CONGREGATION FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES

***PASTORAL GUIDE***

FOR DIOCESAN PRIESTS
IN CHURCHES DEPENDENT ON THE
CONGREGATION
FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES

*Rome, June 1989*

*Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate
Very dear Priests,*

The young mission Churches, of which you are the zealous pastors, are living through a period in history which is particulary favourable to development and maturity. In such a context of encouraging dynamism of the Christian and missionary life, priests, by reason of the ordination and mission they have received, carry out a unique and irreplaceable role.

The Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, consistent with its time-honoured experience, has chosen as its operative priority for these years the care of the autochtonous clergy. So as, in fact, to be in a position to give effective responses to the Lord and to the ever new challenges which history is offering to the missionary Church, it is necessary for the identity of the pastors to be even more enhanced. We are deeply convinced that the coming into being of our future ecclesial communities and their suitability to significantly affect the non-Christian world which surrounds them, are and will be in direct proportion to the "quality" of the clergy.

Not without reason did the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, in the audience granted to the Plenary of our Dicastery, after having insisted on the "pre-eminence of the spiritual life" for local priests, affirm that in the Mission Territories "the personal witness of the holiness of priests acquires a singular importance and becomes, even more than elsewhere, a mark of credibility and a guarantee of the efficacy of apostolic activity".

For my part, I am happy to be able to offer to all the diocesan priests of the mission Churches a copy of this "Pastoral Guide". The basic principles of priestly being and acting have been delineated in it, in conformity with the wisdom and experience of the missionary Church. I entrust it with a sense of hope to Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ the Eterna1 Priest, and the Star of Evangelization, so that it might help every priest to interiorize it and follow it with fidelity, joy and perseverance.

Together we implore the assistance of the Holy Spirit so as to become ever more faithful imitators of Christ the "Missionary of the Father".

*Rome, 1 October 1989, Feast of St. Therese of the Child Jesus*

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*Prefect*

1. Introduction.

Conscious of the fundamental importance of the ministerial priesthood for the life and growth of Christian communities, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples has always had special care for local priests in the young Churches.

As a practical contribution to the training of sacred ministers, its plenary session of 14 - 17 October 1986 formulated Some Guidelines on Formation in Major Seminaries, which were communicated to the Bishops concerned by H.E. the Cardinal Prefect in a circular letter of 25 April 1987.

Following on this first important contribution towards the training of seminarians, and as an expression of its care for priests, the plenary session of 11-14 April 1989, after wide consultation and an examination of the ample material submitted by the local Churches, has prepared a Pastoral Guide for Diocesan Priests in Churches dependent on the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

In this guide, in conformity with the doctrine and general norms of the Church, we find treated in order the main themes concerning the identity, spirituality, life and pastoral activity of priests, with particular emphasis, in accordance with the express wish of the Council, on the aspects that are of particular importance to young Churches in process of dynamic growth. Such aspects are: essential interior values for the priest and his lifestyle that may serve as a witness also for non-Christians; close communion with the bishop, fellow priests and the Christian community; a willingness to devote oneself to first evangelization of non-Christians; training of the laity for participation in the life and growth of the Church and in evangelization; special attention to youth; preferential love of the poor; sensitivity to human development and the defence of justice; aptitude for the promotion of inculturation; and ecumenical dialogue with other religions.

These and similar themes are, as it were, the connective tissue of the whole document, make the Guide more adapted to the needs of priests in the Churches in mission territories, and are to be considered the key to the reading of what follows.

Those addressed by the Guide are diocesan secular priests in Churches dependent on the Congregation. These are growing in number and are assuming ever greater responsibilities, and so special attention should be paid to quality. Also, they are largely the first or second generation of local priests, for whom there has been a traditional model of religious missionary priests but not of a local diocesan clergy. Finally, the problems of priests in mission territories are specific and concrete, bound to local socio-ecclesial and cultural situations, and requiring suitable pastoral guidelines and solutions.

Our hope is that this Guide will be a reference text which will promote unity and stimulate all secular priests, and be a source of inspiration also to religious and missionary priests working in the same young Churches. With confidence, therefore, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples presents it to the Episcopal Conferences and individual bishops as a pastoral guide for their priests and as a basis and point of reference in formulating or renewing their local directories, so that the whole priestly family of the missionary Church may grow in fervour, work in unity of spirit and purpose, and be able to respond to the hopes of a Church that is on the way towards a new missionary age, in union with Mary.

I - AT THE SOURCES OF MINISTERIAL PRIESTHOOD

2. Trinitarian Foundation.

Jesus Christ, in whom "lives the fulness of divinity"' (Col 2:9), was sent by the Father to put into effect the plan for universal salvation (cf. Jn 3:17; 5:30; 8:16; Gal 4:4; etc.), receiving from Him all power to fulfil his mission (cf. Jn 5:20-21; Mt 28:18); He was consecrated with the strength of the Holy Spirit (cf. Lk 4:18ff; Acts 10:38) and, after fulfilling the will of his **Father,**who wishes that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (cf. 1 Tim 2:4), to the point of giving his life as a ransom for many (cf. Mk 10:45), he destroyed death by his resurrection and returned to the Father, entering heaven, where he reigns for ever and intercedes for his brothers and sisters (cf. Jn 16:27-28; 13:1,3; Heb 4:14-16). The priest, who has the task of continuing Christ's mission, finds the ultimate source of his mission in the Father's salvific love (cf. Jn 17:6-9,24; 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1), and the immediate origin of his vocation in Christ, who calls him by name, as He called the apostles and gave them his Spirit (cf. Jn 20:21), to go towards the Father, along with his brothers. In this Trinitarian reality, which is at the base of the Church's mission, there lies the full meaning of the vocation and mission of the ministerial priest.

Christ himself made his apostles *ministers,*so that, in the community of believers, they should have the *sacred powers of holy orders.*Through the apostles, the Lord made their successors, the bishops, sharers in his own consecration and mission, and their *ministerial*function was transmitted, at a subordinate level, to the priests, so that they might collaborate in the proper development of the apostolic mission. This mission participates in the universality of the Church's mission to non-Christians and involves priests in a practical way.

Through the bishop, priests are called by Christ with a *special vocation*(cf. Mk 3:13; Lk 6:13); they are in the world but are not of it (cf. Jn 17:14-15); and, from the moment of their *consecration,*they are qualified to take part in Christ's own mission, to announce to all that the time has come and that the Kingdom of God is in our midst (cf. Mk 1:15), and to *preside over, teach*and *sanctify*the People of God.

The constitutive principle of the ministerial priesthood is Christ, priest and victim of the new and eternal covenant (cf. Heb 9:11-15). The efficacious principle is a special election and mission on the part of God, which makes one become an instrument of Christ (cf. Mk 3:10-19; Lk 22:19; Mt 28:18-20).

The exemplary principle is the *diaconia*of Christ, whose images are illuminating for the priest's identity: Christ sent by the Father to save the world (cf. Jn 3:17), emphasizing the universal mission; Christ the servant, emphasizing the abnegation of Christ, who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life (cf. Mt 20:28; Ph 2:7-8); Christ the shepherd and master, who shows the love of one who knows and guides his own flock and gathers it into a single sheepfold (cf. Jn 10:lff), and who is the living word of his Father, inviting all people into his Kingdom (cf. Jn 12:48-50).

The stress laid on the *ministerial*function emphasizes the priest's essential relationship with the *Person*of Christ. The priest, in fact, is a sign and instrument of the one priest and mediator with the Father, Jesus Christ, and is his continuation on earth, actualizing Christ's own powers of preaching the word, renewing the sacrifice of the Cross in the Eucharist, forgiving sinners and guiding the People of God. It is impossible to separate the *being*of the priest from the *being*of Christ, the *life*of the priest from the *life* of Christ.

A1l priests therefore, should be convinced that their *priestly identity*is realized only in conforming themselves totally to the identity of Christ - consciously, consistently and fervently. And they should remember that Christ, in his mission as Saviour, accepted the way of *incarnation,*emptying himself and taking on himself all that was human except sin (cf. Heb 2:17-18; 4:15). This *incarnation*will he a sign of missionary activity.

The **Holy Spirit** gives the Church its inner and ministerial unity and provides it with various hierarchic and charismatic gifts (cf. Eph 4:11-13; 1 Cor 12:4), vivifying ecclesiastical institutions as their soul and infusing into the hearts of Christians that zeal for their own mission with which Christ himself was inspired.

"Through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, priests are marked with a special character and are so configured to Christ the Priest that they can act in the person of Christ the Head".

At the origin of this election, sanctification and mission, there is always the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier (cf. Acts 13:3; 19:6). And it is the Holy Spirit who grants him the objective capacity for exercising an efficacious ministry. The Spirit himself is *sent*(cf. Jn 14:26; 15:26) and remains united to the priest, who is sent to collaborate in the work of salvation.

Thanks to the Spirit, who is the *principle of communion,*priests become guides and spiritual animators of the community; especially through the power of the Word. Thanks to the same Spirit, they become ministers of the sacraments, which are all vivified by Him, from baptism "in water and the Spirit" (Jn 3:5; Acts 10:47) to the Eucharist, in which Christ "continually exercises his priestly office on our behalf by the action of' his Spirit".

Ordination is, for priests, the beginning of a continual Pentecost. By virtue, therefore, of this extraordinary grace, they should be always aware of the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church and should cooperate with it, conscious of having received a supernatural and universal mission for the benefit of all people.

3. Ecclesiological and sacramental foundation.

The Church, the "universal sacrament of salvation", transmits Christ's redemption through the word and sacraments, especially through the sacrament of the Eucharist. Priests who participate in the ministry of the Church are called to preach and to spread the gospel, to preside over the liturgy, and to guide the People of God.

The Church is *communion,*hierarchically bringing together various ministries, services and functions within the community. Especially through the three grades of holy orders (bishops, priests and deacons), it builds itself up as a living temple, in a communion of faith and love. These three ministries, conferred by ordination and transmitted by the apostles and their successors, are hierarchical and constitute the Church's hierarchy.

The bishop, in communion with the Supreme Pontiff, head of the Episcopal College, and with the members of this College, is the "high priest" in his ecclesial community and is the living sign of Christ the Supreme Pastor. His function reproduces the central role of the humble and powerful service of Christ the Head. But in order to exercise his own ministry fully and efficaciously, the bishop needs to he helped by his priests and deacons. Priests are *aids and instruments*of the episcopal order and, in a certain sense, make the bishop present in their own local communities. Under his authority they preach the gospel, and "sanctify and govern that part of the Lord's flock entrusted to them".

The priests also, in communion with the bishop, *make Christ present.*In so far as they fulfil the ministry of Christ the Prophet, through the service of the word, they preach even to those who are far away; they are priests and ministers, because when they consecrate they are acting in the person of Christ the High Priest; they are pastors, because they lead and guide the community in the name of Christ the God Shepherd (cf. Lk 10:16;1 Pt 5:2).

In the Church's communion, finally, there is a distinction and complementarity between the priesthood of ordained ministers and the common priesthood of the faithful, so that each cooperates in an organic way with the other in fulfilling the mission entrusted by Christ to the Church. The common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood, in fact, although they differ essentially and not merely in degree, are related to each other in that each in its own way shares in the one priesthood of Christ. Priests should be conscious of this particular identity of theirs, which fits them for a specific ministry in the building up of the one Body of Christ, which by its nature is prophetic, priestly and kingly. Although there are different functions, the one identical fundamental dignity of Christians remains intact.

The priest becomes specifically *diocesan*by his incardination in a diocese, in which he remains united to the bishop by a new title and is placed in a special way at the service of the particular *communion*which is the diocese. As a diocesan priest, he is called to build up communion between the members of the local community, and also to enlarge it through the evangelization of those who are still outside.

Within this communion that is the Church, there should not be forgotten either the figure of the permanent deacon, who works alongside the priest and should be trained to live an evangelical life so as to be able to fulfil in a fitting way the duties proper to his order. He is a figure who could assume an important role today in the young Churches, which are in need of all available energies for their growth. The diaconate should be studied and organized at the level of the Episcopal Conferences.

It is necessary to stress the *ecclesial*and *sacramental* dimensions of the priesthood. Every priest is an expression of the Church and realizes its plan of salvation. This implies consciousness of his links with the Church, participation in its work of salvation, and communion of spirit and action with the various pastoral agents, in particular with the Roman Pontiff, and with the bishop, the other priests and the deacons.

