

84/No. 9 & 10.

1st June, 1984

SPECIAL ISSUE

MINISTRIES IN A DYNAMIC LOCAL CHURCH

SEDOS SEMINAR - MARCH 20-24, 1984.

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FOREWARD

The Sedos Seminar brought together close to one hundred people having direct personal and communitarian interest in the development of ministries. About one half of those present are in situations of central administrative responsibility for societies engaged in mission to-day and represent tens of thousands of their members involved in basic situations of mission in the most diverse circumstances.

They were aware of the diversity of ministries appearing in the Christian Church to-day, ministries which span diversities of sex, of status, of race, of colour, of nationality. The Spirit of God breathes where She wills and surely in these days is informing women and men that mission is of the whole Church, of all who are incorporated into Christ in Baptism, and that many are being called to a diversity of new ministries in mission, in particular or local Churches.

One of the elements which stood out in this seminar was the great wealth and variety of ministries represented there, and the willingness of people to respond to new calls, to live new ways, to take on new responsibilities and to support old ministries, to have courage in face of situations never before encountered or foreseen, to live in insecurity, in tension, even sadly at times in fear of their own, And to have a fantastic hope.

If one could single out a particular gift of this gathering it was the slow, sometimes painful movement, towards a new recognition of the dignity of woman in ministry. Perhaps also a significant movement towards rejecting fully that quality of violence, in which all partake, consciously or unconsciously, perpetrated against the full acknowledgement of woman as the sister of Christ.

One could hear the voice of Jesus speaking through John, - was it to the Twelve, or the apostles, or the disciples, or the women of all time? -

Anybody who loves me will be loved by the Father
and I shall love her and show myself to her
and my Father will love her
and we shall come to her
and make our home with her.

And one could be comfortable with the concept of God's Fatherhood and Motherhood.

The Seminar members drew up a final Synthesis. It speaks of their vision of ministry and mission to-day, of their tensions, questions and fears, of the tasks that lie ahead, and of their hope, for this also was an experience of the meeting, a hope based not on their efforts as

women and men, but on the presence and the action of the Spirit of God. They could hear Helder Camara:

Put your ear to the ground
and listen,
hurried, worried footsteps,
bitterness, rebellion.
Hope
hasn't yet begun.
Listen again.
Put out feelers.
The Lord is there.
He is far less likely
to abandon us
in hardship
than in times of ease. (1)

The members saw themselves as partakers in the struggles of our times, listening to what God's Spirit is telling us about the tasks of the Christian Community for today in and through new situations, and praying for an openness to change, not least in themselves, while they continued to live in hope, in solidarity with the Church whom they call Mother.

This Report contains four main sections:

- the final Synthesis based on the shared reflection of the Seminar members;
- the personal experiences of the resource persons who shared with us in a simple and unadorned way, the accounts of their ministry;
- the two major theological reflections of Fr. David Power and Fr. Robert Schreiter which informed the discussion process and the scriptural reflections on ministry of Fr. Michael Amaladoss.
- appendices: a note on the experiential methodology and the list of participants.

(1) *The Desert is Fertile* by Dom Helder Camara, Orbis Books, 1974. Included in *Hoping Against All Hope*, Orbis Books and Gill & Macmillan, 1984.

PART I

SYNTHESIS OF CONCLUSIONS: A REPORT FROM THE SEDOS SEMINAR
MINISTRIES IN A DYNAMIC LOCAL CHURCH
MARCH 20-24, 1984

(This synthesis was presented to the members of the SEDOS Seminar on the final day of the Seminar. It was then discussed in General Assembly. Some minor changes have been incorporated in the text in accordance with suggestions made at that discussion).

Introduction: We see today a world which is caught up more and more in tensions which seem impossible to resolve. The economic situation of many countries is a desperate one, with the two major opposing economic systems of that world offering solutions and ideologies which Christians find hard to accept. The earth's ecology becomes more blighted even as more land is needed for food production and a more livable environment is needed for the burgeoning cities of the world. In many places, the struggle for justice and human rights grows more acute, and Christians are finding martyrdom an almost inevitable response to their living out the values of the Gospel. And over the entire planet hangs the dark cloud of potential nuclear destruction.

Yet, within this sombre picture of struggle and death, new life is emerging, expressing itself in spirited courage and uncommon beauty. The rapid growth of the Christian Church in the southern hemisphere and in the East Asian region has heightened the awareness of all to the multi-cultural character of Christian experience today. The growing warmth between the divided communions of Christianity is shaping a new ecumenical reality. And basic Christian communities around the world are revealing a vital new Christian witness. In a truly prophetic mode, these communities, along with groups of bishops and other Church leaders, are speaking out for justice, for peace, and for an end to the deadly spiral of disarmament.

Christians within local churches are coming to new and powerful understanding of what it means to be part of God's people, and are shaping a new vision of the Church and its ministry to the world as a sign of God's Reign. In many places, the poor are finding their own voice and speaking prophetically in word and deed to the entire Church, calling the Church back to a deeper fidelity to the message of Christ. All of these things fill us with great hope, despite the profound troubles and tensions of the world we experience. For we believe that the Spirit of God must be moving somehow within this new reality.

Those experiences of hope and new life, witnessed in the growth of new ministries in the Church form the basis of our coming together in this SEDOS Seminar to reflect what these realities mean for the Church and our institutes. We have been encouraged by the invitations of Pope Paul VI (Evangelii Nuntiandi, 73) and many episcopal conferences to stand open to this new reality, and to reflect upon what all this means. This report is a record of our reflections together over a period of five days.

A NEW REALITY OF MINISTRY

There are indeed new realities in the Church's ministry. As more and more Christians become aware of their dynamic belonging in the Church, they are experiencing the call of the Spirit to ministry, both for the building up of the Christian community and for the witness of the Gospel to the world in which they live. It is a time of new developments, of change, in both the practice and the understanding of ministry. We have been aided in that new understanding by our sisters and brothers in the churches of the Reformation, who in some instances have had longer experiences with diverse ministries in the Church.

Change is a reality of our world, especially in a world where the technologies of communication bombard us with more changes than we can assimilate. The changes in our experience of ministry create something of the same feelings, tension, uncertainty, even some anxiety. These new realities are caught up for us in a mood of conflict, with established forms of ministry and of being Church, challenges to our identity, and questions about the future.

But despite the anxieties which these changes may cause, we are committed to continuing to listen for what these changes portend. Listening is the first step in involvement, evoking as it does the life, the creativity, and the growth toward communion, of a people.

Thus our first activity is that of listening for what God's Spirit is telling us about the tasks of the Christian community for today, in and through these new situations. That involves many things:

- being especially committed to listening to those who, through their discovery of a new role and identity in the Church today, are leading us into the reality of new ministries in the Church. That is particularly the case with women, who for so long have been denied the place in the Church's ministry to which they are being called. They are helping the whole Church to see and experience new pathways in ministry.
- attending to the emerging voice of the poor of our world, for God speaks to us through them in a special way. We listen to them and to all those who have been marginalized in the Christian and larger human community, as they too open up new possibilities for us.
- listening for the results of the continuing process of the inculturation of the Gospel in new settings in the South and East, and also in renewed settings in the North and West of our world.

Listening is a discipline of patience and of learning to walk with another. It leads to greater involvement with the other, and to committed action with the other. We are still in many ways in the early stages of this process, yet already can point to some things we are learning.

1. Ministry and Community: We are discovering from the new ministries how much ministry is related concretely to a community. The Spirit raises up those ministries the community needs to carry out its mission in the world, and to care for its own nourishment in God's Word and life in Christ. Ministries of justice and advocacy, ministries of healing and reconciliation, ministries to those who suffer and are oppressed in a special way, ministries of teaching and spiritual direction, new ministries of leadership in and for the community, we are tempted to enumerate all the ministries we have been experiencing among believing men and women. But to become prescriptive of what can be the ministries of the Church at this stage is premature and disregards the first thing we have learned: how much ministry is rooted in communities.

Rather than try to create definitive lists, we wish to return to those communities to continue listening and to join them in discerning how the Spirit is raising up ministers in the Church based on the needs of their world and their community.

2. A New Vision of the Church: The second thing which we are learning in this new situation is how much these new ministries are part of a new vision of the Church on the part of those who now feel the call of the Spirit and are receiving the affirmation of their local communities. It is a new vision, and we hesitate to describe it yet in any detail. But we recognize factors which are giving contour and texture to that vision. Among those factors are:

- an understanding of the Church as the People of God, along the lines set out in Lumen Gentium's first chapters;
- experiences in basic Christian communities around the planet, and the ministries emerging there which constitute a second, powerful factor;
- the prophetic role of the poor in our Church;
- the experience of women, and the experience of others discovering a new identity for themselves and within the Church, provide further shape to that vision;
- the contrasting experience between the new realities in ministry and our previous understanding of Church and ministry, give a fifth aspect to our grasping of this vision;
- the reality of the growing shortage of priests and others who have ministered before in the Church makes us attend to how God now seems to be caring for the leadership and nurture of the Church through these new ministries.

QUESTIONS BEING RAISED

But even what we are already able to discern of this new vision of the Church, and how its mission will be carried out, prompts within us questions with which we will have to come to terms in the years ahead.

A major question already upon us is: how are these experiences changing our definition of ministry? And how does what we are calling ministry relate to a more general sense of service or Christian witness? How does service come to be acknowledged as a special work of the Spirit for the community and come to be affirmed and supported by communities as a ministry of the Church? We see a need for careful theological reflection on this question, guided by experience of these ministries and by a faithful listening to previous experience given us in the Scripture and the traditions of our Church.

A second major question is how these new ministries will relate to other ministries already in the universal Church. In light of this, some ministries are now seen to be renewed ministries rather than totally new one.

Nonetheless, this major question brings with it a series of other questions for which we seek answers in light of this new **vision** of the Church, yet one faithful to the best of our tradition. Among those questions are:

- 1) What impact are new ministries having on our understanding of the role of ordained ministry in the Church and the meaning of those ministries? Historically, an earlier diversity of ministry has come to be consolidated in the ministry of the ordained priest. Now some of those ministries are coming to others. What will this mean?
- 2) What does this new diversity of ministries mean for what has been the sacramental commissioning for ministry, ordination? How do we arrive at discerning what the Spirit is doing in communities, and how do we come to affirm and commission or ordain persons in these new ministries?
- 3) The diversity of new ministries affects not only the sacrament of Orders. It is already having an impact on other parts of the traditional sevenfold division of the sacraments. In ministries of healing and spiritual direction, the results of those ministries lead naturally into rites of reconciliation. Can we rethink who might be the appropriate minister of the sacrament of Reconciliation in those circumstances? The renewed awareness of relatedness of ministry to community reminds us of the close connection between leadership of the community and leadership of the Eucharist in earlier periods in the Church. Might the ministry of this sacrament also not be rethought?
- 4) Ministry in sacrament recalls to us the Second Vatican Council's reaffirmation of the priesthood of the People of God, the priesthood of all the baptized. These new situations are making us think more about what might be the true and full meaning of this priesthood, and how it will affect the priesthood of those now ordained.
- 5) We also need to clarify more for ourselves what we mean by "the community" when we say that ministry is connected so closely with a community. Does this mean the basic Christian community, the parish, the diocese, or even the missionary society in some cases? And what is the relation of the community's affirmation of new ministries

to their acceptance and affirmation between local churches and the universal Church?

- 6) How are we to understand the charisms or gifts of the Spirit that give rise to ministry, and their ordering and institutionalization in the Church? What kind of process guides this ordering, and who are to be the ones guiding the process?
- 7) This new vision of Church and ministry is not one universally shared. It operates alongside another vision of the Church, which emphasizes the ministry of the central leadership of the universal Church as directly and clearly guiding local Churches. This other vision of the Church wants to enhance the role of the ordained priest and to maintain a clear distinction between this ministry and other, subordinate ministries. Even when encouraging a diversity of ministries in the Church, its chief concern is their hierarchical ordering, even in the local community. It also excludes certain persons, especially women, on the basis of status in life rather than call of the Spirit. Both of these visions are found in Lumen Gentium. How shall these two visions of the Church relate to one another, and what shall be the future of new ministries as a result of that relation?
- 8) The visions of ministry in these two models of Church are distinguished further by different understandings of the work of Christ in His Church. The newer vision emphasizes Christ's work in the Spirit, guiding the Church, and calling forth the ministries needed for the building up of the Church and for the mission of the Church in the world. This vision is reminiscent of one found in the earliest part of the Church's history, and never completely lost. The other, more hierarchical vision sees Christ's work especially through the bishop and priest, who stand in the place of Christ in the leading of the community. Thus to diminish in any way the role of priest or bishop is to diminish the role of Christ. How shall these visions be seen in a balance that supports and protects what is happening in ministry in the Church?

UNRESOLVED TENSIONS IN THIS NEW REALITY

These last questions point to profound tensions, not only between those who hold to differing models of the Church, but also among all concerned for the well-being and authentic witness of the Church to its Lord. These tensions have not been resolved, and at this time show no ways of easy resolution. Among the most troubling of these tensions we see:

- 1) How shall we maintain the unity so important to Catholic Christianity, and yet acknowledge and even affirm the pluralism of the current situation? The resolution of the tensions caused by the interplay between unity and plurality will require great patience on the part of all involved in this discernment. This is especially important, given the fluidity of the current situation in ministry.

- 2) How will effective coordination between local churches be brought about in the midst of a diversity of ministries? Can a process be developed for recognition of ministries from local church to local church where this is needed, and for situations where ministries can span more than one local church (such as justice ministries)?
- 3) What happens when new ministries are discerned and accepted in a community, but are not accepted by the bishop or the central government of the Church, either because of the restriction of universal law or because of the preferences of a bishop or the central government of the Church? How can such situations be adjudicated?
- 4) The major portion of authority for leadership of the Church continues to reside at the level of the bishop and of the central government of the Church. How are we to deal with the ways of exercise of that authority and the use of power in those situations which, to our best judgement, seem to be harmful to new ministries?
- 5) In the midst of these tensions and the conflicts which sometimes then arise, how do we maintain the unity within our societies which we, as members of general government, are required to preserve, and how do we maintain credibility when what we say is contradicted by what we become obliged to do? Our concern is not so much for our personal fate in such situations, as it is for a faithful rendering of leadership for our societies.
- 6) The current situation has to a great extent become one of an impasse for women called to ministry. Both in recent legislation and pronouncements from the central government of the Church, the way for women into many of the ministries to which they now feel called is blocked. This seems to us to be impeding both the development of a genuine mutuality in ministry between men and women, and a renewal of traditional ministries of which we have received glimpses in many places. How can a dialogue be initiated and carried through that can resolve this impasse?
- 7) The tensions now felt and the conflicts we see already emerging could well lead to the departure from our societies of some of our most prophetic and creative members. Within communities, it could lead to persons breaking bonds of communion with parts of the larger Church. These prospects create fear and sadness within us, feelings that still seek adequate expression. How can we deal with these prospects for ourselves and within our societies, and in the communities we serve?

TASKS AHEAD FOR MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

The questions and tensions we see and have experienced in these new situations remind us of our roles within our missionary societies. These societies live out a charism, recognized by our members and approved by the central authority of the Church. The experience of living from a charism

means that societies are often able to feel at home more quickly with new and prophetic models of the Church and ministry than are members of the hierarchy. That same charism often prompts societies to prophetic action which causes tensions in the Church, tensions which we hope are signs of new life rather than of sin and death.

