiastical authority, "through an apt and properly approved rule of life and through brotherly assistance" (PO 8), seek to advance the aims which belong to their function and "holiness in the exercise of the ministry" (*ibid.*).

It is desirable that, as far as possible, ways be sought, even if they prove rather difficult, whereby associations which perhaps divide the clergy into factions may be brought back to communion and to the ecclesial structure.

There should be greater communication between religious priests and

diocesan priests, so that true priestly fraternity may exist between them and that they may provide one another with mutual help, especially in spiritual matters.

3. *Relations between priests and laity.*

Let priests remember "confidently to entrust to the laity duties in the service of the Church, allowing them freedom and room for action. In fact, on suitable occasions, they should invite them to undertake works on their own initiative" (PO 9). The laity, "likewise sharing their cares, should help their priests by prayer and work to the extent possible, so that their priests can more readily overcome difficulties and be able to fulfil their duties more fruitfully" (*ibid.*).

It is necessary to keep always in mind the special character of the Church's communion in order that personal freedom, in accordance with the recognized duties and charisms of each person, and the unity of life and activity of the People of God may be fittingly combined.

The pastoral council, in which specially chosen clergy, religious and lay people take part (cf. CD 27), furnishes by its study and reflection elements necessary for enabling the diocesan community to arrange its pastoral programme organically and to fulfil it effectively.

In proportion as the co-responsibility of bishops and priests daily increases (especially through priests' councils), the more desirable it becomes that a pastoral council be established in each diocese.

4. *Economic affairs.*

The economic questions of the Church cannot be adequately solved unless they are carefully examined within the context of the communion and mission of the People of God. All the faithful have the duty of assisting the Church's needs.

In treating these questions account must be taken not only of solidarity within the local Church, diocese or religious institute, but also of the condition of dioceses of the same region or nation, indeed of the whole world, especially of the Churches in the so-called mission territories, and of other poor regions.

The remuneration of priests, to be determined certainly in a spirit of evangelical poverty, but as far as possible equitable and sufficient, is a duty of justice and ought to include social security. Excessive differences in this

matter must be removed, especially among priests of the same diocese or jurisdiction, account also being taken of the average condition of the people of the region.

It seems greatly to be desired that the Christian people be gradually instructed in such a way that priests' incomes may be separated from the acts of their ministry, especially sacramental ones.

CONCLUSION

To priests exercising the ministry of the Spirit (cf. *2 Cor* 3:4-12) in the midst of the communion of the entire Church, new ways are open for giving a profoundly renewed witness in today's world.

It is necessary therefore to look to the future with Christian confidence and to ask the Holy Spirit that by his guidance and inspiration doors may be opened to the Gospel, in spite of the dangers which the Church cannot overcome by merely human means.

Having always before our eyes the Apostles, especially Peter and Paul, as the examples for the renewal of the priesthood, we should give thanks to God the Father that he has given us all the opportunity of manifesting more faithfully the countenance of Christ.

Already there are true signs of a rebirth of spiritual life, while men everywhere, amid the uncertainties of modern times, look forward to fullness of life. This renewal certainly cannot take place without a sharing in the Lord's Cross, because the servant is not greater than his master (cf. *Jn* 13:16). Forgetting the past let us strive for what is still to come (cf. *Phil* 3:13).

With real daring we must show the world the fullness of the mystery hidden through all ages in God so that men through their sharing in it may be able to enter into the fullness of God (cf. *Eph* 3:19).

" We proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ " (1 *Jn* 1:2-3).

JUSTICE IN THE WORLD

JUSTICE IN THE WORLD

INTRODUCTION

Gathered from the whole world, in communion with all who believe in Christ and with the entire human family, and opening our hearts to the Spirit who is making the whole of creation new, we have questioned ourselves about the mission of the People of God to further justice in the world.

Scrutinizing the "signs of the times" and seeking to detect the meaning of emerging history, while at the same time sharing the aspirations and questionings of all those who want to build a more human world, we have listened to the Word of God that we might be converted to the fulfilling of the divine plan for the salvation of the world.

