

# DOCUMENTS OF THE VATICAN II COUNCIL

## Declarations and Decrees

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DECLARATION ON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION  
**GRAVISSIMUM EDUCATIONIS**

PROCLAIMED BY  
POPE PAUL VI  
ON OCTOBER 28, 1965

**INTRODUCTION**

The Sacred Ecumenical Council has considered with care how extremely important education is in the life of man and how its influence ever grows in the social progress of this age.(1)

Indeed, the circumstances of our time have made it easier and at once more urgent to educate young people and, what is more, to continue the education of adults. Men are more aware of their own dignity and position; more and more they want to take an active part in social and especially in economic and political life.(2) Enjoying more leisure, as they sometimes do, men find that the remarkable development of technology and scientific investigation and the new means of communication offer them an opportunity of attaining more easily their cultural and spiritual inheritance and of fulfilling one another in the closer ties between groups and even between peoples.

Consequently, attempts are being made everywhere to promote more education. The rights of men to an education, particularly the primary rights of children and parents, are being proclaimed and recognized in public documents.(3) As the number of pupils rapidly increases, schools are multiplied and expanded far and wide and other educational institutions are established. New experiments are conducted in methods of education and teaching. Mighty attempts are being made to obtain education for all, even though vast numbers of children and young people are still deprived of even rudimentary training and so many others lack a suitable education in which truth and love are developed together.

To fulfill the mandate she has received from her divine founder of proclaiming the mystery of salvation to all men and of restoring all things in Christ, Holy Mother the Church must be concerned with the whole of man's life, even the secular part of it insofar as it has a bearing on his heavenly calling.(4) Therefore she has a role in the progress and development of education. Hence this sacred synod declares certain fundamental principles of Christian education especially in schools. These principles will have to be developed at greater length by a special post-conciliar commission and applied by episcopal conferences to varying local situations.

***1. The Meaning of the Universal Right to an Education***

All men of every race, condition and age, since they enjoy the dignity of a human being, have an inalienable right to an education (5) that is in keeping with their ultimate goal,(6) their ability, their sex, and the culture and tradition of their country, and also in harmony with their fraternal association with other peoples in the fostering of true unity and peace on earth. For a true education aims at the formation of the human person in the pursuit of his ultimate end and of the good of the societies of which, as man, he is a member, and in whose obligations, as an adult, he will share.

Therefore children and young people must be helped, with the aid of the latest advances in psychology and the arts and science of teaching, to develop harmoniously their physical, moral and intellectual endowments so that they may gradually acquire a mature sense of responsibility in striving endlessly to form their own lives properly and in pursuing true freedom as they surmount the vicissitudes of life with courage and constancy. Let them be given also, as they advance in years, a positive and prudent sexual education. Moreover they should be so trained to take their part in social life that properly instructed in the necessary and opportune skills they can become actively involved in various community organizations, open to discourse with others and willing to do their best to promote the common good.

This sacred synod likewise declares that children and young people have a right to be motivated to appraise moral values with a right conscience, to embrace them with a personal adherence, together with a deeper knowledge and love of God. Consequently it earnestly entreats all those who hold a position of public authority or who are in charge of education to see to it that youth is never deprived of this sacred right. It further exhorts the sons of the Church to give their attention with generosity to the entire field of education, having especially in mind the need of extending very soon the benefits of a suitable education and training to everyone in all parts of the world.(7)

## **2. Christian Education**

Since all Christians have become by rebirth of water and the Holy Spirit a new creature(8) so that they should be called and should be children of God, they have a right to a Christian education. A Christian education does not merely strive for the maturing of a human person as just now described, but has as its principal purpose this goal: that the baptized, while they are gradually introduced the knowledge of the mystery of salvation, become ever more aware of the gift of Faith they have received, and that they learn in addition how to worship God the Father in spirit and truth (cf. John 4:23) especially in liturgical action, and be conformed in their personal lives according to the new man created in justice and holiness of truth (Eph. 4:22-24); also that they develop into perfect manhood, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:13) and strive for the growth of the Mystical Body; moreover, that aware of their calling, they learn not only how to bear witness to the hope that is in them (cf. Peter 3:15) but also how

to help in the Christian formation of the world that takes place when natural powers viewed in the full consideration of man redeemed by Christ contribute to the good of the whole society.(9) Wherefore this sacred synod recalls to pastors of souls their most serious obligation to see to it that all the faithful, but especially the youth who are the hope of the Church, enjoy this Christian education.(10)

### **3. *The Authors of Education***

Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators.(11) This role in education is so important that only with difficulty can it be supplied where it is lacking. Parents are the ones who must create a family atmosphere animated by love and respect for God and man, in which the well-rounded personal and social education of children is fostered. Hence the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs. It is particularly in the Christian family, enriched by the grace and office of the sacrament of matrimony, that children should be taught from their early years to have a knowledge of God according to the faith received in Baptism, to worship Him, and to love their neighbor. Here, too, they find their first experience of a wholesome human society and of the Church. Finally, it is through the family that they are gradually led to a companionship with their fellowmen and with the people of God. Let parents, then, recognize the inestimable importance a truly Christian family has for the life and progress of God's own people.(12)

The family which has the primary duty of imparting education needs help of the whole community. In addition, therefore, to the rights of parents and others to whom the parents entrust a share in the work of education, certain rights and duties belong indeed to civil society, whose role is to direct what is required for the common temporal good. Its function is to promote the education of youth in many ways, namely: to protect the duties and rights of parents and others who share in education and to give them aid; according to the principle of subsidiarity, when the endeavors of parents and other societies are lacking, to carry out the work of education in accordance with the wishes of the parents; and, moreover, as the common good demands, to build schools and institutions.(13)

Finally, in a special way, the duty of educating belongs to the Church, not merely because she must be recognized as a human society capable of educating, but especially because she has the responsibility of announcing the way of salvation to all men, of communicating the life of Christ to those who believe, and, in her unflinching solicitude, of assisting men to be able to come to the fullness of this life.(14) The Church is bound as a mother to give to these children of hers an education by which their whole life can be imbued with the spirit of Christ and at the same time do all she can to promote for all peoples the complete perfection of the human person, the good of earthly society and the building of a world that is more human.(15)

#### **4. Various Aids to Christian Education**

In fulfilling its educational role, the Church, eager to employ all suitable aids, is concerned especially about those which are her very own. Foremost among these is catechetical instruction,(16) which enlightens and strengthens the faith, nourishes life according to the spirit of Christ, leads to intelligent and active participation in the liturgical mystery(17) and gives motivation for apostolic activity. The Church esteems highly and seeks to penetrate and ennoble with her own spirit also other aids which belong to the general heritage of man and which are of great influence in forming souls and molding men, such as the media of communication,(18) various groups for mental and physical development, youth associations, and, in particular, schools.

#### **5. The Importance of Schools**

Among all educational instruments the school has a special importance.(19) It is designed not only to develop with special care the intellectual faculties but also to form the ability to judge rightly, to hand on the cultural legacy of previous generations, to foster a sense of values, to prepare for professional life. Between pupils of different talents and backgrounds it promotes friendly relations and fosters a spirit of mutual understanding; and it establishes as it were a center whose work and progress must be shared together by families, teachers, associations of various types that foster cultural, civic, and religious life, as well as by civil society and the entire human community.

Beautiful indeed and of great importance is the vocation of all those who aid parents in fulfilling their duties and who, as representatives of the human community, undertake the task of education in schools. This vocation demands special qualities of mind and heart, very careful preparation, and continuing readiness to renew and to adapt.

#### **6. The Duties and Rights of Parents**

Parents who have the primary and inalienable right and duty to educate their children must enjoy true liberty in their choice of schools. Consequently, the public power, which has the obligation to protect and defend the rights of citizens, must see to it, in its concern for distributive justice, that public subsidies are paid out in such a way that parents are truly free to choose according to their conscience the schools they want for their children.(20)

In addition it is the task of the state to see to it that all citizens are able to come to a suitable share in culture and are properly prepared to exercise their civic duties and rights. Therefore the state must protect the right of children to an adequate school education, check on the ability of teachers and the excellence of their training, look after the health of the pupils and in general, promote the whole school project. But it must always keep in mind the principle of subsidiarity so

that there is no kind of school monopoly, for this is opposed to the native rights of the human person, to the development and spread of culture, to the peaceful association of citizens and to the pluralism that exists today in ever so many societies.(21)

Therefore this sacred synod exhorts the faithful to assist to their utmost in finding suitable methods of education and programs of study and in forming teachers who can give youth a true education. Through the associations of parents in particular they should further with their assistance all the work of the school but especially the moral education it must impart.(22)

### ***7. Moral and Religious Education in all Schools***

Feeling very keenly the weighty responsibility of diligently caring for the moral and religious education of all her children, the Church must be present with her own special affection and help for the great number who are being trained in schools that are not Catholic. This is possible by the witness of the lives of those who teach and direct them, by the apostolic action of their fellow-students,(23) but especially by the ministry of priests and laymen who give them the doctrine of salvation in a way suited to their age and circumstances and provide spiritual aid in every way the times and conditions allow.

The Church reminds parents of the duty that is theirs to arrange and even demand that their children be able to enjoy these aids and advance in their Christian formation to a degree that is abreast of their development in secular subjects. Therefore the Church esteems highly those civil authorities and societies which, bearing in mind the pluralism of contemporary society and respecting religious freedom, assist families so that the education of their children can be imparted in all schools according to the individual moral and religious principles of the families.(24)

### ***8. Catholic Schools***

The influence of the Church in the field of education is shown in a special manner by the Catholic school. No less than other schools does the Catholic school pursue cultural goals and the human formation of youth. But its proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made through baptism as they develop their own personalities, and finally to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life and man is illumined by faith.(25) So indeed the Catholic school, while it is open, as it must be, to the situation of the contemporary world, leads its students to promote efficaciously the good of the earthly city and also prepares them for service in the spread of the Kingdom of God, so that by leading an exemplary apostolic life they become, as it were, a saving leaven in the human community.

Since, therefore, the Catholic school can be such an aid to the fulfillment of the mission of the People of God and to the fostering of the dialogue between the Church and mankind, to the benefit of both, it retains even in our present circumstances the utmost importance. Consequently this sacred synod proclaims anew what has already been taught in several documents of the magisterium,(26) namely: the right of the Church freely to establish and to conduct schools of every type and level. And the council calls to mind that the exercise of a right of this kind contributes in the highest degree to the protection of freedom of conscience, the rights of parents, as well as to the betterment of culture itself.

But let teachers recognize that the Catholic school depends upon them almost entirely for the accomplishment of its goals and programs.(27) They should therefore be very carefully prepared so that both in secular and religious knowledge they are equipped with suitable qualifications and also with a pedagogical skill that is in keeping with the findings of the contemporary world. Intimately linked in charity to one another and to their students and endowed with an apostolic spirit, may teachers by their life as much as by their instruction bear witness to Christ, the unique Teacher. Let them work as partners with parents and together with them in every phase of education give due consideration to the difference of sex and the proper ends Divine Providence assigns to each sex in the family and in society. Let them do all they can to stimulate their students to act for themselves and even after graduation to continue to assist them with advice, friendship and by establishing special associations imbued with the true spirit of the Church. The work of these teachers, this sacred synod declares, is in the real sense of the word an apostolate most suited to and necessary for our times and at once a true service offered to society. The Council also reminds Catholic parents of the duty of entrusting their children to Catholic schools wherever and whenever it is possible and of supporting these schools to the best of their ability and of cooperating with them for the education of their children.(28)

### ***9. Different Types of Catholic Schools***

To this concept of a Catholic school all schools that are in any way dependent on the Church must conform as far as possible, though the Catholic school is to take on different forms in keeping with local circumstances.(29) Thus the Church considers very dear to her heart those Catholic schools, found especially in the areas of the new churches, which are attended also by students who are not Catholics.

Attention should be paid to the needs of today in establishing and directing Catholic schools. Therefore, though primary and secondary schools, the foundation of education, must still be fostered, great importance is to be attached to those which are required in a particular way by contemporary conditions, such as: professional(30) and technical schools, centers for educating adults and promoting social welfare, or for the retarded in need of special care, and also

schools for preparing teachers for religious instruction and other types of education.

This Sacred Council of the Church earnestly entreats pastors and all the faithful to spare no sacrifice in helping Catholic schools fulfill their function in a continually more perfect way, and especially in caring for the needs of those who are poor in the goods of this world or who are deprived of the assistance and affection of a family or who are strangers to the gift of Faith.

### ***10. Catholic Colleges and Universities***

The Church is concerned also with schools of a higher level, especially colleges and universities. In those schools dependent on her she intends that by their very constitution individual subjects be pursued according to their own principles, method, and liberty of scientific inquiry, in such a way that an ever deeper understanding in these fields may be obtained and that, as questions that are new and current are raised and investigations carefully made according to the example of the doctors of the Church and especially of St. Thomas Aquinas,(31) there may be a deeper realization of the harmony of faith and science. Thus there is accomplished a public, enduring and pervasive influence of the Christian mind in the furtherance of culture and the students of these institutions are molded into men truly outstanding in their training, ready to undertake weighty responsibilities in society and witness to the faith in the world.(32)

In Catholic universities where there is no faculty of sacred theology there should be established an institute or chair of sacred theology in which there should be lectures suited to lay students. Since science advances by means of the investigations peculiar to higher scientific studies, special attention should be given in Catholic universities and colleges to institutes that serve primarily the development of scientific research.

The sacred synod heartily recommends that Catholic colleges and universities be conveniently located in different parts of the world, but in such a way that they are outstanding not for their numbers but for their pursuit of knowledge. Matriculation should be readily available to students of real promise, even though they be of slender means, especially to students from the newly emerging nations.

Since the destiny of society and of the Church itself is intimately linked with the progress of young people pursuing higher studies,(33) the pastors of the Church are to expend their energies not only on the spiritual life of students who attend Catholic universities, but, solicitous for the spiritual formation of all their children, they must see to it, after consultations between bishops, that even at universities that are not Catholic there should be associations and university centers under Catholic auspices in which priests, religious and laity, carefully selected and prepared, should give abiding spiritual and intellectual assistance to the youth of



the university. Whether in Catholic universities or others, young people of greater ability who seem suited for teaching or research should be specially helped and encouraged to undertake a teaching career.

### ***11. Faculties of Sacred Sciences***

The Church expects much from the zealous endeavors of the faculties of the sacred sciences.(34) For to them she entrusts the very serious responsibility of preparing her own students not only for the priestly ministry, but especially for teaching in the seats of higher ecclesiastical studies or for promoting learning on their own or for undertaking the work of a more rigorous intellectual apostolate. Likewise it is the role of these very faculties to make more penetrating inquiry into the various aspects of the sacred sciences so that an ever deepening understanding of sacred Revelation is obtained, the legacy of Christian wisdom handed down by our forefathers is more fully developed, the dialogue with our separated brethren and with non-Christians is fostered, and answers are given to questions arising from the development of doctrine.(35)

Therefore ecclesiastical faculties should reappraise their own laws so that they can better promote the sacred sciences and those linked with them and, by employing up-to-date methods and aids, lead their students to more penetrating inquiry.

### ***12. Coordination to be Fostered in Scholastic Matters***

Cooperation is the order of the day. It increases more and more to supply the demand on a diocesan, national and international level. Since it is altogether necessary in scholastic matters, every means should be employed to foster suitable cooperation between Catholic schools, and between these and other schools that collaboration should be developed which the good of all mankind requires.(36) From greater coordination and cooperative endeavor greater fruits will be derived particularly in the area of academic institutions. Therefore in every university let the various faculties work mutually to this end, insofar as their goal will permit. In addition, let the universities also endeavor to work together by promoting international gatherings, by sharing scientific inquiries with one another, by communicating their discoveries to one another, by having exchange of professors for a time and by promoting all else that is conducive to greater assistance.

## **CONCLUSION**

The sacred synod earnestly entreats young people themselves to become aware of the importance of the work of education and to prepare themselves to take it up, especially where because of a shortage of teachers the education of youth is in jeopardy. This same sacred synod, while professing its gratitude to priests, Religious men and women, and the laity who by their evangelical self-dedication

are devoted to the noble work of education and of schools of every type and level, exhorts them to persevere generously in the work they have undertaken and, imbuing their students with the spirit of Christ, to strive to excel in pedagogy and the pursuit of knowledge in such a way that they not merely advance the internal renewal of the Church but preserve and enhance its beneficent influence upon today's world, especially the intellectual world.

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## NOTES

1. Among many documents illustrating the importance of education confer above all apostolic letter of Benedict XV, *Communes Litteras*, April 10, 1919: A.A.S. 11 (1919) p. 172. Pius XI's apostolic encyclical, *Divini Illius Magistri*, Dec. 31, 1929: A.A.S. 22 (1930) pp. 49-86. Pius XII's allocution to the youths of Italian Catholic Action, April 20, 1946: *Discourses and Radio Messages*, vol. 8, pp. 53-57. Allocution to fathers of French families, Sept. 18, 1951: *Discourses and Radio Messages*, vol. 13, pp. 241-245. John XXIII's 30th anniversary message on the publication of the encyclical letter, *Divini Illius Magistri*, Dec. 30, 1959: A.A.S. 52 (1960) pp. 57-S9. Paul VI's allocution to members of Federated Institutes Dependent on Ecclesiastic Authority, Dec. 30, 1963: *Encyclicals and Discourses of His Holiness Paul VI*, Rome, 1964, pp. 601-603. Above all are to be consulted the Acts and Documents of the Second Vatican Council appearing in the first series of the ante-preparatory phase. vol. 3. pp. 363-364; 370-371; 373-374.
2. Cf. John XXIII's encyclical letter *Mater et Magistra*, May 15, 1961: A.A.S. 53 (1961) pp. 413-415; 417-424; Encyclical letter, *Pacem in Terris*, April 11, 1963: A.A.S. 55 (1963) p. 278 ff.
3. Declaration on the Rights of Man of Dec. 10, 1948, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations, and also cf. the Declaration of the Rights of Children of Nov. 20 1959; additional protocol to the Convention Safeguarding the Rights of Men and Fundamental Liberties, Paris, March 20, 1952; regarding that universal profession of the character of human laws cf. apostolic letter *Pacem in Terris*, of John XXIII of April 11, 1963: A.A.S. 55 (1963) p. 295 ff.
4. Cf. John XXIII's encyclical letter, *Mater et Magistra*, May 15, 1961: A.A.S. 53 (1961) p. 402. Cf. Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, no. 17: A.A.S. 57 (1965) p. 21, and schema on the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 1965.
5. Pius XII's radio message of Dec. 24, 1942: A.A.S. 35 (1943) pp. 12-19, and John XXIII's encyclical letter, *Pacem in Terris* April 11, 1963: A.A.S. 55 (1963) p. 259 ff. Also cf. declaration cited on the rights of man in footnote 3.
6. Cf. Pius XI's encyclical letter, *Divini Illius Magistri*, Dec. 31, 1929: A.A.S. 22 (1930) p. 50 ff.
7. Cf. John XXIII's encyclical letter, *Mater et Magistra*, May 15 1961: A.A.S. 53 (1961) p. 441 ff.
8. Cf. Pius XI's encyclical letter, *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1, p. 83.
9. Cf. Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, no. 36: A.A.S. 57 (1965) p. 41 ff.
10. Cf. Second Vatican Council's schema on the Decree on the Lay Apostolate (1965), no. 12.
11. Cf. Pius XI's encyclical letter *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1, p. 59 ff., encyclical letter *Mit Brennender Sorge*, March 14, 1937: A.A.S. 29; Pius XII's allocution to the first national congress of the Italian Catholic Teachers' Association, Sept. 8, 1946: *Discourses and Radio Messages*, vol. 8, p. 218.
12. Cf. Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, nos. 11 and 35: A.A.S. 57 (1965) pp. 16, 40 ff.

13. Cf. Pius XI's encyclical letter *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1, p. 63 ff. Pius XII's radio message of June 1, 1941: A.A.S. 33 (1941) p. 200; allocution to the first national congress of the Association of Italian Catholic Teachers, Sept 8, 1946: *Discourses and Radio Messages*, vol. 8, 1946: *Discourses and Radio Messages*, vol. 8 p. 218. Regarding the principle of subsidiarity, cf. John XXIII's encyclical letter, *Pacem in Terris*, April 11, 1963: A.A.S. 55 (1963) p. 294.

14. Cf. Pius XI's encyclical letter, *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1 pp. 53 ff. and 56 ff.; Encyclical letter, *Non Abbiamo Bisogno* June 29, 1931: A.A.S. 23 (1931) p. 311 ff. Pius XII's letter from Secretariat of State to 28th Italian Social Week, Sept. 20, 1955; *L'Osservatore Romano*, Sept. 29, 1955.

15. The Church praises those local, national and international civic authorities who, conscious of the urgent necessity in these times, expend all their energy so that all peoples may benefit from more education and human culture. Cf. Paul VI's allocution to the United Nations General Assembly, Oct. 4, 1965: *L'Osservatore Romano*, Oct. 6, 1965.

16. Cf. Pius XI's *motu proprio*. *Orbem Catholicum*, June 29 1923: A.A.S. 15 (1923) pp. 327-329; decree, *Provide Sane*, Jan. 12, 1935: A.A.S. 27 (1935) pp. 145-152. Second Vatican Council's Decree on Bishops and Pastoral Duties, nos. 13 and 14.

17. Cf. Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, no. 14: A.A.S. 56 (1964) p. 104.

18. Cf. Second Vatican Council's Decree on Communications Media, nos. 13 and 14: A.A.S. 56 (1964) p. 149 ff.

19. Cf. Pius XI's encyclical letter, *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1, p. 76; Pius XII's allocution to Bavarian Association of Catholic Teachers, Dec. 31, 1956: *Discourses and Radio Messages*, vol. 18, p. 746.

20. Cf. Provincial Council of Cincinnati III, a. 1861: *Collatio Lacensis*, III, col. 1240, c/d; Pius XI's encyclical letter, *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1, pp. 60, 63 ff.

21. Cf. Pius XI's encyclical letter, *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1, p. 63; encyclical letter, *Non Abbiamo Misogno*, June 29, 1931: A.A.S. 23 (1931) p. 305, Pius XII's letter from the Secretary of State to the 28th Italian Social Week, Sept. 20, 1955: *L'Osservatore Romano*, Sept. 29, 1955. Paul VI's allocution to the Association of Italian Christian Workers, Oct. 6, 1963: *Encyclicals and Discourses of Paul VI*, vol. 1, Rome, 1964, p. 230.

22. Cf. John XXIII's message on the 30th anniversary of the encyclical letter, *Divini Illius Magistri*, Dec. 30, 1959: A.A.S. 52 (1960) p. 57.

23. The Church considers it as apostolic action of great worth also when Catholic teachers and associates work in these schools. Cf. Second Vatican Council's schema of the Decree on the Lay Apostolate (1965), nos. 12 and 16.

24. Cf. Second Vatican Council's schema on the Declaration on Religious Liberty (1965), no. 5.

25. Cf. Provincial Council of Westminster I, a. 1852: *Collatio Lacensis*, III, col. 1334, a/b; Pius XI's encyclical letter, *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1, p. 77 ff.; Pius XII's allocution to the Bavarian Association of Catholic Teachers, Dec. 31, 1956: *Discourses and Radio Messages*, vol. 18, p. 746; Paul VI's allocution to the members of Federated Institutes Dependent on Ecclesiastic Authority, Dec. 30, 1963: *Encyclicals and Discourses of Paul VI*, 1, Rome, 1964, 602 ff.

26. Cf. especially the document mentioned in the first note; moreover this law of the Church is proclaimed by many provincial councils and in the most recent declarations of very many of the episcopal conferences.

27. Cf. Pius XI's encyclical letter, *Divini Illius Magistri*, 1 p. 80 ff.; Pius XII's allocution to the Catholic Association of Italian Teachers in Secondary Schools, Jan. 5, 1954: *Discourses and Radio Messages*, 15, pp. 551-55B; John XXIII's allocution to the 6th Congress of the Associations of Catholic Italian Teachers Sept. 5, 1959: *Discourses, Messages, Conversations*, 1, Rome, 1960, pp. 427-431.

28. Cf. Pius XII's allocution to the Catholic Association of Italian Teachers in Secondary Schools, Jan. 5, 1954, 1, p. 555.
29. Cf. Paul VI's allocution to the International Office of Catholic Education, Feb. 25, 1964: *Encyclicals and Discourses of Paul VI*, 2, Rome, 1964, p. 232.
30. Cf. Paul VI's allocution to the Christian Association of Italian Workers, Oct. 6, 1963: *Encyclicals and Discourses of Paul VI*, 1, Rome, 1964, p. 229.
31. Cf. Paul VI's allocution to the International Thomistic Congress, Sept. 10, 1965: *L'Osservatore Romano*, Sept. 13-14, 1965.
32. Cf. Pius XII's allocution to teachers and students of French Institutes of Higher Catholic Education, Sept. 21, 1950: *Discourses and Radio Messages*, 12, pp. 219-221; letters to the 22nd congress of Pax Romana, Aug. 12, 1952: *Discourses and Radio Messages*, 14, pp. 567-569; John XXIII's allocution to the Federation of Catholic Universities, April 1, 1959: *Discourses, Messages and Conversations*, 1, Rome, 1960, pp. 226-229; Paul VI's allocution to the Academic Senate of the Catholic University of Milan, April 5, 1964: *Encyclicals and Discourses of Paul VI*, 2, Rome, 1964, pp. 438-443.
33. Cf. Pius XII's allocution to the academic senate and students of the University of Rome, June 15, 1952: *Discourses and Radio Messages*, 14, p. 208: "The direction of today's society principally is placed in the mentality and hearts of the universities of today."
34. Cf. Pius XII's apostolic constitution, *Deus Scientiarum Dominus*, May 24, 1931: *A.A.S.* 23 (1931) pp. 245-247.
35. Cf. Pius XII's encyclical letter, *Humani Generis* Aug. 12, 1950 *A.A.S.* 42 (1950) pp. 568 ff. and 578; Paul VI's encyclical letter, *Ecclesiam Suam*, part III Aug. 6, 1964; *A.A.S.* 56 (1964) pp. 637-659; Second Vatican Council's Decree on Eccumenism: *A.A.S.* 57 (1965) pp. 90-107.
36. Cf. John XXIII's encyclical letter, *Pacem in Terris*, April 11, 1963: *A.A.S.* 55 (1963) p. 284 and elsewhere

DECLARATION ON  
THE RELATION OF THE CHURCH TO NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS  
**NOSTRA AETATE**

PROCLAIMED BY HIS HOLINESS  
POPE PAUL VI  
ON OCTOBER 28, 1965

1. In our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions. In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship.

One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth.(1) One also is their final goal, God. His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men,(2) until that time when the elect will be united in the Holy City, the city ablaze with the glory of God, where the nations will walk in His light.(3)

Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men: What is man? What is the meaning, the aim of our life? What is moral good, what sin? Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve? Which is the road to true happiness? What are death, judgment and retribution after death? What, finally, is that ultimate inexpressible mystery which encompasses our existence: whence do we come, and where are we going?

2. From ancient times down to the present, there is found among various peoples a certain perception of that hidden power which hovers over the course of things and over the events of human history; at times some indeed have come to the recognition of a Supreme Being, or even of a Father. This perception and recognition penetrates their lives with a profound religious sense.

Religions, however, that are bound up with an advanced culture have struggled to answer the same questions by means of more refined concepts and a more developed language. Thus in Hinduism, men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an inexhaustible abundance of myths and through searching philosophical inquiry. They seek freedom from the anguish of our human condition either through ascetical practices or profound meditation or a flight to God with love and trust. Again, Buddhism, in its various forms, realizes the radical insufficiency of this changeable world; it teaches a way by which men, in a devout and confident spirit, may be able either to acquire the state of perfect liberation, or attain, by their own efforts or through higher help, supreme illumination. Likewise, other religions found everywhere try to counter the restlessness of the human heart, each in its own manner, by proposing "ways,"

comprising teachings, rules of life, and sacred rites. The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the ones she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. Indeed, she proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), in whom men may find the fullness of religious life, in whom God has reconciled all things to Himself.(4)

The Church, therefore, exhorts her sons, that through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, carried out with prudence and love and in witness to the Christian faith and life, they recognize, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men.

3. The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all- powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth,(5) who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as peace and freedom.

4. As the sacred synod searches into the mystery of the Church, it remembers the bond that spiritually ties the people of the New Covenant to Abraham's stock.

Thus the Church of Christ acknowledges that, according to God's saving design, the beginnings of her faith and her election are found already among the Patriarchs, Moses and the prophets. She professes that all who believe in Christ- Abraham's sons according to faith (6)-are included in the same Patriarch's call, and likewise that the salvation of the Church is mysteriously foreshadowed by the chosen people's exodus from the land of bondage. The Church, therefore, cannot forget that she received the revelation of the Old Testament through the people with whom God in His inexpressible mercy concluded the Ancient Covenant. Nor can she forget that she draws sustenance from the root of that well-cultivated olive tree onto which have been grafted the wild shoots, the Gentiles.(7) Indeed,

the Church believes that by His cross Christ, Our Peace, reconciled Jews and Gentiles. making both one in Himself.(8)

The Church keeps ever in mind the words of the Apostle about his kinsmen: "theirs is the sonship and the glory and the covenants and the law and the worship and the promises; theirs are the fathers and from them is the Christ according to the flesh" (Rom. 9:4-5), the Son of the Virgin Mary. She also recalls that the Apostles, the Church's main-stay and pillars, as well as most of the early disciples who proclaimed Christ's Gospel to the world, sprang from the Jewish people.

As Holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation,(9) nor did the Jews in large number, accept the Gospel; indeed not a few opposed its spreading.(10) Nevertheless, God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of their Fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls He issues-such is the witness of the Apostle.(11) In company with the Prophets and the same Apostle, the Church awaits that day, known to God alone, on which all peoples will address the Lord in a single voice and "serve him shoulder to shoulder" (Soph. 3:9).(12)

Since the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is thus so great, this sacred synod wants to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of biblical and theological studies as well as of fraternal dialogues.

True, the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ;(13) still, what happened in His passion cannot be charged against all the Jews, without distinction, then alive, nor against the Jews of today. Although the Church is the new people of God, the Jews should not be presented as rejected or accursed by God, as if this followed from the Holy Scriptures. All should see to it, then, that in catechetical work or in the preaching of the word of God they do not teach anything that does not conform to the truth of the Gospel and the spirit of Christ.

Furthermore, in her rejection of every persecution against any man, the Church, mindful of the patrimony she shares with the Jews and moved not by political reasons but by the Gospel's spiritual love, decries hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism, directed against Jews at any time and by anyone.

Besides, as the Church has always held and holds now, Christ underwent His passion and death freely, because of the sins of men and out of infinite love, in order that all may reach salvation. It is, therefore, the burden of the Church's preaching to proclaim the cross of Christ as the sign of God's all-embracing love and as the fountain from which every grace flows.

5. We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat in a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God. Man's relation to God the Father and his relation to men his brothers are so linked together that Scripture says: "He who does not love does not know God" (1 John 4:8).

No foundation therefore remains for any theory or practice that leads to discrimination between man and man or people and people, so far as their human dignity and the rights flowing from it are concerned.

The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their race, color, condition of life, or religion. On the contrary, following in the footsteps of the holy Apostles Peter and Paul, this sacred synod ardently implores the Christian faithful to "maintain good fellowship among the nations" (1 Peter 2:12), and, if possible, to live for their part in peace with all men,(14) so that they may truly be sons of the Father who is in heaven.(15)

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## NOTES

1. Cf. Acts 17:26
2. Cf. Wis. 8:1; Acts 14:17; Rom. 2:6-7; 1 Tim. 2:4
3. Cf. Apoc. 21:23f.
4. Cf 2 Cor. 5:18-19
5. Cf St. Gregory VII, letter XXI to Anzir (Nacir), King of Mauritania (Pl. 148, col. 450f.)
6. Cf. Gal. 3:7
7. Cf. Rom. 11:17-24
8. Cf. Eph. 2:14-16
9. Cf. Lk. 19:44
10. Cf. Rom. 11:28
11. Cf. Rom. 11:28-29; cf. dogmatic Constitution, Lumen Gentium (Light of nations) AAS, 57 (1965) pag. 20
12. Cf. Is. 66:23; Ps. 65:4; Rom. 11:11-32
13. Cf. John. 19:6
14. Cf. Rom. 12:18
15. Cf. Matt. 5:45





DECLARATION ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM  
**DIGNITATIS HUMANAE**

ON THE RIGHT OF THE PERSON AND OF COMMUNITIES  
TO SOCIAL AND CIVIL FREEDOM IN MATTERS RELIGIOUS  
PROMULGATED BY HIS HOLINESS  
POPE PAUL VI  
ON DECEMBER 7, 1965

1. A sense of the dignity of the human person has been impressing itself more and more deeply on the consciousness of contemporary man,<sup>(1)</sup> and the demand is increasingly made that men should act on their own judgment, enjoying and making use of a responsible freedom, not driven by coercion but motivated by a sense of duty. The demand is likewise made that constitutional limits should be set to the powers of government, in order that there may be no encroachment on the rightful freedom of the person and of associations. This demand for freedom in human society chiefly regards the quest for the values proper to the human spirit. It regards, in the first place, the free exercise of religion in society. This Vatican Council takes careful note of these desires in the minds of men. It proposes to declare them to be greatly in accord with truth and justice. To this end, it searches into the sacred tradition and doctrine of the Church—the treasury out of which the Church continually brings forth new things that are in harmony with the things that are old.

First, the council professes its belief that God Himself has made known to mankind the way in which men are to serve Him, and thus be saved in Christ and come to blessedness. We believe that this one true religion subsists in the Catholic and Apostolic Church, to which the Lord Jesus committed the duty of spreading it abroad among all men. Thus He spoke to the Apostles: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have enjoined upon you" (Matt. 28: 19-20). On their part, all men are bound to seek the truth, especially in what concerns God and His Church, and to embrace the truth they come to know, and to hold fast to it.

This Vatican Council likewise professes its belief that it is upon the human conscience that these obligations fall and exert their binding force. The truth cannot impose itself except by virtue of its own truth, as it makes its entrance into the mind at once quietly and with power.

Religious freedom, in turn, which men demand as necessary to fulfill their duty to worship God, has to do with immunity from coercion in civil society. Therefore it leaves untouched traditional Catholic doctrine on the moral duty of men and societies toward the true religion and toward the one Church of Christ.

Over and above all this, the council intends to develop the doctrine of recent popes on the inviolable rights of the human person and the constitutional order of society.

2. This Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits.

The council further declares that the right to religious freedom has its foundation in the very dignity of the human person as this dignity is known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself.(2) This right of the human person to religious freedom is to be recognized in the constitutional law whereby society is governed and thus it is to become a civil right.

It is in accordance with their dignity as persons-that is, beings endowed with reason and free will and therefore privileged to bear personal responsibility-that all men should be at once impelled by nature and also bound by a moral obligation to seek the truth, especially religious truth. They are also bound to adhere to the truth, once it is known, and to order their whole lives in accord with the demands of truth. However, men cannot discharge these obligations in a manner in keeping with their own nature unless they enjoy immunity from external coercion as well as psychological freedom. Therefore the right to religious freedom has its foundation not in the subjective disposition of the person, but in his very nature. In consequence, the right to this immunity continues to exist even in those who do not live up to their obligation of seeking the truth and adhering to it and the exercise of this right is not to be impeded, provided that just public order be observed.

3. Further light is shed on the subject if one considers that the highest norm of human life is the divine law-eternal, objective and universal-whereby God orders, directs and governs the entire universe and all the ways of the human community by a plan conceived in wisdom and love. Man has been made by God to participate in this law, with the result that, under the gentle disposition of divine Providence, he can come to perceive ever more fully the truth that is unchanging. Wherefore every man has the duty, and therefore the right, to seek the truth in matters religious in order that he may with prudence form for himself right and true judgments of conscience, under use of all suitable means.

Truth, however, is to be sought after in a manner proper to the dignity of the human person and his social nature. The inquiry is to be free, carried on with the aid of teaching or instruction, communication and dialogue, in the course of which men explain to one another the truth they have discovered, or think they have discovered, in order thus to assist one another in the quest for truth.

Moreover, as the truth is discovered, it is by a personal assent that men are to adhere to it.

On his part, man perceives and acknowledges the imperatives of the divine law through the mediation of conscience. In all his activity a man is bound to follow his conscience in order that he may come to God, the end and purpose of life. It follows that he is not to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his conscience. Nor, on the other hand, is he to be restrained from acting in accordance with his conscience, especially in matters religious. The reason is that the exercise of religion, of its very nature, consists before all else in those internal, voluntary and free acts whereby man sets the course of his life directly toward God. No merely human power can either command or prohibit acts of this kind.<sup>(3)</sup> The social nature of man, however, itself requires that he should give external expression to his internal acts of religion: that he should share with others in matters religious; that he should profess his religion in community. Injury therefore is done to the human person and to the very order established by God for human life, if the free exercise of religion is denied in society, provided just public order is observed.

There is a further consideration. The religious acts whereby men, in private and in public and out of a sense of personal conviction, direct their lives to God transcend by their very nature the order of terrestrial and temporal affairs. Government therefore ought indeed to take account of the religious life of the citizenry and show it favor, since the function of government is to make provision for the common welfare. However, it would clearly transgress the limits set to its power, were it to presume to command or inhibit acts that are religious.

4. The freedom or immunity from coercion in matters religious which is the endowment of persons as individuals is also to be recognized as their right when they act in community. Religious communities are a requirement of the social nature both of man and of religion itself.

Provided the just demands of public order are observed, religious communities rightfully claim freedom in order that they may govern themselves according to their own norms, honor the Supreme Being in public worship, assist their members in the practice of the religious life, strengthen them by instruction, and promote institutions in which they may join together for the purpose of ordering their own lives in accordance with their religious principles.

Religious communities also have the right not to be hindered, either by legal measures or by administrative action on the part of government, in the selection, training, appointment, and transferral of their own ministers, in communicating with religious authorities and communities abroad, in erecting buildings for religious purposes, and in the acquisition and use of suitable funds or properties.

Religious communities also have the right not to be hindered in their public teaching and witness to their faith, whether by the spoken or by the written word.

However, in spreading religious faith and in introducing religious practices everyone ought at all times to refrain from any manner of action which might seem to carry a hint of coercion or of a kind of persuasion that would be dishonorable or unworthy, especially when dealing with poor or uneducated people. Such a manner of action would have to be considered an abuse of one's right and a violation of the right of others.

In addition, it comes within the meaning of religious freedom that religious communities should not be prohibited from freely undertaking to show the special value of their doctrine in what concerns the organization of society and the inspiration of the whole of human activity. Finally, the social nature of man and the very nature of religion afford the foundation of the right of men freely to hold meetings and to establish educational, cultural, charitable and social organizations, under the impulse of their own religious sense.

5. The family, since it is a society in its own original right, has the right freely to live its own domestic religious life under the guidance of parents. Parents, moreover, have the right to determine, in accordance with their own religious beliefs, the kind of religious education that their children are to receive. Government, in consequence, must acknowledge the right of parents to make a genuinely free choice of schools and of other means of education, and the use of this freedom of choice is not to be made a reason for imposing unjust burdens on parents, whether directly or indirectly. Besides, the right of parents are violated, if their children are forced to attend lessons or instructions which are not in agreement with their religious beliefs, or if a single system of education, from which all religious formation is excluded, is imposed upon all.

6. Since the common welfare of society consists in the entirety of those conditions of social life under which men enjoy the possibility of achieving their own perfection in a certain fullness of measure and also with some relative ease, it chiefly consists in the protection of the rights, and in the performance of the duties, of the human person.(4) Therefore the care of the right to religious freedom devolves upon the whole citizenry, upon social groups, upon government, and upon the Church and other religious communities, in virtue of the duty of all toward the common welfare, and in the manner proper to each.

The protection and promotion of the inviolable rights of man ranks among the essential duties of government.(5) Therefore government is to assume the safeguard of the religious freedom of all its citizens, in an effective manner, by just laws and by other appropriate means.

Government is also to help create conditions favorable to the fostering of religious life, in order that the people may be truly enabled to exercise their religious rights and to fulfill their religious duties, and also in order that society itself may profit by the moral qualities of justice and peace which have their origin in men's faithfulness to God and to His holy will. (6)

If, in view of peculiar circumstances obtaining among peoples, special civil recognition is given to one religious community in the constitutional order of society, it is at the same time imperative that the right of all citizens and religious communities to religious freedom should be recognized and made effective in practice.

Finally, government is to see to it that equality of citizens before the law, which is itself an element of the common good, is never violated, whether openly or covertly, for religious reasons. Nor is there to be discrimination among citizens.

It follows that a wrong is done when government imposes upon its people, by force or fear or other means, the profession or repudiation of any religion, or when it hinders men from joining or leaving a religious community. All the more is it a violation of the will of God and of the sacred rights of the person and the family of nations when force is brought to bear in any way in order to destroy or repress religion, either in the whole of mankind or in a particular country or in a definite community.

7. The right to religious freedom is exercised in human society: hence its exercise is subject to certain regulatory norms. In the use of all freedoms the moral principle of personal and social responsibility is to be observed. In the exercise of their rights, individual men and social groups are bound by the moral law to have respect both for the rights of others and for their own duties toward others and for the common welfare of all. Men are to deal with their fellows in justice and civility.

Furthermore, society has the right to defend itself against possible abuses committed on the pretext of freedom of religion. It is the special duty of government to provide this protection. However, government is not to act in an arbitrary fashion or in an unfair spirit of partisanship. Its action is to be controlled by juridical norms which are in conformity with the objective moral order. These norms arise out of the need for the effective safeguard of the rights of all citizens and for the peaceful settlement of conflicts of rights, also out of the need for an adequate care of genuine public peace, which comes about when men live together in good order and in true justice, and finally out of the need for a proper guardianship of public morality.

These matters constitute the basic component of the common welfare: they are what is meant by public order. For the rest, the usages of society are to be the usages of freedom in their full range: that is, the freedom of man is to be respected as far as possible and is not to be curtailed except when and insofar as necessary.

8. Many pressures are brought to bear upon the men of our day, to the point where the danger arises lest they lose the possibility of acting on their own judgment. On the other hand, not a few can be found who seem inclined to use

the name of freedom as the pretext for refusing to submit to authority and for making light of the duty of obedience. Wherefore this Vatican Council urges everyone, especially those who are charged with the task of educating others, to do their utmost to form men who, on the one hand, will respect the moral order and be obedient to lawful authority, and on the other hand, will be lovers of true freedom-men, in other words, who will come to decisions on their own judgment and in the light of truth, govern their activities with a sense of responsibility, and strive after what is true and right, willing always to join with others in cooperative effort.

Religious freedom therefore ought to have this further purpose and aim, namely, that men may come to act with greater responsibility in fulfilling their duties in community life.

9. The declaration of this Vatican Council on the right of man to religious freedom has its foundation in the dignity of the person, whose exigencies have come to be fully known to human reason through centuries of experience. What is more, this doctrine of freedom has roots in divine revelation, and for this reason Christians are bound to respect it all the more conscientiously. Revelation does not indeed affirm in so many words the right of man to immunity from external coercion in matters religious. It does, however, disclose the dignity of the human person in its full dimensions. It gives evidence of the respect which Christ showed toward the freedom with which man is to fulfill his duty of belief in the word of God and it gives us lessons in the spirit which disciples of such a Master ought to adopt and continually follow. Thus further light is cast upon the general principles upon which the doctrine of this declaration on religious freedom is based. In particular, religious freedom in society is entirely consonant with the freedom of the act of Christian faith.

10. It is one of the major tenets of Catholic doctrine that man's response to God in faith must be free: no one therefore is to be forced to embrace the Christian faith against his own will.(8) This doctrine is contained in the word of God and it was constantly proclaimed by the Fathers of the Church.(7) The act of faith is of its very nature a free act. Man, redeemed by Christ the Savior and through Christ Jesus called to be God's adopted son,(9) cannot give his adherence to God revealing Himself unless, under the drawing of the Father,(10) he offers to God the reasonable and free submission of faith. It is therefore completely in accord with the nature of faith that in matters religious every manner of coercion on the part of men should be excluded. In consequence, the principle of religious freedom makes no small contribution to the creation of an environment in which men can without hindrance be invited to the Christian faith, embrace it of their own free will, and profess it effectively in their whole manner of life.

11. God calls men to serve Him in spirit and in truth, hence they are bound in conscience but they stand under no compulsion. God has regard for the dignity of the human person whom He Himself created and man is to be guided by his

own judgment and he is to enjoy freedom. This truth appears at its height in Christ Jesus, in whom God manifested Himself and His ways with men. Christ is at once our Master and our Lord(11) and also meek and humble of heart.(12) In attracting and inviting His disciples He used patience.(13) He wrought miracles to illuminate His teaching and to establish its truth, but His intention was to rouse faith in His hearers and to confirm them in faith, not to exert coercion upon them.(14) He did indeed denounce the unbelief of some who listened to Him, but He left vengeance to God in expectation of the day of judgment.(15) When He sent His Apostles into the world, He said to them: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved. He who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16). But He Himself, noting that the cockle had been sown amid the wheat, gave orders that both should be allowed to grow until the harvest time, which will come at the end of the world.(16) He refused to be a political messiah, ruling by force:(17) He preferred to call Himself the Son of Man, who came "to serve and to give his life as a ransom for the many" (Mark 10:45). He showed Himself the perfect servant of God,(18) who "does not break the bruised reed nor extinguish the smoking flax" (Matt. 12:20).

He acknowledged the power of government and its rights, when He commanded that tribute be given to Caesar: but He gave clear warning that the higher rights of God are to be kept inviolate: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21). In the end, when He completed on the cross the work of redemption whereby He achieved salvation and true freedom for men, He brought His revelation to completion. For He bore witness to the truth,(19) but He refused to impose the truth by force on those who spoke against it. Not by force of blows does His rule assert its claims.(20) It is established by witnessing to the truth and by hearing the truth, and it extends its dominion by the love whereby Christ, lifted up on the cross, draws all men to Himself.(21)

Taught by the word and example of Christ, the Apostles followed the same way. From the very origins of the Church the disciples of Christ strove to convert men to faith in Christ as the Lord; not, however, by the use of coercion or of devices unworthy of the Gospel, but by the power, above all, of the word of God.(22) Steadfastly they proclaimed to all the plan of God our Savior, "who wills that all men should be saved and come to the acknowledgment of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). At the same time, however, they showed respect for those of weaker stuff, even though they were in error, and thus they made it plain that "each one of us is to render to God an account of himself" (Romans 14:12),(23) and for that reason is bound to obey his conscience. Like Christ Himself, the Apostles were unceasingly bent upon bearing witness to the truth of God, and they showed the fullest measure of boldness in "speaking the word with confidence" (Acts 4:31) (24) before the people and their rulers. With a firm faith they held that the Gospel is indeed the power of God unto salvation for all who believe.(25) Therefore they rejected all "carnal weapons:(26) they followed the example of the gentleness and respectfulness of Christ and they preached the word of God in the full



confidence that there was resident in this word itself a divine power able to destroy all the forces arrayed against God(27) and bring men to faith in Christ and to His service.(28) As the Master, so too the Apostles recognized legitimate civil authority. "For there is no power except from God," the Apostle teaches, and thereafter commands: "Let everyone be subject to higher authorities.... He who resists authority resists God's ordinance" (Romans 13:1-5).(29) At the same time, however, they did not hesitate to speak out against governing powers which set themselves in opposition to the holy will of God: "It is necessary to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).(30) This is the way along which the martyrs and other faithful have walked through all ages and over all the earth.

12. In faithfulness therefore to the truth of the Gospel, the Church is following the way of Christ and the apostles when she recognizes and gives support to the principle of religious freedom as befitting the dignity of man and as being in accord with divine revelation. Throughout the ages the Church has kept safe and handed on the doctrine received from the Master and from the apostles. In the life of the People of God, as it has made its pilgrim way through the vicissitudes of human history, there has at times appeared a way of acting that was hardly in accord with the spirit of the Gospel or even opposed to it. Nevertheless, the doctrine of the Church that no one is to be coerced into faith has always stood firm.

Thus the leaven of the Gospel has long been about its quiet work in the minds of men, and to it is due in great measure the fact that in the course of time men have come more widely to recognize their dignity as persons, and the conviction has grown stronger that the person in society is to be kept free from all manner of coercion in matters religious.

13. Among the things that concern the good of the Church and indeed the welfare of society here on earth-things therefore that are always and everywhere to be kept secure and defended against all injury-this certainly is preeminent, namely, that the Church should enjoy that full measure of freedom which her care for the salvation of men requires.(31) This is a sacred freedom, because the only-begotten Son endowed with it the Church which He purchased with His blood. Indeed it is so much the property of the Church that to act against it is to act against the will of God. The freedom of the Church is the fundamental principle in what concerns the relations between the Church and governments and the whole civil order.

In human society and in the face of government the Church claims freedom for herself in her character as a spiritual authority, established by Christ the Lord, upon which there rests, by divine mandate, the duty of going out into the whole world and preaching the Gospel to every creature.(32) The Church also claims freedom for herself in her character as a society of men who have the right to live in society in accordance with the precepts of the Christian faith.(33)

In turn, where the principle of religious freedom is not only proclaimed in words or simply incorporated in law but also given sincere and practical application, there the Church succeeds in achieving a stable situation of right as well as of fact and the independence which is necessary for the fulfillment of her divine mission.

This independence is precisely what the authorities of the Church claim in society.(34) At the same time, the Christian faithful, in common with all other men, possess the civil right not to be hindered in leading their lives in accordance with their consciences. Therefore, a harmony exists between the freedom of the Church and the religious freedom which is to be recognized as the right of all men and communities and sanctioned by constitutional law.

14. In order to be faithful to the divine command, "teach all nations" (Matt. 28:19-20), the Catholic Church must work with all urgency and concern "that the word of God be spread abroad and glorified" (2 Thess. 3:1). Hence the Church earnestly begs of its children that, "first of all, supplications, prayers, petitions, acts of thanksgiving be made for all men.... For this is good and agreeable in the sight of God our Savior, who wills that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:1-4). In the formation of their consciences, the Christian faithful ought carefully to attend to the sacred and certain doctrine of the Church.(35) For the Church is, by the will of Christ, the teacher of the truth. It is her duty to give utterance to, and authoritatively to teach, that truth which is Christ Himself, and also to declare and confirm by her authority those principles of the moral order which have their origins in human nature itself. Furthermore, let Christians walk in wisdom in the face of those outside, "in the Holy Spirit, in unaffected love, in the word of truth" (2 Cor. 6:6-7), and let them be about their task of spreading the light of life with all confidence(36) and apostolic courage, even to the shedding of their blood.

