

**NORMS FOR THE COOPERATION
OF THE LOCAL CHURCHES AMONG
THEMSELVES AND ESPECIALLY FOR A
BETTER DISTRIBUTION OF THE
CLERGY IN THE WORLD**

**Notae Directivae de Mutua Ecclesiarum
Particularium Cooperatione Promovenda ac
Praesertim de Aptiore Cleri Distributione**

Vatican Congregation for the Clergy

March 25, 1980

(Released July 22, 1980)



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I. Introduction

Teaching of Vatican Council II

1. After the entrusting to the apostles by Christ the Lord, before his ascension into heaven, of the mission to be witnesses "til the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8), all their labors and sollicitudes had no other aim than the faithful execution of the mandate of Christ: "Go into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

The church, as history tells us, through the centuries never ceased to pledge herself with faithfulness and enthusiasm for the practical fulfillment of such a mandate. And even recently, the successors of the apostles gathered from all over the world in the Second Vatican Council, insisted on the same mandate with these words: "They (the pastors) should be especially concerned about those parts of the world where the word of God has not yet been proclaimed or where, chiefly because of the small number of priests, the faithful are in danger of departing from the precepts of Christian life and even of losing the faith itself." For this reason, the bishops should "strive to see to it that suitable sacred ministers as well as assistants, both Religious and lay, are prepared for the missions and other areas suffering from a lack of clergy" (1).

Institution of a Commission for the Distribution of the Clergy.

2. In order to give practical fulfillment to this intention of the council, the supreme pontiff Paul VI, in the *motu proprio* "Ecclesiae Sanctae" ordered that a special commission be created within the Holy See "with the task to issue general principles for a better distribution of the clergy, keeping in mind the needs of the various churches" (2). The seat of such commission, as it was established in the apostolic constitution "Regimini Ecclesiae Universae," is to be attached to the Sacred Congregation for the Clergy (3).

On this matter, this sacred dicastery has already consulted the episcopal conferences and has held an international congress at Malta in 1970. Furthermore, after having convoked its members often and heard the opinion of the other departments of the Roman Curia many times, this very dicastery, having considered the importance and the opportunity of this action, engaged itself in the preparation of norms which now, with the approval of the supreme pontiff, promulgates through this present document.

II. Need to Implement the Mandate of Christ

The Whole Church Is Called to Evangelize

3. The means through which the church has to fulfill the mandate of Christ is evangelization, following the example of her founder who was the first evangelizer. She has always considered evangelization as indeed her specific and most important task. As a matter of fact, she exists only for this task, as the bishops stated in the synod of 1977: "We wish once again to confirm that the mandate to evangelize all mankind constitutes the essential mission of the church" (5).

As a consequence, no person baptized or confirmed in the church can dispense himself from this duty, following the exhortation of Vatican Council II: "Since the whole church is missionary and the work of evangelization is a basic duty of the people of God, this sacred synod summons all to a deep interior renewal, so that they will have a vivid awareness of their own responsibility for spreading the Gospel" (6).

Even though every Christian should cooperate in the mission of the church for the part that is his, considering however the diversity of the members when it comes to the tasks to be fulfilled (7), different will be the role of the bishop, of the priest, of the Religious as well as of the lay person.

The Role of the Bishop.

4. The duty of evangelization belongs, first of all, to the bishops, who -- "sub Petro et cum Petro" -- must not only care for the evangelization as far as the faithful of their dioceses are concerned, but they must also feel the responsibility for the salvation of the whole world. In fact, "each of them as a member of the episcopal college and a legitimate successor of the apostles, is obliged by Christ's decree and command (9) to be solicitous for the whole church. This solicitude, though it is not exercised by an act of jurisdiction, contributes immensely to the welfare of the universal church" (10).

It is the task of the bishop to use every effort so that the faithful may have since their early childhood and may keep all their lives an authentic Catholic conscience (11), all in order to love the whole mystical body of Christ, especially in its poorest members and in those who are suffering and are being persecuted for the sake of justice (12). Furthermore, he should promote the missionary zeal among his people, so that the laborers of the Gospel in mission lands will not be deprived of the necessary aid, spiritual and material; he has to encourage missionary vocations among youngsters, and

also foster in the candidates to the priesthood the universal dimension of their mission, and consequently their disponibility to serve also outside of the diocese (13).

The Duty of the Priests

5. The priests, who, together with their bishops, act "in the name and in the person of Christ who is the head" (14), contribute in a very special way, to the expansion of the kingdom of God on earth, through their office of pastors of souls, their preaching of the word of God and the administration of the sacraments of the new law (15). They, therefore, through their ministry "make visible in their communities, the universal church" (16).

