

Catholic Church. Congregatio de Propaganda Fide
Instruction on cooperation...

AES3460

SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE
EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES

INSTRUCTION
ON
COOPERATION OF BISHOPS WITH
PONTIFICAL MISSION AID SOCIETIES

INSTRUCTION
ON
RELATIONS BETWEEN LOCAL ORDINARIES
AND MISSIONARY INSTITUTES

UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE
EVANGELIZATION OF PEOPLES

INSTRUCTION
ON
COOPERATION OF BISHOPS WITH
PONTIFICAL MISSION AID SOCIETIES

INSTRUCTION
ON
RELATIONS BETWEEN LOCAL ORDINARIES
AND MISSIONARY INSTITUTES

————— : —————

Dated February 24, 1969
Published March 21, 1969

————— : —————

With Commentary by
Msgr. Mariano Clementi

UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE
1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20005



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2016

Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization
of Peoples

INSTRUCTION ON COOPERATION OF BISHOPS
WITH PONTIFICAL MISSION AID SOCIETIES

The coordination of the missionary cooperation of bishops in respect to the Pontifical Mission aid societies and particular undertakings of the dioceses in favor of the missions.

It is necessary to establish some secure principles and norms so that what has been decreed by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and the Supreme Pontiffs to foster the orderly cooperation of Catholics in regard to the Church's missionary solicitude may be the more aptly achieved.

Wherefore, the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples or for the Propagation of the Faith, with the approval of Pope Paul VI, judged it proper that this important matter should be treated in a Plenary Congregation, which, because of the new make-up given to it by the Apostolic Constitution *Regimini Ecclesiae Universae*,¹ has become not only the most suitable and appropriate means for making decisions concerning the above-mentioned matter, but also the proper organ for decisions having to do with the direction of the Church's worldwide missionary activity.

Therefore, with this purpose in mind, the same Sacred Congregation, after having first requested proposals and suggestions from the episcopal conferences and the national directors of the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies, and having received the opinions of a special group of consultors, presented the following two questions for deliberation and decision by the first Plenary Congregation, held in Rome from June 25 to 28, 1968:

A—The definition of the relations which should exist between the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the episcopal conferences in respect to the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies;

B—The regulation of certain undertakings of dioceses subject to common law in favor of the missions.

A—As regards the first question, the Fathers of the Plenary Congregation, after careful consideration, thought it well, first of all, to call to mind and confirm these Principles:

1. All missionary cooperation is to be organized in an orderly way, for it is part of that serious concern for the whole Church to which the bishops, as “members of the episcopal college and the legitimate successors of the Apostles,” together with the Supreme Pontiff, “are obliged by Christ’s decree and command.”²

2. To obtain this cooperation in the universal Church, the Supreme Pontiff, as is his function, makes special use of his mission aid societies, that is, the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith, the Pontifical Society of St. Peter the Apostle for the Native Clergy, the Pontifical Association of the Holy Childhood and the Pontifical Missionary Union of the Clergy.

Since these societies are pontifical, they are necessarily endowed with the preeminence which derives from their universality and which was confirmed and defined by special statutes given by the Holy See.³

3. Therefore, these “societies are by right to be given the first place” by the bishops in the proper discharge of their missionary task, “for they are the means of imbuing Catholics, from their infancy, with a truly universal and missionary outlook, as well as of bringing about the efficient collection of funds for the benefit of all the missions, according to the needs of each.”⁴

4. The Supreme Pontiff has entrusted the direction of these societies to the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples or for the Propagation of the Faith, to which, accordingly, they are, by proper right, subject.⁵

5. Within the episcopal conferences let there be a special episcopal commission for the missions as the principal and immediate instrument for helping the same missions.⁶

6. The principal duties of this episcopal commission are:

a) To foster initiatives for stirring up mission consciousness and activity in the People of God, especially in the clergy.

b) To promote the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies in all the

dioceses and to see that the statutes of the same societies, especially as regards the transmission of all funds, are properly observed.⁷

c) To propose to the episcopal conference the amount each diocese, in proportion to its income, is obliged to give each year, in accordance with the desire of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, to the Holy See, that is, to the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, for distribution by the same Holy See to the missions.⁸

d) To see that particular missionary initiatives of the episcopal conference do not harm the pontifical societies and the missionary institutes, nor any other association which perchance has been established in the country for the benefit of the missions.