The disciple is bound by a grave obligation toward Christ, his Master, ever more fully to understand the truth received from Him, faithfully to proclaim it, and vigorously to defend it, never-be it understood-having recourse to means that are incompatible with the spirit of the Gospel. At the same time, the charity of Christ urges him to love and have prudence and patience in his dealings with those who are in error or in ignorance with regard to the faith.(37) All is to be taken into account-the Christian duty to Christ, the life-giving word which must be proclaimed, the rights of the human person, and the measure of grace granted by God through Christ to men who are invited freely to accept and profess the faith.

15. The fact is that men of the present day want to be able freely to profess their religion in private and in public. Indeed, religious freedom has already been declared to be a civil right in most constitutions, and it is solemnly recognized in international documents.(38) The further fact is that forms of government still exist under which, even though freedom of religious worship receives constitutional recognition, the powers of government are engaged in the effort to

deter citizens from the profession of religion and to make life very difficult and dangerous for religious communities.

This council greets with joy the first of these two facts as among the signs of the times. With sorrow, however, it denounces the other fact, as only to be deplored. The council exhorts Catholics, and it directs a plea to all men, most carefully to consider how greatly necessary religious freedom is, especially in the present condition of the human family. All nations are coming into even closer unity. Men of different cultures and religions are being brought together in closer relationships. There is a growing consciousness of the personal responsibility that every man has. All this is evident. Consequently, in order that relationships of peace and harmony be established and maintained within the whole of mankind, it is necessary that religious freedom be everywhere provided with an effective constitutional guarantee and that respect be shown for the high duty and right of man freely to lead his religious life in society.

May the God and Father of all grant that the human family, through careful observance of the principle of religious freedom in society, may be brought by the grace of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit to the sublime and unending and "glorious freedom of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:21).

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## NOTES

1. Cf. John XXIII, encycl. "Pacem in Terris," April 11, 1963: AAS 55 (1963) p. 279; *ibid.*, p. 265; Pius XII, radio message, Dec. 24, 1944: AAS 37 (1945), p. 14.

2. Cf. John XXIII, encycl. "Pacem in Terris," April 11, 1963: AAS 55 (1963), pp. 260-261; Pius XII, radio message, Dec. 24, 1942: AAS 35 (1943), p. 19; Pius XI, encycl. "Mit Brennender Sorge," March 14, 1937: AAS 29 (1937), p. 160; Leo XIII, encycl. "Libertas Praestantissimum," June 20, 1888: Acts of Leo XIII 8 (1888), p. 237-238.

3. Cf. John XXIII, encycl. "Pacem in Terris," April 11, 1963: AAS 55 (1963), p. 270; Paul VI, radio message, Dec. 22, 1964: AAS 57 (1965), pp. 181-182.

4. Cf. John XXIII, encycl. "Mater et Magistra," May 15, 1961: AAS 53 (1961), p. 417; *idem*, encycl. "Pacem in Terris," April 11, 1963: AAS 55 (1963), p. 273.

5. Cf. John XXIII, encycl. "Pacem in Terris," April 11, 1963: AAS 55 (1963), pp. 273-274; Pius XII, radio message, June 1 1941: AAS 33 (1941), p. 200.

6. Cf. Leo XIII, encycl. "Immortale Dei," Nov. 1, 1885: AAS 18 (1885) p. 161.

7. Cf. Lactantius "Divinarum Institutionum," Book V, 19: CSEL 19, pp. 463-464, 465: PL 6, 614 and 616 (ch. 20); St. Ambrose, "Epistola ad Valentianum Imp.," Letter 21: PL 16, 1005; St. Augustine, "Contra Litteras Petiliani," Book II, ch. 83: CSEL 52 p. 112: PL 43, 315; cf. C. 23, q. 5, c. 33, (ed. Friedberg, col. 939); *idem*, Letter 23: PL 33, 98, *idem*, Letter 34: PL 33, 132; *idem*, Letter 35: PL 33, 135; St. Gregory the Great, "Epistola ad Virgilium et Theodorum Episcopos Massiliae Galliarum, Register of Letters I, 45: MGH Ep. 1, p. 72: PL 77, 510-511 (Book I, ep. 47); *idem*, "Epistola ad Johannem Episcopum Constantinopolitanum," Register of Letters, III, 52: MGH Letter 1, p. 210: PL 77, 649 (Book III, Letter 53); cf. D. 45, c. 1 (ed. Friedberg, col 160); Council of Toledo IV, c. 57: Mansi 10, 633; cf. D. 45, c. 5 (ed. Friedberg, col. 161-162);

Clement III: X., V, 6, 9: ed. Friedberg, col. 774; Innocent III, "Epistola ad Arelatensem Archiepiscopum," X., III, 42, 3: Friedberg, col. 646.

8. Cf. CIC, c. 1351; Pius XII, allocution to prelate auditors and other officials and administrators of the tribune of the Holy Roman Rota, Oct. 6, 1946: AAS 38 (1946), p. 394; idem. Encycl *Mystici Corporis*," June 29, 1943: AAS (1943) p. 243.

9. Cf. Eph. 1:5.

10. Cf. John 6:44.

11. Cf. John 13:13.

12. Cf. Matt. 11:29.

13. Cf Matt. 11:28-30; John 6:67-68.

14. Cf Matt. 9:28-29; Mark 9:23-24; 6:5-6; Paul VI, encycl. "Ecclesiam Suam," Aug. 6, 1964: AAS 56 (1964), pp. 642-643.

15. Cf. Matt. 11:20-24; Rom. 12:19-20; 2 Thess. 1:8.

16. Cf. Matt. 13:30 and 40-42.

17. Cf. Matt. 4:8-10; John 6:15.

18. Cf. Is. 42:1-4.

19. Cf. John 18:37.

20. Cf. Matt. 26:51-53; John 18:36.

21. Cf. John 12:32.

22. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:3-5; 1 Thess. 2:3-5.

23. Cf. Rom. 14:1-23; 1 Cor. 8:9-13; 10:23-33.

24. Cf. Eph. 6:19-20.

25. Cf. Rom. 1:16.

26. Cf. 2 Cor. 10:4; 1 Thess. 5:8-9.

27. Cf. Eph. 6:11-17.

28. Cf. 2 Cor. 10:3-5.

29. Cf. 1 Pet. 2:13-17.

30. Cf. Acts 4: 19-20.

31. Cf. Leo XIII, letter "Officio Sanctissimo," Dec. 22 1887: AAS 20 (1887), p. 269; idem, letter "Ex Litteris," April 7 1887: AAS 19 (1886), p. 465.

32. Cf. Mark 16:15; Matt. 28:18-20, Pius XII, encycl. "Summi Pontificatus," Oct. 20, 1939: AAS 31 (1939). pp. 445-446.

33. Cf. Pius XI, letter "Firmissiman Constantiam," March 28, 1937: AAS 29 (1937), p. 196.

34. Cf. Pius XII, allocution, "Ci Riesce," Dec. 6, 1953: AAS 45 (1953), p. 802.

35. Cf. Pius XII, radio message, March 23, 1952: AAS 44 (1952) pp. 270-278.

36. Cf. Acts 4:29.

37. Cf. John XXIII, encycl. "Pacem in Terris," April 11, 1963:AAS 55 (1963), pp. 299-300.

38. Cf. John XXIII, encycl. "Pacem in Terris," April 11, 1963:AAS 55 (1963) pp. 295-296.

DECREE  
**AD GENTES**

ON THE MISSION ACTIVITY  
OF THE CHURCH

**PREFACE**

1. Divinely sent to the nations of the world to be unto them "a universal sacrament of salvation,"(1) the Church, driven by the inner necessity of her own catholicity, and obeying the mandate of her Founder (cf. Mark 16:16), strives ever to proclaim the Gospel to all men. The Apostles themselves, on whom the Church was founded, following in the footsteps of Christ, "preached the word of truth and begot churches."(2) It is the duty of their successors to make this task endure "so that the word of God may run and be glorified (2 Thess. 3:1) and the kingdom of God be proclaimed and established throughout the world.

In the present state of affairs, out of which there is arising a new situation for mankind, the Church, being the salt of the earth and the light of the world (cf. Matt. 5:13-14), is more urgently called upon to save and renew every creature, that all things may be restored in Christ and all men may constitute one family in Him and one people of God.

Therefore, this sacred synod, while rendering thanks to God for the excellent results that have been achieved through the whole Church's great - hearted endeavor, desires to sketch the principles of missionary activity and to rally the forces of all the faithful in order that the people of God, marching along the narrow way of the Cross, may spread everywhere the reign of Christ, Lord and overseer: of the ages (cf. Ecc. 36:19), and may prepare the way for his coming.

**CHAPTER I**

**PRINCIPLES OF DOCTRINE**

2. The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father.(1)

This decree, however, flows from the "fount - like love" or charity of God the Father who, being the "principle without principle" from whom the Son is begotten and Holy Spirit proceeds through the Son, freely creating us on account of His surpassing and merciful kindness and graciously calling us moreover to share with Him His life and His cry, has generously poured out, and does not cease to pour out still, His divine goodness. Thus He who created all things may at last be "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28), bringing about at one and the same time His own glory and our happiness. But it pleased God to call men to share His life, not just

singly, apart from any mutual bond, but rather to mold them into a people in which His sons, once scattered abroad might be gathered together (cf. John 11:52).

3. This universal design of God for the salvation of the human race is carried out not only, as it were, secretly in the soul of a man, or by the attempts (even religious ones by which in diverse ways it seeks after God) if perchance it may contact Him or find Him, though He be not far from anyone of us (cf. Acts 17:27). For these attempts need to be enlightened and healed; even though, through the kindly workings of Divine Providence, they may sometimes serve as leading strings toward God, or as a preparation for the Gospel.(2) Now God, in order to establish peace or the communion of sinful human beings with Himself, as well as to fashion them into a fraternal community, did ordain to intervene in human history in a way both new and finally sending His Son, clothed in our flesh, in order that through Him He might snatch men from the power of darkness and Satan (cf. Col. 1:13; Acts 10:38) and reconcile the world to Himself in Him (cf. 2 Cor. 5:19). Him, then, by whom He made the world,(3) He appointed heir of all things, that in Him He might restore all (cf. Eph. 1:10).

For Jesus Christ was sent into the world as a real mediator between God and men. Since He is God, all divine fullness dwells bodily in Him (Gal. 2:9). According to His human nature, on the other hand, He is the new Adam, made head of a renewed humanity, and full of grace and of truth (John 1:14). Therefore the Son of God walked the ways of a true Incarnation that He might make men sharers in the nature of God: made poor for our sakes, though He had been rich, in order that His poverty might enrich us (2 Cor. 8:9). The Son of Man came not that He might be served, but that He might be a servant, and give His life as a ransom for the many - that is, for all (cf. Mark 10:45). The Fathers of the Church proclaim without hesitation that what has not been taken up by Christ is not made whole.(4) Now, what He took up was our entire human nature such as it is found among us poor wretches, save only sin (cf. Heb. 4:15; 9:28). For Christ said concerning Himself, He whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world (cf. John 10:36): the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He anointed me; to bring good news to the poor He sent me, to heal the broken - hearted, to proclaim to the captives release, and sight to the blind" (Luke 4:18). And again: "The Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10).

But what the Lord preached that one time, or what was wrought in Him for the saving of the human race, must be spread abroad and published to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), beginning from Jerusalem (cf. Luke 24:27), so that what He accomplished at that one time for the salvation of all, may in the course of time come to achieve its effect in all.

4. To accomplish this, Christ sent from the Father His Holy Spirit, who was to carry on inwardly His saving work and prompt the Church to spread out. Doubtless, the Holy Spirit was already at work in the world before Christ was

glorified.(5) Yet on the day of Pentecost, He came down upon the disciples to remain with them forever (cf. John 14:16). The Church was publicly displayed to the multitude, the Gospel began to spread among the nations by means of preaching, and there was presaged that union of all peoples in the catholicity of the faith by means of the Church of the New Covenant, a Church which speaks all tongues, understands and accepts all tongues in her love, and so supersedes the divisiveness of Babel.(6) For it was from Pentecost that the "Acts of the Apostles" took again, just as Christ was - conceived when the Holy Spirit came upon the Virgin Mary, and just as Christ was impelled to the work of His ministry by the same Holy Spirit descending upon Him while He prayed.(7)

Now, the Lord Jesus, before freely giving His life for the world, did so arrange the Apostles' ministry and promise to send the Holy Spirit that both they and the Spirit might be associated in effecting the work of salvation always and everywhere.(8) Throughout all ages, the Holy Spirit makes the entire Church "one in communion and in ministering; He equips her with various gifts of a hierarchical and charismatic nature," a giving life, soul - like, to ecclesiastical institutions(10) and instilling into the hearts of the faithful the same mission spirit which impelled Christ Himself. Sometimes He even visibly anticipates the Apostles' acting,(11) just as He unceasingly accompanies and directs it in different ways.(12)

5. From the very beginning, the Lord Jesus "called to Himself those whom He wished; and He caused twelve of them to be with Him, and to be sent out preaching (Mark 3:13; cf. Matt. 10:1-42). Thus the Apostles were the first budding - forth of the New Israel, and at the same time the beginning of the sacred hierarchy. Then, when He had by His death and His resurrection completed once for all in Himself the mysteries of our salvation and the renewal of all things, the Lord, having now received all power in heaven and on earth (cf. Matt. 28 18), before He was taken up into heaven (cf. Acts 1:11), founded His Church as the sacrament of salvation and sent His Apostles into all the world just as He Himself had been sent by His Father (cf. John 20:21), commanding them: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of a nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19 ff.). "Go into the whole world, preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who does not believe, shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15ff.). Whence the duty that lies on the Church of spreading the faith and the salvation of Christ, not only in virtue of the express command which was inherited from the Apostles by the order of bishops, assisted by the priests, together with the successor of Peter and supreme shepherd of the Church, but also in virtue of that life which flows from Christ into His members; "From Him the whole body, being closely joined and knit together through every joint of the system, according to the functioning in due measure of each single part, derives its increase to the building up of itself in love" (Eph. 4:16). The mission of the Church, therefore, is fulfilled by that activity which makes her, obeying the command of Christ and influenced by the grace



and love of the Holy Spirit, fully present to all men or nations, in order that, by the example of her life and by her preaching, by the sacraments and other means of grace, she may lead them to the faith, the freedom and the peace of Christ; that thus there may lie open before them a firm and free road to full participation in the mystery of Christ.

Since this mission goes on and in the course of history unfolds the mission of Christ Himself, who was sent to preach the Gospel to the poor, the Church, prompted by the Holy Spirit, must walk in the same path on which Christ walked: a path of poverty and obedience, of service and self - sacrifice to the death, from which death He came forth a victor by His resurrection. For thus did all the Apostles walk in hope, and by many trials and sufferings they filled up those things wanting to the Passion of Christ for His body which is the Church (cf. Col. 1:24). For often, the blood of Christians was like a seed.(13)

6. This duty, to be fulfilled by the order of bishops, under the successor of Peter and with the prayers and help of the whole Church, is one and the same everywhere and in every condition, even though it may be carried out differently according to circumstances. Hence, the differences recognizable in this, the Church's activity, are not due to the inner nature of the mission itself, but rather to the circumstances in which this mission is exercised.

These circumstances in turn depend sometimes on the Church, sometimes on the peoples or groups or men to whom the mission is directed. For the Church, although of itself including the totality or fullness of the means of salvation, does not and cannot always and instantly bring them all into action. Rather, she experiences beginnings and degrees in that action by which she strives to make God's plan a reality. In fact, there are times when, after a happy beginning, she must again lament a setback, or at least must linger in a certain state of unfinished insufficiency. As for the men, groups and peoples concerned, only by degrees does she touch and pervade them, and thus take them up into full catholicity. The right sort of means and actions must be suited to any state or situation.

"Missions" is the term usually given to those particular undertakings by which the heralds of the Gospel, sent out by the Church and going forth into the whole world, carry out the task of preaching the Gospel and planting the Church among peoples or groups who do not yet believe in Christ. These undertakings are brought to completion by missionary activity and are mostly exercised in certain territories recognized by the Holy See. The proper purpose of this missionary activity is evangelization, and the planting of the Church among those peoples and groups where it has not yet taken root.(14) Thus from the seed which is the word of God, particular autochthonous churches should be sufficiently established and should grow up all over the world, endowed with their own maturity and vital forces. Under a hierarchy of their own, together with the faithful people, and adequately fitted out with requisites for living a full Christian life, they

should make their contribution to the good of the whole Church. The chief means of the planting referred to is the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To preach this Gospel the Lord sent forth His disciples into the whole world, that being reborn by the word of God (cf. 1 Peter 1:23), men might be joined to the Church through baptism - that Church which, as the body of the Word Incarnate, is nourished and lives by the word of God and by the eucharistic bread (cf. Acts 2:43).

In this missionary activity of the Church various stages sometimes are found side by side: first, that of the beginning or planting, then that of newness or youth. When these have passed, the Church's missionary activity does not cease, but there lies upon the particular churches already set up the duty of continuing this activity and of preaching the Gospel to those still outside.

Moreover, the groups among which the Church dwells are often radically changed, for one reason or other, so that an entirely new set of circumstances may arise. Then the Church must deliberate whether these conditions might again call for her missionary activity. Besides, circumstances are sometimes such that, for the time being, there is no possibility of expounding the Gospel directly and forthwith. Then, of course, missionaries can and must at least bear witness to Christ by charity and by works of mercy, with all patience, prudence and great confidence. Thus they will prepare the way for the Lord and make Him somehow present.

Thus it is plain that missionary activity wells up from the Church's inner nature and spreads abroad her saving Faith. It perfects her Catholic unity by this expansion. It is sustained by her apostolicity. It exercises the collegial spirit of her hierarchy. It bears witness to her sanctity while spreading and promoting it. Thus, missionary activity among the nations differs from pastoral activity exercised among the faithful as well as from undertakings aimed at restoring unity among Christians. And yet these two ends are most closely connected with the missionary zeal<sup>(15)</sup> because the division among Christians damages the most holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature<sup>(16)</sup> and blocks the way to the faith for many. Hence, by the very necessity of mission, all the baptized are called to gather into one flock, and thus they will be able to bear unanimous witness before the nations to Christ their Lord. And if they are not yet capable of bearing witness to the same faith, they should at least be animated by mutual love and esteem.

7. This missionary activity derives its reason from the will of God, "who wishes all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, Himself a man, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself as a ransom for all" (1 Tim. 2:45), "neither is there salvation in any other" (Acts 4:12). Therefore, all must be converted to Him, made known by the Church's preaching, and all must be incorporated into Him by baptism and into the Church which is His body. For Christ Himself "by stressing in express

language the necessity of faith and baptism (cf. Mark 16:16; John 3:5), at the same time confirmed the necessity of the Church, into which men enter by baptism, as by a door. Therefore those men cannot be saved, who though aware that God, through Jesus Christ founded the Church as something necessary, still do not wish to enter into it, or to persevere in it."(17) Therefore though God in ways known to Himself can lead those inculpably ignorant of the Gospel to find that faith without which it is impossible to please Him (Heb. 11:6), yet a necessity lies upon the Church (1 Cor. 9:16), and at the same time a sacred duty, to preach the Gospel. And hence missionary activity today as always retains its power and necessity.

By means of this activity, the Mystical Body of Christ unceasingly gathers and directs its forces toward its own growth (cf. Eph. 4:11-16). The members of the Church are impelled to carry on such missionary activity by reason of the love with which they love God and by which they desire to share with all men the spiritual goods of both its life and the life to come.

Finally, by means of this missionary activity, God is fully glorified, provided that men fully and consciously accept His work of salvation, which He has accomplished in Christ. In this way and by this means, the plan of God is fulfilled - that plan to which Christ conformed with loving obedience for the glory of the Father who sent Him,(18) that the whole human race might form one people of God and be built up into one temple of the Holy Spirit which, being the expression of brotherly harmony, corresponds with the inmost wishes of all men. And so at last, there will be realized the plan of our Creator who formed man to His own image and likeness, when all who share one human nature, regenerated in Christ through the Holy Spirit and beholding the glory of God, will be able to say with one accord: "Our Father."(19)

8. Missionary activity is closely bound up even with human nature itself and its aspirations. For by manifesting Christ the Church reveals to men the real truth about their condition and their whole calling, since Christ is the source and model of that redeemed humanity, imbued with brotherly love, sincerity and a peaceful spirit, to which they all aspire. Christ and the Church, which bears witness to Him by preaching the Gospel, transcend every peculiarity of race or nation and therefore cannot be considered foreign anywhere or to anybody.(20) Christ Himself is the way and the truth, which the preaching of the Gospel opens to all in proclaiming in the hearing of all these words of Christ: "Repent, and believe the Gospel" (Mark 1:15). Now, since he who does not believe is already judged (cf. John 3:18), the words of Christ are at one and the same time words of judgment and of grace, of death and of life. For it is only by putting to death what is old that we are able to approach the newness of life. This is true first of all about persons, but it holds also for the various goods of this world which bear the mark both of man's sin and of God's blessing: "For all have sinned and have need of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). No one is freed from sin by himself and by his own power, no one is raised above himself, no one is completely rid of his

sickness or his solitude or his servitude.(21) On the contrary, all stand in need of Christ, their model, their mentor, their liberator, their Savior, their source of life. The Gospel has truly been a leaven of liberty and progress in human history, even in the temporal sphere, and always proves itself a leaven of brotherhood, of unity and of peace. Not without cause is Christ hailed by the faithful as "the expected of the nations, and their Savior."(22)

9. And so the time for missionary activity extends between the first coming of the Lord and the second, in which latter the Church will be gathered from the four winds like a harvest into the kingdom of God.(23) For the Gospel must be preached to all nations before the Lord shall come (cf. Mark 13:10).

Missionary activity is nothing else and nothing less than an epiphany, or a manifesting of God's decree, and its fulfillment in the world and in world history, in the course of which God, by means of mission, manifestly works out the history of salvation. By the preaching of the word and by the celebration of the sacraments, the center and summit of which is the most holy Eucharist, He brings about the presence of Christ, the author of salvation. But whatever truth and grace are to be found among the nations, as a sort of secret presence of God, He frees from all taint of evil and restores to Christ its maker, who overthrows the devil's domain and wards off the manifold malice of vice. And so, whatever good is found to be sown in the hearts and minds of men, or in the rites and cultures peculiar to various peoples, not only is not lost, but is healed, uplifted, and perfected for the glory of God, the shame of the demon, and the bliss of men.(24) Thus, missionary activity tends toward eschatological fullness.(25) For by it the people of God is increased to that measure and time which the Father has fixed in His power(cf. Acts 1:7). To this people it was said in prophecy: "Enlarge the space for your tent, and spread out your tent cloths unsparingly" (Is. 54:2).(26) By missionary activity, the mystical body grows to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:13); and the spiritual temple, where God is adored in spirit and in truth (cf. John 4:23), grows and is built up upon the foundation of the Apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the supreme corner stone (Eph. 2:20).

## **CHAPTER II**

### **MISSION WORK ITSELF**

10. The Church, sent by Christ to reveal and to communicate the love of God to all men and nations, is aware that there still remains a gigantic missionary task for her to accomplish. For the Gospel message has not yet, or hardly yet, been heard by two million human beings (and their number is increasing daily), who are formed into large and distinct groups by permanent cultural ties, by ancient religious traditions, and by firm bonds of social necessity. Some of these men are followers of one of the great religions, but others remain strangers to the very knowledge of God, while still others expressly deny His existence, and

sometimes even attack it. The Church, in order to be able to offer all of them the mystery of salvation and the life brought by God, must implant herself into these groups for the same motive which led Christ to bind Himself, in virtue of His Incarnation, to certain social and cultural conditions of those human beings among whom He dwelt.

### **ARTICLE 1: *Christian Witness***

11. The Church must be present in these groups through her children, who dwell among them or who are sent to them. For all Christians, wherever they live, are bound to show forth, by the example of their lives and by the witness of the word, that new man put on at baptism and that power of the Holy Spirit by which they have been strengthened at Confirmation. Thus other men, observing their good works, can glorify the Father (cf. Matt. ES:16) and can perceive more fully the real meaning of human life and the universal bond of the community of mankind.

In order that they may be able to bear more fruitful witness to Christ, let them be joined to those men by esteem and love; let them acknowledge themselves to be members of the group of men among whom they live; let them share in cultural and social life by the various undertakings and enterprises of human living; let them be familiar with their national and religious traditions; let them gladly and reverently lay bare the seeds of the Word which lie hidden among their fellows. At the same time, however, let them look to the profound changes which are taking place among nations, and let them exert themselves to keep modern man, intent as he is on the science and technology of today's world from becoming a stranger to things divine; rather, let them awaken in him a yearning for that truth and charity which God has revealed. Even as Christ Himself searched the hearts of men, and led them to divine light, so also His disciples, profoundly penetrated by the Spirit of Christ, should show the people among whom they live, and should converse with them, that they themselves may learn by sincere and patient dialogue what treasures a generous God has distributed among the nations of the earth. But at the same time, let them try to furbish these treasures, set them free, and bring them under the dominion of God their Savior.

12. The presence of the Christian faithful in these human groups should be inspired by that charity with which God has loved us, and with which He wills that we should love one another (cf. 1 John 4:11). Christian charity truly extends to all, without distinction of race, creed, or social condition: it looks for neither gain nor gratitude. For as God loved us with an unselfish love, so also the faithful should in their charity care for the human person himself, loving him with the same affection with which God sought out man. Just as Christ, then, went about all the towns and villages, curing every kind of disease and infirmity as a sign that the kingdom of God had come (cf. Matt. 9:35ff; Acts 10:38), so also the Church, through her children, is one with men of every condition, but especially with the poor and the afflicted. For them, she gladly spends and is spent (cf. 2 Cor. 12:15), sharing in their joys and sorrows, knowing of their longings and problems,

suffering with them in death's anxieties. To those in quest of peace, she wishes to answer in fraternal dialogue, bearing them the peace and the light of the Gospel.

Let Christians labor and collaborate with others in rightly regulating the affairs of social and economic life. With special care, let them devote themselves to the education of children and young people by means of different kinds of schools, which should be considered not only as the most excellent means of forming and developing Christian youth, but also as a valuable public service, especially in the developing nations, working toward the uplifting of human dignity, and toward better living conditions. Furthermore, let them take part in the strivings of those peoples who, waging war on famine, ignorance, and disease, are struggling to better their way of life and to secure peace in the world. In this activity, the faithful should be eager to offer prudent aid to projects sponsored by public and private organizations, by governments, by various Christian communities, and even by non - Christian religions.

However, the Church has no desire at all to intrude itself into the government of the earthly city. It claims no other authority than that of ministering to men with the help of God, in a spirit of charity and faithful service (cf. Matt. 20:26; 23:11).(1)

Closely united with men in their life and work, Christ's disciples hope to render to others true witness of Christ, and to work for their salvation, even where they are not able to announce Christ fully. For they are not seeking a mere material progress and prosperity for men, but are promoting their dignity and brotherly union, teaching those religious and moral truths which Christ illumined with His light; and in this way, they are gradually opening up a fuller approach to God. Thus they help men to attain to salvation by love for God and neighbor, and the mystery of Christ begins to shine forth, in which there appears the new man, created according to God (cf. Eph. 4:24), and in which the charity of God is revealed.

## ***ARTICLE 2: Preaching the Gospel and Gathering together the People of God***

13. Wherever God opens a door of speech for proclaiming the mystery of Christ (cf. Col. 4:3), there is announced to all men (cf. Mark 16:15; 1 Cor. 9:15; Rom. 10:14) with confidence and constancy (cf. Acts 4:13, 29, 31; 9:27, 28; 13:46; 14:3; 19:8; 26:26; 28:31; 1 Thess. 2:2; 2 Cor. 3:12; 7:4; Phil. 1:20; Eph. 3:12; 6:19, 20) the living God, and He Whom He has sent for the salvation of all, Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Thess. 1:9-10; 1 Cor. 1:18-21; Gal. 1:31; Acts 14:15-17, 17:22-31), in order that non - Christians, when the Holy Spirit opens their heart (cf. Acts 16:14), may believe and be freely converted to the Lord, that they may cleave sincerely to Him Who, being the "way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6), fulfills all their spiritual expectations, and even infinitely surpasses them.

This conversion must be taken as an initial one, yet sufficient to make a man realize that he has been snatched away from sin and led into the mystery of God's love, who called him to enter into a personal relationship with Him in Christ. For, by the workings of divine grace, the new convert sets out on a spiritual journey, by means of which, already sharing through faith in the mystery of Christ's Death and Resurrection, he passes from the old man to the new one, perfected in Christ (cf. Col. 3:5-10; Eph. 4:20-24). This bringing with it a progressive change of outlook and morals, must become evident with its social consequences, and must be gradually developed during the time of the catechumenate. Since the Lord he believes in is a sign of contradiction (cf. Luke 2:34; Matt. 10:34-39), the convert often experiences an abrupt breaking off of human ties, but he also tastes the joy which God gives without measure (cf. 1 Thess. 1:6).

The Church strictly forbids forcing anyone to embrace the Faith, or alluring or enticing people by worrisome wiles. By the same token, she also strongly insists on this right, that no one be frightened away from the Faith by unjust vexations on the part of others.(2)

In accord with the Church's ancient custom, the convert's motives should be looked into, and if necessary, purified.

14. Those who, through the Church, have accepted from God a belief in Christ(3) are admitted to the catechumenate by liturgical rites. The catechumenate is not a mere expounding of doctrines and precepts, but a training period in the whole Christian life, and an apprenticeship duty drawn out, during which disciples are joined to Christ their Teacher. Therefore, catechumens should be properly instructed in the mystery of salvation and in the practice of Gospel morality, and by sacred rites which are to be held at successive intervals,(4) they should be introduced into the life of faith, of liturgy, and of love, which is led by the People of God.

Then, when the sacraments of Christian initiation have freed them from the power of darkness (cf. Col. 1:13),(5) having died with Christ been buried with Him and risen together with Him (cf. Rom. 6:4-11; Col. 2:12-13; 1 Peter 3:21-22; Mark 16:16), they receive the Spirit (cf. 1 Thess. 3:5-7; Acts 8:14-17) of adoption of sons and celebrate the remembrance of the Lord's death and resurrection together with the whole People of God.

It is to be desired that the liturgy of the Lenten and Paschal seasons should be restored in such a way as to dispose the hearts of the catechumens to celebrate the Easter mystery at whose solemn ceremonies they are reborn to Christ through baptism.

But this Christian initiation in the catechumenate should be taken care of not only by catechists or priests, but by the entire community of the faithful, so that right

from the outset the catechumens may feel that they belong to the people of God. And since the life of the Church is an apostolic one, the catechumens also should learn to cooperate wholeheartedly, by the witness of their lives and by the profession of their faith, in the spread of the Gospel and in the building up of the Church.

Finally, the juridic status of catechumens should be clearly defined in the new code of Canon law. For since they are joined to the Church, they are already of the household of Christ,(7) and not seldom they are already leading a life of faith, hope, and charity.

### ***ARTICLE 3: Forming a Christian Community***

15. The Holy Spirit, who calls all men to Christ by the seeds of the Lord and by the preaching of the Gospel, stirs up in their hearts a submission to the faith. Who in the womb of the baptismal font, He begets to a new life those who believe in Christ, He gathers them into the one People of God which is "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people" (1 Peter 2:9).(8)

Therefore, let the missionaries, God's coworkers, ( cf. 1 Cor. 3:9), raise up congregations of the faithful such that, walking worthy of the vocation to which they have been called (cf. Eph. 4:1), they may exercise the priestly, prophetic, and royal office which God has entrusted to them. In this way, the Christian community will be a sign of God's presence in the world: for by reason of the eucharistic sacrifice, this community is ceaselessly on the way with Christ to the Father;(9) carefully nourished on the word of God(10) it bears witness to Christ;(11) and finally, it walks in charity and is fervent with the apostolic spirit.(12)

The Christian community should from the very start be so formed that it call provide for its necessities insofar as this is possible.

This congregation of the faithful, endowed with the riches of its own nation's culture, should be deeply rooted in the people. Let families flourish which are imbued with the spirit of the Gospel(13) and let them be assisted by good schools; let associations and groups be organized by means of which the lay apostolate will be able to permeate the whole of society with the spirit of the Gospel. Lastly, let charity shine out between Catholics of different rites.(14)

The ecumenical spirit should be nurtured in the neophytes, who should take into account that the brethren who believe in Christ are Christ's disciples, reborn in baptism, sharers with the People of God in very many good things. Insofar as religious conditions allow, ecumenical activity - should be furthered in such a way that, excluding any appearance of indifference or confusion on the one hand, or of unhealthy rivalry on the other, Catholics should cooperate in a brotherly spirit with their separated brethren, among to the norms of the Decree on Ecumenism,



making before the nations a common profession of faith, insofar as their beliefs are common, in God and in Jesus Christ, and cooperating in social and in technical projects as well as in cultural and religious ones. Let them cooperate especially for the sake of Christ, their common Lord: let His Name be the bond that unites them! This cooperation should be undertaken not only among private persons, but also, subject to approval by the local Ordinary, among churches or ecclesial communities and their works.

The Christian faithful gathered together out of all nations into the Church "are not marked off from the rest of men by their government, nor by their language, nor by their political institutions,"(15) and so they should live for God and Christ in a respectable way of their own national life. As good citizens, they should be true and effective patriots, all together avoiding racial prejudice and hypernationalism, and should foster a universal love for man.

To obtain all these things, the most important and therefore worthy of special attention are the Christian laity: namely, those who have been incorporated into Christ and live in the world. For it is up to them, imbued with the spirit of Christ, to be a leaven working on the temporal order from within, to dispose it always in accordance with Christ.(16)

But it is not enough that the Christian people be present and be organized in a given nation, nor is it enough to carry out an apostolate by way of example. They are organized for this purpose, they are present for this, to announce Christ to their non - Christian fellow - citizens by word and example, and to aid them toward the full reception of Christ.

Now, in order to plant the Church and to make the Christian community grow, various ministries are needed, which are raised up by divine calling from the midst of the faithful congregation, and are to be carefully fostered and tended to by all. Among these are the offices of priests, of deacons, and of catechists, and Catholic action. Religious men and women likewise, by their prayers and by their active work, play an indispensable role in rooting and strengthening the Kingdom of Christ in souls, and in causing it to be spread.

16. Joyfully the Church gives thanks for the priceless gift of the priestly calling which God has granted to so many youths among those nations but recently converted to Christ. For the Church drives deeper roots in any given sector of the human family when the various faithful communities all have, from among their members, their own ministers of salvation in the order of bishops, priests, and deacons, serving their own brethren, so that the young churches gradually acquire a diocesan structure with their own clergy.

What this council has decreed concerning priestly vocations and formation, should be religiously observed where the Church is first planted, and among the young churches. Of great importance are the things which are said about closely

joining spiritual formation with the doctrinal and pastoral; about living a life patterned after the Gospel without looking out for one's own comfort or that of one's family; about cultivating a deep appreciation of the mystery of the Church. From all this, they will be well taught to dedicate themselves wholly to the service of the Body of Christ and to the work of the Gospel, to cleave to their own bishop as his faithful co-workers, and to cooperate with their colleagues.(17)

To attain this general end, the whole training of the students should be planned in the light of the mystery of salvation as it is revealed in the Scriptures. This mystery of Christ and of man's salvation they can discover and live in the liturgy.(18)

These common requirements of priestly training, including the pastoral and practical ones prescribed by the council(19) should be combined with an attempt to make contact with their own particular national way of thinking and acting. Therefore, let the minds of the students be kept open and attuned to an acquaintance and an appreciation of their own nation's culture. In their philosophical and theological studies, let them consider the points of contact which mediate between the traditions and religion of their homeland on the one hand and the Christian religion on the other.(20) Likewise, priestly training should have an eye to the pastoral needs of that region; and the students should learn the history, aim, and method of the Church's missionary activity, and the special social, economic, and cultural conditions of their own people. Let them be educated in the ecumenical spirit, and duly prepared for fraternal dialogue with non-Christians.(21) All this demands that studies for the priesthood be undertaken, so far as possible, in association and living together with their own people.(22) Finally, let care be taken that students are trained in ordinary ecclesiastical and financial administration.

Moreover, suitable priests should be chosen, after a little pastoral practice, to pursue higher studies in universities, even abroad and especially in Rome as well as in other institutes of learning. In this way the young churches will have at hand men from among the local clergy equipped with the learning and skill needed for discharging more difficult ecclesiastical duties.

Where episcopal conferences deem it opportune, the order of the diaconate should be restored as a permanent state of life according to the norms of the Constitution "De Ecclesia."(23) For there are men who actually carry out the functions of the deacon's office, either preaching the word of God as catechists, or presiding over scattered Christian communities in the name of the pastor and the bishop, or practicing charity in social or relief work. It is only right to strengthen them by the imposition of hands which has come down from the Apostles, and to bind them more closely to the altar, that they may carry out their ministry more effectively because of the sacramental grace of the diaconate.

17. Likewise worthy of praise are the ranks of men and women catechists, well deserving of missionary work to the nations. Imbued with the apostolic spirit, they labor much to make an outstanding and altogether necessary contribution to the spread of the Faith and of the Church.

In our time, when there are so few clerics to preach the Gospel to such great numbers and to exercise the pastoral ministry, the position of catechists is of great importance. Therefore their training must be so accomplished and so adapted to advances on the cultural level that as reliable coworkers of the priestly order, they may perform their task well, though it be weighed down with new and greater burdens.

There should therefore be an increase in the number of schools, both on the diocesan and on the regional levels, wherein future catechists may study Catholic doctrine, especially in the fields of Scripture and the liturgy, as well as catechetical method and pastoral practice; schools wherein they can develop in themselves a Christian character, and wherein they can devote themselves tirelessly to cultivating piety and sanctity of life. Moreover, conventions or courses should be held in which at certain times catechists could be refreshed in the disciplines and skills useful for their ministry and in which their spiritual life could be nourished and strengthened. In addition, for those who devote themselves entirely to this work, a decent standard of living should be provided, and social security, by paying them a just wage.(24)

It would be desirable for the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to provide special funds for the due training and support of catechists. If it seems necessary and fitting, let a special "Opus pro Catechists" be founded.

Moreover, the churches should gratefully acknowledge the noble work being done by auxiliary catechists, whose help they will need. These preside over the prayers in their communities and teach sacred doctrine. Something suitable should be done for their doctrinal and spiritual training. Besides, it is to be hoped that, where it seems opportune, catechists who are duly trained should receive a "missio canonica" in a publicly celebrated liturgical ceremony, so that in the eyes of the people they may serve the Faith with greater authority.

18. Right from the planting stage of the Church, the religious life should be carefully fostered. This not only offers precious and absolutely necessary assistance to missionary activity, but by a more inward consecration made to God in the Church, it also clearly manifests and signifies the inner nature of the Christian calling.(25)

Religious institutes, working to plant the Church, and thoroughly imbued with mystic treasures with which the Church's religious tradition is adorned, should strive to give expression to them and to hand them on, according to the nature and the genius of each nation. Let them reflect attentively on how Christian

religious life might be able to assimilate the ascetic and contemplative traditions, whose seeds were sometimes planted by God in ancient cultures already prior to the preaching of the Gospel.

Various forms of religious life are to be cultivated in the young churches, in order that they may display various aspects of the mission of Christ and of the life of the Church, and may devote themselves to various pastoral works, and prepare their members to exercise them rightly. On the other hand, the bishops in their conference should see to it that congregations pursuing the same apostolic aims are not multiplied to the detriment of the religious life and of the apostolate.

Worthy of special mention are the various projects for causing the contemplative life to take root. There are those who in such an attempt have kept the essential element of a monastic institution, and are bent on implanting the rich tradition of their order; there are others again who are returning to the simpler forms of ancient monasticism. But all are studiously looking for a genuine adaptation to local conditions. Since the contemplative life belongs to the fullness of the Church's presence, let it be put into effect everywhere.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **PARTICULAR CHURCHES**

19. The work of planting the Church in a given human community reaches a certain goal when the congregation of the faithful already rooted in social life and somewhat conformed to the local culture, enjoys a certain firmness and stability. That is to say, it is already equipped with its own supply (perhaps still insufficient) of local priests, Religious, and lay men, and is endowed with these institutions and ministries which are necessary for leading and expanding the life of the people of God under the guidance of their own bishop.

In such new churches, the life of the People of God must mature in all those fields of Christian life which are to be reformed by the norms of this council. The congregations of the faithful become daily more aware of their status as communities of faith, liturgy, and love. The laity strive by their civic and apostolic activity to set up a public order based on justice and love. The means of social communication are put to wise use at the opportune time. By a truly Christian life, families become seedbeds of the lay apostolate and of vocations to the priesthood and the Religious life. Finally, the Faith is taught by an adequate catechesis; it is celebrated in a liturgy in harmony with the genius of the people, and by suitable canonical legislation, it is introduced into upright institutions and local customs.

The bishops, in turn, each one together with his own college of priests, being more and more imbued with the mind of Christ and of the Church, feel and live along with the universal Church. Let the young church keep up an intimate

communion with the whole Church, whose tradition they should link to their own culture, in order to increase, by a certain mutual exchange of forces, the life of the Mystical Body.(1) Hence, stress should be laid on those theological, psychological, and human elements which can contribute to fostering this sense of communion with the universal Church.

But these churches, very often located in the poorer portions of the globe, are mostly suffering from a very serious lack of priests and of material support. Therefore, they are badly in need of the continued missionary activity of the whole Church to furnish them with those subsidies which serve for the growth of the local Church, and above all for the maturity of Christian life. This mission action should also furnish help to those churches, founded long since, which are in a certain state of regression or weakness.

Yet these churches should launch a common pastoral effort and suitable works to increase the number of vocations to the diocesan clergy and to religious institutes, to discern them more readily, and to train them more efficiently,(2) so that little by little these churches may be able to provide for themselves and to bring aid to others.

20. Since the particular church is bound to represent the universal Church as perfectly as possible, let it realize that it has been sent to those also who are living in the same territory with it, and who do not yet believe in Christ. By the life witness of each one of the faithful and of the whole community, let the particular church be a sign which points out Christ to others.

Furthermore, there is need of the ministry of the word, so that the Gospel may reach all. The bishop should be first and foremost a herald of the Faith, who leads new disciples to Christ.(3) In order that he may properly fulfill this noble task, let him thoroughly study both the conditions of his flock, and the private opinions of his countrymen concerning God, taking careful note also of those changes which urbanization, migrations, and religious indifferentism have introduced.

The local priests in the young churches should zealously address themselves to the work of spreading the Gospel, and join forces with the foreign missionaries who form with them one college of priests, united under the authority of the bishop. They should do this, not only with a view to the feeding the faithful flock, and to the celebrating of divine worship, but also to the preaching of the Gospel to those outside, let them show themselves ready, and when the occasion presents itself, let them with a willing heart offer the bishop their services for missionary work in distant and forsaken areas of their own diocese or of other dioceses.

Let religious men and women, and the laity too, show the same fervent zeal toward their countrymen, especially toward the poor.

Episcopal conferences should see to it that biblical, theological, spiritual and pastoral refresher courses are held at stated intervals with this intention, that amid all vicissitudes and changes the clergy may acquire a fuller knowledge of the theological sciences and of pastoral methods.

For the rest, those things which this council has laid down, particularly in the Decree on the Life and Work of Priests, should be religiously observed.

In order that this missionary work of the particular church may be performed, there is need of qualified ministers, who are to be prepared in due time in a way suited to the conditions of each church. Now since men are more and more banding together into associations, it is very fitting that episcopal conferences should form a common plan concerning the dialogue to be held with such associations. But if perchance in certain regions, groups of men are to be found who are kept away from embracing the Catholic Faith because they cannot adapt themselves to the peculiar form which the church has taken in there, it is hoped that this condition will be provided for in a special way,<sup>(4)</sup> until such time as all Christians can gather together in one community. Let individual bishops call to their dioceses the missionaries whom the Holy See may have on hand for this purpose; or let them receive such missionaries gladly, and support their undertakings effectively.

In order that this missionary zeal may flourish among those in their own homeland, it is very fitting that the young churches should participate as soon as possible in the universal missionary work of the Church, and send their own missionaries to proclaim the Gospel all over the world, even though they themselves are suffering from a shortage of clergy. For their communion with the universal Church will be somehow brought to perfection when they themselves take an active part in missionary zeal toward other nations.

21. The church has not been really founded, and is not yet fully alive, nor is it a perfect sign of Christ among men, unless there is a laity worthy of the name working along with the hierarchy. For the Gospel cannot be deeply grounded in the abilities, life and work of any people without the active presence of laymen. Therefore, even at the very founding of a Church, great attention is to be paid to establishing a mature, Christian laity.

For the lay faithful fully belong at one and the same time both to the People of God and to civil society: they belong to the nation in which they were born; they have begun to share in its cultural treasures by means of their education; they are joined to its life by manifold social ties; they are cooperating in its progress by their efforts, each in his own profession; they feel its problems to be their very own, and they are trying to solve them. They also belong to Christ, because they were regenerated in the Church by faith and by baptism, so that they are Christ's in newness of life and work (cf. 1 Cor. 15:23), in order that in Christ, all things may be made subject to God, and finally God will be all in all (cf. Cor. 15:28).

Their main duty, whether they are men or women, is the witness which they are bound to bear to Christ by their life and works in the home, in their social milieu, and in their own professional circle. In them, there must appear the new man created according to God in justice and true holiness (cf. Eph. 4:24). But they must give expression to this newness of life in the social and cultural framework of their own homeland, according to their own national traditions. They must be acquainted with this culture; they must heal it and preserve it; they must develop it in accordance with modern conditions, and finally perfect it in Christ, so that the Faith of Christ and the life of the Church are no longer foreign to the society in which they live, but begin to permeate and to transform it. Let them be one with their fellow countrymen in sincere charity, so that there appears in their way of life a new bond of unity and of universal solidarity, which is drawn from the mystery of Christ. Let them also spread the Faith of Christ among those with whom they live or have professional connections - an obligation which is all the more urgent, because very many men can hear of Christ and of the Gospel only by means of the laity who are their neighbors. In fact, wherever possible, the laity should be prepared, in more immediate cooperation with the hierarchy, to fulfill a special mission of proclaiming the Gospel and communicating Christian teachings, so that they may add vigor to the nascent Church.

Let the clergy highly esteem the arduous apostolate of the laity. Let them train the laity to become conscious of the responsibility which they as members of Christ have for all men; let them instruct them deeply in the mystery of Christ, introduce them to practical methods, and be at their side in difficulties, according to the tenor of the Constitution *Lumen Gentium* and the Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem*.

While pastors and laymen, then, retain each their own state of life and their own responsibilities, let the whole young church render one firm and vital witness to Christ, and become a shining beacon of the salvation which comes to us in Christ.

22. The seed which is the word of God, watered by divine dew, sprouts from the good ground and draws from thence its moisture, which it transforms and assimilates into itself, and finally bears much fruit. In harmony with the economy of the Incarnation, the young churches, rooted in Christ and built up on the foundation of the Apostles, take to themselves in a wonderful exchange all the riches of the nations which were given to Christ as an inheritance (cf. Ps. 2:8). They borrow from the customs and traditions of their people, from their wisdom and their learning, from their arts and disciplines, all those things which can contribute to the glory of their Creator, or enhance the grace of their Savior, or dispose Christian life the way it should be.(5)

To achieve this goal, it is necessary that in each major socio - cultural area, such theological speculation should be encouraged, in the light of the universal Church's tradition, as may submit to a new scrutiny the words and deeds which

God has revealed, and which have been set down in Sacred Scripture and explained by the Fathers and by the magisterium.

Thus it will be more clearly seen in what ways faith may seek for understanding, with due regard for the philosophy and wisdom of these peoples; it will be seen in what ways their customs, views on life, and social order, can be reconciled with the manner of living taught by divine revelation. From here the way will be opened to a more profound adaptation in the whole area of Christian life. By this manner of acting, every appearance of syncretism and of false particularism will be excluded, and Christian life will be accommodated to the genius and the dispositions of each culture.(6) Particular traditions, together with the peculiar patrimony of each family of nations, illumined by the light of the Gospel, can then be taken up into Catholic unity. Finally, the young particular churches, adorned with their own traditions, will have their own place in the ecclesiastical communion, saving always the primacy of Peter's See, which presides over the entire assembly of charity.(7)

And so, it is to be hoped that episcopal conferences within the limits of each major socio - cultural territory will so coordinate their efforts that they may be able to pursue this proposal of adaptation with one mind and with a common plan.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **MISSIONARIES**

23. Although every disciple of Christ, as far in him lies, has the duty of spreading the Faith,(1) Christ the Lord always calls whomever He will from among the number of His disciples, to be with Him and to be sent by Him to preach to the nations (cf. Mark 3:13). Therefore, by the Holy Spirit, who distributes the charismata as He wills for the common good (1 Cor. 12:11), He inspires the missionary vocation in the hearts of individuals, and at the same time He raises up in the Church certain institutes(2) which take as their own special task the duty of preaching the Gospel, a duty belonging to the whole Church.

They are assigned with a special vocation who, being endowed with a suitable natural temperament, and being fit as regards talent and other qualities, have been trained to undertake mission work;(3) or be they autochthonous or be they foreigners: priests, Religious, or laymen. Sent by legitimate authority, they go out in faith and obedience to those who are far from Christ. They are set apart for the work for which they have been taken up (cf. Acts 13:2), as ministers of the Gospel, "that the offering up of the Gentiles may become acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:16).

24. Yet man must respond to God Who calls, and that in such a way, that without taking counsel with flesh and blood (Gal. 1:16), he devotes himself wholly to the work of the Gospel. This response, however can only be given when the Holy



Spirit gives His inspiration and His power. For he who is sent enters upon the life and mission of Him Who "emptied Himself, taking the nature of a slave" (Phil. 2:7). Therefore, he must be ready to stay at his vocation for an entire lifetime, and to renounce himself and all those whom he thus far considered as his own, and instead to "make himself all things to all men" (1 Cor. 9:22).