On the other hand, the same Christian community by its essence needs the presence of priests, because the community cannot really be established without the sacrifice of Christ which "through the hands of the priests and in the name of the whole church, is offered in the Eucharist in an unbloody and sacramental manner" (17); and such a liturgical action represents the center of the community of the faithful (18). Hence, the Synod of Bishops in 1971 rightly declared concerning the ministerial priesthood: "If we would lose the presence and the action of his (of the priest's) ministry...the church could not have the full assurance of her faithfulness and of his visible continuity" (19). However, such spiritual gift which is received by the priests in the sacred ordination "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; for every priestly ministry shares in the universality of the mission entrusted by Christ to this apostles" (20).

Every priest should therefore nourish such disponibility of soul in his heart, and if someone receives a special vocation from the spirit of the Lord, with the consent of his bishop, he will not refuse to move to another diocese in order to continue his ministry.

Anyhow, all the priests should be sensitive to the needs of the universal church, and therefore, they should inquire about the state of the missions, as well as about the situation of the local churches that find themselves in some particular difficulty, so that they may exhort the faithful to share the needs of the church (21).

The Participation of the Religious

6. Men and women Religious, already because of their their vows, are intimately connected with the mystery of the church, and therefore from the particular nature of their

lives, stems the duty to endeavor so that "the kingdom of Christ may be rooted and consolidated in the souls and spread all over the world" (22). Consequently Vatican Council II not only exhorts them to foster the missionary spirit, but further invites the institutes, except for their specific goals, to update themselves in order to adjust to the present situations, so that the "evangelization in the missions may become more and more effective" (23).

Men and women Religious that belong to missionary institutes have been and still are models of life entirely dedicated to the cause of Christ. In them, we admire that promptness which stems from their consecration to God, the church and and their brothers; in fact "thanks to their religious consecration they are first of all volunteers and free to leave everything and go to announce the Gospel to the ends of the world" (24). Finally, since the religious state is "a special gift," it is given for the whole church, whose salvific mission in no way can operate without the participation of the Religious" (25).

The Call of the Laity

7. All lay people, in virtue of their baptism and confirmation, are called by God to an effective apostolate: "The Christian vocation is by its nature also a call to the apostolate" (26). The apostolate of the laity, even though exercised mainly in the parishes, has to be extended however also to the inter-parochial, diocesan, national and international level. And more than that, they should have at heart "the needs of the people of God over all the earth"; which could be done by helping the missionary works with material subsidies and personal services (27).

Furthermore, lay people may be called by the hierarchy to a more direct and immediate cooperation in the apostolate. The church, as a matter of fact, in the last decades has discovered the rich possibilities and the vast resources that the cooperation of the laity can offer to her mission of salvation. The apostolic exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi," already on the basis of the most recent experiences, enumerates various functions, such as that of catechist, that of Christians dedicated to the service of the word of God or to the works of mercy, that of heads of small communities, etc. This cooperation of the laity, useful everywhere, is useful especially in mission lands for the founding, the life and the development of the church (28).

All the members of the church, therefore, be they pastors, lay people or Religious, share, each in his own way, the missionary nature of the church. The diversity of the

members, due to the variety of the ministries or charisms, as the apostle tells us, has to be understood in the sense that "these members do not all have the same functions," but serving each other, they form the single body of Christ (Romans 12,4) in order to fulfill better their own mandate; the whole church, in fact, is prompted by the Holy Spirit to cooperate so that the plan of God may become a reality (29).

III. The Fulfillment of the Mandate of Christ in Our Time

Statistical Data of the World's Population

8. Now, if we turn our attention to the world still to be evangelized, and, more precisely, to the non-Christian population, we cannot fail to notice the insufficiency of the means at the disposal of the church today in order to meet the enormous problem. As a matter of fact, in 1977, our planet had a population of 4,094,110,000 with a Catholic population of only 739,127,000, just 18 percent of the world's population (30). If we, then, wish to consider the number of priests reported to the number of the world's inhabitants, we will have the following picture: for every 100,000 inhabitants, we have two priests in Asia, four in Africa, 13 in Latin America, 26 in Oceania, 29 in North America and 37 in Europe.

Inequality of Forces of the Apostolate Within the Church.

9. Moreover, if you examine the distribution of sacred ministers among these Catholics, the statistical data show this picture: for every 100,000 Catholics in Latin America there are 16 priests; in Southern Africa, 33 priests; in the Far East, 43 priests; in Europe, 93 priests; in Oceania, 104 priests; in North America, 120 priests; and in the Asiatic Middle East, 133 priests.

From what has been said one notes this great disproportion: While in Europe and North America one finds 45 percent of the Catholics of the world, assisted by 77.2 percent of all priests of the Catholic Church, in Latin America and in the Philippines, on the other hand, where 45 percent of the world's Catholics also live, only 12.62 percent of the priests lend their spiritual assistance.

In other words, the proportion of priests for the same number of faithful is 6 to 1 in favor of Europe and North America in comparison with Latin America and the Philippines. It is worthy of note that nearly the same inequality is found in these geographical areas if one considers the number of deacons and of men and women Religious.

