

**THE PRIEST  
AND THE THIRD CHRISTIAN MILLENNIUM  
TEACHER OF THE WORD,  
MINISTER OF THE SACRAMENTS  
AND LEADER OF THE COMMUNITY**

*Vatican City, 19 March 1999  
Solemnity of St. Joseph  
Patron of the universal Church*

*Your Eminence,  
Your Excellency,*

The entire Church prepares to enter the third millennium since the Incarnation of the Word in a spirit of penance, and, by the continued Apostolic solicitude of the Successor of Peter, is stimulated to an ever more lively recollection of the will of her divine Founder.

At its Plenary Assembly of 13-15 October 1998, the Congregation for the Clergy, in a spirit of intimate communion with that objective, decided to entrust the enclosed circular letter to every Ordinary, for transmission to their priests. On that occasion, the Holy Father said. "The prospective of New Evangelization reaches a high point in commitment to the Great Jubilee. Here, providentially, we retrace the paths laid out in *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, in the *Directories for Priests and Permanent Deacons*, in the *Instruction on the collaboration of the lay faithful with the pastoral ministry of priests* and in the *fruits of this Plenaria*. With a convinced universal application of these documents, what is expressed by the now familiar term "new evangelization" can be more easily translated into effective reality".

Bearing in mind actual circumstances, this document is designed to lead individual priests as well as presbyterates to an examination of conscience, remembering that, in concrete terms, love means fidelity. This document reiterates the teachings of the Council, and of the Popes and it refers to the other documents already mentioned by the Holy Father. These documents are fundamental for an authentic response to the demands of our time and for an effective mission of evangelization.

The questionnaires at the end of each section are intended as an aid to discerning everyday reality in the light of the teaching contained in the aforementioned documents. It is not intended that any replies should be sent to this Congregation. Priests may use them in whatever manner they find most helpful for them.

We are aware that no missionary activity can be realistically undertaken without the enthusiastic support of priests, who are the first and most valued collaborators of the Order of Bishops. This letter is also intended as a help for priests attending study days, retreats, spiritual exercises and priestly meetings being promoted in each ecclesiastical

circumscription during this time of preparation for the Great Jubilee, and especially during the Jubilee Year.

May the Queen of Apostles, the bright Morning Star, guide her beloved priests, sons of her Son, into the path of effective communion, fidelity and generous, integral exercise of their indispensable ministry.

With sentiments of fraternal esteem, I remain  
Yours sincerely in Christ,

Darío Card. Castrillón Hoyos  
*Prefect*

Csaba Ternyák  
*Titular Archbishop of Eminenza*  
*Secretary*

## INTRODUCTION

Catholic doctrinal tradition describes the priest as *teacher of the Word, Minister of the Sacraments and Leader of the Christian community entrusted to him*. This is the starting point of all reflection on the identity and mission of the priest in Church. In the light of *new evangelization*, to which the Holy Spirit calls all the faithful through the person and authority of the Holy Father, this unchanging yet ever-new doctrine must again be reflected upon with faith and hope.

The whole Church is called to greater apostolic commitment which is both personal and comunitarian, renewed and generous. Encouraged by the personal example and clear teaching of John Paul II, both pastors and faithful must but realize ever more incisively that the time has come to hasten their preparations, with renewed apostolic spirit, to cross the threshold of the twenty-first century and to throw open the door of history to Jesus Christ, who is our God and only Saviour. Pastors and faithful in the year 2000 are called to proclaim with renewed force: "*Ecce natus est nobis Salvator mundi*".(1)

"In countries with ancient Christian roots, and occasionally in the younger Churches as well, entire groups of the baptized have lost a living sense of the faith or even no longer consider themselves members of the Church and live a life far removed from Christ and his Gospel. In this case what is needed is a 'new evangelization' or a 're-evangelization'".(2) New Evangelization, therefore, is firstly a maternal reaction of the Church to the weakening of the faith and obscuring of the demands of the Christian moral life in the conscience of her children. Many of the baptized live in a world indifferent to religion. While maintaining a certain faith, these practically live a form of religious and moral indifferentism, alienated from Word and Sacraments which are essential for the Christian life. There are others, although born of Christian parents and baptized, who have never received a foundation in the faith and live in practical atheism. The Church looks on all of these with love and is particularly sensitive to the pressing duty to draw

these people to that ecclesial communion where, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, they rediscover Jesus Christ and the Father.

Together with new evangelization which seeks to rekindle the faith in the Christian conscience of many and cause the joyful proclamation of salvation to resound in society, the Church is also especially conscious of her perennial mission *ad gentes* — the right duty to carry the Gospel to all men who do not yet know Christ or participate in his salvific gifts. For the contemporary Church, Mother and Teacher, the mission *ad gentes* and new evangelization are inseparable aspects of her mandate to teach, sanctify and guide all men to the Father. Fervent Christians also need loving and continuous encouragement in their quest for personal holiness, to which they are called by God and by the Church. This is the true impetus of new evangelization.

All the Christian faithful, children of the Church, should be impelled by this common and pressing responsibility. In a particular way, priests have this duty since they have been specially chosen, consecrated and sent to make evident the presence of Christ whose authentic representatives and messengers they become.(3) It is, therefore, necessary to assist both secular and religious priests in assuming the "important pastoral responsibility of new evangelization"(4) and, in the light of this commitment, to rediscover the divine call to serve that portion of God's people entrusted to them as teachers of the Word, ministers of the Sacraments and pastors of the flock.

## **Chapter One**

### **IN THE SERVICE OF NEW EVANGELIZATION**

***"It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain" (John 15:16)***

#### **1. New Evangelization, responsibility of the entire Church**

Being called and sent by the Lord have always been relevant but in contemporary historical circumstances they acquire a particular importance. The end of the twentieth century, from a religious perspective, is marked by contrasting phenomena. On the one hand, intense secularization in society results in rejection of God and all reference to the transcendent, while the other is marked by the emergence of a greater religious sensitivity which seeks to satisfy the innate aspiration for God which is present in the hearts of all mankind but which sometimes fails to find satisfactory expression.

"The mission of Christ the Redeemer which is entrusted to the Church, is still very far from completion. As the second millennium after Christ's coming draws to an end, an overall view of the human race shows that this mission is still only beginning and that we must commit ourselves wholeheartedly to its service".(5) Today, this missionary task is carried out largely in the context of the new evangelization of many countries which have had long Christian traditions but in which the Christian understanding of life appears to be in decline. It is also carried out in the general context of mankind, in which not

everyone has yet heard and understood the proclamation of the salvation brought by Christ.

It is a sad but evident reality that many have heard of Christ but seem to know and accept his teaching merely as a set of general ethical norms rather than as concrete life commitments. Large numbers of the baptized have abandoned following Christ and live by the tenets of relativism. In many instances, the role of the Christian faith is reduced to that of a purely cultural factor often limited to a merely private sphere and without any social relevance in individual or national life.(6)

After twenty centuries of Christianity there is still no shortage of wide missionary fields. All Christians should be aware that, in virtue of their baptismal priesthood (cf. *1 Pt 2*, 4-5.9; *Ap 1*, 5-6. 9-10; 20, 6), they are called to collaborate, in so far as their personal circumstances permit, in the new evangelizing mission which is a common ecclesial undertaking.(7) Responsibility for missionary activity "is incumbent primarily on the College of Bishops presided over by its head, the Successor of Peter".(8) "Priests, who are collaborators with the bishop in virtue of the Sacrament of Orders, are called to share responsibility for the mission".(9) Thus it can be said that, in a certain sense, they bear primary responsibility for this new evangelization of the third Millennium".(10)

Encouraged by scientific and technical advances, contemporary society has developed a profound sense of critical independence from secular and religious authority and doctrine. This situation requires thorough explanation and presentation of the Christian message of salvation which always remains a mystery. Such must be done with respect, and with the power and capacity of the first evangelization, while making prudent use of all suitable methods afforded by modern technology. However, it should never be forgotten that technology is no substitute for the witness of holiness of life. The Church needs true witnesses to communicate the Gospel in every sector of society. From this derives the need for all Christians in general, and for priests in particular, to acquire a profound and proper training in philosophy and theology(11) which enables them to render account for their faith and hope. Such also alerts them to the importance of presenting the faith constructively by means of personal dialogue and understanding. Proclamation of the Gospel, however, cannot be reduced to dialogue alone. The courage of the truth is, in fact, an ineluctable challenge when confronted with temptation to conform, or to seek facile popularity or personal convenience.