All priests should fix their gaze on Mary, Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church, who from the time the Incarnation of the Son of God has become an exemplary and necessary foundation of their being and their life.

II - IDENTITY AS EVANGELIZER AND PASTOR

4. Missionary conscience of the priest.

The communion of the local Churches with the universal Church reaches its perfection only when these take part in the missionary effort on behalf of non-Christians, both within their own territory and beyond their borders.

In the apostolic dynamism that belongs to the missionary nature of the Church, priests necessarily occupy an important place. And this should be seen all the more in those working in mission territories, where the evangelization of non-Christians is in progress.

Priests, by their ordination, have received a special gift, which "prepares them not for any limited and narrow mission but for the widest scope of' the universal mission of salvation 'even to the very ends of the earth' (Acts 1:8)".

It follows that every priest should have a clear *missionary conscience,*which makes him fit and ready to devote himself effectively and generously to the preaching of the gospel to those who do not profess faith in Christ. The priest is in a special way a "missionary to the world".

The evangelization of non-Christians who are present in the territory of a diocese or parish is entrusted, as a primary responsibility, to the respective pastor with his community. This apostolic duty requires that the bishop should be essentially a messenger of faith, and that the priests should work with all their strength to preach the gospel to those who are outside the ecclesial community, committing themselves personally to it and involving their faithful in it, in collaboration with the missionaries.

In the distribution of pastoral tasks, it should not be the general rule that local priests will be given communities that are already formed and developed, while missionaries are entrusted with those that are beginning, along with the responsibility of evangelizing new groups. Local priests have the right and duty to take on for themselves the evangelization of their brothers and sisters who are not vet Christians, becoming real *frontier apostles,*without aspiring to posts that are more highly considered, secure, central or better remunerated.

Young Churches are encouraged to participate "as soon as possible in the universal missionary work of the Church. Let them send their own missionaries to proclaim the gospel all over the world, even though they themselves are suffering from a shortage of clergy". All local Churches should know how to give from their own poverty. Thus, apart from priests who belong to missionary institutes, dioceses should be prepared to send out priests of their own, who feel the call of Christ, as *Fidei Donum*missionaries, to take part in missionary activity properly so called. Such priests should be happy to live fully their communion with Christ, who was sent by the Father (cf. Jn 17:18; 20:21), and with the universal Church, placing themselves at the disposal of their bishop to be sent out to preach the gospel to other peoples. This requires on their part not only maturity in their vocation, but also detachment from their own country, people and family, and an ability to enter into another culture, with intelligence and respect (cf. Gn 12:1 - 4; Heb 11:8).

In no other sector of the Church's apostolate as in this, can priests show the intensity of their love for Christ, for the Church and for humankind, being able to say with St. Paul: "I made myself all things to all, in order to save some at any cost" (1 Cor 9:22).

5. Pastoral conscience of the priest.

The pastoral function requires a mature *pastoral conscience*on the part of priests, founded on their identity as men who are "consecrated to preach the gospel, shepherd the faithful and celebrate divine worship", deriving their mission from Christ the Good Shepherd, who knows, feeds and guides his own sheep and goes in search of those that are lost or are still outside the fold (cf. Jn 10:lff; Lk 15:3-6).

In its fuller expression, the pastoral conscience shows itself in a sense of belonging to the universal Church, in a loving communion of obedience to the Roman Pontiff, perpetual and visible principle and foundation of the unity of faith and communion (cf. Mt 16:19; Jn 21:15-17); and also in a sense of communion and exchange between local Churches, in which and of which the universal Church is constituted. A local Church becomes barren if it does not give itself also to its sister Churches. This implies that priests should be ready to go out, sent by their bishop, to collaborate in charity with Churches that are more in need, especially those that are in areas that have been only partly evangelized.

In its immediate expression, the pastoral conscience shows itself in a sense of belonging to one's own local Church, in communion with the bishop, the other priests, the deacons and the whole community of faithful.

Communion with one's bishop should be *spiritual*and *hierarchical,*and entails certain attitudes, such as: recognizing in him the authority of Christ the Supreme Pastor; welcoming with respect and love his role as father of the diocesan community; collaborating actively with him, in apostolic obedience. Bishops, for their part, should consider their priests as "brothers and friends"; they should know them personally, visit them frequently and take to heart their material and spiritual wellbeing. The relationship between bishop and priests is founded on a spirit of faith, but it grows and expresses itself in a climate of mutual trust, esteem and practical cooperation, with respect for each other's role.

Communion with other priests is based on the fact that, together and around their bishop, they constitute a "single priesthood". The sense of belonging to the 'presbyterium' enables each priest to feel united to all the others "by special bonds of apostolic charity, ministry and brotherhood", achieving that unity which Christ wished for his own (cf. Jn 17:23).

The institutionalised structure which in practice represents the role of the 'presbyterium', is the council of priests, whose task it is to assist the bishop in the governance of the diocese, in accordance with the norms of law. These councils have a definite function even in mission territories, and so they should be established and given an important function in the widest way possible, in accordance with the canonical norms, taking into account, of course, the local concrete situations.

Communion with the faithful means that priests must consider themselves as part of the People of God, dedicated to the growth of the community, with genuine *pastoral charity,*because they have been taken from the people and appointed to act for them in their relations with God (cf. Heb 5:1). They should constantly, therefore, pray for their people, recommending them to the love of the Father (cf. 2 Th 1:11); they should try to get to know them in the situations of their daily life, as a shepherd knows his own flock (cf. Jn 10:14); they should live among them as "brothers among brothers and sisters"; they should accompany them on their journey of faith, going ahead of them with their example (cf. Jn 13:15); they should carefully avoid anything that might give scandal (cf. 2 Cor 6:3); they should give, along with their community, a genuine witness of Christian consistency; so as to provide a valid invitation to those who are far off and do not yet believe in Christ; they should take care not to distance themselves from the people because of their own status, which often seems to give them a higher rank in the social scale.

Those priests are to be praised who accept whatever service is entrusted to them by the bishop and fulfil it with dedication and joy, doing their best to attract non-Christians and not allowing themselves to become involved in activities that are foreign to the apostolic meaning of their vocation.

 **6. Priestly fraternity.**

Priests, united around their bishop, should live their brotherhood, in the knowledge that it is a true "sacramental fraternity", which is a necessary foundation for mutual spiritual animation and for the accomplishment of their ministry in unity of purpose. They should keep in mind the value of their priestly fraternity for purposes of evangelization, forming a dynamic and credible *body,*in conformity with the prayer of Jesus to his Father at the Last Supper (cf. Jn 17:20-21). Evangelization is never an isolated individual act, but is always deeply ecclesial, to be undertaken in a spirit of communion. This applies all the more to Churches where there is a large number of non-Christians.

Priests should try to have relations of real *friendship*with their fellow priests, being able in this way to help each other more easily to develop their spiritual and intellectual life, to give assistance in material needs, and to live more fully and more serenely. This type of friendship between priests, developed in Christ as a consequence of each one's personal communion with Him, is of great help in overcoming the difficulties of loneliness.

Priests with the pastoral care of souls, especially parish priests, should pay particular attention to the young priests whom the bishop assigns to them as assistants, and should help them fraternally, so that they may never feel abandoned but be able to integrate fully into the 'presbyterium’.

Among the means that promote fraternity among priests may be mentioned *priestly associations.*These are to be encouraged when, with statutes approved by the competent authorities, they aim to foster spiritual life, human relations, and cultural and pastoral activities, and to develop unity among the priests themselves and with the bishop. Associations with a closed, exclusive spirit are to be avoided, especially if they are in any way connected with, or even favoured by, influential groups or political movements. In any case, the unity of the whole ‘presbyterium' should be stressed in the younger Churches.

A particular aspect that should not be forgotten concerns fraternity between secular priests and missionaries, especially those who have contributed to the founding of the Church and the development of its local clergy.

Priestly fraternity obviously also embraces priests belonging to religious institutes and to societies of apostolic life. And it can be broadened to include lay people who follow Christ more closely in the consecrated life. Priests should be prepared to give spiritual help to lay Brothers and Sisters, in accordance with the bishop's directives and without ever interfering in their communitys internal questions of discipline and organization.

 **7. Ministry of the Word.**

It is the priest's task, as educator of the People of God in the faith, sharer in Christ's prophetic role and cooperator with the bishop, to preach the word of salvation and gather together through its power the community of believers (cf. Rom 10:17). It is the duty of the preacher of the gospel to transmit the word of God, whose humble servant he is, and not some human wisdom (cf. 1 Cor 2:1ff). The ministry of the word takes various forms, of which the following may be mentioned for the younger Churches: first evangelization of non-Christians, preaching to the faithful, catechesis of catechumens and those already baptized, evangelization of the world of education and culture, and individual dialogue.

- Indefatigable evangelizer: The priest should give priority to proclaiming the gospel message to those in the area who have not vet been baptized. First evangelization is a basic duty that the Church, through the apostles, has received from the Lord himself: "Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation" (Mk 16:15; cf. Mt 28:19). Every priest, by virtue of his prophetic role and in close collaboration with the missionary responsibility of his bishop, has a strict duty to proclaim "the living God and Him whom He has sent for the salvation of all, Jesus Christ(cf.1 Th 1:9-10; 1 Cor l:18-21). Thus, when the Holy Spirit opens their heart (cf. Acts 16:14), non-Christians may believe and be freely converted to the Lord". Like Peter and John, every priest should affirm his intention to be an unwearying proclaimer of the good news about Jesus the Messiah: "We cannot promise to stop proclaiming what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20); they should take as addressed to themselves the words of the Lord to Paul: "Do not be afraid to speak out, nor allow yourself to be silenced: I am with you" (Acts 18:9-10).

In programming the apostolic activity of the diocese and the parish, an important place should be given to the specific task of preaching to non-Christians, involving first of all priests and deacons, with close collaboration from catechists and the whole Christian community.

At *the service of the Word:*It is the duty of the parish priest, along with his collaborators, to draw up a program of preaching that will reach all the faithful regularly and frequently, including groups for whom it is not possible to celebrate the Eucharist every Sunday and holy day.

Preaching entails a high sense of responsibility and dedication on the part of priests: it should never be improvised, but should be prepared by study and prayer; it should express the perennial values of Scripture, Tradition, the liturgy, the magisterium and the life of the Church; there should be consistency between the priest's preaching and his life, so that his word may be strengthened by his witness (cf. Mt 9:16); and the criteria put forward should be of permanent validity for the Christian life of individuals and community.

Of special importance in preaching is the *homily,*which is part of the liturgy and is reserved to the priest or deacon. It should illustrate the mysteries of faith and the norms of Christian life, starting from the sacred texts and following the course of the liturgical year. It should also be linked to the catechesis, applying the mysteries that are preached upon to the situations of daily life, within the cultural context.

In mission areas where there is a shortage of clergy, lay people may be allowed to preach, in accordance with canonical norms. In this case, the priests should choose suitable candidates from among the faithful and should prepare them for this sensitive ministry. When they have been officially mandated by the bishop, they should involve them in parochial preaching programs and should give them fraternal help.

- Ivolved in catechesis: Catechetical training, under-stood as systematic teaching of doctrine and as a gradual experience of Christian life, is a grave duty of the community and especially of its pastors. Parish priests, by virtue of their office, are bound to see to it that catechesis takes place in a regular and orderly way, reaching all classes of faithful and all age levels.

In mission areas, catechesis assumes a still more important role, as new communities have to be brought into being and the religious growth of the newly baptized must be fostered, in a youthful ecclesial context which requires adequate inculturation and is often subject to pressure from the non-Christian environment and possibly from the influence of modern materialism.

In this Field, cooperation from all classes of the community is indispensable, but in particular from certain categories:

Parents, first of all, have the duty to bring up their children in a Christian way by word and example. Priests should prepare those who are about to be married, and should assist Christian couples to assume this responsibility, by giving them appropriate instruction and practical help.

Teachers obviously have an important role to play in helping new generations to grow in the faith. The teaching of religion in school is, for many young people, their first serious contact with the gospel. Priests, therefore, should pay special attention to the sector of Catholic and State schools, because they provide a suitable setting for first evangelization as well as for the religious training of those already baptized, and also because of the opportunity to incarnate the Christian message in the cultural values transmitted at school. The way of using these opportunities will vary according to the nature of the schools, the religious training of the teachers and the laws of the State. What is important is to realize the key role that the scholastic sector can play in diocesan and parochial pastoral planning.