It is true that the problem of a better distribution of clergy is not resolved simply with the numerical method, since it is necessary to take into account historical evolution (and) the specific conditions of more developed particular churches which, naturally, require a greater number of ministers. Nevertheless, the statistical data above carry a weight which makes one reflect and which presents grave problems for those who have at heart the healthy evolution of the church

and, especially, for those who have authority in the church, as was stated earlier.

The Greatest Obstacle Springs from the Shortage of Priests.

10. In our time, the greatest impediment for the fulfillment of the mandate of Christ seems to be the strong diminution of priestly and religious vocations, a phenomenon which, in the last decades, troubles many, if not all, the regions of ancient Christian tradition, either for the limited number of candidates or for the sad defection of some, or for the rather high median age of priests.

We should not forget, however, that such a shortage, if one looks at the conditions of the dioceses where more urgent is the need, is very relative, as we have stated in the last paragraph. In reality, the shortage of clergy in itself should not create an obstacle to generosity. "The dioceses that suffer from shortage of clergy," as Pius XII already said, "should not refuse to listen to the imploring petitions that come from the missions begging for help. The offering of the widow, according to the word of the Lord, should be an example to follow: "If a poor diocese comes to the aid of another poor diocese, it will not become poorer because one cannot outdo the Lord in generosity" (31).

Every local church should meditate on the messianic prophecy: "The poor will be evangelized" (Luke 7:28), so that a prudence, too human and earthly, may not stifle those sentiments of generosity that impel the offering of the gift of faith to all those who today may be called poor in some way. We must, therefore, convince ourselves that the mandate of Christ cannot ever be fulfilled if a local church would like to offer only the superfluous of her energies to the churches that are poorer.

The Plan of God and the Limits of Human Forces

11. If we compare the number of Catholics with the number of non-Catholics, and at the same time we reflect on the mission entrusted today to the church for the fulfillment of the mandate of Christ, we could easily get discouraged, especially since we know that such disproportion will probably get worse in the near future, and that the indifferentism of a large number of Catholics is increasing, also as a consequence of other evils, as secularism, naturalism, materialism, etc., which have pervaded the standard of living in countries of ancient Christian tradition.

We should not forget, however, that the church -- if we consider only the human means -- was never up to the

greatness of her vocation in the world. Even more, this insufficiency was foreseen by her founder, who, having designated 72 disciples, said to them: "The harvest is bountiful, but the laborers are few" and added: "Pray therefore to the master of the harvest that he may send laborers in his field" (Luke 10:2), thus wishing to inculcate in the mind of his disciples that the most effective way to overcome the obstacles is prayer, since we are dealing here not with an attempt or a project on the human level, but rather with the realization of a divine plan. It is, in fact, with prayer, through which we admit our need for the help of God, that we not only assume our responsibilities in the execution of the divine plan and we thus make ourselves available to be sent, but -- which is very important -- we also exercise our direct influence on the very increase of vocations, because the Lord has clearly told us that the number of laborers depends on prayer.

It is true that the divine plan of salvation for all mankind has been revealed to us, but the time when the messianic kingdom will reach its fullness remains obscure and mysterious: "The exact time is not yours to know. The father has reserved that to himself" (Acts 1:7). These words seem to hint that the mandate of Christ needs time in order to be fulfilled. The history of the church tells us that, through the centuries, we have witnessed moments of grace, when multitudes of peoples received the seed of the word of God; we must admit however that there have been, and there are, moments less favorable, particularly for some populations (32).

It is the task of those who, enlightened by the light of Christ, can read the signs of the times, and especially of those placed by the Holy Spirit to govern his church (Acts 28:28), to discover the moments and the hour of grace and recognize the peoples that seem mature to embrace the Gospel. We would like at this point to report the example of Pope Pius XII, who, in his encyclical letter "Fidei Donum" recommended Africa to all the children of the church, as a continent already mature for evangelization (33).

Testimony of the Early Church

12. What has been said so far is perfectly in accord with the history of the early church. The acts of the apostles clearly demonstrate that our ancestors in the faith followed the same line of thinking and acting. Their apostolic method was exactly this: Send the messengers of the Gospel in other regions, without being preoccupied by the fact that the local community was not converted as a whole to the faith of

Christ. In this way, the apostles and their coworkers were obeying the command of Christ: "Go and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19), placing all their trust in the will of God who wishes "all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4).

The Second Vatican Council recommends this method: "It is very fitting that the young churches should 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." And the council gives the reason for it: "Their communion with the universal church reaches a certain measure of perfection when they themselves take an active part in missionary zeal toward other nations" (35).

IV. Tasks and Duties of the Particular Churches

The Particular Church as a Community.

13. The diocese, as a particular church, is a portion of the people of God that is entrusted to the bishop, with the collaboration of the presbyterate, to be governed, nourished by teaching, and sanctified (36). But for a true, living diocesan community to be formed, it is necessary that basic structures, and especially parishes, cultivate a sense of the diocese and consider themselves as living cells within it, and thus insert themselves into the universal church (37). Therefore, the council exhorts parishes to pursue their function in such a way that "the individual parishioners and the parish communities will really feel that they are members of the diocese and of the universal church" (38).