When evangelizing, it must be remembered that some of the traditional ideas and vocabulary of evangelization have become unintelligible to the greater part of contemporary culture. Certain contexts are impervious to the positive Christian sense of terms such as original sin and its consequences, redemption, the cross, the need for prayer, voluntary sacrifice, chastity, sobriety, obedience, humility, penance, poverty, etc. New evangelization, in fidelity to the doctrine of the faith constantly taught by the Church and with a strong sense of responsibility with regard to the vocabulary of Christian doctrine, must discover means of expressing itself to the contemporary world so as to help it rediscover the profound meaning of these Christian and human terms. In this

effort, new evangelization cannot discard the established formulations of faith which have already been arrived at and which are summarized in the Creed.(12)

## **2. The necessary and indispensable role of priests**

While the Pastors of the Church "know that they themselves were not established by Christ to undertake alone the whole salvific mission of the Church to the world", (13) they do exercise an absolutely indispensable evangelizing role. New evangelization needs urgently to find a form for the exercise of the priestly ministry really consonant with contemporary conditions so as to render it effective and capable of adequately responding to the circumstances in which it is exercised. This, however, can only be done by constant reference to Christ, our only model, who enables us to move in contemporary conditions without losing sight of our final goal. Genuine pastoral renewal is not motivated solely by socio-cultural considerations but, more importantly, by a burning love for Christ and his Church. The end of all our efforts is the definitive Kingdom of Christ, recapitulation of all created things in Him. This will only be fully achieved at the end of time but already it is present through the power of the life-giving Spirit through whom Jesus Christ constituted his body, the Church, as universal sacrament of salvation.(14)

Christ, head of the Church and Lord of all creation, continues his salvific work among men. The ministerial priesthood is properly located within this operative framework. In drawing all things to Himself (cf. *John* 12, 32), Christ desires to involve his priests in a special way. This is the divine plan (God wills that the Church and her ministers should be involved in the work of redemption) which, although evident from a doctrinal and theological perspective, can be particularly difficult for modern man to accept. Sacramental mediation and the hierarchical structure of the Church, are often questioned to-day. The need for sacramental mediation or for the hierarchical structure of the Church as well as the reasons for them are also called into question.

As the life of Christ was consecrated to the authentic proclamation of the loving will of the Father (cf. *John* 17, 4; *Heb* 10, 7-10) so too the life of priests should be consecrated, in his name, to the same proclamation. "In word and deed" (cf. *Acts* 1, 1) the Messiah devoted his public life to preaching with authority (cf. *Mt* 7, 29). Such authority derived, in the first place, from his divine condition but also, in the eyes of the people, from his sincere, holy and perfect example. Likewise, the priest is obliged to complement the objective spiritual authority which is his in virtue of sacred ordination(15) with a subjective authority deriving from sincerity and holiness of life,(16) and that pastoral charity which manifests the love of Christ.(17) Gregory the Great's exhortation to his priests is still relevant: "The Pastor must be pure in thought, exemplary in his actions, discreet in his silence and useful in his words. He should be close to all in his compassion and, above all, dedicated to contemplation. He should be the humble ally of all who do good. In justice, he should be inflexibly opposed to the vice of sinners. He should neither neglect the interior life through exterior preoccupations nor omit provision of exterior needs through solicitude for interior good".(18)

In our times, as always in the Church, "heralds of the Gospel are needed who are expert in humanity, profoundly knowing the heart of contemporary man, who share his joys and

hopes, his fears and sorrows, and, at the same time, who are contemplatives in love with God." The Holy Father, specifically referring to the re-Christianization of Europe but in terms valid everywhere, affirms that "the saints were the great evangelizers of Europe. We must pray the Lord to increase the spirit of holiness in the Church and to send saints to evangelize the contemporary world".(19) Many of our contemporaries, it must not be forgotten, arrive at ideas of Christ and the Church above all through their contact with her sacred ministers. Hence the need for their authentic witness to the Gospel becomes all the more pressing since it is "a living and transparent image of Christ the priest".(20)

In the context of Christ's saving action, two inseparable objectives can be highlighted: an intellectual objective, on the one hand, which seeks to teach, instruct the crowds without shepherds (cf. *Mt* 9, 36) and move the intelligence towards conversion (cf. *Mt* 4, 17), and, on the other, the desire to move the hearts of those who listened to him to sorrow and penance for their sins thereby opening the way to divine forgiveness. This continues to be true to-day: "the call to new evangelization is primarily a call to conversion"(21) and when the Word of God has taught the intellect of man and moved his will to reject sin, evangelizing activity attains its goal in fruitful participation in the sacraments, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist. Paul VI taught that "the role of evangelization is precisely to educate people in the faith in such a way as to lead each individual Christian to live the sacraments of faith — and not to receive them passively or reluctantly".(22)

Evangelization consists of proclamation, witness, dialogue and service. It is based on three inseparable elements: preaching the Word, sacramental ministry and leading the faithful.(23) Preaching would be senseless unless it include continuous formation of the faithful and participation in the sacraments. Likewise, participation in the sacraments without sincere conversion of heart, full acceptance of the faith and of the principles of Christian morality is also meaningless. From a pastoral perspective, the primary action of evangelization is, logically, considered to be preaching.(24) From the perspective of intentionality, however, the primary element of evangelization must be celebration of the sacraments, especially of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist.(25) The integrity of the pastoral ministry of priests in the service of new evangelization is to be found, however, in a harmonious fusion of both of these functions.

Ecumenical formation of the faithful is another aspect of new evangelization of growing importance. The Second Vatican Council encouraged all the faithful "to take an active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism" and "to esteem the truly Christian endowments of our common heritage which are to be found among our separated brethren".(26) At the same time, however, it must be noted that "nothing is so foreign to the spirit of ecumenism as a false irenicism which harms the purity of Catholic doctrine and obscures its genuine and certain meaning".(27) Priests should ensure that ecumenism is always conducted in fidelity to the principles established by the Magisterium of the Church, avoid divisions and promote harmonious continuity.

## **QUESTIONNAIRE ON CHAPTER ONE**

1. Is the need for and urgency of new evangelization really felt in our ecclesial communities and especially among our priests?
2. Is it frequently preached? Does new evangelization feature at clergy meetings, in pastoral programmes and in continuing formation?
3. Are priests especially involved in promoting a new evangelizing mission — new in its "ardour, methods and expression"(28) — *both ad intra and ad extra in the Church?*
4. Do the faithful regard the priesthood as a divine gift both for those who receive it and for their communities, or do they regard the priesthood merely as an administrative function? Are prayers for vocations to the priesthood sufficiently encouraged as well as prayers for that generosity which responds affirmatively to a vocation?
5. In preaching the Word of God and in catechesis is the necessary proportion between instruction in the faith and sacramental practice maintained? Is the evangelizing activity of priests characterized by a complementarity between preaching and sacraments, the "munus docendi" and the "munus sanctificandi"?
6. What can be done to help priests become ministers who harmoniously build the prophetic, liturgical and charitable community which is the Church?
7. From the preparations for the Great Jubilee of 2000 do priests derive opportunities and ideas for a realistic programme of new evangelization?

## **Chapter Two**

### **TEACHERS OF THE WORD**

***"Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation" (Mk 16, 15)***

#### **1. Priests, ministers of the Word "nomine Christi et nomine Ecclesiae"**

A correct understanding of the pastoral ministry of the Word begins with a consideration of God's divine Revelation in itself. "By this revelation, the invisible God (cf. *Col 1, 15; 1 Tim 1, 17*), from the fullness of his love, addresses men as his friends (cf. *Es 33, 11; John 15, 14-15*) and moves among them in order to invite and receive them into his company".(29) The proclamation of the Kingdom in Scripture not only speaks of the glory of God but also spreads that same glory by its very proclamation. The Gospel preached by the Church is not just a message but a divine and life-giving experience for those who believe, hear, receive and obey the message.

Revelation, therefore, is not limited to instruction about God who lives in inaccessible light since it also recounts the marvelous things that God does for us with his grace. The revealed Word, made present and actualized "in" and "through" the Church, is an instrument through which Christ acts in us with his Spirit. It is both judgment and grace. In hearing the Word, the actual encounter with God himself calls to the heart of man and

demands a decision which is not arrived at solely through intellectual knowledge but which requires conversion of heart.

"It is the first task of priests as co-workers of the bishops to preach the Gospel of God to all men...(so as to)... set up and increase the People of God".(30) Precisely because preaching the Gospel is not merely an intellectual transmission of a message but "the power of God for the salvation of all who believe" (*Rm* 1, 16), accomplished for all time in Christ, its proclamation in the Church requires from its heralds a supernatural basis which guarantees its authenticity and its effectiveness. The proclamation of the Gospel by the sacred ministers of the Church is, in a certain sense, a participation in the salvific character of the Word itself, not only because they speak of Christ, but because they proclaim the Gospel to their hearers with that power to call which comes from their participation in the consecration and mission of the incarnate Word of God. The words of the Lord still resound in the ears of his ministers: "Whosoever listens to you listens to me; whosoever despises you despises me" (*Lk* 10, 16). Together with St Paul they can testify: "the Spirit we have received is not the world's spirit but God's Spirit, helping us to recognize the gifts he has given us: We speak of these not in words of human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, thus interpreting spiritual things in spiritual terms" (*1 Cor* 2, 12-13).

Proclaiming the Gospel is a ministry deriving from the Sacrament of Orders and is exercised by the authority of Christ. The power of the Holy Spirit does not guarantee all the acts of sacred ministers in the same way. In the administration of the sacraments this guarantee is assured to the extent that not even the sinful condition of a minister can impede the fruit of grace. There are many other acts in which the human qualities of the minister acquire notable importance. Those qualities can serve to promote or impede the apostolic effectiveness of Church.(31) While the entire *munus pastorale* must be characterized by service, it is especially necessary that service characterize the minister of preaching since the salvific effectiveness of the Word becomes more operative when its minister, who is never master of the Word, increasingly becomes its servant.