Within the context of these considerations we see a number of tasks ahead for societies and their leadership. Among them:

- 1) We ought to aid in the discernment of new ministries, and in the process of raising up and affirming them in Christian communities.
- 2) We need to support those members of our societies and other Christians who are working in new ministries.
- 3) We need to educate and help form our members to the reality of new ministries, both those members who are called into these ministries and those who are not. Likewise, we should lend our support to the education and formation of persons called to new ministries in the communities we serve.
- 4) The fact that our societies span many countries and many local churches gives us channels of communication which can be put to the service of helping coordinate ministries between local churches. We need to explore ways in which this might be done.
- 5) Because of the experiences of our members with new ministerial realities, we need to continue to work toward representing those realities to church authorities at all levels. We also need to continue to work toward reconciliation where differing views of these realities in the Church come into conflict.
- 6) We must prepare ourselves and our members to see the role of our societies decrease in situations where local people come to assume greater leadership in the ministry of the Church.
- 7) We must find ways to prepare ourselves and our members to face the painful situations where conflicts find no resolution, and church authorities at some level ask our societies to leave a particular area. We must be prepared also to see some of our members leave our societies in those situations, but we must also try to promote and sustain dialogue to the greatest extent possible.
- 8) The experience of new ministries may lead us to abandon some ministries long thought to be central to expressing our charism, causing us to rethink our role in the Church in order to reflect more faithfully our charism in changed situations. This can be a very painful process, but one to which we may be called. Such change in our own ministries may bring us into conflict with those communities whom we have served through those ministries in the past. Again, we must promote dialogue and reconciliation as much as possible in those situations.

Conclusion: Much of this report has dealt with the uncertainties, the questions, the tensions, and the conflicts which the reality of new ministries present to us. But the feelings which uncertainty, tension and conflict may arouse within us should not be mistaken for our attitude toward what we see happening today in the Church. Rather, we see the emergence of new ministries as a sign of great hope, of vitality and grace in Christian communities, as a sign of God's continuing care for His Church and the world He created and redeemed.

Our dominant mood about the new directions which the mission of the Church is taking is one of joy and even of excitement. We rejoice in sharing in the experience of people finding a new identity in the Church, leading them into the furthering of God's Reign. And it is because of that great hope that we are willing to face the challenges which new ministries pose to us as religious societies. And it is within that hope that we pray for continued guidance of the Spirit in meeting the difficult situations ahead.

March 24, 1984.

Members of the SEDOS Seminar

LATIN AMERICAN CONTEXT
FOR A CHURCH OF NEW MINISTRIES

(New Ministries in the Church in Latin American Context)

Carlos Pape, SVD

(Carlos Pape from Chile is a member of the Society of the Divine Word. He is Mission Secretary in the Generalate of the Society in Rome).

The first witnesses, or better the first experiences, about the theme of our meeting come from Latin America. Sr. Sara from Colombia has worked among the indigenous people of Ecuador for many years; Sr. Graciella from Mexico will speak of her pastoral experiences in Guatemala and Nicaragua, and Mr. Faustino from Brazil will keep us in living touch for some moments with the situation of Brazil, the largest Catholic country in the world. My contribution will consist in offering a framework within which the experiences of my colleagues are placed.

Medellin: I begin by indicating a contrasting and hopeful development which throws light on the theme in which we are interested. The Second General Assembly of the Bishops of Latin America gathered at MEDELLIN in 1968 with the specific intention of putting into practice the spirit and the orientation of Vatican II. The meeting had such an importance that Pope Paul VI himself wished to inaugurate it. But if we read today the documents and conclusions of MEDELLIN we may be surprised for at the precise moment when Vatican II was supposed to be applied, the Latin American Church silently and in a subtle manner bypassed her co-responsibility for the universal mission of our time.

Puebla: Ten years later, when the Bishops assembled together for the Third General Assembly at PUEBLA, the theme was: "Evangelization in the present and in the future of Latin America." This time one of its key conclusions was:

"The time has come for Latin America to intensify mutual services among the particular Churches (local churches) and to go beyond its own boundaries, (ad Gentes). It is true that we ourselves have the need of missionaries. But we have to give even from our scarcity."

To the question: What can the Latin American Church give to the world today? PUEBLA answers:

"Our Church can offer something original and important" and then enumerates: "sensitiveness to salvation and liberation, the richness of Popular religiosity, the experience of basic communities, the abundance of

her ministries, her hope and joy in faith".

The Latin American Church is now able to offer these basic values beyond her own boundaries, values of a missionary model which stems from her own innermost depth and which are proper traits of the Latin American Church.

The pastoral and missionary experience of Latin America is becoming an ever more interesting theme for the universal Church at various levels; the ecclesial physionomy of the continent ceases to be a copy of the ecclesial and pastoral model typical of Europe. The Churches of ancient Christianity which are going through the crisis of "post-Christianity", as well as the Churches of the so-called "Third World", study with hope the path the Latin American Church is taking in theology as well as in the area of pastoral activity. Consequently, theologians and experts in pastoral activity from Latin America are invited for discussions in other continents.

Likewise people from other churches go to visit Latin America in order to experience basic communities at close quarters and to come in contact with the well known exponents of pastoral renewal there. In this way the Church is living in a new stage, a stage that has a double orientation, that of receiving and of giving. She grows in the conviction that it is better to give than to receive.

A receiving Church: For a long time the Latin American church had remained in an attitude of receiving, of chronic dependence, right from the time of the royal patronage. It is perhaps worth recalling that, in tune with the theme of our meeting, the years immediately before Vatican II were characterised by an exceptional, almost obsessive attention by the church in Europe with regard to Latin America. Under the able guidance of the Holy See, projects of help of every kind were taking on at ever increasing rhythm. A well planned programme of emergency having the traits of a crusade, was made; in this programme the motives were mixed and complex, -of hope or of alarm, of conquest or of belligerent heroism.

In 1955, the year the Episcopal Conference of Latin America (CELAM) was instituted, Pius XII had identified some of the grave and vital problems of Latin America. Among these the scarcity of clergy was mentioned as *"the most grave and dangerous."* Both the salvation and the decadence of a society are connected to the scarcity of clergy. According to the Pope, if there are not enough clergy the spiritual march of the people will be at a slow pace. To this effect the Pope asked that prompt and forceful action be taken to coordinate the available resources.

As a result of the collective effort of the whole Church, the Pope hoped that an increasing number of vocations to the priesthood and the religious life would arise and that priests from other nations would rush to Latin America to render service there.

"A hard and costly struggle" has to be fought against "the dangers of masonry, the doctrines and propaganda of protestants, different forms of laicism, superstition and spiritism, the perverse doctrines so diffused among those who, under the pretext of social justice, work to eradicate the priceless treasure of religion from souls."

The appeal of the Pope was heard throughout the whole Church. Within the span of a few years many important organizations were created: The Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM); the Conference of the Religious of Latin America (CLAR); the Pontifical Commission for Latin America; the College for Latin America at Lovanio; the Latin American Office of the National Catholic Welfare Conference; the Missionary Society of St. James (founded by Cardinal Cushing); Adveniat, and other associations which had the exclusive aim of rendering aid to the threatened church of Latin America. John XXIII gave a greater emphasis to the appeal for help. In a special audience to Superiors and Superiors General he expressed his concern for Latin America, appealed to them to cooperate and laid a plan to face up to the increasing needs of the continent.

"What is needed", says the Pope, is to send "legions of priests and religious men and women to collaborate with the Bishops...the present moment demands a decisive programme of action which can be too late tomorrow."

Implementation of the programme materialized first of all in the church of the United States. A plan was officially proposed to the Conference of the Major Superiors in the succeeding year. The plan was to send 10% of the personnel of religious congregations, both men and women, of the United States to Latin America during the following ten years, that is between 1960 and 1970. If that were realized in the specified time about 20,000 missionaries (men and women) of North America would have left their community of origin to serve their brethren in Latin America.

A new Vision of Church: But in between came Vatican II and with it came a profound change both in ecclesiological and pastoral vision. The model of the Church and the model of the clerical mission were subjected to a rapid process of revision. On this matter The meeting which took place between Pope Paul VI and the Latin American bishops at the conclusion of Vatican II, and precisely on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the existence of CELAM, is significant.

"The time is opportune, the Council has caused to gush forth a great and forceful energy which it is necessary to nurture and to take advantage of; ..the world is changing and one should know how to meet its multiple needs and interpret its new exigencies."

Among these, the social aspect is most urgent *"the painful cry of so many",* continues the Pope, *"who live in conditions unbecoming to human beings cannot leave us impassive and inattentive...we have to involve ourselves so that the Church becomes aware of her responsibility for the formation of sound order and of social justice for all."*

Paul VI insisted on general and wholistic solutions and a pastoral activity of a missionary type, not limited to conservation but also geared to expansion and recommending a better use of the already existing clergy, a wider use of the means of social communication, special attention to the youth, and evangelization that transforms the parishes, in his own words, into *"true ecclesial communities."*

Latin America had entered upon a stage of noticeable social ferment. The latent contradictions were increasingly threatening, taking on forms of a radical nature. Cuba began to export its revolution; Canillo Torres and Che Guevara were considered symbols and forerunners of a new society; programmes of development were questioned and rejected. The solution for the continent, it was said, could not be through a reform but through a total change of the present system. In this atmosphere the celebration of the Second General Assembly of the Bishops at Medellin was initiated. Its scope consisted in the application of Vatican II to the human and pastoral reality of Latin America.

"A moment of total reflection", was how Paul VI characterized the Assembly during the inauguration that he personally presided over in August 1968. The message of the bishops addressed to all the people of Latin America on this occasion was as follows:

"the Church concentrates her attention on mankind in this continent.. our mission consists in contributing to the integral promotion of mankind and of the community, our plan is to encourage their efforts, to speed up their realization, to integrate the entire process of change with the values of the Gospel."

This demand for action is imposed with dramatic urgency:

"We believe we find ourselves in a new era of history"- while, state the bishops-"our peoples aspire to their liberation and to their growth in human dignity".

Since the Medellin Assembly the church in Latin America has acquired a collective consciousness of its original identity and of its specific vocation. With Medellin arose the sense of a local Latin American church, undertaking with consistent conviction that it has not only the right but also the duty, to develop its own programmes of action. From Medellin the Latin American church began to show its own proper physiognomy. Its basic orientations consisted in creating an understanding and judgement of reality not from an ecclesial point of view alone but in the light of its historical reality and of the "signs of the times". It is a church which is the leaven of transformation in a continent where the social structure does not correspond any more to a Christian vision of life, or of mankind; a church that becomes the messenger of the Good News to the poor, to the emarginated and to the forgotten ones of the same society.

Mission and Ministry: In such a search for faithfulness and the service of mankind, the Latin American experience sees the rise of basic communities, of an experience of the Gospel by the simple and little ones of human society, by people who experience a new sense of community and who are conscious of a personalized faith which brings about a growth of men and women in their very humanity. Thus, as observed earlier, Medellin has not spoken of a mission "ad gentes", but its inspiration is profoundly missionary in the sense that faith is necessarily involved in the problems of man, of all men and women. And in the measure in which one finds such a mission and lives it he or she becomes also aware of the ministerial dimension of the life of the Christian community. Mission and ministry become two

correlative concepts. Such is the orientation to which the church in Latin America has moved between Medellin and Puebla.

Sr. Sara, Sr. Graciella and Mr. Faustino will narrate to us their personal experience of how this ministerial dimension passes from words to practice.

AN EXPERIENCE OF MINISTRY IN ECUADOR

Sara Casanova Lozada

(Sara Casanova Lozada is a member of the Congregation Missionaria di Maria Immaculata. She has responsibility for a parish of Latin American Indian people in Ecuador.)

My name is Sara Casanova Lozada. I belong to the Congregation of the missionary Sisters of Mary Immaculate, or "Lauritas" as we are commonly called according to our foundress: Laura Montoya. My Latinamerican congregation chose as its charism right from the start, evangelization and human development among the poorest of the poor and the marginalized, and foremost, among the indigenous people. I am from Colombia and I have worked in Ecuador for 19 years among the indigenous Indian people.

I am going to share with you my mission experiences in a parish working with these native peoples. I shall do so with special reference to the topic of lay ministries as it has been under this aspect that I have been approached.

San Cristobal is a parish which belongs to the archdiocese of Cuenca. It spreads out over some 205 km and there are about 3,500 inhabitants scattered over the vast area. Actually it is only some 35 km away from the city and is situated at an altitude of 3,000m. We have no public facilities or services, so there is neither light nor telephone connection. Water is very scarce and obtainable only in some centres. Then we have but three public schools. The sole means of communication is over a poorly maintained country road to the parish centre. In 1980 the parish was entrusted to me, together with the two other Sisters by the Archbishop who delegated to us responsibility for the organization and execution of pastoral work as well as the administration of the Sacraments, that is, the non-priestly part of it. I worked in coördination with the diocesan pastoral comission.

The indigenous people of our area are owners of small lots of half a hectar or less. The soil is poor, dry, eroded and stony. For this reason they have only one harvest during the year. Usually they cultivate corn or big kidney-beans. Men group together to work but they cannot avoid migrating to the big cities in search of casual labour as builders in a sugar factory. In the absence of their husbands women have to assume responsibility for the family, for the work in the fields the care of the animals, and so on. They also work in cottage industries like the weaving of hats, together with their children, while they wait for the return of their husbands.

Our parish did not have a parish priest for 18 years. From time to time a priest would come around for the administration of the sacraments especially on the occasion of the Fiesta of the Patron Saint. In order to establish basic christian communities, we started to organize work with the already existing geographical and social units or neighbourhoods. There are now twelve such communities which attend missions of one to two months duration.

While we were engaged in this work we remained with the indigenous people sharing their homes, participating in their daily family chores, taking part in their work and occupations and eating the food which they ate. We had daily meetings, and there we reflected together about their way of life, their poverty-stricken situation, their marginalization, about their values and abilities. All this reflection we tried to do in the light of the Word of God. Eventually, after one year, the first ministers of the Word emerged. After that in answer to the existing needs other ministries developed: agents of healthcare, of teaching to read and to write, organizers of communal works, agents responsible for social and religious affairs.

Now in order to train these ministers, frequent short courses were held within the parish. Those were organized with the help of the Department for Indigenous People of the Episcopal Conference. Action was facilitated through courses of between 3 and 8 days during which a given minister would practice what he or she thought necessary and also would reflect about what he or she was already doing. While ministers were away taking part in a course, the rest of the community would pitch in for them at home. After all, the ministers' work was without pay.

This kind of education is basically development of the human person, conscientization based on the Scriptures, all with the goal in mind, that the indigenous peoples may become the authors and agents of their own development and christian way of life.

Now I myself have learned many things from my indigenous brothers and sisters. Above all they taught me to share with others with great simplicity, most unassumingly so to say. They give from what they have to give, without much worry about their own security tomorrow. The great sense of community which is so typical of them has been awakened and transformed.

Finally, they do not make a distinction between their life of faith and their daily struggle to survive. They feel themselves to be God's children when they work in the field, when they unite themselves with their families to share their bread, or when they dance during a feast.

PASTORAL EXPERIENCE IN A RURAL PARISH IN GUATEMALA

Graciella Estrada

(Graciella Estrada is a member of the Congregation, Missionaria di Berriz and is a community leader in the Church of Guatemala.)

I shall speak about a pastoral experience which started eight years ago, when pastoral teams at the beginning composed of a parish priest and four sisters, set out to organize and to implement a structured plan of action. This took note of the local needs as well as of the directives of the diocesan pastoral team. The latter, in turn, moved within the framework of the national situation viewed in the light of the Church's magisterium as expressed in Vatican II, the Medellín and Puebla documents, and Evangelii Nuntiandi.

The National Situation: Guatemala is a small country in Central America which suffers a national life of ever increasing violence and death. The roots of this state of affairs lie in socio-economic and political structures arising from the marginalization and exploitation of the majority of the people who usually live in poverty in a rural setting. There is a situation of dependency on external structures and a system that tries to continue this power structure ever more forcefully. The population of the place may be called 100% religious and even christian. Basically we confront the problem of the inequalities between people who depend on their land.

The Local Situation of the Parish: Within this framework then, exists our parish of some 30,000 inhabitants. It happens to be located along the coast in a zone of vast private landholdings for agricultural production of items for export such as coffee, sugarcane, and so on. These estates called "fincas" created small villages of permanent agricultural workers. These are tenant farmers. As a rule their settlements are made up of 200 or more families who live in conditions of housing, health and education which are simply speaking below human dignity. The average daily wage today is about \$ US 3.50. Until four years ago it was only \$ US 1.5.

Means of Public Transportation: These are in poor condition, and, as a rule, they function only if needed to transport goods to the outside. For the rest of the year the roads are virtually unpassable. Distances within the parish are considerable.