Catechists, in mission Churches, have the task of teaching Christian doctrine and of organizing, in collaboration with the priests, the liturgical exercises and works of charity. In certain cases they may be given the spiritual care of small communities which the priest can reach only from time to time. With the development of the Churches, the catechist who used to do every thing is tending to give way to the catechist with the specific task of catechesis. Priests should develop a special relationship with catechists, should recognize their status and give them proper remuneration, and should see to their spiritual and intellectual training, possibly in special centres, in accordance with diocesan norms.

One of the most important tasks of catechists is the instruction and guidance of catechumens. Experience shows that it is largely to their generosity that the fruits of first evangelization are due, especially in areas where non-Christians are numerous. In this context, we may stress the role of the catechumenate, in which, through instruction and apprenticeship, catechumens are initiated into the mysteries of salvation and introduced to a life of faith, charity and apostolate. It is up to the Episcopal Conferences to draw up statutes for the catechumenate, on the basis of the *Ordo Initiationis Christianae,*determining the duties, programs and rights of catechumens. Priests are asked to make a generous effort to develop the catechumenate, in the convinction that it is a privileged means of fostering the growth of the community, in new members and in maturity.

To promote catechetical instruction, and the preaching of the word in general, priests should learn how to make use of the means of group communication and the social communications media, helping the faithful also to develop criteria for their proper use. This will require sensitivity, a certain amount of training, a talent for stimulating cooperation on the part of the laity, and ability to make use of properly equipped institutions.

- Personal dialogue: One form of communication of the word that should never be left aside is the always effective one of person to person. The Lord himself made use of it, as can be seen, for example, in his conversations with Nicodemus (cf. Jn 3:lff), the Samaritan woman (cf. Jn 4:lff), Simon the Pharisee (cf. Lk 7:lff), and others. Personal contact between the one who transmits the word and the one who receives it is to be encouraged. Priests should pay special attention to the sacrament of reconciliation and to spiritual direction as opportunities for fraternal contact and dialogue, in which appropriate solutions may be found to individual problems.

8. President of liturgical celebrations and minister of the sacraments.

The priest, who participates in a special way in the priesthood of Christ, as his minister and under the authority of the bishop, expresses his priestly function above all in the liturgy and in the conferring of the sacraments. He should try to develop a deep sense of liturgy, therefore, and should be a convinced animator of the liturgical life of the faithful.

- The sacraments: Asfar as the ministry of the sacraments is concerned, the priest's first task is to see that they are properly understood, especially through catechesis: their ecclesial character, their intrinsic link with the Eucharist, the radical aptitude of the faithful to receive them and to live the grace proper to each of them by virtue of the common Christian priesthood. One should try to eradicate the idea that the sacraments are automatic, quasi-magical things, detached from life.

As the faithful who are properly disposed have a right to receive the sacraments, pastors should see that they are suitably prepared. And this instruction should not be limited to the time preceding the celebration, but should continue also afterwards, accompanying them and helping them grow to maturity, especially in the case of neophytes. The community has a duty, to create an environment of fraternal welcome for those receiving sacraments for the first time.

For the growth of the Church, it is important to stress the centrality of the *Eucharist,*through which and around which the community is set up, lives and grows to maturity. Offering the holy sacrifice "in specific, sacramental identification with the eternal High Priest", priests should place the eucharistic mystery really at the centre of their life and of that of the community. They should not forget that it is only by starting from this eucharistic centre that they will be able to preach the word fruitfully and bring together the community entrusted to them. They should encourage the faithful to take an active part in the Mass, offering the divine Victim to the Father and uniting the offering of their own lives to Him, receiving the bread of life frequently, and adoring the living Christ in the tabernacle. When, through lack of priests, it is not possible to have Mass every Sunday in all the communities, pastors should draw up a program of rotation, to enable the faithful to have a certain security and order in this essential area of their Christian life.

In the present situation, it is well also to recall priests "to a diligent, regular, patient and fervent exercise of the sacred ministry of *Penance*".It is a pastoral task that requires availability and a spirit of sacrifice, but which is the highest expression of God's mercy in Christ, through the ministry of the Church. Priests should try to present this sacrament also as a solution to conflicts in the present world, inasmuch as individual sin always affects social life, with negative consequences for the full dignity of persons.

In Churches in mission territories, where precisely this practice is still largely in effect, thanks to good catechesis and the generosity of pastors, care should be taken to try to overcome any difficulties of organization and personnel, in order to maintain and strengthen it. A certain amount of planning will be necessary, especially on the occasion of major feasts, to enable neighbouring priests to help each other in their task. One should remember that individual confession is the only ordinary way in which the faithful who are conscious of grave sin can be reconciled to God and the Church. As for general absolution without previous individual confession, it should be recalled that it may be granted only in precise conditions of imminent danger of death or of grave necessity; this is verified when because of the number of penitents, there is not a sufficient number of confessors available to hear the confessions of each of the penitents within a suitable period of time, so that these, through no fault of their own, would be constrained to remain for a long period of time deprived of sacramental grace or of Holy Communion. To judge whether the conditions required by the canonical norms truly apply belongs to the Diocesan Bishop who, by taking into account the criteria agreed upon with the other members of the Episcopal Conference, may determine the cases for such a need.

Community penitential celebrations, however, should be held, especially at the more important periods of the liturgical year, while educating the faithful to understand their deeply ecclesial meaning of purification, even when there is not sacramental absolution.

Especially, but not exclusively, in areas where there is first evangelization of non-Christians, Baptism and Confirmation also require special attention on the part of priests.

The effects, especially, of *Baptism*should be emphasized, namely: liberation from sin, divine adoption, configuration with Christ and incorporation into the Church. Preparation for it should be given special attention, involving parents and godparents when it is a question of infants, and the candidates themselves when they are adults. The natural link between the catechumenate and baptism should be brought out. And there should be a follow-up after the baptism, as the neophytes will need help in fulfilling the obligations of Christian life and integrating themselves into the ecclesial community that has welcomed them.

Also for *Confirmation*it is important to stress the effects. It furthers one's Christian initiation, enriches with the gift of the Spirit, binds one more closely to the Church, strengthens one's faith and also increases one's duty to devote oneself to the apostolate within and outside the ecclesial community. For those to be confirmed, too, there should be careful preparation and follow-up, to help them to a more mature Christian life and more generous involvement in the apostolate, including that to non-Christians. The conferring of Confirmation is a good occasion to establish a personal relationship between each candidate and the bishop.

- Some priorities for the 1iturgy: In Churches growing towards maturity, the pastoral work of the liturgy should have certain priorities: first of all, a *sense of community*in the celebrations, inasmuch as they are the work of Christ and of the Church, in which each Christian has his own proper aptitude to participate according to the diversity of orders and functions. Secondly, there is the need for *active participation,*which presupposes preparation and an awareness of the value of the liturgical act. There should be emphasis on the *link between celebration and life,*so that the faithful may be able to express in their lives the riches of the mystery of Christ, learnt through faith. There should be a conscious effort at *inculturation,*so that the celebrations may be more easily understood and may respond to the sensibilities of people in their cultural context, without however diminishing the indispensable sense of mystery. The study of inculturation and its practical applications in the liturgy should be undertaken at the level of the Episcopal Conference, in conformity and harmony with the traditions and norms of the universal Church. Priests with the care of souls should be convinced proponents of inculturation and should courageously put into effect the common program approved for the diocese. Finally, serious attention should be given to *Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest.*While the celebration of the Eucharist is the centre and summit of the Christian life, it is indispensable to ensure that outlying communities have a prayer service every Sunday, even when it is impossible to have Mass because of a shortage of priests. Episcopal Conferences and individual bishops have a duty to regulate these celebrations, in accordance with the norms of the Church, in their content, their ordering, their relation to the liturgical year, the person who should preside, and the importance of not confusing them with the celebration of the Eucharist. It is up to the priests to prepare the communities concerned and their animators, so that these celebrations, which will comprise the reading of the word of God and possibly also the distribution of the Blessed Sacrament, will be a true expression of liturgical prayer, capable of helping the faithful to sanctify Sunday and increasing their desire to participate in the Mass.

- The comportment of the presiding priest should be guided by a sense of decorum, as well as by a proper understanding of the liturgy. The dignity of the liturgy can be ensured even in conditions of simplicity or poverty in the buildings and furnishings, provided the ceremonies are conducted with interior and exterior devotion, avoiding all haste and carelessness. Thus, the president of the liturgy should animate it actively, intervening personally with explanations and exhortations as foreseen in the rubrics, and providing space for other interventions through readings, singing, movements and moments of silence. To preside at the liturgy and animate it effectively requires deep spirituality on the part of the priest, as well as doctrinal knowledge, the ability to involve others, and the willingness to prepare each celebration.

- *The faithful observance of the liturgical norms,*in all that concerns gestures, words, vestments and furnishings, should be an opportunity for the priest to express a sense of the sacred and to educate people in this. The Church has promulgated precise instructions on this matter, and they should be followed by all priests. Fidelity to the norms of the liturgy, along with a dynamic way of presiding, will provide a good example to the community. The faithful should get a sense of the depth of the mysteries celebrated, both by the interior fervour of the priest and by the dignity of his comportment. Priests should realize that they are failing in their role as guides and may disorientate the faithful if they change the liturgy by additions or subtractions without sufficient reason, or celebrate without sacred vestments or sacred vessels, or outside the appointed place. While recognizing that there may be situations of need and justifiable exceptions, priests are strongly urged to offer the young mission communities liturgical celebrations that are as orderly and dignified as possible. It should be remembered, too, that dignified celebrations will attract those who may be interested in becoming Christians.

9. Liberation, human promotion and the preferential option for the poor.

Human development is linked to evangelization. There is, in fact, only the one mission of the Church, which considers itself, by the will of Christ (cf. Mt 25:41-45; Lk 16:19-31), involved in the integral development of men and women, as individuals and in society, to the point of denouncing, when necessary, the evils and social injustices that oppress them. It should be remembered, however, that the mission proper to the Church "is not of a political, economic and social order", but is "religious", in that it offers its "primary contribution to the solution of the urgent problem of development when it proclaims the truth about Christ, about itself and about humanity".

In this connection there arises the discussion, seen as more or less urgent in different parts of the Church, on *liberation,*with all that this implies in practice. Everyone is called, in the Father's eternal loving design, to communion with God, with one's fellow human beings and with the whole world, which is intimately connected with man and through him arrives at its end. This communion was upset by sin, but restored in Christ, in accordance with the promise of salvation that God foretold from the beginning of humankind (cf. Gn 3:15; Rom 5:20-21). Christ, by his death and resurrection, frees us from sin and from its consequences of oppression, egoism and injustice on the individual and social level; He restores communion with and offers salvation to all.

Following the example of Christ, the Church proclaims this same liberation and strives to help people to achieve it in all spheres of their lives. It is necessary for priests in mission territories to have clear and precise ideas on this problem and to know the essential elements for a theology of liberation in conformity with the magisterium of the Church, so as to be able to make a valid contribution in both theory and practice, without falling into partisan ideologies.

To apply the values of the gospel and of the Kingdom to the economic, social and political sphere is the specific task of the laity. Priests have a duty to prepare them for this, to help and support them, and to urge them to take on their proper responsibilities in the field of temporal realities. Priests should be courageous and balanced in this field of apostolate.

For a fruitful pastoral ministry in liberation, human development and justice, priests should strive to acquire a thorough knowledge of the Church's social doctrine, guidelines and pastoral options. They should be close to their people, when they are oppressed by the rich and the powerful, with bonds of solidarity, and unity; 'conscientizing' them so that they do not submit passively to situations of social injustice. Pastors should not give up in the face of the difficulties inherent in this type of work.

The grave phenomenon of refugees, from war or natural disasters, should also be remembered. The sufferings of flight, separation of families, isolation and extreme poverty, often lead to the collapse of ideals, discouragement and despair. Religious faith is a precious support in rebuilding one's life. The priest is often the first to feel the impact of such situations, with their related problems of people being herded together, promiscuity in the camps, and young people adrift. In these cases, considerable sensitivity is required of priests, along with preparation for this specific pastoral task.

When acting on issues of development, and especially in cases of public denunciation of injustice, priests should act together, not individually, in a program studied at the diocesan level and approved by the bishop. It should be borne in mind that exaggerated personal involvement, especially in the socio- political sphere, can risk taking the priest away from his proper plane, which is that of pastoral charity, and may undermine credibility in his mission and cause disorientation among the faithful and prejudice to the apostolate.