Service demands a personal dedication on the part of the minister to the preached Word. Such dedication ultimately is made to God "to whom I render worship in my heart by preaching the Gospel of his Son" (*Rm* 1, 9). The minister may not place obstacles in its path by pursuing objectives extraneous to its mission, or relying on human wisdom, or by promoting subjective experiences that can obscure the Gospel. The Word of God can never be manipulated. Rather, preachers "should firstly become personally familiar with the Word of God...and be the first "believers" in the Word, fully conscious that the words of their preaching are not their own, but those of the one who sent them".(32)

There is an *essential relationship between personal prayer and preaching*. From meditating on the Word of God in personal prayer, comes that spontaneous "primacy of witness of life which discovers the power of the love of God and makes his word convincing.(33) Effective preaching is another fruit of personal prayer. Such preaching is effective not only because of its speculative coherence but because it comes from a prayerful, sincere heart which is aware that sacred ministers are bound not to impart their

own wisdom but the Word of God and ceaselessly to invite all to conversion and holiness".(34) The preaching of Christ's sacred ministers, to be effective, requires that it be based on their spirit of filial prayer: "sit orator antequam dictor".(35)

Personal prayer provides priests with support and encouragement for their sense of the ministry, their vocation in life, and for their living and apostolic faith. In personal prayer they draw daily zeal for evangelization. Once personally convinced of this, it is translated into persuasive, coherent and convincing preaching. Praying the *Liturgy of the Hours* thus is not simply a matter of personal piety nor is it the totality of the Church's public prayer. It is of great pastoral use(36) since it is a special opportunity to interiorize and become familiar with biblical, patristic, theological and magisterial teaching which can subsequently be returned to the People of God through preaching.

## **2. Towards an effective proclamation of the Word**

New evangelization has to underline the importance of bringing to maturity the meaning of the baptismal vocation of the faithful thereby bringing the faithful to an awareness that they have been called by God closely to follow Christ and personally to collaborate in the Church's mission. "Transmitting the faith means awakening, proclaiming and deepening the Christian vocation, that is, God's call to all men as He makes known to them the mystery of salvation...".(37) The task of preaching, therefore, is to present Christ to all men because He alone, "the new Adam, in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love, fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his most high calling".(38)

New evangelization together with a vocational sense of existence go hand in hand for the Christian. This is the "good news" which must be preached to the faithful without any reductionism in what concerns its goodness and the demands which are made in accomplishing it. It must always be remembered that "the Christian is certainly bound by need and by duty to struggle with evil through many afflictions and to suffer death; but as one who has been made a partner in the paschal mystery and configured to the death of Christ, he will go forward, strengthened by hope, to the resurrection".(39)

New evangelization demands a zealous ministry of the Word which is complete and well-founded. It should have a clear theological, spiritual, liturgical and moral content, while bearing in mind the needs of those men and women whom it must reach. This is not to succumb to any temptation to intellectualism which could obscure rather than enlighten the intelligence of Christians, rather it requires a genuine intellectual charity through continuous patient catechesis on the fundamentals of Catholic faith and morals and on their influence on the spiritual life. Christian instruction is foremost among the spiritual works of mercy: salvation comes by knowing Christ since "there is no other name in the whole world given to men by which we are to be saved" (*Acts* 4, 12).

Catechetical proclamation cannot be achieved without use of a solid theology since it requires not only presentation of revealed doctrine but also formation of the intelligence and conscience of the faithful by means of revealed doctrine so that they can authentically live the demands of their baptismal calling. New evangelization will be achieved not only

in the measure that the Church as a whole and its institutions but each and every Christian live the faith authentically, thereby giving credible witness to that same faith.

Evangelizing means announcing and spreading the contents of revealed truth by every available good and congruent means (Christological and Trinitarian faith, the meaning of the dogma of creation, the eschatological truths, the doctrine concerning the Church, man, the sacraments and other means of salvation). It is also important to teach people how concretely to translate these truths into life by means of spiritual and moral formation so that they become a witness to life and missionary commitment.

The task of spiritual and theological formation (and that of permanent formation of priests, deacons and the lay faithful) is both inescapable and enormous. Hence, the ministry of the Word and its ministers must be able to respond to current circumstances. While its effectiveness is essentially dependent on the help of God, it also requires the highest possible degree of human perfection. A renewed doctrinal, theological and spiritual proclamation of the Christian message, aimed primarily to enthuse and purify the conscience of the baptized, cannot be achieved through irresponsible or indolent improvisation. Less still can it be brought about if there is an unwillingness on the part of priests to assume directly their responsibilities for the proclamation of the Gospel — especially those relating to the homiletic ministry which cannot be delegated to the non-ordained<sup>(40)</sup> nor easily entrusted to those ill prepared for its exercise.

Preaching, as always has been insisted, requires the priest to give particular attention to the importance of *remote preparation*. This can be concretized by such things as study and the pursuit of those things which can help the sacred ministers in their preparation. Pastoral sensitivity on the part of preachers must always be aware of the problems preoccupying the contemporary world and be able to identify possible solution for them. "Moreover, if priests are to give adequate answers to the problems discussed by people at the present time, they should be well versed in the statements of the Church's magisterium and especially those of the Councils and the Popes. They should also consult the best approved writers in theology"<sup>(41)</sup> as well as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Insistence must also be placed on the importance of the permanent formation of the clergy and especially on its content which should be in accord with the *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*.<sup>(42)</sup> Efforts in this regard will always reap a rich harvest. In addition to the foregoing, attention must be given to the *proximate preparation* needed to preach the Word of God. Apart from exceptional circumstances where nothing else is possible, humility and industry require, at the very least, a careful plan of what the priest intends to preach.

The principle source for preaching is naturally Sacred Scripture, deeply meditated in personal prayer and assimilated through study and adequate contact with suitable books.<sup>(43)</sup> Pastoral experience well demonstrates the capacity of the power and eloquence of the Sacred text to stir the hearts of those who hear it. The Fathers of the Church and the other great writers of the Catholic tradition teach us how to penetrate the meaning of the revealed Word and communicate it to others.<sup>(44)</sup> This is far removed from any form of "biblical fundamentalism" or mutilation of the divine message. The

pedagogy with which the Church reads, interprets and applies the Word of God throughout the liturgical seasons should also be a point of reference for preaching. The lives of the saints, their struggles and heroism, have always produced positive effects in the hearts of the Christian faithful who, today, have special need of the heroic example of the saints in their self-dedication to the love of God and, through God, to others. Reference to the lives of the saints has renewed significance in contemporary circumstances where the faithful are often assailed by equivocal values and doctrines. All of these are helpful for evangelization as indeed is the promotion of a sense of the love of God among the faithful, a solidarity with everyone and spirit of service and generous self-giving for others. Christian conscience comes to maturity through constant reference to charity.

The priest should also cultivate the formal aspects of preaching. We live in an information era characterized by rapid communication. We frequently hear experts and specialists on the television and radio. In a certain sense the priest (who is also a social communicator) has to compete with these when he preaches to the faithful. Hence his message must be presented in an attractive manner. His apostolic spirit should move him to acquire competence in the use of the "new pulpits" provided by modern communications and ensure that his preaching is always of a standard congruent with the preached Word. Universities today have witnessed a resurgence of interest in rhetoric. A similar interest should be aroused among priests as well as a desire to acquire a noble and dignified self presentation and poise.

Like that of Christ, priestly preaching should be positive, stimulating and draw men and women to the goodness, beauty and truth of God. Christians are bound to make known "the divine glory which shines on the face of Christ" (2 Cor 4, 6) and present revealed truth in a captivating way. Is it not impossible to deny the strong attractive, though serene, nature of Christian existence? There is nothing to fear in this. "From the moment when, in the Paschal Mystery, she received the gift of the ultimate truth about man's life, the Church has made her way along the path of the world proclaiming that Jesus Christ is 'the way, the truth and the life' (John 14, 6). It is her duty to serve humanity in different ways, but one way in particular imposes a responsibility of a quite special kind: *the diaconia of service to the truth*".(45)

Elegant accurate language, comprehensible to contemporary men and women of all social backgrounds, is always useful for preaching. Banal commonplace language should be eschewed.(46) While preachers must speak from an authentic vision of faith, a vocabulary must be employed which is comprehensible in all quarters and must avoid specialized jargon or concessions to the spirit of materialism. The human "key" to effective preaching of the Word is to be found in the professionalism of the preacher who knows what he wants to say and who is always backed up by serious remote and proximate preparation. This is far removed from the improvisation of the dilettante. Attempts to obscure the entire force of truth are insidious forms of irenecism. Care should therefore be taken with the meaning of words, style and diction. Important themes should be highlighted, without ostentation, after careful reflection. A pleasant speaking voice should be cultivated. Preachers should know their objectives and have a good understanding of the existential

and cultural reality of their congregations. Theories and abstract generalizations must always be avoided. Hence every preacher should know his own flock well and use an attractive style which, rather than wounding people, strikes the conscience and is not afraid to call things for what they really are.