In this particular church "the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church of Christ is truly present and operative" (39). It follows that the diocese must mirror to perfection the universal church in the concrete environment; and it is necessary for it to become a sign, able to reveal Christ to all those with whom it comes in contact (40).

The Particular Church in Relationship with the Other Churches.

14. Since the particular church is fashioned "after the model of the universal church" (41), in its heart it mirrors the hope and anguish, the joy and sorrow of the whole church. It is true that the particular church must first of all evangelize the portion of the people of God entrusted to it, that is those who have lost the faith or no longer practice it (42); nevertheless, there is incumbent on it the sacrosanct duty "to foster every activity which is common to the whole church" (43).

It follows that the particular church cannot be closed in upon itself but, as a living part of the universal church, must be open to the needs of the other churches. Therefore, its participation in the universal mission of evangelization is not left to its own judgment, even if this is generous, but must be considered as a fundamental law of life. For its vital zeal is diminished if, concentrating only on its own problems, it does not care for the needs of the other churches. On the other hand, it takes on new vigor whenever its horizons are expanded towards the others.

This duty of the particular church is clearly emphasized by the Second Vatican Council, which affirms that the renewal, indeed the healthy reform of the particular church depends on the degree of ecclesial charity with which it works to bring the gift of faith to the other churches: "The grace of

renewal cannot flourish in communities unless each of them extends the range of its charity to the ends of the earth, and devotes to those far off a concern similar to that which it bestows on those who are its own members" (44).

The Meaning of Reciprocal Collaboration.

15. The universal church will realize a great profit if the diocesan communities work to develop reciprocal relations, exchanging help and goods; thus that communion and cooperation of the churches among themselves will arise which today more than ever is necessary to pursue happily the work of evangelization (45).

In talking of this question, often expressions such as "rich dioceses" and "poor dioceses" are used. Such expressions could lead to error, as if one church were only giving help and the other only receiving it. The fact of the matter is different: for what is involved is mutual cooperation, because true reciprocity is present between the two churches, in that the poverty of the one church that receives help makes richer the church which deprives itself in giving, and it does so both by making the apostolic zeal of the richer community more vigorous and, above all, by communicating its pastoral experiences. These are often most useful and can concern simpler but more effective methods of pastoral work, lay auxiliaries in the apostolate, small communities, etc.

The artisans of this common collaboration will be the ministers themselves, chosen by the bishop, who will view themselves as messengers of their own community, acting as ambassadors of Christ to the other community.

To make this mutual exchange of pastoral experiences more alive and effective, the diocese or even a large parish community will be able to form a kind of "twin sister" link with another poor community, to which it will be able to send not only material subsidies but also some sacred ministers as collaborators. Experience shows that cooperation of this kind can benefit both communities greatly. (46)

The Need to Hear Calls for Help.

16. Since this is the situation, the particular churches must become more and more aware of their common responsibility. Making themselves sensitive to cries for help, they must show themselves ready to help those who need help. Among these, the new churches which suffer a serious shortage of priests and lack of material means are especially deserving of help; but it is also necessary to help those churches which, even though they were founded a long time ago, find themselves greatly weakened today because of various circumstances. (47)

It is clear that the more needy churches can be helped greatly by priests and other collaborators sent to their aid. The purpose of such help, obviously, is not simply to fill in the gaps, but rather to send the kind of sacred ministers who, once they are inserted among the local forces of the apostolate, will become, in the manner of teachers and guides, true helpers in the faith. Once the local churches, preserving their autochthonous character, are able to become gradually stronger and more developed, they can begin to provide for their needs with their own means. This explains why bishops and other superiors are asked to send for this kind of evangelization "some of the better priests." (48)

The Need to Reform Church Structures

17. So that a particular church can more adequately carry out its task of bringing aid to other churches that are in a state of need, above all, there is required, even in the bosom of that particular church, a process aimed at revising forces and restructuring traditionally Christian regions. Social phenomena exist which themselves have already transformed the structures of society. Thus church structures also have to be adapted to the new reality. Among the new phenomena it is enough to cite here: the transmigration of the people into industrial regions, urbanization with the resulting depopulation of other zones, the general problem of migration, both for the sake of work and for political reasons (49), the quite widespread phenomenon of tourism for longer or shorter periods (e.g. for holidays or for weekends) (50). These phenomena require a new presence of priests who, in these changed circumstances of life, have to face a specialized care of souls.

The problem, then, is whether and how to renew the structures that once satisfactorily served the spiritual needs of the people of God. Certainly this revision is not easy and requires much prudence and circumspection. The bishop, with the help of priests' senates and pastoral councils, ought to draw up an organic project for the better employment of those who share effectively in the care of souls. It doesn't seem possible for the church to put off this problem any longer without suffering damage. In fact, despite the bemoaned scarcity of priests, it is not unusual to find priests who feel frustrated over a job that does not fill up their time, with the result that they rightfully would like to work more intensely.