Announcing the Gospel to all nations, he confidently makes known the mystery of Christ, whose ambassador he is, so that in him he dares to speak as he ought (cf. Eph. 6:19; Acts 4:31), not being ashamed of the scandal of the Cross. Following in his Master's footsteps, meek and humble of heart, he proves that His yoke is easy and His burden light (Matt. 11:29ff.) By a truly evangelical life,(4) in much patience, in long - suffering, in kindness, in unaffected love (cf. 2 Cor. 6:4ff.), he bears witness to his Lord, if need be to the shedding of his blood. He will ask of God the power and strength, that he may know that there is an overflowing of joy amid much testing of tribulation and deep poverty (2 Cor. 8:2). Let him be convinced that obedience is the hallmark of the servant of Christ, who redeemed the human race by His obedience.

The heralds of the Gospel lest they neglect the grace which is in them, should be renewed day by day in the spirit of their mind (cf. 1 Tim. 4:14; Eph. 4:23; 2 Cor. 4:16). Their Ordinaries and superiors should gather the missionaries together from time to time, that they be strengthened in the hope of their calling and may be renewed in the apostolic ministry, even in houses expressly set up for this purpose.

25. For such an exalted task, the future missionary is to be prepared by a special spiritual and moral training.(5) For he must have the spirit of initiative in beginning, as well as that of constancy in carrying through what he has begun; he must be persevering in difficulties, patient and strong of heart in bearing with solitude, fatigue, and fruitless labor. He will encounter men with an open mind and a wide heart; he will gladly take up the duties which are entrusted to him; he will with a noble spirit adapt himself to the people's foreign way of doing things and to changing circumstances; while in the spirit of harmony and mutual charity, he will cooperate with his brethren and all who dedicate themselves to the same task, so that together with the faithful, they will be one heart and one soul (cf. Acts 2:42; 4:32)(7) in imitation of the apostolic community.

These habits of mind should be earnestly exercised already in his time of training; they should be cultivated, and should be uplifted and nourished by the spiritual life. Imbued with a living faith and a hope that never fails, the missionary should be a man of prayer. Let him have an ardent spirit of power and of love and of prudence (cf. 2 Tim. 1:7). Let him learn to be self - sufficing in whatever circumstances (Phil. 4:11); always bearing about in himself the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may work in those to whom he is sent (2 Cor. 4:10ff.), out of zeal of souls, let him gladly spend all and be spent himself for souls (cf. 2 Cor. 12:15ff.), so that "by the daily practice of his duty he may grow in the love of God

and neighbor."(8) Thus obedient to the will of the Father together with Christ, he will continue His mission under the hierarchical authority of the Church.

26. Those who are sent to different nations in order to be good ministers of Christ, should be nourished with the "words of faith and with good doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:6), which they should draw principally from the Sacred Scriptures, studying the mystery of Christ, whose heralds and witnesses they will be.

Therefore, all missionaries - priests, Brothers, Sisters, and lay folk - each according to their own state, should be prepared and trained, lest they be found unequal to the demands of their future work.(9) From the very beginning, their doctrinal training should be so planned that it takes in both the universality of the Church and the diversity of the world's nations. This holds for all of their studies by which they are prepared for the exercise of the ministry, as also for the other studies which it would be useful for them to learn, that they may have a general knowledge of the peoples, cultures, and religions; not only a knowledge that looks to the past, but one that considers the present time. For anyone who is going to encounter another people should have a great esteem for their patrimony and their language and their customs. It is very necessary for the future missionary to devote himself to missiological studies: that is, to know the teachings and norms of the Church concerning missionary activity, to know along what roads the heralds of the Gospel have run in the course of the centuries, and also what is the present condition of the missions, and what methods are considered more effective at the present time.(8)

But even though this entire training program is imbued with pastoral solicitude, a special and organized apostolic training ought to be given, by means of both teaching and practical exercises.(9)

Brothers and Sisters, in great numbers, should be well instructed and prepared in the catechetical art, that they may collaborate still better in the apostolate.

Even those who take part in missionary activity only for a time have to be given a training which is suited to their condition.

All these different kinds of formation should be completed in the lands to which they are sent, so that the missionaries may have a more thorough knowledge of the history, social structures, and customs of the people; that they may have an insight into their moral order and their religious precepts, and into the secret notions which, according to their sacred tradition, they have formed concerning God, the world and man.(10) Let the missionaries learn the languages to such a degree that they can use them in a fluent and polished manner, and so find more easy access to the minds and the hearts of men. (11) Furthermore, they should be properly introduced into special pastoral problems.

Some should be more thoroughly prepared in missiological institutes or in other faculties or universities, so that they may be able to discharge special duties more effectively(12) and be a help, by their learning, to other missionaries in carrying on the mission work, which especially in our time presents so many difficulties and opportunities. It is moreover highly desirable that the regional episcopal conferences should have available an abundance of such experts, and that they should make fruitful use of their knowledge and experience in the necessities of their office. Nor should there be wanting some who are perfectly skilled in the use of practical instruments and the means of social communication, the importance of which should be highly appreciated by all.

27. All these things, though necessary for everyone who is sent to the nations, can scarcely be attained to in reality by individual missionaries. Since even mission work itself, as experience teaches, cannot be accomplished by lone individuals, a common calling has gathered these individuals together into institutes, in which, with united efforts, they are properly trained and might carry out this work in the name of the Church and under the direction of the hierarchy. For many centuries, these institutes have borne the burden of the day and the heat, devoting themselves to missionary labor either entirely or in part. Often vast territories were committed to them by the Holy See for evangelization, and there they gathered together a new people for God, a local church clinging to their own shepherds. With their zeal and experience, they will serve, by fraternal cooperation either in the care of souls or in rendering special services for the common good, those churches which were founded at the cost of their sweat and even of their blood.

Sometimes, throughout the entire extent of some region, they will take certain tasks upon themselves; e.g., the evangelization of groups of peoples who perhaps for special reasons have not yet accepted the Gospel message, or who have thus far resisted it.(13)

If need be, let them be on hand to help and train, out of their own experience, those who will devote themselves to missionary activity for a time.

For these reasons, and since there are still many nations to be led to Christ, the institutes remain extremely necessary.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **PLANNING MISSIONARY ACTIVITY**

28. The Christian faithful, having different gifts (cf. Rom. 12:6), according to each one's opportunity, ability, charisms and ministry (cf. 1 Cor. 3:10) must all cooperate in the Gospel. Hence all alike, those who sow and those who reap (cf. John 4:37), those who plant and those who irrigate, must be one (cf. 1 Cor. 3:8),

so that "in a free and orderly fashion cooperating toward the same end,"(1) they may spend their forces harmoniously for the building up of the Church.

Wherefore, the labors of the Gospel heralds and the help given by the rest of the Christian faithful must be so directed and intertwined that "all may be done in order" (1 Cor. 14:40) in all fields of missionary activity and cooperation.

29. Since the charge of proclaiming the Gospel in the whole world falls primarily on the body of bishops,(2) the synod of bishops or that "stable Council of bishops for the entire Church,"(3) among the affairs of general concern,(4) should give special consideration to missionary activity, which is the greatest and holiest task of the Church.(5)

For all missions and for the whole of missionary activity there should be only one competent office, namely that of the "Propagation of the Faith," which should direct and coordinate, throughout the world, both missionary work itself and missionary cooperation. However, the law of the Oriental Churches is to remain untouched.(6)

Although the Holy Spirit in diverse manners arouses the mission spirit in the Church of God, and oft times anticipates the action of those whose task it is to rule the life of the Church, yet for its part, this office should promote missionary vocations and missionary spirituality, zeal and prayer for the missions, and should put out authentic and adequate reports about them. Let it raise up missionaries and distribute them according to the more urgent needs of various areas. Let it arrange for an orderly plan of action, issue directives and principles adapted to evangelization, and give the impetus. Let it take care of stimulating and coordinating an effective collection of funds, which are to be distributed according to reasons of necessity and usefulness, the extent of the territory in question, the number of believers and non - believers, of undertakings and institutes, of ministers and missionaries.

In coordination with the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, let it search out ways and means for bringing about and directing fraternal cooperation as well as harmonious living with missionary undertaking of other Christian communities, that as far as possible the scandal of division may be removed.

Therefore, this office must be both an instrument of administration and an organ of dynamic direction, which makes use of scientific methods and means suited to the conditions of modern times, always taking into consideration present - day research in matters of theology, of methodology and missionary pastoral procedure.

In the direction of this office, an active role with a deliberative vote should be had by selected representatives of all those who cooperate in missionary work: that is, the bishops of the whole world (the episcopal conferences should be heard

from in this regard), as well as the moderators of pontifical institutes and works, in ways and under conditions to be fixed by the Roman Pontiff. All these, being called together at stated times, will exercise supreme control of all mission work under the authority of the Supreme Pontiff. This office should have available a permanent group of expert consultants, of proven knowledge and experience, whose duty it will be, among other things to gather pertinent information about local conditions in various regions, and about the thinking of various groups of men) as well as about the means of evangelization to be used. They will then propose scientifically based conclusions for mission work and cooperation.

Institutes of religious women, regional undertakings for the mission cause, and organizations of laymen (especially international ones) should be suitably represented.

30. In order that the proper goals and results may be obtained, all missionary workers should have but "one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:32) in the actual carrying out of mission work itself.

It is the bishop's role, as the ruler and center of unity in the diocesan apostolate, to promote missionary activity, to direct it and to coordinate it but always in such a way that the zeal and spontaneity of those who share in the work may be preserved and fostered. All missionaries, even exempt Religious, are subject to his power in the various works which refer to the exercise of the sacred apostolate.(7) To improve coordination, let the bishop set up, insofar as possible, a pastoral council, in which clergy, Religious, and laity may have a part, through the medium of selected delegates. Moreover let them take care that apostolic activity be not limited to those only who have already been converted. A fair proportion of personnel and funds should be assigned to the evangelization of non - Christians.

31. Episcopal conferences should take common counsel to deal with weightier questions and urgent problems, without however neglecting local differences.(8) Lest the already insufficient supply of men and means be further dissipated, or lest projects be multiplied without necessity, it is recommended that they pool their resources to found projects which will serve the good of all as for instance, seminaries; technical schools and schools of higher learning; pastoral, catechetical, and liturgical centers; as well as the means of social communication.

Such cooperation, when indicated, should also be initiated between several different episcopal conferences.

32. It would also be good to coordinate the activities which are being carried on by ecclesiastical institutes and associations. All these, of whatever kind, should defer to the local Ordinary in all that concerns missionary activity itself.

Therefore, it will be very helpful to, draw up contracts to regulate relations between local Ordinaries and the moderator of the institute.

When a territory has been committed to a certain institute, both the ecclesiastical superior and the institute will be concerned to direct everything to this end, that the new Christian community may grow into a local church, which in due time will be governed by its own pastor with his clergy.

When the commission of a certain territory expires, a new state of affairs begins. Then the episcopal conference and the institutes in joint deliberation should lay down norms governing the relations between local Ordinaries and the institutes.(9) It will be the role of Holy See to outline the general principles according to which regional and even particular contracts are to be drawn up.

Although the institutes will be prepared to continue the work which they have begun, cooperating in the ordinary ministry of the care of souls, yet when the local clergy grows numerous, it will be provided that the institute, insofar as this is in agreement with its purpose, should remain faithful to the diocese, generously taking over special works or some area in it.

33. The institutes engaged in missionary activity in the same territory should find ways and means of coordinating their work. Therefore, it will be very useful to have conferences of Religious men and unions of Religious women, in which institutes of the same country or region should take part. These conferences should ask what things can be done by combined efforts, and they should be in close touch with the episcopal conferences.

All these things, with equal reason, should be extended to include the cooperation of missionary institutes in the home lands, so that questions and joint projects can be settled with less expense, as for instance the formation of future missionaries, as well as courses for missionaries, relations with public authorities and with international or supranational organizations.

34. Since the right and methodical exercise of missionary activity requires that those who labor for the Gospel should be scientifically prepared for their task, and especially for dialogue with non - Christian religions and cultures, and also that they should be effectively assisted in the carrying out of this task, it is desired that, for the sake of the missions, there should be fraternal and generous collaboration on the part of scientific institutes which specialize in missiology and in other arts and disciplines useful for the missions, such as ethnology and linguistics, the history and science of religions, sociology, pastoral skills and the like.

## **CHAPTER VI**

### **COOPERATION**

35. Since the whole Church is missionary, and the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the People of God, this sacred synod invites all to a deep interior renewal; so that, having a vivid awareness of their own responsibility for spreading the Gospel, they may do their share in missionary work among the nations.

36. As members of the living Christ, incorporated into Him and made like unto Him through baptism and through confirmation and the Eucharist, all the faithful are duty - bound to cooperate in the expansion and spreading out of His Body, to bring it to fullness as soon as may be (Eph. 4:13).

Therefore, all sons of the Church should have a lively awareness of their responsibility to the world; they should foster in themselves a truly catholic spirit; they should spend their forces in the work of evangelization. And yet, let everyone know that their first and most important obligation for the spread of the Faith is this: to lead a profoundly Christian life. For their fervor in the service of God and their charity toward others will cause a new spiritual wind to blow for the whole Church, which will then appear as a sign lifted up among the nations (cf. Is. 11:12), "the light of the world" (Matt. 5:14) and "the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13). This testimony of a good life will more easily have its effect if it is given in unison with other Christian communities, according to the norms of the Decree on Ecumenism, 12.(1) From this renewed spirit, prayer and works of penance will be spontaneously offered to God that He may fructify the missionaries' work with His grace; and then there will be missionary vocations, and the material subsidies which the missions need will be forthcoming.

But in order that each and every one of the Christian faithful may be fully acquainted with the present condition of the Church in the world, and may hear the voice of the multitudes who cry "Help us!" (cf. Acts 16:9), modern means of social communication should be used to furnish such mission information that the faithful may feel this mission work to be their very own, and may open their hearts to such vast and profound human needs, and may come to their assistance.

It is also necessary to coordinate the information, and to cooperate with national and international agencies.

37. But since the People of God lives in communities, especially in dioceses and parishes, and becomes somehow visible in them, it is also up to these to witness Christ before the nations.

The grace of renewal cannot grow in communities unless each of these extends the range of its charity to the ends of the earth, and devotes the same care to those afar off as it does to those who are its own members.

Thus the whole community prays, works together, and exercises its activity among the nations through those of its sons whom God has chosen for this most excellent task.

It will be very useful, provided the universal scope of mission work is not thereby neglected, to keep in contact with missionaries who are from one's own community, or with some parish or diocese in the missions, so that the communion between the communities may be made visible, and serve for their mutual edification.

38. All bishops, as members of the body of bishops succeeding to the College of Apostles, are consecrated not just for some one diocese, but for the salvation of the entire world. The mandate of Christ to preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15) primarily and immediately concerns them, with Peter and under Peter. Whence there arises that communion and cooperation of churches which is so necessary today for carrying on the work of evangelization. In virtue of this communion, the individual churches bear the burden of care for them all, and make their necessities known to one another, and exchange mutual communications regarding their affairs, since the extension of the Body of Christ is the duty of the whole College of Bishops.(2)

In his own diocese, with which he constitutes one unit the bishop, stimulating, promoting and directing the work for the missions, makes the mission spirit and zeal of the People of God present and as it were visible, so that the whole diocese becomes missionary.

It will be the bishop's task to raise up from among his own people, especially the sick and those oppressed by hardship, some souls to offer prayers and penance to God with a wide - open heart for the evangelization of the world. The bishop will also gladly encourage youths and clerics who have vocations to mission institutes, accepting it with a grateful spirit if God should call some of them to be employed in the missionary activity of the Church. The bishop will exhort and help the diocesan congregations to play a role of their own in the missions; he will promote the works of mission institutes among his own faithful, but most especially the papal mission works. For it is only right to give these works pride of place, since they are the means of imbuing Catholics from their very infancy with a real universal and missionary outlook; and they are also the means of making an effective collection of funds to subsidize all missions, each according to its needs.(3)

But since the need for workers in the vineyard of the Lord is growing from day to day, and diocesan priests have expressed the wish to play an ever greater part in the evangelization of the world, this sacred synod desires that the bishops considering the very serious dearth of priests which is hindering the evangelization of many areas, should send some of their better priests, who offer themselves for mission work and have received a suitable preparation, to those



dioceses which are lacking in clergy, where at least for a time they will exercise their missionary ministry in a spirit of service.(4)

But in order that the missionary activity of the bishops may be exercised more effectively for the good of the whole Church, it would be expedient for the episcopal conferences to take charge of those affairs which concern the orderly cooperation of their own region.

In their own conference, the bishops should deliberate about dedicating to the evangelization of the nations some priests from among the diocesan clergy; they should decide what definite offering each diocese should be obliged to set aside annually for the work of the missions, in proportion to its own budget;(5) they should consider how to direct and control the ways and means by which the missions receive direct help; they should deal with assisting and if need be, founding, missionary institutes and seminaries for diocesan mission clergy, and the promoting of closer relations between such institutes and the dioceses.

It also pertains to the episcopal conferences to found and promote works for the brotherly reception and due pastoral care of those who immigrate from mission lands for the sake of studying or finding work. For through them, far - away peoples are sometimes made near; and an excellent opportunity is offered to communities which have long been Christian to converse with nations which have not yet heard the Gospel, and to show them in their own dutiful love and aid, the genuine face of Christ.(6)

39. Priests personally represent Christ, and are collaborators of the order of bishops in that threefold sacred task which by its very nature belongs to the mission of the Church.(7) Therefore, they should fully understand that their life is also consecrated to the service of the missions. Now because by means of their own ministry - which consists principally in the Eucharist which perfects the Church - they are in communion with Christ the Head and are leading others to this communion, they cannot help but feel how much is yet wanting to the fullness of that Body, and how much therefore must be done that it may grow from day to day. They shall therefore plan their pastoral care in such a way that it will serve to spread the Gospel among non - Christians.

In their pastoral activities, priests should stir up and preserve amid the faithful a zeal for the evangelization of the world, by instructing them in sermons and in Christian doctrine courses about the Church's task of announcing Christ to all nations; by enlightening Christian families about the necessity and the honor of fostering missionary vocations among their own sons and daughters, by promoting mission fervor in young people from the schools and Catholic associations so that among them there may arise future heralds of the Gospel. Let priests teach the faithful to pray for the missions, and let them not be ashamed to ask alms of them for this purpose, becoming like beggars for Christ and for the salvation of souls.

Professors in seminaries and universities will teach young people the true state of the world and of the Church, so that the necessity of a more intense evangelization of non - Christians will become clear to them and will nurture their zeal. In teaching the dogmatic, biblical, moral, and historical branches, they should focus attention on the missionary elements therein contained, so that in this way a missionary, awareness may be formed in future priests.

40. Religious institutes of the contemplative and of the active life have so far played, and still do play, the main role in the evangelization of the world. This sacred synod gladly acknowledges their merits and thanks God for all that they have expended for the glory of God and the service of souls while exhorting them to go on untiringly in the work which they have begun, since they know that the virtue of charity, which by reason of their vocation they are bound to practice with greater perfection, obliges and impels them to a truly catholic spirit and work.(9)

Institutes of the contemplative life, by their prayers, sufferings, and works of penance have a very great importance in the conversion of souls, because it is God who sends workers into His harvest when He is asked to do so (cf. Matt. 9:38) God who opens the minds of non - Christians to hear the Gospel (cf. Acts 16:14), and God who fructifies the word of salvation in their hearts (cf. 1 Cor. 3:7). In fact, these institutes are asked to found houses in mission areas, as not a few of them have already done, so that there, living out their lives in a way accommodated to the truly religious traditions of the people, they can bear excellent witness among non - Christians to the majesty and love of God, as well as to our union in Christ.

Institutes of the active life, whether they pursue a strictly mission ideal or not, should ask themselves sincerely in the presence of God, whether they would not be able to extend their activity for the expansion of the Kingdom of God among the nations; whether they could possibly leave certain ministries to others so that they themselves could expend their forces for the missions, whether they could possibly undertake activity in the missions, adapting their constitutions if necessary, but according to the spirit of their founder; whether their members are involved as totally as possible in the mission effort; and whether their type of life is a witness to the Gospel accommodated to the character and condition of the people.

Now since, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, secular institutes are daily increasing in the Church, their activity, under the authority of the bishop, could be fruitful in the missions in many ways as a sign of complete dedication to the evangelization of the world.

41. Laymen cooperate in the Church's work of evangelization; as witnesses and at the same time as living instruments, they share in her saving mission;(10) especially if they have been called by God and have been accepted by the bishop for this work.

In those lands which are already Christian, laymen cooperate in the work of evangelization by nurturing in themselves and in others a knowledge and love of the missions; by stimulating vocations in their own family, in Catholic associations, and in the schools; by offering subsidies of every kind, that they may offer to others that gift of Faith which they have received gratis.

But in mission lands, let laymen, whether foreigners or autochthonous, teach in schools, administer temporal goods cooperate in parish and diocesan activities, and organize and promote various forms of the lay apostolate, in order that the faithful of the young churches may be able to take part as soon as possible in the life of the Church.(11)

Lastly, let laymen gladly offer socio - economic cooperation to peoples on the way of development. This cooperation is all the more to be praised, the more it concerns itself with founding institutes which touch on the basic structures of social life, or which are oriented to the training of those who bear the responsibility for the government.

Worthy of special praise are those laymen who, in universities or in scientific institutes, promote by their historical and scientific religious research the knowledge of peoples and of religions; thus helping the heralds of the Gospel, and preparing for the dialogue with non - Christians.

They should cooperate in a brotherly spirit with other Christians, with non - Christians, and with members of international organizations, always having before their eyes the fact that "the building up of the earthly city should have its foundation in the Lord, and should be directed towards Him."(12)

To be equal to all these tasks, laymen need the necessary technical and spiritual preparation, which should be given in institutes destined for this; so that their lives may be a witness for Christ among non - Christians, according to the words of the Apostle: "Do not be a stumbling - block to Jews and Greeks and to the Church of God, even as I myself in all things please all men, not seeking what is profitable to myself but to the many, that they may be saved." (1 Cor. 10:32-33).

DECREE ON THE MINISTRY AND LIFE OF PRIESTS  
**PRESBYTERORUM ORDINIS**

PROMULGATED BY HIS HOLINESS,  
POPE PAUL VI  
ON DECEMBER 7, 1965

**PREFACE**

1. The excellence of the order of priests in the Church has already been recalled to the minds of all by this sacred synod.(1) Since, however, in the renewal of Christ's Church tasks of the greatest importance and of ever increasing difficulty are being given to this order, it was deemed most useful to treat of the subject of priests at greater length and with more depth. What is said here applies to all priests, especially those devoted to the care of souls, with suitable adaptations being made for priests who are religious. Priests by sacred ordination and mission which they receive from the bishops are promoted to the service of Christ the Teacher, Priest and King. They share in his ministry, a ministry whereby the Church here on earth is unceasingly built up into the People of God, the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in order that their ministry be carried on more effectively and their lives be better provided for, in pastoral and human circumstances which very often change so profoundly, this sacred synod declares and decrees as follows.

**CHAPTER I**

**THE PRIESTHOOD IN THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH**

2. The Lord Jesus, "whom the Father has sent into the world" (Jn 10:36) has made his whole Mystical Body a sharer in the anointing of the Spirit with which he himself is anointed.(1) In him all the faithful are made a holy and royal priesthood; they offer spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ, and they proclaim the perfections of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light.(2) Therefore, there is no member who does not have a part in the mission of the whole Body; but each one ought to hallow Jesus in his heart,(3) and in the spirit of prophecy bear witness to Jesus.(4)

The same Lord, however, has established ministers among his faithful to unite them together in one body in which, "not all the members have the same function" (Rom 12:4). These ministers in the society of the faithful are able by the sacred power of orders to offer sacrifice and to forgive sins,(5) and they perform their priestly office publicly for men in the name of Christ. Therefore, having sent the apostles just as he himself been sent by the Father,(6) Christ, through the apostles themselves, made their successors, the bishops,(7) sharers in his consecration and mission. The office of their ministry has been handed down, in a lesser degree indeed, to the priests.(8) Established in the order of the

priesthood they can be co-workers of the episcopal order for the proper fulfillment of the apostolic mission entrusted to priests by Christ.(9)

The office of priests, since it is connected with the episcopal order, also, in its own degree, shares the authority by which Christ builds up, sanctifies and rules his Body. Wherefore the priesthood, while indeed it presupposes the sacraments of Christian initiation, is conferred by that special sacrament; through it priests, by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are signed with a special character and are conformed to Christ the Priest in such a way that they can act in the person of Christ the Head.(10)

In the measure in which they participate in the office of the apostles, God gives priests a special grace to be ministers of Christ among the people. They perform the sacred duty of preaching the Gospel, so that the offering of the people can be made acceptable and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.(11) Through the apostolic proclamation of the Gospel, the People of God are called together and assembled. All belonging to this people, since they have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit, can offer themselves as "a sacrifice, living, holy, pleasing to God" (Rom 12:1). Through the ministry of the priests, the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful is made perfect in union with the sacrifice of Christ. He is the only mediator who in the name of the whole Church is offered sacramentally in the Eucharist and in an unbloody manner until the Lord himself comes.(12) The ministry of priests is directed to this goal and is perfected in it. Their ministry, which begins with the evangelical proclamation, derives its power and force from the sacrifice of Christ. Its aim is that "the entire commonwealth of the redeemed and the society of the saints be offered to God through the High Priest who offered himself also for us in his passion that we might be the body of so great a Head."(13)

The purpose, therefore, which priests pursue in their ministry and by their life is to procure the glory of God the Father in Christ. That glory consists in this-that men working freely and with a grateful spirit receive the work of God made perfect in Christ and then manifest it in their whole lives. Hence, priests, while engaging in prayer and adoration, or preaching the word, or offering the Eucharistic Sacrifice and administering the other sacraments, or performing other works of the ministry for men, devote all this energy to the increase of the glory of God and to man's progress in the divine life. All of this, since it comes from the Pasch of Christ, will be crowned by the glorious coming of the same Lord, when he hands over the Kingdom to God the Father.(14)

3. Priests, who are taken from among men and ordained for men in the things that belong to God in order to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins,(15) nevertheless live on earth with other men as brothers. The Lord Jesus, the Son of God, a Man sent by the Father to men, dwelt among us and willed to become like his brethren in all things except sin.(16) The holy apostles imitated him. Blessed Paul, the doctor of the Gentiles, "set apart for the Gospel of God" (Rom 1:1) declares that

he became all things to all men that he might save all.(17) Priests of the New Testament, by their vocation and ordination, are in a certain sense set apart in the bosom of the People of God. However, they are not to be separated from the People of God or from any person; but they are to be totally dedicated to the work for which the Lord has chosen them.(18) They cannot be ministers of Christ unless they be witnesses and dispensers of a life other than earthly life. But they cannot be of service to men if they remain strangers to the life and conditions of men.(19) Their ministry itself, by a special title, forbids that they be conformed to this world;(20) yet at the same time it requires that they live in this world among men. They are to live as good shepherds that know their sheep, and they are to seek to lead those who are not of this sheepfold that they, too, may hear the voice of Christ, so that there might be one fold and one shepherd.(21) To achieve this aim, certain virtues, which in human affairs are deservedly esteemed, contribute a great deal: such as goodness of heart, sincerity, strength and constancy of mind, zealous pursuit of justice, affability, and others. The Apostle Paul commends them saying: "Whatever things are true, whatever honorable, whatever just, whatever holy, whatever loving, whatever of good repute, if there be any virtue, if anything is worthy of praise, think upon these things" (Phil 4:8).(22)

## **CHAPTER II**

### **The Ministry of Priests**

#### **SECTION I**

##### **Priests' Functions**

4. The People of God are joined together primarily by the word of the living God.(1) And rightfully they expect this from their priests.(2) Since no one can be saved who does not first believe,(3) priests, as co-workers with their bishops, have the primary duty of proclaiming the Gospel of God to all.(4) In this way they fulfill the command of the Lord: "Going therefore into the whole world preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15),(5) and they establish and build up the People of God. Through the saving word the spark of faith is lit in the hearts of unbelievers, and fed in the hearts of the faithful. This is the way that the congregation of faithful is started and grows, just as the Apostle describes: "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17).

To all men, therefore, priests are debtors that the truth of the Gospel(6) which they have may be given to others. And so, whether by entering into profitable dialogue they bring people to the worship of God,(7) whether by openly preaching they proclaim the mystery of Christ, or whether in the light of Christ they treat contemporary problems, they are relying not on their own wisdom for it is the word of Christ they teach, and it is to conversion and holiness that they exhort all men.(8) But priestly preaching is often very difficult in the circumstances of the modern world. In order that it might more effectively move

men's minds, the word of God ought not to be explained in a general and abstract way, but rather by applying the lasting truth of the Gospel to the particular circumstances of life.

The ministry of the word is carried out in many ways, according to the various needs of those who hear and the special gifts of those who preach. In areas or communities of non-Christians, the proclaiming of the Gospel draws men to faith and to the sacraments of salvation.(9) In the Christian community, especially among those who seem to understand and believe little of what they practice, the preaching of the word is needed for the very ministering of the sacraments. They are precisely sacraments of faith, a faith which is born of and nourished by the word.(10) This is especially true of the Liturgy of the Word in the celebration of Mass, in which the proclaiming of the death and resurrection of Christ is inseparably joined to the response of the people who hear, and to the very offering whereby Christ ratified the New Testament in his blood. In this offering the faithful are united both by their dispositions and by their discernment of the sacrament.(11)

5. God, who alone is holy and who alone bestows holiness, willed to take as his companions and helpers men who would humbly dedicate themselves to the work of sanctification. Hence, through the ministry of the bishop, God consecrates priests, that being made sharers by special title in the priesthood of Christ, they might act as his ministers in performing sacred functions. In the liturgy they continue to carry on his priestly office by the action of his Spirit.(12) By Baptism men are truly brought into the People of God; by the sacrament of Penance sinners are reconciled to God and his Church; by the Anointing of the Sick, the ill are given solace; and especially by the celebration of Mass they offer sacramentally the Sacrifice of Christ. In administering all sacraments, as St. Ignatius Martyr(13) has borne witness from the early days of the Church, priests by various titles are bound together hierarchically with the bishop. And so in a certain way they make him present in every congregation.(14)

The other sacraments, as well as with every ministry of the Church and every work of the apostolate, are tied together with the Eucharist and are directed toward it.(15) The Most Blessed Eucharist contains the entire spiritual boon of the Church,(16) that is, Christ himself, our Pasch and Living Bread, by the action of the Holy Spirit through his very flesh vital and vitalizing, giving life to men who are thus invited and encouraged to offer themselves, their labors and all created things, together with him. In this light, the Eucharist shows itself as the source and the apex of the whole work of preaching the Gospel. Those under instruction are introduced by stages to a sharing in the Eucharist, and the faithful, already marked with the seal of Baptism and Confirmation, are through the reception of the Eucharist fully joined to the Body of Christ.

Thus the Eucharistic Action, over which the priest presides, is the very heart of the congregation. So priests must instruct their people to offer to God the Father

the Divine Victim in the Sacrifice of the Mass, and to join to it the offering of their own lives. In the spirit of Christ the Shepherd, they must prompt their people to confess their sins with a contrite heart in the sacrament of Penance, so that, mindful of his words "Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mt 4:17), they are drawn closer to the Lord more and more each day. Priests likewise must instruct their people to participate in the celebrations of the sacred liturgy in such a way that they become proficient in genuine prayer. They must coax their people on to an ever more perfect and constant spirit of prayer for every grace and need. They must gently persuade everyone to the fulfillment of the duties of his state of life, and to greater progress in responding in a sensible way to the evangelical counsels. Finally, they must train the faithful to sing hymns and spiritual songs in their hearts to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.(17)

Priests themselves extend to the other hours of the day the praise and thanksgiving of the Eucharistic celebration in praying the Divine Office, offered in the name of the Church for all the people entrusted to their care, and indeed for the whole world.

The house of prayer in which the Most Holy Eucharist is celebrated and reserved, where the faithful gather and where the presence of the Son of God, our Savior, offered for us on the altar of sacrifice bestows strength and blessings on the faithful, must be spotless and suitable for prayer and sacred functions.(18) There pastors and the faithful are called to acknowledge with grateful heart the gift of him, Who through his humanity constantly pours divine life into the members of his Body.(19) Let priests take care so to foster a knowledge of and facility in the liturgy, that by their own liturgical ministry Christian communities entrusted to their care may ever more perfectly give praise to God, the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit.

6. Exercising the office of Christ, the Shepherd and Head, and according to their share of his authority, priests, in the name of the bishop, gather the family of God together as a brotherhood enlivened by one spirit. Through Christ they lead them in the Holy Spirit to God the Father.(20) For the exercise of this ministry, as for the other priestly duties, spiritual power is conferred upon them for the building up of the Church.(21) In building up of the Church, priests must treat all with exceptional kindness in imitation of the Lord. They should act toward men, not as seeking to please them,(22) but in accord with the demands of Christian doctrine and life. They should teach them and admonish them as beloved sons,(23) according to the words of the Apostle: "Be urgent in season, out of season, reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine" (2 Tim 4:2).(24)

Priests therefore, as educators in the faith, must see to it either by themselves or through others that the faithful are led individually in the Holy Spirit to a development of their own vocation according to the Gospel, to a sincere and practical charity, and to that freedom with which Christ has made us free.(25)



Ceremonies however beautiful, or associations however flourishing, will be of little value if they are not directed toward the education of men to Christian maturity.(26) In furthering this, priests should help men to see what is required and what is God's will in the important and unimportant events of life. Also, Christians should be taught that they live not only for themselves, but, according to the demands of the new law of charity; as every man has received grace, he must administer the same to others.(27) In this way, all will discharge in a Christian manner their duties in the community of men.

Although they have obligations toward all men, priests have a special obligation to the poor and weak entrusted to them, for our Lord himself showed that he was united to them,(28) and their evangelization is mentioned as a sign of messianic activity.(29) With special diligence, attention should be given to youth and also to married people and parents. It is desirable that these join together in friendly meetings for mutual aid in leading more easily and fully and in a Christian manner a life that is often difficult. Priests should remember that all religious, both men and women, who certainly have a distinguished place in the house of the Lord, deserve special care in their spiritual progress for the good of the whole Church. Finally, and above all, priests must be solicitous for the sick and the dying, visiting them and strengthening them in the Lord.(30)

The office of pastor is not confined to the care of the faithful as individuals, but also in a true sense is extended to the formation of a genuine Christian community. Yet the spirit of the community should be so fostered as to embrace not only the local church, but also the universal Church. The local community should promote not only the care of its own faithful, but, filled with a missionary zeal, it should prepare also the way to Christ for all men. In a special way, catechumens and the newly-baptized who must be educated gradually to know and to live the Christian life are entrusted to his care.

No Christian community, however, is built up unless it has its basis and center in the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist; from this, therefore, all education to the spirit of community must take its origin.(31) This celebration, if it is to be genuine and complete, should lead to various works of charity and mutual help, as well as to missionary activity and to different forms of Christian witness.

The ecclesial community by prayer, example, and works of penance, exercise a true motherhood toward souls who are to be led to Christ. The Christian community forms an effective instrument by which the path to Christ and his Church is pointed out and made smooth for non-believers. It is an effective instrument also for arousing, nourishing and strengthening the faithful for their spiritual combat.

In building the Christian community, priests are never to put themselves at the service of some human faction of ideology, but, as heralds of the Gospel and

shepherds of the Church, they are to spend themselves for the spiritual growth of the Body of Christ.

## **SECTION 2**

### **Priests' Relationships with Others**

7. All priests, in union with bishops, so share in one and the same priesthood and ministry of Christ that the very unity of their consecration and mission requires their hierarchical communion with the order of bishops.(32) At times in an excellent manner they manifest this communion in liturgical concelebration as joined with the bishop when they celebrate the Eucharistic Sacrifice.(33) Therefore, by reason of the gift of the Holy Spirit which is given to priests in Holy Orders, bishops regard them as necessary helpers and counselors in the ministry and in their role of teaching, sanctifying and nourishing the People of God.(34) Already in the ancient ages of the Church we find liturgical texts proclaiming this with insistence, as when they solemnly call upon God to pour out upon the candidate for priestly ordination "the spirit of grace and counsel, so that with a pure heart he may help and govern the People of God,"(35) just as in the desert the spirit of Moses was spread abroad in the minds of the seventy prudent men,(36) "and using them as helpers among the people, he easily governed countless multitudes."(37)

Therefore, on account of this communion in the same priesthood and ministry, bishops should regard priests as their brothers and friends(38) and be concerned as far as they are able for their material and especially for their spiritual well-being. For above all upon the bishops rests the heavy responsibility for the sanctity of their priests.(39) Therefore, they should exercise the greatest care in the continual formation of their priests.(40) They should gladly listen to their priests, indeed consult them and engage in dialogue with them in those matters which concern the necessities of pastoral work and welfare of the diocese. In order to put this into effect, there should be-in a manner suited to today's conditions and necessities,(41) and with a structure and norms to be determined by law-a body or senate(42) of priests representing all the priests. This representative body by its advice will be able to give the bishop effective assistance in the administration of the diocese.

Priests, never losing sight of the fullness of the priesthood which the bishops enjoy, must respect in them the authority of Christ, the Supreme Shepherd. They must therefore stand by their bishops in sincere charity and obedience.(43) This priestly obedience, imbued with a spirit of cooperation is based on the very sharing in the episcopal ministry which is conferred on priests both through the Sacrament of Orders and the canonical mission.(44)

This union of priests with their bishops is all the more necessary today since in our present age, for various reasons, apostolic undertakings must necessarily not only take on many forms but frequently extend even beyond the boundaries of

one parish or diocese. No priest, therefore, can on his own accomplish his mission in a satisfactory way. He can do so only by joining forces with other priests under the direction of the Church authorities.

8. Priests by virtue of their ordination to the priesthood are united among themselves in an intimate sacramental brotherhood. In individual dioceses, priests form one priesthood under their own bishop. Even though priests are assigned to different duties, nevertheless they carry on one priestly ministry for men. All priests are sent as co-workers in the same apostolate, whether they engage in parochial or extra-parochial ministry. This is true whether they devote their efforts to scientific research or teaching, or whether by manual labor they share in the lot of the workers themselves-if there is need for this and competent authority approves-or finally whether they fulfill some other apostolic tasks or labor designed for the apostolate. All, indeed, are united in the building up of the Body of Christ which, especially in our times, requires manifold duties and new methods. It is very important that all priests, whether diocesan or religious, help one another always to be fellow workers in the truth.(45) Each one, therefore, is united in special bonds of apostolic charity, ministry and brotherhood with the other members of this priesthood. This has been manifested from ancient times in the liturgy when the priests present at an ordination are invited to impose hands together with the ordaining bishop on the new candidate, and with united hearts concelebrate the Sacred Eucharist. Each and every priest, therefore, is united with his fellow priests in a bond of charity, prayer and total cooperation. In this manner, they manifest that unity which Christ willed, namely, that his own be perfected in one so that the world might know that the Son was sent by the Father.(46)

Older priests, therefore, should receive younger priests as true brothers and help them in their first undertakings and priestly duties. The older ones should likewise endeavor to understand the mentality of younger priests, even though it be different from their own, and follow their projects with good will. By the same token, young priests should respect the age and experience of their seniors; they should seek their advice and willingly cooperate with them in everything that pertains to the care of souls. In a fraternal spirit, priests should extend hospitality,(47) cultivate kindness and share their goods in common.(48) They should be particularly solicitous for the sick, the afflicted, those overburdened with work, the lonely, those exiled from their homeland, and those who suffer persecution.(49) They should gladly and joyfully gather together for recreation, remembering Christ's invitation to the weary apostles: "Come aside to a desert place, and rest awhile" (Mk 6:31). And further, in order that priests may find mutual assistance in the development of their spiritual and intellectual life, that they may be able to cooperate more effectively in their ministry and be saved from the dangers of loneliness which may arise, it is necessary that some kind of common life or some sharing of common life be encouraged among priests. This, however, may take many forms, according to different personal or pastoral needs, such as living together where this is possible, or having a common table,

or at least by frequent and periodic meetings. One should hold also in high regard and eagerly promote those associations which, having been recognized by competent ecclesiastical authority, encourage priestly holiness in the ministry by the use of an appropriate and duly approved rule of life and by fraternal aid, intending thus to do service to the whole order of priests.

Finally, by reason of the same communion in the priesthood, priests should realize that they are obliged in a special manner toward those priests who labor under certain difficulties. They should give them timely help, and also, if necessary, admonish them discreetly. Moreover, they should always treat with fraternal charity and magnanimity those who have failed in some matters, offer urgent prayers to God for them, and continually show themselves as true brothers and friends.

9. Though priests of the New Testament, in virtue of the sacrament of Orders, exercise the most outstanding and necessary office of father and teacher among and for the People of God, they are nevertheless, together with all Christ's faithful, disciples of the Lord, made sharers in his Kingdom by the grace of God's call.(50) For priests are brothers among brothers(51) with all those who have been reborn at the baptismal font. They are all members of one and the same Body of Christ, the building up of which is required of everyone.(52)

Priests, therefore, must take the lead in seeking the things of Jesus Christ, not the things that are their own.(53) They must work together with the lay faithful, and conduct themselves in their midst after the example of their Master, who among men "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life as redemption for many" (Mt 20:28). Priests must sincerely acknowledge and promote the dignity of the laity and the part proper to them in the mission of the Church. And they should hold in high honor that just freedom which is due to everyone in the earthly city. They must willingly listen to the laity, consider their wants in a fraternal spirit, recognize their experience and competence in the different areas of human activity, so that together with them they will be able to recognize the signs of the times. While trying the spirits to see if they be of God,(54) priests should uncover with a sense of faith, acknowledge with joy and foster with diligence the various humble and exalted charisms of the laity. Among the other gifts of God, which are found in abundance among the laity, those are worthy of special mention by which not a few of the laity are attracted to a higher spiritual life. Likewise, they should confidently entrust to the laity duties in the service of the Church, allowing them freedom and room for action; in fact, they should invite them on suitable occasions to undertake worlds on their own initiative.(55)

Finally priests have been placed in the midst of the laity to lead them to the unity of charity, "loving one another with fraternal love, eager to give one another precedence" (Rom 12:10). It is their task, therefore, to reconcile differences of mentality in such a way that no one need feel himself a stranger in the

community of the faithful. They are defenders of the common good, with which they are charged in the name of the bishop. At the same time, they are strenuous assertors of the truth, lest the faithful be carried about by every wind of doctrine.(56) They are united by a special solicitude with those who have fallen away from the use of the sacraments, or perhaps even from the faith. Indeed, as good shepherds, they should not cease from going out to them.

Mindful of the prescripts on ecumenism,(57) let them not forget their brothers who do not enjoy full ecclesiastical communion with us.

Finally, they have entrusted to them all those who do not recognize Christ as their Savior.

The Christian faithful, for their part, should realize their obligations to their priests, and with filial love they should follow them as their pastors and fathers. In like manner, sharing their cares, they should help their priests by prayer and work insofar as possible so that their priests might more readily overcome difficulties and be able to fulfill their duties more fruitfully.(58)

### **SECTION 3**

#### **The Distribution of Priests, and Vocations to the Priesthood**

10. The spiritual gift which priests receive at their ordination prepared them not for a sort of limited and narrow mission but for the widest possible and universal mission of salvation "even to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8), for every priestly ministry shares in the universality of the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles. The priesthood of Christ, in which all priests really share, is necessarily intended for all peoples and all times, and it knows no limits of blood, nationality or time, since it is already mysteriously prefigured in the person of Melchisedech.(59) Let priests remember, therefore, that the care of all churches must be their intimate concern. Hence, priests of such dioceses as are rich in vocations should show themselves willing and ready, with the permission of their own ordinaries (bishops), to volunteer for work in other regions, missions or endeavors which are poor in numbers of clergy.

Present norms of incardination and excardination should be so revised that, while this ancient institution still remains intact, they will better correspond to today's pastoral needs. Where a real apostolic spirit requires it, not only should a better distribution of priests be brought about but there should also be favored such particular pastoral works as are necessary in any region or nation anywhere on earth. To accomplish this purpose there should be set up international seminaries, special personal dioceses or prelatures (vicariates), and so forth, by means of which, according to their particular statutes and always saving the right of bishops, priests may be trained and incardinated for the good of the whole Church.

Priests should not be sent singly to a new field of labor, especially to one where they are not completely familiar with the language and customs; rather, after the example of the disciples of Christ,(60) they should be sent two or three together so that they may be mutually helpful to one another. Likewise, thoughtful care should be given to their spiritual life as well as their mental and bodily welfare; and, so far as is possible, the circumstances and conditions of labor should be adapted to individual needs and capabilities. At the same time it will be quite advantageous if those priests who go to work in a nation new to them not only know well the language of that place but also the psychological and social milieu peculiar to the people they go to serve, so that they may communicate with them easily, thus following the example of Paul the Apostle who could say of himself: "For when I was free of all I made myself the servant of all, that I might win over many. Among Jews I was a Jew that I might win over the Jews" (1 Cor 9:19-20).

11. The Shepherd and Bishop of our souls(61) so constituted his Church that the people whom he chose and acquired by his blood(62) would have its priests to the end of time, and that Christians would never be like sheep without a shepherd.(63) Recognizing Christ's desire, and at the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the apostles considered it their duty to select men "who will be capable of teaching others" (2 Tim 2:2). This duty, then, is a part of the priestly mission by which every priest becomes a sharer in the care of the whole Church, lest ministers be ever lacking for the People of God on earth. Since, however, there is common cause between the captain of a ship and the sailors,(64) let all Christian people be taught that it is their duty to cooperate in one way or another, by constant prayer and other means at their disposal,(65) that the Church will always have a sufficient number of priests to carry out her divine mission. In the first place, therefore, it is the duty of priests, by the ministry of the word and by the example of their own lives, showing forth the spirit of service and the paschal joy to demonstrate to the faithful the excellence and necessity of the priesthood; then they should see to it that young men and adults whom they judge worthy of such ministry should be called by their bishops to ordination, sparing no effort or inconvenience in helping them to prepare for this call, always saving their internal and external freedom of action. In this effort, diligent and prudent spiritual direction is of the greatest value. Parents and teachers and all who are engaged in any way in the education of boys and young men should so prepare them that they will recognize the solicitude of our Lord for his flock, will consider the needs of the Church, and will be prepared to respond generously to our Lord when he calls, saying: "Here I am Lord, send me" (Is 6:8). This voice of the Lord calling, however, is never to be expected as something which in an extraordinary manner will be heard by the ears of the future priest. It is rather to be known and understood in the manner in which the will of God is daily made known to prudent Christians. These indications should be carefully noted by priests.(66)

Works favoring vocations, therefore, whether diocesan or national, are highly recommended to the consideration of priests.(67) In sermons, in catechetical instructions, and written articles, priests should set forth the needs of the Church

both locally and universally, putting into vivid light the nature and excellence of the priestly ministry, which consoles heavy burdens with great joys, and in which in a special way, as the Fathers of the Church point out, the greatest love of Christ can be shown.(68)

## **CHAPTER III**

### **The Life of Priests**

#### **SECTION 1**

#### **The Vocation of Priests to the Life of Perfection**

12. Priests are made in the likeness of Christ the Priest by the Sacrament of Orders, so that they may, in collaboration with their bishops, work for the building up and care of the Church which is the whole Body of Christ, acting as ministers of him who is the Head. Like all other Christians they have received in the sacrament of Baptism the symbol and gift of such a calling and such grace that even in human weakness(1) they can and must seek for perfection, according to the exhortation of Christ: "Be you therefore perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). Priests are bound, however, to acquire that perfection in special fashion. They have been consecrated by God in a new manner at their ordination and made living instruments of Christ the Eternal Priest that they may be able to carry on in time his marvelous work whereby the entire family of man is again made whole by power from above.(2) Since, therefore, every priest in his own fashion acts in place of Christ himself, he is enriched by a special grace, so that, as he serves the flock committed to him and the entire People of God, he may the better grow in the grace of him whose tasks he performs, because to the weakness of our flesh there is brought the holiness of him who for us was made a High Priest "holy, guiltless, undefiled not reckoned among us sinners" (Heb 7:26).

Christ, whom the Father sanctified, consecrated and sent into the world,(3) "gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and cleanse for himself an acceptable people, pursuing good works" (Tt 2:14), and thus through suffering entered into his glory.(4) In like fashion, priests consecrated by the anointing of the Holy Spirit and sent by Christ must mortify the works of the flesh in themselves and give themselves entirely to the service of men. It is in this way that they can go forward in that holiness with which Christ endows them to perfect man.(5)

Hence, those who exercise the ministry of the spirit and of justice(6) will be confirmed in the life of the spirit, so long as they are open to the Spirit of Christ, who gives them life and direction. By the sacred actions which are theirs daily as well as by their entire ministry which they share with the bishop and their fellow priests, they are directed to perfection in their lives. Holiness does much for priests in carrying on a fruitful ministry. Although divine grace could use unworthy

ministers to effect the work of salvation, yet for the most part God chooses, to show forth his wonders, those who are more open to the power and direction of the Holy Spirit, and who can by reason of their close union with Christ and their holiness of life say with St. Paul: "And yet I am alive; or rather, not I; it is Christ that lives in me" (Gal 2:20).

Hence, this holy council, to fulfill its pastoral desires of an internal renewal of the Church, of the spread of the Gospel in every land and of a dialogue with the world of today, strongly urges all priests that they strive always for that growth in holiness by which they will become consistently better instruments in the service of the whole People of God, using for this purpose those means which the Church has approved.(7)

13. Priests who perform their duties sincerely and indefatigably in the Spirit of Christ arrive at holiness by this very fact.

Since they are ministers of God's word, each day they read and hear the word of God, which it is their task to teach others. If at the same time they are ready to receive the word themselves they will grow daily into more perfect followers of the Lord. As St. Paul wrote to Timothy, "Let this be thy study, these thy employments, so that all may see how well thou doest. Two things claim thy attention, thyself and the teaching of the faith, spend thy care on them; so wilt thou and those who listen to thee achieve salvation" (1 Tim 4:15-16). As they seek how they may better teach others what they have learned,(8) they will better understand "the unfathomable riches of Christ" (Eph 3:8) and the manifold wisdom of God.(9) If they keep in mind that it is God who opens hearts,(10) and that power comes not from themselves but from the might of God,(11) in the very fact of teaching God's word they will be brought closer to Christ the Teacher and led by his Spirit. Thus those who commune with Christ share in God's love, the mystery of which, kept hidden from the beginning of time,(12) is revealed in Christ.