Priests engaged in different pastoral tasks should help each other with fraternal advice on these and other matters such as the content of preaching and its theological and linguistic quality, style, the duration of homilies -which should always be reasonable, the proper use of the ambo, the development of an unaffected normal tone of voice and its inflection while preaching. Humility is necessary if the priest is to be helped by his brother priests and, indirectly, by the faithful who co-operate in his pastoral activities.

### **QUESTIONNAIRE ON CHAPTER TWO**

8. Do we really appreciate the real effect of the ministry of the Word on the life of our communities? Are we anxious to use this essential instrument of evangelization with the best possible professionalism?

9. Is sufficient attention given to perfecting the diverse forms of proclamation of the Word in permanent formation courses?

10. Are priests encouraged to study sound theology and the writings of the Fathers of the Church, the Doctors of the Church and of the Saints? Are positive efforts made to know and make known the great masters of Christian spirituality?

11. Is the formation of good libraries for priests encouraged which reflect a solid doctrinal outlook?

12. Is it possible locally to access libraries available on the internet? Are priests aware of the electronic library which has been set up by the Congregation for the Clergy ([www.clerus.org](http://www.clerus.org))?

13. Do priests use the catechesis and teaching of the Holy Father and the various documents published by the Holy See?

14. Is there an awareness of the necessity to train people (priests, permanent deacons, religious and laity) capable of using well the means of communication which are key aspects of the evangelization of contemporary culture?

## **Chapter Three**

### **MINISTERS OF THE SACRAMENTS**

*"Christ's servants, stewards of the entrusted with the mysteries of God" (1 Cor 4, 1)*

1. **"In persona Christi Capitis"**

"The Church's mission is not an addition to that of Christ and the Holy Spirit, but is its sacrament: in her whole being and in all her members, the Church is sent to announce, bear witness, make present, and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity".(47) This sacramental dimension of the whole mission of the Church springs from her very nature as a reality which is "both human and divine, visible yet endowed with invisible realities, zealous in action and dedicated to contemplation, present in the world but as a pilgrim".(48) In the context of the Church as "universal sacrament of salvation",(49) in which Christ "manifests and actualizes the mystery of God's love for men",(50) the sacraments, privileged moments in communicating the divine life to man, are at the very core of priestly ministry. Priests are especially conscious of being living instruments of Christ, the Priest. Their function, in virtue of sacramental character, is that of men complying with the action of God through shared instrumental effectiveness.

Configuration to Christ in sacramental ordination places the priest at the heart of God's people. It allows him to participate in a way proper to him, and in conformity with the whole structure of the ecclesial community, in the triple *munus Christi*. The priest, acting in persona Christi Capitis, feeds the flock, the people of God, and leads them to sanctity.(51) Hence the need for credible witness to the faith in all aspects of priestly life and in his respect for and celebration of the sacraments.(52) The classic doctrine, repeated by the Second Vatican Council, must always be borne in mind: "while it is true that God can accomplish the work of salvation through unworthy ministers, God nevertheless, ordinarily prefers to manifest his greatness through those who are more docile to the promptings and direction of the Holy Spirit, so much so that they can say of the apostolate, thanks to their own intimate union with Christ and holiness of life: 'it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me'" (*Gal 2, 20*).<sup>(53)</sup>

Priests, in celebrating the sacraments, act as ministers of Christ and, through the Holy Spirit, participate in a His priesthood in a special way.<sup>(54)</sup> Hence the sacraments are moments of worship of singular importance for new evangelization. It must be recalled that they have become the only effective moments for transmitting the contents of the faith. While this is true for all the faithful, it is even more true for those who, having lost the practice of the faith, occasionally participate in the liturgy for family or social reasons (baptisms, confirmations, marriages, ordinations, funerals etc.). A credible life-style on the part of priests should be complemented "with a high standard of ceremony and liturgical celebration:<sup>(55)</sup> it should not seek spectacle but truly ensure that "the human is directed toward and subordinate to the divine, the visible to the invisible, action to contemplation, this present world to the city yet to come".<sup>(56)</sup>

## **2. Ministers of the Eucharist: core of priestly ministry**

"Jesus called his Apostles "friends". He also calls us friends since we share in his Priesthood by virtue of the Sacrament of Orders (...) Could Jesus have expressed his friendship for us in a more eloquent way than by allowing us, priests of the New Covenant, to act in his name, to act in persona Christi Capitis? This is what happens in all our priestly service, when we administer the sacraments and especially when we celebrate the Holy Eucharist. We repeat the words spoken by Him over the bread and wine, and,

through our ministry we effect the same consecration as effected by Christ. Can there be a more complete expression of friendship than this? This is what is at the very core of our priestly ministry".(57)

New evangelization must also signal a new clarity about the centrality of the Eucharist, the source and summit of the entire Christian life, to the faithful.(58) "No Christian community can be built up unless it grow from and hinges on to the celebration of the Most Holy Eucharist"(59) because "the other sacraments and indeed all ecclesial ministries and works of the apostolate are bound up with the Eucharist and are directed toward it. For in the most Blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church".(60)

The Eucharist is also the object of the pastoral ministry. The faithful must participate in it if they are to draw fruit from it. While it is necessary to inculcate a "worthy, careful and fruitful" preparation for the liturgy among the laity, it is also necessary to bring them to an awareness that they are "invited and led to offer themselves, their works and all creation with Christ. For this reason the Eucharist appears as the source and summit of all preaching of the Gospel".(61) From this truth many consequences follow for the pastoral ministry.

Formation of the faithful concerning the essence of the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar is vitally important as is the need to encourage them to participate fruitfully in the Eucharist.(62) Insistence must be made on the observance of the Sunday obligation(63) and on frequent, if not daily, participation in the celebration of the Mass and holy communion. Emphasis must be placed on the grave obligation to fulfill the spiritual and corporeal conditions governing reception of the Body of Christ — especially individual sacramental confession for those conscious that they are not in a state of grace. The strength of Christian life in every particular Church and parish community depends, in large measure, on rediscovery of the great gift of the Eucharist in faith and adoration. When the link between daily life and the Eucharist is not clearly manifested in the priest's doctrinal teaching, preaching and life, participation begins to fall into abeyance.

In this respect, the example of the priest-celebrant is fundamentally important: "celebrating the Eucharist well is an important form of primary catechesis on the Holy Sacrifice".(64) While this is not the immediate intention of the priest, it is important for the faithful to see him prepare well by recollecting himself before celebrating the Holy Sacrifice. They should be able to witness the love and devotion that he has for the Eucharist and, following his example, they should learn to remain, for a while, in thanksgiving after Holy Communion.

While an essential part of the Church's work of evangelization is to teach men and women to pray to the Father, through the Son in the Holy Spirit, new evangelization entails the recovery and consolidation of pastoral practices which manifest belief in the real presence of Our Lord under the eucharistic species. "The priest has a mission to promote the cult of the eucharistic presence, also outside of the celebration of the Mass, thereby making of his own church a Christian "house of prayer".(65) The faithful should be well instructed with regard to the indispensable conditions for the reception of Holy

Communion. It is important to encourage their devotion to Christ who awaits them in the tabernacle. A simple but effective form of eucharistic catechesis is the material care of everything concerned with the church and especially the altar and tabernacle: cleanliness and decor, worthy vestments and vessels, care in celebrating the liturgical ceremonies,(66) genuflection etc. An atmosphere of recollection should pervade the Blessed Sacrament chapel. This is a centuries old tradition guaranteeing that silence which facilitates dialogue with the Lord. The heart of our churches is the Blessed Sacrament chapel or the area in which the Eucharistic Christ is reserved and adored. Access to it should be evident and easily facilitated. It should be open for as much of the day as possible and it should be well decorated.

All these are signs deriving not from some form of "spiritualism" but from a well tested theological tradition of devotion to the Blessed Eucharist. They are possible only if the priest is a man of prayer and genuinely devoted to the Holy Eucharist. Only the pastor who prays will know how to teach others to pray and bring God's grace on those in his pastoral charge, thereby evincing conversions, more fervent resolution for life, priestly vocations and special consecration. Only the priest who has daily experience of the "conversatio in coelis" and whose life is motivated by friendship with Christ can make genuine advances towards authentic and renewed evangelization.

### **3. Ministers of Reconciliation with God and the Church**

In a world in which the sense of sin has declined (67) it is most necessary to insist that lack of love for God obscures our perception of the reality of sin and evil. The initiation of conversion, not just as a momentary interior act but as a stable disposition, begins with authentic knowledge of God's merciful love. "Those who come to know and see God in this way cannot live other than in continual conversion toward Him. Thus they live in a state of conversion".(68) Penance is an essential constituent of the patrimony in the ecclesial life of the baptized. It is, however, marked by the hope of pardon: "you who were once excluded from mercy have now received mercy" (*1 Pt 2, 10*).

New evangelization calls for renewed efforts to bring the faithful to the Sacrament of Penance.(69) This pastoral task is absolutely indispensable. The Sacrament of Penance "opens the way for everyone, especially those borne down by grave sin, individually to experience mercy, that love which is stronger than sin".(70) We should never fail to encourage and promote the sacrament while striving intelligently to renew and revitalize age old beneficial Christian traditions. As a first step, with the help of the Holy Spirit, this should bring the faithful to that conversion which leads to sincere and contrite recognition of those moral flaws or deficiencies found in everyone's daily life. It is essential to insist upon the importance of frequent individual confession in arriving, where possible, at authentic personal spiritual direction.