7. a) In order that missionary cooperation, in all its various aspects, may be unified and rendered efficient, the episcopal commission for the missions is to make use of the national missionary council, which has been established for this purpose⁹ and is directed by the president of the same commission. The president of the Pontifical Missionary Union of the Clergy, the national directors of the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies, some priests, as well as diocesan delegates chosen by the episcopal commission, delegates of the missionary institutes found in the country¹⁰ and of lay associations serving the missions, are, each for his own respective field of endeavor, members of this council.

b) Where regional councils for the missions have been set up, their operating procedure for the harmonization of diocesan activities with the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies is regulated in a way similar to that of the national council for the missions.

The Fathers, after examining the statutes of the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies, proposed the following Norms for the structure and operating procedure of the same societies in each and every country:

1. The Pontifical Mission Aid Societies are to have their director in each country, whose task it is to promote and direct these societies.

The Pontifical Missionary Union of the Clergy, on the other

hand, is to have, besides the national director, a bishop president.

2. The appointments of these directors and of the above-mentioned president are to be made in the following way:

The director of the Pontifical Missionary Union of the Clergy is appointed by the president of the same Union.

The director of the Pontifical Association of the Holy Childhood is appointed by the president of the superior general council of the association, with the approval of the episcopal conference.

The director of the Pontifical Societies for the Propagation of the Faith and of St. Peter the Apostle for the Native Clergy, as well as the episcopal president of the Pontifical Missionary Union of the Clergy, are appointed by the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples from a list of three candidates, if possible, whom the president of the episcopal conference will present to the Sacred Congregation in the conference's name.

3. The national directors of the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies and the president of the Pontifical Missionary Union of the Clergy are appointed for a period of five years and they can be reappointed for a second five-year term.

4. The national directors of the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies, in all the duties connected with the office entrusted to them, are to observe carefully the statutes and other norms given by the Holy See for the same purpose. They will see to it that what is prescribed in the aforesaid statutes and norms is faithfully observed and they will faithfully forward to their respective general councils the entire amount collected for the missions by the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies.

Finally, in order to obtain everywhere a better coordination of the activity of the Holy See and the episcopal conferences in the field of missionary cooperation, the Fathers of the Plenary Congregation warmly commend in the Lord to the aforesaid episcopal conferences the following:

1. That they diligently put into practice what is set forth in n. 3 of the above-mentioned principles, namely, that, among the means available for attaining missionary cooperation, first place is to be given to the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies.

2. That they support the president of the Pontifical Missionary Union of the Clergy and the national directors of the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies, in whom the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples places its trust, in the exercise of their office.

3. That they choose to associate the national directors of the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies in the deliberations and undertakings of the Episcopal Commission for the Missions, for, in this way, the national directors, knowing the mind of the local hierarchy, will be able to discharge more efficaciously their task of promoting a mission consciousness and collecting suitable aid.

4. That they take the means to put into practice what is set forth in principle 6, c, that is, that besides the offerings voluntarily given by the faithful to the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies, a suitable amount from the income of the individual dioceses be sent each year to the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples.

B—Regarding the other question, namely, the regulation of certain undertakings of dioceses subject to common law in favor of the missions, the Fathers, duly considering the necessity that everything proceed in a proper and orderly way in this area of missionary activity as well, came to the following conclusions:

1. The particular form of missionary activity of individual dioceses subject to common law or even of the episcopal conference itself, by which diocesan priests and, those things being observed which are to be observed, male and female Religious also, as well as lay people, are sent to some missionary circumscription for the purpose of collaborating under the jurisdiction of the local Ordinary, is acknowledged and willingly accepted.¹¹

2. Prior consultation—both of the episcopal conference to which the diocese subject to common law belongs and of the episcopal conference in whose area the missionary circumscription is found—is required for the implementation of this particular form of missionary activity or solicitude. The Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples is also to be informed of this matter.

3. All forms of this direct collaboration between the dioceses subject to common law and missionary circumscriptions, whether it be a question of sending personnel, as in n. 1 above, or economic aid and the establishment of works having a missionary purpose, are certainly to be commended, as long as the Pontifical Mission Aid Societies do not suffer any harm as a result.

After all the above was presented to His Holiness Pope Paul VI by the Cardinal Prefect of this Sacred Congregation in the audience of Feb. 6, 1969, the Supreme Pontiff was pleased to approve it and ordered that it be promulgated.