Even though it is not for us to elaborate a very profound analysis of the situation of the world, we have nevertheless been able to perceive the serious injustices which are building around the world of men a network of domination, oppression and abuses which stifle freedom and which keep the greater part of humanity from sharing in the building up and enjoyment of a more just and more fraternal world.

At the same time we have noted the inmost stirring moving the world in its depths. There are facts constituting a contribution to the furthering of justice. In associations of men and among peoples themselves there is arising a new awareness which shakes them out of any fatalistic resignation and which spurs them on to liberate themselves and to be responsible for their own destiny. Movements among men are seen which express hope in a better world and a will to change whatever has become intolerable.

Listening to the cry of those who suffer violence and are oppressed by unjust systems and structures, and hearing the appeal of a world that by its perversity contradicts the plan of its Creator, we have shared our awareness of the Church's vocation to be present in the heart of the world by proclaiming the Good News to the poor,

freedom to the oppressed, and joy to the afflicted. The hopes and forces which are moving the world in its very foundations are not foreign to the dynamism of the Gospel, which through the power of the Holy Spirit frees men from personal sin and from its consequences in social life.

The uncertainty of history and the painful convergences in the ascending path of the human community direct us to sacred history; there God has revealed himself to us, and made known to us, as it is brought progressively to realization, his plan of liberation and salvation which is once and for all fulfilled in the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation.

I

JUSTICE AND WORLD SOCIETY

CRISIS OF UNIVERSAL SOLIDARITY

The world in which the Church lives and acts is held captive by a tremendous paradox. Never before have the forces working for bringing about a unified world society appeared so powerful and dynamic; they are rooted in the awareness of the full basic equality as well as of the human dignity of all. Since men are members of the same human family, they are indissolubly linked with one another in the one destiny of the whole world, in the responsibility for which they all share.

The new technological possibilities are based upon the unity of science, on the global and simultaneous character of communications and on the birth of an absolutely interdependent economic world. Moreover, men are beginning to grasp a new and more radical dimension of unity; for they perceive that their resources, as well as the precious treasures of air and water—without which there cannot be life—and the small delicate biosphere of the whole complex of all life on earth, are not infinite, but on the contrary must be saved and preserved as a unique patrimony belonging to all mankind.

The paradox lies in the fact that within this perspective of unity the forces of division and antagonism seem today to be increasing in strength. Ancient divisions between nations and empires, between races and classes, today possess new technological instruments of destruction. The arms race is a threat to man's highest good, which is life; it makes poor peoples and individuals yet more miserable, while making richer those already powerful; it creates a continuous danger of conflagration, and in the case of nuclear arms, it threatens to destroy all life from the face of the earth. At the same time new divisions are being born to separate man from his neighbour. Unless combatted and overcome by social and political action, the influence of the new

industrial and technological order favours the concentration of wealth, power and decision-making in the hands of a small public or private controlling group. Economic injustice and lack of social participation keep a man from attaining his basic human and civil rights.

In the last twenty-five years a hope has spread through the human race that economic growth would bring about such a quantity of goods that it would be possible to feed the hungry at least with the crumbs falling from the table, but this has proved a vain hope in underdeveloped areas and in pockets of poverty in wealthier areas, because of the rapid growth of population and of the labour force, because of rural stagnation and the lack of agrarian reform, and because of the massive migratory flow to the cities, where the industries, even though endowed with huge sums of money, nevertheless provide so few jobs that not infrequently one worker in four is left unemployed. These stifling oppressions constantly give rise to great numbers of "marginal" persons, ill-fed, inhumanly housed, illiterate and deprived of political power as well as of the suitable means of acquiring responsibility and moral dignity.

Furthermore, such is the demand for resources and energy by the richer nations, whether capitalist or socialist, and such are the effects of dumping by them in the atmosphere and the sea that irreparable damage would be done to the essential elements of life on earth, such as air and water, if their high rates of consumption and pollution, which are constantly on the increase, were extended to the whole of mankind.