Without confusing the sacramental moment with spiritual direction, priests should know how to identify opportunities to initiate spiritual dialogue outside of the celebration of the Sacrament. "Rediscovery and promotion of this practice, also during the various moments of the Sacrament of Penance, is a major benefit for the contemporary Church".(71) Such leads to an awakening of the sense and effectiveness of the Sacrament and creates the

conditions necessary to overcome the present crisis. Personal spiritual direction forms true apostles, capable of activating new evangelization in society. The success of the mission to re-evangelize so many of the faithful who are estranged from the Church requires a solid formation for those who have remained close to her.

New evangelization depends on an adequate number of priests; experience teaches that many respond positively to a vocation because of spiritual direction as well as the example given by priests who are interiorly and exteriorly faithful to their priestly identity. "In his pastoral work each priest will take particular care concerning vocations, encouraging prayer for vocations, doing his best in the work of catechetics and taking care of the formation of ministers. He will promote appropriate initiatives through a personal rapport with those in his care, allowing him to discover their talents and to single out the will of God for them, permitting a courageous choice in following Christ...It is desirable that every priest be concerned with inspiring at least one priestly vocation which could thus continue the ministry"(72)

Giving the faithful a real possibility of coming to confession implies much dedication.(73) Fixed times during which the priest is available in the confessional are warmly to be encouraged. They should be well published and availability on the priest's part should not be just theoretical. Sometimes the mere fact of having to search for a confessor is sufficient to delay or postpone confession. The faithful, on the other hand, willingly approach the sacrament in places where they know confessors are available.(74) Parish churches and those open for public worship should have a good, well-lit confessional chapel, suitable for hearing confessions. A regular organized schedule of confessions should be provided and implemented by the priests. In order to facilitate the faithful in their desire to approach the Sacrament care should be taken to maintain the confessionals by frequent cleaning, ensuring that they are clearly visible and by affording the possibility of using a grill to those who wish to remain anonymous.(75)

It is not always easy to maintain these pastoral practices, but this is no excuse to overlook their pastoral effectiveness or not to reinstitute them where they have fallen into disuse. Cooperation between the diocesan clergy and religious should be encouraged so as to ensure this pastoral priority. In the same context, recognition must be given to the daily service provided in the confessional by many older priests who are true masters of the spiritual life in the various Christian communities.

This service to the Church would, of course, be more easily accomplished when priests themselves are the first to approach the Sacrament of Penance regularly.(76) Personal recourse to the Sacrament by the priest, as penitent, is an indispensable condition for a generous ministry of Reconciliation.

"All priestly existence undergoes an inexorable decline if the priest, through negligence or whatever other reason, neglects frequent recourse, inspired by genuine faith and devotion, to the Sacrament of Penance. If a priest no longer goes to confession or makes a bad confession, very quickly this will affect his priestly ministry and be noticed by the community of which he is Pastor".(77)

"The ministry of priests is above all communion and a responsible and necessary cooperation with the Bishop's ministry, in concern for the universal Church and for the individual particular Churches, for whose service they form with the Bishop a single presbyterate".(78) The brethren in the presbyterate should always be the special object of the priest's pastoral charity, by helping them materially and spiritually, by affording the opportunity for confession and spiritual direction, by encouraging their service, by helping them in their necessities, by offering fraternal support in their difficulties, old-age or infirmity. This is truly an area for the exercise of priestly virtue.

Pastoral prudence is a fundamental virtue for fruitful exercise of the ministry of Reconciliation. Thus when the minister imparts absolution he participates as an effective instrument in the sacramental action. His task in the penitential rites is to place the penitent *before Christ*, thereby facilitating an encounter of mercy with the utmost discretion. Disagreements which do not take into account the reality of sin should be avoided. Hence the confessor should have opportune knowledge.(79) However, the penitential dialogue should always be imbued with that understanding which gradually leads to conversion. It should not, however, lapse into a so called "graduality of moral norms".

When the practice of confession diminishes, in some cases, to the detriment of the moral life and the conscience of the faithful, the danger sometimes arises of a decline in the theological and pastoral quality of the exercise of the ministry of confession. Confessors should always pray to the Paraclete for the ability to fill this salvific moment(80) with supernatural meaning and to transform it into an authentic encounter with the all merciful and forgiving Jesus for the penitent. He should also avail of confession to form the conscience of the faithful correctly — an extremely important task — by asking, where necessary, those questions which secure the integrity of confession and the validity of the sacrament. He should help the penitent to thank God for His mercy and assist him in making a firm purpose of amendment for his conduct of the moral life. He should never fail to encourage the penitent appropriately, offering him comfort and motivating him to do works of penance which are satisfaction for his sins and which help him to grow in virtue.

### **QUESTIONNAIRE ON CHAPTER THREE**

15. The essence and saving meaning of the sacraments are invariable. Starting out from a firm conviction of this position, how can sacramental pastoral care be renewed and how can it be placed at the service of new evangelization?

16. Is our particular community a "Church of Eucharist and Penance"? Is eucharistic devotion in all its forms nourished and promoted? Is the practice of personal confession facilitated and encouraged?

17. Is habitual reference made to the real presence of Our Lord in the tabernacle and, for example, is the fruitful practice of visiting the Blessed Sacrament encouraged? Are there

frequent acts of eucharistic worship? Do our Churches have an atmosphere which encourages prayer before the Blessed Sacrament?

18. In a true pastoral spirit is special care given to the proper maintenance of the Church? Do priests respect the canonical (cf. canons 284, 669; the Directory for the Life and Ministry Priests.) and liturgical norms by vesting properly and reverently for divine worship and by wearing all of the prescribed vestments? (cf. canon 929).

19. Do priests go to confession regularly and do they make themselves available for this important ministry?

20. In the exercise of their pastoral ministry what pastoral efforts are being made in the area of Reconciliation and Penance? Do churches and sanctuaries have an established time for hearing confessions? Is it respected and followed?

21. What initiatives are taken in permanent formation to perfect and assist priests in their ministry of confessors? Are they encouraged to up-date themselves properly for this indispensable ministry?

22. Are confessors reminded of the norms pertaining to prudence in the confessional regularly and the need for reserve when dealing with all penitents? Among other things, in this respect, is the traditional discipline of the confessional employed?

23. Given the importance for new evangelization of a renewal of individual confession, are the canonical norms concerning general absolution observed? Are penitential ceremonies in the various churches and chapels prepared with prudence and pastoral charity? Are opportunities made available for a number of examinations of conscience bearing in mind the diversity of age and states of life?

24. What concrete initiatives are being made to encourage the faithful to attend Mass on Sundays and on holy days of obligation?

## **Chapter Four**

### **LOVING PASTORS OF THE FLOCK**

***"The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep" (John 10, 11)***

#### **1. With Christ, incarnating and spreading the mercy of the Father**

"The Church lives an authentic life when she *professes* and *proclaims* mercy — the most stupendous attribute of the creator and of the Redeemer — and when she brings people close to the sources of the Saviour's mercy, of which she is trustee and dispenser"(81). This reality essentially distinguishes the Church from other human institutions dedicated to the promotion of solidarity and philanthropy. Even when imbued with a religious spirit, by themselves, such institutions cannot effectively dispense the mercy of God. The mercy of God as offered by the Church, in contrast with secularized concepts of mercy which

fail to transform man interiorly, is primarily forgiveness and salvific healing. Its effectiveness on man requires his acceptance of the entire truth concerning his being, his action and his guilt. Hence derives the need for sorrow and encounter with the proclamation of mercy and the fullness of truth. Such affirmations are vitally important for priests who are called to a particular vocation, by the Church and in the Church, to reveal and effect the mystery of the Father's love in their ministry, lived in charity according to the truth (*Ef* 4, 15) and in docility to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

The mercy of God, manifested by His paternal love, is encountered in Christ. He reveals his messianic role (cf. *Lk* 4, 18) as the Father's mercy for all who are in need, especially sinners who need forgiveness and interior peace. "It is especially for these last that the Messiah becomes a particularly clear sign of God who is love, a sign of the Father. In this visible sign the people of our time, just like people then, can see the Father".(82) God "who is love" (*I John* 4, 16) cannot but reveal Himself as mercy.(83) Through the sacrifice of His Son, God the Father, in His love, implicated Himself in the drama of man's salvation.

While in the preaching of Christ mercy acquires many striking characteristics which surpass human realization — as emerges in the parable of the Prodigal Son (cf. *Lk* 15, 11-32) — it is in his sacrifice on the cross that its meaning is most especially revealed. The crucified Christ is the radical manifestation of the Father's mercy, of that "love which goes against the very source of evil in human history: countering sin and death".(84) The Christian spiritual tradition regards the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which draws priestly hearts to itself, as a profound, mysterious synthesis of the Father's infinite mercy.