Given in Rome, from the Offices of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples or for the Propagation of the Faith, on the Feast of St. Matthias the Apostle, Feb. 24, 1969.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Cf. Apostolic Constitution **Regimini Ecclesiae Universae**, art. 83, par. 2; AAS, LIX (1967), p. 916.

² Dogmatic Constitution on the Church **Lumen Gentium**, n. 23: AAS, LVII (1965), p. 27.

³ "Pii Operis a Propagatione Fidei Statuta Generalia" (added to the Moto Proprio **Romanorum Pontificum**, dated May 3, 1922): AAS, XIV (1922), pp. 326-328.

"Statuta pro consilio Superiore Generali Pii Operis a Propagatione Fidei": AAS XIV (1922), pp. 328-330.

"Statuta Generalia" of the Pious Union of the Clergy for the Missions (added to the Decree of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, dated April 4, 1926): AAS, XVIII (1926), pp. 231-235.

Cf. Motu Proprio **Decessor Noster**, dated June 24, 1929, "De Pontificiorum Operum Missionalium coordinatione": AAS, XXI, (1929), pp. 342-345.

Motu Proprio **Vix ad Summi Pontificatus**, dated June 24, 1929, by which the Pontifical Society of St. Peter the Apostle for the Native Clergy is given its own definitive statutes: AAS, XXI (1929), pp. 345-349.

Instruction given by the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith on March 9, 1937: "De coordinatione Piae Unionis Cleri pro Missionibus cum Operibus Missionalibus": AAS, XXIX (1937), pp. 476-477. Concerning the granting of the title "Pontifical" to the Union by Pope Pius XII, on Oct. 28, 1956: **Acta Pontificalium Operum** (1957), p. 97.

Pontificium Opus a Sancta Infantia, Ordinatio Operis, die 7 junii 1950 recognita (Paris, 1951).

⁴ Conciliar Decree **Ad Gentes**, n. 38: AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 985.

Cf. Message of Pope Paul VI for Mission Sunday 1968: AAS, LX (1968), p. 399-403.

⁵ Cf. Motu Proprio **Ecclesiae Sanctae**, III, 13, 2: AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 785.

- ⁶ Cf. Motu Proprio **Ecclesiae Sanctae**, III, 9: AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 784.
- ⁷ Cf. Motu Proprio **Ecclesiae Sanctae**, III, 7: AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 784.
- ⁸ Cf. Conciliar Decree **Ad Gentes**, n. 38: AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 986.
Motu Proprio **Ecclesiae Sanctae**, III, 8: AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 784.
- ⁹ Cf. Motu Proprio **Ecclesiae Sanctae**, III, 11: AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 784.
- ¹⁰ Cf. Motu Proprio **Ecclesiae Sanctae**, III, 11: AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 784.
- ¹¹ Cf. Conciliar **Ad Gentes**, nn. 38 and 41: AAS, LVIII (1966), pp. 985-986, 988-989.
Conciliar Decree **Christus Dominus**, n. 6: AAS, LVIII (1966), pp. 675-676.
Message of Pope Paul VI **Africae Terrarum**, n. 26: AAS, LIX (1967), p. 1088.

Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization
of Peoples

INSTRUCTION
ON RELATIONS BETWEEN LOCAL ORDINANCES AND
MISSIONARY INSTITUTES

Some principles and norms concerning the relations between local Ordinaries and missionary institutes¹ in mission territories.

The relations in mission territories between the local Ordinaries and missionary institutes, especially those institutes charged with the pastoral care of these territories, have sometimes, because of circumstances of time and place, given rise to difficulties, for the solution of which the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples or for the Propagation of the Faith, in keeping with the function entrusted to it, has always been solicitous.

Indeed, the prominent and often unique role which the above-mentioned institutes played in establishing and developing the missions is well known. Wherefore, it is easy to see how the harmonious composition of these relations makes possible the orderly and effective preaching of the Gospel in mission territories, as well as the very existence and consolidation of the ecclesiastical circumscriptions (territories) erected in these areas.

This state of affairs, moreover, proves how necessary it is that the same Sacred Congregation, in its solicitude, elaborate suitable norms to meet the new requirements that come to the fore daily as a result of the changed juridical structure or form of the missionary circumscriptions (mission territories).