The Doctrinal Framework: As the pastoral team of the parish experienced this situation they worked out a doctrinal framework which would aid them to read the reality from the point of view of the Church. It appeared to us that what was needed was not just some programme of action geared to assistance. What was called for were ways of putting into practice a comprehensive evangelization, in line with the

orientations of Medellin and Evangelii Nuntiandi. So we asked ourselves how we could possibly accompany these people so that they would become the authors of their own history, committed to a process of transformation, to changes based on the Gospel values. How would we announce a God who is the father of all, who is a God of life, a God who wants life, brotherhood and sisterhood, salvation of all people for these poor people who lived in an environment contradictory to these very truths of our Faith.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION AND PRIORITIES EMERGING FROM IT

We made an analysis of the local reality and from that we established priorities for our work, relating all activities to one unifying goal. This goal we formulated in the following way: We want to arrive at the existence of an evangelized and evangelizing parish-community, which has as its starting point a consciousness of the dignity of the person. From this follows the defense of the right to live a worthy life, presupposing that each person has been created in the likeness of God. Therefore, we felt responsible for constructing a community of people who were brothers and sisters within the People of God. This programme we were convinced, is penetrated by the light which comes from reading the Bible.

Priorities of Work:

1. The formation of catechists, men as well as women, meant to be christian community leaders. They should be catalysts, animators of the Faith in their community and at the same time bridges of communication with the parish.
2. The use of the means of social communication for programmes of religious and cultural formation, of healthcare, of the advancement of women, etc.
3. Regular visits to the different communities with the goal of keeping in contact with them and to participate in their celebrations of the Faith. These are, the eucharist if a priest were present, or else, the liturgy of the word and other celebrations. An additional purpose was to motivate the people so that more catechists and ministers would emerge, persons disposed to carry out the different tasks which a better service of the community would require.
4. The elaboration of materials and the coordination of programmes of presacramental catechism.

CATECHISTS' PROJECT

The discovery of these animators was brought about by a direct invitation which we extended to all those who felt called by the Lord to offer a christian service to their community. We started with a group of about 50 people which, little by little, began to grow until it reached 250. All of these had the

recommendations of their respective communities. Five formation centres were established within the different zones of the parish.

The programme is built mainly on a biblical formation of four successive years. The meetings take place every two weeks, lasting four to five hours each time. Besides, intensive short courses of three full days are provided twice a year. These offer complementary topics such as: learning to analyze one's own situation, the importance of the prophetic sense of the Gospel, knowledge of labour legislation. Finally, we should mention as well, diocesan and national encounters, once or twice a year.

The Commitment of the Catechist: The catechists have to find their own identity and role, starting out from the experiences they will make within their environment. During an annual Eucharist in the parish, attended by people from all the small communities, a diploma is handed out. Receiving this diploma means for a catechist assuming a public commitment before the parish and one's own community. Each catechist is called individually to receive it. In this gesture becomes explicit what kind of service they are now disposed to render. Naturally this requires a previous dialogue with the community so as to clarify needs. There is also a dialogue with the parochial team which has to give its opinion on matters referring to the biblical, theological and human formation of a candidate.

As time passes the opinion of the communities and the catechists already serving receives ever more weight in the decision to accept or not accept candidates for the ministries they may wish to perform. A pivotal point is the witness of their christian life, the realm of their individual as well as their family life. Just here the community shows itself very demanding.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND POSITIVE POINTS

The catechists have turned out to be real evangelizers of their communities, and this in the all-embracing sense of the word.

- They are people who use the Bible as their basic tool in evaluating their own situation as part of the one history of salvation. In this manner they direct the liturgy of the Word and preside at the presacramental preparation for baptism, first holy Communion and marriages.

- They have achieved a critical sense and a capacity for judgement which enables them to play their prophetic role: thus they can discover signs of life and of light, areas of death and of sin within society.

- They managed to develop their human talents in a way which made it possible for them to express themselves in public with ease. They also knew how to organize themselves-all this for the purpose of better service and not to gain power or domination.

- They also have developed their creative capacities so that they can present a topic in a more existential way within the particular manifestation of their popular religiosity (for example, pilgrimages, the celebration of Holy Week and others).

When we had finished four years with this programme for catechists the idea came up from among themselves of starting an organization for catechists (the 250, that is). In this way they wanted to become the very agents of their own coordination, formation, mutual protection, and this through commissions in which they would feel taken up with a very concrete task.

DIFFICULTIES

As we moved ahead with the project, repression in the country was increasing. This we also felt in our area.

- One began to look upon catechists as dangerous people in the "finca," because quite often it was they who spoke out about the needs and the claims of the communities to the administrators.
- The protestant sects were increasing their numbers constantly. Now their "converts" often turned into spies and accusers of catechists to the landowners.
- Relations between the "finca"-owners and their administrators, and the personnel of the parish (priest and Sisters) which in the beginning were very cordial, then began to become ever more strained until the point of break-down. The work of evangelization interfered with their interests more and more...
- In a "finca" it became increasingly difficult to use the chapel for community celebrations.
- There were threats to the parish priest's life and some attempts to kill him failed.
- Persecution of catechists began, and some of them have actually been killed.
- Spying on the house of the Sisters began, etc., etc.

All this has grown to such proportions that now the work has to be accomplished via the "Pastoral Bureau of" This means for us remaining present with the catechists in the face of running risks, still working out with them materials in order to keep alive hope despite the situation of martyrdom of the Church. To the extent, still possible, we want to celebrate the Faith with them.

The time is now over for pursuing a programme of projects and then measuring accomplishments. But now we realise all the more, that in the silence forced upon us, and through the blood of so many martyrs, this project of the poor will turn into a triumph. After all, we are helped by God who came to us with the Good News for the poor. And He is faithful.

A SYNOPTIC VIEW OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE BASIC
ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES IN BRAZIL

Faustino Teixeira

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It is a great pleasure for me to be here to present to you this brief reflection on the Basic Ecclesial Communities in Brazil. There is no doubt that the lived experience of the BEC continues with an ever increasing impact, to influence all of Latin America, and especially Brazil itself. The existence of these small communities is one of the most significant facts on the contemporary ecclesiastical scene; they are an evangelical influence and inspiration to the universal Church. It was in this regard that the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB) published an all important statement in November 1982 in which they said: "The basic ecclesial Communities in our country today are a realistic expression of one of the most dynamic features of the Church and for various reasons they continue to arouse interest in other sectors of society also" (1). Their statement recognizes the authentic ecclesial nature of the BECs. "Essentially an ecclesial phenomenon, the BECs in our country came to life in the heart of the church and have become a new way of 'being Church'". It can be affirmed that through and around them the pastoral and evangelizing action of the Church is developing and will continue to develop in the future" (2).

The small Communities which began in Brazil towards the middle of the 1960s due to the combined efforts of religious and laity, were re-enforced by the Conference of Medellin (1968) and today are a very definite, -indeed fundamental, -factor in the life of the Brazilian Church. The BECs are not a new movement of the lay folk but rather a new way of being Church in which all, priests and people, consider themselves to be coresponsible for the realization in practice of a more evangelical way of ecclesial living according to the will of Christ.

Songs (hymns) have a very special place in the life of the Communities. I would like to begin by singing one that is very popular in the Communities and which more or less synopsis all I am now going to present to you: (see notes for translation)

"Nossa alegria é saber que um dia
 Todo esse povo se libertará.
 Pois Jesus Cristo é o Senhor do mundo
 Nossa esperança realizará.

Jesus manda libertar os pobres
 E ser cristão é ser libertador
 Nascemos livres prá crescer na vida
 Não prá ser pobres nem viver na dor

Vendo no mundo tanta coisa errada
 A gente pensa em desanimar
 Mas quem tem fé sabe que está com Cristo
 Tem esperança e força prá lutar.

Não digas não que Deus é o culpado
 Quando na vida o sofrimento vem
 Vamor lutar que o sofrimento passa
 Pois Jesus Cristo já sofreu também

Libertação se encontra no trabalho
 Mas há dois modos de se trabalhar
 Há quem trabalha escravo do dinheiro
 Há quem procura o mundo melhorá

E pouco a pouco o tempo vai passando
 E a gente espera a libertação
 Se a gente luta ela vem chegando
 Se a gente pára ela chega não." (3)

Let us have a close look at what has happened in BECs in the Diocese of Volta Redonda (Rio de Janeiro) and especially in the suburb of Jardim Belmonte, on the periphery of that city. One of the largest steel industries in the country is located in Volta Redonda, which is a relatively young city. A large proportion of its population is made up of labourers who have come from other States (principally from the States of Minas Gerais and the North East). Jardim Belmonte is one of the poorest areas of the city and the pollution there is particularly noxious for added to the pollution from the steel works there is an equally unwholesome pollution from a large cement factory. In addition to this problem there is the utter lack of basic facilities (gutters, footpaths, light etc.). This situation arises from low earning capacity of the population and results in severe health hazards. Children suffer most - many have respiratory and skin problems and, of course, they are undernourished. This suburban population is composed for the most part of unskilled workers, mechanics, builders assistants, domestic servants, unemployed etc.

The formation of Communities in the zone began in a really successful way at the beginning of the 1970s. The presence of worker priests and religious enabled it to take a definitive form due to the fact that they lived in close contact with the people and with families. As they visited more and more houses people who showed an interest in Community work began to appear and from among them emerged the elements of lay leadership which was to play such a fundamental role in the whole development of the process.

Up to the present the work has developed very well and there are many basic groups meeting weekly to meditate on the Word of God and to discuss together the pressing problems that effect their lives. Side by side with the basic groups are associations that show an effective vitality: the mothers club, the youth Group, the adolescents, and of course the different pastoral action groups which are responsible for preparation for baptism and marriage, catechetics etc. In all of these lay people play a decisive role. On Sundays the different groups come together for what is one of the high points in the life of the Community, the celebration of the Eucharist.

INNER DYNAMIC OF BASIC ECCLESIAL COMMUNITIES

How can the inner dynamic of basic ecclesial Communities be defined or described? Because of the limits of time I will restrict myself to answering that question. First of all it is of interest to note that the small communities made it possible to bring the Word of God to the masses of people in the periphery. The poor, who did not have a place nor a voice in society, those who were formerly unable to organize themselves or express their opinions publicly, - these now began to meet together and discuss what life entailed for them by way of suffering and hope.

All this was done in the light of the Word of God, - a profoundly rich experience for these people. Visualize a zone of a city inhabited by poor persons and lacking the most basic amenities of life and imagine what happens when these people begin to meet each other in order to tell of their experiences and discuss their real-life problems! The poor who begin to read the Word of God and see its application to their daily lives in, and as a community setting, become conscious of a new, broadening and very illuminating dimension in their lives. First of all they become aware that they are persons, subjects and not mere objects, and that they have a sacred dignity. It is as sung in one of the songs of the BECs:

"Suddenly our Vision became clearer, brighter, broader
And we discovered that the poor man is of value" (4)

Along with the growing realization of their intrinsic worth the poor become responsibly conscious of the importance of the Community dimension in their lives. They come to understand that they are

bedevilled by the same common problems and that their situation of oppression is clearly against the designs of God. God wills the fullness of life, not poverty and infant mortality for all. In the basic Community they become aware of the importance of the poor being united together. One of the reports from the BECs: "When alone, one struggles, grows tired, disheartened and never succeeds".(5)

The strength of the Community is rooted in its unity. When they are united together the poor overcome their fear and lack of self-confidence; they discover themselves moved to action to change the anti-life forces which batten on the environment in which their lives are lived.

As a result of their meetings and discussions a new awareness grows and new paths open up before the people's vision. Slowly but surely a collective consciousness of their situation of poverty and oppression develops. The more the poor are conscientized regarding their dignity and worth so much the more their understanding broadens regarding the role they are called to play in life. People bring to the ears of the Community the actual, real problems that plague their families: lack of water and of drainage, poor health of the children, pollution of the ecology, unpaved streets, lack of schools, unemployment, the rising price of foodstuffs, oppression at work etc.

Reflection on the Word of God: All these problems are discussed in the light of reflection on the Word of God. Comparing their deprived situation with the gospel message the poor evangelize each other and become aware that things must not continue as they are: "All this happened because people began to see the presence of injustice and exploitation. The light of the Gospel made clear for us the reality of our situation. Now, in the name of Jesus it is impossible to remain silent as if it had not been seen" (6)

Inspired by faith, the poor, now as a Community, develop a better understanding of their social environment. They feel an intense desire to understand more deeply the forces that cause society to function the way it does. The community gradually gains a new grasp of reality. Poverty is no longer accepted as an inevitable natural phenomenon akin to the weather; instead it is now seen as consequentially related to, and part of, the whole network of oppression in which they are ensnared. Such a process takes time. If it is slow it is also decisive. Depending on the particular circumstances it develops more slowly in some places than in others.

'Being Church'; 'being a person': Out of the womb of this process of conscientization a new ecclesial subject is born - a person, one who is at one and the same time aware of "being Church" and aware of being "a person". Likewise there is begotten an ecclesial "acting person" who adorns the ecclesial institution with new freshness while at the same time playing his or

her part in changing the age-old historical moulds of poverty and oppression. These are not parallel developments but different aspects of the same process of liberation. And so a new person comes to be, through the light of revealed truth that comes from the Word of God.

Ministries have their part to play in the conception and birth of the new ecclesial subject. Participation in ministries, or services, is one of the manifestations of the "new way of being Church". The various services (ministries) do not derive from pastoral decisions from outside nor from above but from the real needs of the Community and as the result of a decision-making process in which all its members are actively involved. In the BECs the concept of ministries is a broad one and involves the manifold activities of a Community: the sacristan, the liturgist, the person responsible for biblical reflections, the co-ordinators of pastoral action and of courses of preparation for baptism and marriage, the co-ordinators of basic groups etc. In the BECs lay people become more and more convinced of the need to give more time and place to decision making on the pastoral level.

A Liberating Action: The dynamic of the Communities, however, does not consist simply in meeting and conscientizing people. Its fundamental direction is rather towards a changing liberating action. In the BEC the Word of God not only illuminates reality but impels to an effective humanizing commitment. "The Word of God becomes woven into the fabric of peoples lives and indicates the path they are to follow while at the same time encouraging them on the way" (7). The way of life of the Communities does not allow for a separation between faith and life. In them the relationship between faith and daily life is an energetically dynamic one that is rooted in reality around them and clamours for the liberation of the poor.

Conscientization begets, in the poor, the will to make every effort. It can be said that, in general, the first sign of commitment on the part of the Communities consists in their immediate reactions against their situation of poverty, especially in what relates to subsistence and the most urgent necessities of life. Examples are the struggle that now starts in order to improve the amenities of the zone (water, light, drainage etc.) Only with time comes an awareness that the situation of poverty arises from the underlying situation of oppression. Now the poor begin to realize that their poverty (as existing in their local situation) springs from the manner in which society is organized. At this time the scale and scope of the reactions broaden and new forms of popular collective organization and mobilization gain strength.

Dynamic of Development: According to one of the reports the Communities grow in the measure in which they become aware of the political dimension of the faith: "Every Community has its own history, its specificity, its peculiar pace of growth, but the dynamic

of development generally would appear to as follows: first of all comes the recognition of the value of the individual human person and the collective strength of the Community; secondly there follows an outlook and mentality that leads to concrete actions to help others and to engage in promotional community projects; thirdly comes an awareness of the deeper underlying causes and roots of injustices and evil on a global level and springing from the organization of society. This third stage is the most difficult one and depends largely on the quality of vision of pastoral agents, on the level of awareness of the local leadership and on the actual situation in which the struggle takes place" (8).

Faith: All of this process of Community participation is nourished by the faith dimension. The faith is the ultimate touchstone by which the meaning of all things is measured. It is because of their faith, and moved to action by the word of God, that the poor as a Community strive together for a more dignified and human life. At the last inter-ecclesial meeting of the BECs, held in the city of Camindé (Ceará) in July 1983 the participants indicated some of the reasons that motivated them in the struggle for a new society: "The first reason is known to everyone: because of the way it is organized society is perverse and corrupt; it generates ever increasing poverty and is responsible for the deaths of the poor among our people. If everything exists for the purpose of generating, defending and promoting life, then it is no longer possible to live in this society. The Christians of the BECs seek for liberation in faith, a liberation born of the Gospel and of our acceptance of the Kingdom of God.