The strong drive towards global unity, the unequal distribution which places decisions concerning three quarters of income, investment and trade in the hands of one third of the human race, namely the more highly developed part, the insufficiency of a merely economic progress, and the new recognition of the material limits of the biosphere — all this makes us aware of the fact that in today's world new modes of understanding human dignity are arising.

THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

In the face of international systems of domination, the bringing about of justice depends more and more on the determined will for development.

In the developing nations and in the so-called socialist world, that determined will asserts itself especially in a struggle for forms of claiming one's rights and self-expression, a struggle caused by the evolution of the economic system itself.

This aspiring to justice asserts itself in advancing beyond the threshold at which begins a consciousness of enhancement of personal worth (cf. *Populorum Progressio* 15; *A.A.S.* 59, 1967, p. 265) with regard both to the whole man and the whole of mankind. This is expressed in an awareness of the right to development. The right to development must be seen as a dynamic interpenetration of all those fundamental human rights upon which the aspirations of individuals and nations are based.

This desire however will not satisfy the expectations of our time if it ignores the objective obstacles which social structures place in the way of conversion of hearts, or even of the realization of the ideal of charity. It demands on the contrary that the general condition of being marginal in society be overcome, so that an end will be put to the systematic barriers and vicious circles which oppose the collective advance towards enjoyment of adequate remuneration of the factors of production, and which strengthen the situation of discrimination with regard to access to opportunities and collective services from which a great part of the people are now excluded. If the developing nations and regions do not attain liberation through development, there is a real danger that the conditions of life created especially by colonial domination may evolve into a new form of colonialism in which the developing nations will be the victims of the interplay of international economic forces. That right to development is above all a right to hope according to the concrete measure of contemporary humanity. To respond to such a hope, the concept of evolution must be purified of those myths and false convictions which have up to now gone with a thought-pattern subject to a kind of deterministic and automatic notion of progress.

By taking their future into their own hands through a determined will for progress, the developing peoples—even if they do not achieve the final goal—will authentically manifest their own personalization. And in order that they may cope with the unequal relationships within the present world complex, a certain responsible nationalism gives them the impetus needed to acquire an identity of their

own. From this basic self-determination can come attempts at putting together new political groupings allowing full development to these peoples; there can also come measures necessary for overcoming the inertia which could render fruitless such an effort—as in some cases population pressure; there can also come new sacrifices which the growth of planning demands of a generation which wants to build its own future.

On the other hand, it is impossible to conceive true progress without recognizing the necessity—within the political system chosen—of a development composed both of economic growth and participation; and the necessity too of an increase in wealth implying as well social progress by the entire community as it overcomes regional imbalance and islands of prosperity. Participation constitutes a right which is to be applied both in the economic and in the social and political field.

While we again affirm the right of people to keep their own identity, we see ever more clearly that the fight against a modernization destructive of the proper characteristics of nations remains quite ineffective as long as it appeals only to sacred historical customs and venerable ways of life. If modernization is accepted with the intention that it serve the good of the nation, men will be able to create a culture which will constitute a true heritage of their own in the manner of a true social memory, one which is active and formative of authentic creative personality in the assembly of nations.

VOICELESS INJUSTICES

We see in the world a set of injustices which constitute the nucleus of today's problems and whose solution requires the undertaking of tasks and functions in every sector of society, and even on the level of the global society towards which we are speeding in this last quarter of the twentieth century. Therefore we must be prepared to take on new functions and new duties in every sector of human activity and especially in the sector of world society, if justice is really to be put into practice. Our action is to be directed above all at those men and nations which because of various forms of oppression and because of the present character of our society are silent, indeed voiceless, victims of injustice.

Take, for example, the case of migrants. They are often forced to leave their own country to find work, but frequently find the doors

closed in their faces because of discriminatory attitudes, or, if they can enter, they are often obliged to lead an insecure life or are treated in an inhuman manner. The same is true of groups that are less well off on the social ladder such as workers and especially farm workers who play a very great part in the process of development.