Requests for financial aid from other Churches or international agencies should always be made with the approval of the Ordinary and in accordance with a diocesan program, so as to ensure equity between the different parochial communities.

Among the demands of the gospel, one of the most important is that of charity towards all, with particular attention to the poor. The Church reaffirms its preferential love or option for the poor and asks priests to be true to this. It is not a question of an exclusive choice, but of a special form of the primacy of charity - a love for others, based on what they are and not on what they possess or because of the fortunate circumstances in which they find themselves. By poor is meant not only those without money, but all the oppressed, the marginalized and those in serious difficulty, such as the handicapped, the unemployed immigrants, refugees, drug addicts etc. Priests should be close to these brothers and sisters, sharing their problems and sufferings, and seeing in them the suffering face of Christ (cf. Mt 25:40).

Even in the work of social development, priests should be convinced that evangelization must take place through the supernatural values of the gospel and not by force of economic means. By safeguarding the Church's mission, one will avoid awakening expectations that are too secular in the faithful and in those who are interested in Christianity.

10. Promoter of collaboration.

Apostolic activity is the *work of the Church,*of a community, that is hierarchically organized with different levels of competence.

Priests have a duty to fulfil their pastoral service in an ecclesial spirit, as part of the community, in union with and obedience to the bishop, and in collaboration with all the pastoral agents, avoiding acting in an independent, autonomous way, and fitting in with the pace of the community in achieving its goals, with patience and flexibility.

The involvement of priests in the diocesan program is also manifested through their participation in various councils and organizations. They should give their time to these with interest and generosity, for the growth of the whole diocesan family.

In the parish, it is up to the parish priest, first of all, to regulate cooperation between the pastoral agents: priests, deacons, religious, and lay people. Efforts should be made to foster unity especially among those who work full-time at the apostolate, with frequent and regular meetings for information, planning and evaluation.

Structures for participation foreseen in canon law, such as *pastoral councils*and *finance committees,*should be willingly set up and promoted, as also other communal initiatives such as *small Christian communities,*associations and movements. It may be noted that in certain cultures small community groups are at the basis of the social structure and can form an ideal setting also for Christian life. These basic communities should be assisted so as to be truly ecclesial, in genuine communion and cooperation with the Church and its pastors, in doctrine, organization and apostolic initiatives. The priest should encourage convergence of action between the groups, in a spirit of unity, while respecting the individuality and autonomy of each.

At both diocesan and parochial levels, there should be cooperation between local clergy and missionaries, who come from other nations, many of whom will belong to religious congregations. These do their missionary work by virtue of a universal mandate of the Church, expressed by, the Holy Father, and under a special contract with the local Ordinary. Their presence is a special gift of the missionary Church and an exchange of love between particular Churches. These missionaries should strive to become integrated in the local society and Church, inasmuch as they are now fully part of them; they are members of the 'presbyterium' if they are priests, and are subject to the bishop in everything concerning pastoral activity, while living and acting in conformity with the particular charism expressed in their constitutions. Local priests, overcoming any false sense of nationalism, should live in communion with them, appreciating their cooperation in the apostolate, which, especially in the sphere of first evangelization, is not only useful and specialized, but in many cases indispensable. The missionaries, for their part, should encourage the growth of local vocations. Between these institutes and the local clergy there should be a proper coordination of work, under the guidance of the bishop, taking account of the unity, that should exist in the apostolate and the charisms proper to the institutes.

For the overall unity of the pastoral work which is of capital importance in mission activities, priests will need to work on the basis of specific planning, both at the diocesan and parochial levels. This will require the use of proven techniques, namely: studying the situation and fixing general and specific objectives, criteria, strategies and modes of action. For the planning not to remain theoretical, concrete programs must be drawn up, fixing clear goals, initiatives, those in charge, means, places, dates etc. The programs should be subject to regular checks.

11. Dedicated to the evangelization of cultures.

The gospel transcends all cultures and is identified with none of them (cf. Jn 18:36). However, the Kingdom announced by the gospel is lived by people who are deeply bound to a culture, and the construction of this Kingdom cannot but take account of cultural elements. This important area has a deep significance for missionary evangelization, as it has an obvious link with the incarnation of the Word. The Church has not only the simple task of evangelizing cultures, i.e. promoting and welcoming all the resources, the richness and customs of the nations, in the measure in which they are good; it also has the task of bringing the Good News to all groups of peoples, to transform them from within, and purify them from negative elements, both old and new, so that the gospel message may be expressed in a new and authentic way.

The primary subject of inculturation is the local Churches, as communities living a daily experience of faith and love. Specialists may help to stimulate and guide, but they are not the principal agents. Nor is inculturation the task of a single community, but of all the Churches that live in a particular cultural area. Inculturation, finally, is not something that is done once and for all, but is the continuous integration of Christian experience in a culture, which is never stable or closed.

It is well to note that the gospel, over the centuries, has penetrated a vast number of different cultures, drawing, from them, values that have become universal Christian values, capable of providing answers to questions from any culture. This fact facilitates and enriches the inculturation of the gospel message in a particular culture, and should be taken into account when discerning local customs, so as not to destroy them carelessly and deprive a particular group of a cultural heritage that is also the heritage of the whole Church.

Priests should engage with confidence and joy in this challenging field of apostolate, learning how to judge their own culture, distinguishing its positive elements from its less positive ones, and taking into account the consequences of sin, so as not to believe that every cultural manifestation is necessarily of value. They should bear in mind that inculturation should not harm the unity of the Church, but should start always from Scripture, and should be in conformity with Tradition and with the directives of the living magisterium.

And so, that inculturation may achieve its aim without disorientating the faithful, priests should act in union with the bishop and with their fellow priests, following a common program drawn up by the Episcopal Conference.

In this context, one should mention the indispensable function of popular Catholic piety in the country. Popular piety, with its values, beliefs, attitudes and manifestations based on the Catholic religion, is a privileged field for the dialogue between gospel and culture. It is an expression of popular wisdom. And so, to be able to evangelize a culture in depth, it is necessary to foster this piety in it. Priests should also see to it that popular piety is based on the authentic Christian message and does not lapse into magic, superstition, fatalism or other deviations.

12. Friend and guide of the young.

The young are a living and active force in the Church, and are at the centre of its interest and love; they are its *hope.*Convinced that youth is precious in itself, and that young people have a key role in the construction of society, the Church entrusts them to the preferential care of priests"', who should help them become men and women of strong human and Christian personality. In young ecclesial communities, located for the most part in areas with a high percentage of young people in the population, this type of pastoral work is a priority for the present and future of the Church. Priests should make use of young people in the work of evangelization. With reason one can speak of the apostolate of hope when the young are evangelized and themselves become protagonists in the evangelization of non-Christian youth.

The attitude of priests towards the young should be characterized by sincere love and great availability. First of all, one should allow oneself to become involved in their exuberance, even at the cost of personal inconvenience, sharing their ideals, their way of looking at things, their problems and activities. One should aim at stimulating them to form their judgement, so as to be able to face difficult situations, such as a surrounding secular and sometimes atheistic culture, alienating ideologies, social injustice, unemployment, the lure of drugs and sex, etc. Priests should be close to young people to enlighten them and guide them through these dangers, helping them to grow in confidence, to overcome certain contradictions that are often found in them, and to take right decisions and stick to them. They should try to see with thc eyes of the young, and be prepared to give up a lot of time to them, sharing their interests and having friendly relations with them, engaging also in spiritual direction, which can have such an influence for good in the years of adolescence. Priests should bear in mind that the Church has a lot to say to the young, and the young have a lot to say to the Church.

It is also necessary to bring young people together in groups of boys or girls or mixed, making the most of school structures, associations and movements, or encouraging the formation of spontaneous groups. Young people need to participate and support each other, to achieve something worthwhile, in order to grow together. Priests should familiarize themselves, therefore, with group dynamics and train leaders of youth groups.

On the diocesan level, there should be an organization to promote pastoral work among youth, with priests trained for this type of work and appointed to lend their assistance to parish groups and others.

Priests should be aware of a phenomenon that is frequent today and has an influence on the transmission of the Church's message: a large number of young people wish to be considered as such until an age that is in fact adult, and impose immature criteria, which they call those of youth, by which to judge life. It is a problem of adaptation and should be borne in mind when dealing with them.

The pastoral approach to youth should not be limited solely to them but should involve also the whole Christian community, which should be helped and educated to understand and take account of young people's aspirations, to be for them an example of honesty and consistency in the faith, and to integrate the young in the community, for it will not be complete without the dynamic contribution of their presence. Adults and young people, as integrated together and exchanging ideas and values, will form a true and complete Christian community.

13. Promoter of vocations.

Priests have a role that no others can play in the promotion of vocations. Convinced that the Spirit continues to pour out the charisms of special vocations, and that Christ continues to call the young because He loves them (cf. Mk 10:2), priests should willingly undertake to accompany them in the delicate and decisive period of their choice of career.

Vocational work begins in the Christian community with an invitation to prayer and to a fully consistent life of faith. The community, with its diversity of services, functions and charisms, has a role of co-responsibility in the promotion of vocations. Families and schools have a particularly important role, as parents and teachers are educators also in the sphere of career guidance. But it is the children and young people themselves who are most concerned, and the priest should challenge them and help them to a mature choice from all the vocational possibilities before them.

When any of them show signs of a vocation to the priesthood or religious or missionary life, the priest should intervene discreetly and accompany them with appropriate spiritual direction. Following the example of Jesus, he should not be afraid to challenge them, with an explicit proposal of a choice of life totally consecrated to God in apostolic service (cf. Mt 4:19-20; 19:21; Jn 1:39,42-43). He should remember, too, that the best invitation is the example of his own faithful and happy life. And he should avoid holding up merely the ideal of helping the needy, without stressing the decisive and focal point of every sacred vocation, namely the person of Jesus Christ, to be loved and followed in the work of salvation. He should remember that vocations are born and grow only in the climate of an intense Christian life.

An important point in this work is to help the young person to evaluate his or her motivation. The quality of the aspirants should be tested, to avoid filling houses of formation with insufficiently motivated candidates. Each Bishop has the responsibility to provide criteria for the discernment of vocations, stressing human and spiritual maturity, intellectual capacity, willingness to serve, and social commitment. Among criteria for a vocation to the priesthood, an essential condition should be an aptitude and willingness to evangelize non-Christians. Priests should also take part in diocesan and national vocation programs, lending their support to common initiatives and making use of organizations that provide subsidies.

Part of the work for vocations will be the welcome and attention given to seminarians during holidays in their family and in the periods of pastoral experience provided for in their training. Priests, and especially parish priests, should be close to them and accompany them in their life of prayer, their apostolic experiences and study, in understanding with their directors at the seminary. Special attention should be paid to deacons during their pastoral period, which is of great importance for their formation and their introduction to the ministry.

14. Attentive to the identity of the laity.

The Church takes to heart its care for the laity, and emphasizes their vocation to sanctity and to the prophetic, priestly and regal functions of all the baptized.

Priests should be open and attentive towards the laity and should consider themselves as *disciples of the Lord*with them. In the exercise of their ministry they should not forget that, although with different functions, they are, along with the laity, "members of one and the same body of Christ, whose upbuilding is entrusted to all" (cf. Rom 12:4-1O).

Pastoral work for the laity should take into account first of all their *secular nature.* By vocation, they seek the Kingdom of God through dealing with temporal matters. They live in the world, involved in the daily situations of family and social life, but they are called by God, so that, led by the spirit of the gospel, they may sanctify the world from within, in the manner of leaven. In Churches where Christians form a minority in the population, the presence of baptized lay people has particular significance, as they can bear witness to the strength and relevance of the gospel message.

The work of the lay faithful is becoming more precious and necessary today, as the Church's missionary task assumes ever greater scope, requiring personal commitment on the part of all the baptized. In this perspective, the training of a mature and committed laity, becomes indispensable for the foundation and development of the Church.

Priests should strive to keep alive, in the conscience of their faithful, the grave duty to be proclaimers of the Good News and animators of the temporal order, in solidarity with their fellow citizens, in a spirit of charity and in the strength of the gospel.

Priests should be convinced of the value of lay people's apostolic work, should promote it and train and animate them, so that they may devote themselves to it with enthusiasm based on a genuine Christian life. They should bring them into councils and working groups, entrusting them with tasks in the Community, in accordance with their proper vocation. They should never take the place of lay people, but should encourage them to be active, in the conviction that the growth of the Church, especially in mission areas, depends on the dynamic presence of a committed and well-trained laity.