Similar norms, which had multiplied in the course of time and were somewhat variegated, were given a kind of organic codification by the Sacred Congregation with its Instruction of Dec. 8, 1929.² This Instruction, as is evident, had to concern itself necessarily with the task of defining exactly the relationship of the institute's superior to the vicar or prefect apostolic or to other types of ecclesiastical superiors, since it was based on the principle of the so-called "ius commissionis"

(right of entrustment), by means of which a mission territory to be evangelized was entrusted to a certain institute.

However, during the last few decades, some events and changes have taken place, which have rendered the aforesaid Instruction at least partially inadequate. We have, for example, the erection of the episcopal hierarchy almost everywhere in mission territories, the more frequent entrustment of the care of missionary dioceses to the local secular clergy, and, very recently, the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, which reasserted and solemnly confirmed the theological and juridical principles upon which the position of the residential bishop in the Church and in his diocese is firmly established.

Consequently, because of the aforesaid changes, it was found necessary to restudy carefully, in the light of the conciliar principles, the relations between local Ordinaries, for the most part diocesan bishops, and missionary institutes, which, whereas they once played the principal role in missionary work, have now passed, in some instances, to the other, more modest, but hardly less important, position of collaborators in the same work.

The Sacred Congregation, therefore, responding to this need and having received positive replies from some of the more competent episcopal conferences and missionary institutes, and having sought the counsel of a special group of consultors, presented the question, with the consent of the Supreme Pontiff, for the deliberation and decision of the first Plenary Congregation,³ held in Rome from June 25 to 28, 1968.

The Fathers of the Plenary Congregation, after careful and thorough consideration of the matter, thought it well to adopt the following resolutions:

1. The juridical system of "commissio" (entrustment), about which mention is made in the foresaid Instruction, is to be abrogated for the dioceses in mission territories. On the other hand, it remains in force in ecclesiastical missionary circumscriptions not yet erected into dioceses properly so called.

2. The new juridical system, which takes the place of the "commissio" system in the above-mentioned dioceses, will entail a special form of collaboration of the missionary institutes with the bishops of these dioceses known as the "mandate."

3. This mandate is described in the following way: the charge that is given to some institute by the supreme authority of the Church, upon the request of the bishop and after having consulted the institute concerned, to collaborate with and under the same bishop in a missionary diocese in accordance with the terms of the stipulated contract.⁴

4. The mandate is given only if the institute as such duly takes on the care of a fixed territory or a definite missionary work of importance in the diocese.

5. The supreme authority of the Church, which, in the above description, is known as the "mandator," is understood to be the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples or for the Propagation of the Faith, which directs and coordinates missionary work throughout the world in the name and by the order of the Supreme Pontiff.⁵

6. The "mandatory," on the other hand, is the clerical or lay institute of men or women, which accepts, in accordance with its own character, the above-mentioned function of collaboration. The superior general of the institute alone is competent to receive the mandate and this is to be done in agreement with the institute's constitutions or regulations, or its statutes for the missions.

7. The purpose of the mandate is to safeguard the rights and duties both of the diocesan bishops in mission lands and of the institutes which give their collaboration. Certainly, the mandate will help to facilitate and make more equitable the distribution of missionaries and temporal assistance, contribute to the more efficient functioning of said institutes in the Church and render the work of evangelization in the missions stable and coordinated.

8. The bishop, before requesting the mandate, is obliged:

a) To determine the mind of the episcopal conference to which he belongs, since it is the task of the episcopal conferences in the missions, in conjunction with the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, "to consider ways in which resources (priests, catechists, institutes, etc.) can be more suitably distributed in the territory."⁶

b) To communicate this opinion to the Holy See in writing.

9. The mandate is given by means of a decree of the Sacred Congregation.

10. The mandate ceases only when it is explicitly revoked by the Sacred Congregation, which, however, will not take such a step without first consulting the bishop and the institute.

11. The bishop can admit other institutes to the diocese without a mandate and, unless the contract requires otherwise, without the obligation of prior consultation with the institute already in possession of a mandate. When a new institute is admitted without a mandate, the Sacred Congregation does not assume the particular responsibility which derives from the granting of a mandate.

12. When the ecclesiastical circumscriptions mentioned above are raised to dioceses, the juridical system of "commissio" ceases. But, in order to avoid difficulties, the bishop and the institute, which enjoyed the "ius commissionis," are to reach an agreement as to how the missionary apostolate is to be continued in the area concerned.