This then, dear fellow-pilgrim sisters and brothers, is the principal reason why we wish to change this kind of Society; because God wills it, because Jesus Christ preached it, because the Holy Spirit inspires us. The plan of God the Father is that all of us should feel ourselves to be His children, that we should love each other as family and place the fruits of the earth at the service of the needs of all. He made a covenant with us in order that we might live in justice and brotherhood. If poor live amongst us it is a sign that the Covenant has been broken. And if the poor man cries out, God hears him, condemns our sin and asks for change and conversion in society. There should be neither rich nor poor in society but all should work and co-operate together for the good of all (9).

NOTES

(1) Cf. CNBB. Comunidades eclesiais de base na Igreja do Brasil.' São Paulo, Paulinas, 1982, (documentos da CNBB 25) No.1.

(2) Ibidem, No.3.

NOTES (continued)

- (3) Cf. Nossa alegria é saber que um dia. Caderno de cantos da paróquia de São Simão (Lote XV - Nova Iguaçu), p. 9.

"It is our great joy to know
That one day all will be free
Since Jesus Christ is Lord of the world
Our hope will become a reality

Jesus commands us to free the poor
And so to be Christian is to be liberator
We were born free to enjoy life
And not to live in poverty and pain

Seeing so many wrongs in the world
One is tempted to despair
But those with faith know they are with Christ
That gives faith and hope for the struggle

Oh do not complain that God is to blame
When suffering comes in life
But let us strive to overcome it
Knowing that Jesus the Christ suffered too

Liberation is achieved through work
But there are two ways of working
Some work enslaved by lust for money
Others to bring about a better world.

As time passes slowly by
One looks forward in hope to liberation
If it is fought for it will come
But it will never be achieved through passivity"

- (4) Cf. Nossa vista clareou. mimeografado (canção apresentada no V Encontro Intereclesial de CEBs - Canindé).
- (5) Relatório das comunidades do Ceará, em preparação ao III Encontro Intereclesial de CEBs. Sedoc, 11 (115): 286, 1978.
- (6) Cf. relatório da Igreja de Goiás, em preparação ao II Encontro Intereclesial de CEBs. Sedoc, 9 (96): 500, 1976.
- (7) Cf. relatório da comunidade de Santa Rosa (Goiás), em preparação ao IV Encontro Intereclesial de CEBs. Sedoc, 14 (144): 250, 1981.
- (8) Cf. Relatório do Encontro regional de Vitória (ES), em preparação ao III Intereclesial de CEBs. Sedoc, 11 (115): 389, 1978.
- (9) Cf. Carta de Canindé- V Encontro Intereclesial das CEBs. Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira, 43 (171): 594, 1983.

AN EXPERIENCE OF MINISTRY IN SIERRA LEONE

Patrick Aruna Abdulai

(Patrick Aruna Abdulai is a catechist and community leader in the Makeni Diocese of Sierra Leone, West Africa.)

I was born in a polygamous family, a Muslim, my father having six wives. At age twenty six I became a Catholic. This did not mean that I broke with my family. We are still friendly and united. In fact I am often loaned a bicycle by a muslim friend to enable me to reach distant places where I teach Catechism.

I am a Catechist in the diocese of Makeni. The Sisters of Cluny at Freetown were and are my great friends. They encouraged me in my decision to give myself to teaching. Looking at the christian way of life in Sierra Leone (and the entire African Continent) I see that many were evangelized but not converted, some were converted but not baptized, some were batized yet they are not christians. Some have christianity in their hands yet go with the traditional religion in their hearts. There is no common place where traditional religions, cultures and customs meet the Christian faith. So I find some Sierra Leonians who are neither christians nor pagans.

I meet other difficulties in my work. In very small villages I will find Muslims, Catholics, Protestants, traditional worshipers, free-thinkers, all together. It is not easy to be a catechist. It requires special training in my religion, in techniques and approaches. I see this as a lay ministry which is distinct but sometimes it is just something "painted on" by clerical powers. There are priests who use the catechist as a house servant.

I see my work as first, to educate people in the ecclesial life so that they can live the concrete experience of the church community of faith, worship and charity. This is a process. It goes on and on. When my people welcome the word that I preach to them I want them to make a fundamental option and commit themselves totally to integrate their lives with their faith. If this faith is to be alive, to have integrity, if it is to be a total existence then it will translate itself into daily action and people will share and participate in the work of the Church in solidarity. I see the Church as an assembly of people gathering in unity with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In Makeni Diocese and other dioceses in Sierra Leone our catechetical work is divided into missionary catechesis and pastoral catechesis. Our

missionary catechesis deals with five groups:

- 1) Traditional worshipers
- 2) Non-Christians-mostly Muslim families
- 3) Catechumens
- 4) Neophytes
- 5) Baptized, but not catechized, these are children baptized under five years of age.

Our pastoral catechesis is for the faith to mature. It is also divided into groups:

- 1) Preparation for first Communion
 - 2) Adolescents
 - 3) Youth
 - 4) Adults/ family groups and community.
- To conclude the above division I can say that we try to build the Church to-day on
- a) catechetics
 - b) liturgy and
 - c) charity.

Catechists, men and women are all engaged in the great task of preparing the groups to the best of their ability and counting on the help of the Holy Spirit.

There are also various organisations in the parishes to help propagate the faith and to assist the poor and disabled in their material needs. To name a few there are:

- 1) The Catholic Teachers Association (C.T.A.) made up of Catholic men and women teachers. These teach religious education (R.E) and give religious instructions and moral formation to the entire Christian community using topics and guide-lines approved by the diocese. They also take care of annual retreats for all levels and encourage mature men and women to marry in the Church.
- 2) The Catholic Mothers Organisation (CMO) is made up of mainly Christian married women. They take care of the orphans by adopting them into their families, decide on 'cases' between married couples and preach to young girls about the good aspects of Christian marriage and the dangers of abortion. The C.T.A. and the C.M.O. with other movements in the parish were invited to attend a two week course on natural family planning so that in turn they could educate our Muslim brothers and sisters on this issue.

There are also other movements like the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Cultural Club for Youths etc.

In our work of catechesis in the diocese there is a doctrinal part, and an anthropological part. Human promotion is an important part of our catechesis. The integral development of our people calls for gradual development of men and women to wholeness and depends on their capacity to react, to know, to choose their fundamental values. This affects their physical, moral, social, spiritual growth. It is aimed at the values of men and women in relation to nature around them, in relation to other men and women, and in relation to God. Our local Church's teaching in catechesis and human promotion insists on the satisfaction of mankind's material needs. When men and women are more fully human they more easily recognise God as their Father and other people as their brothers and sisters. So human promotion is linked to the full satisfaction of material and spiritual

needs and full communion with God.

There is a problem which I have come up against in my work as a catechist. I look for an answer but have not found one that satisfies me. It is this - why is it not allowed to baptize the wives in a polygamous family? These are very good people, they have completed their catechetics and are believing. Their social situation is polygamous which they cannot leave. I find it strange that baptism is permitted for people who may even be public sinners but is forbidden to these wives and so I ask for your help in this matter.

AN EXPERIENCE OF MINISTRY IN INDIA

Pearl Drego

(Pearl Drego is a member of the International Grail Movement, Director of the Transactional Analytic Centre for Education and Training, New Delhi and is engaged in directing a Women's development project, counselling, formation and retreat work).

I am going to tell you who I am and my experience of ministry - and from the questions put to me yesterday I feel the need to say that not only have I just arrived from India but I am also "made in India"! I have completed my growing up, my education and training, in my own country and not abroad. However, I have also had the benefits of "foreign mission", being baptised in an SVD parish staffed by Germans, and having studied with the Daughters of the Cross and the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. And now I am a member of the Grail, an international lay movement of women. Though founded in Holland in the 1920s the Grail has always had a respect for both national identity and local culture.

Internationality for me, is not only respect of local needs and culture but a sharing of power and decision-making. I am proud of the fact that though the majority of Grail members are from western countries we have had an Egyptian President for two terms with our international headquarters in Cairo. This is a new experience for those of our members who were used to Dutch punctuality and American democracy. Another Congregation of Sisters in India, I hear, have a Chinese Superior General. We need local leaders not just for the local church but local leadership in a global context.

J.K. Galbraith in a recent book says that, even an attempt to help is an act of domination. Because missionary activity was historically so much part of the process of colonisation we have to beware of religious Congregations following the pattern of multinationals today. In the concrete this can mean looking for a "market" in developing countries to fill their ranks, rather than being of service in the struggle for transformation at the local level.

While I believe in my Indian identity and in an Indian Church, I also believe in international solidarity and witness to humanity, the common roots of all cultures and nations. Concretely this means that while we do not invite foreign theologians to do in India what can be done by local theologians, we do not stop international exchange based on partnership and sharing. This is not easy, for either parties. In India we still stand in great awe of the white face and of foreign theology, anthropology, etc. In Pune, two days ago, I met a disciple of an Indian guru, Swami Satyanand of Monghyr who told me how clever his guru was and why his ashrams all over the world were flourishing: he had Australians leading his ashrams in India and Indians leading his ashrams in Australia and America. We cannot ignore this local

attraction for internationality nor deny its thrust. I indicated "Grail Missionary" when applying for a visa to visit Japan and this was accepted without question, but when I was visiting a Faculty of the University of San Francisco to lecture in their Summer Theology programme 'Grail Missionary' was not sufficient for my American visa. I had to go through a rather humiliating interview! African, Indian and Latin American Superiors in Western countries would indeed be a new experience of internationality.

While I am conscious in my ministry, of being Indian, I am also conscious of being a woman, a healer, and at times a 'warrior'.

As a woman: The Grail is especially a woman's movement - based on the responsibility of women in Church and society. When I finished college I was sure I would not join a religious congregation. I felt they belonged to a different world and to join there would be an escape into security. I met Elizabeth Reid, a famous Australian Grail member who was based in India. Her spirit summed up in, "The Christian is in the Eye of the Storm", caught my imagination. The Grail was founded to "convert the world to Christ", a formulation which today we consider grandiose. The Jesuit philologist Fr. Van Ginnekan, who was one of the founders, wanted us to glorify God in our womanhood and thus bring Christ to all humankind. He even had one wild idea that if European women married Asian kings and princes they could convert the nations to Christianity. Today we would see our mission as transforming the world in Christ, not just filling up the ranks of the Christian churches.

For my own formation I refused to go abroad - so my reflection on my own life experience with Elizabeth, was my process of formation. Then when she died it was decided that no other foreign Grail member would come to take her place and so I carried the administrative and other responsibilities as an Indian.

I must mention here that I dislike the term "lay" and "lay woman". It is like the term "non-Christian". Some even say, "Oh! at least you are half a nun!" Anyway now my own journey as a woman disciple merges with the feminist movement that has just begun in India and with the lives of my feminist friends in all parts of the world. This is vitalizing and exciting source of energy for mission and justice. I'll share one or two of my experiences here. I became 'radicalised' when, two years ago, I had to address the Asian Bishops on the role of women. Their reaction was strange. When I said that complementarity of the sexes for men, means in effect that women filled up the gaps in men's activities, they reminded me of great Christian women who were ashamed to have their husband come into the kitchen. And the galling moment came when one bishop said; "But Miss Drego we men are not built for affection; you women are made biologically to be mothers." When I pointed out that sociological and psychological studies today show that what is masculine or feminine is often determined largely by cultures and that biological differences do not necessarily lead to cultural differences it was a male theologian who assured my audience of bishops that there was truth in my observation. I may be able to illustrate the far reaching consequences of this simple truth in the treatment of our Indian women among whom I minister.

As a healer; My ministry of healing takes me into Indian villages where girls are regarded as domestic property and wives are often subjected to beatings. By helping the formation of support groups among the women they get a new sense of their human dignity and an ability to view their society in a new way. This means that they stop seeing themselves as victims, stop seeing their role as one of offering themselves in sacrifice for their men folk and cease their feeling of powerlessness. They become aware that they themselves take it as normal to be treated as "good-for-nothing". They learn to value their time, their work and their ambitions.

It takes time, listening and much reflection to discover how the good news of human freedom can come to the poor, the oppressed, the powerless, of a given geographical community. In the process, analysis of the cultural patterns becomes central to the groups' development. We find alternatives to violent revolution and ways of using anger in a healthy way to bring about social justice. It is quite a battle to harness the knowledge of psychotherapy into socio-cultural activities. Psychology so easily becomes channeled into a privatised field concerned with personal happiness rather than a spearhead for social change. By exercising a ministry of leadership in secular institutions I have been able to influence public groups in the direction of values based on justice and the healing of social systems.

As a warrior? The goal of my ministry is to empower life - a fuller life in people and specially in women. In some village situations girls do not have the freedom to go alone even to the other end of the village. I minister to these girls who cannot question the choice of husband being made for them. They are treated as chattels. The horror of "wife burning" is still all too common in marriages arranged in such circumstances. I am engaged also in a ministry of helping women in reconciliation of marriage difficulties and in arranging for separations.

I work with many people who are outside the Church, mostly Hindus. I have facilitated reconciliation between trade union leaders and managers following labour disputes which led to massacres in Assam. Our message was one of peace, forgiveness, reconciliation. Instead of seeking revenge we encouraged a search for new goals. In this process of reconciliation almost all had an experience of God and at the end many of these Hindus asked a blessing of Fr. Sommerton who was accompanying me in this ministry.

We must be involved in the currents that shape the world to-day even if they are dangerous. A recent medical conference organised by the World Health Organisation dealt with the topics of rural health, psychic healing and other paramedical programmes in India. At this conference, where medical history was being made, it was sad that only one Catholic hospital was represented. Our ministry is in this world. We cannot remain outside it.

AND EXPERIENCE OF MINISTRY IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Peter Kunga

(Peter Kunga is a community leader with experience in media work in the Diocese of Bouganville, Papua New Guinea.)

After the Second Vatican Council the church in Papua New Guinea looked at itself to really find out what people had in mind about the church. During three years Seminars and meetings were held both at Parish and diocesan levels and as a result a book called OUR MAJOR CONCERN was published.

The major discovery that was made during this self study was WE ARE THE CHURCH. People who really were part of the body of Christ had thought that the church was the bishops, priests, brothers and sisters. The people having this idea in mind received passively, did not participate in decision making, were not given responsibility in areas like taking care of schools and hospitals or helping in running a parish.

During the mid 70s this idea of WE ARE THE CHURCH was talked so much about in my Diocese of Bouganville. After I listened for sometime I began to question myself; Me a member of the church? Being a member then what must I do? The obvious answer was to involve myself in serving the people in one way or other. I then decided to leave the work I was doing in town and started heading for my home in the village.

After I stayed in the village for a few months the people elected me to represent them in a local community school board of management. It was here I saw that there was a need to replace the old classrooms built by the missionary. Together with the other members of the board we divided the work among three groups. As a result three classrooms were built without the help of the church or the government.

But the great difficulty I faced here was that of changing the mentality which led to the feeling that all was to be done by the missionary. This idea continues to exist even up till today.

Another experience was that of trying to help the so called "pushed out" youth. These are the youth who were and still continue to be pushed out because there is not any room for them in high school. The problem here is that parents get frustrated when they see their children being dropped from further schooling after having spent so much money on them.

The youth also felt depressed and useless psychologically when they saw that the others who went on were much better placed than themselves. Faced with these sorts of feelings I tried to help them realise that even with the small education they had they could do something, more especially by working together and by trying to help one another. There were difficulties but at least we started off with the ones who were willing to do something. Slowly the others joined in. These youth numbered 50

and they were from within the seven neighbouring villages. With this same group I also ended up in forming a choir. Every Sunday during the Eucharistic celebration we sang praising God.

The last experience was working in the field of mass media mainly in the area of producing radio programmes. This is an indirect way of ministering the word of God. The questions and answers programme was what I liked very much because it made the programme more interesting. I worked here for three years before being asked to study in Rome. This is also a form of ministry, of evangelising.