Special attention should be paid to the presence of women in the life of the Church and in its various pastoral activities By virtue of the values proper to womanhood, women can intervene with greater effectiveness in certain sectors, such as family life, the education of children, catechesis, visits to the sick, works of assistance and charity, etc., and in others in which it may not be fitting for a man, and especially a priest, to intervene. Pastoral collaboration with women requires maturity and discretion on the part of priests. The immediate direction of activities engaged in by women would be preferably entrusted to one of them.

15. Apostolate of the family.

The Christian family has the privilege of being the image of God, who is love. This love, which touches the human person as body and spirit, unites the couple and becomes fruitful (cf. Eph 5:25-32). Thus the family is "the first and vital cell of society" and "the domestic sanctuary of the Church". Jesus defended its original and immutable values (cf. Mt 19:4-8). If everywhere the family is going through a complex period, with both light and shade, in mission countries it has to resolve special problems caused by social conditions, cultural influences, and also religious convictions. The Church is conscious of the great challenges facing the Christian family at this time, and reaffirms its support for it, entrusting this care to pastors as one of their primary tasks.

Care for the families in his parish is one of the principal duties of a parish priest, and the other priests, the deacons, religious and lay cooperators should help him in this. The privileged and immediate place for the pastoral care of the family is the parochial community, with its bonds of communion, and the Christian family itself, by virtue of the grace received in the sacrament.

Pastoral care of the family begins with the remote, proximate and immediate preparation of couples for their marriage. The remote preparation should begin already in the catechesis of the young; proximate preparation is given by the pastors, in collaboration with trained assistants; immediate preparation is the task of priests, for it touches the sacrament closely. Priests should see that couples are carefully prepared for marriage, meeting them individually and in groups, paying attention specially to the meaning of the sacrament, its sanctity and the duties inherent in the state. In certain cultures, it is the family itself that transmits to the young the human and Christian values of married and family life, and this is to be encouraged.

In the liturgical celebration of marriage, the spouses signify and participate in the mystery of union and fruitful love between Christ and the Church (cf. Eph 5:32). Thus, as far as possible, its sacramental celebration should be solemn, preferably on festive days or on those indicated in the diocesan program, with the active participation of the community. The liturgy of the word will convey the meaning the occasion and will help to instruct those present in its values.

Post-matrimonial pastoral care will be the task of all sectors of the community, helping the spouses to live their vocation and mission. Priests should care for newly established families, helping them to make use of the grace of the sacrament, to be grateful in a Christian spirit for times of happiness and to accept and overcome the difficulties that are sure to come, and above all to accept children with love, taking on themselves joyfully the responsibility of helping them to grow as human beings and as Christians.

While theories contrary to the Church's teaching on the transmission of life continue to be spread, and become even enshrined in civil law, priests have the difficult and praiseworthy task of helping the faithful to be conscious and responsible "cooperators with God's creative love". There should be a united, insistent and planned pastoral effort at the diocesan level to implant in the young Churches a proper education on the responsible transmission of life, in conformity with the sound traditional teaching of the Church. In mission territories, the work of the Church in this pedagogy of marriage is often favoured by local cultural values, and these should be brought out. The points to be given special attention by pastors are the following: through courses and personal instruction, with the help of expert and morally upright persons, to educate the faithful, especially engaged and newly married couples, in responsible Christian parenthood according to natural methods; to bring out the full meaning and value of conjugal chastity; to combat with determination the scourge of abortion; to be particularly prudent and adhere to the teaching of the magisterium in all that concerns biomedical problems in the field of genetic engineering, artificial insemination etc.

Pastors should help families to be faithful to their Christian duties, even in indifferent or hostile environments, to support each other with love, a spirit of sacrifice and prayer in common, and to give a true witness to the gospel in society, especially to non-Christians. Visiting families is an important element in pastoral work. Priests should be properly trained for this apostolate and should act towards families as "father, brother, shepherd and teacher", without showing a preference except for the poor and for those going through particularly difficult trials.

The young Churches often have to face special problems concerning marriage and the family because of local cultural, religious or social conditions. Frequently there are unions, accepted by society but not regularized before the Church, either because the husband has not yet paid the full bride-price, or because one is waiting to see if the marriage will be fruitful, or for some other reason of law or custom. There may also be frequent cases of polygamy, mixed marriages with disparity of cult, and, in certain areas, the scourge of divorce. Pastoral care of such unions is delicate and difficult. It is up to the bishops to consult with other members of the Episcopal Conference and to draw up pastoral guidelines for applying to concrete situations the universal norms approved by the Roman Pontiff, which, while forbidding admission to the sacraments, express profound love and respect. Thus, young people should be educated to accept the duties of Christian marriage; there should be sympathetic understanding for persons involved in irregular situations through weakness or because of outside pressure; such couples should be encouraged not to lose hope but to live a Christian life to the best of their ability, to educate their children religiously, and, when possible, to regularize their union; one should make use of the canonical norms which can help in cases of mixed marriage or 'sanatio in radice': 'retroactive validation'.

16. At the side of the sick and the aged.

The sick and the aged require special care in the community, particularly on the part of the pastors (cf. Mt 25:36,43; Mk 16:18; Lk 9:11). They are united by a sense of physical and psychic fragility and by the dimension of internal and external suffering.

Priests should have a sympathetic concern for the sick, and should consider them a precious part of their flock. They should follow them closely and continually, helping them to understand the infinite love of the heart of Christ (cf. Mt 11:28), the solidarity of Christians and the mysterious supernatural meaning of the Cross. They should encourage them to find strength and hope in prayer and in offering their own suffering for the redemption of the world, in union with the passion of Jesus: "In my own body I do what I can to make up all that has still to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church" (Col 1:24). With the support of this faith, the sick can become bearers of "the joy of the Holy Spirit in many tribulations" (1 Th 1:6) and credible witnesses of Christian hope both to their brothers and sisters and to those who do not yet believe in the Lord. This pastoral care of the sick and the suffering should be insisted upon.

Frequent reception of the Eucharist is the best gift and help that the priest can offer to the sick and the aged. Thanks to the resurrection of Christ, he can bring them, in the Eucharist, the certitude of victory over pain and death. It is the reply of Christian wisdom to the emptiness that so often exists in society today, in spite of all its technological progress. The aged are also helped in this way to overcome the painful experience of their growing limitations and, in certain cases, of loneliness and abandonment. Priests should care for the aged and help them realize the positive aspects of this stage of their life, which has its own *specific and origina1*form of mission. The elderly person can be considered, in both the Church and society, as "the witness of the tradition of faith (cf. Ps 44:2; Ex 12:26-27), a teacher of wisdom (cf. Sir 6:34; 8:11-12), a worker of charity". They should be helped to complete their earthly existence in a positive way. Cultures are to be praised which show special veneration to the aged and keep them as an integral part of the family, as "witnesses of the past and an inspiration and source of wisdom to the young for the future".

A special moment in the pastoral care of the sick and the aged is the administration of the sacraments of reconciliation and the anointing of the sick. Priests should be careful to fulfil this precious ministry, without waiting for the last moments, and, when possible and in accordance with the bishop's regulations, should provide also for the celebration of the anointing of the sick for several persons together, with the participation of their families and possibly of the community.

In the pastoral care of the sick and the aged, use should be made of properly trained and commissioned lay people, such as extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist and for the other different works of charity. But the priest should not give up his own personal contact, which is indispensable.

In this context, priests are also invited to give care and attention to funerals. Everywhere, but especially in societies where the veneration of ancestors is traditional, pastors should be close to families at these painful times and should solemnize funerals, with as great a participation of the community as possible. A sense of the Church's own participation should be conveyed, along with the paschal nature of Christian death (cf. Rom 6:3-9; 1 Cor 15:20-22; 2 Cor 4:14-15; Rev 14:13), with attention to cultural traditions in what concerns the colour of vestments, the music, the place and manner of burial. This is an opportune moment to give the faithful an experience of the communion of saints, and for catechesis on the last things and on prayers for the dead. It is also an occasion for giving to non-Christians a witness to the faith of the baptized in Christ, the conqueror of death and giver of eternal life.

17. Promoter of ecumenism.

Discord among Christians "openly contradicts the will of Christ, provides a stumbling block to the world, and inflicts damage on the most holy cause of proclaiming the good news to every creature", thus impeding the "fulness of unity".

Priests should be convinced promoters of ecumenism, hoping for the realization of the prayer of Jesus "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21), without allowing themselves to be discouraged by local obstacles and misunderstandings that still exist.

To their own faithful, priests should expound Catholic teaching clearly and integrally, and should not fall into relativism and ambiguity in faith or behaviour, even with the intention of doing good.

As for official initiatives of the ecumenical movement, priests should follow the directives of the Church, as specified locally by the Episcopal Conference and the bishop.

In concrete relations with non-Catholics, which at times create pastoral problems, they should avoid contention and religious rivalry, but should maintain unity and clarity in their own community. They should do their best to have friendly relations with religious leaders of other denominations, helping each other where possible and avoiding misunderstandings and slights, which could only scandalize non-Christians.

In dealing with fundamentalist and intransigent religious sects, which are numerous enough in mission territories and which are usually aggressive towards Catholicism, the faithful should be instructed on certain specific points: the true marks of the Church which these sects mostly contradict; their weak points and main errors; the impossibility of establishing even a minimum of dialogue with them; the duty to defend oneself, and even to evangelize them, because in many cases they cannot even be considered as Christians. Priests should try, therefore, to understand at least the main elements of their teaching and their methods of proselytism, so as to be able to help the faithful adequately.

18. Attentive to dialogue with non-Christians.

Dialogue with followers of other religions is a delicate and important task in the Church's apostolate. It should be clear that it is a *dialogue of salvation,*which is realized only in Christ, and therefore one should not fall into relativism or undermine the integrity of the Catholic faith. This dialogue is necessary also to clarify one's understanding of the gospel and make its message more acceptable.

Priests should be open to this dialogue and should have an adequate knowledge of other religions - not only their history, organization, limits and errors, but also the values which they contain as "seeds of the Word" and "preparation for the gospel".

In a world of religious pluralism, there should be dialogue and collaboration on the part of all in the great causes on behalf of humanity, such as peace, justice, development, human rights, etc. In these fields too, priests have a duty to promote in their faithful a spirit of dialogue, encouraging solidarity and collaboration with the followers of other religions.

For concrete initiatives in inter-religious dialogue, priests should not act in isolation but should conform to the diocesan program, following the directives of the bishop, the Episcopal Conference and the universal Church.

Above all, they should be convinced that the followers of other religions have a right to receive the fulness of Christian truth, which is potentially a patrimony of all humanity, through the preachers mandated by the Catholic Church.

III - SPIRITUALlTY OF THE DIOCESAN PRIEST

19. Necessity and nature of the spirituality of the priest.

A vocation to the ministerial priesthood begins with an encounter with Christ, which must be prolonged in those He has called to a missionary life: "He summoned those He wanted... and sent them out to preach" (Mk 3:13-14). The experience of a personal encounter with Christ (cf. Jn 1:39,41; 15:9) becomes a loving discipleship (cf. Mt 4:l9ff; 19:27). The priest's response to Christ's call turns into *paschal*joy at the possibility of giving to Christ "a supreme testimony of love". The priest, like the apostles, in collaboration with his bishop and at the service of the Church, is an appointed witness to Christ, who died and rose again: "we are his witnesses" (Acts 2:32); "what we have seen and heard we are telling you" (1 Jn 1:3).

Priests should understand what is specific to priestly spirituality so that they may renew themselves continually in it. Spirituality means life in the Spirit, making priests personal and specific signs of Christ, at the service of the local and universal Church, in union with the charism of the bishops.

The spirituality of the priest springs from the grace of the Holy Spirit, as a participation in the consecration (being) and mission (action) of Christ, Prophet, Priest and King. In the rite of ordination it is summed up in the bishop's exhortation to priests for the conduct of their whole life: "imitate the holy things that you deal with". In this spirituality there is not only a *requirement*but also the *possibility of realizing*it, inasmuch as the grace of the sacrament has the power to activate the priestly character, which enables one to act in the name of Christ and which is a permanent sign of the Spirit, prolonging in a *worthy way*the priestly activity of Christ. The priest should be aware of this reality and should express it in the fervour of his life (cf. 1 Tim 4:14-16; 2 Tim 1:6).