13. The rights and duties of residential bishops in mission territories:

a) The Roman Pontiff has full, supreme, universal⁷ and immediate⁸ power over the whole Church. The bishops govern the particular Churches entrusted to them in virtue of their proper, ordinary and immediate power.⁹ The exercise of episcopal power is ultimately regulated by the Roman Pontiff and can be circumscribed by certain limits for the benefit of the Church or the faithful.¹⁰

The Roman Pontiff, however, makes use of the departments of the Roman Curia for the exercise of this supreme power.¹¹ Thus, there is one competent department for all the missions and for the whole of missionary activity, namely, the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples or for the Propagation of the Faith, whose task is to direct and coordinate all missionary activity and, for that reason, distribute missionaries according to the more urgent needs in various areas of the world.¹²

b) The exercise of episcopal power in missionary dioceses is to be such that the bishop, as the director and center of

unity in the diocesan apostolate, can promote, direct and coordinate missionary activity, but always in such a way that the spontaneous zeal of those who share in it—and the institutes which give their collaboration are the first of these—is preserved and fostered.¹³

14. The rights and duties of missionary institutes in mission territories:

a) The institutes, which for centuries have zealously dedicated their efforts to the preaching of the Gospel and the establishment of the Church, are still to be acknowledged as very beneficial instruments for these dioceses by the bishops in mission territories.¹⁴ Indeed, the collaboration given by these institutes enables missionary bishops to accomplish more efficaciously the task of evangelication. Nevertheless, these institutes, even in mission territories, cannot be denied the exercise of the right to preserve their particular character and due autonomy,¹⁵ nor the possibility of establishing houses in accordance with the prescripts of law and fostering vocations¹⁶ so that the faithful may choose freely their way of life in accordance with the inspiration received from the Lord.¹⁷

b) The same institutes will, with their zeal and experience, give the service and help to the missionary bishops under the jurisdiction of the same bishops, which will constitute a real and efficacious sharing in the work of evangelization. This collaboration, which is effected in a special way by the members of the institute who are sent, as well as by the temporal aid appropriately given, is to be utilized both for the care of souls and for the discharge of special assignments for the common good of the mission territory.¹⁸

c) Moreover, in order to foster fruitful collaboration, contracts are to be drawn up between the local Ordinaries and the missionary institutes for the regulation of their mutual relations. The Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples already recommended this in the above-mentioned Instruction,¹⁹ and the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and the Supreme Pontiff have now explicitly decreed it.²⁰ Such contracts facilitate the attainment not only of the harmony and peace necessary for any sacred ministry, but also the stability which the missions themselves and the institutes need very much. These contracts, therefore, should clearly and

explicitly indicate, among other things, the task assumed by the institutes and the manner of collaborating with the local Ordinaries. In like manner, as regards the missionaries, they are to determine, besides the number of missionaries, the right of presentation for any appointment to the different offices, as well as everything concerning their transfer, removal or replacement.

d) Finally, the members of these institutes, in giving of their services, are obliged to observe the norms and other precepts issued by the bishop or episcopal conference for pastoral or social activity, as well as for liturgical and ecclesiastical discipline.²¹

15. Regarding the relations between local Ordinaries and missionary institutes in the matter of temporal goods and their administration, the Fathers of the Plenary Congregation thought it well, because of the complexity of the matter and the diverse conditions existing in different missionary areas, to call to mind some relevant general principles, while leaving to the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples the task of preparing a special Instruction after a complete and thorough study of the question.

Meanwhile, the following principles are to be kept in mind:

a) Concerning ecclesiastical temporal goods—The temporal goods of those moral persons directly subject to the local Ordinary (diocesan goods, parochial goods, etc.) are to be administered in accordance with the norms of common law. The temporal goods of those moral persons subject to the institute (the goods of the houses, provinces, etc.) are administered in accordance with the norms of common law and the constitutions or regulations of the institute, or sit statutes for the missions.

b) Concerning alms—It is, first of all, always to be remembered that the supreme guideline in this matter is either the explicit or the implicit will of the donor. Wherefore, alms received for a specified missionary circumscription, or for the missions of a particular institute, are to be forwarded to the one who governs the aforesaid circumscription or institute. Alms, which have been given to missionaries personally, belong to the missionary himself or to the institute in accordance with

the institute's constitutions or regulations, or its statutes for the missions.

16. What has been set forth in this Instruction about the rights and duties both of bishops and other local Ordinaries in mission territories and of the institutes working there, as well as about the other principles defined in the same Instruction, is to be considered the foundation and basis of the contracts to be drawn up between local Ordinaries and missionary institutes, about which mention is made in n. 14, c.