Priests act especially in the person of Christ as ministers of holy things, particularly in the Sacrifice of the Mass, the sacrifice of Christ who gave himself for the sanctification of men. Hence, they are asked to take example from that with which they deal, and inasmuch as they celebrate the mystery of the Lord's death they should keep their bodies free of wantonness and lusts.(13) In the mystery of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, in which priests fulfill their greatest task, the work of our redemption is being constantly carried on;(14) and hence the daily celebration of Mass is strongly urged, since even if there cannot be present a number of the faithful, it is still an act of Christ and of the Church.(15) Thus when priests join in the act of Christ the Priest, they offer themselves entirely to God, and when they are nourished with the body of Christ they profoundly share in the love of him who gives himself as food to the faithful. In like fashion they are united with the intention and love of Christ when they administer the sacraments. This is true in a special way when in the performance of their duty in the



sacrament of Penance they show themselves altogether and always ready whenever the sacrament is reasonably sought by the faithful. In the recitation of the Divine Office, they offer the voice of the Church which perseveres in prayer in the name of the whole human race, together with Christ who "lives on still to make intercession on our behalf."

As they direct and nourish the People of God, may they be aroused by the example of the Good Shepherd that they may give their life for their sheep,(16) ready for the supreme sacrifice following the example of priests who, even in our own day, have not shrunk from giving their lives. As they are leaders in the faith and as they "enter the sanctuary with confidence, through the blood of Christ" (Heb 10:19) they approach God "with sincere hearts in the full assurance of the faith" (Heb 10:22) they set up a sure hope for their faithful,(17) that they may comfort those who are depressed by the same consolation wherewith God consoles them.(18) As leaders of the community they cultivate an asceticism becoming to a shepherd of souls, renouncing their personal convenience, seeking not what is useful to themselves but to many, for their salvation,(19) always making further progress to do their pastoral work better and, where needful, prepared to enter into new pastoral ways under the direction of the Spirit of Love, which breathes where it will.(20)

14. In the world of today, when people are so burdened with duties and their problems, which oftentimes have to be solved with great haste, range through so many fields, there is considerable danger of dissipating their energy. Priests, too, involved and constrained by so many obligations of their office, certainly have reason to wonder how they can coordinate and balance their interior life with feverish outward activity. Neither the mere external performance of the works of the ministry, nor the exclusive engagement in pious devotion, although very helpful, can bring about this necessary coordination. Priests can arrive at this only by following the example of Christ our Lord in their ministry. His food was to follow the will of him who had sent him to accomplish his work.(21)

In order to continue doing the will of his Father in the world, Christ works unceasingly through the Church. He operates through his ministers, and hence he remains always the source and wellspring of the unity of their lives. Priests, then, can achieve this coordination and unity of life by joining themselves with Christ to acknowledge the will of the Father. For them this means a complete gift of themselves to the flock committed to them.(22) Hence, as they fulfill the role of the Good Shepherd, in the very exercise of their pastoral charity they will discover a bond of priestly perfection which draws their life and activity to unity and coordination. This pastoral charity(23) flows out in a very special way from the Eucharistic sacrifice. This stands as the root and center of the whole life of a priest. What takes place on the altar of sacrifice, the priestly heart must make his own. This cannot be done unless priests through prayer continue to penetrate more deeply into the mystery of Christ.

In order to measure and verify this coordination of life in a concrete way, let priests examine all their works and projects to see what is the will of God(24)- namely, to see how their endeavors compare with the goals of the Gospel mission of the Church. Fidelity to Christ cannot be separated from faithfulness to his Church. Pastoral charity requires that priests avoid operating in a vacuum(25) and that they work in a strong bond of union with their bishops and brother priests. If this be their program, priests will find the coordination and unity of their own life in the oneness of the Church's mission. They will be joined with the Lord and through him with the Father in the Holy Spirit. This will bring them great satisfaction and a full measure of happiness.(26)

## **SECTION 2**

### **Special Spiritual Requirements in the Life of a Priest**

15. Among the virtues that priests must possess for their sacred ministry none is so important as a frame of mind and soul whereby they are always ready to know and do the will of him who sent them and not their own will.(27) The divine task that they are called by the Holy Spirit to fulfill(28) surpasses all human wisdom and human ability. "God chooses the weak things of the world to confound the strong" (1 Cor 1:27). Aware of his own weakness, the true minister of Christ works in humility trying to do what is pleasing to God.(29) Filled with the Holy Spirit,(30) he is guided by him who desires the salvation of all men. He understands this desire of God and follows it in the ordinary circumstances of his everyday life. With humble disposition he waits upon all whom God has sent him to serve in the work assigned to him and in the multiple experiences of his life.

However, the priestly ministry, since it is the ministry of the Church itself, can only function in the hierarchical union of the whole body. Pastoral charity, therefore, urges priests, as they operate in the framework of this union, to dedicate their own will by obedience to the service of God and their fellow men. In a great spirit of faith, let them receive and execute whatever orders the holy father, their own bishop, or other superiors give or recommend.

With a willing heart let them spend and even exhaust themselves(31) in whatever task they are given, even though it be menial and unrecognized. They must preserve and strengthen a necessary oneness with their brothers in the ministry, especially with those whom God has selected as visible rulers of his Church. For in this way they are laboring to build the Body of Christ which grows "through every gesture of service."(32) This obedience is designed to promote the mature freedom of the children of God; by its very nature it postulates that in the carrying out of their work, spurred on by charity, they develop new approaches and methods for the greater good of the Church. With enthusiasm and courage, let priests propose new projects and strive to satisfy the needs of their flocks. Of course, they must be ready to submit to the decisions of those who rule the Church of God.

By this humility and by willing responsible obedience, priests conform themselves to Christ. They make their own the sentiments of Jesus Christ who "emptied himself, taking on the form of a servant," becoming obedient even to death (Phil 2:7-9). By this obedience he conquered and made up for the disobedience of Adam, as the Apostle testifies, "for as by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners, so also by the obedience of one, many shall be made just"(Rom 5:19).

16. (Celibacy is to be embraced and esteemed as a gift). Perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, commended by Christ the Lord(33) and through the course of time as well as in our own days freely accepted and observed in a praiseworthy manner by many of the faithful, is held by the Church to be of great value in a special manner for the priestly life. It is at the same time a sign and a stimulus for pastoral charity and a special source of spiritual fecundity in the world.(34) Indeed, it is not demanded by the very nature of the priesthood, as is apparent from the practice of the early Church(35) and from the traditions of the Eastern Churches. where, besides those who with all the bishops, by a gift of grace, choose to observe celibacy, there are also married priests of highest merit. This holy synod, while it commends ecclesiastical celibacy, in no way intends to alter that different discipline which legitimately flourishes in the Eastern Churches. It permanently exhorts all those who have received the priesthood and marriage to persevere in their holy vocation so that they may fully and generously continue to expend themselves for the sake of the flock commended to them.(36)

Indeed, celibacy has a many-faceted suitability for the priesthood. For the whole priestly mission is dedicated to the service of a new humanity which Christ, the victor over death, has aroused through his Spirit in the world and which has its origin "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but of God (Jn 1:13). Through virginity, then, or celibacy observed for the Kingdom of Heaven,(37) priests are consecrated to Christ by a new and exceptional reason. They adhere to him more easily with an undivided heart,(38) they dedicate themselves more freely in him and through him to the service of God and men, and they more expeditiously minister to his Kingdom and the work of heavenly regeneration, and thus they are apt to accept, in a broad sense, paternity in Christ. In this way they profess themselves before men as willing to be dedicated to the office committed to them-namely, to commit themselves faithfully to one man and to show themselves as a chaste virgin for Christ(39) and thus to evoke the mysterious marriage established by Christ, and fully to be manifested in the future, in which the Church has Christ as her only Spouse.(40) They give, moreover, a living sign of the world to come, by a faith and charity already made present, in which the children of the resurrection neither marry nor take wives.(41)

For these reasons, based on the mystery of Christ and his mission, celibacy, which first was recommended to priests, later in the Latin Church was imposed

upon all who were to be promoted to sacred orders. This legislation, pertaining to those who are destined for the priesthood, this holy synod again approves and confirms, fully trusting this gift of the Spirit so fitting for the priesthood of the New Testament, freely given by the Father, provided that those who participate in the priesthood of Christ through the sacrament of Orders-and also the whole Church-humbly and fervently pray for it. This sacred synod also exhorts all priests who, in following the example of Christ, freely receive sacred celibacy as a grace of God, that they magnanimously and wholeheartedly adhere to it, and that persevering faithfully in it, they may acknowledge this outstanding gift of the Father which is so openly praised and extolled by the Lord.(42) Let them keep before their eyes the great mysteries signified by it and fulfilled in it. Insofar as perfect continence is thought by many men to be impossible in our times, to that extent priests should all the more humbly and steadfastly pray with the Church for that grace of fidelity, which is never denied those who seek it, and use all the supernatural and natural aids available. They should especially seek, lest they omit them, the ascetical norms which have been proved by the experience of the Church and which are scarcely less necessary in the contemporary world. This holy synod asks not only priests but all the faithful that they might receive this precious gift of priestly celibacy in their hearts and ask of God that he will always bestow this gift upon his Church.

17. (Relationship to the world and temporal goods, and voluntary poverty.) In their friendly and brotherly dealings with one another and with other men, priests are able to learn and appreciate human values and esteem created goods as gifts of God. By living in the world, let priests know how not to be of the world, according to the word of our Lord and Master.(43) By using the world as those who do not use it,(44) let them achieve that freedom whereby they are free from every inordinate concern and become docile to the voice of God in their daily life. From this freedom and docility grows spiritual discretion in which is found the right relationship to the world and earthly goods. Such a right relationship is of great importance to priests, because the mission of the Church is fulfilled in the midst of the world and because created goods are altogether necessary for the personal development of man. Let them be grateful, therefore, for all that the heavenly Father has given them to lead a full life rightly, but let them see all that comes to them in the light of faith, so that they might correctly use goods in response to the will of God and reject those which are harmful to their mission.

For priests who have the Lord as their "portion and heritage," (Num 18:20) temporal goods should be used only toward ends which are licit according to the doctrine of Christ and the direction of the Church.

Ecclesiastical goods, properly so called, according to their nature and ecclesiastical law, should be administered by priests with the help of capable laymen as far as possible and should always be employed for those purposes in the pursuit of which it is licit for the Church to possess temporal goods-namely, for the carrying out of divine worship, for the procuring of honest sustenance for

the clergy, and for the exercise of the works of the holy apostolate or works of charity, especially in behalf of the needy.(45) Those goods which priests and bishops receive for the exercise of their ecclesiastical office should be used for adequate support and the fulfillment of their office and status, excepting those governed by particular laws.(46) That which is in excess they should be willing to set aside for the good of the Church or for works of charity. Thus they are not to seek ecclesiastical office or the benefits of it for the increase of their own family wealth.(47) Therefore, in no way placing their heart in treasures,(48) they should avoid all greediness and carefully abstain from every appearance of business.

Priests, moreover, are invited to embrace voluntary poverty by which they are more manifestly conformed to Christ and become eager in the sacred ministry. For Christ, though he was rich, became poor on account of us, that by his need we might become rich.(49) And by their example the apostles witnessed that a free gift of God is to be freely given,(50) with the knowledge of how to sustain both abundance and need.(51) A certain common use of goods, similar to the common possession of goods in the history of the primitive Church,(52) furnishes an excellent means of pastoral charity. By living this form of life, priests can laudably reduce to practice that spirit of poverty commended by Christ.

Led by the Spirit of the Lord, who anointed the Savior and sent him to evangelize the poor,(53) priests, therefore, and also bishops, should avoid everything which in any way could turn the poor away. Before the other followers of Christ, let priests set aside every appearance of vanity in their possessions. Let them arrange their homes so that they might not appear unapproachable to anyone, lest anyone, even the most humble, fear to visit them.

### **SECTION THREE**

#### **Aids to the Life of Priests**

18. (Aids to encourage the spiritual life.) In order that, in all conditions of life, they may be able to grow in union with Christ, priests, besides the exercise of their conscious ministry, enjoy the common and particular means, old and new, which the Spirit never ceases to arouse in the People of God and which the Church commends, and sometimes commands,(54) for the sanctification of her members. Outstanding among all these spiritual aids are those acts by which the faithful are nourished in the Word of God at the double table of the Sacred Scripture and the Eucharist.(55) The importance of frequent use of these for the sanctification of priests is obvious to all. The ministers of sacramental grace are intimately united to Christ our Savior and Pastor through the fruitful reception of the sacraments, especially sacramental Penance, in which, prepared by the daily examination of conscience, the necessary conversion of heart and love for the Father of Mercy is greatly deepened. Nourished by spiritual reading, under the light of faith, they can more diligently seek signs of God's will and impulses of his grace in the various events of life, and so from day to day become more docile to the mission they have assumed in the Holy Spirit. They will always find a

wonderful example of such docility in the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was led by the Holy Spirit to dedicate herself totally to the mystery of man's redemption.(56) Let priests love and venerate with filial devotion and veneration this mother of the Eternal Highpriest, Queen of Apostles and Protector of their own ministry.

In the fulfillment of their ministry with fidelity to the daily colloquy with Christ, a visit to and veneration of the Most Holy Eucharist, spiritual retreats and spiritual direction are of great worth. In many ways, but especially through mental prayer and the vocal prayers which they freely choose, priests seek and fervently pray that God will grant them the spirit of true adoration whereby they themselves, along with the people committed to them, may intimately unite themselves with Christ the Mediator of the New Testament, and so as adopted children of God may be able to call out "Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15).

19. (Study and pastoral knowledge.) Priests are admonished by their bishop in the sacred rite of ordination that they "be mature in knowledge" and that their doctrine be "spiritual medicine for the People of God."(57) The knowledge of the sacred minister ought to be sacred because it is drawn from the sacred source and directed to a sacred goal. Especially is it drawn from reading and meditating on the Sacred Scriptures,(58) and it is equally nourished by the study of the Holy Fathers and other Doctors and monuments or tradition. In order, moreover, that they may give apt answers to questions posed by men of this age, it is necessary for priests to know well the doctrines of the magisterium and the councils and documents of the Roman pontiffs and to consult the best of prudent writers of theological science.

Since human culture and also sacred science has progressed in our times, priests are urged to suitably and without interruption perfect their knowledge of divine things and human affairs and so prepare themselves to enter more opportunely into conversation with their contemporaries.

Therefore, let priests more readily study and effectively learn the methods of evangelization and the apostolate. Let opportune aids be prepared with all care, such as the institution of courses and meetings according to territorial conditions, the erection of centers of pastoral studies, the establishment of libraries, and the qualified supervision of studies by suitable persons. Moreover, let bishops, either individually or united in groups, see to it that all their priests at established intervals, especially a few years after their ordination,(59) may be able to frequent courses in which they will be given the opportunity to acquire a fuller knowledge of pastoral methods and theological science, both in order that they may strengthen their spiritual life and mutually communicate their apostolic experiences with their brothers.(60) New pastors and those who have newly begun pastoral work, as well as those who are sent to other dioceses or nations, should be helped by these and other suitable means with special care.

Finally, the bishops will be solicitous that there will be some who dedicate themselves to a deeper study of theology, that there will not be lacking suitable teachers for the formation of clerics, that the rest of the priests and the faithful will be helped to acquire the doctrine they need, and that healthy progress will be encouraged in the sacred disciplines, so necessary for the Church.

20. (Providing equitable remuneration for priests.) As those dedicated to the service of God and the fulfillment of the office entrusted to them, priests deserve to receive an equitable remuneration, because "the laborer is worthy of his hire," (Lk 10:7)(61) and "the Lord directed that those who preach the Gospel should have their living from the Gospel" (1 Cor 9:14). Wherefore, insofar as an equitable remuneration of the priests would not be provided otherwise, the faithful themselves-that is, those in whose behalf the priest labors-are truly obliged to see to it that they can provide what help is necessary for the honorable and worthy life of the priests. The bishops, however, should admonish the faithful concerning this obligation of theirs. And they should see to it whether each individual for his own diocese or, more aptly, several together for their common territory-that norms are established according to which suitable support is rightly provided for those who do fulfill or have fulfilled a special office in the service of the People of God. The remuneration received by each one, in accord with his office and the conditions of time and place, should be fundamentally the same for all in the same circumstances and befitting his station. Moreover, those who have dedicated themselves to the service of the priesthood, by reason of the remuneration they receive, should not only be able to honorably provide for themselves but also themselves be provided with some means of helping the needy. For the ministry to the poor has always been held in great honor in the Church from its beginnings. Furthermore, this remuneration should be such that it will permit priests each year to take a suitable and sufficient vacation, something which indeed the bishops should see that their priests are able to have.

Special importance ought to be given to the office fulfilled by sacred ministers. Therefore the so-called system of benefices should be relinquished or at least so reformed that the place of the benefits, or the right to revenue from the endowment attached to an office, would be held as secondary, and the first place in law would be given to the ecclesiastical office itself. From this it should be understood that whatever office is conferred in a stable manner is to be exercised for a spiritual purpose.

21. (On setting up common funds and establishing a system of social assistance for priests.) We should always keep before our eyes the example of the faithful of the early Church in Jerusalem, who "held all things in common" (Acts 4:32) "and distribution was made to each according to each one's need" (Acts 4:35). So it is supremely fitting, at least in regions where the support of the clergy completely or largely depends on the offerings of the faithful, that their offerings for this purpose be collected by a particular diocesan institution, which the bishop administers with the help of priests and, when useful, of laymen who are expert in financial

matters. Further it is hoped that insofar as is possible in individual dioceses or regions there be established a common fund enabling bishops to satisfy obligations to other deserving persons and meet the needs of various dioceses. This would also enable wealthier dioceses to help the poorer, that the need of the latter might be supplemented by the abundance of the former.(62) These common funds, even though they should be principally made up of the offerings of the faithful, also should be provided for by other duly established sources.

Moreover, in nations where social security for the clergy is not yet aptly established, let the episcopal conferences see to it that-in accord with ecclesiastical and civil laws-there may be either diocesan institutes, whether federated with one another or established for various dioceses together, or territorial associations, which under the vigilance of the hierarchy would make sufficient and suitable provision for a program of preventive medicine, and the necessary support of priests who suffer from sickness, invalid conditions or old age. Let priests share in this established institute, prompted by a spirit of solidarity with their brothers to take part in their tribulations(63) while at the same time being freed from an anxious concern for their own future so that they can cultivate evangelical poverty more readily and give themselves fully to the salvation of souls. Let those in charge of this act to bring together the institutes of various nations in order that their strength be more firmly achieved and more broadly based.

## **CONCLUSION AND EXHORTATION**

22. Having before our eyes the joys of the priestly life, this holy synod cannot at the same time overlook the difficulties which priests experience in the circumstances of contemporary life. For we know how much economic and social conditions are transformed, and even more how much the customs of men are changed, how much the scale of values is changed in the estimation of men. As a result, the ministers of the Church and sometimes the faithful themselves feel like strangers in this world, anxiously looking for the ways and words with which to communicate with it. For there are new obstacles which have arisen to the faith: the seeming unproductivity of work done, and also the bitter loneliness which men experience can lead them to the danger of becoming spiritually depressed.

The world which today is entrusted to the loving ministry of the pastors of the Church is that which God so loved that he would give his only Son for it.(1) Truly this world, indeed weighed down with many sins but also endowed with many talents, provides the Church with the living stones(2) which are built up into the dwelling place of God in the Spirit.(3) This same Holy Spirit, while impelling the Church to open new ways to go to the world of today, suggests and favors the growth of fitting adaptations in the ministry of priests.



Priests should remember that in performing their office they are never alone, but strengthened by the power of Almighty God, and believing in Christ who called them to share in his Priesthood, they should devote themselves to their ministry with complete trust, knowing that God can cause charity to grow in them.(4) Let them be mindful of their brothers in the priesthood as well, and also of the faithful of the entire world who are associated with them. For all priests cooperate in carrying out the saving plan of God,(5) that is, the Mystery of Christ, the sacrament hidden from the ages in God, which is only brought to fulfillment little by little through the collaboration of many ministries in building up the Body of Christ until it grows to the fullness of time. All this, hidden with Christ in God,(6) can be uniquely perceived by faith. For the leaders of the People of God must walk by faith, following the example of faithful Abraham, who in faith "obeyed by going out into a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out not knowing where he was going" (Heb 11:8). Indeed, the dispenser of the mysteries of God can see himself in the man who sowed his field, of whom the Lord said: "then sleep and rise, night and day, and the seed should sprout without his knowing" (Mk 4:27). As for the rest, the Lord Jesus, who said: "Take courage, I have overcome the world," (Jn 16:33) did not by these words promise his Church a perfect victory in this world. Certainly this holy synod rejoices that the earth has been sown with the seed of the Gospel which now bears fruit in many places, under the direction of the Holy Spirit who fills the whole earth and who has stirred up a missionary spirit in the hearts of many priests and faithful. Concerning all this, this holy synod gives fervent thanks to the priests of the entire world. "Now to him who is able to accomplish all things in a measure far beyond what we ask or conceive in keeping with the power that is at work in us - to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus" (Eph 3:20-21).

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## NOTES

### Preface

1. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Dec. 4, 1963; AAS 56 (1964) pp 7ff; Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium Nov. 21, 1964; AAS 57 (1965) p 5ff; Decree Christus Dominus on Pastoral Duties of Bishops, Oct. 28, 1965; Decree on Priestly Training, Oct. 28, 1965.

### Chapter 1

1. Cf. Mt 3:16; Lk 4:18; Acts 4:27, 10:38.

2. Cf. 1 Pt 2:5,9.

3. Cf. 1 Pt 3:15.

4. Cf. Rev 19:10; Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, Nov. 21, 1964, n 35; AAS 57 (1965) p 40-41.

5. Council of Trent, 23rd session, chapter 1, canon 1: Denzinger 957 and 961 (1764 and 1771).

6. Cf. Jn 20:21; Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, Nov. 21, 1964, n 22: AAS 57 (1965) pp 21-28.

7. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, Nov. 21, 1964, n 22: AAS 57 (1965) pp 33-36.

8. Cf. *ibid*

9. Cf. Roman Pontifical Ordination of a Priest, preface. These words are already found in the Verona Sacramentary (ed. L.C. Moehlberg, Rome 1956, p 122); also in Frankish Missal (ed. L.C. Moehlberg, Rome 1957, p 9) and in the Book of Sacramentaries of the Roman Church (ed. L.C. Moehlberg, Rome 1960, p 25) and Roman German Pontificals (ed. Vogel-Elze, Vatican City 1963, vol. I, p 34).

10. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, Nov. 21, 1964, n 10: AAS 57 (1965) pp 14-15.

11. Cf. Rom 15:16 (Greek).

12. Cf. 1 Cor 11:26.

13. St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 10, 6: PL 41, 284.

14. Cf. 1 Cor 15:24.

15. Cf. Heb 5:1.

16. Cf. Heb 2:17; 4:15.

17. Cf. 1 Cor 9:19-23 (Vg.).

18. Cf. Acts 13:2.

19. Paul VI, encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, Aug.6, 1964: AAS 56 (1964), pp 627 and 638.

20. Cf. Rom 12:2.

21. Cf. Jn 10:14-16.

22. Cf. St. Polycarp, *Epist. ad Philippenses*, 6, 1 (ed. F.X. Funk, *Apostolic Fathers*, I, p 303).

## Chapter 2

1. Cf. 1 Pt 1:23; Acts 6:7; 12:24. "(The apostles) preached the word of truth and founded Churches." (St. Augustine, *On Psalms*, 44, 23; PL 36, 508).

2. Cf. Mal 2:7; 1 Tim 4:11-13; 1 Tim 1:9.

3. Cf. Mk 16:16.

4. Cf. 2 Cor 11:7. All that has been said regarding bishops also applies to priests inasmuch as they are cooperators of the bishops. Cf. *Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua*, c. 3 (ed. Ch. Munier, Paris 1960, p 79); Decree of Gracian, c. 6, D.88 (ed. Friedberg, 1, 307); Council of Trent, Decree De Reform., Session 5, c. 2, n 9 (*Ecumenical Council Decrees*, ed. Herder, Rome 1963, p 645); Session 24, c. 4 (p 739); Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, Nov. 21, 1964, n 25: AAS 57 (1965), pp 29-31.

5. Cf. *Constitutiones Apostolorum* II, 26, 7: "(Priests) are teachers of sacred science as the Lord himself commanded when he said: 'Going, therefore, teach, etc.'" (ed. F.X. Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, I, Paderborn 1905, p 105); Leonine Sacramentary and other sacramentaries up to the Roman Pontifical, preface of the ordination of priests: "By this providence, Lord, you have added to the apostles of your Son fellow teachers of the faith through whom the apostles have filled the whole world with their teaching." *Ordo Book of the Mozarabic Liturgy*, preface to the ordination of priests: "Teacher of peoples and ruler of subjects, he keeps intact the Catholic faith and announces true salvation to all." (ed. M. Ferotin, Paris, 1904, col. 55).

6. Cf. Gal 2:5.

7. Cf. 1 Pt 2:12.

8. Cf. Rite of priestly ordination in the Alexandrian Jacobite Church: "...Gather your people to the word of doctrine like a foster-mother who nourishes her children" (H. Denzinger, *Oriental Rites*, Book II, Wurzburg 1863, p 14).

9. Cf. Mt 28:19; Mk 16:16; Tertullian, *On Baptism*, 14, 2 (*The Body of Christians*, Latin Series, I p 289, 11-13); St. Athanasius, *Against the Arians*, 2, 42 (PG 26, 237); St. Jerome, *On Matthew*, 28, 19 (PL 26, 218 BC): "First let them teach all nations, and then pour water on those who have learned. It cannot be that the body receive the sacrament of baptism unless the soul first has received the truth of faith;" St. Thomas, "Exposition of the first decretal," n 1: "Sending his disciples to preach, our Savior enjoined on them three things: first, that they teach the faith; second, that they confer the sacraments on believers...." (ed. Marietti, *Opuscula Theologica*, Taurini-Rome 1954, 1138).

10. Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, Dec. 4, 1963, n 35, 2: AAS 56 (1964), p 109.

11. Cf. *ibid*, nn 33, 35, 48, 52 (pp 108-109, 113, 114).

12. Cf. *ibid*, n 7 (pp 100-101); Pius XII, encyclical letter, *Mystici Corporis*, June 29, 1943: AAS 35 (1943), p 230.

13. St. Ignatius Martyr, *Smyrn.*, 8, 1-2 (ed. F.X. Funk, p 282, 6-15); *Constitutions of the Apostles*, VIII, 12, 3 (ed. F.X. Funk, p 496); VIII,29, 2 (p 532).

14. Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium*, Nov. 21, 1964, n 28: AAS 57 (1965), pp 33-36.

15. "The Eucharist indeed is a quasi consummation of the spiritual life, and the goal of all the sacraments" (St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* III, q.73, a.3 c); cf. *Summa Theol.* III, q. 65, a. 3.

16. Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* III, q. 65, a. 3, ad 1; q. 79, a.1, c. and ad 1.

17. Cf. Eph 5:19-20.

18. Cf. St. Jerome, *Epistles*, 114, 2 (PL 22, 934), See Second Vatican Council, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, Dec. 4, 1963, nn 122-127: AAS 56 (1964), pp 130-132.

19. Paul VI, encyclical letter *Mysterium Fidei*, Sept. 3, 1965: AAS 57 (1965), p 771.

20. Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium*, Nov. 21, 1964, n 28: AAS 57 (1965), pp 33-36.

21. Cf. 2 Cor 10:8; 13:10.

22. Cf. Gal 1:10.
23. Cf. 1 Cor 4:14.
24. Cf. Didascalia, II, 34, 3; II, 46, 6; II, 47, 1; Constitutions of the Apostles, II, 47, 1 (ed. F.X. Funk, *Didascalia and Constitutions*, I, pp 116, 142 and 143).
25. Cf. Gal 4:3; 5:1 and 13.
26. Cf. St. Jerome, *Epistles*, 58, 7 (PL 22, 584).
27. Cf. 1 Pt 4:10 ff.
28. Cf. Mt 25:34-45.
29. Cf. Lk 4:18.
30. Other categories could be named, e.g. migrants, nomads, etc. The Decree on the Pastoral Duties of Bishops, Oct. 28, 1965, treats of these.
31. Cf. Didascalia, II, 59, 1-3 (ed. F.X. Funk, I, p 170); Paul VI, allocution to Italian clergy present at the 13th week-long congress at Orvieto on pastoral aggiornamento, Sept. 6, 1963: AAS 55 (1963) pp 750ff.
32. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, Nov. 21, 1964, n 28: AAS 57 (1965), p 35.
33. Cf. cited Ecclesiastical Constitution of the Apostles, XVIII: (ed. Th. Schermann, *Die allgemeine Kirchenordnung*, I, Paderborn 1914, p 26; A. Harnack, *T. u. U.*, II, 4, p 13, nn 18 and 19); Pseudo-Jerome, *The Seven Orders of the Church* (ed. A.W. Kalf, Wurzburg 1937, p 45); St. Isidore of Hispali, *Ecclesiastical Offices*, c. VII (PL 83, 787).
34. Cf. Didascalia, II, 28, 4 (ed. F.X. Funk, p 108); Constitutions of the Apostles, II, 28, 4; II, 34, 3 (ibid., pp 109 and 117).
35. Constitutions of the Apostles, VIII, 16, 4 (ed. F.X. Funk, I, p 522, 13); cf. *Epitome of the Constitutions of the Apostles*, VI (ibid., II, p 80, 3-4); *Testamentum Domini*, (transl. I.E. Rahmani, Moguntiae 1899, p 69). Also in *Trad. Apost.* (ed. B. Botte, *La Tradition Apostolique*, Munster, i. W. 1963, p 20).
36. Cf. Nm 11:16-25.
37. Roman Pontifical on the ordination of a priest, preface: these words are also found in the Leonine Sacramentary, the Gelasian Sacramentary and the Gregorian Sacramentary. Similar words can be found in the Oriental Liturgies: cf. *Trad. Apost.*: (ancient Latin version of Verona, ed. B. Botte, *La Tradition Apostolique de St. Hippolyte. Essai de reconstruction*, Munster i. W. 1963, p 20); *Constitutions of the Apostles*, VIII, 16, 4 (ed. F.X. Funk, I, p 522, 16- 17); *Epitome on the Constitutions of the Apostles*, 6 (ed. F.X. Funk, II, p 20, 5-7); *Testamentum Domini* (transl. I.E. Rahmani, Moguntiae 1899, p 69); *Eucholegium Serapionis*, XXVII (ed. F.X. Funk, *Didascalia and Constitutions*, II, p 190, lines 1-7); *Maronite Rite of Ordination* (transl. H. Denzinger, *Rites of the Orientals*, II, Wurzburg 1863, p. 161). Among the Fathers can be cited: Theodore of Mopsuestia, *On First Timothy*, 3, 8 (ed. Swete, II, pp 119-121); Theodoretus, *Questions on Numbers*, XVIII (PG 80, 372 b).
38. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, Nov. 21, 1964, n 28: AAS 57 (1965), p 35.
39. Cf. John XXIII, encyclical letter *Sacerdotii Nostri Primordia*, Aug. 1, 1959: AAS 51 (1959), p 576; St. Pius X, *Exhortation to the Clergy Haerent Animo*, Aug. 4, 1908: *Acts of St. Pius X*, vol. IV (1908), pp 237 ff.

40. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Pastoral Duties of Bishops, Oct. 28, 1956 nn 15 and 16.

41. The Cathedral Chapter is already found in established law, as the "senate and assembly" of the bishop (Code of Canon Law, c.391), or if there is not one, an assembly of diocesan consultors (cf. Code of Canon Law, cc. 423-428). It is our desire to give recognition to such institutions so that modern circumstances and necessities might better be provided for. As is evident, this synod of priests forms the pastoral consilium spoken of in the Decree on the Pastoral Duties of Bishops of Oct. 28, 1965 (n.27), of which the laity can also be members, and whose function is mainly to map out a plan of action for pastoral work. Concerning priests as counselors of the bishops, one might refer to the Didascalia, II, 28, 4 (ed. F.X. Funk, II, p 108); also Constitutions of the Apostles, II 28,4 (ed. F.X. Funk, I, p 109); St. Ignatius Martyr, Magn. 6, 1 (ed. F.X. Funk, p 234, 10-16); Trall. 3, 1 (ed. F.X. Funk, p 244, 10-12); Origen, Against Celsus, 3, 30: "Priests are counselors or 'bouleytai'" (PG 11, 957 d-960 a).

42. St. Ignatius Martyr, Magn. 6, 1: (ed. F.X. Funk, p 234, 10-13); St. Ignatius Martyr, Trall., 3, 1: (ibid., p 244, 10-12); St. Jerome, On Isaiah, II, 3 (PL 24, 61 A).

43. Cf. Paul VI, allocution to the family heads of Rome and Lenten speakers, March 1, 1965, in the Sistine Hall: AAS 57 (1965), p 326.

44. Cf. Constitutions of the Apostles, VIII 47, 39: (ed. F.X. Funk, p 577).

45. Cf. 3 Jn 8.

46. Cf. Jn. 17:23.

47. Cf. Heb 13:1-2.

48. Cf. Heb 13:16.

49. Cf. Mt 5:10.

50. Cf. 1 Thes 2:12; Col 1:13.

51. Cf. Mt 23:8. Also Paul VI, encyclical letter Ecclesiam Suam, Aug. 6, 1964: AAS 58 (1964) p 647.

52. Cf. Eph 4:7 and 16; Constitutions of the Apostles, VIII, 1, 20: (ed. F.X. Funk, I, p 467).

53. Cf. Phil 2:21.

54. Cf. 1 Jn 4:1.

55. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, Nov. 21, 1964, n 37: AAS 57 (1965), pp 42-43.

56. Cf. Eph 4:14.

57. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism, Nov. 21, 1964: AAS 57 (1965), pp 90ff.

58. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, Nov 21, 1964, n 37: AAS 57 (1965), pp 42-43.

59. Cf. Heb 7:3.

60. Cf. Lk 10:1.

61. Cf. 1 Pt 2:25.
62. Cf. Acts 20:28.
63. Cf. Mt 9:36.
64. Roman Pontifical, on the ordination of a priest.
65. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on Priestly Training, Oct. 28, 1965, n 2.
66. Paul VI, allocution of May 5, 1965: L'Osservatore Romano, 5-6-65, p 1.
67. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on Priestly Training, Oct. 28, 1965, n 2.
68. The Fathers teach this in their explanations of Christ's words to Peter: "Do you love me? ...Feed my sheep." (Jn 21:17); This St. John Chrysostom, On the Priesthood, II, 1-2 (PG 47-48, 633); St. Gregory the Great, Reg. Past. Liber, P I c. 5 (PL 77, 19 a).

### Chapter 3

1. Cf. 2 Cor 12:9.
2. Cf. Pius XI, encyclical letter Ad Catholici Sacerdotii, Dec. 20, 1935: AAS 28 (1936) n 10.
3. Cf. Jn 10:36.
4. Lk 24:26.
5. Cf. Eph 4:13.
6. Cf. 2 Cor 3:8-9.
7. Cf. among others: St. Pius X, exhortation to the clergy Haerent Animo, Aug. 4, 1908: St. Pius X, AAS 4 (1908), pp 237ff. Pius XI, encyclical letter Ad Catholici Sacerdotii, Dec. 20, 1935; AAS 28 (1936). Pius XII apostolic exhortation Menti nostrae, Sept. 23, 1950: AAS (1950) 657ff. John XXIII, encyclical letter Sacerdoti Nostri Primordia, Aug. 1, 1959: AAS 51 (1959) 545ff.
8. Cf. St. Thomas, Summa Theol. II-II, q. 188, a. 7.
9. Cf. Heb 3:9-10.
10. Acts 16:14.
11. Cf. 2 Cor 4:7.
12. Cf. Eph 3:9.
13. Cf. Roman Pontifical on the ordination of priests.
14. Cf. Roman Missal, Prayer over the Offerings of the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.
15. Paul VI, encyclical letter Mysterium Fidei, Sept. 3, 1965: AAS 57 (1965), pp 761-762. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Dec. 4, 1963, nn 26 and 27; AAS 56 (1964), p 107.

16. Cf. Jn 10:11.
17. Cf. 2 Cor 1:7.
18. Cf. 2 Cor 1:4.
19. Cf. 1 Cor 10:33.
20. Cf. Jn 3:8.
21. Cf. Jn 4:34.
22. Cf. 1 Jn 3:16.
23. "May it be a duty of love to feed the Lord's flock" (St. Augustine, Tract on John, 123, 5: PL 35, 1967).
24. Cf. Rom 12:2.
25. Cf. Gal 2:2.
26. Cf. 2 Cor 7:4.
27. Cf. Jn 4:34; 5:30; 6:38.
28. Cf. Acts 13:2.
29. Cf. Eph 5:10.
30. Cf. Acts 20:22.
31. Cf. 2 Cor 12:15.
32. Cf. Eph 4:11-16.
33. Cf. Mt 19:22.
34. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, Nov. 21, 1964 n 42: AAS 57 (1965) pp 47-49.
35. Cf. 1 Tim 3:2-5: Tt 1:6.
36. Cf. Pius XI, encyclical letter Ad Catholici Sacerdotii Dec. 30, 1935: AAS 28 (1936) p 28.
37. Cf. Mt 19:12.
38. Cf. 1 Cor 7:32-34.
39. Cf. 2 Cor 11:2.
40. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, Nov. 21, 1964, n 42 and 44: AAS 57 (1965), pp 47-49 and 50-51; Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life, Oct. 18, 1965, n 12.

41. Cf. Lk 20:35-36; Pius XI, encyclical letter *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii* Dec.20, 1935, AAS 28 (1936) pp 24-28; Pius XII, encyclical letter *Sacra Virginitas*, March 25, 1954, AAS 46 (1954) nn 169-172.

42. Cf. Mt 19:11.

43. Cf. Jn 17:14-16.

44. Cf. 1 Cor 7:31.

45. Council of Antioch, canon 25: Mansi 2, 1328; Decree of Gratian, c. 23, C. 12 q. 1. (ed. Friedberg, 1, pp 684-685).

46. This is to be understood especially with regard to the laws and customs prevailing in the Eastern Churches.

47. Council of Paris a, 829, can 15: M.G.H. Sect. III, Concilia, t. 2, para 6 622; Council of Trent, Session XXV, *De Reform.*, chapter 1.

48. Ps 62:11 (Vulgate 61).

49. Cf. 2 Cor 8:9.

50. Cf. Acts 8:18-25.

51. Cf. Phil 4:12.

52. Cf. Acts 2:42-47.

53. Cf. Lk 4:18.

54. Cf. Code of Canon Law, 125 ff.

55. Cf. Second Vatican Council Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life, Oct. 28, 1965, n 6; Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Nov. 18, 1965, n 21.

56. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, Nov. 21, 1964, n 65: AAS 57 (1965) pp 64-65.

57. Roman Pontifical On the Ordination of Priests.

58. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Nov. 18, n 25.

59. This course is not the same as the pastoral course which is to be undertaken immediately after ordination, spoken of in the Decree on Priestly Training, Oct.28, 1965, n 22.

60. Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Pastoral Duties of Bishops. Oct.28, 1965, n 16.

61. Cf. Mt 10:10; 1 Cor 9:7; 1 Tim 5:18.

62. Cf. 2 Cor 8:14.

63. Cf. Phil 4:14.

Conclusion and exhortation



1. Cf. Jn 3:16.
2. Cf. 1 Pt 2:5.
3. Cf. Eph 2:22.
4. Cf. Roman Pontifical, on the ordination of priests.
5. Cf. Eph 3:9.
6. Cf. Col 3:3.

DECREE ON THE APOSTOLATE OF THE LAITY  
**APOSTOLICAM ACTUOSITATEM**

SOLEMNLY PROMULGATED BY HIS HOLINESS,  
POPE PAUL VI  
ON NOVEMBER 18, 1965

**INTRODUCTION**

1. To intensify the apostolic activity of the people of God,(1) the most holy synod earnestly addresses itself to the laity, whose proper and indispensable role in the mission of the Church has already been dealt with in other documents.(2) The apostolate of the laity derives from their Christian vocation and the Church can never be without it. Sacred Scripture clearly shows how spontaneous and fruitful such activity was at the very beginning of the Church (cf. Acts 11:19-21; 18:26; Rom. 16:1-16; Phil. 4:3).

Our own times require of the laity no less zeal: in fact, modern conditions demand that their apostolate be broadened and intensified. With a constantly increasing population, continual progress in science and technology, and closer interpersonal relationships, the areas for the lay apostolate have been immensely widened particularly in fields that have been for the most part open to the laity alone. These factors have also occasioned new problems which demand their expert attention and study. This apostolate becomes more imperative in view of the fact that many areas of human life have become increasingly autonomous. This is as it should be, but it sometimes involves a degree of departure from the ethical and religious order and a serious danger to Christian life. Besides, in many places where priests are very few or, in some instances, deprived of due freedom for priestly work, the Church could scarcely exist and function without the activity of the laity.

An indication of this manifold and pressing need is the unmistakable work being done today by the Holy Spirit in making the laity ever more conscious of their own responsibility and encouraging them to serve Christ and the Church in all circumstances.(3)

In this decree the Council seeks to describe the nature, character, and diversity of the lay apostolate, to state its basic principles, and to give pastoral directives for its more effective exercise. All these should be regarded as norms when the canon law, as it pertains to the lay apostolate, is revised.

**CHAPTER I**

**THE VOCATION OF THE LAITY TO THE APOSTOLATE**

2. The Church was founded for the purpose of spreading the kingdom of Christ throughout the earth for the glory of God the Father, to enable all men to share in His saving redemption,(1) and that through them the whole world might enter into a relationship with Christ. All activity of the Mystical Body directed to the attainment of this goal is called the apostolate, which the Church carries on in various ways through all her members. For the Christian vocation by its very nature is also a vocation to the apostolate. No part of the structure of a living body is merely passive but has a share in the functions as well as life of the body: so, too, in the body of Christ, which is the Church, "the whole body . . . in keeping with the proper activity of each part, derives its increase from its own internal development" (Eph. 4:16).

Indeed, the organic union in this body and the structure of the members are so compact that the member who fails to make his proper contribution to the development of the Church must be said to be useful neither to the Church nor to himself.

In the Church there is a diversity of ministry but a oneness of mission. Christ conferred on the Apostles and their successors the duty of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling in His name and power. But the laity likewise share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own share in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world.(2)

They exercise the apostolate in fact by their activity directed to the evangelization and sanctification of men and to the penetrating and perfecting of the temporal order through the spirit of the Gospel. In this way, their temporal activity openly bears witness to Christ and promotes the salvation of men. Since the laity, in accordance with their state of life, live in the midst of the world and its concerns, they are called by God to exercise their apostolate in the world like leaven, with the ardor of the spirit of Christ.

3. The laity derive the right and duty to the apostolate from their union with Christ the head; incorporated into Christ's Mystical Body through Baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through Confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord Himself. They are consecrated for the royal priesthood and the holy people (cf. 1 Peter 2:4-10) not only that they may offer spiritual sacrifices in everything they do but also that they may witness to Christ throughout the world. The sacraments, however, especially the most holy Eucharist, communicate and nourish that charity which is the soul of the entire apostolate.(3)

One engages in the apostolate through the faith, hope, and charity which the Holy Spirit diffuses in the hearts of all members of the Church. Indeed, by the precept of charity, which is the Lord's greatest commandment, all the faithful are impelled to promote the glory of God through the coming of His kingdom and to obtain eternal life for all men-that they may know the only true God and Him

whom He sent, Jesus Christ (cf. John 17:3). On all Christians therefore is laid the preeminent responsibility of working to make the divine message of salvation known and accepted by all men throughout the world.

For the exercise of this apostolate, the Holy Spirit Who sanctifies the people of God through ministry and the sacraments gives the faithful special gifts also (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7), "allotting them to everyone according as He wills" (1 Cor. 12:11) in order that individuals, administering grace to others just as they have received it, may also be "good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10), to build up the whole body in charity (cf. Eph. 4:16). From the acceptance of these charisms, including those which are more elementary, there arise for each believer the right and duty to use them in the Church and in the world for the good of men and the building up of the Church, in the freedom of the Holy Spirit who "breathes where He wills" (John 3:8). This should be done by the laity in communion with their brothers in Christ, especially with their pastors who must make a judgment about the true nature and proper use of these gifts not to extinguish the Spirit but to test all things and hold for what is good (cf. 1 Thess. 5:12,19,21).(4)

4. Since Christ, sent by the Father, is the source and origin of the whole apostolate of the Church, the success of the lay apostolate depends upon the laity's living union with Christ, in keeping with the Lord's words, "He who abides in me, and I in him, bears much fruit, for without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). This life of intimate union with Christ in the Church is nourished by spiritual aids which are common to all the faithful, especially active participation in the sacred liturgy.(5) These are to be used by the laity in such a way that while correctly fulfilling their secular duties in the ordinary conditions of life, they do not separate union with Christ from their life but rather performing their work according to God's will they grow in that union. In this way the laity must make progress in holiness in a happy and ready spirit, trying prudently and patiently to overcome difficulties.(6) Neither family concerns nor other secular affairs should be irrelevant to their spiritual life, in keeping with the words of the Apostle, "Whatever you do in word or work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col. 3:17).

Such a life requires a continual exercise of faith, hope, and charity. Only by the light of faith and by meditation on the word of God can one always and everywhere recognize God in Whom "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28), seek His will in every event, see Christ in everyone whether he be a relative or a stranger, and make correct judgments about the true meaning and value of temporal things both in themselves and in their relation to man's final goal.

They who have this faith live in the hope of the revelation of the sons of God and keep in mind the cross and resurrection of the Lord. In the pilgrimage of this life, hidden with Christ in God and free from enslavement to wealth, they aspire to

those riches which remain forever and generously dedicate themselves wholly to the advancement of the kingdom of God and to the reform and improvement of the temporal order in a Christian spirit. Among the trials of this life they find strength in hope, convinced that "the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that will be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

Impelled by divine charity, they do good to all men, especially to those of the household of the faith (cf. Gal. 6:10), laying aside "all malice and all deceit and pretense, and envy, and all slander" (1 Peter 2:1), and thereby they draw men to Christ. This charity of God, "which is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom. 5:5), enables the laity really to express the spirit of the beatitudes in their lives. Following Jesus in His poverty, they are neither depressed by the lack of temporal goods nor inflated by their abundance; imitating Christ in His humility, they have no obsession for empty honors (cf. Gal. 5:26) but seek to please God rather than men, ever ready to leave all things for Christ's sake (cf. Luke 14:26) and to suffer persecution for justice sake (cf. Matt. 5:10), as they remember the words of the Lord, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. 16:24) . Promoting Christian friendship among themselves, they help one another in every need whatsoever.

This plan for the spiritual life of the laity should take its particular character from their married or family state or their single or widowed state, from their state of health, and from their professional and social activity. They should not cease to develop earnestly the qualities and talents bestowed on them in accord with these conditions of life, and they should make use of the gifts which they have received from the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, the laity who have followed their vocation and have become members of one of the associations or institutes approved by the Church try faithfully to adopt the special characteristics of the spiritual life which are proper to them as well. They should also hold in high esteem professional skill, family and civic spirit, and the virtues relating to social customs, namely, honesty, justice, sincerity, kindness, and courage, without which no true Christian life can exist.

The perfect example of this type of spiritual and apostolic life is the most Blessed Virgin Mary, Queen of Apostles, who while leading the life common to all here on earth, one filled with family concerns and labors, was always intimately united with her Son and in an entirely unique way cooperated in the work of the Savior. Having now been assumed into heaven, with her maternal charity she cares for these brothers of her Son who are still on their earthly pilgrimage and remain involved in dangers and difficulties until they are led into the happy fatherland.(7) All should devoutly venerate her and commend their life and apostolate to her maternal care.

## CHAPTER II

### OBJECTIVES

5. Christ's redemptive work, while essentially concerned with the salvation of men, includes also the renewal of the whole temporal order. Hence the mission of the Church is not only to bring the message and grace of Christ to men but also to penetrate and perfect the temporal order with the spirit of the Gospel. In fulfilling this mission of the Church, the Christian laity exercise their apostolate both in the Church and in the world, in both the spiritual and the temporal orders. These orders, although distinct, are so connected in the singular plan of God that He Himself intends to raise up the whole world again in Christ and to make it a new creation, initially on earth and completely on the last day. In both orders the layman, being simultaneously a believer and a citizen, should be continuously led by the same Christian conscience.

6. The mission of the Church pertains to the salvation of men, which is to be achieved by belief in Christ and by His grace. The apostolate of the Church and of all its members is primarily designed to manifest Christ's message by words and deeds and to communicate His grace to the world. This is done mainly through the ministry of the Word and the sacraments, entrusted in a special way to the clergy, wherein the laity also have their very important roles to fulfill if they are to be "fellow workers for the truth" (3 John 8). It is especially on this level that the apostolate of the laity and the pastoral ministry are mutually complementary.

There are innumerable opportunities open to the laity for the exercise of their apostolate of evangelization and sanctification. The very testimony of their Christian life and good works done in a supernatural spirit have the power to draw men to belief and to God; for the Lord says, "Even so let your light shine before men in order that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

However, an apostolate of this kind does not consist only in the witness of one's way of life; a true apostle looks for opportunities to announce Christ by words addressed either to non-believers with a view to leading them to faith, or to the faithful with a view to instructing, strengthening, and encouraging them to a more fervent life. "For the charity of Christ impels us" (2 Cor. 5:14). The words of the Apostle should echo in all hearts, "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16).(1)

Since, in our own times, new problems are arising and very serious errors are circulating which tend to undermine the foundations of religion, the moral order, and human society itself, this sacred synod earnestly exhorts laymen—each according to his own gifts of intelligence and learning—to be more diligent in doing what they can to explain, defend, and properly apply Christian principles to the problems of our era in accordance with the mind of the Church.