The soteriological dimension of the entire priestly *munus pastorale* is centered on the eucharistic Sacrifice, the memorial of Jesus' offering up of his life. "There exists, in fact, an intimate rapport between the centrality of the Eucharist, pastoral charity and the priest's unity of life. He finds in this rapport the decisive indications for the way to holiness to which he has been specifically called... If the priest lends to Christ, Most Eternal High Priest, his intelligence, will, voice and hands so as to offer through his own ministry the sacrifice of redemption to the Father, he should make his own the dispositions of the Master and, like him, live those *gifts* for his brothers in the faith. He must therefore learn to unite himself intimately to the offering, placing his entire life on the altar of sacrifice as a revealing sign of the gratuitous and anticipatory love of God".(85) In the permanent gift of the eucharistic Sacrifice, memorial of the death and resurrection of Jesus, priests have sacramentally received the unique and singular ministerial capacity to bring the witness of God's infinite love to men, which will be confirmed as more powerful than sin in salvation history. The paschal Christ is the definitive incarnation of mercy and its living sign, both in salvation history and eschatologically.(86) According to the Curé d'Ars, the priesthood is "the love of the heart of Jesus".(87) In virtue of the consecration and their ministry, with Christ, priests are living and effective signs of this great love, described by St. Augustine as the "amoris officium".(88)

## 2. Sacerdos et Hostia

Essential to authentic mercy is its gratuitous nature. It is received as an unmerited gift which has been freely and gratuitously given and which is completely unmerited. Such liberality is part of the Father's saving plan. "This is the love I mean: not our love for God, but God's love for us when he sent his son to be the sacrifice that takes our sins away" (1 John 4, 10). The ordained minister, in precisely this context, finds his *raison d'être*. No one can confer grace of himself; it is always given and received. This presupposes that there are ministers of grace, authorized and empowered by Christ. In the Church's tradition, the ordained ministry is referred to as "sacrament", since through the ministry those sent by Christ, by God's gift, effect and offer that which they themselves can neither effect nor give.(89)

Priests should therefore regard themselves as living signs and bearers of that mercy which they offer, not as though it were their own, but as a free gift from God. They are thus servants of God's mercy. The desire to serve is an essential element of priestly ministry and requires the respective moral disposition in the subject. The priest makes Jesus, the Pastor who came to serve and not be served (Mt 20, 28) present to men. The priest primarily serves Christ, but that service necessarily passes through the Church and her mission.

"He loves us and sheds his blood to wash away our sins: *Pontifex qui dilexisti nos et lavasti a peccatis in sanguine tuo*. He gave himself for us: *tradidisti teipsum Deo oblationem et hostiam*. Christ introduces the sacrifice of himself, ransom for our redemption, into the eternal sanctuary. The offering, the sacrificial victim, is inseparable from the priest".(90) While only Christ is simultaneously *Sacerdos et Hostia*, his minister who partakes in the dynamic of the Church's mission, is sacramentally priest and permanently called to become a *Hostia* and thereby assimilate "the same sentiments that Jesus had" (Phil 2, 5). The effectiveness of all evangelizing activity depends on this unbreakable unity of priest and sacrificial victim,(91) or priesthood and Eucharist. Today, the work of divine mercy, contained in Word and Sacraments, depends on the unity, in the Holy Spirit, of Christ and his minister, who does not substitute for Him but relies on Him and allows Him to act in and through him. The significance of St. John's Gospel can be applied to this link between the ministry of the priest and Jesus: "I am the vine...cut off from me you can do nothing" (John 15, 14).

The call to become, like Jesus, a *Hostia* underlies the compatibility of the commitment to celibacy with the priestly ministry in the Church. It implies the incorporation of the priest in the sacrifice with which "Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her so as to make her holy" (Eph 5, 25-26). The priest is called to be "a living image of Jesus Christ, Spouse of the Church" and to make his entire life an offering for her".(92) "Priestly celibacy, then, is the gift of self *in* and *with* Christ *to* his Church and expresses the priest's service *in* and *with* the Lord".(93)

### **3. The Pastoral Ministry of Priests: service of leading in love and strength**

"Priests exercise the function of Christ as Pastor and Head in proportion to their share of authority. In the name of the bishop they gather the family of God as a brotherhood

endowed with the spirit of unity and lead it through Christ in the Spirit to God the Father".(94) The indispensable exercise of the *munus regendi* by the priest, far from being a mere sociological concept or organizational capacity, derives also from the sacramental priesthood: "in virtue of the Sacrament of Orders, after the image of Christ, the supreme and eternal priest (*Heb 5, 1-10; 7, 24; 9, 11-28*) they are consecrated in order to preach the Gospel and shepherd the faithful as well as celebrate divine worship as true priests of the New Testament".(95)

Since priests participate in the authority of Christ they differ notably from the faithful. These realize, however, that "the presence of Christ in their ministry is not to be understood as if... (they) were preserved from all human weaknesses, the spirit of domination, error and even sin".(96) The word and guidance of ministers are subject to greater or lesser effectiveness depending on their natural or acquired qualities of intelligence, will, character and maturity. This awareness together with a realization of the sacramental origins of the pastoral ministry, inspires them to imitate Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and makes pastoral charity indispensable for a fruitful exercise of the ministry.

"The essential object of their action as pastors and of the authority conferred on them" is "to bring the communities entrusted to them to full spiritual and ecclesial development".(97) However, "the community dimension of pastoral care...the needs of each of the faithful...Jesus himself, the Good Shepherd, calls "his sheep one by one" with a voice well known to them (*John 10, 3-4*). By his example he has set the first canon of individual pastoral care: knowledge of the people and friendly relations with them.(98) In the Church, a community vision of the pastoral ministry must be in harmony with this personal pastoral care. Indeed, in building up the Church the pastor always moves from a personal to a community dimension. In relating to individuals and communities, the priest cares for all "*eximia humanitate*".(99) He can never be the servant of an ideology or of a faction. (100) He is obliged to treat men "not according to what may please men, but according to the demands of Christian doctrine and life". (101)

Today more than ever, the style of pastoral action needs to be such as can address the demands arising in traditionally Christian communities which have become largely secularized. In this context, consideration of the *munus regendi*, in its original missionary sense, acquires greater significance. The *munus regendi*, however, should never be confused with a merely bureaucratic or organizational task. It requires a loving exercise of strength on the part of priests — the model for which is the pastoral activity of Jesus Christ. He, as is clear from the Gospels, never refused to assume that responsibility deriving from his messianic authority and exercised it with charity and strength. This authority is not an oppressive domination but a spirit of and a willingness to serve. This dual aspect — authority and service — is the reference point for the *munus regendi* of the priest who must always commit himself to a coherent exercise of his participation in the condition of Christ, Head and Shepherd of the flock.(102)

The priest, with and under the Bishop, is also a pastor of the community entrusted to him. Moved by pastoral charity he should not fear to exercise proper authority in those areas where he is obliged to exercise it for he has been constituted in authority for this very

purpose. It must be recalled that when authority is duly exercised it is done "non tam praesesse quam prodesse" (not so much to command but to serve). (103) Those in authority must overcome the temptation to exempt themselves from this responsibility. If they do not exercise authority, they no longer serve. In close communion with his Bishop and with his faithful, the priest should avoid introducing into his pastoral ministry all forms of authoritarianism and forms of democratic administration which are alien to the profound reality of the ministry, for these lead to a secularization of the priest and a clericalization of the laity. (104) Behind such approaches to the ministry there is often a hidden fear of assuming responsibility or making mistakes, of not being liked or of being unpopular or indeed a reluctance to accept the cross. Ultimately these spring from an obscuring of the real source of priestly identity which is assimilation to Christ, the Shepherd and Head of the flock.

New evangelization requires that the priest make his authentic presence evident in the community. They should realize that the ministers of Jesus Christ are present and available to all men. (105) Thus their amicable insertion into the community is always important. In this context it is easy to understand the significance and pastoral role of the discipline concerning clerical garb, to which the priest should always conform since it is a public proclamation of his limitless dedication to the brethren and to the faithful in his service to Jesus Christ. The more society is marked by secularization, the greater the need for signs.

The priest should avoid falling into the contradictory position of abdicating exercise of his specific authority so as to involve himself in temporal, social or even political matters, (106) which God has left to the free disposition of man.

The priest enjoys a certain prestige amongst the faithful and, in some places, with the civil authorities. He should, however, be aware that such prestige should be lived in humility and used correctly for the promotion of the "salus animarum" while remembering that Christ is the real head of the people of God. It is to Him that the faithful must be directed and not to any attachment to an individual priest. The faithful belong to Christ alone, for only He has redeemed them by His precious blood, to the glory of God the Father. He is thus Lord of all supernatural goods and Teacher who teaches with authority. In Christ and the Holy Spirit, the priest is but an administrator of the gifts entrusted to him by the Church. He has no right to omit or deviate them or remodel them to his own liking. (107) He has received, for example, no authority to teach the Christian faithful that only some of the truths of the Christian faith have been given to him so as to obscure or ignore others which he personally considers more difficult to accept or "less relevant". (108)

Concerning new evangelization and the pastoral leadership given by priests, all need to undertake a sincere and careful discernment. The attitude of "not wishing to impose", etc., may well mask a misconception of the very theological substance of the pastoral ministry or a lack of character which seeks to escape responsibility. Neither undue attachment to persons or particular ministerial positions nor misguided desires for popularity nor lack of proper intention can be underestimated when making this discernment. Pastoral charity,

void of humility, is empty. Pride or need to crave attention can mask seemingly motivated rebellion, reticence in the face of pastoral changes desired by the Bishop, eccentric preaching and celebration of the liturgy, refusal to wear ecclesial garb or alteration of ecclesiastical garb for personal convenience.