Consequently, there is contained in priestly spirituality under a new title the vocation to sanctity, as a personal sign and instrument of Christ. If for the People of God there exists a "universal vocation to sanctity", for sacred ministers there exists a special call to perfection which they will attain if, in the Spirit of Christ, they exercise their proper functions with sincere and unwearying dedication (cf. Lv 11:44-45; 19:2; Mt 5:48; 2 Tim 1:9; 1 Pt 2:5).

Diocesan priests find their specific spirituality by living this reality in pastoral charity, in communion with their bishop as successor of the apostles, forming a priestly family in the 'presbyterium', at the permanent service of the' local Church through incardination, and available for the mission of universal salvation. This spirituality is eminently ecclesial and missionary.

Priests should be convinced that, without a strong spiritual life and a generous apostolic commitment, in close union with Christ the Priest and Good Shepherd, aiming at the heights of sanctity in line with the spirituality proper to them, it will be impossible for them to realize their priestly identity and persevere generously in their ministry.

20. Dimensions of priestly spirituality.

The spirituality proper to the secular diocesan clergy is based mainly on the following points: a loving adherence to, and devoted following of, Christ, who was sent by the Father and consecrated by the Spirit, with special devotion to the central mystery of the Eucharist and the exemplary presence of Mary; cordial and generous union with, and obedience to, the Roman Pontiff and the local bishop; close fraternity with the priests of the local 'presbyterium'; apostolic service to the faithful of the local Church and a willingness to help other Churches that are in need and to evangelize non-Christians.

The spirituality of the secular diocesan priest, therefore, should be lived in a Trinitarian, Marian, ecclesial and missionary perspective. His call, consecration and mission are a participation in the reality of Christ, consecrated in the Spirit and sent by the Father (cf. Lk 4:18; Jn 10:36), which continues in the Church (cf. Mt 28:20; Eph 1:23). Mary, Mother and associate of Christ the Priest and faithful to the action of the Holy Spirit, type and mother of the Church, is always close to the life and ministry of the priest. "Our priestly service unites us to her, who is the Mother of the Redeemer and model of the Church".

The characteristic mark of the spirituality of the priest is pastoral charity, which expresses itself in certain essential ways.

It is *sacred:*the starting point of his spirituality is his specific ministerial participation in the consecration of Christ the Priest, which took place at the moment of the Incarnation of the Word in the womb of Mary, under the action of the Holy Spirit, and which will manifest itself fully in the paschal mystery. The vocation to *be with Him*(cf. Mk 3:14) becomes, for the priest, a sharing in the priesthood of Christ and engages him to express this *sacredness*in his own life (cf. Jn 17:10).

His spirituality is *communion*with the Church: with the Roman Pontiff, his own bishop, the other priests, the deacons, the religious and the ecclesial community. This communion, by reason of Sacred ordination, creates among priests a sacramental fraternity. The charism of the bishop, welcomed as father and friend, is indispensable for bringing about the communion willed by the Lord in his sacerdotal prayer (cf. Jn 17:23). There follows from all this a deep need for community spirit and communion life. The diocesan priest lives this communion, under the bishop and within the local Church, as an indispensable component of the one priesthood.

His spirituality is also *mission:*the priestly character is the root of the specific action of the sacred minister, who acts *in the person of Christ,*as his extension, on behalf of the local and universal community. This reality engages the priest to express the redemptive love of the Lord in his ministry, as his worthy representative (cf. Rom 15:5). Diocesan priests, "as they sanctify and govern under the bishop's authority that part of the Lord's flock entrusted to them, make the universal Church visible in their own locality and lend powerful assistance to the upbuilding of the whole body of Christ (cf. Eph 4:12). Intent always upon the welfare of God's children, they must strive to lend their effort to the pastoral work of the whole diocese, and even of the entire Church".

Finally, the priest's spirituality entails *imitation*of the evangelical life of the apostles, which consists mainly in giving up everything and following Christ (cf. Mt 19:27), in generous availability for the apostolate even to the ends of the earth (cf. Mk 16:20), in mutual help and fraternity as members of a *priestly family*(cf. Jn 17:12ff; Acts 1:13-14). Diocesan priests live *the following of Christ*in accordance with the evangelical demands of the *apostolic life,*under the guidance of their bishop.

21. Evangelical traits in spirituality.

The Church, in conformity with the gospel, traces precise spiritual traits that are fundamental in delineating the figure of a true priest.

Friendship with Jesus: precisely because he is an extension of Christ, the priest is called to live in a relationship of deep, personal friendship with Him (cf. Jn 15:13-16), and it is in proportion to this that he will realize his vocation.

Ecclesial service: as minister of the Lord and of the Church, the priest should have a spirit of service (cf. Lk 22:26-27; Mk 10:42-45), which manifests itself in apostolic zeal, an ability to endure the fatigue of the work, a willingness to accept any pastoral charge, however humble, without seeking honours or personal reward, and a missionary readiness to preach to those who are outside Christ's fold.

Holiness *through his daily ministry,*in the exercise of his triple function: as minister of the word, he will unite himself ever more closely to Christ the Teacher, who proclaims the truth to those who are far and near, and he will strive to enter more deeply into the "unfathomable riches of Christ" (Eph 3:8); as minister of the sacraments, and especially in the sacrifice of the Mass, in which he exercises his main function, he will continually perform the work of redemption for the glory of God and the sanctification of the world (cf. 1 Cor 11:26); as guide of the People of God, he will be urged on by the love of the Good Shepherd to an ever more generous service, to unite the scattered flock, and if necessary to give his life for his sheep (cf. Jn 10:15-17). The royal road for the sanctification of priests, then, is in the exercise of their ministry. Ministerial actions are the normal means for the sanctification of the pastor himself, on condition that he lives in union with Christ, works in faith and charity, and does not neglect the normal means valid for all Christians. His union with Christ will provide a balance between interior life and apostolic action.

The *virtues*proper to the Good Shepherd: pastoral charity is put into action and shows itself through zeal (cf. Rom 12:11; 1 Pet 3:13; 1 Tim 4:14-16), in a life of obedience, chastity and poverty in an attitude of humility and in a willingness to carry the cross, in imitation of Christ (cf. Mt 10:38; 16:24; Mk 8:34; Lk 14:27). Each of these virtues is a necessary aspect of pastoral charity as proposed in the gospel. Priests should strive to live them faithfully, so as to be convincing disciples of the Good Shepherd and to be available with undivided hearts for the pastoral work of the diocese and of the whole Church.

22. Means of spirituality.

The *common*means of Christian spirituality are necessary also for that of the priest. Apart from these, priests are offered *specific*means, which consist substantially in the acts connected with their ministry, lived according to the spirit and directives of the Church.

The spirituality of the diocesan priest in mission territories is not lived in isolation, but in unity with the diocesan 'presbyterium' and the bishop. The central, animating presence of the bishop and the responsibility of each priest will see to it that the 'presbyterium' will be a stimulus to fervour and will offer concrete help for the spiritual life, becoming a real *priestly family*which protects its members and helps them to grow. In particular, the 'presbyterium' should foster ongoing formation, especially spiritual, indicating its objectives and offering means to achieve them, at both the personal and community levels.

The Eucharist is the centre and root of the whole life of the priest, and he should strive to mirror what takes place on the altar. He should have a full and fervent eucharistic life, drawing from the Eucharist the drive and strength of his spiritual life. The celebration of Mass, with due preparation and thanksgiving, and daily visits to the Blessed Sacrament, are not merely pastoral duties but indispensable aids to spirituality.

The Church's tradition and current directives of the magisterium indicate numerous other means for the spirituality of the priest. Each of these should be interpreted with reference to the proper identity of the priesthood: the word of God, preached and meditated upon in prayer; the liturgy of the hours, on behalf of the whole community and in communion with it; the sacrament of reconciliation, which purifies and strengthens; Marian piety, which helps one to serve Christ and the Church with generosity; frequent and regular personal prayer and meditation; retreats and spiritual exercises; examinations of conscience; spiritual direction; the study of theology; and active participation in spiritual and apostolic priestly associations.

Regular meetings with one's bishop are very useful, enabling the priest to express his ideals, projects, problems and difficulties to him, as to a father and friend, and to seek out solutions with him. Meetings with other priests are also important, for exchanges on spiritual and pastoral life: retreats, prayer in common, reflection on one's life, spiritual direction, etc. In this way diocesan priests will help each other to profit from the means of spirituality, individually and as a group.

Communion with one's bishop, with priests and deacons and the whole ecclesial community, is an efficacious means and sign of sanctification and evangelization. Mutual help becomes a "sacramental fraternity". The bishop's charism, fully acknowledged, is necessary to create this communion willed by the Lord as a participation in his universal mission (cf. Jn 17:18-23).

Priests should study the meaning of these classic and indispensable means of spirituality, and should be consistent and regular in their use, so as to be guaranteed a rich spiritual and missionary life, after the example of Christ, the apostles and the holy priests through the ages.

IV - RULES OF PRIESTLY LIFE

23. The word of God challenges the priest.

There is a close connection between the word of God and priestly life. From this word, in fact, the identity of the priest takes its origin and meaning; the preaching of the word is one of his fundamental duties; in the word is contained strength for his faith and nourishment for his spiritual life. The Church, therefore, recommends in a special way to priests a constant contact with the Scriptures in reading, study and prayer, to get an ever deeper knowledge of the Lord and of the meaning of his message (cf. Ph 3:8; Eph 3:19; 4:13).

To be able to welcome, assimilate and preach the word, priests should take time off for silence and meditation. Although pastoral work makes constant demands of all kinds, those priests who know how to take time off in order to grow interiorly are to be praised. In planning their life, they should reserve times for reflecting on Sacred Scripture, reading the Fathers of the Church and studying the sacred sciences. This interior enrichment will also help them to be more convincing apostles, towards those who do not believe in the Lord.

24. Life of prayer.

Among the preeminent means and expressions of the spiritual life of the priest is the practice of prayer. The priest's prayer is first of all a participation in the faith and prayer of the community, in which it should find expression as in its privileged place (cf. Acts 1:14). It is also an example for the faithful, who are thus encouraged by their pastors to live in communion with God. Apart from prayer in and with the Christian community; the priest should nourish his own spiritual life with regular personal prayer. He should feel his responsibility to be a man of prayer on behalf of his brothers and sisters, in imitation of Christ, who "is living for ever to intercede for all" (Heb 7:25). Through prayer, even before words and actions, the priest should communicate the divine to others and speak to God in their name. From the priest's heart there should rise to the Father adoration, praise, thanksgiving and petition on behalf of the faithful and also of non-Christians.

Realistically, it must be recognized that the rhythm of pastoral activity in the Churches in mission territories does not facilitate regularity in prayer. The priest, as a *person entrusted with sacred things,*cannot accept a situation that would regularly sacrifice prayer in favour of work. Pastoral tasks may at times modify, the order, the time, and even the manner of exercises of piety, but they should never eliminate prayer. Those priests who know how to order their work, and if necessary limit it, in favour of prayer are to be praised. The Church confidently proposes to priests the highest ideal of prayer life, contemplation, inviting them to tend towards it with sincerity, in spite of their own limitations, external difficulties and pressing engagements (cf. Lk 18:1; Eph 6:18; 1 Th 5:17).

The Eucharist, which priests celebrate in *persona Christi*constitutes the summit of the spiritual life. They should be faithful, therefore, to the celebration of Mass every day, with suitable preparation and thanksgiving, if possible with the participation of the faithful. If priests live together, it is good for them to concelebrate, at least on special occasions, to express and strengthen their sacramental fraternity. The Eucharist also reminds priests that they should be happy to pray in the presence of Jesus living in the tabernacle, with daily visits and times of more prolonged adoration.

The recital of the liturgy of the hours, the official prayer of the Church entrusted to the piety of priests, should be complete and ordered, so as to consecrate the different stages of the day to the praise of God, in communion with all the community at prayer Parts of the breviary should not be omitted lightly, but only for serious reasons. Where there are several priests, it is advisable that they recite part of the breviary in common, and, where possible, pastors should try to involve even the faithful in community recitation of Lauds and Vespers.

Mental prayer, in an attitude of listening, of prayer and of response, is the most elevated form of confrontation between the Word and one's own life. Priests, therefore, are to be faithful to the practice of daily meditation, preferably at the beginning of the day. In it they will find light, comfort and a remedy for all the necessities of life and ministry. As experience confirms, it is this regular meditation which puts order into life and guarantees spiritual growth and prevents falling into tepidity.