7. God's plan for the world is that men should work together to renew and constantly perfect the temporal order.

All those things which make up the temporal order, namely, the good things of life and the prosperity of the family, culture, economic matters, the arts and professions, the laws of the political community, international relations, and other matters of this kind, as well as their development and progress, not only aid in the attainment of man's ultimate goal but also possess their own intrinsic value. This value has been established in them by God, whether they are considered in themselves or as parts of the whole temporal order. "God saw that all He had made was very good" (Gen. 1:31). This natural goodness of theirs takes on a special dignity as a result of their relation to the human person, for whose service they were created. It has pleased God to unite all things, both natural and supernatural, in Christ Jesus "so that in all things He may have the first place" (Col. 1:18). This destination, however, not only does not deprive the temporal order of its independence, its proper goals, laws, supports, and significance for human welfare but rather perfects the temporal order in its own intrinsic strength and worth and puts it on a level with man's whole vocation upon earth.

In the course of history, the use of temporal things has been marred by serious vices. Affected by original sin, men have frequently fallen into many errors concerning the true God, the nature of man, and the principles of the moral law. This has led to the corruption of morals and human institutions and not rarely to contempt for the human person himself. In our own time, moreover, those who have trusted excessively in the progress of the natural sciences and the technical arts have fallen into an idolatry of temporal things and have become their slaves rather than their masters.

The whole Church must work vigorously in order that men may become capable of rectifying the distortion of the temporal order and directing it to God through Christ. Pastors must clearly state the principles concerning the purpose of creation and the use of temporal things and must offer the moral and spiritual aids by which the temporal order may be renewed in Christ.

The laity must take up the renewal of the temporal order as their own special obligation. Led by the light of the Gospel and the mind of the Church and motivated by Christian charity, they must act directly and in a definite way in the temporal sphere. As citizens they must cooperate with other citizens with their own particular skill and on their own responsibility. Everywhere and in all things they must seek the justice of God's kingdom. The temporal order must be renewed in such a way that, without detriment to its own proper laws, it may be brought into conformity with the higher principles of the Christian life and adapted to the shifting circumstances of time, place, and peoples. Preeminent among the works of this type of apostolate is that of Christian social action which the sacred synod desires to see extended to the whole temporal sphere, including culture.(2)

8. While every exercise of the apostolate should be motivated by charity, some works by their very nature can become specially vivid expressions of this charity. Christ the Lord wanted these works to be signs of His messianic mission (cf. Matt. 11:4-5).

The greatest commandment in the law is to love God with one's whole heart and one's neighbor as oneself (cf. Matt. 22:37-40). Christ made this commandment of love of neighbor His own and enriched it with a new meaning. For He wanted to equate Himself with His brethren as the object of this love when He said, "As long as you did it for one of these, the least of My brethren, you did it for Me" (Matt. 25:40). Assuming human nature, He bound the whole human race to Himself as a family through a certain supernatural solidarity and established charity as the mark of His disciples, saying, "By this will all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

In her very early days, the holy Church added the agape to the eucharistic supper and thus showed itself to be wholly united around Christ by the bond of charity. So, too, in every era it is recognized by this sign of love, and while it rejoices in the undertakings of others, it claims works of charity as its own inalienable duty and right. For this reason, pity for the needy and the sick and works of charity and mutual aid intended to relieve human needs of every kind are held in highest honor by the Church.(3)

At the present time, with the development of more rapid facilities for communication, with the barrier of distance separating men greatly reduced, with the inhabitants of the entire globe becoming one great family, these charitable activities and works have become more urgent and universal. These charitable enterprises can and should reach out to all persons and all needs. Wherever there are people in need of food and drink, clothing, housing, medicine, employment, education; wherever men lack the facilities necessary for living a truly human life or are afflicted with serious distress or illness or suffer exile or imprisonment, there Christian charity should seek them out and find them, console them with great solicitude, and help them with appropriate relief. This obligation is imposed above all upon every prosperous nation and person.(4)

In order that the exercise of charity on this scale may be unexceptionable in appearance as well as in fact, it is altogether necessary that one should consider in one's neighbor the image of God in which he has been created, and also Christ the Lord to Whom is really offered whatever is given to a needy person. It is imperative also that the freedom and dignity of the person being helped be respected with the utmost consideration, that the purity of one's charitable intentions be not stained by seeking one's own advantage or by striving for domination,(5) and especially that the demands of justice be satisfied lest the giving of what is due in justice be represented as the offering of a charitable gift. Not only the effects but also the causes of these ills must be removed and the



help be given in such a way that the recipients may gradually be freed from dependence on outsiders and become self-sufficient.

Therefore, the laity should hold in high esteem and, according to their ability, aid the works of charity and projects for social assistance, whether public or private, including international programs whereby effective help is given to needy individuals and peoples. In so doing, they should cooperate with all men of good will.(6)

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **THE VARIOUS FIELDS OF THE APOSTOLATE**

9. The laity carry out their manifold apostolate both in the Church and in the world. In both areas there are various opportunities for apostolic activity. We wish to list here the more important fields of action, namely, church communities, the family, youth, the social milieu, and national and international levels. Since in our times women have an ever more active share in the whole life of society, it is very important that they participate more widely also in the various fields of the Church's apostolate.

10. As sharers in the role of Christ as priest, prophet, and king, the laity have their work cut out for them in the life and activity of the Church. Their activity is so necessary within the Church communities that without it the apostolate of the pastors is often unable to achieve its full effectiveness. In the manner of the men and women who helped Paul in spreading the Gospel (cf. Acts 18:18, 26; Rom. 16:3) the laity with the right apostolic attitude supply what is lacking to their brethren and refresh the spirit of pastors and of the rest of the faithful (cf. 1 Cor. 16:17-18). Strengthened by active participation in the liturgical life of their community, they are eager to do their share of the apostolic works of that community. They bring to the Church people who perhaps are far removed from it, earnestly cooperate in presenting the word of God especially by means of catechetical instruction, and offer their special skills to make the care of souls and the administration of the temporalities of the Church more efficient and effective.

The parish offers an obvious example of the apostolate on the community level inasmuch as it brings together the many human differences within its boundaries and merges them into the universality of the Church.(1) The laity should accustom themselves to working in the parish in union with their priests,(2) bringing to the Church community their own and the world's problems as well as questions concerning human salvation, all of which they should examine and resolve by deliberating in common. As far as possible the laity ought to provide helpful collaboration for every apostolic and missionary undertaking sponsored by their local parish.

They should develop an ever-increasing appreciation of their own diocese, of which the parish is a kind of cell, ever ready at their pastor's invitation to participate in diocesan projects. Indeed, to fulfill the needs of cities and rural areas,(3) they should not limit their cooperation to the parochial or diocesan boundaries but strive to extend it to interparochial, interdiocesan, national, and international fields. This is constantly becoming all the more necessary because the daily increase in mobility of populations, reciprocal relationships, and means of communication no longer allow any sector of society to remain closed in upon itself. Thus they should be concerned about the needs of the people of God dispersed throughout the world. They should especially make missionary activity their own by giving material or even personal assistance. It is a duty and honor for Christians to return to God a part of the good things that they receive from Him.

11. Since the Creator of all things has established conjugal society as the beginning and basis of human society and, by His grace, has made it a great mystery in Christ and the Church (cf. Eph. 5:32), the apostolate of married persons and families is of unique importance for the Church and civil society.

Christian husbands and wives are cooperators in grace and witnesses of faith for each other, their children, and all others in their household. They are the first to communicate the faith to their children and to educate them by word and example for the Christian and apostolic life. They prudently help them in the choice of their vocation and carefully promote any sacred vocation which they may discern in them.

It has always been the duty of Christian married partners but today it is the greatest part of their apostolate to manifest and prove by their own way of life the indissolubility and sacredness of the marriage bond, strenuously to affirm the right and duty of parents and guardians to educate children in a Christian manner, and to defend the dignity and lawful autonomy of the family. They and the rest of the faithful, therefore, should cooperate with men of good will to ensure the preservation of these rights in civil legislation and to make sure that governments give due attention to the needs of the family regarding housing, the education of children, working conditions, social security, and taxes; and that in policy decisions affecting migrants their right to live together as a family should be safeguarded.(4)

This mission-to be the first and vital cell of society-the family has received from God. It will fulfill this mission if it appears as the domestic sanctuary of the Church by reason of the mutual affection of its members and the prayer that they offer to God in common, if the whole family makes itself a part of the liturgical worship of the Church, and if it provides active hospitality and promotes justice and other good works for the service of all the brethren in need. Among the various activities of the family apostolate may be enumerated the following: the adoption of abandoned infants, hospitality to strangers, assistance in the

operation of schools, helpful advice and material assistance for adolescents, help to engaged couples in preparing themselves better for marriage, catechetical work, support of married couples and families involved in material and moral crises, help for the aged not only by providing them with the necessities of life but also by obtaining for them a fair share of the benefits of an expanding economy.

At all times and places but particularly in areas where the first seeds of the Gospel are being sown, or where the Church is just beginning, or is involved in some serious difficulty, Christian families can give effective testimony to Christ before the world by remaining faithful to the Gospel and by providing a model of Christian marriage through their whole way of life.(5)

To facilitate the attainment of the goals of their apostolate, it can be useful for families to be brought together into groups.(6)

12. Young persons exert very important influence in modern society.(7) There has been a radical change in the circumstances of their lives, their mental attitudes, and their relationships with their own families. Frequently they move too quickly into a new social and economic status. While their social and even their political importance is growing from day to day, they seem to be unable to cope adequately with their new responsibilities.

Their heightened influence in society demands of them a proportionate apostolic activity, but their natural qualities also fit them for this activity. As they become more conscious of their own personalities, they are impelled by a zest for life and a ready eagerness to assume their own responsibility, and they yearn to play their part in social and cultural life. If this zeal is imbued with the spirit of Christ and is inspired by obedience and love for the Church, it can be expected to be very fruitful. They should become the first to carry on the apostolate directly to other young persons, concentrating their apostolic efforts within their own circle, according to the needs of the social environment in which they live.(8)

Adults ought to engage in such friendly discussion with young people that both age groups, overcoming the age barrier, may become better acquainted and share the special benefits each generation can offer the other. Adults should stimulate young persons first by good example to take part in the apostolate and, if the opportunity presents itself, by offering them effective advice and willing assistance. By the same token young people should cultivate toward adults respect and trust, and although they are naturally attracted to novelties, they should duly appreciate praiseworthy traditions.

13. The apostolate in the social milieu, that is, the effort to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws, and structures of the community in which one lives, is so much the duty and responsibility of the laity that it can never be performed properly by others. In this area the laity can exercise the apostolate of like toward like. It is here that they complement the testimony of life with the

testimony of the word.(9) It is here where they work or practice their profession or study or reside or spend their leisure time or have their companionship that they are more capable of helping their brethren.

The laity fulfill this mission of the Church in the world especially by conforming their lives to their faith so that they become the light of the world as well as by practicing honesty in all their dealings so that they attract all to the love of the true and the good and finally to the Church and to Christ. They fulfill their mission also by fraternal charity which presses them to share in the living conditions, labors, sorrows, and aspirations of their brethren with the result that the hearts of all about them are quietly prepared for the workings of saving grace. Another requisite for the accomplishment of their task is a full consciousness of their role in building up society whereby they strive to perform their domestic, social, and professional duties with such Christian generosity that their manner of acting should gradually penetrate the whole world of life and labor.

This apostolate should reach out to all wherever they may be encountered; it should not exclude any spiritual or temporal benefit which they have the ability to confer. True apostles however, are not content with this activity alone but endeavor to announce Christ to their neighbors by means of the spoken word as well. For there are many persons who can hear the Gospel and recognize Christ only through the laity who live near them.

Children also have their own apostolic work to do. According to their ability they are true living witnesses of Christ among their companions.

10. A vast field for the apostolate has opened up on the national and international levels where the laity especially assist with their Christian wisdom. In loyalty to their country and in faithful fulfillment of their civic obligations, Catholics should feel themselves obliged to promote the true common good. Thus they should make the weight of their opinion felt in order that the civil authority may act with justice and that legislation may conform to moral precepts and the common good. Catholics skilled in public affairs and adequately enlightened in faith and Christian doctrine should not refuse to administer public affairs since by doing this in a worthy manner they can both further the common good and at the same time prepare the way for the Gospel.

Catholics should try to cooperate with all men and women of good will to promote whatever is true, whatever just, whatever holy, whatever lovable (cf. Phil. 4:8). They should hold discussions with them, excel them in prudence and courtesy, and initiate research on social and public practices which should be improved in line with the spirit of the Gospel.

Among the signs of our times, the irresistibly increasing sense of the solidarity of all peoples is especially noteworthy. It is a function of the lay apostolate sedulously to promote this awareness and to transform it into a sincere and

genuine love of brotherhood. Furthermore, the laity should be aware of the international field and of the questions and solutions, doctrinal as well as practical, which arise in this field, with special reverence to developing nations.(10)

All who work in or give help to foreign nations must remember that relations among peoples should be a genuine fraternal exchange in which each party is at the same time a giver and a receiver. Travelers, whether their interest is international affairs, business, or leisure, should remember that they are itinerant heralds of Christ wherever they go and should act accordingly.

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **THE VARIOUS FORMS OF THE APOSTOLATE**

15. The laity can engage in their apostolic activity either as individuals or together as members of various groups or associations.

16. The individual apostolate, flowing generously from its source in a truly Christian life (cf. John 4:14), is the origin and condition of the whole lay apostolate, even of the organized type, and it admits of no substitute.

Regardless of status, all lay persons (including those who have no opportunity or possibility for collaboration in associations) are called to this type of apostolate and obliged to engage in it. This type of apostolate is useful at all times and places, but in certain circumstances it is the only one appropriate and feasible.

There are many forms of the apostolate whereby the laity build up the Church, sanctify the world, and give it life in Christ. A particular form of the individual apostolate as well as a sign specially suited to our times is the testimony of the whole lay life arising from faith, hope, and charity. It manifests Christ living in those who believe in Him. Then by the apostolate the spoken and written word, which is utterly necessary under certain circumstances, lay people announce Christ, explain and spread His teaching in accordance with one's status and ability, and faithfully profess it.

Furthermore, in collaborating as citizens of this world, in whatever pertains to the upbuilding and conducting of the temporal order, the laity must seek in the light of faith loftier motives of action in their family, professional, cultural, and social life and make them known to others when the occasion arises. Doing this, they should be aware of the fact that they are cooperating with God the creator, redeemer, and sanctifier and are giving praise to Him.

Finally, the laity should vivify their life with charity and express it as best they can in their works.

They should all remember that they can reach all men and contribute to the salvation of the whole world by public worship and prayer as well as by penance and voluntary acceptance of the labors and hardships of life whereby they become like the suffering Christ (cf. 2 Cor. 4:10; Col. 1:24).

17. There is a very urgent need for this individual apostolate in those regions where the freedom of the Church is seriously infringed. In these trying circumstances, the laity do what they can to take the place of priests, risking their freedom and sometimes their life to teach Christian doctrine to those around them, training them in a religious way of life and a Catholic way of thinking, leading them to receive the sacraments frequently and developing in them piety, especially Eucharistic devotion.(1) While the sacred synod heartily thanks God for continuing also in our times to raise up lay persons of heroic fortitude in the midst of persecutions, it embrace them with fatherly affection and gratitude.

The individual apostolate has a special field in areas where Catholics are few in number and widely dispersed. Here the laity who engage in the apostolate only as individuals, whether for the reasons already mentioned or for special reasons including those deriving also from their own professional activity, usefully gather into smaller groups for serious conversation without any more formal kind of establishment or organization, so that an indication of the community of the Church is always apparent to others as a true witness of love. In this way, by giving spiritual help to one another through friendship and the communicating of the benefit of their experience, they are trained to overcome the disadvantages of excessively isolated life and activity and to make their apostolate more productive.

18. The faithful are called to engage in the apostolate as individuals in the varying circumstances of their life. They should remember, nevertheless, that man is naturally social and that it has pleased God to unite those who believe in Christ into the people of God (cf. 1 Peter 2:5-10) and into one body (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12). The group apostolate of Christian believers then happily corresponds to a human and Christian need and at the same time signifies the communion and unity of the Church in Christ, who said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20).

For this reason the faithful should participate in the apostolate by way of united effort.(2) They should be apostles both in their family communities and in their parishes and dioceses, which themselves express the community nature of the apostolate, as well as in the informal groups which they decide to form among themselves.

The group apostolate is very important also because the apostolate must often be performed by way of common activity both the Church communities and the various spheres. For the associations established for carrying on the apostolate in common sustain their members, form them for the apostolate, and rightly

organize and regulate their apostolic work so that much better results can be expected than if each member were to act on his own.

In the present circumstances, it is quite necessary that, in the area of lay activity, the united and organized form of the apostolate be strengthened. In fact, only the pooling of resources is capable of fully achieving all the aims of the modern apostolate and firmly protecting its interests.(3) Here it is important that the apostolate encompass even the common attitudes and social conditions of those for whom it is designed. Otherwise those engaged in the apostolate are often unable to bear up under the pressure of public opinion or of social institutions.

19. There is a great variety of associations in the apostolate.(4) Some set before themselves the broad apostolic purpose of the Church; others aim to evangelize and sanctify in a special way. Some purpose to infuse a Christian spirit into the temporal order; others bear witness to Christ in a special way through works of mercy and charity.

Among these associations, those which promote and encourage closer unity between the concrete life of the members and their faith must be given primary consideration. Associations are not ends unto themselves; rather they should serve the mission of the Church to the world. Their apostolic dynamism depends on their conformity with the goals of the Church as well as on the Christian witness and evangelical spirit of every member and of the whole association.

Now, in view of the progress of social institutions and the the fast- moving pace of modern society, the global nature of the Church's mission requires that apostolic enterprises of Catholics should more and more develop organized forms in the international sphere. Catholic international organizations will more effectively achieve their purpose if the groups comprising them, as well as their members, are more closely united to these international organizations.

Maintaining the proper relationship to Church authorities,(5) the laity have the right to found and control such associations(6) and to join those already existing. Yet the dispersion of efforts must be avoided. This happens when new associations and projects are promoted without a sufficient reason, or if antiquated associations or methods are retained beyond their period of usefulness. Nor is it always fitting to transfer indiscriminately forms of the apostolates that have been used in one nation to other nations.(7)

20. Many decades ago the laity in many nations began to dedicate themselves increasingly to the apostolate. They grouped themselves into various kinds of activities and societies which, while maintaining a closer union with the hierarchy, pursued and continue to pursue goals which are properly apostolic. Of these associations, or even among similar and older institutions, those are specially noteworthy which followed different methods of operation and yet produced excellent results for Christ's kingdom. These societies were deservedly

recommended and promoted by the popes and many bishops, from whom they received the title of "Catholic Action," and were often described as the collaboration of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy.(8)

Whether these forms of the apostolate have the name of "Catholic Action" or some other title, they exercise an apostolate of great value for our times and consist in the combination and simultaneous possession of the following characteristics:

a) The immediate aim of organizations of this kind is the Church's apostolic aim, that is, the evangelization and sanctification of men and the formation of a Christian conscience among them so that they can infuse the spirit of the Gospel into various communities and departments of life.

b) Cooperating with the hierarchy in their own way, the laity contribute the benefit of their experience to, and assume responsibility for the direction of these organizations, the consideration of the conditions in which the pastoral activity of the Church is to be conducted, and the elaboration and execution of the plan of things to be done.

c) The laity act together in the manner of an organic body so that the community of the Church is more fittingly symbolized and the apostolate rendered more effective.

d) Whether they offer themselves spontaneously or are invited to action and direct cooperation with the apostolate of the hierarchy, the laity function under the higher direction of the hierarchy itself, and the latter can sanction this cooperation by an explicit mandate.

Organizations in which, in the opinion of the hierarchy, the ensemble of these characteristics is realized, must be considered to be Catholic Action even though they take on various forms and titles because of the needs of different regions and peoples.

The most holy council earnestly recommends these associations, which surely answer the needs of the apostolate of the Church among many peoples and countries, and invites the clergy and laity working in them to develop the above-mentioned characteristics to an ever greater degree and to cooperate at all times with all other forms of the apostolate in a fraternal manner in the Church.

21. All associations of the apostolate must be given due appreciation. Those, however, which the hierarchy have praised or recommended as responsive to the needs of time and place, or have ordered to be established as particularly urgent, must be held in highest esteem by priests, Religious, and laity and promoted according to each one's ability. Among these associations, moreover,



international associations or groups of Catholics must be specially appreciated at the present time.

22. Deserving of special honor and commendation in the Church are those lay people, single or married, who devote themselves with professional experience, either permanently or temporarily, to the service of associations and their activities. There is a source of great joy for the Church in the fact that there is a daily increase in the number of lay persons who offer their personal service to apostolic associations and activities, either within the limits of their own nation or in the international field or especially in Catholic mission communities and in regions where the Church has only recently been implanted.

The pastors of the Church should gladly and gratefully welcome these lay persons and make sure that the demands of justice, equity, and charity relative to their status be satisfied to the fullest extent, particularly as regards proper support for them and their families. They should also take care to provide for these lay people the necessary formation, spiritual consolation, and incentive.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS**

23. Whether the lay apostolate is exercised by the faithful as individuals or as members of organizations, it should be incorporated into the apostolate of the whole Church according to a right system of relationships. Indeed, union with those whom the Holy Spirit has assigned to rule His Church (cf. Acts 20:28) is an essential element of the Christian apostolate. No less necessary is cooperation among various projects of the apostolate which must be suitably directed by the hierarchy.

Indeed, the spirit of unity should be promoted in order that fraternal charity may be resplendent in the whole apostolate of the Church, common goals may be attained, and destructive rivalries avoided. For this there is need for mutual esteem among all the forms of the apostolate in the Church and, with due respect for the particular character of each organization, proper coordination.<sup>(1)</sup> This is most fitting since a particular activity in the Church requires harmony and apostolic cooperation on the part of both branches of the clergy, the Religious, and the laity.

24. The hierarchy should promote the apostolate of the laity, provide it with spiritual principles and support, direct the conduct of this apostolate to the common good of the Church, and attend to the preservation of doctrine and order.

Indeed, the lay apostolate admits of different types of relationships with the hierarchy in accordance with the various forms and objects of this apostolate. For

in the Church there are many apostolic undertakings which are established by the free choice of the laity and regulated by their prudent judgment. The mission of the Church can be better accomplished in certain circumstances by undertakings of this kind, and therefore they are frequently praised or recommended by the hierarchy.(2) No project, however, may claim the name "Catholic" unless it has obtained the consent of the lawful Church authority.

Certain forms of the apostolate of the laity are given explicit recognition by the hierarchy, though in various ways.

Because of the demands of the common good of the Church, moreover, ecclesiastical authority can select and promote in a particular way some of the apostolic associations and projects which have an immediately spiritual purpose, thereby assuming in them a special responsibility. Thus, making various dispositions of the apostolate according to circumstances, the hierarchy joins some particular form of it more closely with its own apostolic function. Yet the proper nature and distinctiveness of each apostolate must be preserved, and the laity must not be deprived of the possibility of acting on their own accord. In various Church documents this procedure of the hierarchy is called a mandate.

Finally, the hierarchy entrusts to the laity certain functions which are more closely connected with pastoral duties, such as the teaching of Christian doctrine, certain liturgical actions, and the care of souls. By virtue of this mission, the laity are fully subject to higher ecclesiastical control in the performance of this work.

As regards works and institutions in the temporal order, the role of the ecclesiastical hierarchy is to teach and authentically interpret the moral principles to be followed in temporal affairs. Furthermore, they have the right to judge, after careful consideration of all related matters and consultation with experts, whether or not such works and institutions conform to moral principles and the right to decide what is required for the protection and promotion of values of the supernatural order.

25. Bishops, pastors of parishes, and other priests of both branches of the clergy should keep in mind that the right and duty to exercise this apostolate is common to all the faithful, both clergy and laity, and that the laity also have their own roles in building up the Church.(3) For this reason they should work fraternally with the laity in and for the Church and take special care of the lay persons in these apostolic works.(4)

Special care should be taken to select priests who are capable of promoting particular forms of the apostolate of the laity and are properly trained.(5) Those who are engaged in this ministry represent the hierarchy in their pastoral activity by virtue of the mission they receive from the hierarchy. Always adhering faithfully to the spirit and teaching of the Church, they should promote proper relations between laity and hierarchy. They should devote themselves to nourishing

the spiritual life and an apostolic attitude in the Catholic societies entrusted to them; they should contribute their wise counsel to the apostolic activity of these associations and promote their undertakings. Through continuous dialogue with the laity, these priests should carefully investigate which forms make apostolic activity more fruitful. They should promote the spirit of unity within the association as well as between it and others.

Finally, in keeping with the spirit and norms of their societies, Religious Brothers and Sisters should value the apostolic works of the laity and willingly devote themselves to promoting lay enterprises.(6) They should also strive to support, uphold, and fulfill priestly functions.

26. In dioceses, insofar as possible, there should be councils which assist the apostolic work of the Church either in the field of evangelization and sanctification or in the charitable, social, or other spheres, and here it is fitting that the clergy and Religious should cooperate with the laity. While preserving the proper character and autonomy of each organization, these councils will be able to promote the mutual coordination of various lay associations and enterprises.(7)

Councils of this type should be established as far as possible also on the parochial, interparochial, and interdiocesan level as well as in the national or international sphere.(8)

A special secretariat, moreover, should be established at the Holy See for the service and promotion of the lay apostolate. It can serve as a well-equipped center for communicating information about the various apostolic programs of the laity, promoting research into modern problems arising in this field, and assisting the hierarchy and laity in their apostolic works with its advice. The various movements and projects of the apostolate of the laity throughout the world should also be represented in this secretariat, and here clergy and Religious also are to cooperate with the laity.

27. The quasi-common heritage of the Gospel and the common duty of Christian witness resulting from it recommend and frequently require the cooperation of Catholics with other Christians, on the part of individuals and communities within the Church, either in activities or in associations, in the national or international field.(9)

Likewise, common human values not infrequently call for cooperation between Christians pursuing apostolic aims and those who do not profess Christ's name but acknowledge these values.

By this dynamic and prudent cooperation,(10) which is of special importance in temporal activities, the laity bear witness to Christ, the Savior of the world, as well as to the unity of the human family.

## CHAPTER VI

### FORMATION FOR THE APOSTOLATE

28. The apostolate can attain its maximum effectiveness only through a diversified and thorough formation. This is demanded not only by the continuous spiritual and doctrinal progress of the lay person himself but also by the accommodation of his activity to circumstances varying according to the affairs, persons, and duties involved. This formation for the apostolate should rest upon those bases which have been stated and proclaimed by this most holy council in other documents.(1) In addition to the formation which is common for all Christians, many forms of the apostolate demand also a specific and particular formation because of the variety of persons and circumstances.

29. Since the laity share in their own way in the mission of the Church, their apostolic formation is specially characterized by the distinctively secular and particular quality of the lay state and by its own form of the spiritual life.

The formation for the apostolate presupposes a certain human and well-rounded formation adapted to the natural abilities and conditions of each lay person. Well-informed about the modern world, the lay person should be a member of his own community and adjusted to its culture.

However, the lay person should learn especially how to perform the mission of Christ and the Church by basing his life on belief in the divine mystery of creation and redemption and by being sensitive to the movement of the Holy Spirit who gives life to the people of God and who urges all to love God the Father as well as the world and men in Him. This formation should be deemed the basis and condition for every successful apostolate.

In addition to spiritual formation, a solid doctrinal instruction in theology, ethics, and philosophy adjusted to differences of age, status, and natural talents, is required. The importance of general culture along with practical and technical formation should also be kept in mind.

To cultivate good human relations, truly human values must be fostered, especially the art of living fraternally and cooperating with others and of striking up friendly conversation with them.

Since formation for the apostolate cannot consist in merely theoretical instruction, from the beginning of their formation the laity should gradually and prudently learn how to view, judge and do all things in the light of faith as well as to develop and improve themselves along with others through doing, thereby entering into active service to the Church.(2) This formation, always in need of improvement because of the increasing maturity of the human person and the proliferation of problems, requires an ever deeper knowledge and planned activity. In the

fulfillment of all the demands of formation, the unity and integrity of the human person must be kept in mind at all times so that his harmony and balance may be safeguarded and enhanced.

In this way the lay person engages himself wholly and actively in the reality of the temporal order and effectively assumes his role in conducting the affairs of this order. At the same time, as a living member and witness of the Church, he renders the Church present and active in the midst of temporal affairs.(3)

30. The training for the apostolate should start with the children's earliest education. In a special way, however, adolescents and young persons should be initiated into the apostolate and imbued with its spirit. This formation must be perfected throughout their whole life in keeping with the demands of new responsibilities. It is evident, therefore, that those who have the obligation to provide a Christian education also have the duty of providing formation for the apostolate.

In the family parents have the task of training their children from childhood on to recognize God's love for all men. By example especially they should teach them little by little to be solicitous for the material and spiritual needs of their neighbor. The whole family in its common life, then, should be a sort of apprenticeship for the apostolate. Children must be educated, too, in such fashion that transcending the family circle, they may open their minds to both ecclesiastical and temporal communities. They should be so involved in the local community of the parish that they will acquire a consciousness of being living and active members of the people of God. Priests should focus their attention on the formation of the laity for the apostolate in their catechetics, their ministry of the word, their direction of souls, and in their other pastoral services.

Schools, colleges, and other Catholic educational institutions also have the duty to develop a Catholic sense and apostolic activity in young persons. If young people lack this formation either because they do not attend these schools or because of any other reason, all the more should parents, pastors of souls, and apostolic organizations attend to it. Teachers and educators on the other hand, who carry on a distinguished form of the apostolate of the laity by their vocation and office, should be equipped with that learning and pedagogical skill that are needed for imparting such education effectively.

Likewise, lay groups and associations dedicated to the apostolate or other supernatural goals, should carefully and assiduously promote formation for the apostolate in keeping with their purpose and condition.(4) Frequently these groups are the ordinary vehicle for harmonious formation for the apostolate inasmuch as they provide doctrinal, spiritual, and practical formation. Their members meet in small groups with their associates or friends, examine the methods and results of their apostolic activity, and compare their daily way of life with the Gospel.

Formation of this type must be so organized that it takes into account the whole lay apostolate, which must be carried on not only among the organized groups themselves but also in all circumstances throughout one's whole life, especially one's professional and social life. Indeed, everyone should diligently prepare himself for the apostolate, this preparation being the more urgent in adulthood. For the advance of age brings with it a more open mind, enabling each person to detect more readily the talents with which God has enriched his soul and to exercise more effectively those charisms which the Holy Spirit has bestowed on him for the good of his brethren.

31. Various types of the apostolate demand also a specially suitable formation.

a) In regard to the apostolate for evangelizing and sanctifying men, the laity must be specially formed to engage in conversation with others, believers, or non-believers, in order to manifest Christ's message to all men.(5)

Since in our times, different forms of materialism are spread far and wide even among Catholics, the laity should not only learn doctrine more diligently, especially those main points which are the subjects of controversy, but should also exhibit the witness of an evangelical life in contrast to all forms of materialism.

b) In regard to the Christian renewal of the temporal order, the laity should be instructed in the true meaning and value of temporal things, both in themselves and in relation to all the aims of the human person. They should be trained in the right use of things and the organization of institutions, attentive always to the common good in line with the principles of the moral and social teaching of the Church. Laymen should above all learn the principles and conclusions of the social doctrine so as to become capable of working for the development of this doctrine to the best of their ability and of rightly applying these same principles and conclusions to individual cases.(6)

c) Since the works of charity and mercy express the most striking testimony of the Christian life, apostolic formation should lead also to the performance of these works so that the faithful may learn from childhood on to have compassion for their brethren and to be generous in helping those in need.(7)

32. There are many aids for lay persons devoted to the apostolate, namely, study sessions, congresses, periods of recollection, spiritual exercises, frequent meetings, conferences, books, and periodicals directed toward the acquisition of a deeper knowledge of sacred Scripture and Catholic doctrine, the nourishment of spiritual life, the discernment of world conditions, and the discovery and development of suitable methods.(8)

These aids in formation take into consideration the various types of the apostolate in the milieu where it is exercised.

For this purpose also centers or higher institutes have been erected, and they have already proved highly successful.

The most holy council rejoices over projects of this kind which are already flourishing in certain areas, and it desires that they may be promoted also in other areas where they may be needed. Furthermore, centers of documentation and study not only in theology but also in anthropology, psychology, sociology, and methodology should be established for all fields of the apostolate for the better development of the natural capacities of the laity-men and women, young persons and adults.

## EXHORTATION

33. The most holy council, then, earnestly entreats all the laity in the Lord to answer gladly, nobly, and promptly the more urgent invitation of Christ in this hour and the impulse of the Holy Spirit. Younger persons should feel that this call has been directed to them especially and they should respond to it eagerly and generously. Through this holy synod, the Lord renews His invitation to all the laity to come closer to Him every day, recognizing that what is His is also their own (Phil. 2:5), to associate themselves with Him in His saving mission. Once again He sends them into every town and place where He will come (cf. Luke 10:1) so that they may show that they are co-workers in the various forms and modes of the one apostolate of the Church, which must be constantly adapted to the new needs of our times. Ever productive as they should be in the work of the Lord, they know that their labor in Him is not in vain (cf. 1 Cor. 15:58).

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## NOTES

Introduction:

1. cf. John XXIII, apostolic constitution "Humani Salutis," Dec. 25, 1961: A.A.S. 54 (1962) pp. 7-10.
2. cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Nature of the Church, nos. 33 ff.: A.A.S. 57 (1965) pp. 39 ff.; cf. also Constitution on the Liturgy, nos. 26-40; A.A.S. 56 (1964) pp. 107-111; cf. Decree on Instruments of Social Communication: A.A.S. 56 (1964) pp. 145-158; cf. Decree on Ecumenism: A.A.S. 57 (1965) pp. 90-107; cf. Decree on Pastoral Duties of Bishops, nos. 16, 17, 18; cf. Declaration on Christian Education, nos. 3, 5, 7; cf. Decree on Missionary Activity of Church, nos. 15, 21, 41; cf. Decree on Priestly Life and Ministry, no. 9.
3. cf. Pius XII, allocution to cardinals, Feb. 18, 1946: A.A.S. 38 (1946) pp. 101-102; Idem., sermon to young Catholic workers, Aug. 25, 1957: A.A.S. 49 (1957) p. 843.

Chapter 1 Article 2:

1. cf. Pius XI, encyclical "Rerum Ecclesiae:" A.A.S. 18 (1926) p. 65.
2. cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Nature of the Church, no. 31: A.A.S. 57 (1965) p. 37. Article 3:

3. cf. *ibid.*, no. 33, p. 39; cf. also no. 10, *ibid.*, p. 14.

4. cf. *ibid.*, no. 12, p. 16. Article 4:

5. cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Liturgy, Chap. 1, no. 11: A.A.S. 56 (1964) pp. 102-103.

6. cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Nature of the Church, no. 32: A.A.S. 57 (1965) p. 38; cf. also nos. 40-41: *ibid.*, pp. 45-47.

7. *ibid.*, no. 62, p. 63; cf. also no. 65. *ibid.*, pp. 64-65. CHAPTER II Article 6:

1. cf. Pius XI, encyclical "Ubi Arcano," Dec. 23, 1922: A.A.S. 14 (1922) p. 659; Pius XII, encyclical "Summi Pontificatus," Oct. 20, 1939: A.A.S. 31 (1939) pp. 442-443. Article 7:

2. cf. Leo XIII, encyclical "Rerum Novarum:" A.A.S. 23 (1890-91) p. 47; Pius XI encyclical "Quadragesimo anno:" A.A.S. 23 (1931) p. 190; Pius XII, radio message of June 1, 1941: A.A.S. 33 (1941) p. 207. Article 8:

3. cf. John XXIII, encyclical "Mater et Magistra:" A.A.S. 53 (1961) p. 402.

4. cf. *ibid.*, pp. 440-441.

5. cf. *ibid.*, pp. 442-443.

6. cf. Pius XII, allocution to "Pax Romana" April 25, 1957: A.A.S. 49 (1957) pp. 298-299; and especially John XXIII, "Ad Conventum Consilii" Food and Agriculture Organization Nov. 10, 1959: A.A.S. 51 (1959) pp. 856-866.

Chapter III Article 10:

1. cf. St. Pius X, apostolic letter "Creationis Duarum Novarum Paroeciarum" June 1, 1905: A.A.S. 38 (1905) pp. 65-67; Pius XII, allocution to faithful of parish of St. Saba, Jan. 11, 1953: Discourses and radio messages of His Holiness Pius XII, 14 (1952-53) pp. 449-454; John XXIII allocution to clergy and faithful of suburbicarian diocese of Albano, "Ad Arcem Gandulfi Habita," Aug. 26, 1962: A.A.S. 54 (1962) pp. 656-660.

2. cf. Leo XIII, allocution Jan. 28, 1894: Acts, 14 (1894) pp. 424-425.

3. cf. Pius XII, allocution to pastors, etc., Feb. 6, 1951: Discourses and Radio Messages of His Holiness Pius XII, 12 (1950-51) pp. 437-443; 852: *ibid.*, 14 (1952-53) pp. 5-10; March 27, 1953: *ibid.*, 15 (1953-54) pp. 27-35; Feb. 28, 1954: *ibid.*, pp. 585-590. Article 11:

4. cf. Pius XI, encyclical "Casti Connubii:" A.A.S. 22 (1930) p. 554; Pius XII, Radio Messages, Jan. 1, 1941: A.A.S. 33 (1941) p. 203; *idem.*, to delegates of the convention of the members of the International Union to Protect the Rights of Families, Sept. 20, 1949: A.A.S. 41 (1949) p. 552; *idem.*, to heads of families on pilgrimage from France to Rome, Sept. 18, 1951: A.A.S. 43 (1951) p. 731, *idem.*, Christmas Radio Message of 1952: A.A.S. 45 (1953) p. 41; John XXIII, encyclical "Mater et Magistra" May 15, 1961: A.A.S. (1961) pp. 429, 439.

5. cf. Pius XII, encyclical "Evangelii Praecones," June 2, 1951: A.A.S. 43 (1951) p. 514.

6. cf. Pius XII, to delegates to the convention of members of the International Union for the Defense of Family Rights, Sept. 20, 1949: A.A.S. 41 (1949) p. 552. Article 12:

7. cf. St. Pius X, allocution to Association of French Catholic Youth on piety, knowledge and action, Sept. 25, 1904: A.A.S. 37 (1904-05) pp. 296-300.



8. cf. Pius XII, letter "Dans Quelques Semaines" to Archbishop of Montreal, Canada, to be relayed to the Assemblies of Canadian Young Christian Workers, May 24, 1947: A.A.S. 39 (1947) p. 257; radio message to Young Christian Workers, Brussels, Sept. 3, 1950: A.A.S. 42 (1950) pp. 640-641. Article 13:

9. cf. Pius XI, encyclical "Quadragesimo Anno," May 15, 1931: A.A.S. 23 (1931) pp. 225-226. Article 14:

10. cf. John XXIII, encyclical "Mater et Magistra" May 15, 1961: A.A.S. 53 (1961) pp. 448-450.

#### Chapter IV Article 17:

1. cf. Pius XII, allocution to the first convention of laymen representing all nations on the promotion of the apostolate, Oct. 15, 1951: A.A.S. 43 (1951) p. 788. Article 18:

2. cf. Pius XII, allocution to the first convention of laymen representing all nations on the promotion of the apostolate Oct. 15, 1951: A.A.S. 43 (1951) pp. 787-788.

3. cf. Pius XII, encyclical "Le Pelerinage de Lourdes," July 2, 1957: A.A.S. 49 (1957) p. 615. Article 19:

4. cf. Pius XII, allocution to the assembly of the International Federation of Catholic Men, Dec. 8, 1956: A.A.S. 49 (1957) pp. 26- 27.

5. cf. in Chap. 5, no. 24.

6. cf. Sacred Congregation of the Council, concerning the dissolution of the Corrientes diocese in Argentina, Nov. 13, 1920: A.A.S. 13 (1921) p. 139.

7. cf. John XXIII, encyclical "Princeps Pastorum," Dec. 10, 1959: A.A.S. 51 (1959) p. 856. Article 20:

8. cf. Pius XI, letter "Quae Nobis" to Cardinal Bertram, Nov. 13, 1928: A.A.S. 20 (1928) p. 385. cf. also Pius XII, allocution to Italian Catholic Action, Sept. 4, 1940: A.A.S. 32 (1940) p. 362.

#### Chapter V Article 23:

1. cf. Pius XI, encyclical "Quamvis Nostra," April 30, 1936: A.A.S., 28 (1936) pp. 160-161. Article 24:

2. cf. Sacred Congregation of the Council on the dissolution of the diocese of Corrientes, Argentina, Nov. 13, 1920; A.A.S. 13 (1921) pp. 137-140. Article 25:

3. cf. Pius XII, allocution to the second convention of laymen representing all nations on the promotion of the apostolate, Oct. 5 1957: A.A.S. 49 (1957) p. 927.

4. cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Nature of the Church, no. 37. A.A.S. 57 (1965) pp. 442-443.

5. cf. Pius XII, apostolic exhortation "Menti Nostrae," Sept. 23 1950: A.A.S. 42 (1950) p. 660.

6. cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Renovation of Religious Life, no. 8. Article 26:

7. cf. Benedict XIV, On the Diocesan Synod, I, 3, Chap. 9, no. 7.

8. cf. Pius XI, encyclical "Quamvis Nostra," April 30, 1936: A.A.S. 28 (1936) pp. 160-161. Article 27:

9. cf. John XXIII, encyclical "Mater et Magistra," May 15, 1961: A.A.S. 53 (1961) pp. 456-457. cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism, no. 12: A.A.S. 57 (1965) pp. 99-100.

10. cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism, no. 12: A.A.S. 57 (1965) p. 100. Also cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Nature of the Church, no. 15: A.A.S. 57 (1965) pp. 19-20.

CHAPTER VI Article 28:

1. cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Nature of the Church, Chaps. 2, 4 and 5: A.A.S. 57 (1965) pp. 12- 21, 37-49; also cf. Decree on Ecumenism, nos. 4, 6, 7 and 12: A.A.S. 57 (1965) pp. 94, 96, 97, 99, 100; cf. also above, no. 4. Article 29:

2. cf. Pius XII, allocution to the first international Boy Scouts congress, June 6, 1952: A.A.S. 44 (1952) pp. 579-580; John XXIII, encyclical, "Mater et Magistra," May 15, 1961: A.A.S. 53 (1961) p. 456.

3. cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Nature of the Church, p. 33: A.A.S. 57 (1965) p. 39. Article. 30:

4. cf. John XXIII, encyclical "Mater et Magistra," May 15, 1961: A.A.S. 53 (1961) p. 455. Article 31:

5. cf. Pius XII, encyclical "Sertum Laetitia," Nov. 1, 1939: A.A.S. 31 (1939) pp. 653-654; cf. idem., to graduates of Italian Catholic Action, May 24, 1953.

6. cf. Pius XII, allocution to the universal congress of the World Federation of Young Catholic Women, April 18, 1952: A.A.S. 42 (1952) pp. 414-419. cf. idem., allocution to the Christian Association of Italian Workers, May 1, 1955: A.A.S. 47 (1955) pp. 403-404.

7. cf. Pius XII, to delegates of the Assembly of Charity Associations, April 27, 1952: pp.470-471.

Article 32:

8 cf. John XXIII, encyclical "Mater et Magistra," May 15 1961: A.A.S. 53 (1961) p. 454.

DECREE ON PRIESTLY TRAINING  
**OPTATAM TOTIUS**

PROCLAIMED BY HIS HOLINESS  
POPE PAUL VI  
ON OCTOBER 28, 1965

Animated by the spirit of Christ, this sacred synod is fully aware that the desired renewal of the whole Church depends to a great extent on the ministry of its priests. It proclaims the extreme importance of priestly training and lays down certain basic principles by which those regulations may be strengthened which long use has shown to be sound and by which those new elements can be added which correspond to the constitutions and decrees of this sacred council and to the changed conditions of our times. Because of the very unity of the Catholic priesthood this priestly formation is necessary for all priests, diocesan and religious and of every rite. Wherefore, while these prescriptions directly concern the diocesan clergy, they are to be appropriately adapted to all.

**I.**

**THE PROGRAM OF PRIESTLY TRAINING TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY EACH COUNTRY**

1. Since only general laws can be made where there exists a wide variety of nations and regions, a special "program of priestly training" is to be undertaken by each country or rite. It must be set up by the episcopal conferences, revised from time to time and approved by the Apostolic See. In this way will the universal laws be adapted to the particular circumstances of the times and localities so that the priestly training will always be in tune with the pastoral needs of those regions in which the ministry is to be exercised.

**II.**

**THE URGENT FOSTERING OF PRIESTLY VOCATIONS**

2. The duty of fostering vocations pertains to the whole Christian community, which should exercise it above all by a fully Christian life. The principal contributors to this are the families which, animated by the spirit of faith and love and by the sense of duty, become a kind of initial seminary, and the parishes in whose rich life the young people take part. Teachers and all those who are in any way in charge of the training of boys and young men, especially Catholic associations, should carefully guide the young people entrusted to them so that these will recognize and freely accept a divine vocation. All priests especially are to manifest an apostolic zeal in fostering vocations and are to attract the interest of youths to the priesthood by their own life lived in a humble and industrious

manner and in a happy spirit as well as by mutual priestly charity and fraternal sharing of labor.

Bishops on the other hand are to encourage their flock to promote vocations and should be concerned with coordinating all forces in a united effort to this end. As fathers, moreover, they must assist without stint those whom they have judged to be called to the Lord's work.

The effective union of the whole people of God in fostering vocations is the proper response to the action of Divine Providence which confers the fitting gifts on those men divinely chosen to participate in the hierarchical priesthood of Christ and helps them by His grace. Moreover, this same Providence charges the legitimate ministers of the Church to call forward and to consecrate with the sign of the Holy Spirit to the worship of God and to the service of the Church those candidates whose fitness has been acknowledged and who have sought so great an office with the right intention and with full freedom.

The sacred synod commends first of all the traditional means of common effort, such as urgent prayer, Christian penance and a constantly more intensive training of the faithful by preaching, by catechetical instructions or by the many media of social communication that will show forth the need, the nature and the importance of the priestly vocation. The synod moreover orders that the entire pastoral activity of fostering vocations be methodically and coherently planned and, with equal prudence and zeal, fostered by those organizations for promoting vocations which, in accord with the appropriate pontifical documents, have already been or will be set up in the territory of individual dioceses, regions or countries. Also, no opportune aids are to be overlooked which modern Psychological and sociological research has brought to light.

The work of fostering vocations should, in a spirit of openness, transcend the limits of individual dioceses, countries, religious families and rites. Looking to the needs of the universal Church, it should provide aid particularly for those regions in which workers for the Lord's vineyard are being requested more urgently.

3. In minor seminaries erected to develop the seeds of vocations, the students should be prepared by special religious formation, particularly through appropriate spiritual direction, to follow Christ the Redeemer with generosity of spirit and purity of heart. Under the fatherly direction of the superiors, and with the proper cooperation of the parents, their daily routine should be in accord with the age, the character and the stage of development of adolescence and fully adapted to the norms of a healthy psychology. Nor should the fitting opportunity be lacking for social and cultural contacts and for contact with one's own family. Moreover, whatever is decreed in the following paragraphs about major seminaries is also to be adapted to the minor seminary to the extent that it is in accord with its purpose and structure. Also, studies undertaken by the students

should be so arranged that they can easily continue them elsewhere should they choose a different state of life.

With equal concern the seeds of vocations among adolescents and young men are also to be fostered in those special institutes which, in accord with the local circumstances, serve the purpose of a minor seminary as well as among those who are trained in other schools or by other educational means. Finally, those institutions and other schools initiated for those with a belated vocation are to be carefully developed.

### III.

#### THE SETTING UP OF MAJOR SEMINARIES

4. Major seminaries are necessary for priestly formation. Here the entire training of the students should be oriented to the formation of true shepherds of souls after the model of our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest and shepherd. They are therefore to be prepared for the ministry of the word: that they might understand ever more perfectly the revealed word of God; that, meditating on it they might possess it more firmly, and that they might express it in words and in example; for the ministry of worship and of sanctification: that through their prayers and their carrying out of the sacred liturgical celebrations they might perfect the work of salvation through the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments; for the ministry of the parish: that they might know how to make Christ present to men, Him who did not "come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45; cf. John 13:12-17), and that, having become the servants of all, they might win over all the more (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19).

Therefore, all the forms of training, spiritual, intellectual, disciplinary, are to be ordered with concerted effort towards this pastoral end, and to attain it all the administrators and teachers are to work zealously and harmoniously together, faithfully obedient to the authority of the bishop.

5. Since the training of students depends both on wise laws and, most of all, on qualified educators, the administrators and teachers of seminaries are to be selected from the best men, and are to be carefully prepared in sound doctrine, suitable pastoral experience and special spiritual and pedagogical training. Institutes, therefore, should be set up to attain this end. Or at least courses are to be arranged with a proper program, and the meetings of seminary directors are to take place at specified times.

Administrators, however, and teachers must be keenly aware of how much the success of the students' formation depends on their manner of thinking and acting. Under the rector's leadership they are to form a very closely knit community both in spirit and in activity and they are to constitute among themselves and with the students that kind of family that will answer to the Lord's

prayer "That they be one" (cf. John 17:11) and that will develop in the students a deep joy in their own vocation. The bishop, on the other hand, should, with a constant and loving solicitude, encourage those who labor in the seminary and prove himself a true father in Christ to the students themselves. Finally, all priests are to look on the seminary as the heart of the diocese and are to offer willingly their own helpful service.

6. With watchful concern for the age of each and for his stage of progress, an inquiry should be made into the candidate's proper intention and freedom of choice, into his spiritual, moral and intellectual qualifications, into his appropriate physical and psychic health-taking into consideration also possible hereditary deficiencies. Also to be considered is the ability of the candidate to bear the priestly burdens and exercise the pastoral offices.

In the entire process of selecting and testing students, however, a due firmness is to be adopted, even if a deplorable lack of priests should exist, since God will not allow His Church to want for ministers if those who are worthy are promoted and those not qualified are, at an early date, guided in a fatherly way to undertake other tasks. The latter should also be given sufficient direction so that, conscious of their vocation as Christians, they might eagerly embrace the lay apostolate.

7. Where individual dioceses are unable to institute their own seminaries properly, seminaries for many dioceses or for an entire region or for a country are to be set up and developed, so that the sound training of the students, which must be considered the supreme law in this matter, can be taken care of in a more effective manner. These seminaries, if they are regional or national, are to be regulated according to directives set down by the bishops concerned and approved by the Apostolic See.