To be especially lamented is the condition of so many millions of refugees, and of every group or people suffering persecution—sometimes in institutionalized form—for racial or ethnic origin or on tribal grounds. This persecution on tribal grounds can at times take on the characteristics of genocide.

In many areas justice is seriously injured with regard to people who are suffering persecution for their faith, or who are in many ways being ceaselessly subjected by political parties and public authorities to an action of oppressive atheization, or who are deprived of religious liberty either by being kept from honouring God in public worship, or by being prevented from publicly teaching and spreading their faith, or by being prohibited from conducting their temporal affairs according to the principles of their religion.

Justice is also being violated by forms of oppression, both old and new, springing from restriction of the rights of individuals. This is occurring both in the form of repression by the political power and of violence on the part of private reaction, and can reach the extreme of affecting the basic conditions of personal integrity. There are well known cases of torture, especially of political prisoners, who besides are frequently denied due process or who are subjected to arbitrary procedures in their trial. Nor can we pass over the prisoners of war who even after the Geneva Convention are being treated in an inhuman manner.

The fight against legalized abortion and against the imposition of contraceptives and the pressures exerted against war are significant forms of defending the right to life.

Furthermore, contemporary consciousness demands truth in the communications systems, including the right to the image offered by the media and the opportunity to correct its manipulation. It must be stressed that the right, especially that of children and the young, to education and to morally correct conditions of life and communications media is once again being threatened in our days. The activity of families in social life is rarely and insufficiently recognized by State institutions.

Nor should we forget the growing number of persons who are often abandoned by their families and by the community: the old, orphans, the sick and all kinds of people who are rejected.

THE NEED FOR DIALOGUE

To obtain true unity of purpose, as is demanded by the world society of men, a mediatory role is essential to overcome day by day the opposition, obstacles and ingrained privileges which are to be met with in the advance towards a more human society.

But effective mediation involves the creation of a lasting atmosphere of dialogue. A contribution to the progressive realization of this can be made by men unhampered by geo-political, ideological or socio-economic conditions or by the generation gap. To restore the meaning of life by adherence to authentic values, the participation and witness of the rising generation of youth is as necessary as communication among peoples.

II

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

In the face of the present-day situation of the world, marked as it is by the grave sin of injustice, we recognize both our responsibility and our inability to overcome it by our own strength. Such a situation urges us to listen with a humble and open heart to the word of God, as he shows us new paths towards action in the cause of justice in the world.

THE SAVING JUSTICE OF GOD THROUGH CHRIST

In the Old Testament God reveals himself to us as the liberator of the oppressed and the defender of the poor, demanding from man faith in him and justice towards man's neighbour. It is only in the observance of the duties of justice that God is truly recognized as the liberator of the oppressed.

By his action and teaching Christ united in an indivisible way the relationship of man to God and the relationship of man to other men. Christ lived his life in the world as a total giving of himself to God for the salvation and liberation of men. In his preaching he proclaimed the fatherhood of God towards all men and the intervention of God's justice on behalf of the needy and the oppressed (*Lk* 6:21-23). In this way he identified himself with his "least brethren", as he stated: "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me" (*Mt* 25:40).

From the beginning the Church has lived and understood the Death and Resurrection of Christ as a call by God to conversion in the faith of Christ and in fraternal love, perfected in mutual help even to the point of a voluntary sharing of material goods.

Faith in Christ, the Son of God and the Redeemer, and love of neighbour constitute a fundamental theme of the writers of the New Testament. According to St. Paul, the whole of the Christian life is summed up in faith effecting that love and service of neighbour which involve the fulfilment of the demands of justice. The Christian lives

under the interior law of liberty, which is a permanent call to man to turn away from self-sufficiency to confidence in God and from concern for self to a sincere love of neighbour. Thus takes place his genuine liberation and the gift of himself for the freedom of others.