The Sacred Congregation, that the implementation of this Instruction take place in an orderly manner, advises all those concerned that no immediate change is to be made. The local Ordinaries and the superiors of missionary institutes are to see to it that, within a year of the date of the Instruction's promulgation, their mutual relations are, in common accord, brought into conformity with these new norms.

All the above was presented to His Holiness Pope Paul VI by the Cardinal Prefect of this Sacred Congregation in the audience of Feb. 6, 1969, and the Supreme Pontiff was pleased to approve it and endow it with apostolic authority, everything to the contrary, even those things worthy of special mention, notwithstanding, and ordered that the same Instruction be duly promulgated.

Given in Rome, from the offices of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples or for the Propagation of the Faith, on the Feast of St. Matthias the Apostle, Feb. 24, 1969.

FOOTNOTES

¹ The term "missionary institutes" refers to orders, congregations, institutes and associations of men or women which work in the missions. Cf. Conciliar Decree *Ad Gentes*, n. 23, note 2.

² Cf. AAS, XXII (1930), pp. 111-115.

³ Cf. Apostolic Constitution *Regimini Ecclesiae Universae*, art. 83, par. 2: AAS, LIX (1967), p. 916.

⁴ See n. 14, c; of this Instruction.

⁵ Cf. Conciliar Decree *Ad Gentes*, n. 29: AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 980. *Motu Proprio Ecclesiae Sanctae*, III, 13, 1: AAS, LVII (1966), p. 785.

⁶ *Motu Proprio Ecclesiae Sanctae*, III, 18, 4: AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 786.

⁷ Cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, n. 22: AAS, LVII (1965), p. 26.

⁸ Cf. Conciliar Decree *Christus Dominus*, n. 2: AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 673.

- ⁹ Cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, **Lumen Gentium**, n. 27: AAS, LVII (1965), p. 32.
- ¹⁰ **Ibidem.**
- ¹¹ Cf. Conciliar Decree **Christus Dominus**, n. 9: AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 676.
- ¹² Cf. Conciliar Decree **Ad Gentes**, n. 29: AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 980. Motu Proprio **Ecclesiae Sanctae**, III, 13, 1: AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 785. Apostolic Constitution **Regimini Ecclesiae Universae**, art. 82: AAS, LIX (1967), p. 915.
- ¹³ Cf. Conciliar Decree **Ad Gentes**, n. 30: AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 981.
- ¹⁴ Cf. Conciliar Decree **Ad Gentes**, n. 27; AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 978.
- ¹⁵ Cf. Conciliar Decree **Perfectae Caritatis**, n. 2, b: AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 703.
Conciliar Decree **Christus Dominus**, n. 35, 2-5: AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 691-692.
- ¹⁶ Conciliar Decree **Ad Gentes**, n. 18: AAS, LVIII (1966), pp.968-969.
- ¹⁷ Cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church **Lumen Gentium**, n. 43,
- ¹⁸ Cf. Conciliar Decree **Ad Gentes**, n. 27: AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 978.
- ¹⁹ Cf. AAS, XXII (1930), p. 113.
- ²⁰ Cf. Conciliar Decree **Ad Gentes**, n. 32: AAS, LVIII, (1966), p. 982. Motu Proprio **Ecclesiae Sanctae**, III, 17: AAS, LVIII (1966), pp. 785-786.
- ²¹ Cf. Conciliar Decree **Ad Gentes**, 30, b: AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 981. Motu Proprio **Ecclesiae Sanctae**, I, 25, 26: AAS, LVIII (1966), p. 770.

COMMENTARY

By Monsignor Mariano Clementi

(Official of the Congregation for the Evangelization
of Peoples)

The Sacred Congregation for The Evangelization of Peoples has issued two new Instructions, which bear the date of Feb. 24, the feast of St. Matthias, Apostle, and are published today in the original Latin. The first is concerned with regulating bishops' missionary cooperation in relation to the Pontifical Missionary Works and to particular undertakings in common law dioceses in favor of the missions. The second lays down certain principles and rules regarding the relations, in mission territories, between local Ordinaries and missionary institutes.

This event would normally not be regarded as extraordinary in itself, since it forms part of the usual work of the Sacred Congregation, and would, therefore, not call for special mention or notice. In this case, however, the two documents mentioned above really represent the first solemn acts of particular importance carried out by the Sacred Congregation since the Council and the reform of the Curia.