In these seminaries, however, where there are many students, while retaining a unity of direction and of scientific training, the students should be conveniently divided into smaller groups so that a better provision is had for the personal formation of each.

#### **IV.**

#### **THE CAREFUL DEVELOPMENT OF THE SPIRITUAL TRAINING**

8. The spiritual training should be closely connected with the doctrinal and pastoral, and, with the special help of the spiritual director, should be imparted in such a way that the students might learn to live in an intimate and unceasing union with the Father through His Son Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit. Conformed to Christ the Priest through their sacred ordination they should be accustomed to adhere to Him as friends, in an intimate companionship, their whole life through. They should so live His paschal mystery themselves that they can initiate into it

the flock committed to them. They should be taught to seek Christ in the faithful meditation on God's word, in the active participation in the sacred mysteries of the Church, especially in the Eucharist and in the divine office, in the bishop who sends them and in the people to whom they are sent, especially the poor, the children, the sick, the sinners and the unbelievers. They should love and venerate with a filial trust the most blessed Virgin Mary, who was given as mother to the disciple by Christ Jesus as He was dying on the cross.

Those practices of piety that are commended by the long usage of the Church should be zealously cultivated; but care should be taken lest the spiritual formation consist in them alone or lest it develop only a religious affectation. The students should learn to live according to the Gospel ideal, to be strengthened in faith, hope and charity, so that, in the exercise of these practices, they may acquire the spirit of prayer, learn to defend and strengthen their vocation, obtain an increase of other virtues and grow in the zeal to gain all men for Christ.

9. The students should be so saturated with the mystery of the Church, especially as described by this sacred synod, that, bound to the Vicar of Christ in a humble and trusting charity and, once ordained priests, adhering to their own bishop as faithful helpers and engaging in a common effort with their fellow-priests, they bear witness to that unity that attracts men to Christ. They should learn to take part with a generous heart in the life of the whole Church in accord with what St. Augustine wrote: "to the extent that one loves the Church of Christ, to that extent does he possess the Holy Spirit." The students should understand most clearly that they are not destined for domination or for honors but are given over totally to the service of God and to the pastoral ministry. With a particular concern should they be so formed in priestly obedience, in a simple way of life and in the spirit of self-denial that they are accustomed to giving up willingly even those things which are permitted but are not expedient, and to conform themselves to Christ crucified.

The students are to be made clearly aware of the burdens they will be undertaking, and no problem of the priestly life is to be concealed from them. This is to be done, however, not that they should be almost solely concerned with the notion of danger in their future labors, but rather that they might be more readily conformed to a spiritual life that more than in any other way is actually strengthened by the very pastoral work they do.

10. Students who follow the venerable tradition of celibacy according to the holy and fixed laws of their own rite are to be educated to this state with great care. For renouncing thereby the companionship of marriage for the sake of the kingdom of heaven (cf. Matt. 19:12), they embrace the Lord with an undivided love altogether befitting the new covenant, bear witness to the resurrection of the world to come (cf. Luke 20:36), and obtain a most suitable aid for the continual exercise of that perfect charity whereby they can become all things to all men in their priestly ministry. Let them deeply realize how gratefully that state ought to

be received, not, indeed, only as commanded by ecclesiastical law, but as a precious gift of God for which they should humbly pray. Through the inspiration and help of the grace of the Holy Spirit let them freely and generously hasten to respond to this gift.

Students ought rightly to acknowledge the duties and dignity of Christian matrimony, which is a sign of the love between Christ and the Church. Let them recognize, however, the surpassing excellence of virginity consecrated to Christ, so that with a maturely deliberate and generous choice they may consecrate themselves to the Lord by a complete gift of body and soul.

They are to be warned of the dangers that threaten their chastity especially in present-day society. Aided by suitable safeguards, both divine and human, let them learn to integrate their renunciation of marriage in such a way that they may suffer in their lives and work not only no harm from celibacy but rather acquire a deeper mastery of soul and body and a fuller maturity, and more perfectly receive the blessedness spoken of in the Gospel.

11. The norms of Christian education are to be religiously observed and properly complemented by the newer findings of sound psychology and pedagogy. Therefore, by a wisely planned training there is also to be developed in the students a due human maturity. This will be made especially evident in stability of mind, in an ability to make weighty decisions, and in a sound evaluation of men and events. The students should be accustomed to work properly at their own development. They are to be formed in strength of character, and, in general, they are to learn to esteem those virtues which are held in high regard by men and which recommend a minister of Christ. Such virtues are sincerity of mind, a constant concern for justice, fidelity to one's promises, refinement in manners, modesty in speech coupled with charity.

The discipline of seminary life is to be reckoned not only as a strong safeguard of community life and of charity but also as a necessary part of the total whole training formation. For thereby self-mastery is acquired, solid personal maturity is promoted, and the other dispositions of mind are developed which very greatly aid the ordered and fruitful activity of the Church. Seminary discipline should be so maintained, however, that the students acquire an internal attitude whereby they accept the authority of superiors from personal conviction, that is to say, from a motive of conscience (cf. Rom. 13:5), and for supernatural reasons. The norms of discipline are to be applied according to the age of the students so that they themselves, as they gradually learn self-mastery, may become accustomed to use freedom wisely, to act spontaneously and energetically, and to work together harmoniously with their fellows and with the laity.

The whole pattern of seminary life, permeated with a desire for piety and silence and a careful concern for mutual help, must be so arranged that it provides, in a certain sense, an initiation into the future life which the priest shall lead.



12. In order that the spiritual training rest upon a more solid basis and that the students embrace their vocation with a fully deliberate choice, it will be the prerogative of the bishops to establish a fitting period of time for a more intense introduction to the spiritual life. It will also be their charge to determine the opportuneness of providing for a certain interruption in the studies or of establishing a suitable introduction to pastoral work, in order that they may more satisfactorily test the fitness of candidates for the priesthood. In accordance with the conditions of individual regions it will also be the bishops' responsibility to make a decision about extending the age beyond that demanded at present by common law for the reception of sacred orders, and of deliberating whether it be opportune to rule that students, at the end of their course in theology, exercise the order of deacon for a fitting period of time before being promoted to the priesthood.

## V.

### THE REVISION OF ECCLESIASTICAL STUDIES

13. Before beginning specifically ecclesiastical subjects, seminarians should be equipped with that humanistic and scientific training which young men in their own countries are wont to have as a foundation for higher studies. Moreover they are to acquire a knowledge of Latin which will enable them to understand and make use of the sources of so many sciences and of the documents of the Church. The study of the liturgical language proper to each rite should be considered necessary; a suitable knowledge of the languages of the Bible and of Tradition should be greatly encouraged.

14. In revising ecclesiastical studies the aim should first of all be that the philosophical and theological disciplines be more suitably aligned and that they harmoniously work toward opening more and more the minds of the students to the mystery of Christ. For it is this mystery which affects the whole history of the human race, continually influences the Church, and is especially at work in the priestly ministry.

That this vision be communicated to the students from the outset of their training, ecclesiastical studies are to be begun with an introductory course which should last for an appropriate length of time. In this initiation to ecclesiastical studies the mystery of salvation should be so proposed that the students perceive the meaning, order, and pastoral end of their studies. At the same time they should be helped to establish and penetrate their own entire lives with faith and be strengthened in embracing their vocation with a personal dedication and a joyful heart.

15. The philosophical disciplines are to be taught in such a way that the students are first of all led to acquire a solid and coherent knowledge of man, the world, and of God, relying on a philosophical patrimony which is perennially valid and

taking into account the philosophical investigations of later ages. This is especially true of those investigations which exercise a greater influence in their own nations. Account should also be taken of the more recent progress of the sciences. The net result should be that the students, correctly understanding the characteristics of the contemporary mind, will be duly prepared for dialogue with men of their time.

The history of philosophy should be so taught that the students, while reaching the ultimate principles of the various systems, will hold on to what is proven to be true therein and will be able to detect the roots of errors and to refute them.

In the very manner of teaching there should be stirred up in the students a love of rigorously searching for the truth and of maintaining and demonstrating it, together with an honest recognition of the limits of human knowledge. Attention must be carefully drawn to the necessary connection between philosophy and the true problems of life, as well as the questions which preoccupy the minds of the students. Likewise students should be helped to perceive the links between the subject-matter of philosophy and the mysteries of salvation which are considered in theology under the higher light of faith.

16. The theological disciplines, in the light of faith and under the guidance of the magisterium of the Church, should be so taught that the students will correctly draw out Catholic doctrine from divine revelation, profoundly penetrate it, make it the food of their own spiritual lives, and be enabled to proclaim, explain, and protect it in their priestly ministry.

The students are to be formed with particular care in the study of the Bible, which ought to be, as it were, the soul of all theology. After a suitable introduction they are to be initiated carefully into the method of exegesis; and they are to see the great themes of divine revelation and to receive from their daily reading of and meditating on the sacred books inspiration and nourishment.

Dogmatic theology should be so arranged that these biblical themes are proposed first of all. Next there should be opened up to the students what the Fathers of the Eastern and Western Church have contributed to the faithful transmission and development of the individual truths of revelation. The further history of dogma should also be presented, account being taken of its relation to the general history of the Church. Next, in order that they may illumine the mysteries of salvation as completely as possible, the students should learn to penetrate them more deeply with the help of speculation, under the guidance of St. Thomas, and to perceive their interconnections. They should be taught to recognize these same mysteries as present and working in liturgical actions and in the entire life of the Church. They should learn to seek the solutions to human problems under the light of revelation, to apply the eternal truths of revelation to the changeable conditions of human affairs and to communicate them in a way suited to men of our day.

Likewise let the other theological disciplines be renewed through a more living contact with the mystery of Christ and the history of salvation. Special care must be given to the perfecting of moral theology. Its scientific exposition, nourished more on the teaching of the Bible, should shed light on the loftiness of the calling of the faithful in Christ and the obligation that is theirs of bearing fruit in charity for the life of the world. Similarly the teaching of canon law and of Church history should take into account the mystery of the Church, according to the dogmatic constitution "De Ecclesia" promulgated by this sacred synod. Sacred liturgy, which is to be considered as the primary and indispensable source of the truly Christian spirit, should be taught according to the mind of articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.

The circumstances of various regions being duly considered, students are to be brought to a fuller understanding of the churches and ecclesial communities separated from the Apostolic Roman See, so that they may be able to contribute to the work of re- establishing unity among all Christians according to the prescriptions of this holy synod.

Let them also be introduced to a knowledge of other religions which are more widespread in individual regions, so that they may acknowledge more correctly what truth and goodness these religions, in God's providence, possess, and so that they may learn to refute their errors and be able to communicate the full light of truth to those who do not have it.

17. But since doctrinal training ought to tend not to a mere communication of ideas but to a true and intimate formation of the students, teaching methods are to be revised both as regards lectures, discussions, and seminars and also the development of study on the part of the students, whether done privately or in small groups. Unity and soundness of the entire training is carefully to be provided for by avoiding an excessive multiplication of courses and lectures and by the omission of those questions which scarcely retain any importance or which ought to be referred to higher academic studies.

18. It will be the bishops' concern that young men suited by temperament, virtue, and ability be sent to special institutes faculties, or universities so that priests may be trained at a higher scientific level in the sacred sciences and in other fields which may be judged opportune. Thus they will be able to meet the various needs of the apostolate. The spiritual and pastoral training of these men, however, especially if they are not yet ordained as priests, is in no way to be neglected.

## **VI.**

### **THE PROMOTION OF STRICTLY PASTORAL TRAINING**

19. That pastoral concern which ought to permeate thoroughly the entire training of the students also demands that they be diligently instructed in those matters which are particularly linked to the sacred ministry, especially in catechesis and preaching, in liturgical worship and the administration of the sacraments, in works of charity, in assisting the erring and the unbelieving, and in the other pastoral functions. They are to be carefully instructed in the art of directing souls, whereby they will be able to bring all the sons of the Church first of all to a fully conscious and apostolic Christian life and to the fulfillment of the duties of their state of life. Let them learn to help, with equal solicitude, religious men and women that they may persevere in the grace of their vocations and may make progress according to the spirit of their various Institutes.

In general, those capabilities are to be developed in the students which especially contribute to dialogue with men, such as the ability to listen to others and to open their hearts and minds in the spirit of charity to the various circumstances and needs of men.

20. They should also be taught to use the aids which the disciplines of pedagogy, psychology, and sociology can provide, according to correct methodology and the norms of ecclesiastical authority. Likewise, let them be properly instructed in inspiring and fostering the apostolic activity of the laity and in promoting the various and more effective forms of the apostolate. Let them also be imbued with that truly Catholic spirit which will accustom them to transcend the limits of their own diocese, nation, or rite, and to help the needs of the whole Church, prepared in spirit to preach the Gospel everywhere.

But since it is necessary for the students to learn the art of exercising the apostolate not only theoretically but also practically, and to be able to act both on their own responsibility and in harmonious conjunction with others, they should be initiated into pastoral work, both during their course of studies and also during the time of vacations, by opportune practical projects. These should be carried out in accordance with the age of the students and local conditions, and with the prudent judgment of the bishops, methodically and under the leadership of men skilled in pastoral work, the surpassing power of supernatural means being always remembered.

## **VII.**

### **TRAINING TO BE ACHIEVED AFTER THE COURSE OF STUDIES**

21. Since priestly training, because of the circumstances particularly of contemporary society, must be pursued and perfected even after the completion of the course of studies in seminaries, it will be the responsibility of episcopal conferences in individual nations to employ suitable means to this end. Such would be pastoral institutes working together with suitably chosen parishes, meetings held at stated times, and appropriate projects whereby the younger

clergy would be gradually introduced into the priestly life and apostolic activity, under its spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral aspects, and would be able, day by day, to renew and foster them more effectively.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Fathers of this holy synod have pursued the work begun by the Council of Trent. While they confidently entrust to seminary administrators and teachers the task of forming the future priests of Christ in the spirit of the renewal promoted by this sacred synod, they earnestly exhort those who are preparing for the priestly ministry to realize that the hope of the Church and the salvation of souls is being committed to them. They urge them also to receive the norms of this decree willingly and thus to bring forth most abundant fruit which will always remain.

DECREE ON  
THE ADAPTATION AND RENEWAL OF RELIGIOUS LIFE  
**PERFECTAE CARITATIS**

PROCLAIMED BY HIS HOLINESS  
POPE PAUL VI  
ON OCTOBER 28, 1965

1. The sacred synod has already shown in the constitution on the Church that the pursuit of perfect charity through the evangelical counsels draws its origin from the doctrine and example of the Divine Master and reveals itself as a splendid sign of the heavenly kingdom. Now it intends to treat of the life and discipline of those institutes whose members make profession of chastity, poverty and obedience and to provide for their needs in our time.

Indeed from the very beginning of the Church men and women have set about following Christ with greater freedom and imitating Him more closely through the practice of the evangelical counsels, each in his own way leading a life dedicated to God. Many of them, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, lived as hermits or founded religious families, which the Church gladly welcomed and approved by her authority. So it is that in accordance with the Divine Plan a wonderful variety of religious communities has grown up which has made it easier for the Church not only to be equipped for every good work (cf. 2 Tim 3:17) and ready for the work of the ministry-the building up of the Body of Christ (cf. Eph. 4:12)-but also to appear adorned with the various gifts of her children like a spouse adorned for her husband (cf. Apoc. 21:2) and for the manifold Wisdom of God to be revealed through her (cf. Eph. 3:10).

Despite such a great variety of gifts, all those called by God to the practice of the evangelical counsels and who, faithfully responding to the call, undertake to observe the same, bind themselves to the Lord in a special way, following Christ, who chaste and poor (cf. Matt. 8:20; Luke 9:58) redeemed and sanctified men through obedience even to the death of the Cross (cf. Phil. 2:8). Driven by love with which the Holy Spirit floods their hearts (cf. Rom. 5:5) they live more and more for Christ and for His body which is the Church (cf. Col. 1:24). The more fervently, then, they are joined to Christ by this total life-long gift of themselves, the richer the life of the Church becomes and the more lively and successful its apostolate.

In order that the great value of a life consecrated by the profession of the counsels and its necessary mission today may yield greater good to the Church, the sacred synod lays down the following prescriptions. They are meant to state only the general principles of the adaptation and renewal of the life and discipline of Religious orders and also, without prejudice to their special characteristics, of societies of common life without vows and secular institutes. Particular norms for

the proper explanation and application of these principles are to be determined after the council by the authority in question.

2. The adaptation and renewal of the religious life includes both the constant return to the sources of all Christian life and to the original spirit of the institutes and their adaptation to the changed conditions of our time. This renewal, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the Church, must be advanced according to the following principles:

a) Since the ultimate norm of the religious life is the following of Christ set forth in the Gospels, let this be held by all institutes as the highest rule.

b) It redounds to the good of the Church that institutes have their own particular characteristics and work. Therefore let their founders' spirit and special aims they set before them as well as their sound traditions-all of which make up the patrimony of each institute-be faithfully held in honor.

c) All institutes should share in the life of the Church, adapting as their own and implementing in accordance with their own characteristics the Church's undertakings and aims in matters biblical, liturgical, dogmatic, pastoral, ecumenical, missionary and social.

d) Institutes should promote among their members an adequate knowledge of the social conditions of the times they live in and of the needs of the Church. In such a way, judging current events wisely in the light of faith and burning with apostolic zeal, they may be able to assist men more effectively.

e) The purpose of the religious life is to help the members follow Christ and be united to God through the profession of the evangelical counsels. It should be constantly kept in mind, therefore, that even the best adjustments made in accordance with the needs of our age will be ineffectual unless they are animated by a renewal of spirit. This must take precedence over even the active ministry.

3. The manner of living, praying and working should be suitably adapted everywhere, but especially in mission territories, to the modern physical and psychological circumstances of the members and also, as required by the nature of each institute, to the necessities of the apostolate, the demands of culture, and social and economic circumstances.

According to the same criteria let the manner of governing the institutes also be examined.

Therefore let constitutions, directories, custom books, books of prayers and ceremonies and such like be suitably re-edited and, obsolete laws being suppressed, be adapted to the decrees of this sacred synod.

4. An effective renewal and adaptation demands the cooperation of all the members of the institute.

However, to establish the norms of adaptation and renewal, to embody it in legislation as well as to make allowance for adequate and prudent experimentation belongs only to the competent authorities, especially to general chapters. The approbation of the Holy See or of the local Ordinary must be obtained where necessary according to law. But superiors should take counsel in an appropriate way and hear the members of the order in those things which concern the future well being of the whole institute.

For the adaptation and renewal of convents of nuns suggestions and advice may be obtained also from the meetings of federations or from other assemblies lawfully convoked.

Nevertheless everyone should keep in mind that the hope of renewal lies more in the faithful observance of the rules and constitutions than in multiplying laws.

5. Members of each institute should recall first of all that by professing the evangelical counsels they responded to a divine call so that by being not only dead to sin (cf. Rom. 6:11) but also renouncing the world they may live for God alone. They have dedicated their entire lives to His service. This constitutes a special consecration, which is deeply rooted in that of baptism and expresses it more fully.

Since the Church has accepted their surrender of self they should realize they are also dedicated to its service.

This service of God ought to inspire and foster in them the exercise of the virtues, especially humility, obedience, fortitude and chastity. In such a way they share in Christ's emptying of Himself (cf. Phil. 2:7) and His life in the spirit (cf. Rom. 8:1-13).

Faithful to their profession then, and leaving all things for the sake of Christ (cf. Mark 10:28), religious are to follow Him (cf. Matt. 19:21) as the one thing necessary (cf. Luke 10:42) listening to His words (cf. Luke 10:39) and solicitous for the things that are His (cf. 1 Cor. 7:32).

It is necessary therefore that the members of every community, seeking God solely and before everything else, should join contemplation, by which they fix their minds and hearts on Him, with apostolic love, by which they strive to be associated with the work of redemption and to spread the kingdom of God.

6. Let those who make profession of the evangelical counsels seek and love above all else God who has first loved us (cf. 1 John 4:10) and let them strive to foster in all circumstances a life hidden with Christ in God (cf. Col. 3:3). This love



of God both excites and energizes that love of one's neighbor which contributes to the salvation of the world and the building up of the Church. This love, in addition, quickens and directs the actual practice of the evangelical counsels.

Drawing therefore upon the authentic sources of Christian spirituality, members of religious communities should resolutely cultivate both the spirit and practice of prayer. In the first place they should have recourse daily to the Holy Scriptures in order that, by reading and meditating on Holy Writ, they may learn "the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:8). They should celebrate the sacred liturgy, especially the holy sacrifice of the Mass, with both lips and heart as the Church desires and so nourish their spiritual life from this richest of sources.

So refreshed at the table of divine law and the sacred altar of God, they will love Christ's members as brothers, honor and love their pastors as sons should do, and living and thinking ever more in union with the Church, dedicate themselves wholly to its mission.

7. Communities which are entirely dedicated to contemplation, so that their members in solitude and silence, with constant prayer and penance willingly undertaken, occupy themselves with God alone, retain at all times, no matter how pressing the needs of the active apostolate may be, an honorable place in the Mystical Body of Christ, whose "members do not all have the same function" (Rom. 12:4). For these offer to God a sacrifice of praise which is outstanding. Moreover the manifold results of their holiness lends luster to the people of God which is inspired by their example and which gains new members by their apostolate which is as effective as it is hidden. Thus they are revealed to be a glory of the Church and a well-spring of heavenly graces. Nevertheless their manner of living should be revised according to the principles and criteria of adaptation and renewal mentioned above. However their withdrawal from the world and the exercises proper to the contemplative life should be preserved with the utmost care.

8. There are in the Church very many communities, both clerical and lay, which devote themselves to various apostolic tasks. The gifts which these communities possess differ according to the grace which is allotted to them. Administrators have the gift of administration, teachers that of teaching, the gift of stirring speech is given to preachers, liberality to those who exercise charity and cheerfulness to those who help others in distress (cf. Rom. 12:5-8). "The gifts are varied, but the Spirit is the same" (1 Cor. 12:4).

In these communities apostolic and charitable activity belongs to the very nature of the religious life, seeing that it is a holy service and a work characteristic of love, entrusted to them by the Church to be carried out in its name. Therefore, the whole religious life of their members should be inspired by an apostolic spirit and all their apostolic activity formed by the spirit of religion. Therefore in order

that their members may first correspond to their vocation to follow Christ and serve Him in His members, their apostolic activity must spring from intimate union with Him. Thus love itself towards God and the neighbor is fostered.

These communities, then, should adjust their rules and customs to fit the demands of the apostolate to which they are dedicated. The fact however that apostolic religious life takes on many forms requires that its adaptation and renewal take account of this diversity and provide that the lives of religious dedicated to the service of Christ in these various communities be sustained by special provisions appropriate to each.

9. The monastic life, that venerable institution which in the course of a long history has won for itself notable renown in the Church and in human society, should be preserved with care and its authentic spirit permitted to shine forth ever more splendidly both in the East and the West. The principal duty of monks is to offer a service to the divine majesty at once humble and noble within the walls of the monastery, whether they dedicate themselves entirely to divine worship in the contemplative life or have legitimately undertaken some apostolate or work of Christian charity. Retaining, therefore, the characteristics of the way of life proper to them, they should revive their ancient traditions of service and so adapt them to the needs of today that monasteries will become institutions dedicated to the edification of the Christian people.

Some religious communities according to their rule or constitutions closely join the apostolic life to choir duty and monastic observances. These should so adapt their manner of life to the demands of the apostolate appropriate to them that they observe faithfully their way of life, since it has been of great service to the Church.

10. The religious life, undertaken by lay people, either men or women, is a state for the profession of the evangelical counsels which is complete in itself. While holding in high esteem therefore this way of life so useful to the pastoral mission of the Church in educating youth, caring for the sick and carrying out its other ministries, the sacred synod confirms these religious in their vocation and urges them to adjust their way of life to modern needs.

The sacred synod declares that there is nothing to prevent some members of religious communities of brothers being admitted to holy orders by provision of their general chapter in order to meet the need for priestly ministrations in their own houses, provided that the lay character of the community remains unchanged.

11. Secular Institutes, although not Religious institutes involve a true and full profession of the evangelical counsels in the world. This profession is recognized by the Church and consecrates to God men and women, lay and clerical, who live in the world. Hence they should make a total dedication of themselves to

God in perfect charity their chief aim, and the institutes themselves should preserve their own proper, i.e., secular character, so that they may be able to carry out effectively everywhere in and, as it were, from the world the apostolate for which they were founded.

It may be taken for granted, however, that so great a task cannot be discharged unless the members be thoroughly trained in matters divine and human so that they are truly a leaven in the world for the strengthening and growth of the body of Christ. Superiors, therefore, should give serious attention especially to the spiritual training to be given members as well as encourage their further formation.

12. The chastity "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:12) which religious profess should be counted an outstanding gift of grace. It frees the heart of man in a unique fashion (cf. 1 Cor. 7:32-35) so that it may be more inflamed with love for God and for all men. Thus it not only symbolizes in a singular way the heavenly goods but also the most suitable means by which religious dedicate themselves with undivided heart to the service of God and the works of the apostolate. In this way they recall to the minds of all the faithful that wondrous marriage decreed by God and which is to be fully revealed in the future age in which the Church takes Christ as its only spouse.

Religious, therefore, who are striving faithfully to observe the chastity they have professed must have faith in the words of the Lord, and trusting in God's help not overestimate their own strength but practice mortification and custody of the senses. Neither should they neglect the natural means which promote health of mind and body. As a result they will not be influenced by those false doctrines which scorn perfect continence as being impossible or harmful to human development and they will repudiate by a certain spiritual instinct everything which endangers chastity. In addition let all, especially superiors, remember that chastity is guarded more securely when true brotherly love flourishes in the common life of the community.

Since the observance of perfect continence touches intimately the deepest instincts of human nature, candidates should neither present themselves for nor be admitted to the vow of chastity, unless they have been previously tested sufficiently and have been shown to possess the required psychological and emotional maturity. They should not only be warned about the dangers to chastity which they may meet but they should be so instructed as to be able to undertake the celibacy which binds them to God in a way which will benefit their entire personality.

13. Religious should diligently practice and if need be express also in new forms that voluntary poverty which is recognized and highly esteemed especially today as an expression of the following of Christ. By it they share in the poverty of

Christ who for our sakes became poor, even though He was rich, so that by His poverty we might become rich (cf. 2 Cor. 8:9; Matt. 8:20).

With regard to religious poverty it is not enough to use goods in a way subject to the superior's will, but members must be poor both in fact and in spirit, their treasures being in heaven (cf. Matt. 6:20).

Religious should consider themselves in their own assignments to be bound by the common law of labor, and while they procure what is required for their sustenance and works, they should banish all undue solicitude and trust themselves to the provident care of their Father in heaven (cf. Matt. 6:25).

Religious congregations by their constitutions can permit their members to renounce inheritances, both those which have been acquired or may be acquired.

Due regard being had for local conditions, religious communities should readily offer a quasi-collective witness to poverty and gladly use their own goods for other needs of the Church and the support of the poor whom all religious should love after the example of Christ (cf. Matt. 19:21, 25:34-46 James 2:15-16; 1 John 3:17). The several provinces and houses of each community should share their temporal goods with one another, so that those who have more help the others who are in need.

Religious communities have the right to possess whatever is required for their temporal life and work, unless this is forbidden by their rules and constitutions. Nevertheless, they should avoid every appearance of luxury, excessive wealth and the accumulation of goods.

14. In professing obedience, religious offer the full surrender of their own will as a sacrifice of themselves to God and so are united permanently and securely to God's salvific will.

After the example of Jesus Christ who came to do the will of the Father (cf. John 4:34; 5:30; Heb. 10:7; Ps. 39:9) and "assuming the nature of a slave" (Phil. 2:7) learned obedience in the school of suffering (cf. Heb. 5:8), religious under the motion of the Holy Spirit, subject themselves in faith to their superiors who hold the place of God. Under their guidance they are led to serve all their brothers in Christ, just as Christ himself in obedience to the Father served His brethren and laid down His life as a ransom for many (cf. Matt. 20:28; John 10:14-18). So they are closely bound to the service of the Church and strive to attain the measure of the full manhood of Christ (Eph. 4:13).

Religious, therefore, in the spirit of faith and love for the divine will should humbly obey their superiors according to their rules and constitutions. Realizing that they are contributing to building up the body of Christ according to God's plan, they

should use both the forces of their intellect and will and the gifts of nature and grace to execute the commands and fulfill the duties entrusted to them. In this way religious obedience, far from lessening the dignity of the human person, by extending the freedom of the sons of God, leads it to maturity.

Superiors, as those who are to give an account of the souls entrusted to them (Heb. 13:17), should fulfill their office in a way responsive to God's will. They should exercise their authority out of a spirit of service to the brethren, expressing in this way the love with which God loves their subjects. They should govern these as sons of God, respecting their human dignity. In this way they make it easier for them to subordinate their wills. They should be particularly careful to respect their subjects' liberty in the matters of sacramental confession and the direction of conscience. Subjects should be brought to the point where they will cooperate with an active and responsible obedience in undertaking new tasks and in carrying those already undertaken. And so superiors should gladly listen to their subjects and foster harmony among them for the good of the community and the Church, provided that thereby their own authority to decide and command what has to be done is not harmed.

Chapters and deliberative bodies should faithfully discharge the part in ruling entrusted to them and each should in its own way express that concern for the good of the entire community which all its members share.

15. Common life, fashioned on the model of the early Church where the body of believers was united in heart and soul (cf. Acts 4:32), and given new force by the teaching of the Gospel, the sacred liturgy and especially the Eucharist, should continue to be lived in prayer and the communion of the same spirit. As members of Christ living together as brothers, religious should give pride of place in esteem to each other (cf. Rom. 12:10) and bear each other's burdens (cf. Gal. 6:2). For the community, a true family gathered together in the name of the Lord by God's love which has flooded the hearts of its members through the Holy Spirit (cf. Rom. 5:5), rejoices because He is present among them (cf. Matt. 18:20). Moreover love sums up the whole law (cf. Rom. 13:10), binds all together in perfect unity (cf. Col. 3:14) and by it we know that we have crossed over from death to life (cf. 1 John 3:14). Furthermore, the unity of the brethren is a visible pledge that Christ will return (cf. John 13:35; 17:21) and a source of great apostolic energy.

That all the members be more closely knit by the bond of brotherly love, those who are called lay-brothers, assistants, or some similar name should be drawn closely in to the life and work of the community. Unless conditions really suggest something else, care should be taken that there be only one class of Sisters in communities of women. Only that distinction of persons should be retained which corresponds to the diversity of works for which the Sisters are destined, either by special vocation from God or by reason of special aptitude.

However, monasteries of men and communities which are not exclusively lay can, according to their nature and constitutions, admit clerics and lay persons on an equal footing and with equal rights and obligations, excepting those which flow from sacred orders.

16. Papal cloister should be maintained in the case of nuns engaged exclusively in the contemplative life. However, it must be adjusted to conditions of time and place and obsolete practices suppressed. This should be done after due consultation with the monasteries in question. But other nuns applied by rule to apostolic work outside the convent should be exempted from papal cloister in order to enable them better to fulfill the apostolic duties entrusted to them. Nevertheless, cloister is to be maintained according to the prescriptions of their constitutions.

17. The religious habit, an outward mark of consecration to God, should be simple and modest, poor and at the same becoming. In addition it must meet the requirements of health and be suited to the circumstances of time and place and to the needs of the ministry involved. The habits of both men and women religious which do not conform to these norms must be changed.

18. Adaptation and renewal depend greatly on the education of religious. Consequently neither non-clerical religious nor religious women should be assigned to apostolic works immediately after the novitiate. Rather, their religious and apostolic formation, joined with instruction in arts and science directed toward obtaining appropriate degrees, must be continued as needs require in houses established for those purposes.

In order that the adaptation of religious life to the needs of our time may not be merely external and that those employed by rule in the active apostolate may be equal to their task, religious must be given suitable instruction, depending on their intellectual capacity and personal talent, in the currents and attitudes of sentiment and thought prevalent in social life today. This education must blend its elements together harmoniously so that an integrated life on the part of the religious concerned results.

Religious should strive during the whole course of their lives to perfect the culture they have received in matters spiritual and in arts and sciences. Likewise, superiors must, as far as this is possible, obtain for them the opportunity, equipment and time to do this.

Superiors are also obliged to see to it that directors, spiritual fathers, and professors are carefully chosen and thoroughly trained.

19. When the question of founding new religious communities arises, their necessity or at least the many useful services they promise must be seriously weighed. Otherwise communities may be needlessly brought into being which

are useless or which lack sufficient resources. Particularly in those areas where churches have recently established, those forms of religious life should be promoted and developed which take into account the genius and way of life of the inhabitants and the customs and conditions of the regions.

20. Religious communities should continue to maintain and fulfill the ministries proper to them. In addition, after considering the needs of the Universal Church and individual dioceses, they should adapt them to the requirements of time and place, employing appropriate and even new programs and abandoning those works which today are less relevant to the spirit and authentic nature of the community.

The missionary spirit must under all circumstances be preserved in religious communities. It should be adapted, accordingly, as the nature of each community permits, to modern conditions so that the preaching of the Gospel may be carried out more effectively in every nation.

21. There may be communities and monasteries which the Holy See, after consulting the interested local Ordinaries, will judge not to possess reasonable hope for further development. These should be forbidden to receive novices in the future. If it is possible, these should be combined with other more flourishing communities and monasteries whose scope and spirit is similar.

22. Independent institutes and monasteries should, when opportune and the Holy See permits, form federations if they can be considered as belonging to the same religious family. Others who have practically identical constitutions and rules and a common spirit should unite, particularly when they have too few members. Finally, those who share the same or a very similar active apostolate should become associated, one to the other.

23. This synod favors conferences or councils of major superiors, established by the Holy See. These can contribute very much to achieve the purpose of each institute; to encourage more effective cooperation for the welfare of the Church; to ensure a more just distribution of ministers of the Gospel in a given area; and finally to conduct affairs of interest to all religious. Suitable coordination and cooperation with episcopal conferences should be established with regard to the exercise of the apostolate.

Similar conferences should also be established for secular institutes.

24. Priests and Christian educators should make serious efforts to foster religious vocations, thereby increasing the strength of the Church, corresponding to its needs. These candidates should be suitably and carefully chosen. In ordinary preaching, the life of the evangelical counsels and the religious state should be treated more frequently. Parents, too, should nurture and protect religious vocations in their children by instilling Christian virtue in their hearts.

Religious communities have the right to make themselves known in order to foster vocations and seek candidates. In doing this, however, they should observe the norms laid down by the Holy See and the local Ordinary.

Religious should remember there is no better way than their own example to commend their institutes and gain candidates for the religious life.

25. Religious institutes, for whom these norms of adaptation and renewal have been laid down, should respond generously to the specific vocation God gave them as well as their work in the Church today. The sacred synod highly esteems their way of life in poverty, chastity and obedience, of which Christ the Lord is Himself the exemplar. Moreover, their apostolate, most effective, whether obscure or well known, offers this synod great hope for the future. Let all religious, therefore, rooted in faith and filled with love for God and neighbor, love of the cross and the hope of future glory, spread the good news of Christ throughout the whole world so that their witness may be seen by all and our Father in heaven may be glorified (Matt. 5:16). Therefore, let them beseech the Virgin Mary, the gentle Mother of God, "whose life is a model for all,"<sup>(1)</sup> that their number may daily increase and their salutary work be more effective.

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## NOTES

1. St. Ambrose, *De Virginitate*, 1, II, c. II, n. 15.



DECREE CONCERNING  
THE PASTORAL OFFICE OF BISHOPS  
IN THE CHURCH  
**CHRISTUS DOMINUS**

PROCLAIMED BY  
HIS HOLINESS, POPE PAUL VI  
ON OCTOBER 28, 1965

**PREFACE**

1. Christ the Lord, Son of the living God, came that He might save His people from their sins(1) and that all men might be sanctified. Just as He Himself was sent by the Father, so He also sent His Apostles.(2) Therefore, He sanctified them, conferring on them the Holy Spirit, so that they also might glorify the Father upon earth and save men, "to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12), which is the Church.

2. In this Church of Christ the Roman pontiff, as the successor of Peter, to whom Christ entrusted the feeding of His sheep and lambs, enjoys supreme, full, immediate, and universal authority over the care of souls by divine institution. Therefore, as pastor of all the faithful, he is sent to provide for the common good of the universal Church and for the good of the individual churches. Hence, he holds a primacy of ordinary power over all the churches.

The bishops themselves, however, having been appointed by the Holy Spirit, are successors of the Apostles as pastors of souls.(3) Together with the supreme pontiff and under his authority they are sent to continue throughout the ages the work of Christ, the eternal pastor.(4) Christ gave the Apostles and their successors the command and the power to teach all nations, to hallow men in the truth, and to feed them. Bishops, therefore, have been made true and authentic teachers of the faith, pontiffs, and pastors through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to them.(5)

3. Bishops, sharing in the solicitude for all the churches, exercise this episcopal office of theirs, which they have received through episcopal consecration,(6) in communion with and under the authority of the supreme pontiff. As far as their teaching authority and pastoral government are concerned, all are united in a college or body with respect to the universal Church of God.

They exercise this office individually in reference to the portions of the Lord's flock assigned to them, each one taking care of the particular church committed to him, or sometimes some of them jointly providing for certain common needs of various churches.

This sacred synod, therefore, attentive to the conditions of human association which have brought about a new order of things in our time,(7) intends to determine more exactly the pastoral office of bishops and, therefore, has decreed the things that follow.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **THE RELATIONSHIP OF BISHOPS TO THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH**

#### **I. The Role of the Bishops in the Universal Church**

4. By virtue of sacramental consecration and hierarchical communion with the head and members of the college, bishops are constituted as members of the episcopal body.(1) "The order of bishops is the successor to the college of the apostles in teaching and pastoral direction, or rather, in the episcopal order, the apostolic body continues without a break. Together with its head, the Roman pontiff, and never without this head it exists as the subject of supreme, plenary power over the universal Church. But this power cannot be exercised except with the agreement of the Roman pontiff."(2) This power however, "is exercised in a solemn manner in an ecumenical council."(3) Therefore, this sacred synod decrees that all bishops who are members of the episcopal college, have the right to be present at an ecumenical council.

"The exercise of this collegiate power in union with the pope is possible although the bishops are stationed all over the world, provided that the head of the college gives them a call to collegiate action, or, at least, gives the unified action of the dispersed bishops such approval, or such unconstrained acceptance, that it becomes truly collegiate action."(4)

5. Bishops chosen from various parts of the world, in ways and manners established or to be established by the Roman pontiff, render more effective assistance to the supreme pastor of the Church in a deliberative body which will be called by the proper name of Synod of Bishops.(5) Since it shall be acting in the name of the entire Catholic episcopate, it will at the same time show that all the bishops in hierarchical communion partake of the solicitude for the universal Church.(6)

6. As legitimate successors of the Apostles and members of the episcopal college, bishops should realize that they are bound together and should manifest a concern for all the churches. For by divine institution and the rule of the apostolic office each one together with all the other bishops is responsible for the Church.(7) They should especially be concerned about those parts of the world where the word of God has not yet been proclaimed or where the faithful, particularly because of the small number of priests, are in danger of departing from the precepts of the Christian life, and even of losing the faith itself.

Let bishops, therefore, make every effort to have the faithful actively support and promote works of evangelization and the apostolate. Let them strive, moreover, to see to it that suitable sacred ministers as well as auxiliaries, both religious and lay, be prepared for the missions and other areas suffering from a lack of clergy. They should also see to it, as much as possible, that some of their own priests go to the above-mentioned missions or dioceses to exercise the sacred ministry there either permanently or for a set period of time.

Bishops should also be mindful, in administering ecclesiastical property, of the needs not only of their own dioceses but also of the other particular churches, for they are also a part of the one Church of Christ. Finally, they should direct their attention, according to their means, to the relief of disasters by which other dioceses and regions are affected.

7. Let them especially embrace in brotherly affection those bishops who, for the sake of Christ, are plagued with slander and indigence, detained in prisons, or held back from their ministry. They should take an active brotherly interest in them so that their sufferings may be assuaged and alleviated through the prayers and good works of their confreres.

## **II. Bishops and the Apostolic See**

8. (a) To bishops, as successors of the Apostles, in the dioceses entrusted to them, there belongs per se all the ordinary, proper, and immediate authority which is required for the exercise of their pastoral office. But this never in any way infringes upon the power which the Roman pontiff has, by virtue of his office, of reserving cases to himself or to some other authority.

(b) The general law of the Church grants the faculty to each diocesan bishop to dispense, in a particular case, the faithful over whom they legally exercise authority as often as they judge that it contributes to their spiritual welfare, except in those cases which have been especially reserved by the supreme authority of the Church.

9. In exercising supreme, full, and immediate power in the universal Church, the Roman pontiff makes use of the departments of the Roman Curia which, therefore, perform their duties in his name and with his authority for the good of the churches and in the service of the sacred pastors.

The fathers of this sacred council, however, desire that these departments-which have furnished distinguished assistance to the Roman pontiff and the pastors of the Church-be reorganized and better adapted to the needs of the times, regions, and rites especially as regards their number, name, competence and peculiar method of procedure, as well as the coordination of work among them.(8) The fathers also desire that, in view of the very nature of the pastoral office proper to

the bishops, the office of legates of the Roman pontiff be more precisely determined.

10. Furthermore, since these departments are established for the good of the universal Church, it is desirable that their members, officials, and consultors as well as legates of the Roman pontiff be more widely taken from various regions of the Church, insofar as it is possible. In such a way the offices and central organs of the Catholic Church will exhibit a truly universal character.

It is also desired that some bishops, too-especially diocesan bishops-will be chosen as members of the departments, for they will be able to report more fully to the supreme pontiff the thinking, the desires, and the needs of all the churches.

Finally, the fathers of the council think it would be most advantageous if these same departments would listen more attentively to laymen who are outstanding for their virtue, knowledge, and experience. In such a way they will have an appropriate share in Church affairs.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **BISHOPS AND THEIR PARTICULAR CHURCHES OR DIOCESES**

#### **I. Diocesan Bishops**

11. A diocese is a portion of the people of God which is entrusted to a bishop to be shepherded by him with the cooperation of the presbytery. Thus by adhering to its pastor and gathered together by him through the Gospel and the Eucharist in the Holy Spirit, it constitutes a particular church in which the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church of Christ is truly present and operative.

Individual bishops who have been entrusted with the care of a particular church-under the authority of the supreme pontiff-feed their sheep in the name of the Lord as their own, ordinary, and immediate pastors, performing for them the office of teaching, sanctifying, and governing. Nevertheless, they should recognize the rights which legitimately belong to patriarchs or other hierarchical authorities.(1)

Bishops should dedicate themselves to their apostolic office as witness of Christ before all men. They should not only look after those who already follow the Prince of Pastors but should also wholeheartedly devote themselves to those who have strayed in any way from the path of truth or are ignorant of the Gospel of Christ and His saving mercy until finally all men walk "in all goodness and justice and truth" (Eph. 5:9).

12. In exercising their duty of teaching-which is conspicuous among the principal duties of bishops(2)-they should announce the Gospel of Christ to men, calling them to a faith in the power of the Spirit or confirming them in a living faith. They should expound the whole mystery of Christ to them, namely, those truths the ignorance of which is ignorance of Christ. At the same time they should point out the divinely revealed way to give glory to God and thereby to attain to eternal happiness.(3)

They should show, moreover, that earthly goods and human institutions according to the plan of God the Creator are also disposed for man's salvation and therefore can contribute much to the building up of the body of Christ.

Therefore, they should teach, according to the doctrine of the Church, the great value of these things: the human person with his freedom and bodily life, the family and its unity and stability, the procreation and education of children, civil society with its laws and professions, labor and leisure, the arts and technical inventions, poverty and affluence. Finally, they should set forth the ways by which are to be answered the most serious questions concerning the ownership, increase, and just distribution of material goods, peace and war, and brotherly relations among all countries.(4)

13. The bishops should present Christian doctrine in a manner adapted to the needs of the times, that is to say, in a manner that will respond to the difficulties and questions by which people are especially burdened and troubled. They should also guard that doctrine, teaching the faithful to defend and propagate it. In propounding this doctrine they should manifest the maternal solicitude of the Church toward all men whether they be believers or not. With a special affection they should attend upon the poor and the lower classes to whom the Lord sent them to preach the Gospel.

Since it is the mission of the Church to converse with the human society in which it lives,(5) it is especially the duty of bishops to seek out men and both request and promote dialogue with them. These conversations on salvation ought to be noted for clarity of speech as well as humility and mildness in order that at all times truth may be joined to charity and understanding with love. Likewise they should be noted for due prudence joined with trust, which fosters friendship and thus is capable of bringing about a union of minds.(6)

They should also strive to make use of the various media at hand nowadays for proclaiming Christian doctrine, namely, first of all, preaching and catechetical instruction which always hold the first place, then the presentation of this doctrine in schools, academies, conferences, and meetings of every kind, and finally its dissemination through public statements at times of outstanding events as well as by the press and various other media of communication, which by all means ought to be used in proclaiming the Gospel of Christ.(7)

14. Bishops should take pains that catechetical instruction-which is intended to make the faith, as illumined by teaching, a vital, explicit and effective force in the lives of men-be given with sedulous care to both children and adolescents, youths and adults. In this instruction a suitable arrangement should be observed as well as a method suited to the matter that is being treated and to the character, ability, age, and circumstances of the life of the students. Finally, they should see to it that this instruction is based on Sacred Scripture, tradition, the liturgy, magisterium, and life of the Church.

Moreover, they should take care that catechists be properly trained for their function so that they will be thoroughly acquainted with the doctrine of the Church and will have both a theoretical and a practical knowledge of the laws of psychology and of pedagogical methods.

Bishops should also strive to renew or at least adapt in a better way the instruction of adult catechumens.

15. In exercising their office of sanctifying, bishops should be mindful that they have been taken from among men and appointed their representative before God in order to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. Bishops enjoy the fullness of the sacrament of orders and both presbyters and deacons are dependent upon them in the exercise of their authority. For the presbyters are the prudent fellow workers of the episcopal order and are themselves consecrated as true priests of the New Testament, just as deacons are ordained for the ministry and serve the people of God in communion with the bishop and his presbytery. Therefore bishops are the principal dispensers of the mysteries of God, as well as being the governors, promoters, and guardians of the entire liturgical life in the church committed to them.(8)

They should, therefore, constantly exert themselves to have the faithful know and live the paschal mystery more deeply through the Eucharist and thus become a firmly-knit body in the unity of the charity of Christ.(9) "Intent upon prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4), they should devote their labor to this end that all those committed to their care may be of one mind in prayer(10) and through the reception of the sacraments may grow in grace and be faithful witnesses to the Lord.

As those who lead others to perfection, bishops should be diligent in fostering holiness among their clerics, religious, and laity according to the special vocation of each.(11) They should also be mindful of their obligation to give an example of holiness in charity, humility, and simplicity of life. Let them so hallow the churches entrusted to them that the feeling of the universal Church of Christ may shine forth fully in them. For that reason they should foster priestly and religious vocations as much as possible, and should take a special interest in missionary vocations.

16. In exercising their office of father and pastor, bishops should stand in the midst of their people as those who serve.(12) Let them be good shepherds who know their sheep and whose sheep know them. Let them be true fathers who excel in the spirit of love and solicitude for all and to whose divinely conferred authority all gratefully submit themselves. Let them so gather and mold the whole family of their flock that everyone, conscious of his own duties, may live and work in the communion of love.

In order effectively to accomplish these things, bishops, "ready for every good work" (2 Tim. 2:21) and "enduring all things for the sake of the chosen ones" (2 Tim. 2:10), should arrange their life in such a way as to accommodate it to the needs of our times.

Bishops should always embrace priests with a special love since the latter to the best of their ability assume the bishops' anxieties and carry them on day by day so zealously. They should regard the priests as sons and friends(13) and be ready to listen to them. Through their trusting familiarity with their priests they should strive to promote the whole pastoral work of the entire diocese.

They should be solicitous for the spiritual, intellectual and material welfare of the priests so that the latter can live holy and pious lives and fulfill their ministry faithfully and fruitfully. Therefore, they should encourage institutes and hold special meetings in which priests might gather from time to time both for the performance of longer exercises and the renewal of their spiritual life and for the acquisition of deeper subjects, especially Sacred Scripture and theology, the more important social questions, and the new methods of pastoral activity.

With active mercy bishops should pursue priests who are involved in any danger or who have failed in certain respects.

In order to be able to look more closely to the welfare of the faithful according to the condition of each one, bishops should strive to become duly acquainted with their needs in the social circumstances in which they live. Therefore, they ought to employ suitable methods, especially social research. They should manifest their concern for everyone, no matter what their age, condition, or nationality, be they natives, strangers, or foreigners. In exercising this pastoral care they should preserve for their faithful the share proper to them in Church affairs; they should also respect their duty and right of actively collaborating in the building up of the Mystical Body of Christ.

They should deal lovingly with the separated brethren, urging the faithful also to conduct themselves with great kindness and charity in their regard and fostering ecumenism as it is understood by the Church.(14) They should also have a place in their hearts for the non-baptized so that upon them too there may shine the charity of Christ Jesus, to whom the bishops are witnesses before all men.

17. Various forms of the apostolate should be encouraged, and in the whole diocese or in any particular areas of it the coordination and close connection of all apostolic works should be fostered under the direction of the bishop. Thus all undertakings and organizations, be they catechetical, missionary, charitable, social, familial, educational, or anything else pursuing a pastoral aim, should be directed toward harmonious action. Thus at the same time the unity of the diocese will also be made more evident.

The faithful should be earnestly urged to assume their duty of carrying on the apostolate, each according to his state in life and ability. They should be admonished to participate in and give aid to the various works of the apostolate of the laity, especially Catholic Action. Those associations should also be promoted and supported which either directly or indirectly pursue a supernatural objective, that is, either the attaining of a more perfect life, the spreading of the Gospel of Christ to all men, and the promoting of Christian doctrine or the increase of public worship, or the pursuing of social aims or the performing of works of piety and charity.

The forms of the apostolate should be properly adapted to the needs of the present day with regard not only for man's spiritual and moral circumstances but also for his social, demographic, and economic conditions. Religious and social research, through offices of pastoral sociology, contributes much to the efficacious and fruitful attainment of that goal, and it is highly recommended.