The bishop, in his goal of making better provision for the growing needs of the care of souls, has the responsibility to engage the interest of religious priests who, after all, "are to be considered in a certain sense as part of the diocesan clergy"; like all other men and women Religious, even those who are exempt, who live and work among the people of God, these too "belong to the diocesan family under a certain aspect." In both cases it is a matter of taking into account the particular character of each religious institute (51). In this regard, the Sacred Congregation for Bishops, in union with the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes, recently published wise norms for cordial collaboration on the formative, operational and organizational levels (52).

In recent times pastors have called the laity to the service of the church communities more and more often. These have willingly accepted their duties and have dedicated their energies to the service of the church on a full or part-time basis. Thus in the present day we have again taken up the practice of the early church, when lay persons were involved in various services according to their inclinations and charisms and according to the necessities and practical needs of the people of God "for the growth and vitality of the church community." (53)

V. The Organs of Collaboration Among the Particular Churches.

The Bishops' Conferences.

18. The principal and indispensable role for more effective collaboration among the particular churches lies with the bishops' conferences, which have as their specific goal the overall coordination of pastoral work. In this regard Pope Paul VI decreed in his *motu proprio* "Ecclesiae Sanctae": "It belongs to patriarchal synods and bishops' conferences, keeping in mind what has been prescribed by the Holy See, to achieve an appropriate distribution of the clergy both in their own territory and in that which comes from other areas; with such a distribution, provision will be made for the needs of all the dioceses of one's own territory, and the good of the church in mission lands and in countries that suffer a scarcity of clergy will also be considered" (54).

Accordingly, beyond providing for the needs of pastoral care in their own territory, two other requirements are recommended to the bishops' conferences, namely the first preaching of the Gospel in mission lands and assistance to weaker churches in general. Both tasks are incumbent on each particular church; nevertheless, in order for the matter to be regulated well the collaboration of all the bishops of the same nation or territory is required. To provide for these necessities, each bishops' conference must establish two commissions: one for the better distribution of the clergy, and another for the missions (55). Since the institution of the latter is intended to promote missionary zeal and both have, in a certain way, a similar scope, it seems necessary that the two commissions collaborate or even, in some cases, it may seem more convenient to unite the two.

Solicitude for Mission Territories.

19. As regards the first preaching of the Gospel, that is, the missions, the supreme direction over the pertinent questions belongs to the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, which "has competency over matters regarding all the missions instituted to spread the kingdom of Christ everywhere, and therefore over the establishment and changing of the necessary ministers and the ecclesiastical circumscriptions; over the proposing of the persons who govern them; over the promotion in the most effective way of an autochthonous clergy, to which the highest posts and government are to be gradually entrusted; over the direction and coordination of all the missionary activity in every part of the land, as regards both the

missionaries themselves and the missionary cooperation of the faithful" (56).

In this context, it is up to the bishops' conferences to promote the effective participation of the diocesan clergy in the apostolate in the missions; to establish a determinate monetary contribution for missionary work; to intensify more and more their relations with missionary institutes and collaborate so that seminaries which serve the missions are erected or aided (57).

As regards missionary works, the bishops' commission established in every bishops' conference must increase missionary activity and the appropriate collaboration among the dioceses; therefore, it will have to maintain relations with other conferences and work to see to it that, as far as possible, a just proportion is maintained in giving aid to the missions (58).

Solicitude for More Needy Particular Churches.

20. As stated above, bishops' conferences must form another bishops' commission which has as its duty "to investigate the needs of the various dioceses within their territory and the possibilities of giving some of their own clergy to other churches to carry out the decisions made and approved by the conferences regarding the distribution of the clergy and to inform the bishops of the territory of these decisions" (59).

The task, therefore, of this commission is twofold. Above all it is to remove the possible inequalities in its own territory. Quite often, in fact, one can note a great disproportion in the number of priests. While there are some dioceses with an abundance of clergy, there are others in which the scarcity of priests endangers the very preservation of the faith.

The other task concerns solicitude toward those particular churches outside one's own territory, to help them in virtue of that bond of communion between particular churches which was spoken of above.

This work must be pursued with the investigation, first of all, of the needs of the dioceses, comparing the number of the faithful with the number of pastors; then proposing to the bishops' conference a study of the more urgent needs and the possibility of helping the more needy churches.

As regards this latter task of the commission, praiseworthy initiatives have already been undertaken which have produced happy results in this field (60).