New evangelization demands a renewal of commitment to the pastoral ministry, especially on the part of priests. "As the Council points out 'the spiritual gift which priests have received in ordination does not prepare them merely for a limited and circumscribed mission, but for the fullest, in fact the universal mission of salvation to the end of the earth. The reason is that every priestly ministry shares in the fullness of the mission entrusted by Christ to the Apostles". (109) Numerical shortages of clergy, experienced in some countries, coupled with the mobility of the contemporary world makes it particularly necessary to be able to call on priests who are willing to change not only pastoral assignments but also cities, regions, countries in response to various needs and to undertake whatever mission may be necessary while renouncing personal plans and desires for the sake of the love of God. "By the very nature of their ministry they should therefore be penetrated and animated by a profound missionary spirit and 'with that truly Catholic spirit which habitually looks beyond the boundaries of diocese, country or rite, to meet the needs of the whole Church, being prepared in spirit to preach the Gospel everywhere". (110) A correct sense of the particular Church, especially in permanent formation, should never obscure a sense of the universal Church and should always be in harmony with it.

#### **QUESTIONNAIRE ON CHAPTER FOUR**

25. How can the Mercy of God of those in need be made more clearly evident through our communities and especially through our priests? Is sufficient emphasis given to the practice of the spiritual and corporeal works of mercy as a means of attaining Christian maturity and of evangelizing?
26. Is pastoral charity in all its dimensions really "the soul and dynamism of the permanent formation" of our priests?
27. Are priests encouraged to care for their brother priests with a sincere fraternal spirit, especially the sick and the old or those who find themselves in difficulty? Are there forms of common life available?
28. Do our priests understand and exercise their proper and correct function as spiritual leaders of the communities entrusted to them? In what concrete form is this exercised?
29. Given the urgency of the apostolic mission on the threshold of the Third Millennium when all the faithful must be asked to have the courage to show that they are followers of Christ by manifesting themselves as believers, how can emphasis be given to the need for priests to make ever more evident, even externally, their specific presence among men?
30. Is sufficient emphasis given to the missionary dimension of the sacred ministry and to the Church's universal dimension in the spiritual formation of priests?

31. Do we factually omit preaching on certain truths of the faith or particular moral principles simply because they are regarded as difficult to accept?
32. Are all priests encouraged to teach Christian morality in its integrity?
33. One of the demands of the pastoral ministry is to unite initiatives in promoting the mission of evangelizing. Are all the vocations present in the Church encouraged and their specific charisms respected?

## CONCLUSIONS

"New evangelization needs new evangelizers and these are the priests who are serious about living their priesthood as a specific path toward holiness". (111) To accomplish this it is fundamentally important that every priest rediscover the absolute need for personal sanctity. "Before purifying others, they must purify themselves; to instruct others they must be instructed; they have to become light in order to illuminate and become close to God in order to bring others closer to Him; they have to be sanctified in order to sanctify".(112) This commitment is made concrete in a profound *unity of life* which leads the priest to be and live as *another Christ* in all the circumstances of his life.

The faithful in the parish and those who collaborate in various pastoral activities see, observe, feel, and listen not only when the Word of God is preached but also when the liturgy is celebrated, especially the Mass, when they are received in the parochial office (which should be comfortable and welcoming) (113); when the priest eats and when he rests and they are edified by his temperance and sobriety; when they visit his home and they rejoice in his simplicity and priestly poverty; (114) when they talk with him and discuss common interests and are comforted by his spiritual outlook, his courtesy and his behaviour in treating humble people with priestly nobility. "The grace and charity of the Altar are diffused at the ambo, in the confessional, in the parish archive, in the schools and oratories, in the homes of the faithful, in the streets and at the hospitals, on public transport and in the media. The priest has an opportunity to fulfill his role as Pastor everywhere. In every instance it is his Mass which is diffused. His spiritual union with Christ, Priest and Host, causes him to be the grain of God that is to become the true bread of Christ — as St. Ignatius of Antioch says (*Epist. ad Romanos*, IV, 1) — for the good of the brethren". (115)

Thus the priest of the Third Millennium will be able to repeat again the reaction of the disciples at Emaus, who, having heard Jesus, the Divine Teacher, explain the Scriptures, could not but ask themselves "did not our hearts burn within us as he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?" (*Lk* 24, 32). We pastors should entrust ourselves to Mary, Queen and Mother of the Church, so that, united with the Vicar of Christ, we may discover new ways to evince a sincere desire for renewal among the Church's priests in their tasks as teachers of the Word, ministers of the Sacraments and leaders of the community. Let us ask the Queen of Evangelization for the Church to discover anew the

path which the mercy of God, in Christ and through the Holy Spirit, has prepared from all eternity to draw all men, including our own generation, into communion with Him.

*Rome, at the Palace of the Congregations, 19 March 1999, Solemnity of St. Joseph, Patron of the universal Church.*

Darío Card. Castrillón Hoyos  
*Prefect*

Csaba Ternyák  
*Titular Archbishop of Eminenziana*  
*Secretary*

### **PRAYER TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

MARY,  
Star of the New Evangelization,  
who from the outset gladdened and renewed the hearts of the apostles and their helpers in their spreading the Gospel, at the dawn of the third millennium, cause to grow in priests an increasing realization that they are primarily responsible for new evangelization.

MARY,  
First of the evangelized and first evangelizer,  
who with incomparable faith, hope and charity responded to the Angel, intercede for those configured to your Son, Christ the Priest, so that they too may respond in the same spirit to the Holy Father's urgent call made to them in the Father's name on the occasion of the great Jubilee.

MARY,  
Teacher of lived faith, who accepted the divine Word in total availability, teach priests to know the Word in prayer and to devote themselves to his service in humility and love, so that the same Word may continue to exercise his all saving power in the third millennium.

MARY,  
Full of grace and Mother of grace, protect your priestly sons who, like you, are called to be collaborators of the Spirit who causes Jesus to be born in the hearts of the faithful. Teach them to be faithful dispensers of the mysteries of God during this anniversary of the birth of your Son, so that with your help they may open the way of reconciliation to sinners, make the Eucharist the summit of their lives and of the lives of those entrusted to them.

MARY,  
Morning Star of the Third Millennium,  
continue to guide the priests of Jesus Christ in following your example of love of God and love of neighbour. May they know how to be true pastors. May they guide the

footsteps of all men to your Son, true light enlightening all men (*John* 1, 9). May priests and through them, all God's people, listen lovingly to his call on the eve of a new millennium in the history of salvation: "Do what he tells you" (*John* 2, 5). The Vicar of Christ tells us that "with renewed force, the year 2000 should echo the proclamation of the truth: *Ecce natus est nobis Salvator Mundi*".

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(1) John Paul II, Apostolic Letter, *Tertio Millennio adveniente*, 10 November 1994, n. 38: *AAS* 87 (1995) 5-41; n. 30.

(2) John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Missio*, 7 December 1990, n. 33: *AAS* 83 (1991), p. 279.

(3) Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests*, n. 7: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican City 1994, p. 11.

(4) John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 25 March 1992, n. 18: *AAS* 84 (1992), p. 685.

- (5) John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 1: *l.c.*, p. 249.
- (6) "The Christian religion is often regarded as just one religion among many or reduced to nothing more than a social ethic at the service of man. As a result its amazing novelty in human history is quite often not apparent. It is a 'mystery', the event of the coming of the Son of God who becomes man and gives to those who welcome him the 'power to become children of God' (*John 1, 12*)" (John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 46: *l.c.*, pp. 738-739).
- (7) Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 2; John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 13: *l.c.*, 677-678; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests*, nn. 1, 3, 6: *l.c.*, pp. 7, 9, 1011; Congregation for the Clergy, Pontifical Council for the Laity, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Congregation for Bishops, Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts, Instruction *Ecclesiae de Mystero* (15 August 1997) on some aspects of the collaboration of the lay faithful with the ministry of priests, Forward: *AAS* 89 (1997), p. 852.
- (8) John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Redemptoris Missio*, n. 63: *l.c.*, p. 311.
- (9) *Ibid.*, n. 67: *l.c.*, p. 315.
- (10) Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, Introduction: *l.c.*, p. 4. Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nn. 2 and 14: *l.c.*, pp. 659-660; 678-679.
- (11) Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Fides et Ratio*, 14 September 1998, n. 62.
- (12) Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 171.
- (13) Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 30.
- (14) Cf. *ibid.*, n. 48.
- (15) Cf. John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 21: *l.c.*, pp. 688-690.
- (16) Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 12; John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 25: *l.c.*, pp. 695-697.
- (17) Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 43: *l.c.*, p. 42.
- (18) St. Gregory the Great, *Regula pastoralis*, II, 1.
- (19) John Paul II, Allocution to the VI Symposium of European Bishops, 11 November 1985, *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, VIII, 2 (1985), pp. 918-919.