Another ministry which exists in my diocese is that of the Eucharist. On Sundays in the absence of a priest these men gather people together and the Eucharist is distributed. The catechist is also a parish co-ordinator and plans for the priest so that when he comes preparations have already been made for baptisms and marriages.

Lately with the acceptance of basic christian communities in the diocese I think many more ministries will come up.

AN EXPERIENCE OF MINISTRY AT NIJMEGEN

Catharina Halkes

(Catharina Halkes is Professor of Feminist Theology at the Catholic University of Nijmegen where she is also engaged in research.)

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As a girl I already had a feeling that something was wrong with the society in which I lived and with the church to which I belonged. As a student studying philology and literature in Leyden, after World War II, I heard male students speaking about the girls whom they were going to invite for a party or for a University-festivity as if these girls were objects which they were going to single out and possess.

At the same time I was struck by a dominant male and clerical clergy in my church. So, after I had finished my studies I saw it as my first vocation to participate in the struggle to declericalize this church and to make room for participation and responsibility of lay people. What the church needed especially, in my opinion, was to listen attentively to the faithful reflections on human sexuality experienced by men and women in their relationships.

In the commitment to this process of declericalization and upgrading the responsibility of all lay-people (culminating in the lay-congress in Rome, 1967), I gradually discovered that there was a special problem regarding women. Not only as lay-persons had they been disregarded but also as women as such. They took second place always in a twofold way: they always had to follow; special roles and exclusions were always prescribed for them.

This twofold discovery brought me into all kinds of activities, both in the, still rather traditional, Catholic women's movement and also in the lay-movement. These two aspects came together when I was appointed by the bishop of my diocese, co-director of a training centre for women and men to train them in pastoral care and counselling so that they could function afterwards in parishes or elsewhere.

It was at that moment that I decided to start my second period of academic study: pastoral theology (which had not been possible till 1964) in order to find out how we, lay women, as professional theologians could serve the community of women and men, which is the church. I saw the potential and the commitment of lay persons for the church, especially of women who discovered that they themselves could grow as mature, whole and responsible persons.

After my study I was appointed to the theological faculty of the Roman Catholic University at Nijmegen in order to teach theology and

train students who wanted to become pastors. Among them were also priests following renewal courses. In other words, I was the one whose task it was to make them more sensitive to communication, to facilitate processes of growth within themselves for an optimal functioning in that priestly ministry from which I was excluded, the only reason being that I was female.

During the early seventies my feminist consciousness broke through and I saw clearly that all the activities in which I had been engaged were interconnected: declericalization; promoting the laity's own responsibilities; women's rising consciousness; male dominance in society and a male hierarchy in our church. Through this process of my own conscientization and awakening I became more and more liberated from alienating roles and expectations, and therefore more and more connected with my own roots. Feminism has meant for me personally, a journey inwards and a radicalizing in terms of living from my own roots (radix, radices: roots). I received the inner strength of leaving all stereotypes behind me and going on a social and spiritual quest to live on my own terms and not on the terms of others. In biblical symbolism, and together with others, it was a quest for exodus - desert - new, promised land.

I really see this new quest of women, in terms of spirituality, as prophetic and as moved by the Holy Spirit. In this new christian feminist movement our primary God-experience is primarily one of God's immanence. This movement is also one great cry for liberation from onesidedness both of men and women in order that they both may become more whole.

Two reactions are to be seen in the male hierarchical church: many women are leaving this church; or there occurs a bonding together of feminist women building up new groups, new communities; doing feminist theology, either in small groups or in institutes of adult education or in diocesan groups, or studying feminist theology at the theological faculties. You may call the new chair of "Feminism and Christianity" in Nijmegen, a first victory in the struggle.

I thought that it made sense to tell you my own personal story in a nutshell in order to concretize this new feminist movement. To complete the story: after my marriage of 22 years I am now living alone in Nijmegen. I have three grown-up children who have finished their studies and who have varying relations with the church. One of them is a pastoral worker in a big parish as a lay theologian; the other two have a certain reserve towards the Church.

II.

My experiences with the diversity of ministries are not too numerous and my reflections on this subject are in an ongoing process these last twenty years. I do not like the term "lay ministries" and prefer to speak about the variety of ministries to build up the people of God. One might make a distinction between volunteers and professionals; between not-ordained and ordained; but I prefer to speak about the commitment of all and about the charisms of each one.

Generally speaking the number of priests is seriously diminishing in the Dutch Roman Catholic church. There is a strong movement towards secularization and many people have left the churches (also the reformed churches). Many are looking for new forms of religiosity or spirituality. On the other hand there is still a great number of faithful women and men, committed to all kinds of church-work.

There is a large number of basic communities, of experimental groups, of ecumenical parishes, of student and university parishes etc. Some five or six years ago many of them came together to form one movement: the Dutch "basis-movement", having widespread relationships with many parts of the world. In this movement we can distinguish four basic elements which are fundamental:

- 1) the so-called "leerhuis" (a coming together for a careful, critical, political reading of the bible in the context of Israel and of our own structures of injustice)
- 2) political action
- 3) pastoral care of each other
- 4) liturgical celebrations

In the last few years the feminist critique played an important role as well. In 1983 the first European congress of basis communities was held in Amsterdam with friends and guests from many European countries including those from behind the Iron Curtain.

For all these activities people, male and female, are being trained and schooled, either within the official church structures, local and diocesan, or within the 'basis movement' (to mention a few: the context of the peace movement; women's work; social and pastoral care for foreign labourers etc. The Dutch council of churches, of which the Roman Catholic church is a member, also plays an active part in all this and the 'basis - movement' has the status of an observer within this structure.

Then there is the problem of the distinction and sometimes of the difference between the pastoral worker (male or female) and the ordained priest within a parish team. The one is not permitted to do what the other is called to do: administering the sacraments, and this sometimes causes frictions. We all must still learn not to think of the qualifications of one as "higher", more important than the other. These biases in high-low, top-basis, derive from a hierarchical way of thinking which, I think, is not an evangelical way of thinking.

I myself function in the student-parish in Nijmegen, preach there every two months, lead the service of the Word by myself and the service of the Table with the students' chaplain. These liturgies are always prepared by a group of students and grown-ups. I have experienced that, at least for young people, it is hardly relevant whether the person who is leading the service is ordained or not, provided she or he is trustworthy. In this student-parish we had a number of women-liturgies during the Advent of 1980, and at Easter (1982) and Whitsuntide (1983)

the texts of which have been published and have had many fruitful consequences.

We live in different times in the Netherlands now. We try to make more room for new forms of ministries and at the same time we are frustrated every now and then by centralizing trends which come from Rome. What I do experience is that a true faith-community is a community based on the holy Spirit and that every form of ministry has a maieutic aspect. A minister (woman or man) is a midwife, birthing people into new life. Only the ministry of men and women, each and together, can build up a true community of faith and can give the church credibility in these times.

What I see arising in North-West secularized Europe among Christians who want to take society and the gospel seriously is a great variety of functions and ministries on behalf of people in their "social and spiritual quest". A lot of these ministries are of critical type, inspired by the gospel, but more society- than church-oriented; or somewhat differently, more structure- than person-centered. Many young theologians have a tendency to see their vocation in this "critical" work; others prefer to function as pastors within parish and group structures.

I give some examples of new situations: taking care of drug-addicts; counseling in situations of suicide and caring for the relatives of the persons concerned; helping unemployed people; guiding processes of growing conscientization of women both in themselves and in relation to the changes within the network of their relations; functioning within many groups on "woman and faith"; "woman and church"; "woman and theology". These groups exist both on the national level of the Roman Catholic church and of the Dutch council of churches and on the diocesan level, most of them of course at grassroots. Both the media and the various institutes for adult education play an important role regarding these themes.

I consider all these ministries and the people in them as a missionary church as well, although they stay and work within their own country.

As for myself: more and more I experience my "doing feminist theology" primarily as a ministry and, of course, also as scientific work. Formerly, I struggled to get women accepted in the priesthood as it was; now I struggle with the accent on changing church-structures so that a new form of priesthood may emerge within a community of radical mutuality. Together we hope and pray for the transformation of all the ecclesial structures to enable people to realize their gifts and their charisms and enable them to listen to the holy Spirit.

READING LIST

Two authors who in their work always connect the liberation of women with the liberation of all oppressed people are Rosemary Radford Ruether (R.C.) and Letty Russel (Reformed).

Rosemary R. Ruether:

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NEW WOMAN, NEW EARTH - SEXIST IDEOLOGIES AND HUMAN LIBERATION; New York, 1975.
SEXISM AND GOD-TALK - TOWARD A FEMINIST THEOLOGY; Boston, Beacon Press, 1983 (an introduction to a systematic feminist theology).

Rosemary R. Ruether & Bianchi, Eugene:

FROM MACHISMO TO MUTUALITY, New York, 1976 (very important to be read and discussed by men and women).

Letty Russell (a reformed pastor who served a parish in East Harlem for many years)

HUMAN LIBERATION IN A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE - A THEOLOGY; Philadelphia, 1984.
THE FUTURE OF PARTNERSHIP; Philadelphia, 1979.
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BECOMING HUMAN; Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1982.

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Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza:

IN MEMORY OF HER - A FEMINIST THEOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF CHRISTIAN ORIGINS; Crossroad/Continuum, New York, 1983.

Phyllis Tribble:

GOD AND THE RHETORIC OF SEXUALITY; Philadelphia, 1978.

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Sarah Maitland:

A MAP OF THE NEW COUNTRY - WOMAN AND CHRISTIANITY; Routledge and Kegan Paul, Boston, 1983.

A very radical introduction:

Mary Daly:

BEYOND GOD THE FATHER; Boston 1973.

See also the following.

Joan Chamberlain Engelsman:

THE FEMININE DIMENSIONS OF THE DIVINE; Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1979.

Roger Grayson:

THE MINISTRY OF WOMEN IN THE EARLY CHURCH; The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1976.

J. Moltmann and E. Moltmann-Wendel:

HUMANITY IN GOD.

C. Parvey:

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Leonard Swidler:

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George H. Tavard:

WOMAN IN CHRISTIAN TRADITION; London, 1973. (important for a good historical survey)

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E. Moltmann-Wendel:

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GOTT HAT NICHT NUR STARKE SÖHNE - GRUNDZÜGE EINER FEMINISTISCHEN THEOLOGIE; Gütersloh, 1980.

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Marie-Jeanne Bérère (ed):

ET SI ON ORDONNAIT DES FEMMES...?; Le Centurion, Paris, 1982.

André Smet:

LA GRANDE DÉESSE N'EST PAS MORTE

Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo:

LES NOUVEAUX FÉMINISMES: QUESTION POUR LES CHRÉTIENS? Ed. du Cerf, Paris, 1980.

France Quéré:

LA FEMME AVENIR; Ed. du Seuil, Paris, 1976.

LES FEMMES DE L'ÉVANGILE; Ed. du Seuil, Paris, 1982.

Yvonne Pellé-Douël:

ÊTRE FEMME; Ed. du Seuil, Paris, 1967.

Some suggestions in Italian.

Mary Hunt, Rosino Gibellini (ed.):

LA SFIDA DEL FEMMINISMO ALLA TEOLOGIA; Queriniana, Brescia, 1980.

M. Caterina Jacobelli:

SACERDOZIO DONNA CELIBATO; Edizioni Borla, Rome, 1981.

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1980/4, WOMEN IN A MEN'S CHURCH;

1981/3, GOD - A FATHER?;

1983/3, MARY.

(In most of these issues Catharina Halkes has made a contribution).

THEOLOGICAL STUDIES: December, 1975, Women and Religion.

BULLETIN INTERNATIONAL; Femmes et Hommes dans l'Eglise; Femmes religieuses;
nr. 16-17, mars, 1984.

PART III

MINISTRIES: REFLECTIONS FROM SCRIPTURE

Michael Amaladoss, SJ

(Michael Amaladoss taught Theology for the past ten years at Delhi. He is a member of the Society of Jesus and was elected Assistant to Fr. Peter Kolvenbach, General of the Society, at the 1984 Congregation.)

Every morning during the Seminar the first session of the day began with a prayer service based on reflection from Scripture and leading to prayer. They were conducted by Fr. Michael Amaladoss S.J. and are summarised here.

1. JESUS, THE SERVANT (Wednesday)

Jesus is the Servant of the Kingdom, of the world,
bringing to it life in abundance,
enlightening - revealing,
vivifying, saving - giving new life.

Jesus is the symbol of the Church, called to serve the world.

Jesus is the symbol of every man and woman,
called to serve the others in mutual service,
in a complementarity of charisms.

Jesus is the cosmic mystery, embracing all the ways in
which God's life reaches out to man.

The mystery of salvation becomes a mystery of service
because of the mystery of the incarnation.

(Readings: Luke 4,18-19, John 17,18-19)

2. DIVERSITY OF MINISTRIES (Thursday)

Diversity of ministries is not merely diversity of gifts,
but also diversity of needs and situations,
diversity of calls from God and Community
diversity of creative ways of response.

With this background, bring before your mind various 'ministers' in the Bible and in your contemporary experience:

Patriarch Joseph in Egypt and his relief work - Moses, leader and liberator - David, king and psalmist - Nathan, the critic - Solomon, the symbolic author of the Wisdom books - Tobias, the social worker - Esther, the Queen - Judith, the warrior - Job, the victim - Isaias and the other Prophets.

Joseph, the husband of Mary - Mary the mother of Jesus - Martha and Mary, friends of Jesus - The Samaritan woman - The Twelve - Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus - Stephen and the Deacons - Paul, Barnabas and Apollo - Aquila, Prisca and other co-workers of Paul.

Contemporary 'ministers' of your experience.
(Reading: 1 Corinthians 12,4-11)

3. THE SUFFERING SERVANT (Friday)

Ministry means today honour, power, control. This can be so whether you feel it is from God or from the Community.

But, Jesus is the suffering servant,
who serves humbly, washing the feet,
who sacrifices himself even unto death,
who is wholly dependant on God, with hope.

If the Church is not only for the poor, but of the poor,
the minister too will feel the helplessness of the poor,
powerless, persecuted, perhaps killed,
but prophetic, strong and joyful in the hope of the Kingdom.

Let us remember the countless martyrs, who have died all over the world as servants of the people.

(Readings: John 13,12-15, John 12,24-26, Phil 2,3-9)

4. CALL AND RESPONSE (Saturday)

Hopefully the Lord has spoken to us
Hopefully we have been challenged
by the situation
the needs
the creativity of the local Churches.

Do we feel called to do something about it?
to encourage a new vision of community?
to support new initiatives of service?
to accept willingly co-workers?

As we collect our thoughts and feelings,
let Mary, a woman and a lay person, responding with a total 'yes'
let Mary, symbol of the Church and of each one of us,
guide our response.

(Reading: Luke 1,26-38)

MINISTRY IN A DYNAMIC LOCAL CHURCH: THEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT
OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

David N. Power, O.M.I.

PRESENTED AT THE SEDOS SEMINAR: MINISTRIES
IN A DYNAMIC LOCAL CHURCH. MARCH 20-24, 1984

(David Power is a member of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. He is Professor of Systematic Theology in the Department of Theology of the Catholic University, Washington, D.C.)

Introduction: The explosion of ministries in local churches since the end of the Second Vatican Council constitutes the fact under consideration in this seminar. It is well documented and is known through personal experience or through hearsay to all of us. That local or particular churches are beginning to find their own identity within cultural pluralism is also quite a well-known fact. We are at least fuzzily aware of the fact that the issues raised by diversity in ministry and by the search for particular identity are not always clearly grasped or uniformly resolved. We do have some idea, but are often not sure what to think about the impact upon Roman Catholic ministry of dialogue and sharing with other churches.

I have been asked to outline a theological approach to these issues which might serve as guideline for discussion and possible future development of ministries. I want to identify the issue more clearly, point out what different approaches are being taken towards them, and indicate the point of tension at which the Roman Catholic church as a communion of churches has arrived twenty years after the Second Vatican Council.