According to the Christian message, therefore, man's relationship to his neighbour is bound up with his relationship to God; his response to the love of God, saving us through Christ, is shown to be effective in his love and service of men. Christian love of neighbour and justice cannot be separated. For love implies an absolute demand for justice, namely a recognition of the dignity and rights of one's neighbour. Justice attains its inner fullness only in love. Because every man is truly a visible image of the invisible God and a brother of Christ, the Christian finds in every man God himself and God's absolute demand for justice and love.

The present situation of the world, seen in the light of faith, calls us back to the very essence of the Christian message, creating in us a deep awareness of its true meaning and of its urgent demands. The mission of preaching the Gospel dictates at the present time that we should dedicate ourselves to the liberation of man even in his present existence in this world. For unless the Christian message of love and justice shows its effectiveness through action in the cause of justice in the world, it will only with difficulty gain credibility with the men of our times.

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH, HIERARCHY AND CHRISTIANS

The Church has received from Christ the mission of preaching the Gospel message, which contains a call to man to turn away from sin to the love of the Father, universal brotherhood and a consequent demand for justice in the world. This is the reason why the Church has the right, indeed the duty, to proclaim justice on the social, national and international level, and to denounce instances of injustice, when the fundamental rights of man and his very salvation demand it. The Church, indeed, is not alone responsible for justice in the world; however, she has a proper and specific responsibility which is identified with her mission of giving witness before the world of the need for love and justice contained in the Gospel message, a witness to be carried out in Church institutions themselves and in the lives of Christians.

Of itself it does not belong to the Church, insofar as she is a religious and hierarchical community, to offer concrete solutions in the social, economic and political spheres for justice in the world. Her mission involves defending and promoting the dignity and fundamental rights of the human person.

The members of the Church, as members of society, have the same right and duty to promote the common good as do other citizens. Christians ought to fulfil their temporal obligations with fidelity and competence. They should act as a leaven in the world, in their family, professional, social, cultural and political life. They must accept their responsibilities in this entire area under the influence of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church. In this way they testify to the power of the Holy Spirit through their action in the service of men in those things which are decisive for the existence and the future of humanity. While in such activities they generally act on their own initiative without involving the responsibility of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, in a sense they do involve the responsibility of the Church whose members they are.

III

THE PRACTICE OF JUSTICE

THE CHURCH'S WITNESS

Many Christians are drawn to give authentic witness on behalf of justice by various modes of action for justice, action inspired by love in accordance with the grace which they have received from God. For some of them, this action finds its place in the sphere of social and political conflicts in which Christians bear witness to the Gospel by pointing out that in history there are sources of progress other than conflict, namely love and right. This priority of love in history draws other Christians to prefer the way of non-violent action and work in the area of public opinion.

While the Church is bound to give witness to justice, she recognizes that anyone who ventures to speak to people about justice must first be just in their eyes. Hence we must undertake an examination of the modes of acting and of the possessions and life style found within the Church herself.

Within the Church rights must be preserved. No one should be deprived of his ordinary rights because he is associated with the Church in one way or another. Those who serve the Church by their labour, including priests and religious, should receive a sufficient livelihood and enjoy that social security which is customary in their region. Lay people should be given fair wages and a system for promotion. We reiterate the recommendations that lay people should exercise more important functions with regard to Church property and should share in its administration.

We also urge that women should have their own share of responsibility and participation in the community life of society and likewise of the Church.

We propose that this matter be subjected to a serious study employing adequate means: for instance, a mixed commission of men and women, religious and lay people, of differing situations and competence.

The Church recognizes everyone's right to suitable freedom of expression and thought. This includes the right of everyone to be heard in a spirit of dialogue which preserves a legitimate diversity within the Church.

The form of judicial procedure should give the accused the right to know his accusers and also the right to a proper defence. To be complete, justice should include speed in its procedure. This is especially necessary in marriage cases.

Finally, the members of the Church should have some share in the drawing up of decisions, in accordance with the rules given by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and the Holy See, for instance with regard to the setting up of councils at all levels.