Collaboration With the Councils of Major Superiors

21. To coordinate ministerial activities and works of the apostolate in the territory of the same bishops' conference, closer collaboration between the diocesan clergy and the religious institutes is required. The promotion of this kind of collaboration is up to the bishops' conference. But since profitable cooperation depends heavily on an attitude of putting special interests in second place and looking solely for the general good of the church, it is advisable for bishops and religious superiors to hold meetings, at set times, to study what is to be done in common in their respective territories (61). For this reason the *motu proprio* "Ecclesiae Sanctae" prescribes the formation of a mixed commission of the bishops' conference and the national council of major superiors to study questions that concern both parties (62). The principal theme of the meetings of this mixed commission ought to be precisely that of a better and more fitting distribution of the forces of the apostolate, determining the priorities and options to be pursued in a common effort to promote joint pastoral action (63). The deliberations of this commission ought then to be submitted, for reasons of competency, to the judgment of the bishops' conference and the council of religious superiors (64).

The Animation of the Faithful.

22. One cannot stress enough the first and principal task incumbent on both commissions, which is that of continually keeping the public opinion of the faithful well informed both about the needs of the missions and about the situations of particular churches that find themselves in difficulty. They must therefore use all the means of social communications, they must assist and spread reviews and other similar publications, and engage as well in the preparation and execution of well-defined programs to publicize the problems in this field.

The aim of all this, in addition to quick, accurate information, is to make the faithful more and more aware of their responsibilities and to develop in them a sense of catholicity regarding mature and effective collaboration of the particular churches (65).

VI. Sacred Ministers Sent to Other Diocese

The Necessity of a Special Vocation

23. Granted that all the faithful in their own way ought to participate in the work of evangelization, nevertheless one who wants to carry out his sacred ministry in another diocese needs a special vocation. Indeed the whole community, under the guidance of the bishop, is bound to petition the Holy Spirit with prayer and works of penance for the gift of vocations, so that there may be priests, Religious and laity available who will leave their homeland and go to carry out the mandate of Christ in another area (66).

Regarding the preparation of young souls, it is necessary to inculcate in them a truly Catholic mentality right from the earliest age; then, regarding candidates for the priesthood, during their formation it is necessary to see to it that they cultivate a sense of solicitude for the whole church in addition to a love of the diocese for the service of which they are ordained (67).

Fitness of the Ministers.

24. This special vocation presupposes, however, the right kind of character and particular natural gifts. Among the qualities of the psyche, spiritual fortitude and a sincere spirit of service are considered necessary. Thus, in the direction of souls superiors will use great diligence to find fit, appropriate candidates. And since it is to be hoped that bishops will destine the best priests for this work, these ought to be not only abundantly imbued with sound sacred doctrine but also distinguished by their robust faith, steadfast hope and zeal for souls (68), so that they will be able to truly generate in others the faith that they themselves have.

The Necessary Preparation.

25. All ministers who go to another diocese need an adequate preparation in matters regarding their human formation, orthodoxy of doctrine, and the apostolic style of life. Those who are going to a diocese in another nation to announce the Gospel, moreover, must receive a special formation. That is, they must know the culture and religion of that people; they must value highly the language and customs; they must acquire practice in the language, along with understanding of the social conditions, habits and customs; finally, they must carefully study the moral order and deepest convictions which that people, according to its sacred traditions, has formed for itself about God, the world and man (69).

The Convention Required for the Transfer

26. The transfer of ministers, especially of priests, from one diocese to another must be done with good order. The ordinary "a quo" is to furnish the ordinary "ad quem" honest and open information about those who are to be sent, especially if the reasons for them come under suspicion.

It is absolutely necessary that the rights and duties of priests who offer themselves for such a transfer of their own free will should be accurately defined in a written convention between the bishop "ad quem" (70); this convention, drawn up with the involvement of the priest as well so that it will have normative value, must be accepted and signed by the priest himself; copies of the convention are then to be kept by the priest and by the two curias.

Similar conventions are to be made with lay auxiliaries. For Religious, it is necessary to observe the constitutions of the institute of provenance. The same principle, applies to the following numbers, to the degree that it fits.

The Object of the Convention.

27. In this convention it is necessary to define: a) the length of the term of service; b) the duties of the priest and his place of ministry and of residence, taking into account the living conditions in the area where the priest will go; whatever subsidies of any kind he is to receive and from whom; c) his social security in case of sickness, disability or old age. If the case permits, it will also be useful to include the possibility of revisiting one's homeland after a certain period of time.

This convention cannot be changed without the consensus of the interested parties. The right of the bishop "ad quem" remains firm to remand the priest to his own diocese whenever his ministry has become harmful, provided that he has advised the bishop "a quo" beforehand and has observed natural and canonical equity.

The Duties of the Bishops "A Quo" and "Ad Quem" Toward the Priests.

28. The bishop "a quo" should have a special solicitude, as far as possible, toward his priests who exercise their sacred ministry outside their own diocese, considering them as members of his own community who work far away. He should do this whether by letter, by visiting them personally or through others, or by helping them according to the tenor of the convention. The bishop "ad quem," who enjoys the help of these priests, remains the guarantor of their material and spiritual life, again in terms of the convention.

The Priests as Members of the Other Diocese's Presbyterate.