Marian piety should have a place of honour and should express itself spontaneously and lovingly to the Mother of God and of the Church. Priests should look to Mary as to a model of consecration to God, of listening, prayer and availability. They should express their love in fervent celebration of her feasts, in daily recitation of the rosary, and in other forms of Marian devotion, including those suggested by healthy popular piety. They should experience her presence in their life and confidently entrust to her protection both their faithful and those who do not yet know the Lord Jesus, so that they too may hear her maternal voice saying, "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2:5).

Ministers of reconciliation, priests should themselves approach the sacrament of Penance frequently and regularly, if possible with the same confessor, so as to be better known and helped. They will obtain, in this sacrament, not only pardon for their sins but also the strength to be faithful to their commitments and to make progress in the spiritual life. In this context, it is strongly recommended that priests, in all stages of their life, should resort to spiritual direction, convinced that, even more than the faithful, they can profit from a guide who will enlighten and advise them. Spiritual direction helps maintain fervour of spirit.

As a share in the offering of the sacrificial Lamb, priests should accept the cross as a necessary dimension of their identity (cf. 2 Cor 4:10; 6:4-5; Gal 6:17). Apart from the sacrifices connected with the ordinary situations of their life and ministry, priests should be generous in following the suffering Christ with voluntary penance also, offered in joy, with the apostolic spirit of St. Paul: "It makes me happy to suffer for you" (Col 1:24); "in all our trouble, I am filled with consolation, and my joy is over-flowing" (2 Cor 7:4).

Spiritual life is absolutely in need of the special help afforded by periods of more intense prayer and reflection (cf. Mk 6:31). Priests should be faithful to their monthly day of recollection and their annual retreat. Retreats organized by the diocese for the local clergy are to be recommended, especially with the bishop's presence. By active participation in these, priests will be helped to take regular stock of their spiritual situation and to maintain unity between their interior life and apostolic service.

25. Intellectual life.

The constant progress that is taking place in the Church in the theological sciences, with the aid of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 14:26; 16:13); the need to spread the gospel message and make it understandable to people of one's own time and culture; the need also to understand our rapidly changing societies in the light of faith - all of these make it essential for priests to maintain their intellectual life. Without knowledge, the priest is like an extinguished lamp (cf. Mt 5:14-15). For this reason the Church insists that priests "are to continue their sacred studies even after ordination to the priesthood. They are to hold to that solid doctrine based on sacred Scripture which has been handed down by our forebears and which is generally received in the Church, as set out especially in the documents of the Councils and of the Roman Pontiffs".

Because of their identity as prophets and pastors, priests should strive, therefore, to keep abreast of the theological renewal that is taking place in the Church through the Spirit, so as to have an ever deeper understanding of the mystery of Christ and not be deceived by vain novelties and pseudo-sciences.

The priest's studies should be concerned first of all with the sacred sciences and other disciplines that are connected with these and that could help in the exercise of the ministry, or with disciplines in which he is professionally employed. Priests should be reminded of the need to express the gospel message in suitable catechetical language, and to be open and attentive to inculturation also in the theological field.

The intellectual life presupposes not only conviction and willingness, but also regular use of adequate means, such as: time set aside for study; active participation in initiatives and meetings organized by the diocese; the choice of good reading material; possibly also the building up of a basic personal library or at least a diocesan one that can be easily consulted. Every priest should make a point of having the recent documents of the Roman Pontiff and of the local bishop, and of studying them and explaining them to the faithful. He should avoid, on the other hand, publications that spread ideas that would be harmful for his personal life or his ministry.

The choice of priests for university studies, at home or abroad, is for the bishop to make, for the unity of the diocesan apostolate. Every priest should be at his disposal in this matter, fitting in willingly with the program of the diocese or of the Episcopal Conference, without personal ambitions*.*When he has finished his course, he should go back immediately to the diocese and take up the work assigned to him, making use of the training he has received but without claiming privileges because of his qualifications.

26. Community life.

Community life, based on the one priesthood and as an expression of fraternity, is strongly recommended by the Church for diocesan priests. It favours joint apostolic work and especially first evangelization, which experience has shown to be difficult if undertaken by individuals. Bishops should study, therefore, how to promote community life, according to the possibilities available and the models offered by local culture, trying to overcome understandable organizational difficulties and possibly some psychological reticence. It should be remembered that community life cannot be improvised, but requires sensitization and preparation already in the seminary.

When several priests are employed in the same parish, it is advisable that they live in the same house and form a single community. It is also useful to form communities of priests who work in different but neighbouring parishes. If possible, no priest, especially if he is young should remain for a long time on his own. However, as pastoral reasons in many areas oblige priests to live alone in their parish, the bishop should try to help them develop a community spirit by organizing regular meetings, in small groups or at the diocesan level.

Community life means not merely living physically together but sharing on the spiritual, pastoral and human levels. Thus, priests who form a community should pray together; they should exchange useful information and plan and evaluate together their apostolic activities; they should help each other in cultural updating; they should help each other financially, even having to some extent their goods in common, according to the bishop's guidelines; they should willingly take recreation together; they should help and encourage each other in difficult situations, in times of weariness or illness, and especially when problems with one's vocation arise; when necessary, they should not be afraid to give fraternal advice.

Community life can help understanding between priests of different backgrounds or ages; the young are helped in the early exercise of their ministry by the experience of the older priests, who in turn are assisted by the young and encouraged by their enthusiasm and dynamism.

For priestly community life to achieve its aims, there must be a minimum of organization, such as a designated superior, who need not necessarily be the parish priest; a clear assignment of functions; orderly material and financial arrangements; and a realistic timetable, providing for moments in common during the day.

27. Priestly obedience.

"Among the virtues most necessary for the priestly ministry must be named that disposition of soul by which priests are always ready to seek not their own will, but the will of Him who sent them (cf. Jn 4:34; 5:30; 6:38)". The fundamental reason for the priest's obedience is the fact that he is a personal instrument of Christ and therefore should conform himself totally to Him. Christ, "although He was Son, learned to obey through suffering" (Heb 5:8), "He emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave..., becoming obedient even to accepting death" (Ph 2:7-8), and through his obedience He cancelled the disobedience of Adam and earned the salvation of all (cf. Rom 5:19).

The task of evangelizing non-Christians needs to be done by priests in a spirit of obedience. As Jesus was the first missionary because He obeyed the salvific will of his Father: "Here I am! I am coming to obey your will" (Heb 10:7), so the priest should live his mission in obedience to Christ and the Church, who send him to continue the work of gathering together in unity the scattered children of God (cf. Jn 11:52).

The priest's obedience is ecclesial, linked with his own ordination, because his mission cannot be realized except in union with the hierarchy. Therefore, pastoral love demands that priests "dedicate their own wills through obedience to the service of God and their brothers. This love requires that they accept and carry out in a spirit of faith whatever is commanded or recommended by the Sovereign Pontiff, their own bishop or other superiors".

Obedience for a priest is, first of all, a habitual disposition of mind, which links him with the will of God through the authority of his superiors, and which enables him to overcome a too earthly concept of the autonomy of the person; and it entails a faithful execution of the norms, with recognition of his place in the 'presbyterium' and of his duty of service to the hierarchy.

The areas in which priestly obedience should show itself specially today are:

- Fidelity to the magisterium: based on his Christian and priestly identity, this fidelity should express itself concretely in an attitude of obedience to the teaching authority of both the Roman Pontiff and the bishops, from which priests should not deviate to follow unapproved theories or personal convictions; such fidelity is indispensable for their own authenticity and for them to be able to offer their faithful a teaching conformed to revealed truth; the pastor should guide his flock with sound doctrine and should not disturb it with uncertain or deviant theories (cf. 2 Tim 2:14; Tit 2:1).

- Acceptance of appointments: the priest's fidelity to his task as evangelizer and pastor should be seen in his readiness to accept and fulfil whatever mission is entrusted to him by his bishop. A spirit of faith and obedience is needed for this, with an attitude of availability, not asking insistently to be assigned to certain tasks or parishes, or refusing the task assigned by the bishop. When appointments are being made, priests should be open with the bishop, expressing their ideas in sincere and frank dialogue, but, once a decision has been made, they should accept it joyfully; without further objections. Even if at times they find that they are not very suitable for a task accepted in obedience, they should not forget that it is the duty of diocesan priests, as collaborators of the bishop, to give themselves fully, to try to provide for the needs of the diocese. When they reach retirement age, they should hand in their resignation to the bishop and be willing to leave their post.

- Observance of the requirements and norms of their function: pastoral service in a Christian community, especially in the case of a parish, requires priests to be regular and faithful in their fulfilment of certain routine duties and also in their comportment. In what concerns *Mass intentions,*the Church has laid down regulations for these in the new Code of Canon Law, and priests should follow them carefully. There should be no impression of financial interest conveyed, and one should be prepared to offer Mass without a stipend, especially for the poor. General and diocesan rules concerning bination and the Mass for the people should be observed. Every priest should keep a written account of the Mass stipends received, the date of celebration, the intention specified, the fulfilment of the obligation, and the transfer of intentions to other celebrants. In parishes there should be a special register for Mass intentions.

The parish registers, for baptisms, marriages, deaths and other items prescribed by the Episcopal Conference and the bishop, are important for the proper exercise of the rights and duties of the faithful. The parish priest should see to it that they are properly kept. In every parish there should be safely maintained *archives,*including the parish registers, letters from the bishop and other important documents.

Priests should wear *clerical dress,*in accordance with the norms of the Episcopal Conference and legitimate custom. They should not lightly give up this sign of their state, which can be both a safeguard for themselves and a positive witness to the faithful.

Residence in their parish is a duty imposed on pastors by the terms of their service. However, in accordance with the directives of their bishop, priests need and have a right to a suitable period of vacation each year, for physical and spiritual restoration. They should also try to take a weekly break for recreation and for useful reading. Before leaving the parish for a long period, however, they should arrange with the bishop for someone to take their place.

28. Poverty and the use of goods.

The Church is called to follow the road taken by Jesus, who "carried out the work of redemption in poverty and under oppression" (cf. Ph 2:6-7; 2 Cor 8:9). Consistency in evangelical poverty and in the preferential option for the poor is indispensable if the ecclesial community and its pastors are to be credible to the world.

Priests, by their ordination, "are invited to embrace voluntary poverty. By it they will be more clearly likened to Christ and will become more devoted to the sacred ministry".

The virtue of poverty for priests is, above all, a total choice of the Lord as their "portion and inheritance" (Num 18:20); it means living in the world without belonging to it (cf. Jn 17:14-16) and without becoming engrossed in it (cf. 1 Cor 7:31); it means maintaining a certain freedom and detachment from earthly realities.

Affective and effective poverty requires certain precise attitudes and ways of dealing with personal property and that of the Church, and the virtue of justice may also be involved:

- *A certain financial security*is necessary for priests, as those serving at the altar (cf. 1 Cor 9:13), so that they may exercise their ministry without excessive preoccupation or distraction. The traditional principle holds that the support of their priests is the responsibility of the different Christian communities. It is for the Episcopal Conferences and the individual bishops to decide the best means to ensure a fair retribution for priests, and to determine what goes to the priest personally and what to the Church. But even the use of personal money should be guided by a spirit of poverty and charity. Priests, therefore, should have the spirituality of a pilgrim: what exceeds their own needs and a just retribution for those employed by them, they should use for the Church and for works of charity, without accumulating for themselves, in the conviction that the clerical state should not be a means for improving one's own financial situation.

- A *sober lifestyle:*grateful to Divine Providence, they should make use of temporal goods to maintain a worthy but simple lifestyle, with detachment from riches and from anything that might smack of vanity. In this way they will be credible witnesses and be listened to by their people when they speak about the Christian view of temporal goods and their use.

In certain contexts, becoming a priest means moving up on the social scale. This fact, although involuntary, should not result in the priest being distanced from his own people. His lifestyle, therefore, should be an evangelical witness and should not separate him from the poor; he should be sparing in his use of money; saving so as to be able to help the needy; he should not feel himself above manual labour, for example in household chores, gardening etc., without however devoting too much time to it at the expense of pastoral work; he should willingly do without what is unnecessary, and especially superfluous; he should be frugal in his household arrangements, furniture, clothing, means of transport, audiovisual equipment etc.; he should avoid frequent and costly outings and vacations; he should be hardworking and make good use of his time. All of this is required by the spirit of poverty and to enable him to approach the poor without humiliating them.