In regard to temporal possessions, whatever be their use, it must never happen that the evangelical witness which the Church is required to give becomes ambiguous. The preservation of certain positions of privilege must constantly be submitted to the test of this principle. Although in general it is difficult to draw a line between what is needed for right use and what is demanded by prophetic witness, we must certainly keep firmly to this principle: our faith demands of us a certain sparingness in use, and the Church is obliged to live and administer its own goods in such a way that the Gospel is proclaimed to the poor. If instead the Church appears to be among the rich and the powerful of this world its credibility is diminished.

Our examination of conscience now comes to the life style of all: bishops, priests, religious and lay people. In the case of needy peoples it must be asked whether belonging to the Church places people on a rich island within an ambient of poverty. In societies enjoying a higher level of consumer spending, it must be asked whether our life style exemplifies that sparingness with regard to consumption which we preach to others as necessary in order that so many millions of hungry people throughout the world may be fed.

EDUCATING TO JUSTICE

Christians' specific contribution to justice is the day-to-day life of the individual believer acting like the leaven of the Gospel in his family, his school, his work and his social and civic life. Included with this are the perspectives and meaning which the faithful can give to human effort. Accordingly, educational method must be such as to

teach men to live their lives in its entire reality and in accord with the evangelical principles of personal and social morality which are expressed in the vital Christian witness of one's life.

The obstacles to the progress which we wish for ourselves and for mankind are obvious. The method of education very frequently still in use today encourages narrow individualism. Part of the human family lives immersed in a mentality which exalts possessions. The school and the communications media, which are often obstructed by the established order, allow the formation only of the man desired by that order, that is to say, man in its image, not a new man but a copy of man as he is.

But education demands a renewal of heart, a renewal based on the recognition of sin in its individual and social manifestations. It will also inculcate a truly and entirely human way of life in justice, love and simplicity. It will likewise awaken a critical sense, which will lead us to reflect on the society in which we live and on its values; it will make men ready to renounce these values when they cease to promote justice for all men. In the developing countries, the principal aim of this education for justice consists in an attempt to awaken consciences to a knowledge of the concrete situation and in a call to secure a total improvement; by these means the transformation of the world has already begun.

Since this education makes men decidedly more human, it will help them to be no longer the object of manipulation by communications media or political forces. It will instead enable them to take in hand their own destinies and bring about communities which are truly human.

Accordingly, this education is deservedly called a continuing education, for it concerns every person and every age. It is also a practical education: it comes through action, participation and vital contact with the reality of injustice.

Education for justice is imparted first in the family. We are well aware that not only Church institutions but also other schools, trade unions and political parties are collaborating in this.

The content of this education necessarily involves respect for the person and for his dignity. Since it is world justice which is in question here, the unity of the human family within which, according to God's plan, a human being is born must first of all be seriously affirmed. Christians find a sign of this solidarity in the fact that all human beings are destined to become in Christ sharers in the divine nature.

The basic principles whereby the influence of the Gospel has made itself felt in contemporary social life are to be found in the body of teaching set out in a gradual and timely way from the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* to the letter *Octogesima Adveniens*. As never before, the Church has, through the Second Vatican Council's constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, better understood the situation in the modern world, in which the Christian works out his salvation by deeds of justice. *Pacem in Terris* gave us an authentic charter of human rights. In *Mater et Magistra* international justice begins to take first place; it finds more elaborate expression in *Populorum Progressio*, in the form of a true and suitable treatise on the right to development, and in *Octogesima Adveniens* is found a summary of guidelines for political action.

Like the apostle Paul, we insist, welcome or unwelcome, that the Word of God should be present in the centre of human situations. Our interventions are intended to be an expression of that faith which is today binding on our lives and on the lives of the faithful. We all desire that these interventions should always be in conformity with circumstances of place and time. Our mission demands that we should courageously denounce injustice, with charity, prudence and firmness, in sincere dialogue with all parties concerned. We know that our denunciations can secure assent to the extent that they are an expression of our lives and are manifested in continuous action.