29. In regions that differ notably in language, customs or social conditions, except in urgent necessity, priests should not ordinarily be sent individually, but rather in groups so that they can help out each other (71). Such groups nevertheless should work to insert themselves in the midst of the local clergy in such a way as to bring not the least prejudice to brotherly cooperation.

Priests who have entered another diocese are to revere the local bishop and obey him, in accord with the convention. As regards their style of life, they are to adapt to the conditions of of the autochthonous priests and work to cultivate their friendship, since all form a single presbyterate under the bishop's authority (72). Therefore, they must insert themselves into the local community as if they were native members of that particular church; this demands an uncommon spiritual disposition and deep spirit of service. As ministers joined to a new family, they are to abstain from judgments and criticisms of the local church, leaving the task of following that prophetic office to the bishop, to whom belongs the full responsibility of governing the particular church.

Return of Priests to Their Homeland

30. Priests who want to return to their own diocese at the end of the time set in the convention are to be welcomed; this return requires a preparation, just as their going to the mission did. They are to enjoy all the rights in their diocese of origin, in which they have remained incardinated, as if they had been involved in the sacred ministry there without interruption (73). With the various experiences they have acquired, they can bring a significant spiritual contribution to their own diocese. Further, a sufficient period of time is to be given to returnees to take up new tasks, to allow them to adapt to changes that may have taken place in the meantime.

Incardination in the Host Diocese.

31. The prescriptions of the Code of Canon Law remain in force concerning the incardination of priests in other dioceses. However, the *motu proprio* "Ecclesiae Sanctae" has set out a new norm, for obtaining incardination "ope legis" (by the power of the law), which takes into account the service rendered: "The cleric who goes legitimately from his own diocese to another, after five years, will be incardinated by law in the latter diocese if he has expressed in writing such a desire to the ordinary of the host diocese and to his

own ordinary, and has not received a judgment to the contrary from either of the two within four months." (74).

Conclusion

The situation of the church today, especially as regards the insufficiency of clergy for the most urgent needs of evangelization, could induce many to a pessimistic vision of things and thus create a certain sense of discouragement toward the future of the church.

Such a way of thinking is not the way of Christians and even less becoming to pastors of souls.

This, in fact, is but one aspect, not all the ecclesial reality, if we look at it not in an exterior and superficial manner but in a Christian way, that is with the eyes of faith, the supernatural light of which makes us perceive, through the interreaction of human events, the living and toiling presence of the Holy Spirit which animates the church and leads it infallibly toward that direction of salvation which God conceived for man and which he realizes despite the most violent opposition from those who seek to impede the path of the church.

Therefore, just as we know that along all the course of the history of the church the principal agent of evangelization is the Holy Spirit who moves Christians to make progress toward the kingdom of God and opens the hearts of men to the divine word, thus also we must believe that under the direction of that same Spirit is placed the future of the church. In the meantime, the duty of us all is to pray for it incessantly and to allow ourselves faithfully to be guided by him, employing all our power in order that among the faithful the conviction of the missionary nature of the church may remain alive and the awareness of responsibility which individual Christians and especially the pastors of souls have toward the universal church may increase.

May we seek to fulfill such effort and enliven it, guided and animated always by Christian hope, "which does not disappoint" (Romans 5:5) since it is founded on the words of Christ, who, about to leave his disciples among the dangers and hostile forces of this world, promised, "know that I am with you always, until the end of the world" (Matthew 29:20). "Take courage. I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Rome, March 25, 1980, solemnity of the annunciation of the Lord.

Silvio Cardinal Oddi, prefect.

Maximino Romero De Lena, titular archbishop of Cittanova.

FOOTNOTES

1. Decree "Christus Dominus," n.6.
2. Motu proprio "Ecclesiae Sanctae," I,1, in AAS 58 (1966), p. 757 f.
3. N. 68, Par. 2, AAS 59, (1967), p. 885 F.
4. Atti del 1 Congresso "Pro meliori cleri distributione in mundo," il mondo e' la mia parrocchia, Rome 1971.
5. "Declarationes Patrum Synodaliu," n. 4. L'Osservatore Romano (27 October 1974, p. 6). Cf. Apostolic exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi" nn. 6-15, AAS 68 (1976), p. 5 f.
6. Decree "Ad Gentes Divinitus," n. 35.
7. Constitution "Lumen Gentium," n. 13.
8. Decree "Ad Gentes Divinitus," n. 38.
9. Cf. Encyclical letter "Fidei Donum," Pope Pius XII, AAS 49 (1957), p. 237.
10. Constitution "Lumen Gentium," n. 23.
11. Cf. "Directorium de Pastoralis Ministerio Episcoporum," 1973 n. 43, Rome.
12. Constitution "Lumen Gentium," n. 23.
13. Cf. Decree "Christus Dominus," n. 6; Decree "Ad Gentes Divinitus," n. 38.
14. Decree "Presbyterorum Ordinis," n. 2.
15. Ibid. nn. 4, 5, 6.
16. Constitution "Lumen Gentium," n. 28.
17. Decree "Presbyterorum Ordinis," n. 2.
18. Ibid. n. 5.
19. I. n. 4. AAS 63 (1971), p. 898 f.
20. Decree "Presbyterorum Ordinis," n. 10.
21. Cf. apostolic letter "Graves et Increscentes," AAS 58 (1966), p. 750 f.
22. Constitution "Lumen Gentium," n. 44.
23. Decree "Perfectae Caritatis," n. 20. Cf. Decree "Ad Gentes Divinitus," n. 40.
24. Apostolic exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi," n. 69.
25. Constitution "Lumen Gentium," n. 43 Cf. Sacred Congregations for Religious and Secular Institutes, and for Bishops: Notae Directivae Pro Mutuis Relationibus Inter Episcopos et Religiosos in Ecclesia, AAS 70 (1978), p. 373 f.
26. Decree "Apostolicam Actuositatem," n. 2.
27. Ibid. n. 10.
28. N. 73; Cf. Constitution "Lumen Gentium," n. 22.
29. Constitution "Lumen Gentium," n. 17.
30. Cf. Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae, 1977, p. 44.
31. Encyclical letter "Fidei Donum," AAS 49 (1957), p. 244.
32. Cf. Apostolic exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi," n. 50.