- Responsible administration: aware that the goods of the parish belong to the Church and are not his own, the priest should see that they are administered with justice and order, in conformity with their proper ends, which are: the promotion of worship and the apostolate, the honest support of the pastors, and aid to the needy. He should maintain a clear separation, in accordance with diocesan norms, between personal property and that of the Church, which should never be employed for the interests of third parties, such as relatives and friends. In the administration of parish property or that of pastoral works, the help of lay experts should be called upon, a council for financial affairs should be set up, the community should be informed of the financial situation of the parish, prudently but in a spirit of openness, and clear balance sheets should be drawn up, in accordance with the bishop's directives.

- Financial self-reliance, requests for aid: from a financial point of view, the aim of every Christian community should be self-reliance. Priests should educate the faithful to provide for the needs of the Church and to share with the poor. It is also useful to promote exchanges of charity between different Churches. Priests, however, should be discreet in requesting offerings and donations, and these should always be used in conformity with the wishes of the donors; when a specific use is not indicated, they should be used for the needs of the Church and of the poor. Prudence should be exercised in requesting, or even in merely accepting, donations from the rich and powerful, so as to be free from possibly dangerous obligations in the ministry.

- Insurance for illness and old age: priests should pay their contributions, according to the law, to civil insurance and pension schemes, so that they will be provided for in cases of illness, invalidity and old age. Where the State does not make adequate provision, the local Churches should themselves set up insurance and pension schemes, at the diocesan level or, better, at the level of the Episcopal Conference. It is recommended also that houses for elderly priests should be constructed, so that they may spend their old age in priestly and peaceful surroundings and with adequate care. Priests are encouraged to take care of their health, to have a regular medical check-up, and to take precautions against contagious illnesses, especially in places where hygienic conditions are poor.

- Wills: among duties concerning justice and poverty, one should not forget to draw up in good time one's will and testament, which should preferably be handed in to the diocesan curia. It is clear that only personal goods, not those of the Church, may be disposed of in the will. Priests should try to help the Church and the poor even after their death, and not leave their goods to those who are already well off.

29. Chastity in celibacy for the Kingdom.

The Church has always considered perfect and perpetual continence for the Kingdom of Heaven, so strongly recommended by the Lord (cf. Mt 19:12), as "particularly fitting to the priestly life". In today’s often permissive society priests are called upon to reconfirm their vocation to perfect continence in celibacy, through which they are consecrated to God "in a new and distinguished way"; theymore easily hold fast to "Him" with undivided heart" (cf. 1 Cor 7:32-34), and are dedicated to the service of their brothers and sisters with greater liberty and effectiveness, receiving the gift of a greater "paternity in Christ". Chastity should not be considered a law that inhibits personal growth; rather its positive aspects should be stressed.

Perfect chastity in celibacy is first of all a grace that the Father grants to those who pray for it with perseverance, truth and humility. Convinced, however, that ordination does not protect them from every temptation and danger and that chastity for the Kingdom is not something that can be acquired once and for all but is the result of a daily conquest, priests should take the normal means and not neglect practices of proven efficacy:

- Sincerity with God and with oneself: first of all, they should have the courage to be sincere with God and with their own conscience, looking frankly at their aspirations, difficulties and weaknesses. Self-knowledge helps one pick out the points to be strengthened and those to correct; sincerity with God guarantees supernatural help, and strengthens one's confidence and joy in the priesthood.

- Us*e of the normal means:*experience indicates the need to make use of both supernatural and natural means in order to be faithful to celibacy. Thus, priests should renew every day their total dedication to Christ; they should ask in prayer for the gift of fidelity and perseverance; they should entrust their heart to Mary, Queen of virgins; and they should have recourse to mortification, which increases self-control and helps overcome obstacles.

Human maturity is an indispensable premise for a life of priestly chastity. Priests should have control of their affective life and, if necessary, should seek expert help, preferably from priests; they should have friendships with other priests and should be happy to live in common with them, avoiding isolation for too long a time; they should not expose themselves needlessly to danger; they should be moderate in their use of food, and especially in their use of alcohol and tobacco; they should be prudent in their reading, the shows they attend, their use of audiovisual media, and their choice of entertainment.

They should realize that at times celibacy contrasts with family or tribal structures. Even in these cases, they should be faithful to their undertaking, explaining to their people, by word but especially by their lives, the true meaning of their choice.

- Comportment with women: in their relations with women, special care should be taken, because of the priestly state and the danger of scandalizing the faithful. This holds particularly for Sisters, who are closer to priests through their religious spirit, apostolic ideal and way of life. Priests, therefore, while they have a duty to have good relations with all women and to involve them in the apostolate, should avoid preferential attentions and anything that might create special bonds and diminish freedom of heart. Taking account of local culture, they should avoid all ways of behaviour that might disturb the faithful and diminish the credibility of priests, such as being alone with a woman for a considerable time, admitting women to private rooms, giving them presents, travelling alone with them, etc. In this whole matter, it is not enough that the priest himself should know that he is not guilty of anything; he should also follow the criterion of St. Paul: "For our part, we avoid giving scandal to anyone, so that our ministry may not be brought into discredit" (2 Cor 6:3; cf. 8:21). As for women employed in priests' houses, the regulations of the bishop and of the Episcopal Conference should be observed.

30. Relations with one’s relatives.

Relations with his family are important for a priest, as he should find in his family a natural support for his life. In certain cultures, the problem of a priest's relations with his family can become acute, involving not only the human and affective aspect but also matters of finance and justice. An evangelical attitude must be adopted, which will enable him to live in communion with his family and to help them, without losing his freedom for the ministry.

Christian families should be educated to look upon a priestly vocation as a gift from God to the community, and to try to share the priest's apostolic ideal, without interfering in his priestly task. On the financial side, priests should gratefully try to help their relatives, and especially their parents when in need, but always with discretion and without using Church property. They should never involve their relatives in the administration of Church property. While exercising normal hospitality towards their relatives, they should avoid having them on a permanent basis in their residence, especially if it is a question of groups, and they should see to it that their visits do not interfere with apostolic activity by their frequency and length.

31. Civic commitment.

Being citizens of their State, priests have a duty to take an active part in it, helping in the construction and ordered life of the earthly city, according to the spirit of the gospel and the social doctrine of the Church.

As pastors, they should feel obliged "to do their utmost to foster among people peace and harmony based on justice". They should give a good example to the faithful in obeying the order and just laws of the State. They should also feel capable of reserving for themselves that freedom that is necessary for the exercise of their pastoral ministry, in accordance with the natural and inalienable rights of the Church. In defending these rights and affirming their autonomy, they should act only in accord with their bishop.

While taking an active role in civic life, priests are asked by the Church to behave always in a way befitting their state and to avoid activities that might compromise their credibility as pastors.

In the following areas, Canon Law imposes precise limitations: priests are forbidden to assume public office whenever it means sharing in the exercise of civil power; without the permission of their Ordinary, they may not undertake the administration of goods belonging to lay people, or secular offices which involve the obligation to render an account; they are forbidden to act as surety, even concerning their own goods; they are not to sign promissory notes which involve the payment of money but do not state the reasons for the payment; they are forbidden to practise commerce or trade, either personally or through another; they are not to play an active role in political parties or in directing trade unions.

If the good of the Church or of the civic community indicates that a priest should take part in one of these activities that require special permission, the bishop should grant it only for a limited time, in accordance with the criteria of the Episcopal Conference and after hearing the opinion of his own council of priests.

32. Ongoing formation.

The fact that the human person is in constant development, and the need for growth in one's Christian and priestly life, for renewal in the sacred and secular sciences, and for keeping abreast of the evolution of society, require of priests a continual, ongoing formation, which involves all the dimensions of life: human, spiritual, priestly, doctrinal, apostolic and professional.

Ongoing human formation is indispensable for priests to be able to remain in touch with social life, to understand its values and defects, to maintain positive relations with people, to adapt to change, and to express critical judgements on the world about them.

Ongoing formation should stress the spiritual, priestly and apostolic dimension: vocation to the priesthood, relations with God, commitment to follow Christ, generosity in one's mission as evangelizer and pastor, interior conversion, renewal in pastoral methods - these are all areas that require continual attention and a capacity for growth, in accordance with the renewal of the Church inspired by the Holy Spirit. Priests should realize that the duty to update themselves concerns first of all their inner *being,*i.e. their spiritual and apostolic life, which should grow continually towards the high ideal of priestly sanctity.

They should be convinced of the need to continue their studies throughout life, as an aid to their growth as persons, as nourishment for piety and contact with God, and as a stimulus in their apostolate. Ongoing formation should include the use of suitable instruments, such as organized courses, personal study, sharing of experiences, etc., which should be persevered in, in the conviction that one is never completely formed.

Ongoing formation assumes particular characteristics at different stages of one's life. In the first years after ordination, and especially at one's first appointment or when asked to take on a new appointment, a young priest should be helped by one with some experience and should make an effort to adapt to the new surroundings and type of work. It is not right that he should be asked to take up a new function without adequate preparation. The diocese should have structures to see to this, especially for young priests in the first years after ordination.

During their years of maturity, priests should undertake a critical review of their life and apostolate, during a period set aside for this, as, for instance, during a sabbatical year. Other stages in life may call for a special effort at adaptation, such as times of illness or old age, when there will be inevitable limitations on activity and a change of role. Priests should be helped to live these situations in a positive way by the bishop and their fellow priests, with friendship, attention and even material assistance. Finally, priests should always be ready for death, seen as the entrance into the Kingdom and a meeting with the living and glorious Christ, loved above all things and served with generosity and fidelity (cf. Mt 25:31,34).

33. Unity, harmony and zeal in the life of a priest.

The pressures in the life of a priest are many, and he must find time for prayer, apostolic service, study, rest and contact with others. It is good, therefore, to draw up a program, including a daily timetable, to which one should try to be faithful. This should not, however, limit freedom and spontaneity, or bind one to fixed schemas that would hinder one's pastoral service, but should help one to work with method, avoiding improvisation and the risk of omitting important duties. It should be an ordered program, therefore, insisting on the essentials and providing a just balance between the different duties.

However, to achieve unity and harmony in one's life, it is not enough to have external order in one's pastoral work, or the mere practice of prayer, or constancy in the fulfilment of one's duties. It is necessary to go deeper and to touch the principle and source of the priest's identity, namely the person of Christ, whose minister he is.

To achieve unity and harmony of life, priests should "unite themselves with Christ in acknowledging the Father's will and in the gift of themselves on behalf of the flock committed to them (cf. l Jn 3:16)".

It is, above all, in the eucharistic sacrifice that they will find that *pastoral charity*that is capable of producing an irresistible zeal, with unity and harmony of life and activity. It is only if he is a man of the sacred that a priest can be also a man for others.

Zeal is a necessary consequence of the priestly character and of the generous response to grace that this implies. Like St. Paul, the priest should be able to say: "I live now, not with my own life, but with the life of Christ, who lives in me" (Gal 2:20); "it was I who begot you in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor 4:15); "I made myself all things to all" (1 Cor 9:22); "I should be punished if I did not preach the gospel" (1 Cor 9:16). Zeal is an intrinsic necessity for a priest, deriving from his consecration; it implies interior ardour and deep conviction and expresses itself in missionary dedication, unwearying pastoral service, openness to those who are far off, and care for all, especially the poorest. All priests, therefore, should strive to realize this unity and harmony between consecration and mission.

Priests will find a simple and effective model in Mary, who was able to sum up and express all her personal participation in the mission of Jesus through her maternal love. "The Virgin Mary in her own life lived an example of that maternal love by which all should be fittingly animated who cooperate in the apostolic mission of the Church on behalf of the rebirth of humankind". Mary, who welcomed her Son Jesus with faith and love (cf. Lk 1:38), contemplated Him in her heart (cf. Lk 2:19,51) and gave Him to the world, will be a perennial source of inspiration and a powerful support to priests, as they strive to bring about the ardent desire of Christ, who has called and sent them: "I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already!" (Lk 12:49).

The Supreme Pontiff John Paul II, during the course of the Audience granted to the undersigned Cardinal Prefect on the 1st September 1989, approved the present Pastoral Guide and gave consent to its publication.

*Rome, from the Office of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, 1 October 1989, Feast of Therese of the Child Jesus.*

**Jozef Card. Tomko**, *Prefect*

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