The liturgy, which we preside over and which is the heart of the Church's life, can greatly serve education for justice. For it is a thanksgiving to the Father in Christ, which through its communitarian form places before our eyes the bonds of our brotherhood and again and again reminds us of the Church's mission. The liturgy of the word, catechesis and the celebration of the sacraments have the power to help us to discover the teaching of the prophets, the Lord and the Apostles on the subject of justice. The preparation for baptism is the beginning of the formation of the Christian conscience. The practice of penance should emphasize the social dimension of sin and of the sacrament. Finally, the Eucharist forms the community and places it at the service of men.

COOPERATION BETWEEN LOCAL CHURCHES

That the Church may really be the sign of that solidarity which the family of nations desires, it should show in its own life greater

cooperation between the Churches of rich and poor regions through spiritual communion and division of human and material resources. The present generous arrangements for assistance between Churches could be made more effective by real coordination (Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the Pontifical Council "Cor Unum"), through their overall view in regard to the common administration of the gifts of God, and through fraternal solidarity, which would always encourage autonomy and responsibility on the part of the beneficiaries in the determination of criteria and the choice of concrete programmes and their realization.

This planning must in no way be restricted to economic programmes; it should instead stimulate activities capable of developing that human and spiritual formation which will serve as the leaven needed for the integral development of the human being.

ECUMENICAL COLLABORATION

Well aware of what has already been done in this field, together with the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council we very highly commend cooperation with our separated Christian brethren for the promotion of justice in the world, for bringing about development of peoples and for establishing peace. This cooperation concerns first and foremost activities for securing human dignity and man's fundamental rights, especially the right to religious liberty. This is the source of our common efforts against discrimination on the grounds of differences of religion, race and colour, culture and the like. Collaboration extends also to the study of the teaching of the Gospel insofar as it is the source of inspiration for all Christian activity. Let the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity and the Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace devote themselves in common counsel to developing effectively this ecumenical collaboration.

In the same spirit we likewise commend collaboration with all believers in God in the fostering of social justice, peace and freedom; indeed we commend collaboration also with those who, even though they do not recognize the Author of the world, nevertheless, in their esteem for human values, seek justice sincerely and by honourable means.

INTERNATIONAL ACTION

Since the Synod is of a universal character, it is dealing with those questions of justice which directly concern the entire human family. Hence, recognizing the importance of international cooperation for social and economic development, we praise above all else the inestimable work which has been done among the poorer peoples by the local Churches, the missionaries and the organizations supporting them; and we intend to foster those initiatives and institutions which are working for peace, international justice and the development of man. We therefore urge Catholics to consider well the following propositions:

1. Let recognition be given to the fact that international order is rooted in the inalienable rights and dignity of the human being. Let the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights be ratified by all Governments who have not yet adhered to it, and let it be fully observed by all.

2. Let the United Nations - which because of its unique purpose should promote participation by all nations - and international organizations be supported insofar as they are the beginning of a system capable of restraining the armaments race, discouraging trade in weapons, securing disarmament and settling conflicts by peaceful methods of legal action, arbitration and international police action. It is absolutely necessary that international conflicts should not be settled by war, but that other methods better befitting human nature should be found. Let a strategy of non-violence be fostered also, and let conscientious objection be recognized and regulated by law in each nation.

3. Let the aims of the Second Development Decade be fostered. These include the transfer of a precise percentage of the annual income of the richer countries to the developing nations, fairer prices for raw materials, the opening of the markets of the richer nations and, in some fields, preferential treatment for exports of manufactured goods from the developing nations. These aims represent first guidelines for a graduated taxation of income as well as for an economic and social plan for the entire world. We grieve whenever richer nations turn their backs on this ideal goal of worldwide sharing and responsibility. We hope that no such weakening of international soli-

parity will take away their force from the trade discussions being prepared by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

4. The concentration of power which consists in almost total domination of economics, research, investment, freight charges, sea transport and securities should be progressively balanced by institutional arrangements for strengthening power and opportunities with regard to responsible decision by the developing nations and by full and equal participation in international organizations concerned with development. Their recent *de facto* exclusion from discussions on world trade and also the monetary arrangements which vitally affect their destiny are an example of lack of power which is inadmissible in a just and responsible world order.