18. Special concern should be shown for those among the faithful who, on account of their way of life, cannot sufficiently make use of the common and ordinary pastoral care of parish priests or are quite cut off from it. Among this group are the majority of migrants, exiles and refugees, seafarers, air-travelers, gypsies, and others of this kind. Suitable pastoral methods should also be promoted to sustain the spiritual life of those who go to other lands for a time for the sake of recreation.

Episcopal conferences, especially national ones, should pay special attention to the very pressing problems concerning the above-mentioned groups. Through voluntary agreement and united efforts, they should look to and promote their spiritual care by means of suitable methods and institutions. They should also bear in mind the special rules either already laid down or to be laid down by the Apostolic See(15) which can be wisely adapted to the circumstances of time, place, and persons.

19. In discharging their apostolic office, which concerns the salvation of souls, bishops per se enjoy full and perfect freedom and independence from any civil authority. Hence, the exercise of their ecclesiastical office may not be hindered, directly or indirectly, nor may they be forbidden to communicate freely with the Apostolic See, or ecclesiastical authorities, or their subjects.



Assuredly, while sacred pastors devote themselves to the spiritual care of their flock, they also in fact have regard for their social and civil progress and prosperity. According to the nature of their office and as behooves bishops, they collaborate actively with public authorities for this purpose and advocate obedience to just laws and reverence for legitimately constituted authorities.

20. Since the apostolic office of bishops was instituted by Christ the Lord and pursues a spiritual and supernatural purpose, this sacred ecumenical synod declares that the right of nominating and appointing bishops belongs properly, peculiarly, and per se exclusively to the competent ecclesiastical authority.

Therefore, for the purpose of duly protecting the freedom of the Church and of promoting more conveniently and efficiently the welfare of the faithful, this holy council desires that in future no more rights or privileges of election, nomination, presentation, or designation for the office of bishop be granted to civil authorities. The civil authorities, on the other hand, whose favorable attitude toward the Church the sacred synod gratefully acknowledges and highly appreciates, are most kindly requested voluntarily to renounce the above-mentioned rights and privileges which they presently enjoy by reason of a treaty or custom, after discussing the matter with the Apostolic See.

21. Since the pastoral office of bishops is so important and weighty, diocesan bishops and others regarded in law as their equals, who have become less capable of fulfilling their duties properly because of the increasing burden of age or some other serious reason, are earnestly requested to offer their resignation from office either at their own initiative or upon the invitation of the competent authority. If the competent authority should accept the resignation, it will make provision both for the suitable support of those who have resigned and for special rights to be accorded them.

## **II. Diocesan Boundaries**

22. For a diocese to fulfill its purpose the nature of the Church must be clearly evident to the people of God who constitute that diocese. To this end also bishops must be able to carry out their pastoral duties effectively among their people. Finally, the welfare of the people of God must be served as perfectly as possible.

All this demands, then, a proper determination of the boundaries of dioceses and a distribution of clergy and resources that is reasonable and in keeping with the needs of the apostolate. All these things will benefit not only the clergy and Christian people involved, but also the entire Catholic Church.

Concerning diocesan boundaries, therefore, this sacred synod decrees that, to the extent required by the good of souls, a fitting revision of diocesan boundaries be undertaken prudently and as soon as possible. This can be done by dividing

dismembering or uniting them, or by changing their boundaries, or by determining a better place for the episcopal see or, finally, especially in the case of dioceses having larger cities, by providing them with a new internal organization.

23. In revising diocesan boundaries first place must be accorded to organic unity of each diocese, with due regard to the personnel, the offices and institutions, which form, as it were, a living body. In individual cases all circumstances should be carefully studied and the general criteria which follow should be kept in mind.

1.) In determining a diocesan boundary, as far as possible consideration should be given the variety in composition of the people of God, for this can contribute greatly to a more effective exercise of the pastoral office. At the same time the natural population units of people, together with the civil jurisdictions and social institutions that compose their organic structure, should be preserved as far as possible as units. For this reason, obviously, the territory of each diocese should be continuous.

Attention should also be given, if necessary, to civil boundaries and the special characteristics of regions and peoples, such as their psychological, economic, geographic and historical backgrounds.

2.) The extent of the diocese and the number of its inhabitants should generally be such that, on the one hand, the bishop himself- even though assisted by others-can officiate at pontifical functions, make pastoral visitations, faithfully direct and coordinate all the works of the apostolate in the diocese and know well especially his priests, and also the religious and lay people who are engaged in diocesan projects. On the other hand, an adequate and suitable area should be provided so that bishop and clergy, mindful also of the needs of the universal Church, can usefully devote all their energies to the ministry.

3.) Finally, in order that the ministry of salvation be more effectively carried out in each diocese, it should be considered a general rule that each diocese have clergy, in number and qualifications at least sufficient, for the proper care of the people of God; also, there should be no lack of the offices, institutions and organizations which are proper to the particular church and which experience has shown necessary for its efficient government and apostolate; finally, resources for the support of personnel and institutions should be at hand or at least prudently foreseen in prospect.

For this same purpose, where there are faithful of a different rite, the diocesan bishop should provide for their spiritual needs either through priests or parishes of that rite or through an episcopal vicar endowed with the necessary faculties. Wherever it is fitting, the last named should also have episcopal rank. Otherwise the Ordinary himself may perform the office of an Ordinary of different rites. If for certain reasons, these prescriptions are not applicable in the judgment of the

Apostolic See, then a proper hierarchy for the different rites is to be established.(16)

Also, where similar situations exist, provision should be made for the faithful of different language groups, either through priests or parishes of the same language, or through an episcopal vicar well versed in the language-and if needs be having the episcopal dignity- or at least in some other more appropriate way.

24. In order to bring about the changes and alterations of dioceses as set forth in numbers 22-23-and leaving untouched the discipline of the Oriental Churches-it is desirable that the competent episcopal conferences examine these matters each for its respective territory. If deemed opportune, they may employ a special episcopal commission for this purpose, but always taking into account the opinions of the bishops of the provinces or regions concerned. Finally, they are to propose their recommendations and desires to the Apostolic See.

### **III. Assistants in the Pastoral Office of the Diocesan Bishops**

#### ***1. Coadjutor and auxiliary bishops***

25. The pastoral office of Bishops should be so constituted for the governing of dioceses that the good of the Lord's flock is always the supreme consideration. Rightly to achieve this goal, auxiliary bishops will frequently be appointed because the diocesan bishop cannot personally fulfill all his episcopal duties as the good of souls demands, either because of the vast extent of the diocese or the great number of its inhabitants, or because of the special nature of the apostolate or other reasons of a different nature. Sometimes, in fact, a particular need requires that a coadjutor bishop be appointed to assist the diocesan bishop. Coadjutor and auxiliary bishops should be granted those faculties necessary for rendering their work more effective and safeguarding the dignity proper to bishops. This, of course, should always be accomplished without detriment to the unity of the diocesan administration and the authority of the diocesan bishop.

Furthermore, coadjutor and auxiliary bishops, since they are called to share part of the burden of the diocesan bishops, so should exercise their office that they may proceed in all matters in single-minded agreement with him. In addition, they should always show respect and reverence for the diocesan bishop and he, in turn, should have a fraternal love for coadjutor and auxiliary bishops and hold them in esteem.

26. To the extent that the good of souls demands, the diocesan bishop should not hesitate to ask the competent authority for one or more auxiliaries who will be appointed for the diocese without the right of succession.

If there is no provision for it in the letter of nomination, the diocesan bishop is to appoint his auxiliary or auxiliaries as vicar generals or at least as episcopal

vicars. They shall be dependent upon his authority only and he may wish to consult them in examining questions of major importance, especially of a pastoral nature.

Unless competent authority has otherwise determined, the powers and faculties which auxiliary bishops have by law do not cease when the office of the diocesan bishop comes to an end. It is also desirable that when the See is vacant the office of ruling the diocese-unless some serious reasons persuade otherwise-should be committed to the auxiliary bishop or, when there are more than one, to one of the auxiliaries.

A coadjutor bishop, appointed with the right of succession, must always be named vicar general by the diocesan bishop. In particular cases the competent authority can grant him even more extensive faculties.

In order to provide for the greatest possible present and future good of the diocese, the diocesan bishop and his coadjutor should not fail to consult with each other on matters of great importance.

## ***2. The diocesan curia and commissions***

27. The most important office in the diocesan curia is that of vicar general. However, as often as the proper government of the diocese requires it, one or more episcopal vicars can be named by the bishop. These automatically enjoy the same authority which the common law grants the vicar general, but only for a certain part of the diocese, or for a determined type of transaction or for the faithful of a determined rite.

Among the collaborators of the bishop in the government of the diocese are numbered those presbyters who constitute his senate, or council, such as the cathedral chapter, the board of consultors or other committees according to the circumstances or nature of various localities. These institutions, especially the cathedral chapters, should be reorganized wherever necessary in keeping with present day needs.

Priests and lay people who belong to the diocesan curia should realize that they are making a helpful contribution to the pastoral ministry of the bishop.

The diocesan curia should be so organized that it is an appropriate instrument for the bishop, not only for administering the diocese but also for carrying out the works of the apostolate.

It is greatly desired that in each diocese a pastoral commission will be established over which the diocesan bishop himself will preside and in which specially chosen clergy, religious and lay people will participate. The duty of this

commission will be to investigate and weigh pastoral undertakings and to formulate practical conclusions regarding them.

### **3. *The diocesan clergy***

28. All presbyters, both diocesan and religious, participate in and exercise with the bishop the one priesthood of Christ and are thereby constituted prudent cooperators of the episcopal order. In the care of souls, however, the first place is held by diocesan priests who are incardinated or attached to a particular church, for they have fully dedicated themselves in the service of caring for a single portion of the Lord's flock. In consequence, they form one presbytery and one family whose father is the bishop. In order to distribute more equitably and properly the sacred ministries among his priests, the bishop should possess a necessary freedom in bestowing offices and benefices. Therefore, rights or privileges which in any way limit this freedom are to be suppressed.

The relationships between the bishop and the diocesan priests should rest most especially upon the bonds of supernatural charity so that the harmony of the will of the priests with that of their bishop will render their pastoral activity more fruitful. Wherefore, for the sake of greater service to souls, let the bishop call the priests into dialogue, especially about pastoral matters. This he should do not only on a given occasion but at regularly fixed intervals insofar as this is possible.

Furthermore all diocesan priests should be united among themselves and so should share a genuine concern for the spiritual welfare of the whole diocese. They should also be mindful that the benefits they receive by reason of their ecclesiastical office are closely bound up with their sacred work. Therefore they should contribute generously, as the bishop may direct and as their means permit, to the material needs of the diocese.

29. The closer collaborators of the bishop are those priests who are charged with a pastoral office or apostolic organizations of a supra-parochial nature, whether in a certain area of the diocese or among special groups of the faithful or with respect to a specific kind of activity.

Priests assigned by the bishop to various works of the apostolate, whether in schools or in other institutions or associations, contribute an exceedingly valuable assistance. Those priests also who are engaged in supra-diocesan works are commended to the special consideration of the bishop in whose diocese they reside, for they perform outstanding works of the apostolate.

30. Pastors, however, are cooperators of the bishop in a very special way, for as pastors in their own name they are entrusted with the care of souls in a certain part of the diocese under the bishop's authority.

1.) In exercising this care of souls, pastors and their assistants should so fulfill their duty of teaching, sanctifying and governing that the faithful and the parish communities will truly realize that they are members both of the diocese and of the universal Church. For this reason, they should collaborate with other pastors and priests who exercise a pastoral office in the area (such as vicars forane and deans), as well as with those engaged in works of a supra-parochial nature. In this way the pastoral work in the diocese will be unified and made more effective.

Moreover, the care of souls should always be infused with a missionary spirit so that it reaches out as it should to everyone living within the parish boundaries. If the pastor cannot contact certain groups of people, he should seek the assistance of others, even laymen who can assist him in the apostolate.

To render the care of souls more efficacious, community life for priests-especially those attached to the same parish-is highly recommended. This way of living, while it encourages apostolic action, also affords an example of charity and unity to the faithful.

2.) In the exercise of their teaching office it is the duty of pastors to preach God's word to all the Christian people so that, rooted in faith, hope and charity, they will grow in Christ, and as a Christian community bear witness to that charity which the Lord commended.(17) It is also the duty of pastors to bring the faithful to a full knowledge of the mystery of salvation through a catechetical instruction which is consonant with each one's age. In imparting this instruction they should seek not only the assistance of religious but also the cooperation of the laity, establishing also the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.

In discharging their duty of sanctifying their people, pastors should see to it that the celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice is the center and culmination of the whole life of the Christian community. They should labor without stint that the faithful are nourished with spiritual food through the devout and frequent reception of the Sacraments and through intelligent and active participation in the Liturgy. Pastors should also be mindful of how much the sacrament of Penance contributes to developing the Christian life and, therefore, should always make themselves available to hear the confessions of the faithful. If necessary, they should invite the assistance of priests who are experienced in various languages.

In fulfilling their office as shepherd, pastors should take pains to know their own flock. Since they are the servants of all the sheep, they should encourage a full Christian life among the individual faithful and also in families, in associations especially dedicated to the apostolate, and in the whole parish community. Therefore, they should visit homes and schools to the extent that their pastoral work demands. They should pay especial attention to adolescents and youth. They should devote themselves with a paternal love to the poor and the sick. They should have a particular concern for workingmen. Finally, they should encourage the faithful to assist in the works of the apostolate.

3.) Assistant pastors, as cooperators with the pastor, make under the authority of the pastor an indispensable and active contribution to the pastoral ministry. Therefore, there should always be fraternal association, mutual charity and reverence between the pastor and his assistants. They should assist one another with counsel, help and example, providing a united will and common zeal in the service of the parish.

31. In forming a judgment on the suitability of a priest for the administration of any parish the bishop should take into consideration not only his knowledge of doctrine but also his piety, apostolic zeal and other gifts and qualities which are necessary for the proper exercise of the care of souls.

Now the parish exists solely for the good of souls. Wherefore, the bishop should be able to provide more easily and effectively for vacant pastorates. To this end all rights whatsoever of presentation, nomination, reservation, excepting the right of Religious-and where it exists, the law of concursus whether general or particular-are to be suppressed.

Pastors should enjoy in their respective parishes that stability of office which the good of souls demands. The distinction between removable and irremovable pastors is to be abrogated and the procedure for transferring and removing pastors is to be re-examined and simplified. In this way the bishop, while observing natural and canonical equity, can better provide for the needs of the good of souls.

Pastors who are unable to fulfill their office properly and fruitfully because of the increasing burden of old age or some other serious reason are urgently requested to tender their resignation voluntarily upon the invitation of the bishop. The bishop should provide suitable support for those who have resigned.

32. Finally, the same concern for souls should be the basis for determining or reconsidering the erection or suppression of parishes and any other changes of this kind which the bishop is empowered to undertake on his own authority.

#### ***4. Religious***

33. (In all that follows with Religious are included also the members of other institutes who profess the evangelical counsels.) All Religious have the duty, each according to his proper vocation, of cooperating zealously and diligently in building up and increasing the whole Mystical Body of Christ and for the good of the particular churches.

It is their first duty to foster these objectives by prayer, works of penance and the example of their own life for which this sacred synod strongly urges them to increase their esteem and zeal. With due consideration for the character proper

to each religious community, they should also enter more vigorously into the external works of the apostolate.

34. Religious priests are by consecration assumed into the responsibilities of the presbyterate so as to become themselves the prudent cooperators of the episcopal order. Today they can be of even greater help to bishops in view of the greater needs of souls. Therefore, they can be said in a real sense to belong to the clergy of the diocese inasmuch as they share in the care of souls and in carrying out works of the apostolate under the authority of the prelates.

Other members of religious communities, both men and women, also belong in a special way to the diocesan family and offer great assistance to the sacred hierarchy. With the increasing demands of the apostolate they can and should offer that assistance even more and more.

35. In order that the works of the apostolate be carried out harmoniously in individual dioceses and that the unity of diocesan discipline be preserved intact, these principles are established as fundamental:

1.) All Religious should always look upon the bishops, as upon successors of the Apostles, with devoted respect and reverence. Whenever they are legitimately called upon to undertake works of the apostolate, they are obliged to discharge their duties as active and obedient helpers of the bishops.(18) Indeed, Religious should consider it an honor to respond promptly and faithfully to the requests and desires of the bishops and in such a way they may assume an even more ample role in the ministry of human salvation. This they should do with due respect for the character of their institute and in keeping with their constitutions which, if needs be, should be accommodated to this goal in accord with the principles of this conciliar decree.

Especially in view of the urgent need of souls and the scarcity of diocesan clergy, Religious communities which the not dedicated exclusively to the contemplative life can be called upon by the bishops to assist in various pastoral ministries. They should, however, keep in mind the particular character of each community. Superiors should encourage this work to the utmost, by accepting parishes, even on a temporary basis.

2.) Religious engaged in the active apostolate, however, must always be imbued with the spirit of their Religious community, and remain faithful to the observance of their rule and spirit of submissiveness due to their own superiors. Bishops should not neglect to impress this obligation upon them.

3.) The institute of exemption, by which Religious are called to the service of the supreme pontiff or other ecclesiastical authority and withdrawn from the jurisdiction of bishops, refers chiefly to the internal order of their communities so that in them all things may be properly coordinated and the growth and perfection



of the Religious common life promoted.(19) These communities are also exempt so that the supreme pontiff can dispose of them for the good of the universal Church(20) and any other competent authority for the good of the churches under its own jurisdiction.

This exemption, however, does not exclude Religious in individual dioceses from the jurisdiction of bishops in accordance with the norm of law, insofar as the performance of their pastoral office and the right ordering of the care of souls requires.(21)

4.) All Religious, exempt and non-exempt, are subject to the authority of the local Ordinaries in those things which pertain to the public exercise of divine worship- except where differences in rites are concerned- the care of souls, the sacred preaching intended for the people, the religious and moral education of the Christian faithful, especially of the children, catechetical instruction and liturgical formation. They are subject to the local Ordinary also in what pertains to the decorum proper to the clerical state as well as in the various works which concern the exercise of the sacred apostolate. Catholic schools conducted by Religious are also subject to the authority of the local Ordinaries for purposes of general policy- making and vigilance, but the right of Religious to direct them remains intact. Religious also are bound to observe all those things which councils or conferences of bishops shall legitimately prescribe for observance by all.

5.) A well-ordered cooperation is to be encouraged between various religious communities and between them and the diocesan clergy. There should also be a very close coordination of all apostolic works and activities which especially depend upon a supernatural attitude of hearts and minds, rooted in and founded upon charity. The Apostolic See is competent to supervise this coordination for the universal Church; sacred pastors are competent in their own respective dioceses: and patriarchal synods and episcopal conferences in their own territory.

For those works of the apostolate which Religious are to undertake, bishops or episcopal conferences, religious superiors or conferences of major religious superiors should take action only after mutual consultations.

6. ) In order to foster harmonious and fruitful mutual relations between bishops and religious, at stated times and as often as it is deemed opportune, bishops and religious superiors should meet to discuss those affairs which pertain to the apostolate in their territory.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **CONCERNING BISHOPS COOPERATING FOR THE COMMON GOOD OF MANY CHURCHES**

## **I. Synods, Councils and especially Episcopal Conferences**

36. From the very first centuries of the Church bishops, as rulers of individual churches, were deeply moved by the communion of fraternal charity and zeal for the universal mission entrusted to the Apostles. And so they pooled their abilities and their wills for the common good and for the welfare of the individual churches. Thus came into being synods, provincial councils and plenary councils in which bishops established for various churches the way to be followed in teaching the truths of faith and ordering ecclesiastical discipline.

This sacred ecumenical synod earnestly desires that the venerable institution of synods and councils flourish with fresh vigor. In such a way faith will be deepened and discipline preserved more fittingly and efficaciously in the various churches, as the needs of the times require.

37. In these days especially bishops frequently are unable to fulfill their office effectively and fruitfully unless they develop a common effort involving constant growth in harmony and closeness of ties with other bishops. Episcopal conferences already established in many nations-have furnished outstanding proofs of a more fruitful apostolate. Therefore, this sacred synod considers it to be supremely fitting that everywhere bishops belonging to the same nation or region form an association which would meet at fixed times. Thus, when the insights of prudence and experience have been shared and views exchanged, there will emerge a holy union of energies in the service of the common good of the churches.

Wherefore, this sacred synod decrees the following concerning episcopal conferences:

38. 1.) An episcopal conference is, as it were, a council in which the bishops of a given nation or territory jointly exercise their pastoral office to promote the greater good which the Church offers mankind, especially through the forms and methods of the apostolate fittingly adapted to the circumstances of the age.

2.) Members of the episcopal conference are all local Ordinaries of every rite - excluding vicar generals-and coadjutors, auxiliaries and other titular bishops who perform a special work entrusted to them by the Apostolic See or the episcopal conferences. Other titular bishops, legates of the Roman pontiff, because of their exceptional office in the territory are not de iure members of the conferences. Local Ordinaries and coadjutors hold a deliberative vote. Auxiliaries and other bishops who have a right to attend the conference will hold either a deliberative or a consultative vote, as the statutes of the conference determine.

3.) Each episcopal conference is to draft its own statutes for recognition by the Apostolic See. In these statutes, among other things, offices should be established which will aid in achieving its purpose more efficaciously, for

example, a permanent board of bishops, episcopal commissions and a general secretariat.

4.) Decisions of the episcopal conference, provided they have been approved legitimately and by the votes of at least two-thirds of the prelates who have a deliberative vote in the conference, and have been recognized by the Apostolic See, are to have juridically binding force only in those cases prescribed by the common law or determined by a special mandate of the Apostolic See, given either spontaneously or in response to a petition of the conference itself.

5.) Wherever special circumstances require and with the approbation of the Apostolic See, bishops of many nations can establish a single conference.

Communications between episcopal conferences of different nations should be especially encouraged in order to promote and safeguard the common good.

6.) It is highly recommended that the prelates of the Oriental Churches, promoting the discipline of their own churches in synods and efficaciously fostering works for the good of religion, should take into account also the common good of the whole territory where many churches of different rites exist. They should exchange views at inter-ritual meetings in keeping with norms to be given by the competent authority.

## **II. The. Boundaries of Ecclesiastical Provinces and the Erection of Ecclesiastical Regions**

39. The good of souls requires fitting boundaries not only for dioceses but also for ecclesiastical provinces; indeed it sometimes counsels the establishment of new ecclesiastical regions. Thus the needs of the apostolate will be better met in keeping with social and local circumstances. Thus, too, the relationships of the bishops with each other and with their metropolitans, and with other bishops of the same nation and even between bishops and civil authorities will be rendered easier and more fruitful.

40. Therefore, in order to accomplish these aims this sacred synod decrees as follows:

1. ) The boundaries of ecclesiastical provinces are to be submitted to an early review and the rights and privileges of metropolitans are to be defined by new and suitable norms.
2. ) As a general rule all dioceses and other territorial divisions that are by law equivalent to dioceses should be attached to an ecclesiastical province. Therefore dioceses which are now directly subject to the Apostolic See and which are not united to any other are either to be brought together to form a new ecclesiastical province, if that be possible, or else attached to that province which is nearer or more convenient. They

are to be made subject to the metropolitan jurisdiction of the bishop, in keeping with the norms of the common law.

3. ) Wherever advantageous, ecclesiastical provinces should be grouped into ecclesiastical regions for the structure of which juridical provision is to be made.

41. It is fitting that the competent episcopal conferences examine the question of boundaries of such provinces and the establishment of regions in keeping with the norms given with respect to diocesan boundaries in numbers 23-24. They are then to submit their suggestions and desires to the Apostolic See.

### **III. Bishops Having an Inter-Diocesan Office**

42. Since pastoral needs require more and more that some pastoral undertakings be directed and carried forward as joint projects, it is fitting that certain offices be created for the service of all or many dioceses of a determined region or nation. These offices can be filled by bishops.

This sacred synod recommends that between the prelates or bishops serving in these offices and the diocesan bishops and the episcopal conferences, there exist always fraternal association and harmonious cooperation in the expression of pastoral concern.

These relationships should also be clearly defined by common law.

43. Since, because of the unique conditions of their way of life, the spiritual care of military personnel requires special consideration, there should be established in every nation, if possible, a military vicariate. Both the military vicar and the chaplains should devote themselves unsparingly to this difficult work in complete cooperation with the diocesan bishops.(1)

Diocesan bishops should release to the military vicar a sufficient number of priests who are qualified for this serious work. At the same time they should promote all endeavors which will improve the spiritual welfare of military personnel.(2)

### **GENERAL DIRECTIVE**

44. This sacred synod prescribes that in the revision of the code of canon law suitable laws be drawn up in keeping with the principles stated in this decree. Due consideration should also be given the observations made by the commissions and the council Fathers.

This sacred synod also prescribes that general directories be prepared treating of the care of souls for the use of both bishops and pastors. Thus they will be

provided with certain methods which will help them to discharge their own pastoral office with greater ease and effectiveness.

There should be prepared also a particular directory concerning the pastoral care of special groups of the faithful as the different circumstances of individual nations or regions require. Another directory should be composed concerning the catechetical instruction of the Christian people; this directory will consider the fundamental principles of such instruction, its disposition and the composition of books on the subject. In preparing these directories, special attention should be given to the views which have been expressed both by the commissions and the council Fathers.

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## NOTES

### Preface

1. cf. Matt. 1:21.

2. cf. John 20:21.

3. cf. First Vatican Council, fourth session, part 1 of Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ, c. 3, Denz. 1828 (3061).

4. cf. First Vatican Council, fourth session, Introduction to Dogmatic Constitution on the Church of Christ, Denz. 1821 (3050).

5. cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, chap. 3, nos. 21, 24 and 25: A.A.S. 57 (1965) pp. 24-25, 29-31.

6. cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, chap. 3, no. 21: A.A.S. 57 (1965) pp. 24-25.

7. cf. John XXIII's apostolic constitution, *Humanae Salutis*, Dec. 25, 1961: A.A.S. 54 (1962) p. 6.

### Chapter I

1. cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, chap. 3, no. 22: A.A.S. 57 (1965) pp. 25-27.

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*

4. *ibid.*

5. cf. Paul VI's *motu proprio*, *Apostolica Sollicitudo*, Sept. 15, 1965.

6. cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, chap. 3, no. 23: A.A.S. 57 (1965) pp. 27-28.

7. cf. Pius XII's encyclical letter, *Fidei Donum*, April 21, 1957: A.A.S. 49 (1957) p. 27 ff.; also cf. Benedict XV's apostolic letter, *Maximum Illud*, Nov. 30, 1919: A.A.S. 11 (1919) p. 440; Pius XI's encyclical letter, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, Feb. 28, 1926: A.A.S. 18 (1926) p.68.

8. cf. Paul VI's allocution to the cardinals, prelates and various officials of the Roman curia, Sept. 21, 1963: A.A.S. 55 (1963) p. 793 ff.

## Chapter II

1. cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches, Nov. 21, 1964, nos. 7-11 A.A.S. 57 (1965) p. 29 ff.

2. cf. Council of Trent, fifth session, Decree De Reform., c. 2, Mansi 33, 30: 24th session, Decree De Reform., c. Mansi 33, 159 [cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. chap. 3, no. 25: A.A.S. 57 (1965) p. 29 ff.]

3. cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, chap. 3, no. 25: A.A.S. 57 (1965) pp. 29-31.

4. cf. John XXIII's encyclical letter, *Pacem in Terris*, April 11, 1963, passim: A.A.S. 55 (1963) pp. 257-304.

5. cf. Paul VI's encyclical letter, *Ecclesiam Suam*, April 6, 1964: A.A.S. 56 (1964) p. 639.

6. cf. Paul VI's encyclical letter, *Ecclesiam Suam*, April 6, 1964: A.A.S. 56 (1964) pp. 644-645.

7. cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on Communications Media, Dec. 4, 1963: A.A.S. 56 (1964) pp. 145-153.

8. cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Dec. 4, 1963: A.A.S. 56 (1964) p. 97 ff; Paul VI's motu proprio, *Sacram Liturgiam*, Jan. 25, 1964: A.A.S. 56 (1964) p. 139 ff.

9. Pius XII's encyclical letter, *Mediator Dei*, Nov. 20, 1947: A.A.S. 39 (1947) p. 97 ff.; Paul VI's encyclical letter, *Mysterium Fidei*, Sept. 3, 1965.

10. cf. Acts 1:14 and 2:46.

11. cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, chap. 6, nos. 44 and 45: A.A.S. 57 (1965) pp. 50-52.

12. cf. Luke 22:26-27.

13. cf. John 15:15.

14. cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism, Nov. 21 1964: A.A.S. 57 (1965) pp. 90-107.

15. cf. St. Pius X's motu proprio, *Iampridem*, March 19, 1914: A.A.S. 6 (1914) p. 174 ff.; Pius XII's apostolic constitution, *Exul Familia*, Aug. 1, 1952: A.A.S. 54 (1952) p. 652 ff.; *Leges Operis Apostolatus Maris*, compiled under the authority of Pius XII Nov. 21, 1957: A.A.S. 50 (1958) p. 375 ff.

16. cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches, Nov. 21, 1964, no. 4: A.A.S. 57 (1965) p. 77.

17. cf. John 13:35.

18. cf. Pius XII's allocution of Dec. 8, 1950: A.A.S. 43 (1951) p. 28; also cf. Paul VI's allocution of May 23, 1964: A.A.S. 56 (1964) p. 571.

19. cf. Leo XIII's apostolic constitution, *Romanos Pontifices*, May 8, 1881: *Acta Leonis XIII*, vol. 2, 1882, p. 234.

20. cf. Paul VI's allocution of May 23, 1964: A.A.S. 56 (1965) pp. 570-571.

21. cf. Pius XII's allocution of Dec. 8, 1950, 1. c.

### CHAPTER III

1. cf. Consistorial Congregation's Instruction to Military Ordinariates, April 23, 1951: A.A.S. 43 (1951) pp. 562-565; Formula Regarding the Conferring of the Status of Military Ordinariates, Oct. 20, 1956: A.A.S. 49 (1957) pp. 150-163; Decree on Ad Limina Visits of Military Ordinariates, Feb. 28, 1959: A.A.S. 51 (1959) pp. 272-274; Decree on the Granting of Faculties for Confessions to Military Chaplains, Nov. 27, 1960: A.A.S. 53 (1961) pp. 49-50. Also cf. Congregation of Religious' Instruction on Religious Military Chaplains, Feb. 2, 1955: A.A.S. 47 (1955) pp. 93-97.

2. cf. Consistorial Congregation's letter to the cardinals, archbishops and bishops of Spanish-speaking nations, June 27, 1951: A.A.S. 43 (1951) p. 566.

# DECREE ON ECUMENISM UNITATIS REDINTEGRATIO

## INTRODUCTION

1. The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns of the Second Vatican Council. Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only. However, many Christian communions present themselves to men as the true inheritors of Jesus Christ; all indeed profess to be followers of the Lord but differ in mind and go their different ways, as if Christ Himself were divided.(1) Such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature.

But the Lord of Ages wisely and patiently follows out the plan of grace on our behalf, sinners that we are. In recent times more than ever before, He has been rousing divided Christians to remorse over their divisions and to a longing for unity. Everywhere large numbers have felt the impulse of this grace, and among our separated brethren also there increases from day to day the movement, fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, for the restoration of unity among all Christians. This movement toward unity is called "ecumenical." Those belong to it who invoke the Triune God and confess Jesus as Lord and Savior, doing this not merely as individuals but also as corporate bodies. For almost everyone regards the body in which he has heard the Gospel as his Church and indeed, God's Church. All however, though in different ways, long for the one visible Church of God, a Church truly universal and set forth into the world that the world may be converted to the Gospel and so be saved, to the glory of God.

The Sacred Council gladly notes all this. It has already declared its teaching on the Church, and now, moved by a desire for the restoration of unity among all the followers of Christ, it wishes to set before all Catholics the ways and means by which they too can respond to this grace and to this divine call.

## CHAPTER I

### CATHOLIC PRINCIPLES ON ECUMENISM

2. What has revealed the love of God among us is that the Father has sent into the world His only-begotten Son, so that, being made man, He might by His redemption give new life to the entire human race and unify it.(2) Before offering Himself up as a spotless victim upon the altar, Christ prayed to His Father for all who believe in Him: "that they all may be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, so that the world may believe that thou has sent me".(3) In His Church He instituted the wonderful sacrament of the Eucharist by which the unity of His Church is both signified and made a reality. He gave His followers a new commandment to love one another,(4) and



promised the Spirit, their Advocate,(5) who, as Lord and life-giver, should remain with them forever.

After being lifted up on the cross and glorified, the Lord Jesus poured forth His Spirit as He had promised, and through the Spirit He has called and gathered together the people of the New Covenant, who are the Church, into a unity of faith, hope and charity, as the Apostle teaches us: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one Baptism".(6) For "all you who have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ ... for you are all one in Christ Jesus".(7) It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe and pervading and ruling over the Church as a whole, who brings about that wonderful communion of the faithful. He brings them into intimate union with Christ, so that He is the principle of the Church's unity. The distribution of graces and offices is His work too,(8) enriching the Church of Jesus Christ with different functions "in order to equip the saints for the work of service, so as to build up the body of Christ".(9)

In order to establish this His holy Church everywhere in the world till the end of time, Christ entrusted to the College of the Twelve the task of teaching, ruling and sanctifying.(10) Among their number He selected Peter, and after his confession of faith determined that on him He would build His Church. Also to Peter He promised the keys of the kingdom of heaven,(11) and after His profession of love, entrusted all His sheep to him to be confirmed in faith(12) and shepherded in perfect unity.(13) Christ Jesus Himself was forever to remain the chief cornerstone (14) and shepherd of our souls.(15)

Jesus Christ, then, willed that the apostles and their successors -the bishops with Peter's successor at their head-should preach the Gospel faithfully, administer the sacraments, and rule the Church in love. It is thus, under the action of the Holy Spirit, that Christ wills His people to increase, and He perfects His people's fellowship in unity: in their confessing the one faith, celebrating divine worship in common, and keeping the fraternal harmony of the family of God.

The Church, then, is God's only flock; it is like a standard lifted high for the nations to see it:(16) for it serves all mankind through the Gospel of peace(17) as it makes its pilgrim way in hope toward the goal of the fatherland above.(18)

This is the sacred mystery of the unity of the Church, in Christ and through Christ, the Holy Spirit energizing its various functions. It is a mystery that finds its highest exemplar and source in the unity of the Persons of the Trinity: the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit, one God.

3. Even in the beginnings of this one and only Church of God there arose certain rifts,(19) which the Apostle strongly condemned.(20) But in subsequent centuries much more serious dissensions made their appearance and quite large communities came to be separated from full communion with the Catholic

Church-for which, often enough, men of both sides were to blame. The children who are born into these Communities and who grow up believing in Christ cannot be accused of the sin involved in the separation, and the Catholic Church embraces upon them as brothers, with respect and affection. For men who believe in Christ and have been truly baptized are in communion with the Catholic Church even though this communion is imperfect. The differences that exist in varying degrees between them and the Catholic Church-whether in doctrine and sometimes in discipline, or concerning the structure of the Church-do indeed create many obstacles, sometimes serious ones, to full ecclesiastical communion. The ecumenical movement is striving to overcome these obstacles. But even in spite of them it remains true that all who have been justified by faith in Baptism are members of Christ's body,(21) and have a right to be called Christian, and so are correctly accepted as brothers by the children of the Catholic Church.(22)

Moreover, some and even very many of the significant elements and endowments which together go to build up and give life to the Church itself, can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church: the written word of God; the life of grace; faith, hope and charity, with the other interior gifts of the Holy Spirit, and visible elements too. All of these, which come from Christ and lead back to Christ, belong by right to the one Church of Christ.

The brethren divided from us also use many liturgical actions of the Christian religion. These most certainly can truly engender a life of grace in ways that vary according to the condition of each Church or Community. These liturgical actions must be regarded as capable of giving access to the community of salvation.

It follows that the separated Churches(23) and Communities as such, though we believe them to be deficient in some respects, have been by no means deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the Church.

Nevertheless, our separated brethren, whether considered as individuals or as Communities and Churches, are not blessed with that unity which Jesus Christ wished to bestow on all those who through Him were born again into one body, and with Him quickened to newness of life-that unity which the Holy Scriptures and the ancient Tradition of the Church proclaim. For it is only through Christ's Catholic Church, which is "the all-embracing means of salvation," that they can benefit fully from the means of salvation. We believe that Our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant to the apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, in order to establish the one Body of Christ on earth to which all should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the people of God. This people of God, though still in its members liable to sin, is ever growing in Christ during its pilgrimage on earth, and is guided by God's gentle wisdom, according

to His hidden designs, until it shall happily arrive at the fullness of eternal glory in the heavenly Jerusalem.

4. Today, in many parts of the world, under the inspiring grace of the Holy Spirit, many efforts are being made in prayer, word and action to attain that fullness of unity which Jesus Christ desires. The Sacred Council exhorts all the Catholic faithful to recognize the signs of the times and to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism.

The term "ecumenical movement" indicates the initiatives and activities planned and undertaken, according to the various needs of the Church and as opportunities offer, to promote Christian unity. These are: first, every effort to avoid expressions, judgments and actions which do not represent the condition of our separated brethren with truth and fairness and so make mutual relations with them more difficult; then, "dialogue" between competent experts from different Churches and Communities. At these meetings, which are organized in a religious spirit, each explains the teaching of his Communion in greater depth and brings out clearly its distinctive features. In such dialogue, everyone gains a truer knowledge and more just appreciation of the teaching and religious life of both Communions. In addition, the way is prepared for cooperation between them in the duties for the common good of humanity which are demanded by every Christian conscience; and, wherever this is allowed, there is prayer in common. Finally, all are led to examine their own faithfulness to Christ's will for the Church and accordingly to undertake with vigor the task of renewal and reform.

When such actions are undertaken prudently and patiently by the Catholic faithful, with the attentive guidance of their bishops, they promote justice and truth, concord and collaboration, as well as the spirit of brotherly love and unity. This is the way that, when the obstacles to perfect ecclesiastical communion have been gradually overcome, all Christians will at last, in a common celebration of the Eucharist, be gathered into the one and only Church in that unity which Christ bestowed on His Church from the beginning. We believe that this unity subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time.

However, it is evident that, when individuals wish for full Catholic communion, their preparation and reconciliation is an undertaking which of its nature is distinct from ecumenical action. But there is no opposition between the two, since both proceed from the marvelous ways of God.

Catholics, in their ecumenical work, must assuredly be concerned for their separated brethren, praying for them, keeping them informed about the Church, making the first approaches toward them. But their primary duty is to make a careful and honest appraisal of whatever needs to be done or renewed in the Catholic household itself, in order that its life may bear witness more clearly and

faithfully to the teachings and institutions which have come to it from Christ through the Apostles.

For although the Catholic Church has been endowed with all divinely revealed truth and with all means of grace, yet its members fail to live by them with all the fervor that they should, so that the radiance of the Church's image is less clear in the eyes of our separated brethren and of the world at large, and the growth of God's kingdom is delayed. All Catholics must therefore aim at Christian perfection<sup>(24)</sup> and, each according to his station, play his part that the Church may daily be more purified and renewed. For the Church must bear in her own body the humility and dying of Jesus,<sup>(25)</sup> against the day when Christ will present her to Himself in all her glory without spot or wrinkle.<sup>(26)</sup>

All in the Church must preserve unity in essentials. But let all, according to the gifts they have received enjoy a proper freedom, in their various forms of spiritual life and discipline, in their different liturgical rites, and even in their theological elaborations of revealed truth. In all things let charity prevail. If they are true to this course of action, they will be giving ever better expression to the authentic catholicity and apostolicity of the Church.

On the other hand, Catholics must gladly acknowledge and esteem the truly Christian endowments from our common heritage which are to be found among our separated brethren. It is right and salutary to recognize the riches of Christ and virtuous works in the lives of others who are bearing witness to Christ, sometimes even to the shedding of their blood. For God is always wonderful in His works and worthy of all praise.

Nor should we forget that anything wrought by the grace of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of our separated brethren can be a help to our own edification. Whatever is truly Christian is never contrary to what genuinely belongs to the faith; indeed, it can always bring a deeper realization of the mystery of Christ and the Church.

Nevertheless, the divisions among Christians prevent the Church from attaining the fullness of catholicity proper to her, in those of her sons who, though attached to her by Baptism, are yet separated from full communion with her. Furthermore, the Church herself finds it more difficult to express in actual life her full catholicity in all her bearings.

This Sacred Council is gratified to note that the participation by the Catholic faithful in ecumenical work is growing daily. It commends this work to the bishops everywhere in the world to be vigorously stimulated by them and guided with prudence.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THE PRACTICE OF ECUMENISM**

5. The attainment of union is the concern of the whole Church, faithful and shepherds alike. This concern extends to everyone, according to his talent, whether it be exercised in his daily Christian life or in his theological and historical research. This concern itself reveals already to some extent the bond of brotherhood between all Christians and it helps toward that full and perfect unity which God in His kindness wills.

6. Every renewal of the Church(27) is essentially grounded in an increase of fidelity to her own calling. Undoubtedly this is the basis of the movement toward unity.

Christ summons the Church to continual reformation as she sojourns here on earth. The Church is always in need of this, in so far as she is an institution of men here on earth. Thus if, in various times and circumstances, there have been deficiencies in moral conduct or in church discipline, or even in the way that church teaching has been formulated-to be carefully distinguished from the deposit of faith itself-these can and should be set right at the opportune moment.

Church renewal has therefore notable ecumenical importance. Already in various spheres of the Church's life, this renewal is taking place. The Biblical and liturgical movements, the preaching of the word of God and catechetics, the apostolate of the laity, new forms of religious life and the spirituality of married life, and the Church's social teaching and activity-all these should be considered as pledges and signs of the future progress of ecumenism.

7. There can be no ecumenism worthy of the name without a change of heart. For it is from renewal of the inner life of our minds,(28) from self-denial and an unstinted love that desires of unity take their rise and develop in a mature way. We should therefore pray to the Holy Spirit for the grace to be genuinely self-denying, humble. gentle in the service of others, and to have an attitude of brotherly generosity towards them. St. Paul says: "I, therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace".(29) This exhortation is directed especially to those raised to sacred Orders precisely that the work of Christ may be continued. He came among us "not to be served but to serve".(30)

The words of St. John hold good about sins against unity: "If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us".(31) So we humbly beg pardon of God and of our separated brethren, just as we forgive them that trespass against us.

All the faithful should remember that the more effort they make to live holier lives according to the Gospel, the better will they further Christian unity and put it into

practice. For the closer their union with the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, the more deeply and easily will they be able to grow in mutual brotherly love.

8. This change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and merits the name, "spiritual ecumenism."

It is a recognized custom for Catholics to have frequent recourse to that prayer for the unity of the Church which the Saviour Himself on the eve of His death so fervently appealed to His Father: "That they may all be one".(32)

In certain special circumstances, such as the prescribed prayers "for unity," and during ecumenical gatherings, it is allowable, indeed desirable that Catholics should join in prayer with their separated brethren. Such prayers in common are certainly an effective means of obtaining the grace of unity, and they are a true expression of the ties which still bind Catholics to their separated brethren. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them".(33)

Yet worship in common (*communicatio in sacris*) is not to be considered as a means to be used indiscriminately for the restoration of Christian unity. There are two main principles governing the practice of such common worship: first, the bearing witness to the unity of the Church, and second, the sharing in the means of grace. Witness to the unity of the Church very generally forbids common worship to Christians, but the grace to be had from it sometimes commends this practice. The course to be adopted, with due regard to all the circumstances of time, place, and persons, is to be decided by local episcopal authority, unless otherwise provided for by the Bishops' Conference according to its statutes, or by the Holy See.

9. We must get to know the outlook of our separated brethren. To achieve this purpose, study is of necessity required, and this must be pursued with a sense of realism and good will. Catholics, who already have a proper grounding, need to acquire a more adequate understanding of the respective doctrines of our separated brethren, their history, their spiritual and liturgical life, their religious psychology and general background. Most valuable for this purpose are meetings of the two sides-especially for discussion of theological problems-where each can treat with the other on an equal footing-provided that those who take part in them are truly competent and have the approval of the bishops. From such dialogue will emerge still more clearly what the situation of the Catholic Church really is. In this way too the outlook of our separated brethren will be better understood, and our own belief more aptly explained.

10. Sacred theology and other branches of knowledge, especially of an historical nature, must be taught with due regard for the ecumenical point of view, so that they may correspond more exactly with the facts.

It is most important that future shepherds and priests should have mastered a theology that has been carefully worked out in this way and not polemically, especially with regard to those aspects which concern the relations of separated brethren with the Catholic Church.

This importance is the greater because the instruction and spiritual formation of the faithful and of religious depends so largely on the formation which their priests have received.

Moreover, Catholics engaged in missionary work in the same territories as other Christians ought to know, particularly in these times, the problems and the benefits in their apostolate which derive from the ecumenical movement.

11. The way and method in which the Catholic faith is expressed should never become an obstacle to dialogue with our brethren. It is, of course, essential that the doctrine should be clearly presented in its entirety. Nothing is so foreign to the spirit of ecumenism as a false irenicism, in which the purity of Catholic doctrine suffers loss and its genuine and certain meaning is clouded.

At the same time, the Catholic faith must be explained more profoundly and precisely, in such a way and in such terms as our separated brethren can also really understand.

Moreover, in ecumenical dialogue, Catholic theologians standing fast by the teaching of the Church and investigating the divine mysteries with the separated brethren must proceed with love for the truth, with charity, and with humility. When comparing doctrines with one another, they should remember that in Catholic doctrine there exists a "hierarchy" of truths, since they vary in their relation to the fundamental Christian faith. Thus the way will be opened by which through fraternal rivalry all will be stirred to a deeper understanding and a clearer presentation of the unfathomable riches of Christ.(34)

12. Before the whole world let all Christians confess their faith in the triune God, one and three in the incarnate Son of God, our Redeemer and Lord. United in their efforts, and with mutual respect, let them bear witness to our common hope which does not play us false. In these days when cooperation in social matters is so widespread, all men without exception are called to work together, with much greater reason all those who believe in God, but most of all, all Christians in that they bear the name of Christ. Cooperation among Christians vividly expresses the relationship which in fact already unites them, and it sets in clearer relief the features of Christ the Servant. This cooperation, which has already begun in many countries, should be developed more and more, particularly in regions where a social and technical evolution is taking place be it in a just evaluation of the dignity of the human person, the establishment of the blessings of peace, the application of Gospel principles to social life, the advancement of the arts and sciences in a truly Christian spirit, or also in the use of various remedies to

relieve the afflictions of our times such as famine and natural disasters, illiteracy and poverty, housing shortage and the unequal distribution of wealth. All believers in Christ can, through this cooperation, be led to acquire a better knowledge and appreciation of one another, and so pave the way to Christian unity.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **CHURCHES AND ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES SEPARATED FROM THE ROMAN APOSTOLIC SEE**

13. We now turn our attention to the two chief types of division as they affect the seamless robe of Christ.

The first divisions occurred in the East, when the dogmatic formulae of the Councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon were challenged, and later when ecclesiastical communion between the Eastern Patriarchates and the Roman See was dissolved.

Other divisions arose more than four centuries later in the West, stemming from the events which are usually referred to as "The Reformation." As a result, many Communion, national or confessional, were separated from the Roman See. Among those in which Catholic traditions and institutions in part continue to exist, the Anglican Communion occupies a special place.

These various divisions differ greatly from one another not only by reason of their origin, place and time, but especially in the nature and seriousness of questions bearing on faith and the structure of the Church. Therefore, without minimizing the differences between the various Christian bodies, and without overlooking the bonds between them which exist in spite of divisions, this holy Council decides to propose the following considerations for prudent ecumenical action.

#### **I. The Special Consideration of the Eastern Churches**

14. For many centuries the Church of the East and that of the West each followed their separate ways though linked in a brotherly union of faith and sacramental life; the Roman See by common consent acted as guide when disagreements arose between them over matters of faith or discipline. Among other matters of great importance, it is a pleasure for this Council to remind everyone that there flourish in the East many particular or local Churches, among which the Patriarchal Churches hold first place, and of these not a few pride themselves in tracing their origins back to the apostles themselves. Hence a matter of primary concern and care among the Easterns, in their local churches, has been, and still is, to preserve the family ties of common faith and charity which ought to exist between sister Churches.



Similarly it must not be forgotten that from the beginning the Churches of the East have had a treasury from which the Western Church has drawn extensively in liturgical practice, spiritual tradition, and law. Nor must we undervalue the fact that it was the ecumenical councils held in the East that defined the basic dogmas of the Christian faith, on the Trinity, on the Word of God Who took flesh of the Virgin Mary. To preserve this faith these Churches have suffered and still suffer much.

However, the heritage handed down by the apostles was received with differences of form and manner, so that from the earliest times of the Church it was explained variously in different places, owing to diversities of genius and conditions of life. All this, quite apart from external causes, prepared the way for decisions arising also from a lack of charity and mutual understanding.

For this reason the Holy Council urges all, but especially those who intend to devote themselves to the restoration of full communion hoped for between the Churches of the East and the Catholic Church, to give due consideration to this special feature of the origin and growth of the Eastern Churches, and to the character of the relations which obtained between them and the Roman See before separation. They must take full account of all these factors and, where this is done, it will greatly contribute to the dialogue that is looked for.

15. Everyone also knows with what great love the Christians of the East celebrate the sacred liturgy, especially the eucharistic celebration, source of the Church's life and pledge of future glory, in which the faithful, united with their bishop, have access to God the Father through the Son, the Word made flesh, Who suffered and has been glorified, and so, in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, they enter into communion with the most holy Trinity, being made "sharers of the divine nature".(35) Hence, through the celebration of the Holy Eucharist in each of these churches, the Church of God is built up and grows in stature(36) and through concelebration, their communion with one another is made manifest.

In this liturgical worship, the Christians of the East pay high tribute, in beautiful hymns of praise, to Mary ever Virgin, whom the ecumenical Council of Ephesus solemnly proclaimed to be the holy Mother of God, so that Christ might be acknowledged as being truly Son of God and Son of Man, according to the Scriptures. Many also are the saints whose praise they sing, among them the Fathers of the universal Church.