33. AAS 49 (1957), pp. 225 F.
34. Cf. 8,14; 11,22.; 13,3 etc.
35. Decree "Ad Gentes Divinitus," n. 20.
36. Decree "Christus Dominus," n. 11.
37. Decree "Apostolicam Actuositatem," n. 10.
38. Decree "Christus Dominus," n. 30.
39. Ibid. n. 11.
40. Decree "Ad Gentes Divinitus," n. 20.
41. Constitution "Lumen Gentium," n. 23.
42. Cf. Apostolic exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi," nn. 55, 56.
43. Constitution "Lumen Gentium," n. 23.
44. Decree "Ad Gentes Divinitus," n. 37.
45. Ibid. n.38.
46. Cf. Instructio S. Congregationis Pro Gentium Evangelizatione, "Pro Aptius," AAS 61 (1969), p. 276 f.
47. Decree "Ad Gentes Divinitus," n. 19.
48. Ibid. n. 38.
49. Motu proprio "Pastoralis Migratorum Cura," AAS 61 (1969) p. 601; and Instructio S. Congregationis Pro Episcopis; Ibid. p. 614 f.; Commissionis de Spirituali Migratorum Atque Itinerantium Cura: Chiesa e Mobilia Umana, AAS 70 (1978), p. 357 f.
50. Cf. Directorium generale, pro ministerio quoad "turismum" Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, in AAS 61 (1969), p. 361 f.
51. Decree "Christus Dominus," nn. 34, 35; Cf. "Ecclesiae Sanctae," I, n. 36.
52. AAS 70 (1978), p. 473 f.
53. Apostolic exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi," n. 73.
54. Ibid. 2.
55. Motu proprio "Ecclesiae Sanctae," I, 2. III, 9.
56. Apostolic constitution "Regimini Ecclesiae Universae," n. 82 AAS, 59 (1967), p. 885 F.
57. Decree "Ad Gentes Divinitus," n. 38.
58. Motu proprio "Ecclesiae Sanctae," III, 9.
59. Motu proprio "Ecclesia Sanctae," n. 2.
60. To promote relations with the dioceses of Latin America, the following bishops' commissions exist: COPAL in Belgium, CEFAL in France, CEIAL in Italy, CECADE-OCSHA in Spain, Adveniat in West Germany, NCCB-LAB in the United States, OCCAL in Canada, etc. All these commissions work with the Pontifical Commission for Latin Ameica (CAL), which maintains close relations with the Latin American Bishops Council (CELAM). In addition there is the general council of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America (COGECAL), composed of CAL, CELAM, the

presidents of the bishops' commissions mentioned above, the president of the International Union of Superiors General, and the president of the Confederation of Religious of Latin America.

61. Decree "Christus Dominus," 35:5-6.

62. II, 43, cf. Sacred Congregations for Religious and Secular Institutes and for Bishops, *Notae Directivae*, nn. 60-65, AAS 70 (1978), p. 503 f.

63. Decree "Perfectae Caritatis," n. 23.

64. *Notae Directivae*, n. 63, AAS 70 (1978), p. 504.

65. Decree "Ad Gentes Divinitus," n. 36.

66. *Ibid.* n. 23; Cf. Decree "Optatam Totius," n. 2.

67. Decree "Optatam Totius," n. 20.

68. Decree "Ad Gentes Divinitus," n. 25.

69. *Ibid.* n. 26.

70. *Motu proprio* "Ecclesiae Sanctae," I, 1, par. 2.

71. Decree "Presbyterorum Ordinis," n. 10.

72. Decree "Ad Gentes Divinitus," n. 20.

73. *Motu proprio* "Ecclesiae Sanctae," I, 3, par. 4.

74. *Ibid.* I, 2, par. 5.

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