- (20) Cf. John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 12: *l.c.*, pp. 675-677.
- (21) John Paul II, Inaugural Allocution to the IV General Conference of CELAM, Santo Domingo, 12 October 1992, n. 1: *AAS* 85 (1993), p. 808; cf. Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, 2 December 1984, n. 13, *AAS* 77(1985), pp. 208-211.
- (22) Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), n. 47: *AAS* 68 (1976), p. 37.
- (23) Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 28.
- (24) Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, nn. 5, 13, 14; John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 26: *l.c.*, pp. 697-700.
- (25) Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, nn. 5, 13, 14; John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nn. 23,26, 48: *l.c.*, 691-694; 694-700; 742-745; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests*, n. 48: *l.c.*, pp. 48ff.
- (26) Second Vatican Council, Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio*, n. 4.
- (27) *Ibid.*, n. 11.
- (28) Cf. John Paul II, Allocution to the Bishops of CELAM, 9 March 1983: *Insegnamenti*, VI, 1 (1983), p. 698; Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 18: *l.c.*, pp. 684-686.
- (29) Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum*, n. 2.
- (30) Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 4.
- (31) Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1550.
- (32) John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 26: *l.c.*, p. 698.
- (33) Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 45: *l.c.*, p. 44.
- (34) Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 4.
- (35) St. Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, 4, 15, 32: *PL* 34, 100.
- (36) Cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution *Laudis Canticum*, 1 November 1970, n. 8: *AAS* 63 (1971), pp. 533-534.

- (37) Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 45: *l.c.*, p. 43.
- (38) Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 22.
- (39) *Ibidem*.
- (40) Cf. The Congregation for the Clergy, Pontifical Council for the Laity, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, Congregation for Bishops, Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts, Interdicasterial Instruction, *Ecclesiae de Mystero* on some questions concerning the collaboration of the lay faithful with the ministry of priests, 15 August 1997, article 3: *AAS* 89 (1997), p. 852ff.
- (41) Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 19.
- (42) Cf. John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nn. 70ff: *l.c.*, pp. 778ff; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, nn. 69ff: *l.c.*, pp. 72ff.
- (43) Cf. John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nn. 26 and 47: *l.c.*, pp. 697-700, 740-742; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 46: *l.c.*, p. 46.
- (44) Congregation for Catholic Education, *Instruction on the Study of the Church Fathers in the Formation of Priests* (10 November 1989), nn. 26-27: *AAS* 82 (1990), pp. 618-619.
- (45) John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et ratio*, 14 September 1998, n. 2.
- (46) Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 46: *l.c.*, p. 46.
- (47) *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 738.
- (48) Second Vatican Council, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 2.
- (49) Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, n. 48.
- (50) Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution, *Gaudium et Spes*, 45.
- (51) Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, 7b-c: *l.c.*, pp. 11-12.
- (52) Cf. John Paul II, Catechesis at the General Audience of 5 May 1993, *Insegnamenti XVI*, 1 (1993), p. 1061.
- (53) Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 12.

- (54) Cf. *ibid.*, n. 5.
- (55) John Paul II, Catechesis at the General Audience 12 May 1993, *Insegnamenti*, XVI, 1 (1993), p. 1197.
- (56) Second Vatican Council, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 2.
- (57) John Paul II, *Letter to Priests on Holy Thursday 1997* (16 March 1997), n. 5: *AAS* 89 (1997), p. 662.
- (58) Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nn. 2; 10.
- (59) Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 6.
- (60) *Ibid.*, n. 5.
- (61) Cf. *ibidem*.
- (62) Cf. John Paul II, Catechesis at the General Audience of 12 May 1993, *Insegnamenti* XVI, 1 (1993), pp. 1197-1198.
- (63) Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini*, 31 May 1998, n. 46: *AAS* 90 (1998), p. 742.
- (64) Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, 49.
- (65) John Paul II, Catechesis at the General Audience of 12 May 1993, *Insegnamenti* XVI, 1 (1993), p. 1198.
- (66) Cf. *ibidem*; Second Vatican Council, Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nn. 112, 114, 116, 120, 122-124, 128.
- (67) Cf. Pius XII, Radio message to the National Catechetical Congress of the United States, 26 October 1946: *Discorsi e Radiomessaggi*, VIII (1946), p. 288; John Paul II Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, n. 18: *AAS* 77 (1985), pp. 224-228.
- (68) John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, n. 13: *AAS* 72 (1980), pp. 1220-1221.
- (69) Cf. John Paul II, Catechesis at the General Audience 22 September 1993: *Insegnamenti* XVI, 2 (1993), p. 826.
- (70) John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, n. 13: *l.c.*, p. 1219.
- (71) Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 54, *l.c.*, p. 54; cf. John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, n. 31: *l.c.*, pp. 257-266.

- (72) Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 32: *l.c.* p. 31.
- (73) Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 13; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 52: *l.c.*, pp. 52-53.
- (74) Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 52: *l.c.*, p. 53; cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 13.
- (75) Cf. Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legal Texts, *Risposta circa il can. 964 § 2 CIC*, 7 July 1998, in *AAS* 90 (1998), p. 711.
- (76) Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 18; John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, nn. 26, 28: *l.c.*, pp. 697-700, 742-45; Catechesis at the General Audience of 26 May 1993, *Insegnamenti*, XVI, 1 (1993), p. 1331; Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, n. 31: *l.c.* pp. 257-266; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 53: *l.c.*, p. 54.
- (77) John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia*, n. 31, VI: *l.c.*, p. 266.
- (78) John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 17: *l.c.*, p. 683.
- (79) In this regard, a solid preparation on those matters which arise more frequently in confession is asked of priests. A useful aid in this respect is the *Vademecum per i confessori su alcuni temi morali attinenti alla vita coniugale* (Pontifical Council for the Family, 12 February 1997, Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1997).
- (80) Cf. *ibidem*.
- (81) John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, 30 November 1980, n. 13c: *l.c.*, p. 1219.
- (82) *Ibid.*, n. 3: *l.c.*, p. 1183.
- (83) Cf. n. 13: *l.c.*, pp. 1218-1221.
- (84) *Ibid.*, n. 8: *l.c.*, p. 1204.
- (85) Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 48: *l.c.*, p. 49.
- (86) Cf. John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 8: *l.c.*, pp. 668-669.

- (87) Cf. *Jean-Marie Vianney, curé d'Ars: sa pensée, son cœur*, présentés par Bernard Nodet, Le Puy 1960, p. 100.
- (88) St Augustine, *In Johannis Evangelium Tractatus*, 123, 5: CCL 36, 678.
- (89) Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 875.
- (90) John Paul II, Letter to Priests on Holy Thursday 1997 (16 march 1997), n. 4: *AAS* 89 (1997), p. 661.
- (91) Cf. St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 83, a. 1, ad 3.
- (92) John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 22: *l.c.*, p. 691.
- (93) *Ibid.*, 29: *l.c.*, p. 704.
- (94) Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 6.
- (95) Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, 28.
- (96) *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1550.
- (97) John Paul II, Catechesis at the General Audience of 19 May 1993, *Insegnamenti*, XVI, 1 (1993), p. 1254.
- (98) *Ibid.*, n. 4., *l.c.*, pp. 1255-1256.
- (99) Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum ordinis*, n. 6a.
- (100) Cf. *ibid.*, 6g.
- (101) *Ibid.*, 6a.
- (102) Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 17: *l.c.*, pp. 18-20.
- (103) St Augustine, *Ep. 134*, 1: *CSEL* 44, 85.
- (104) Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 19; John Paul II Allocution at the Symposium "Collaboration of the Laity with the pastoral ministry of priests" (22 April 1994), n. 4; *Sacrum Ministerium* 1 (1995) 64; cf. Congregation for the Clergy, Pontifical Council for the Laity, Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Congregation for Bishops, Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legal Texts, Interdicasterial Instruction *Ecclesiae de Mysterio* on some questions concerning the collaboration of the lay faithful with the ministry of priests, 15 August 1997, Forward: *AAS* 89 (1997), p. 852.

- (105) Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 66: *l.c.*, pp. 67-68.
- (106) Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2442; *CIC*, canon 227; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 33: *l.c.*, pp. 31-32.
- (107) Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 22; *CIC*, canon 846; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, nn. 49 and 64: *l.c.*, pp. 49 and 66.
- (108) Cf. John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 26: *l.c.*, pp. 697-700; Catechesis at the General Audience 21 April 1993, *Insegnamenti*, XVI, 1 (1993), p. 938; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 45: *l.c.*, pp. 43-45.
- (109) John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 18: *l.c.*, p. 684; cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 10.
- (110) John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 18: *l.c.*, p. 684; cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Optatam Totius*, n. 20.
- (111) John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 82f, *l.c.*, p. 801.
- (112) St Gregory Nazianzus, *Orationes*, 2, 71: *PG* 35, 480B.
- (113) Cf. John Paul II, Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, n. 43: *l.c.*, pp. 731-733.
- (114) Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 17; *CIC*, canon 282; John Paul II Post Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 30: *l.c.*, pp. 705-707; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directory for the Ministry and Life of Priests, Tota Ecclesia*, n. 67: *l.c.*, pp. 68-70.
- (115) John Paul II, Catechesis at the General Audience of 7 July 1993, n. 7: *Insegnamenti*, XVI, 2 (1993), p. 38.