TWO ECCLESIOLOGIES

There are those who consider that the new Code of Canon Law is the juridical instrument which will allow the Roman Catholic Church, as a whole and in its parts, to realize, both efficaciously and harmoniously, the directions assumed by the Second Vatican Council. Others, however, while fingering through its pages have been heard to mutter "Vatican 1 1/2", and in a more detailed analysis to show how it fails to meet the aspirations engendered by the Council on such points as the relation of other churches with the See of Rome, or the position of the laity in the life and mission of the church.

We seem, in the Catholic Church, to have arrived at a point along the road which is forked, so that some are taking one direction and some another on matters of church polity. Together, because of the Council, we have attained a common consciousness of local churches, of the active role of the laity, of greater communication within communities and between churches, of

the reality of new churches independent of Europe and North America, and, with this, of greater cultural pluralism. Now, however, this new consciousness is being assimilated in two quite different ways. It is not a matter of division between those who accept the Council and those who do not. These latter are about, but they do seem to be a minority and not to have a significant impact. The present division is more within the ranks of those who appeal to the authority of the Council and who justify their choices by a reading of its documents.

In relation to the theme of this seminar, we can note differences on the relation between local churches and Rome, and on the position of the laity in the church.

1. We are familiar with the experience of the Synod of Bishops which offers its views and assistance to the Pope on a given topic and then awaits the promulgation of a pontifical document. We know that it would be a very different ecclesial experience were the African bishops to call for a church council, with participation from other continents, at which the Bishop of Rome would agree to preside, in order to consider matters which they consider binding or vital to the church in Africa. Such matters could, for example, include liturgical pluriformity, matrimonial law, ordination to office in the church and its conditions, and the role of the Gospel in the North-South tension affecting global human relations (1). The ecumenical significance of such a council would lie in the form of its convocation and in the way in which its agenda would be proposed. There would be a recognition that these matters concern one region of the church, but that they need to be resolved in communion with other churches, because of their nature, and under the presidency in charity of the Bishop of Rome.

What possibilities there are for such a council in the future, it is not clear. As things now stand, they are centred on the initiative and decisions of the Pope. In restructuring the Curia and in structuring the Synod, it was the aim of Paul VI to allow the Pope to have direct personal contact with other churches, to receive information and advice from bishops around the world, while retaining considerable personal independence in making decisions and in giving orientations to the life of the church (2). This is not a return to preconciliar days, for it provides structures for communication and corresponsibility, or collegiality, not previously known. It does, however, interpret collegiality in a way that assures a maximum responsibility and autonomy for the Bishop of Rome as universal head of the church.

2. In local churches we see a similar contrast between images of church life.

One way of being church is realized in a parish where the presbyters are often in dialogue with lay members, and in which lay members are close associates with the clergy, but where the power of decision and direction rests with the latter (if not uniquely with the parish priest!) Education committees, parish councils, study groups, youth teams special ministries and the like, have considerable impact on the life of the parish. The role of the laity, however, could only be called auxiliary and consultative, rather than constitutive and life-determinative (to which in juridical structures would correspond a deliberative voice).

A very different way of being church is realized in an ecclesiastical division which encompasses a number of basic christian communities, enjoying directional autonomy, but aided and knit together through the ministry of presbyter and bishop. For such communities, there is no hesitation in saying that the action and will of the laity is life-determinative and that orientations emerge from a consensus in faith of the

members, attained in a variety of ways, related to the hearing of the Word and the discernment of the Spirit.

These are but rough examples to call attention to the point that we are living out two distinct ecclesiologies, not simply differing in theory but in ecclesial practice, both justified as an implementation of the Council. One, we might say, is an ecclesiastical practice of a centre more in touch with the periphery, not merely transmitting more signals to it, but receiving waves from it. The other is an ecclesial practice of converging circles (the image is inspired by Aldo Moro's image of converging parallels). The starting-point is the activity within each circle, but the vitality of the circles requires communion between them, and some convergence in regard to the meaning and power of the Gospel. The presence of these contrasting models of the church (or, at times, models at the stage of being "for" rather than "of") (3) is verified within local communities and in the relation between particular or local churches and Rome.

Dilemmas from Vatican II: It has been pointed out that both these ecclesiologies or ecclesial polities have their roots in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. We seem, in effect, to be facing the practical dilemmas of a theoretical disjunction that was pointed out to us by the observers from other christian churches and communions during the Council. We were told that it would be impossible to live simultaneously with the first two chapters of Lumen Gentium on the people of God and the third chapter on a hierarchical church. The observers from eastern churches in particular pointed to the inevitable clash between a pneumatological ecclesiology and a Christonomy. (4) On the one hand, there is the image of the people of God, one of coresponsibility and collegiality involving all the faithful, a church coming to be, under the power of the Spirit in its local realizations, and then in the communion of communities. On the other hand, there is the image of a hierarchical church, founded and empowered by Jesus Christ, brought to be in its episcopal succession and in the concrete uniformity within diversity, assured by a collegiality of bishops, una cum et sub Romano Pontifice, Vicar of Christ on earth. At the Council also, we were asked not only what recognition we could give to other christian churches, but how much of the Reformation and Protestant or Evangelical experience we could incorporate into the life and ministry of Roman Catholic communities. Rather awkwardly, the Council put the call and priesthood of all the faithful into relief, while at the same time repeating the statement of yore that the difference between the ordained and the faithful is of essence and not only of kind. This, in effect, is not merely to complement one statement with another, but to put two diverging points of view alongside one another.

CRITICAL TURNING-POINT OR IMPASSE

It is typical of a critical period in history that there should be two divergent models of society and communion, an older one challenged by a new, each with its own rhetoric, the two conflicting with one another in ritual and juridical structure. The new model appeals particularly to new experiences and claims to make sense of them in ways that the old does

not. The old promises continuity, and allows for change by internal modifications that can be encompassed within an unchanging framework. Not being in possession, the new model has difficulties in forging its ritual and juridical structures.

A model, to be effective, needs all three: appropriate rhetoric (e.g. contrast the images of perfect society and of people of God) that appeals to the affective as much as to the cognitive, a ritual that transforms experience in relating it to a vision of life (e.g. the sacrifice of the mass offered by a priest, contrasted with the eucharistic memorial celebrated by a community), and juridical structures (e.g. contrast a pastoral council with consultative voice, or commissioning to ministry by a parish priest with discernment of ministry by a community).

Given these divergent models a historical impasse is reached when there is no resolution to the conflict, so that fragmentation and schism ensue. Instead of impasse, there is a historical turning-point if the new model is received and finds its appropriate ritual and juridical implementation.

Another resolution of conflict is, of course, possible. The old model can adapt its workings so as to contain new experiences while giving primacy to the need for continuity. It contains them, that is to say, by in some measure satisfying what is felt to be important in new experiences, but more importantly by limiting them and their impact. This is what people mean when they use the tag "neo-conservatism". One current typical example of this is the present ritual of eucharistic concelebration in the vernacular. The desire for an understandable language, and the desire for a common celebration are met, but the model of church ritualized remains strictly priestly and hierarchical. Another example is that of the movement Comunione e Liberazione in the Italian church: it accepts the reality of the secularization of society and the diminished place of the church in public life but continues to expect a centrally determined social teaching, a ritual practice that will enable the church to function as a social entity of some vigour in public life, one that transcends the realities of local communities, even at their expense.

Reception of Vatican II. We can grasp the meaning of what is happening among Roman Catholics only if we realize that as an historical event, the way in which a Council is received is as important as what it actually decides or teaches. Looking back to the Second Vatican Council actually means looking back from considerably changed historical circumstances, while at the same time it means the effort to be true to the conciliar experience.

Ecumenical Councils do not affect the life of the church simply by being held and promulgating decrees. They and their decisions have to be received into the life of the church. Historically, a Council becomes an event and not a mere happening by the way in which it is received. The fifth Lateran Council as a council of reform had little impact, not only because of its own internal weaknesses but also because few people had any desire to respond to its, granted relatively weak, impulse towards

reform. The Council of Trent, on the other hand, occurred within a historical context where reform had become necessary to survival. Even then, it has been reasonably well shown that the historical reality of Trent results as much from the precise plan of implementation adopted by Pius V and subsequent Popes, as it does from its own decisions. This does not simply mean, that to be implemented the Council needed the papal arm, but that the papal arm gave a particular colouring to the Council's movement.

One area alone may illustrate the importance of reception, namely, the liturgical. The Council of Trent expresses a non expedit to the use of the vernacular and to the giving of the chalice to the laity, but left open the possibility of some regionalism on these points and of a later more favourable decision. Subsequent papal action made the non expedit irreversible for four centuries. On the other hand, the unity of rite in the Roman Church promoted by the papacy in consequence of Trent did not get reception by the whole Roman patriarchate until the 19th century, up to which time some churches continued to celebrate in the Gallican rites. Both the effort at uniformity and the resistance to it constitute part of the historical reality of the Council of Trent in an area, where in effect, the Council made no clear decisions and was yet invoked as an authority.

Historical Change. In this process of reception, changing historical circumstances make a difference. The political regimes in Europe made a difference to the reception of both Trent and Vatican I. This is important to us today, since we live in an age of such rapid and global historical change. It is apparent that what we call the vision of the Vatican Council, as well as its specific teachings, have to be received in a different historical setting to that of 1960 or 1965 (and we may be right in surmising that some of the bishops at the Council were more in tune with the forties than with the sixties). Since historical consciousness and a self-definition as sacrament of Christ and God's kingdom in the world were integral to the conciliar vision, this is obviously very important to keep in mind for those who wish to be faithful to the Council. In particular, it is an important factor in our consideration of the future of ministries in a dynamic local church. For that reason, it seems useful to say something, in summary fashion, about some of the changes in the world situation and in the position of churches that have occurred since 1965, when the Council closed.

In the World. I am not a historical analyst and so rely on others, and even at that cannot be sure that many of you might not give more importance to other changes than those I list (5). Though careful analysis is indeed important, differences of opinion do not at the moment affect my major argument. As far as the world situation is concerned, there are six points that affect our understanding of the church's mission and its ministries:

- a) Within the enormous economic and scientific expansion of these decades, there has been a shift from an East-West tension to a North-South tension, the East-West conflict being translated into a conflict over influence of the super-powers and their alliances in the South.

Within this tension, the world has to record considerable failure in meeting the needs of human poverty and suffering as well as large-scale economic failure, giving birth to its new poor, such as the landless, the unemployed and the marginal.

- b) There is a threat to human survival in the forms of the nuclear peril, various kinds of genocide, and the impossibility of controlling natural disasters, an impossibility not unrelated to the North-South tension.
- c) The human rights issue has taken on new dimensions, both because of new awareness and because of continuing violations. The notion itself has been expanded to include new categories of persons, e.g. women, children, prisoners (in short, all the socially marginal) and new categories of rights, e.g. some pertaining to the right to work and its conditions.
- d) There is the emergence of new peoples and new countries, claiming cultural and political independence, but bedevilled by their own internal conflicts and by policies of global politics and economics.
- e) There is the re-emergence of religion, in the form of Islam especially, as a social and political force in world history.
- f) Few countries have not been affected by the changing condition of women and of the family in society.

Since it was the intention of the Second Vatican Council that the Church might consider the world as its partner, seeing it as a locus of divine presence and absence (what was meant by reading the signs of the times), how can we today be true to what was said about the relation to the world twenty years ago? Certainly, there was much more historical optimism then than there is now.

In the Church. Correspondingly, in the church itself we can note the following changes as of note to our theme:

- a) There is a loss of optimism in the vision of partnership with the world, and the sense that human history may need a different reading.
- b) There is a changing religious consciousness, not unconnected with the first point, resulting particularly from the discovery of non-christian religions and dialogue with them.
- c) Curiously enough, this is accompanied by what has proved to be a slow and somewhat flawed ecumenism among the churches, where good-will of a vague sort seems to exceed the possibilities of real achievement, and wherein the catholic partnership, always marginal, is affected by decisions of other churches on matters ministerial (e.g. the ordination of women) and moral (e.g. attitudes towards the divorced).
- d) There is a new cultural pluralism within the church, and a sense of the cultural particularity of local churches.

- e) There is the loss of institutions which formed the basis of the church's place in society and its influence on it, and hence the quest for a new basis.
- f) There is the emergence of the laity, and in a very particular way of women, as a tremendous force for change in the church.
- g) There is a growing number of unchurched believers as well as a continuing decline in traditional religious practices.
- h) On the other hand, there is the continuing appeal of what is variously called popular religion or mass religion.
- i) Among many, there is the growing sense that the church is the church of the poor - not only a church for the poor, but the existence of churches constituted through the power and force of poor people.

Faithful to Vatican II. If the inspiration and teaching of the Second Vatican Council is to be received into this rather variant historical situation of both world and church, how are we to be faithful to it in the shape given to local churches, their mission and their ministry? It has been suggested that one is not faithful in face of new experiences, if one simply quotes texts to confirm a position taken. That would be like playing chess on a cribbage board. Hence, it has been asked whether it is legitimate to make a distinction between the texts in themselves and the conciliar experience out of which they sprang? By being faithful to the fundamental experience of the Council, can we find the way of being faithful to ours? This is, of course, a hypothesis and appeals to a reading of the experience that not all might accept, but it seems to be a helpful hypothesis in pointing to a way out of the maze of impasse.

The fundamental experience of the Council, within this hypothesis, has been described as:

- (a) consciousness of experience itself as historical and cultural, and as the place of God's presence, in its very historicity;
- (b) Along with this, a new openness to the challenges of Word and Spirit, by people ready to give up some of their security in old positions. As Professor Antonio Acerbi puts it:
"The experience of the church, reforming herself in light of the Gospel, is the framework within which the Council documents belong and within which, transcending all cultural variations, the unchangeable elements are determined" (6).

He described this experience further, as follows:

"The Church who was questioning herself about her mission and the conditions in which she carried it out, intended to set aside the human securities that were hers as a result of her past in order to place herself in an attitude of listening and obedience before the Word of God, and to acquire once again the freedom and strength that come from fidelity to the Gospel" (7).

- c) To this experience, so formulated, it might be important to add the ecumenical experience, especially since we are talking about ministry. For the first time since the Reformation, the Roman Catholic church felt itself impelled to consider the history and way of being of

orthodox and Protestant churches as evidence of God's salvific presence and design. In reckoning with the reality of church and mission, it could no longer continue to ignore these experiences, nor, at best, to consider them as second-rate.

COMMUNITY MODEL OF CHURCH

Historical contingency, cultural pluralism, ecumenical interaction, evangelical witness, as elements of our new ecclesial experience, seem to call more for a model of converging circles than for that of attentive centre. The root of this ecclesial understanding and polity lies in the life of a local church as a communion of subjects, itself a subject in its relation with other churches. It is a communion of the one Lord and Spirit, diversely manifested and witnessing according to historical and cultural conditions. In fidelity to Word and Spirit, and in a reading of history, each church evolves its own life in a corporate way which involves the responsibility of all the members. To say that a church is a subject, is to say, first of all, that it has the status of "autonomously dependent" person in relation to other churches, and secondly, that it functions itself as a corporate personality which is constituted by the interaction of its members.

To understand this model better we need to do two things: First, to see how it has been affected by a varied critique of Roman Catholic ecclesial polity and organization, and secondly, to look to current ecclesial experiences to see how in practice and self-understanding the model is being filled out.

Constructive Critique. Roman Catholic ecclesiology and practice have nothing to fear from the constructive critique that others make of it. Indeed, it is largely in virtue of an ability to listen to that critique that advance has been possible in recent years. There is the orthodox and Protestant critique, and the critique based on insights from the sciences.

The Orthodox Critique has already been mentioned, in relation to chapter three of Lumen Gentium. Though observations are immediately directed to this chapter, they imply a question to the way in which over centuries the Roman Catholic church had got into the habit of organizing its ministry and choosing its ministers. Too much reliance had been placed on hierarchical structure and transmission, so that not enough attention was given to the special charisms of the Spirit and to the way in which the Spirit guides a community in the appointment or reception of ministers. The need to base the understanding and practice of ministry on a discernment of spirits is one of the major consequences of the orthodox critique of catholic polity.