These Churches, although separated from us, yet possess true sacraments and above all, by apostolic succession, the priesthood and the Eucharist, whereby they are linked with us in closest intimacy. Therefore some worship in common (communicatio in sacris), given suitable circumstances and the approval of Church authority, is not only possible but to be encouraged.

Moreover, in the East are found the riches of those spiritual traditions which are given expression especially in monastic life. There from the glorious times of the holy Fathers, monastic spirituality flourished which, then later flowed over into the Western world, and there provided the source from which Latin monastic life took its rise and has drawn fresh vigor ever since. Catholics therefore are earnestly recommended to avail themselves of the spiritual riches of the Eastern Fathers which lift up the whole man to the contemplation of the divine.

The very rich liturgical and spiritual heritage of the Eastern Churches should be known, venerated, preserved and cherished by all. They must recognize that this is of supreme importance for the faithful preservation of the fullness of Christian tradition, and for bringing about reconciliation between Eastern and Western Christians.

16. Already from the earliest times the Eastern Churches followed their own forms of ecclesiastical law and custom, which were sanctioned by the approval of the Fathers of the Church, of synods, and even of ecumenical councils. Far from being an obstacle to the Church's unity, a certain diversity of customs and observances only adds to her splendor, and is of great help in carrying out her mission, as has already been stated. To remove, then, all shadow of doubt, this holy Council solemnly declares that the Churches of the East, while remembering the necessary unity of the whole Church, have the power to govern themselves according to the disciplines proper to them, since these are better suited to the character of their faithful, and more for the good of their souls. The perfect observance of this traditional principle not always indeed carried out in practice, is one of the essential prerequisites for any restoration of unity.

17. What has just been said about the lawful variety that can exist in the Church must also be taken to apply to the differences in theological expression of doctrine. In the study of revelation East and West have followed different methods, and have developed differently their understanding and confession of God's truth. It is hardly surprising, then, if from time to time one tradition has come nearer to a full appreciation of some aspects of a mystery of revelation than the other, or has expressed it to better advantage. In such cases, these various theological expressions are to be considered often as mutually complementary rather than conflicting. Where the authentic theological traditions of the Eastern Church are concerned, we must recognize the admirable way in which they have their roots in Holy Scripture, and how they are nurtured and given expression in the life of the liturgy. They derive their strength too from the living tradition of the apostles and from the works of the Fathers and spiritual writers of the Eastern Churches. Thus they promote the right ordering of Christian life and, indeed, pave the way to a full vision of Christian truth.

All this heritage of spirituality and liturgy, of discipline and theology, in its various traditions, this holy synod declares to belong to the full Catholic and apostolic character of the Church. We thank God that many Eastern children of the

Catholic Church, who preserve this heritage, and wish to express it more faithfully and completely in their lives, are already living in full communion with their brethren who follow the tradition of the West.

18. After taking all these factors into consideration, this Sacred Council solemnly repeats the declaration of previous Councils and Roman Pontiffs, that for the restoration or the maintenance of unity and communion it is necessary "to impose no burden beyond what is essential".(37) It is the Council's urgent desire that, in the various organizations and living activities of the Church, every effort should be made toward the gradual realization of this unity, especially by prayer, and by fraternal dialogue on points of doctrine and the more pressing pastoral problems of our time. Similarly, the Council commends to the shepherds and faithful of the Catholic Church to develop closer relations with those who are no longer living in the East but are far from home, so that friendly collaboration with them may increase, in the spirit of love, to the exclusion of all feeling of rivalry or strife. If this cause is wholeheartedly promoted, the Council hopes that the barrier dividing the Eastern Church and Western Church will be removed, and that at last there may be but the one dwelling, firmly established on Christ Jesus, the cornerstone, who will make both one.(38)

## **II. Separated Churches and Ecclesial Communities in the West**

19. In the great upheaval which began in the West toward the end of the Middle Ages, and in later times too, Churches and ecclesial Communities came to be separated from the Apostolic See of Rome. Yet they have retained a particularly close affinity with the Catholic Church as a result of the long centuries in which all Christendom lived together in ecclesiastical communion.

However, since these Churches and ecclesial Communities, on account of their different origins, and different teachings in matters of doctrine on the spiritual life, vary considerably not only with us, but also among themselves, the task of describing them at all adequately is extremely difficult; and we have no intention of making such an attempt here.

Although the ecumenical movement and the desire for peace with the Catholic Church have not yet taken hold everywhere, it is our hope that ecumenical feeling and mutual esteem may gradually increase among all men.

It must however be admitted that in these Churches and ecclesial Communities there exist important differences from the Catholic Church, not only of an historical, sociological, psychological and cultural character, but especially in the interpretation of revealed truth. To make easier the ecumenical dialogue in spite of these differences, we wish to set down some considerations which can, and indeed should, serve as a basis and encouragement for such dialogue.

20. Our thoughts turn first to those Christians who make open confession of Jesus Christ as God and Lord and as the sole Mediator between God and men, to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We are aware indeed that there exist considerable divergences from the doctrine of the Catholic Church concerning Christ Himself, the Word of God made flesh, the work of redemption, and consequently, concerning the mystery and ministry of the Church, and the role of Mary in the plan of salvation. But we rejoice to see that our separated brethren look to Christ as the source and center of Church unity. Their longing for union with Christ inspires them to seek an ever closer unity, and also to bear witness to their faith among the peoples of the earth.

21. A love and reverence of Sacred Scripture which might be described as devotion, leads our brethren to a constant meditative study of the sacred text. For the Gospel "is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and then to the Greek".(39)

While invoking the Holy Spirit, they seek in these very Scriptures God as it were speaking to them in Christ, Whom the prophets foretold, Who is the Word of God made flesh for us. They contemplate in the Scriptures the life of Christ and what the Divine Master taught and did for our salvation, especially the mysteries of His death and resurrection.

But while the Christians who are separated from us hold the divine authority of the Sacred Books, they differ from ours-some in one way, some in another-regarding the relationship between Scripture and the Church. For, according to Catholic belief, the authentic teaching authority of the Church has a special place in the interpretation and preaching of the written word of God.

But Sacred Scriptures provide for the work of dialogue an instrument of the highest value in the mighty hand of God for the attainment of that unity which the Saviour holds out to all.

22. Whenever the Sacrament of Baptism is duly administered as Our Lord instituted it, and is received with the right dispositions, a person is truly incorporated into the crucified and glorified Christ, and reborn to a sharing of the divine life, as the Apostle says: "You were buried together with Him in Baptism, and in Him also rose again-through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead".(40)

Baptism therefore establishes a sacramental bond of unity which links all who have been reborn by it. But of itself Baptism is only a beginning, an inauguration wholly directed toward the fullness of life in Christ. Baptism, therefore, envisages a complete profession of faith, complete incorporation in the system of salvation such as Christ willed it to be, and finally complete ingrafting in eucharistic communion.

Though the ecclesial Communities which are separated from us lack the fullness of unity with us flowing from Baptism, and though we believe they have not retained the proper reality of the eucharistic mystery in its fullness, especially because of the absence of the sacrament of Orders, nevertheless when they commemorate His death and resurrection in the Lord's Supper, they profess that it signifies life in communion with Christ and look forward to His coming in glory. Therefore the teaching concerning the Lord's Supper, the other sacraments, worship, the ministry of the Church, must be the subject of the dialogue.

23. The daily Christian life of these brethren is nourished by their faith in Christ and strengthened by the grace of Baptism and by hearing the word of God. This shows itself in their private prayer, their meditation on the Bible, in their Christian family life, and in the worship of a community gathered together to praise God. Moreover, their form of worship sometimes displays notable features of the liturgy which they shared with us of old.

Their faith in Christ bears fruit in praise and thanksgiving for the blessings received from the hands of God. Among them, too, is a strong sense of justice and a true charity toward their neighbor. This active faith has been responsible for many organizations for the relief of spiritual and material distress, the furtherance of the education of youth, the improvement of the social conditions of life, and the promotion of peace throughout the world.

While it is true that many Christians understand the moral teaching of the Gospel differently from Catholics, and do not accept the same solutions to the more difficult problems of modern society, nevertheless they share our desire to stand by the words of Christ as the source of Christian virtue, and to obey the command of the Apostle: "And whatever you do, in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God the Father through Him".(41) For that reason an ecumenical dialogue might start with discussion of the application of the Gospel to moral conduct.

24. Now that we have briefly set out the conditions for ecumenical action and the principles by which it is to be directed, we look with confidence to the future. This Sacred Council exhorts the faithful to refrain from superficiality and imprudent zeal, which can hinder real progress toward unity. Their ecumenical action must be fully and sincerely Catholic, that is to say, faithful to the truth which we have received from the apostles and Fathers of the Church, in harmony with the faith which the Catholic Church has always professed, and at the same time directed toward that fullness to which Our Lord wills His Body to grow in the course of time.

It is the urgent wish of this Holy Council that the measures undertaken by the sons of the Catholic Church should develop in conjunction with those of our separated brethren so that no obstacle be put in the ways of divine Providence and no preconceived judgments impair the future inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

The Council moreover professes its awareness that human powers and capacities cannot achieve this holy objective-the reconciling of all Christians in the unity of the one and only Church of Christ. It is because of this that the Council rests all its hope on the prayer of Christ for the Church, on our Father's love for us, and on the power of the Holy Spirit. "And hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us".(42)

Each and all these matters which are set forth in this Decree have been favorably voted on by the Fathers of the Council. And We, by the apostolic authority given Us by Christ and in union with the Fathers, approve, decree and establish them in the Holy Spirit and command that they be promulgated for the glory of God.

*Given in Rome at St. Peter's, November 21, 1964*

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## **NOTES**

1. Cf. 1 Cor. 1, 13.
2. Cf. 1 Jn. 4, 9; Col. 1, 18-20; Jn. 11, S2.
3. Jn. 17, 21.
4. Cf. Jn. 13, 34.
5. Cf. Jn. 16, 7.
6. Eph. 4, 4-5.
7. Gal. 3, 27-28.
8. Cf. 1 Cor. 12, 4-11.
9. Eph. 4, 12.
10. Cf. Mt. 28, 18-20, collato Jn. 20 21-23.
11. Cf. Mt. 16, 18, collato Mt. 18, 18.
12. Cf. Lc. 22, 32.
13. Cf. Jn. 21, 15-18.
14. Cf. Eph. 2, 20.
15. Cf. 1 Petr. 2, 2S; CONC. VATICANUM 1, Sess. IV (1870), Constitutio Pastor Aeternus: Collac 7, 482 a.
16. Cf. Is. 11, 10-12.

17. Cf. Eph. 2, 17-18, collato Mc. 16, 15.
18. Cf. 1 Petr. 1, 3-9.
19. Cf. 1 Cor. 11, 18-19; Gal. 1, 6-9; 1 Jn. 2, 18-19.
20. Cf. 1 Cor. 1, 11 sqq; 11, 22.
21. Cf. CONC. FLORENTINUM, Sess. VIII (1439), Decretum Exultate Deo: Mansi 31, 1055 A.
22. Cf. S. AUGUSTINUS, In Ps. 32, Enarr. 11, 29: PL 36, 299
23. Cf. CONC. LATERANENSE IV (1215) Constitutio IV: Mansi 22, 990; CONC. LUGDUNENSE II (1274), Professio fidei Michaelis Palaeologi: Mansi 24, 71 E; CONC. FLORENTINUM, Sess. VI (1439), Definitio Laetentur caeli: Mansi 31, 1026 E.
24. Cf. Iac. 1, 4; Rom. 12, 1-2.
25. Cf. 2 Cor. 4, 10, Phil. 2, 5-8
26. Cf. Eph. 5, 27.
27. Cf. CONC. LATERANENSE V, Sess. XII (1517), Constitutio Constituti: Mansi 32, 988 B-C.
28. Cf. Eph. 4, 24.
29. Eph. 4, 1-3.
30. Mt. 20, 28.
31. 1 Jn. 1, 10.
32. Jn. 17, 21.
33. Mt. 18, 20.
34. Cf. Eph. 3, 8.
35. 2 Petr. 1, 4.
36. Cf. S. IOANNES CHRYSOSTOMOS, In Ioannem Homelia XLVI, PG 59, 260-262.
37. Acts 15, 28.
38. Cf. CONC. FLORENTINUM, Sess. VI (1439), Definitio Laetentur caeli: Mansi 31 1026 E.
39. Rom. 1, 16.
40. Col. 2, 12; cf. Rom. 6, 4
41. Col. 3, 17.
42. Rom. 5, 5.





DECREE ON THE CATHOLIC CHURCHES  
OF THE EASTERN RITE  
**ORIENTALIUM ECCLESiarUM**

SOLEMNLY PROMULGATED BY HIS HOLINESS  
POPE PAUL VI  
ON NOVEMBER 21, 1964

**PREAMBLE**

1. The Catholic Church holds in high esteem the institutions, liturgical rites, ecclesiastical traditions and the established standards of the Christian life of the Eastern Churches, for in them, distinguished as they are for their venerable antiquity, there remains conspicuous the tradition that has been handed down from the Apostles through the Fathers (1) and that forms part of the divinely revealed and undivided heritage of the universal Church. This Sacred Ecumenical Council, therefore, in its care for the Eastern Churches which bear living witness to this tradition, in order that they may flourish and with new apostolic vigor execute the task entrusted to them, has determined to lay down a number of principles, in addition to those which refer to the universal Church; all else is remitted to the care of the Eastern synods and of the Holy See.

**THE INDIVIDUAL CHURCHES OR RITES**

2. The Holy Catholic Church, which is the Mystical Body of Christ, is made up of the faithful who are organically united in the Holy Spirit by the same faith, the same sacraments and the same government and who, combining together into various groups which are held together by a hierarchy, form separate Churches or Rites. Between these there exists an admirable bond of union, such that the variety within the Church in no way harms its unity; rather it manifests it, for it is the mind of the Catholic Church that each individual Church or Rite should retain its traditions whole and entire and likewise that it should adapt its way of life to the different needs of time and place.(2)

3. These individual Churches, whether of the East or the West, although they differ somewhat among themselves in rite (to use the current phrase), that is, in liturgy, ecclesiastical discipline, and spiritual heritage, are, nevertheless, each as much as the others, entrusted to the pastoral government of the Roman Pontiff, the divinely appointed successor of St. Peter in primacy over the universal Church. They are consequently of equal dignity, so that none of them is superior to the others as regards rite and they enjoy the same rights and are under the same obligations, also in respect of preaching the Gospel to the whole world (cf. Mark 16, 15) under the guidance of the Roman Pontiff.

4. Means should be taken therefore in every part of the world for the protection and advancement of all the individual Churches and, to this end, there should be established parishes and a special hierarchy where the spiritual good of the faithful demands it. The hierarchs of the different individual Churches with jurisdiction in one and the same territory should, by taking common counsel in regular meetings, strive to promote unity of action and with common endeavor to sustain common tasks, so as better to further the good of religion and to safeguard more effectively the ordered way of life of the clergy.(3)

All clerics and those aspiring to sacred Orders should be instructed in the rites and especially in the practical norms that must be applied in interritual questions. The laity, too, should be taught as part of its catechetical education about rites and their rules.

Finally, each and every Catholic, as also the baptized of every non-Catholic church or denomination who enters into the fullness of the Catholic communion, must retain his own rite wherever he is, must cherish it and observe it to the best of his ability (4), without prejudice to the right in special cases of persons, communities or areas, of recourse to the Apostolic See, which, as the supreme judge of interchurch relations, will, acting itself or through other authorities, meet the needs of the occasion in an ecumenical spirit, by the issuance of opportune directives, decrees or rescripts.

### **PRESERVATION OF THE SPIRITUAL HERITAGE OF THE EASTERN CHURCHES**

5. History, tradition and abundant ecclesiastical institutions bear outstanding witness to the great merit owing to the Eastern Churches by the universal Church.(5) The Sacred Council, therefore, not only accords to this ecclesiastical and spiritual heritage the high regard which is its due and rightful praise, but also unhesitatingly looks on it as the heritage of the universal Church. For this reason it solemnly declares that the Churches of the East, as much as those of the West, have a full right and are in duty bound to rule themselves, each in accordance with its own established disciplines, since all these are praiseworthy by reason of their venerable antiquity, more harmonious with the character of their faithful and more suited to the promotion of the good of souls.

6. All members of the Eastern Rite should know and be convinced that they can and should always preserve their legitimate liturgical rite and their established way of life, and that these may not be altered except to obtain for themselves an organic improvement. All these, then, must be observed by the members of the Eastern rites themselves. Besides, they should attain to an ever greater knowledge and a more exact use of them, and, if in their regard they have fallen short owing to contingencies of times and persons, they should take steps to return to their ancestral traditions.

Those who, by reason of their office or apostolic ministries, are in frequent communication with the Eastern Churches or their faithful should be instructed according as their office demands in the knowledge and veneration of the rites, discipline, doctrine, history and character of the members of the Eastern rites.(6) To enhance the efficacy of their apostolate, Religious and associations of the Latin Rite working in Eastern countries or among Eastern faithful are earnestly counseled to found houses or even provinces of the Eastern rite, as far as this can be done.(7)

## **EASTERN RITE PATRIARCHS**

7. The patriarchate, as an institution, has existed in the Church from the earliest times and was recognized by the first ecumenical councils.(8)

By the name Eastern patriarch, is meant the bishop to whom belongs jurisdiction over all bishops, not excepting metropolitans clergy and people of his own territory or rite, in accordance with canon law and without prejudice to the primacy of the Roman Pontiff.(9)

Wherever an hierarch of any rite is appointed outside the territorial bounds of the patriarchate, he remains attached to the hierarchy of the patriarchate of that rite, in accordance with canon law.

8. Though some of the patriarchates of the Eastern Churches are of earlier and some of later date, nonetheless all are equal in respect of patriarchal dignity, without however prejudice to the legitimately established precedence of honor.(10)

9. By the most ancient tradition of the Church the patriarchs of the Eastern Churches are to be accorded special honor, seeing that each is set over his patriarchate as father and head.

This Sacred Council, therefore, determines that their rights and privileges should be re-established in accordance with the ancient tradition of each of the Churches and the decrees of the ecumenical councils.(11)

The rights and privileges in question are those that obtained in the time of union between East and West; though they should be adapted somewhat to modern conditions.

The patriarchs with their synods are the highest authority for all business of the patriarchate, including the right of establishing new eparchies and of nominating bishops of their rite within the territorial bounds of the patriarchate, without prejudice to the inalienable right of the Roman Pontiff to intervene in individual cases.

10. What has been said of patriarchs is valid also, in harmony with the canon law, in respect to major archbishops, who rule the whole of some individual church or rite.(12)

11. Seeing that the patriarchal office in the Eastern Church is a traditional form of government, the Sacred Ecumenical Council ardently desires that new patriarchates should be erected where there is need, to be established either by an ecumenical council or by the Roman Pontiff.(13)

### **THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS**

12. The Sacred Ecumenical Council confirms and approves the ancient discipline of the sacraments existing in the Oriental Churches, as also the ritual practices connected with their celebration and administration and ardently desires that this should be re-established if circumstances warrant it.

13. The established practice in respect of the minister of Confirmation that has obtained from most early times in the Eastern Church should be fully restored. Therefore, priests validly confer this sacrament, using chrism blessed by a patriarch or a bishop.(14)

14. All Eastern Rite priests, either in conjunction with Baptism or separately from it, can confer this sacrament validly on all the faithful of any rite including the Latin; licitly, however, only if the regulations both of the common and the particular law are observed.(15) Priests, also, of Latin Rite, in accordance with the faculties they enjoy in respect of the administration of this sacrament, validly administer it also to the faithful of Eastern Churches; without prejudice to the rite, observing in regard to licitness the regulations both of the common and of the particular law.(16)

15. The faithful are bound to take part on Sundays and feast days in the Divine Liturgy or, according to the regulations or custom of their own rite, in the celebration of the Divine Office.(17) That the faithful may be able more easily to fulfill their obligation, it is laid down that the period of time within which the precept should be observed extends from the Vespers of the vigil to the end of the Sunday or the feast day.(18) The faithful are earnestly exhorted to receive Holy Communion on these days, and indeed more frequently-yes, even daily.(19)

16. Owing to the fact that the faithful of the different individual churches dwell intermingled with each other in the same area or Eastern territory, the faculties for hearing confessions duly and without restriction given to priests of any rite by their own hierarchs extend to the whole territory of him who grants them and also to the places and faithful of any other rite in the same territory, unless the hierarch of the place has expressly excluded this for places of his rite.(20)

17. In order that the ancient established practice of the Sacrament of Orders in the Eastern Churches may flourish again, this Sacred Council ardently desires that the office of the permanent diaconate should, where it has fallen into disuse, be restored.(21) The legislative authorities of each individual church should decide about the subdiaconate and the minor orders and the rights and obligations that attach to them.(22)

18. To obviate invalid marriages when Eastern Catholics marry baptized Eastern non-Catholics and in order to promote fidelity in and the sanctity of marriage, as well as peace within the family, the Sacred Council determines that the canonical "form" for the celebration of these marriages is of obligation only for liceity; for their validity the presence of a sacred minister is sufficient, provided that other prescriptions of law are observed.(23)

### **DIVINE WORSHIP**

19. It belongs only to an ecumenical council or to the Apostolic See to determine, transfer or suppress feast days common to all the Eastern Churches. On the other hand, to determine, transfer or suppress the feast days of any of the individual churches is within the competence not only of the Apostolic See but also of the patriarchal or archiepiscopal synod, due regard being had to the whole area and the other individual churches.(24)

20. Until such time as all Christians are agreed on a fixed day for the celebration of Easter, with a view meantime to promoting unity among the Christians of the same area or nation, it is left to the patriarchs or supreme authorities of a place to come to an agreement by the unanimous consent and combined counsel of those affected to celebrate the feast of Easter on the same Sunday.(25)

21. Individual faithful dwelling outside the area or territory of their own rite may follow completely the established custom of the place where they live as regards the law of the sacred seasons. In families of mixed rite it is permissible to observe this law according to one and the same rite.(26)

22. Eastern clerics and Religious should celebrate in accordance with the prescriptions and traditions of their own established custom the Divine Office, which from ancient times has been held in high honor in all Eastern Churches.(27) The faithful too should follow the example of their forebears and assist devoutly as occasion allows at the Divine Office.

23. It belongs to the patriarch with his synod, or to the supreme authority of each church with the council of the hierarchs, to regulate the use of languages in the sacred liturgical functions and, after reference to the Apostolic See, of approving translations of texts into the vernacular.(28)

### **RELATIONS WITH THE BRETHREN OF THE SEPARATED CHURCHES**

24. The Eastern Churches in communion with the Apostolic See of Rome have a special duty of promoting the unity of all Christians, especially Eastern Christians, in accordance with the principles of the decree, "About Ecumenism," of this Sacred Council, by prayer in the first place, and by the example of their lives, by religious fidelity to the ancient Eastern traditions, by a greater knowledge of each other, by collaboration and a brotherly regard for objects and feelings.(29)

25. If any separated Eastern Christian should, under the guidance of the grace of the Holy Spirit, join himself to the unity of Catholics, no more should be required of him than what a bare profession of the Catholic faith demands. Eastern clerics, seeing that a valid priesthood is preserved among them, are permitted to exercise the Orders they possess on joining the unity of the Catholic Church, in accordance with the regulations established by the competent authority.(30)

26. Common participation in worship (*communicatio in sacris*) which harms the unity of the Church or involves formal acceptance of error or the danger of aberration in the faith, of scandal and indifferentism, is forbidden by divine law.(32) On the other hand, pastoral experience shows clearly that, as regards our Eastern brethren, there should be taken into consideration the different cases of individuals, where neither the unity of the Church is hurt nor are verified the dangers that must be avoided, but where the needs of the salvation of souls and their spiritual good are impelling motives. For that reason the Catholic Church has always adopted and now adopts rather a mild policy, offering to all the means of salvation and an example of charity among Christians, through participation in the sacraments and in other sacred functions and things. With this in mind, "lest because of the harshness of our judgment we be an obstacle to those seeking salvation" (31) and in order more and more to promote union with the Eastern Churches separated from us, the Sacred Council lays down the following policy.

27. Without prejudice to the principles noted earlier, Eastern Christians who are in fact separated in good faith from the Catholic Church, if they ask of their own accord and have the right dispositions, may be admitted to the sacraments of Penance, the Eucharist and the Anointing of the Sick. Further, Catholics may ask for these same sacraments from those non-Catholic ministers whose churches possess valid sacraments, as often as necessity or a genuine spiritual benefit recommends such a course and access to a Catholic priest is physically or morally impossible.(33)

28. Further, given the same principles, common participation by Catholics with their Eastern separated brethren in sacred functions, things and places is allowed for a just cause.(34)

29. This conciliatory policy with regard to "*communicatio in sacris*" (participation in things sacred) with the brethren of the separated Eastern Churches is put into the care and control of the local hierarchs, in order that, by combined counsel

among themselves and, if need be, after consultation also with the hierarchs of the separated churches, they may by timely and effective regulations and norms direct the relations among Christians.

## CONCLUSION

30. The Sacred Council feels great joy in the fruitful zealous collaboration of the Eastern and the Western Catholic Churches and at the same time declares: All these directives of law are laid down in view of the present situation till such time as the Catholic Church and the separated Eastern Churches come together into complete unity.

Meanwhile, however, all Christians, Eastern as well as Western, are earnestly asked to pray to God fervently and assiduously, nay, indeed daily, that, with the aid of the most holy Mother of God, all may become one. Let them pray also that the strength and the consolation of the Holy Spirit may descend copiously upon all those many Christians of whatsoever church they be who endure suffering and deprivations for their unwavering avowal of the name of Christ.

"Love one another with fraternal charity, anticipating one another with honor".  
(Rom.12,10.)

Each and all these matters which are set forth in this decree have been favorably voted on by the Fathers of the Council. And we, by the apostolic authority given us by Christ and in union with the Fathers, approve, decree and establish them in the Holy Spirit and command that they be promulgated for the glory of God.

*Given in Rome at St. Peter's, November 21, 1964*

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## NOTES

(1) Leo XIII, Litt. Ap. Orientalium dignitas, 30 nov. 1894, in Leonis XIII Acta, vol. XIV, pp. 201-202.

(2) S. Leo IX, Litt. In terra pax, an. 1053: Ut enim; Innocentius III, Synodus Lateranensis IV, an. 1215, cap. IV: . Licet Graccos; Litt. Inter quatuor, 2 aug. 1206: Postulasti postmodum; Innocentius IV, Ep. Cum de cetero, 27 aug. 1247; Ep. Sub catholicae, 6 mart. 1254, proem.; Nicolaus III, Instructio Istud est memoriale, 9 oct. 1278; Leo X, Litt. Ap. Accepimus nuper, 18 maii 1521; Paulus III, Litt. Ap. Dudum, 23 dec. 1534; Pius IV, Const. Romanus Pontifex, 16 febr. 1564, 5; Clemens VIII, Const. Magnus Dominus, 23 dec. 1595, 10; Paulus V, Const. Solet circumspicata, 10 dec. 1615, 3; Benedictus XIV, Ep. Enc. Demandatam, 24 dec. 1743, 3; Ep. Enc. Allatae sunt, 26 iun. 1755, 3, 6-19, 32; Pius VI, Litt. Enc. Catholicae communionis, 24 maii 1787; Pius IX, Litt. In suprema, 6 ian. 1848, 3; Litt. Ap. Ecclesiam Christ., 26 nov. 1853; Const. Romani Pontificis, 6 ian. 1862; Leo XIII, Litt. Ap. Praeclara, 20 iun. 1894, n. 7; Litt. Ap. Orientalium dignitas, 30 nov. 1894, proem.; etc.

(3) Pius XII, Motu proprio Cleri sanctitati, 2 iun. 1957, can. 4.

(4) Pius XII, Motu proprio Cleri sanctitati, 2 iun. 1957, can. 8: sine licentia Sedis Apostolicae, sequendo praxim saeculorum praecedentium; item quoad baptizatos acatholicos in can. 11 habetur: ritum quem

maluerint am plecti possunt; in textu proposito disponitur modo positivo observantia ritus pro omnibus et ubique terrarum.

(5) Cfr. Leo XIII, Litt. Ap. Orientalium dignitas, 30 nov. 1894; Ep. Ap. Praeclara gratulationis, 20 iun. 1894, et documenta in nota 2 allata.

(6) Cfr. Benedictus XV, Motu proprio Orientis catholici, 15 oct. 1917, Pius XI, Litt. Enc. Rerum orientalium, 8 sept. 1928, etc.

(7) Praxis Ecclesiae catholicae temporibus Pii XI, Pii XII, Ioannis XXIII motum hunc abunde demonstrat.

(8) Cfr. Synodum Nicaenam I, can. 6; Constantinopolitanam I, can. 2 et 3; Chalcedonensem, can. 28; can. 9; Constantinopolitanam IV can. 17; can. 21; Lateranensem IV can. 5; can. 30; Florentinam, Decr. pro Graecis; etc.

(9) Gfr. Synodum Nicaenam I, can. 6, Constantinopolitanam I, can. 3; Constantinopolitanam IV, can. 17, Pius XII, Motu proprio Cleri sanctitati, can. 216; 2, 1 .

(10) In Synodis Oecumenicis: Nicaena I, can. 6; Constantinopolitana I, can. 3; Constantinopolitana IV, can. 21; Lateranensi IV, can. 5; Florentina, decr. pro Graecis, 6 iul. 1439, 9. Cfr. Pius XII, Motu proprio Cleri sanctitati, 2 iun. 1957, can. 219, etc.

(11) Cfr. supra, nota 8.

(12) Cfr. Synodum Ephesinam, can. 8; Clemens VII, Decret Romanum Pontificem, 23 febr. 1596; Pius VII, Litt. Ap. In universalis Ecclesiae, 22 febr. 1807; Pius XII Motu proprio Cleri sanctitati, 2 iun. 1957, can. 324-327; Syn. Carthaginen., an. 419, can. 17.

(13) Syn. Carthaginen., an. 419, can. 17 et 57; Chalcedonensis, an. 451, can. 12; S. Innocentius I, Litt. Et onus et honor, a. c. 415: Nam quid sciscitaris; S. Nicolaus I, Litt. Ad consulta vestra, 13 nov. 866: A quo autem; Innocentius III, Litt. Rex regum, 25 feb 1204; Leo XII, Const. Ap. Petrus Apostolorum Princeps, 15 aug 1824; Leo XIII, Litt. Ap. Christi Domini, an. 1895; Pius XII, Motu proprio Cleri sanctitati, 2 iun 1957, can. 159.

(14) Cfr. Innocentius IV, Ep Sub catholicae, 6 mart. 1264; 3, n. 4; Syn. Lugdunensis II, an. 1274 (professio fidei Michaelis Palaeologi Gregorio X oblata); Eugenius IV, in Syn. Florentina, Const. Exsultate Deo, 22 nov. 1439, 11; Clemens VIII, Instr. Sanctissimus, 31 aug. 1595; Benedictus XIV. Const. Etsi pastoralis, 26 maii 1742, II, n. 1, III, n. 1, etc.; Synodus Laodicensa, an. 347/381, can. 48; Syn. Sisen. Armenorum, an. 1342; Synodus Libanen. Maronitarum, an. 1736, P. II, Cap. III n. 2, et aliae Synodi particulares.

(15) Cfr. S.C.S. Officii, Instr. (ad Ep. Scephusien.), an. 1783; S.C. de Prop. Fide (pro Coptis), 15 mart. 1790, n. XIII; Decr. 6 oct. 1863, C, a; S.C. pro Eccl. Orient. 1 maii 1948; S.C.S. Officii, resp. 22 apr. 1896 cum litt. 19 maii 1896.

(16) CIC, can. 782, 4; S.C. pra Eccl. Orient., Decretum . de Sacramento Confirmationis administrando etiam fidelibus orientalibus a presbyteris latini ritus, qui hoc indulto gaudeant pro fidelibus sui ritus, 1 maii 1948.

(17) Cfr. Syn. Laodicen., an. 347/381, can. 29; S. Nicephorus CP., cap. 14; Syn. Duinen. Armenorum, an. 719, can. 31; S. Theodorus Studita, sermo 21; S. Nicolaus I, Litt. Ad consulta vestra, 13 nov. 866: In quorum Apostolorum; Nos cupitis; Quod interrogatis; Praeterea consulitis; Si die Dominico; et Synodi particulares.

(18) Novum quid, saltem ubi viget obligatio audiendi S. Liturgiam; ceterum cohaeret diei liturgicae apud Orientales.

(19) Cfr. Canones Apostolorum, 8 et 9; Syn. Antiochena, an. 341, can. 2; Timotheus Alexandrinus, interrogat. 3; Innocentius III, Const. Quia divinae, 4 ian. 1215; et plurimae Synodi particulares Ecclesiarum Orientalium recentiores.



(20) Salva territorialitate iurisdictionis, canon providere intendit, in bonum animarum, pluralitati iurisdictionis in eodem territorio.

(21) Cfr. Syn. Nicaena I, can. 18; Syn. Neocaesariensis, an. 314/325, can. 12; Syn. Sardicensis, an. 343, can. 8; S. Leo M., Litt. Omnium quidem, 13 ian. 444; Syn. Chalcedonensis, can. 6; Syn. Constantinopolitana IV, can. 23, 26; etc.

(22) Subdiaconatus consideratur apud Ecclesias Orientales plures Ordo minor, sed Motu proprio Pii XII, Cleri sanctitati, ei praescribuntur obligationes Ordinum maiorum. Canon proponit ut redeatur ad disciplinam antiquam singularum Ecclesiarum quoad obligationes subdiaconorum, in derogationem iuris communis Cleri sanctitati.

(23) Cfr. Pius XII, Motu proprio Crebrae allatae, 22 febr. 1949, can. 32, 2, n. 5 (facultas patriarcharum dispensandi a forma); Pius XII, Motu proprio Cleri sanctitati, 2 iun. 1957, can. 267 (facultas patriarcharum sanandi in radice); S.C.S. Officii et S.C. pro Eccl. Orient., an. 1957 concedunt facultatem dispensandi a forma et sanandi ob defectum formae (ad quinquennium): extra patriarchatus, Metropolitanis, ceterisque Ordinariis locorum... qui nullum habent Superiorem infra Sanctam Sedem.

(24) Cfr. S. Leo M., Litt. Quod saepissime, 15 apr. 454: Petitionem autem; S. Nicephorus CP., cap. 13; Syn. Sergii Patriarchae 18 sept. 1596; can. 17; Pius VI Litt. Ap. Assueto paterne, 8 apr. 1775; etc.

(25) Cfr. Syn. Vaticana II Const. De Sacra Liturgia, 4 dec. 1963.

(26) Cfr. Clemens VIII, Instr. Sanctissimus, 31 aug. 1595, 6: Si ipsi graeci; S.C.S. Officii, 7 iun. 1673, ad 1 et 3; 13 mart. 1727, ad 1; S.C. de Prop. Fide, Decret. 18 aug. 1913, art. 33; Decret. 14 aug. 1914, art. 27; Decret. 27 mart. 1916, art. 14; S.C. pro Eccl. Orient., Decret. 1 mart. 1929, art. 36; Decret. 4 maii 1930 art. 41.

(27) Cfr. Syn. Laodicensis, 347/381, can. 18; Syn. Mar Issaci Chaldaeorum, an. 410, can. 15; S. Nerses Glaiensis Armenorum, an. 1166; Innocentius IV Ep. Sub catholicae, 6 mart. 1254, 8; Benedictus XIV, Const. Etsi pastoralis 26 maii 1742, 7, n. 5; Inst. Eo quamvis tempore, 4 maii 1745 42 ss.; et Synodi particulares recentiores: Armenorum (1911) Coptorum (1898), Maronitarum (1736), Rumenuorum (1872), Ruthenorum (1891), Syrorum (1888).

(28) Ex traditione orientali.

(29) Ex tenore Bullarum unionis singularum Ecclesiarum orientalium catholicarum.

(30) Obligatio synodalis quoad fratres seiunctos orientales et quoad omnes Ordines cuiuscumque gradus tum iuris divini tum ecclesiastici.

(31) Haec doctrina valet etiam in Ecclesiis seiunctis.

(32) S. Basilius M., Epistula canonica ad Amphilochium, PG. 32, 669 B.

(33) Fundamentum mitigationis consideratur: 1) validitas sacramentorum; 2) bona fides et dispositio; 3) necessitas salutis aeternae; 4) absentia sacerdotis proprii; 5) exclusio periculis vitandis et formalis adhaesionis errori.

(34) Agitur de s. d. communicatione in sacris extrasacramentali, Concilium est quod mitigationem concedit, servatis servandis.

DECREE ON THE MEDIA OF SOCIAL COMMUNICATIONS  
**INTER MIRIFICA**

SOLEMNLY PROMULGATED BY  
HIS HOLINESS POPE PAUL VI  
ON DECEMBER 4, 1963

**INTRODUCTION**

1. Among the wonderful technological discoveries which men of talent, especially in the present era, have made with God's help, the Church welcomes and promotes with special interest those which have a most direct relation to men's minds and which have uncovered new avenues of communicating most readily news, views and teachings of every sort. The most important of these inventions are those media which, such as the press, movies, radio, television and the like, can, of their very nature, reach and influence, not only individuals, but the very masses and the whole of human society, and thus can rightly be called the media of social communication.

2. The Church recognizes that these media, if properly utilized, can be of great service to mankind, since they greatly contribute to men's entertainment and instruction as well as to the spread and support of the Kingdom of God. The Church recognizes, too, that men can employ these media contrary to the plan of the Creator and to their own loss. Indeed, the Church experiences maternal grief at the harm all too often done to society by their evil use. Hence, this sacred Synod, attentive to the watchful concern manifested by the Supreme Pontiffs and Bishops in a matter of such great importance, judges it to be its duty to treat of the principal questions linked with the media of social communication. It trusts, moreover, that the teaching and regulations it thus sets forth will serve to promote, not only the eternal welfare of Christians, but also the progress of all mankind.

**CHAPTER I**

**ON THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH**

3. The Catholic Church, since it was founded by Christ our Lord to bear salvation to all men and thus is obliged to preach the Gospel, considers it one of its duties to announce the Good News of salvation also with the help of the media of social communication and to instruct men in their proper use.

It is, therefore, an inherent right of the Church to have at its disposal and to employ any of these media insofar as they are necessary or useful for the instruction of Christians and all its efforts for the welfare of souls. It is the duty of Pastors to instruct and guide the faithful so that they, with the help of these same media, may further the salvation and perfection of themselves and of the entire

human family. In addition, the laity especially must strive to instill a human and Christian spirit into these media, so that they may fully measure up to the great expectations of mankind and to God's design.

4. For the proper use of these media it is most necessary that all who employ them be acquainted with the norms of morality and conscientiously put them into practice in this area. They must look, then, to the nature of what is communicated, given the special character of each of these media. At the same time they must take into consideration the entire situation or circumstances, namely, the persons, place, time and other conditions under which communication takes place and which can affect or totally change its propriety. Among these circumstances to be considered is the precise manner in which a given medium achieves its effect. For its influence can be so great that men, especially if they are unprepared, can scarcely become aware of it, govern its impact, or, if necessary, reject it.

5. It is, however, especially necessary that all parties concerned should adopt for themselves a proper moral outlook on the use of these media, especially with respect to certain questions that have been vigorously aired in our day.

The first question has to do with "information," as it is called, or the search for and reporting of the news. Now clearly this has become most useful and very often necessary for the progress of contemporary society and for achieving closer links among men. The prompt publication of affairs and events provides every individual with a fuller, continuing acquaintance with them, and thus all can contribute more effectively to the common good and more readily promote and advance the welfare of the entire civil society. Therefore, in society men have a right to information, in accord with the circumstances in each case, about matters concerning individuals or the community. The proper exercise of this right demands, however, that the news itself that is communicated should always be true and complete, within the bounds of justice and charity. In addition, the manner in which the news is communicated should be proper and decent. This means that in both the search for news and in reporting it, there must be full respect for the laws of morality and for the legitimate rights and dignity of the individual. For not all knowledge is helpful, but "it is charity that edifies."<sup>(1)</sup>

6. The second question deals with the relationship between the rights, as they are called, of art and the norms of morality. Since the mounting controversies in this area frequently take their rise from false teachings about ethics and esthetics, the Council proclaims that all must hold to the absolute primacy of the objective moral order, that is, this order by itself surpasses and fittingly coordinates all other spheres of human affairs—the arts not excepted—even though they be endowed with notable dignity. For man who is endowed by God with the gift of reason and summoned to pursue a lofty destiny, is alone affected by the moral order in his entire being. And likewise, if man resolutely and faithfully

upholds this order, he will be brought to the attainment of complete perfection and happiness.

7. Finally, the narration, description or portrayal of moral evil, even through the media of social communication, can indeed serve to bring about a deeper knowledge and study of humanity and, with the aid of appropriately heightened dramatic effects, can reveal and glorify the grand dimensions of truth and goodness. Nevertheless, such presentations ought always to be subject to moral restraint, lest they work to the harm rather than the benefit of souls, particularly when there is question of treating matters which deserve reverent handling or which, given the baneful effect of original sin in men, could quite readily arouse base desires in them.

8. Since public opinion exercises the greatest power and authority today in every sphere of life, both private and public, every member of society must fulfill the demands of justice and charity in this area. As a result, all must strive, through these media as well, to form and spread sound public opinion.

9. All who, of their own free choice, make use of these media of communications as readers, viewers or listeners have special obligations. For a proper choice demands that they fully favor those presentations that are outstanding for their moral goodness, their knowledge and their artistic or technical merit. They ought, however, to void those that may be a cause or occasion of spiritual harm to themselves, or that can lead others into danger through base example, or that hinder desirable presentations and promote those that are evil. To patronize such presentations, in most instances, would merely reward those who use these media only for profit.

In order that those who make use of these media may fulfill the moral code, they ought not to neglect to inform themselves in time about judgments passed by authorities competent in these matters. They ought also to follow such judgments according to the norms of an upright conscience. So that they may more easily resist improper inducements and rather encourage those that are desirable, let them take care to guide and instruct their consciences with suitable aids.

10. Those who make use of the media of communications, especially the young, should take steps to accustom themselves to moderation and self-control in their regard. They should, moreover, endeavor to deepen their understanding of what they see, hear or read. They should discuss these matters with their teachers and experts, and learn to pass sound judgements on them. Parents should remember that they have a most serious duty to guard carefully lest shows, publications and other things of this sort, which may be morally harmful, enter their homes or affect their children under other circumstances.

11. The principle moral responsibility for the proper use of the media of social communication falls on newsmen, writers, actors, designers, producers,

displayers, distributors, operators and sellers, as well as critic and all others who play any part in the production and transmission of mass presentations. It is quite evident what gravely important responsibilities they have in the present day when they are in a position to lead the human race to good or to evil by informing or arousing mankind.

Thus, they must adjust their economic, political or artistic and technical aspects so as never to oppose the common good. For the purpose of better achieving this goal, they are to be commended when they join professional associations, which-even under a code, if necessary, of sound moral practice-oblige their members to show respect for morality in the duties and tasks of their craft.

They ought always to be mindful, however, that a great many of their readers and audiences are young people, who need a press and entertainment that offer them decent amusement and cultural uplift. In addition, they should see to it that communications or presentations concerning religious matters are entrusted to worthy and experienced hands and are carried out with fitting reverence.

12. The public authority, in these matters, is bound by special responsibilities in view of the common good, to which these media are ordered. The same authority has, in virtue of its office, the duty of protecting and safeguarding true and just freedom of information, a freedom that is totally necessary for the welfare of contemporary society, especially when it is a question of freedom of the press. It ought also to encourage spiritual values, culture and the fine arts and guarantee the rights of those who wish to use the media. Moreover, public authority has the duty of helping those projects which, though they are certainly most beneficial for young people, cannot otherwise be undertaken.

Lastly, the same public authority, which legitimately concerns itself with the health of the citizenry, is obliged, through the promulgation and careful enforcement of laws, to exercise a fitting and careful watch lest grave damage befall public morals and the welfare of society through the base use of these media. Such vigilance in no wise restricts the freedom of individuals or groups, especially where there is a lack of adequate precaution on the part of those who are professionally engaged in using these media.

Special care should be taken to safeguard young people from printed matter and performances which may be harmful at their age.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **ON THE PASTORAL ACTIVITY OF THE CHURCH**

13. All the children of the Church should join, without delay and with the greatest effort in a common work to make effective use of the media of social communication in various apostolic endeavors, as circumstances and conditions

demand. They should anticipate harmful developments, especially in regions where more urgent efforts to advance morality and religion are needed.

Pastors should hasten, therefore, to fulfill their duty in this respect, one which is intimately linked with their ordinary preaching responsibility. The laity, too, who have something to do with the use of these media, should endeavor to bear witness to Christ, first of all by carrying out their individual duties or office expertly and with an apostolic spirit, and, further, by being of direct help in the pastoral activity of the Church-to the best of their ability-through their technical, economic, cultural and artistic talents.

14. First, a good press should be fostered. To instill a fully Christian spirit into readers, a truly Catholic press should be set up and encouraged. Such a press-whether immediately fostered and directed by ecclesiastical authorities or by Catholic laymen-should be edited with the clear purpose of forming, supporting and advancing public opinion in accord with natural law and Catholic teaching and precepts. It should disseminate and properly explain news concerning the life of the Church. Moreover, the faithful ought to be advised of the necessity both to spread and read the Catholic press to formulate Christian judgments for themselves on all events.

The production and showing of films that have value as decent entertainment, humane culture or art, especially when they are designed for young people, ought to be encouraged and assured by every effective means. This can be done particularly by supporting and joining in projects and enterprises for the production and distribution of decent films, by encouraging worthwhile films through critical approval and awards, by patronizing or jointly sponsoring theaters operated by Catholic and responsible managers.

Similarly, effective support should be given to good radio and television programs, above all those that are suitable for families. Catholic programs should be promoted, in which listeners and viewers can be brought to share in the life of the Church and learn religious truths. An effort should also be made, where it may be necessary, to set up Catholic stations. In such instances, however, care must be taken that their programs are outstanding for their standards of excellence and achievement.

In addition, there should be an effort to see that the noble and ancient art of the drama, which now is diffused everywhere by the media of social communication, serves the cultural and moral betterment of audiences.

15. To provide for the needs just set forth, priests, religious and laymen who are equipped with the proper skills for adapting these media to the objectives of the apostolate should be appointed promptly.

Importantly, laymen ought to be afforded technical, doctrinal and moral training. For this purpose, the number of school faculties and institutes should be increased, where newsmen, writers for screen, radio and television and all other interested parties can obtain a sound training that is imbued with the Christian spirit, especially with respect to the social teaching of the Church.

Finally, care must be taken to prepare literary, film, radio, television and other critics, who will be equipped with the best skills in their own crafts and trained and encouraged to render judgments which always put moral issues in their proper light.

16. Since the proper use of the media of social communications which are available to audiences of different cultural backgrounds and ages, calls for instruction proper to their needs, programs which are suitable for the purpose- especially where they are designed for young people-should be encouraged, increased in numbers and organized according to Christian moral principles. This should be done in Catholic schools at every level, in seminaries and in lay apostolate groups. To speed this along catechetical manuals should present and explain Catholic teaching and regulations on this matter.

17. It is quite unbecoming for the Church's children idly to permit the message of salvation to be thwarted or impeded by the technical delays or expenses, however vast, which are encountered by the very nature of these media. Therefore, this sacred Synod advises them of the obligation they have to maintain and assist Catholic newspapers, periodicals and film projects, radio and television programs and stations, whose principal objective is to spread and defend the truth and foster Christian influence in human society. At the same time, the Synod earnestly invites those organizations and individuals who possess financial and technical ability to support these media freely and generously with their resources and their skills, inasmuch as they contribute to genuine culture and the apostolate.

18. Moreover, that the varied apostolates of the Church with respect to the media of social communication may be strengthened effectively, each year in every diocese of the world, by the determination of the Bishops, there should be celebrated a day on which the faithful are instructed in their responsibilities in this regard. They should be invited to pray and contribute funds for this cause. Such funds are to be expended exclusively on the promotion, maintenance and development of institutes and undertakings of the Church in this area, according to the needs of the whole Catholic world.

19. In fulfilling his supreme pastoral charge with respect to the media of social communication, the Sovereign Pontiff has at hand a special office of the Holy See. Moreover, the Fathers of the Council, freely acceding to the wish of the "Secretariat for the Supervision of Publications and Entertainment," reverently request that the Sovereign Pontiff extend the duties and competence of this

office to include all media of social communication, including the press, and that experts from various countries be named to it, including laymen.

20. It will be the task of the Bishops, however, to watch over such works and undertakings in their own dioceses, to promote them and, as far as the public apostolate is concerned, to guide them, not excluding those that are under the direction of exempt religious.

21. Since an effective apostolate on a national scale calls for unity of planning and resources, this sacred Synod decrees and orders that national offices for affairs of the press, films, radio and television be established everywhere and given every aid. It will be the special task of these offices to see to it that the consciences of the faithful are properly instructed with respect to these media. Likewise they should foster and guide whatever is done by Catholics in these areas.

In each country the direction of such offices should be entrusted to a special committee of Bishops, or to a single Bishop. Moreover, laymen who are experts in Catholic teaching and in these arts or techniques should have a role in these offices.

22. Since the effectiveness of these media reaches beyond national boundaries and has an impact on individual members of the whole human family, national offices should co-operate among themselves on an international plane. The offices spoken of in Number 21 should assiduously work together with their own international Catholic associations. These Catholic international associations are legitimately approved by the Holy See alone and depend on it.

## **APPENDICES**

23. So that the general principles and norms of this sacred Synod with respect to the media of social communications may be put into effect, by the express will of the Council, the office of the Holy See mentioned in Number 19 should undertake, with the assistance of experts from various countries, to issue a pastoral instruction.

24. As for the rest, this sacred Synod is confident that its issuance of these instructions and norms will be gladly accepted and religiously kept by all the Church's children. By using these helps they will experience no harm and, like salt and light, they will give savor to the earth and brighten the world. Moreover, the Synod invites all men of good will, especially those who have charge of these media, to strive to turn them solely to the good of society, whose fate depends more and more on their proper use. Thus, as was the case with ancient works of art, the name of the Lord may be glorified by these new discoveries in accordance with those words of the Apostle: "Jesus Christ, yesterday and today, and the same forever."<sup>(2)</sup>



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## **NOTES**

(1) Corinthians 8:1.

(2) Hebrews 13:8.