In order to draw attention to this important feature, we have therefore decided to present them in a special way. We are not offering a complete commentary, but wish only to indicate some of the more interesting elements which in our opinion deserve to be noticed, both because of the method adopted in the choice and treatment of the subjects and because of the special character of the content under the formal aspect of a deliberate act of the Plenary Assembly; also because of its scope, and, finally, the juridico-pastoral value which the contents take on in respect of the cause of the missions.

The work of choosing the matters which the first Plenary Assembly discussed and which form the object of the Instructions was not done solely by the offices of Propaganda. It seemed not only proper and opportune but also necessary to give a responsible part in that task to others who, because of their direct concern with the missions, may be regarded as being qualified to know the real nature, extent and topicality of the problems involved, consequently as being best able to

form a correct view of the order and priority in which they should be considered.

As regards choice of problems: some of these had already been studied. An example is the problem of the relations between Ordinaries and institutes, about which meetings were held at Propaganda from the concluding period of the Council onwards, between representatives of the episcopates of Africa and some superiors general. In order to make the choice, the Sacred Congregation turned to the members of the Plenary Assembly—especially to the new bishops and representatives of the Pontifical Missionary Works and Missionary Institutes—and asked them to suggest themes and matters responding to the needs mentioned above, discussion of which could no longer be delayed.

A similar course was followed in regard to preparation of the chosen topics, which consisted in drawing up reports on them for presentation to the Plenary Assembly. The most authoritative and qualified organisms in the field were invited to participate. Bishops' conferences, national offices of the Pontifical Missionary Works, and missionary institutes were asked to examine the questions thoroughly and to provide useful information and data, also to make suggestions and concrete proposals for solutions. This procedure ensured that there was close and fruitful collaboration, from the preliminary stage on, between the "center," made up of the above-mentioned offices and the members of the Plenary Assembly, and the "perimeter," represented by the organisms just mentioned, in all their vast extension.

The special character of the contents of the Instructions from the formal point of view will be clearly seen if it be remembered that the preamble and all the articles represent no less than the conclusive document of the first Plenary Assembly of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of the Peoples to be held after the reform of the Curia. This means that the contents, inasmuch as they are the result of the Assembly's work, consist solely and exclusively of decisions taken by the members of that Assembly, whether unanimously or by majority vote, on the matters proposed for their consideration, and which the supreme authority of the Church in the person of the Supreme Pontiff ratified and rendered binding and executive.

In order to form a right idea of the true importance and significance of this special character of the contents and to understand the particular interest arising therefrom, it is only necessary to consider the great change produced by the reform in the Plenary Assembly.

It is well known that as a result of the reform the institution of the Plenary Assembly, or Congregation, of the Sacred Congregations was reconstructed. Its membership was altered, for it was given members who are not cardinals but who have the same rights as cardinals in the Assembly, and its scope and powers were also altered, for it was authorized to deal with matters of specifically defined importance (matters of major import "involving a general principle or concerning general rules for courses of action"). It has also taken on a different juridical form from what it had before, so that it may at all events now in practice become the new chief instrument of the Sacred Congregation's work and its chief organ for arriving at decisions.

The extent and significance of the change that has been made can be seen in a particularly striking way if, in view of the other important changes already mentioned, we consider the comprehensiveness with which, in fulfilment of the Council's directions, the Plenary Assembly of Propaganda has been endowed. To appreciate the extent of the change in composition we only have to look at other Sacred Congregations which have also expanded their membership. They admitted only seven diocesan bishops each, and the Sacred Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes has also admitted three Superiors General; but Propaganda has raised the number of the members of its Assembly to include no less than 16 of such bishops (12 from the missions and the others from common law territories), together with four National Directors of the Pontifical Missionary Works, and four Superiors General of missionary institutes. There is also particular significance in the quite special character that such a larger number of members has conferred on the Assembly; it has not only turned it into a body highly representative of the principal workers in the task of evangelization, but has also, to quote the words of the Instruction on cooperation, made it "the proper body for decisions that need to be taken in managing the whole of the Church's missionary activity."

The importance of the special character of the contents of the Instructions described above, namely, that they are exclusively the fruit of the experience and knowledge of that highly qualified Assembly, has far more than purely formal interest, for that special character takes the concrete form of a guaranty that the contents will be applied in a better way to the realities of the problems met with.