The Protestant Critique is both explicit and implicit. It is explicit in as much as it raises questions about the responsibility and role of the faithful in the church, and about the relation of a minister to the community, as well as about the nature of her or his role in relation to word and sacrament. The critique is implicit, in as much as ecclesial practice in the protestant churches shows an alternate experience

of ministry, whose real efficacy presents a valuable contrast experience from which the catholic church may gain fresh insight into ministry.

These contrast experiences, with their implicit questions to catholic practice, are perhaps most vivid today in evangelical and pentecostalist churches. These churches or communities give witness to the ways in which community may be lived, in mutual support and care. Their ministry reveals the power of the word and the import of the witness of a life lived according to the gospel. When some of these churches make their criticism of Roman Catholic polity on ministry explicit, they ask two questions:

First, have we not come to rely too heavily on institution and on institutional training, so that little room is left to the freedom of the Spirit? Secondly, in the emphasis on the apostolic succession of bishops and on the concomitant succession in doctrine, made dependent on the former, have we not neglected the importance of an apostolic succession in evangelical witness? Is this last not as important a criterion for the legitimacy of ministry as the regular practice of ordination within the prescribed canons? These churches also give evidence of the variety of ministries in a church and of the reception into church life of ministries that have their seed in cultural experience. Perhaps the most striking evidence of this lies in the place that their communities give to healing and divining ministries, where these have a link with a people's cultural religious experience.

Social Sciences Critique. The critique that comes from the social sciences had to do, first with the heed that one always needs to give to the inbuilt risk of oppressiveness and elitism in power structures, and, second, with the need to distinguish between unchanging elements and social or cultural particularities. Specifically, as is well known, the question is raised about the role given to women in the church and about the stress on the celibacy of the clergy. Elsewhere I have written of how ritual enactment itself can reinforce a power structure and prevent the collegiality of community. Some theories about the power of the priest in the celebration of the sacraments, for instance, have as much to do with a sacralization of the priest that maintains his authority as they have to do with genuine theological insight.

Its openness to learn from the experiences of other churches, and its openness to an internal critique of its own power structures, are then some of the important factors which contribute to a ministerial renewal in the catholic church. Along with these there goes the important experience of poor churches, for the most part within the historical continuity of the Roman Catholic communion itself. These experiences, being recent and current, help us to see how an alternative model of church and ministry is being filled out.

FILLING OUT THE COMMUNITY MODEL: CURRENT ECCLESIAL EXPERIENCES.

One would first say of a local church, viewed within the catholic tradition, that it is a eucharistic community. This does not mean that wherever people regularly gather together for the celebration of Mass there

is a local church. Unfortunately, this is evidently not the case. What is meant is that, given certain types of communion and relationship in faith and hope, a community celebrates its koinonia, and roots its koinonia, in a celebration of the memorial of the Lord's death. This is what constitutes its vision of itself and its basic vision of history and of the Lord's presence in history. However, what make up these relations in faith and hope is not immediately evident, even as we agree that geographical vicinity or rubbing shoulders do not of themselves constitute community.

Basic Christian Communities. Some practical evidence of such relations is available to us, particularly in the experience of basic christian communities. Here I speak with great circumspection, since the term basic christian community is not univocal. It is not univocal because the experience is not identical from one country to another. It is not univocal, because even within the same country it is used to designate different components of the over-all reality of church life. Thus, in Brazil, the term has at least two distinctive meanings. Clovis Boff explains: "BC's are made up of small groups of an average of ten people; it is most usually a number of these groups - generally ten - grouped in one area, usually a parish, that is known as a BC. A large parish may encompass more than one BC... But the small groups themselves are also sometimes referred to as BC's" (8). It is in the former sense of grouping of groups that the word is used by the permanent Council of the Conference of Brazilian Bishops in a statement issued in 1982: BCC's as communities are formed by families, adults and youth, in a tight interpersonal relationship of faith ... they celebrate the word of God and are nourished by the eucharist... they enjoy solidarity and a common commitment... they are cells of a greater community (9).

The history of basic christian communities across the world has yet to be written. However, from what is known about them one can distinguish between some negative experiences and a largely positive experience. Before speaking of the factors found in a positive experience, it is useful to reflect momentarily on what led to an abortive experience in some groups.

Negative experiences: First, there were those that depended excessively on warm interpersonal relations, groups that, as it were, fed upon themselves (10). They worked out no vision of the Gospel's relation to the world or to the social order, had little or no sense of tradition, but looked for immediacy, spontaneity and the satisfaction, of the directly interpersonal.

Alongside these, other groups did indeed look to the social order, but in so doing were enthralled by the horror of the church's past compromises with economic and political power and of its suffocation of free spirits, as for example in defining people as heretics or simply condemning them to silence - (one description of a heretical sect is that it is the group out of power). Hence, these groups seemed to exhaust themselves in protest and contestation against church and state, and neglected the need for the structural and the juridical (11). While such contestatory groups remind us that what is at stake is the church's witness to Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and to the freedom of the Spirit, they are also a warning of the need to look to structures of continuity and of dialogue with other bodies.

Positive Experiences: In the statement mentioned above, the Brazilian Bishops are helpful in listing the factors that led to a positive experience within basic christian communities, factors that we can extend to any renewal of community life in the church. They mention in particular four factors (12).

- 1) the church is considered as the people of God, in which "to each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Cor 12 7).
- 2) the church is considered as sacrament, sign and instrument of a profound union with God and of the unity of the human race (L G 1).
- 3) the role of the laity is considered in itself, not as participation in the ministry of the priest, and is deemed constitutive of the life and mission of the church.
- 4) the communities possess an integral vision of history where the story of humanity and the story of salvation are interconnected, an interconnection which in Latin America means the quest for justice and for the liberation of the poor.

From the document as a whole there emerged a fifth and sixth condition of community life, pertinent to a model of christian community.

- 5) These communities are the churches of the poor, not for the poor but of the poor, where ministry and leadership and social force come from the poor, are exercised by the poor, and constitute a new form of being a force for social change.
- 6) The prayer and ministries of these communities receive much from the forms in which the general religious experience of the people in the culture is expressed and nurtured.

If we abstract these factors from any particular experience of basic christian community and see them as open to a cultural and historical diversity in the way in which they are embodied, we can take them as the key to an understanding of how church life may develop in this present age. It is the kind of development which allows a local church, as subject, to develop a new relation to self, a new relation to the world, and a new relation to the universal church. Before dwelling on these relations in more detail, it may be remarked that the new experience of being church carries within itself a model for new juridical structures, pertinent to the government and leadership of a church. Structures exist that emerge from church life, but as yet they are not canonically affirmed in full since they are called extraordinary, much being now acknowledged by an ad hoc delegation which normally pertains to internal structuring and in some cases to ordination. However, what Rome is prepared to recognize as extraordinary and episodic is ready one day to be confirmed as normal and normative (13).

The relation to self of these communities is that they are communities of the baptized which exist in virtue of the individual and corporate

responsibility of all. There is need for an ordained ministry, but no room for a clergy/laity distinction. Indeed, at present, because of the absence of this discomfort many communities have a great capacity to realize communion with only marginal help from ordained ministers.

Prayer: The centre and source of a community's life is its prayer in the model of life thus proposed.

This prayer is marked by six qualities (14):

- a) fundamentally, it is a listening to the Word of God;
- b) it shows a growing consciousness of grace and the power of the Spirit in daily life, especially in the midst of human vulnerability and weakness, when hope is shared with others;
- c) it is a common prayer, in which the active and heard voice of all is welcome, and is not hindered by class distinctions, whether social or ecclesiastical;
- d) its symbolic expression finds its "stuff" in the things that belong to the community and its people - their bread, their water, their hands, the tents and awnings that they themselves have erected;
- e) it is a prayer in which the poor are present and active, with their popular religiosity and native religious expression, which is linked to the awareness of Word and Spirit, and welcomed into a community of hope and freedom, thus doing things to the religiosity which sometimes has roots in a life of subjection to human and divine powers;
- f) it is joyous and festive, with a joy that springs from the knowledge of Christ and the freedom of the Spirit.

The community has participatory structures that are grounded in the experience of prayer and eucharist. Affiliation to the community means initiation into the communion of prayer and reflection, of listening to the Word and discerning the Spirit. Any decisions affecting the life of the community follow this model, for they too are rooted in a life of shared faith.

Charism and Ministry in the Community. It is in this communion that one finds the seed and source of charism and ministry. The call of the Spirit is born in the community, ministries are exercised by members of the community and for the community. Whatever training in faith and professional competence is needed, is undertaken as a responsibility of the community. The relation of any minister to the community is that of birth in its life, of discerning and recognition within its womb. When some such ministers are ordained, communion with other churches is thus signalled and effected.

Leadership as now practised in many communities (and ideally this is applicable to ordained leadership) is guaranteed, not by office or delegation or title of power, but by charism, its discernment and public affirmation within the community. Delegation by ecclesiastical authorities is used to effect relations with the wider community but this is not the source of the minister's authority among the people. If a leader appeals to the authority

of office or delegation, she or he has to be able to base the claim in witness and acceptance. According to the ancient tradition of the church this is what is expected of ordained ministers and reception of their witness by the community is an essential component of their authority (15).

Furthermore, the apostolic succession of ordained ministers has to be placed within the context of the apostolic succession of churches in belief and evangelical witness. The Faith and Order statement on ministry from the meeting at Lima states the case well: "the primary manifestation of apostolic succession is to be found in the apostolic tradition of the church as a whole...the orderly transmission of the ordained ministry is powerful expression of the continuity of the church throughout history..."(16).

It is sad to see how this theology of succession and ministry was treated by the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith in its letter of last August on the need for an ordained minister to celebrate the eucharist (17). It is as if condemning what few, if any, hold, relieved it of the need to discuss with those who, in an appeal to tradition, would like to see ministry more firmly rooted in the local community, and open to new forms of leadership and new ways of choice of leaders. There is something terribly insensitive about telling those who desire the eucharist, even to the point of proposing new procedures for ordination, that precisely because they desire it they do not need it, since their desire provides the grace ordinarily given by the sacrament (18).

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMMUNITY

Relation to the world. It is also within the community of prayer and reflection that a church in faith sees its relation to the world. In Brazil, the option for the poor and the vision of liberation constitute the shared vision of God's presence in the world. Granted the historical and cultural particularities of each continent and country, the understanding of itself as the church of the poor would appear to be a constitutive element of every eucharistic community, even in the more affluent countries of the North.

In the first place, this means a community in which the poor of society feel at home and free to express themselves, able to contribute to the life of others. It also means that the community is a place in which there is a living, if not precisely verbal, critique of class divisions, including those affecting access to ordination. Thirdly, it means that mission to the world is the responsibility of the community as such, not of the laity as distinct from the clergy. Fourthly, it means a relation to the earth, of communion and of awareness of the gratuity of life and of all living things. Fifthly, it means that this mission to the world is undertaken with modesty and in an openness to those not of the community, since the pretension is not that the church possesses a comprehensive social ethic; in the place of such a pretension there is the hope to be able to receive the sign and signals of the presence of the Spirit in the human and in the cosmos, given one's readiness to listen and to discern.

Freedom and grace. In its vision of the world, the christian people share a utopian vision of the future, born not of power, but in the experience of freedom and grace, unassured by institutional presence or even by a uniform teaching on social questions. The hope of freedom arises from spiritual liberation, constituted by the absence of fear, the

gift of the spirit that assures us of God's love, the knowledge that the cry of Jesus is one with that of suffering humanity, our own compassion with suffering humanity and a suffering earth, freedom from the desire for power over others, and the hope that survives in the midst of darkness (19).

Ministries arise in these communities that are not simply to the community, but that represent the action of the community in society. They concentrate more on the humanum, on openness to holiness and the transcendent, and on the discernment of the spirit, than they do on large-scale and ambitious projects. The struggle for justice and freedom is carried out in small ways as much as in big organizations. Bare-foot doctors and centres for herbal medicines put health-care within the scope of a people's own management. Credit unions and cooperatives on a small scale make life's care feasible for people living out their own autonomy. These are not in themselves church organizations, but are often served by those who find religious and human vision within the experience of eucharistic community and who are supported in their service by the community.

In more affluent and educated societies, that is - where education is measured by length and institutional internship, it is gradually being discovered that a problem like drug addiction can be faced only when responsibility is accepted on a local level in communities that involve the families and friends of the addicts.

It is necessary to find a community that gives not only the support of care and the interpersonal, but also a vision of reality, in order to meet the social effects of depersonalization, family breakdown, unemployment and the like. Adequate use of the aids provided by society cannot be made without the milieu of a community of meaning and vision such as is provided by a community of christian faith. Here too, the aim is not simply to help the handicapped or the unemployed, but to enable them to find their own power and their ability to contribute to life's ways.

Local Church and Communion of Churches. There remains the question of the relation of Local churches to the communion of churches. What I would like to remark on in this respect is the need for new juridical structures that go beyond what is timidly approached in the revised Code of Canon Law. Three remarks in particular seem appropriate:

- a) juridical structures do not of themselves constitute the church, but they facilitate its life, that life which derives from sacrament and prayer and which is given shape in them more than in law;
- b) the laity belong pleno iure to the church, and this is not recognized unless they are given discretionary and participatory roles in decision-making. Some provision, in short, of a deliberative voice for the laity has to be made in local communities, in parishes, in dioceses, and in every form of church council, including the ecumenical;
- c) the canonical experience of other christian churches, in keeping with what has been said earlier, deserves examination and consideration in arriving at proper norms in this regard.

Problems: Before ending with this model, it is only proper to mention some of the problems encountered in its implementation:

- a) the process of discernment is difficult, whether it is a reading of the signs of the times, a discernment of God's presence in life or a discernment of charisms and ministries;
- b) there is therefore the risk of substituting democratization for discernment, especially in choosing leaders;
- c) some communities, especially when they undertake the work of social liberation can find themselves victims of ideologies of power;
- d) rather than unity in pluralism, the independence of local churches could give rise to fragmentation if bonds between churches are not fostered;
- e) given the persistence of mass religion, and the genuine piety and need of those who adhere to it, the christian community has to work out its responsibility towards those not interested in accepting the invitation to membership, but anxious to have sacraments and other forms of religious expression.

NEOCONSERVATIVE , HIERARCHICAL MODEL OF CHURCH

It has already been said that we are living in a time when some continue to live out of a hierarchical model of the church, feeling that the best way to face new experiences is to adjust rather than to change this model. The image used was that of a centre in touch with the periphery. There seems to be a rather powerful resurgence of this model in recent years, and some appointments of bishops who are expected to adhere to it. Its qualities are that it is hierarchical in structure while attentive to people and what they say; centralized, though ready to listen, and interested in the interests of its members in presenting the face of a society that can have influence on public life.

Attraction of this Model: What appear to be some of the reasons for the present attraction of this model?

- a) It responds to a concern for the ordinary faithful, who are felt to be unable to work out their own personal stand on matters of faith and morals and to need strong direction in order to live and deepen a life of faith. Structural and ritual means of religious practice, clear and unequivocal and ethical teaching, backed by institutions, are felt to fall within the divine mission given at its origins to the hierarchy.
- b) There is pessimism about taking the world as a partner in dialogue, or as a locus of divine revelation. Though other cultures and religions are appreciated, the primary task is that of bringing the faith to peoples. Humanity has to be understood, and the appreciation and understanding of cultures is important to this, but in the end it is only in the light of Christ that understanding comes in full. Talk is therefore of building up a christian culture, that is, an expression of faith socially attainable as a directive to personal and public life, providing symbols, ritual, office, custom and teaching that offer guide-lines and directives, as well as clear and distinct christian identity. The appeal to witness is part of this view, but it is not the foundation of christian identity and identifiability but rather a public affirmation of its truth.

- c) There is the effectiveness of working together as a clearly identifiable social body with social power, rather than working through the medium of small communities whose members insert themselves into the fabric of social life.

Applications of the Model. These are some of the reasons which appear to make a neoconservative model of the church suasive. Is it possible to list some of the principal ways in which the affirmation of this model comes across?