5. Although we recognize that international agencies can be perfected and strengthened, as can any human instrument, we stress also the importance of the specialized agencies of the United Nations, in particular those directly concerned with the immediate and more acute questions of world poverty in the field of agrarian reform and agricultural development, health, education, employment, housing, and rapidly increasing urbanization. We feel we must point out in a special way the need for some fund to provide sufficient food and protein for the real mental and physical development of children. In the face of the population explosion we repeat the words by which Pope Paul VI defined the functions of public authority in his encyclical *Populorum Progressio*: "There is no doubt that public authorities can intervene, within the limit of their competence, by favouring the availability of appropriate information and by adopting suitable measures, provided that these be in conformity with the moral law and that they absolutely respect the rightful freedom of married couples" (37; A.A.S. 59, 1967, p. 276).

6. Let governments continue with their individual contributions to a development fund, but let them also look for a way whereby most of their endeavours may follow multilateral channels, fully preserving the responsibility of the developing nations, which must be associated in decision-making concerning priorities and investments.

7. We consider that we must also stress the new worldwide preoccupation which will be dealt with for the first time in the con-

ference on the human environment to be held in Stockholm in June 1972. It is impossible to see what right the richer nations have to keep up their claim to increase their own material demands, if the consequence is either that others remain in misery or that the danger of destroying the very physical foundations of life on earth is precipitated. Those who are already rich are bound to accept a less material way of life, with less waste, in order to avoid the destruction of the heritage which they are obliged by absolute justice to share with all other members of the human race.

8. In order that the right to development may be fulfilled by action:

a) people should not be hindered from attaining development in accordance with their own culture;

b) through mutual cooperation, all peoples should be able to become the principal architects of their own economic and social development;

c) every people, as active and responsible members of human society, should be able to cooperate for the attainment of the common good on an equal footing with other peoples.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SYNOD

The examination of conscience which we have made together, regarding the Church's involvement in action for justice, will remain ineffective if it is not given flesh in the life of our local Churches at all their levels. We also ask the episcopal conferences to continue to pursue the perspectives which we have had in view during the days of this meeting and to put our recommendations into practice, for instance by setting up centres of social and theological research.

We also ask that there be recommended to the Pontifical Commission Justice and Peace, the Council of the Secretariat of the Synod and to competent authorities, the description, consideration and deeper study of the wishes and desires of our assembly, and that these bodies should bring to a successful conclusion what we have begun.

IV

A WORD OF HOPE

The power of the Spirit, who raised Christ from the dead, is continuously at work in the world. Through the generous sons and daughters of the Church likewise, the People of God is present in the midst of the poor and of those who suffer oppression and persecution; it lives in its own flesh and its own heart the Passion of Christ and bears witness to his resurrection.

The entire creation has been groaning till now in an act of giving birth, as it waits for the glory of the children of God to be revealed (cf. *Rom* 8:22). Let Christians therefore be convinced that they will yet find the fruits of their own nature and effort cleansed of all impurities in the new earth which God is now preparing for them, and in which there will be the kingdom of justice and love, a kingdom which will be fully perfected when the Lord will come himself.

Hope in the coming kingdom is already beginning to take root in the hearts of men. The radical transformation of the world in the Paschal Mystery of the Lord gives full meaning to the efforts of men, and in particular of the young, to lessen injustice, violence and hatred and to advance all together in justice, freedom, brotherhood and love.

At the same time as it proclaims the Gospel of the Lord, its Redeemer and Saviour, the Church calls on all, especially the poor, the oppressed and the afflicted, to cooperate with God to bring about liberation from every sin and to build a world which will reach the fullness of creation only when it becomes the work of man for man.

1972

Publications Office

UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20005