Finally, to deal with the juridico-pastoral value of the contents of the Instructions from the point of view of their substance. Their value may above all be gathered from the reference which the Instructions make to those sectors of missionary activity, namely, cooperation on the part of the episcopate and the People of God in missionary activity, and direct performance of the missionary task. These not only continue to be fundamental, but they are also now seen in a quite different perspective. We are now faced with the urgent problem of reorganizing the juridical structures of these sectors and of bringing pastoral norms regarding them up to date. This is because of the transformations that have been going on over the last few decades in the missions and because of statements made and decisions taken by the Council. For example, the Instruction on relations between Ordinaries and institutes describes the chief transformations as consisting in "the erection almost everywhere in the missionary world of the ordinary episcopal hierarchy, and the increasingly widespread transfer of the care of missionary dioceses to the native secular clergy." The Council for its part confirmed "the theological and juridical principles on which the position of the residential bishop in the Church and his diocese is solidly founded."

The Instructions' contents are of remarkable importance if only because they provide a response to the juridico-pastoral problem from this point of view. We shall now look more closely at the individual Instructions in order to uncover their specific values, contained in their chief characteristics.

As we noted in the beginning, the Instruction on cooperation turns upon two distinct but closely connected subjects. It seems proper in order to avoid complaints and recriminations, to begin by explaining why the whole question has not been dealt with as fully as it is described in the Council Decree, "Ad Gentes," Chapter 6. Except for a few incidental references,

the Instruction deliberately does not speak of the duties of bishops and of bishops' conferences towards missionary institutes, nor of how collaboration by the laity is to be arranged. The reason for this was certainly not any lack of consideration or appreciation for the role played by such institutes and by the laity, but was solely the fact that Propaganda was unable, because of the urgency of other problems and the little time available, to deal adequately in the first Plenary Assembly with even part of such important cooperation. However, future Plenary Assemblies will give it their attention. This having been said, we can now indicate the essential feature of the Instruction.

It is coordination—that coordination that is set up in the field of missionary cooperation between the directive function assigned by the Council to the bishops as successors of the Apostolic College and to the episcopal conferences, and the prior and preeminent position that was attributed by the same Council to the Pontifical Missionary Works, before all other instruments of cooperation, especially by reason of its "pontifical," therefore "universal" character. That coordination takes form through reconfirmation of principles, establishment of rules and formulation of recommendations, and the whole system just described is aimed at obtaining permanent and fruitful collaboration in regard to the Pontifical Missionary Works between the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and the episcopal conferences on the one hand, and on the executive level, between episcopal conferences for the missions and the national directors of those works on the other hand. Such collaboration is a *conditio sine qua non* for orderly development of Catholics' cooperation in the Church's missionary cares.

The other Instruction—on the relations in missionary territories between local Ordinaries and missionary institutes—has weightier juridical content, because in contrast with the first Instruction, it does not restrict itself to repeating principles that have already been approved or simply to establishing guiding norms. On the contrary, it makes a decisive and thorough effort in the field of what some missionarists call the constitutional law of missions, and introduces an innovation of great significance.

The Instruction repeals the juridical system of “*commissio*” in missionary dioceses, and in its place introduces a completely new system of mandate. This change is the essential and the characteristic feature of its contents.

This, for obvious reasons, is not the place to undertake a commentary upon this innovation. We will say only, by way of suggesting an idea of its nature, that the system of “*commissio*” (which consists in entrusting a certain missionary territory to a missionary institute and giving it the task of evangelizing it) is no longer acceptable for the missionary diocese, since that diocese is entrusted solely to the bishop, like a common law diocese. He governs it with his own power, ordinary and immediate, and everything to do with development, direction and coordination of the diocesan apostolate, and consequently of the missionary activity, depends solely on him.

However, dioceses in mission territories still have need of personnel, and there was consequently need to replace the “*commissio*” with a new system fully respecting episcopal power and at the same time permitting missionary institutes to carry on with their collaboration.

The juridical concept of the mandate may be regarded as a kind of special guardianship imparted by the Holy See to the contract of collaboration agreed upon between the bishop and the institutes. It meets its purpose adequately and well.

To conclude this summary, we must not forget to express our hope that the new Instructions issued by the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, may meet with prompt acceptance and agreement in spite of inevitable faults and failings, on the part of the whole Church, “which is missionary by its very nature” and not merely on the part of those to whom the Instructions are directed.