- a) Importance is given to the social relevance of sacraments, e.g. infant baptism, church marriage, and such visible practices as Sunday Mass and Friday abstinence (which some episcopacies have been making attempts to revive). These practices connect people with public life as christians, so that the church and its impact on life are made visible through these means.
- b) The hierarchy remains the radiating centre of communication, not only through the exercise of sacramental ministry, but also through juridical structures that are careful to distinguish between consultative and deliberative voice.
- c) The old institutional base of schools and public institutions is being replaced by strong movements coordinated from the centre, preferably Rome. Good examples of this are Opus Dei and Comunione e Liberazione, in which a strong and uniform position on public issues is fostered, transcending the action and interchange of local christian and eucharistic communities.
- d) In church-state relations, the concordat is replaced by:
- i. the politicization of forms of church presence, such as, christian parties, trade unions, even large credit unions and banks.
 - ii. social teaching of the church as global project is preferred to the power of communities to analyze their own situation, and in the light of the gospel to discover their own social project and presence. The encyclical Laborem Exercens, for example, combines an analysis of work (the new in neoconservative) with a conservative reading of the book of Genesis and of the doctrine of creation, so that it brings a "concept of man" into the situation thus globally analyzed, rather than discovering the human in the situation.
- e) The role of the laity is contained, especially that of women, by enhancement of the sacred character of the priesthood, as well as through an approach to lay ministries which accentuates the force of delegation and commissioning. We are told that in the priest the sacred character of the gospel and of the church are founded. From this it follows that the primary 'holy' of the Gospel is not the community of believers, but the priest, whose role it is to sanctify the baptized, and to celebrate the sacraments in which the holy of holies, Jesus Christ, is present to the church. The letter of John Paul II on the eucharist, Dominicae Coenae, developing the notion that the priest acts in persona Christi comes to the conclusion that

the priest participates sacramentally in the sacrifice and holiness of Christ, while the faithful, through the instrumentality of the priest, participate spiritually (20). Within such a vision, there is little room to change the requisites for ordination to ministry or the process whereby candidates are chosen. Ordained ministry seems to come before community rather than being based in community, and apostolic succession of bishops, not of churches in a succession of faith.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have presented the practical dilemma in which we seem to be presently caught on ministry in the church. I believe that we have to face this dilemma squarely though I do not know how we can move out of it. Let me conclude by listing some points on which there may be common agreement, to whichever viewpoint one subscribes, and then those areas on which tension seems greatest. These may be the points for exchange and discussion in the seminar.

Points of common agreement. First of all, I will list six points on which there may be common agreement:

- a) In ministry, it is important to attend to the human dimension of life and its openness to the transcendent. A discovery of what generates a sense of human love and a sense of the holy among any people is important to the teaching of the gospel and the work of christian ministers.
- b) In all forms of ministry it is important for the minister to be close to the people and to be conscious of their modes of expression and of their approach to the sacred.
- c) Ministries have to be fostered within communities, their seed-bed being the life of faith of the community.
- d) The emergence of new ministries is rooted in the hearing of the Gospel and in the faith of the presence of the Spirit.
- e) Care for the suffering and the marginal, and the defense of justice, have to mark the ministry of the church in today's world, in all quarters of the globe.
- f) Christians bring to the efforts and problems of humanity, as well as to its hopes, the unique experience of the Cross of Christ, their understanding of the presence of Christ among the poor and the suffering.
- g) Some elements of culture and popular religious expression can and should be incorporated into local ministries.

Points of Tension. Tensions, I believe, appear particularly on the following points:

- a) What is the extent of coresponsibility and collegiality among the baptized in local communities, and in the communion of communities?

- b) What forms and approaches to ministry does the Catholic Church take from other christian churches?
- c) Who is to invite a person to ministry, or who is to approve ministry, of whatever form? What are the respective roles of the community and of a community's leader in the promotion, recognition and affirmation of ministry?
- d) What is the relation to a community of the ordained minister, and what changes in the conditions of such ministry are possible, and perhaps imperative to the future of the church?
- e) What is the extent of the influence of a particular culture on the kinds and forms of ministry undertaken? What services that are found in other forms of religious experience can be integrated in the life of a christian community.
- f) How does a community address social problems? Is it through the implementation of a social ethic, or through a discernment of the humanum in a situation and a hope in the presence of Christ among the suffering, which is more modest in the vision it presents and the claims that it makes?
- g) How is the relation between local churches and the Bishop of Rome to be shaped, what initiatives in the polity on ministry are appropriate to the local churches in a region?

This is my modest analysis of the current situation as I have been able to compress it into a short paper. It is an analysis which highlights problems and tensions. Some might have preferred solutions, but perhaps they will come in the course of the seminar from other quarters.

Notes

- 1) Tshishiku Tshibangu, "Full Christian Maturity of a Young Church", Concilium 144 (English edition) April 1981, p. 63: "What is clear is that at this moment African Christians are so conscious of representing a different sort of ecclesiastical world that there has been considerable talk over several years of a general meditation and reflection on the Church in Africa and its specific problems, a reflection in depth to be conducted in the course of an African Council or at least an African Synod to be presided over by the pope of Rome". The author refers to an address of the Bishops of Zaire to Pope John Paul II, Kinshasa, 3rd May, 1980.
- 2) Cf. Antonio Acerbi, "L'ecclesiologia sottesa alle istituzioni ecclesiali postconciliari", in L'Ecclesiologia del Vaticano II: dinamismi e prospettive, a cura di Giuseppe Alberigo (Bologna: EDB 1981) 203-234.
- 3) Model of is an attempt to explain what already is, model for a projection of what might become.

- 4) Cf. Yves Congar, "Implicazioni cristologiche e pneumatologiche dell' ecclesiologia del Vaticano II", in Alberigo, 97-110.
- 5) Cf. J. Kerkhofs, "Principali mutamenti nelle società cristiane istituite e nelle chiese dopo il Vaticano II," in Alberigo, op. cit. 5-22; V. Cosmao, "Spostamenti dei centri di attrazione", ibid. 37-43; Francois Houtart, "The Global Aspects of Dependence and Oppression", Concilium 144 (Engl. ed.) April 1981, 3-10.
- 6) A. Acerbi, "Receiving Vatican II in a Changed Historical Context," Concilium 146, (Engl. ed.) June 1981, 81f.
- 7) l.c., 80.
- 8) Clodovis Boff, "The Nature of Basic Christian Communities", Concilium 144, 53.
- 9) Conselho Permanente da CNNBB, "Comunidades Eclesiais de Base", Comunicado Mensal: Conferência Vocacional dos Bispos de Brasil, Novembre de 1982, no. 362, 1180-1195. cf no. 30, p. 1184. An Italian translation is given in Il Regno/Documenti XXVIII (1983) 451-457.
- 10) ~~101~~ Cf. Gerard Defois, "Typologie de rassemblement chretien aujourd'hui", in J. Doré (dir.) Sacrements de Jésus-Christ (Paris: Desclée 1983) 174-176.
- 11) ~~11~~ Cf. Acerbi, art. cit., Alberigo 230.
- 12) 12) l.c. no. 12, 1181f. Cf. sect. III A CEB e los pobres.
- 13) ~~13~~ This is one of the major points made by Edward Schillebeeckx, Ministry: Leadership in the Church (New York: Crossroad 1980).
- 14) ~~14~~ Cf. Inácio Neutzling, "Célébrations dans les Communautés de Base," Spiritus XXI V (1983) 115-125.
- 15) ~~15~~ Cf. David Power, "The Basis for Official Ministry", The Jurist 49 (1981)
- 16) ~~16~~ Faith and Order Paper N. 111, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, (Geneva: WCC 1982) no. 35, p.28.
- 17) ~~17~~ Sacra Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei, Epistula ad Ecclesiae Catholicae Episcopos de quibusdam questionibus ad Eucharistiae ministrum spectantibus", AAS LXXV (1983) 1001-1009.
- 18) ~~18~~ l.c. 1008.
- 19) ~~19~~ Cf. Rom. 8, which could read as a model for prayer in these communities.
- 20) ~~20~~ Notitiae X VI (1980) 138; OSS. Romano; 19.3.1980.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MINISTRIES IN THEIR HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

SEDOS SEMINAR, VILLA CAVALLETTI, ROME

MARCH, 20-24, 1984

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Introduction: The new ministries now arising in many Christian communities as well as the redefinition of the tasks of ministry in other situations, have led to our looking again at the history of Christian ministry. We do not do this out of some antiquarian interest; rather this need arises out of our hope that some guidance might be found in shaping the practice and theology of ministry in local church settings today. Christians have always believed that ministry is shaped by more than pragmatic or sociological circumstances, although, to be sure, these play a significant role. Christians believe that ministry is a gift from God in the Spirit, and to fail to grasp the interplay between the work of God in the Spirit and our historical circumstances is to end up with something less than Christian ministry.

The purpose of this presentation is not to sketch out a full history of ministry in the Christian Church. That is too vast an undertaking for our purpose here. There have been a number of attempts recently to reconstruct significant parts of that history, that is, significant for the kinds of questions which are now before us.¹ Some of these reconstructions have been controversial, either because of how they organize the scarce data we have, or because they challenge some of our received notions of what our history has been. Some recent historical research has also turned up things in our history of which we were previously unaware, things that can have an impact on how we respond to the challenges before us today.

History is never just a recounting of facts; it is always also an interpretation of the past from the present. Some of the debate about how we are reading our history has to do with what kinds of lenses we use to focus upon our past. As will be seen, the data we have, often

allow for a variety of interpretations. These need to be sorted out as much as the data themselves.

This presentation focuses upon recent research into the history of ministry. More particularly, it looks at recent interpretations of that history with three questions in mind:

1. where is the consensus of scholarship around controverted or controversial points in the history of ministry which are of importance for us today?
2. which historical developments shape our contemporary understanding of theology and practice of ministry in a special way?
3. what other points do we need to be aware of as potential resources in our history for a theology of ministry today?

Much of what follows presents the results of that historical research, not the argumentation which has led to it. The notes point to the resources which can be pursued to follow the argumentation.

What follows here, therefore, is not a complete history, nor even a complete history on any period or any problem in one period. It is more of a map through the maze of work now going on in the study of the history of ministry. It moves by fits and starts, but it is hoped that in doing so it will help highlight some important points for our discussion. The presentation looks at four parts of our history:

1. Jesus and the New Testament
2. The second to the fourth centuries
3. Issues in the medieval period
4. Other factors shaping our contemporary understanding.

Because the presentation is somewhat topical in shape, rather than entirely chronological, there will be some moving back and forth between these periods.

1. JESUS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

A renewed reading of the New Testament, plus recent research into the social world of early Christianity, lead us to look at some of the New Testament history in a different way. Among the questions this recent research addresses are the following:

Whom Did Jesus Charge with the Care of the Church? Catholics have traditionally answered

this question by saying that the care of the Church was entrusted to the twelve apostles, under the leadership of Peter. There is a body of Catholic exegesis which continues to reflect this answer.² This approach

contains part of the historical truth that we have been able to reconstruct, but does not reflect adequately the entire picture.

The Gospel points to three groups closely associated with Jesus and the early Christian movement, all of whom were involved in ministry: the Twelve, the apostles, and the disciples. These groups overlap in the New Testament writings, and so sorting out the differences is difficult and perhaps ultimately impossible.

The Twelve: There is a fair consensus among the contemporary exegetes that the institution of the Twelve does go back to the lifetime of Jesus. The Twelve were probably instituted as a prophetic act of Jesus; that is, as a symbol of the restored Israel with its twelve tribes. After the resurrection of Jesus, the ancient account in I Cor. 15 says that the Lord appeared to them. They seem initially to have been leaders of the main community in Jerusalem. The extent of their authority in this community and other communities is uncertain. When Paul finally visits Jerusalem in 35-37, he does not mention the Twelve, only Peter and James (Gal. 1:18:19). Their significance for the Jerusalem community seems to have faded by the 40's, with James taking on the leadership. The notion of the Twelve is then revived especially by Luke, in that period in the latter part of the first century, when concern for maintaining pure teaching became a principal concern of the Christian movement. In all the lists of the Twelve which are given, it is clear that the Twelve were all men.

"Apostle" is a larger category, and its precise meaning is uncertain.

On the one hand, it was used to refer to those who had walked with Jesus of Nazareth and experienced Him after His resurrection with a commission to continue His work. On the other, it referred to those who never knew the earthly Jesus (such as Paul), but who had come under the influence of the Spirit, and went out to preach and found communities. The Gospel of Luke uses "apostle" in a restricted sense, referring only to the Twelve. For Luke, a criterion of apostleship is having been with Jesus since the beginning (Acts 1:21-22). However, other parts of the New Testament clearly have a broader use in mind. It would seem that both men and women were designated as apostles. The clearest example in the New Testament is Rom. 16, where Julia is referred to as an apostle by Paul and as one who had been an apostle already before him (Rom. 16:7). The commissioning of the apostles, as Paul points out in his own defense, seems to have come directly from the risen Lord, not via the Twelve. Apostles would exercise authority within the churches where they lived, or in churches they founded. That authority was sometimes shared with "prophets"; i.e., those who would speak on behalf of God under the influence of the Spirit.

"Disciples" constitute an even more vague category. The Gospel of John uses it as a comprehensive category, and avoids the term apostle altogether. His writings are also more suggestive of leadership of early communities: the role of the Samaritan woman in founding the Jesus community there, the role of the Bethany community, the distinctive place of Magdalene in the Jerusalem community (or perhaps in a community separate from the one led by the twelve). Women play a distinctive and

decisive role among the disciples.³

Which of these three groups did Jesus commission with the charge of His Church? There are various commissionings recorded in the gospels: of the disciples to go out and preach, at the Last Supper, and in post-resurrection appearances. To take here only the Last Supper stories: Mark and Matthew recount that the Twelve were present; Luke says the apostles (by whom he probably means the Twelve); but John says the disciples. Does John mean the Twelve only when he speaks of the disciples in the supper stories? We cannot say with any certainty. This, and other situations in the New Testament texts have led contemporary exegetes to say that Jesus does not seem to have left any single individual, or group of individuals, in charge of the movement which became the Church. There is clearly too much diversity in first century Christianity which speaks against such a possibility. By the end of the century, more uniform order is starting to emerge or to be imposed, particularly against gnostic teachers. The Pastoral Letters reflect that. But that has to be seen as a later insight or development, some fifty years after the death of Jesus.

How, Then, Was Ministry Ordered in the First Century? While there was great diversity in the ordering of ministry in the first century Church, that does not mean that there was utter confusion. The safest thing to say is that there was indeed some form of order in each community, even though there was not any clear pattern of organizing the ministry (at least in the first decades of the Christian movement) between churches.

Many of the first century communities patterned their leadership on that of the synagogue. This leadership was often a collective one, of those who "presided" or served as "elders". The mode of the Seven in the Hellenistic community at Jerusalem recounted in Acts would be an example of this model.

In other instances, particularly outside Palestine but also within it, whoever's house served as the meeting place for Christians became the leader of the local community. This person, as host or hostess, presided at gatherings of the Christians. The case of Phoebe at Cenchrae, or Prisca and Aquila in Romans 16 would be an example of this, or the case of the "noble lady" called the elder (presbyteros) of the church in 2 Jn.1:1. Often these first two models were combined. There is evidence that some Hellenistic synagogues were ruled by a body of elders, among whom someone might be called "father" or "mother" as the first among the elders.⁴ Often those so designated provided either the space or the financial foundations that made the gathering possible.

Another pattern followed one that was found among social groups in general in the Eastern Mediterranean, especially in Asia Minor. Groups gathered into associations or clubs often called for that reason ekklēsiai. These associations would gather for companionship, recreation, and especially festive meals.⁵ In view of the central Christian ritual of the Eucharist, this model of organization seems to have been used in

Antioch and Asia Minor. The one in charge of the association was sometimes called the episkopos, often a wealthy patron who provided for the meal.

Romans, I Corinthians, and Ephesians give us lists of ministries.⁶ Two are from Paul, and the third from disciples of Paul. None mention episkopos. The lists are no doubt illustrative rather than exhaustive. Diakonos is used either of specific ministry, or of ministerial service or leadership in general. It seems that a diakonos could be either male or female. Thus Phoebe is called the diakonos of the Church at Cenchrae by Paul in Rom. 16:1, indicating, it would seem, the role of leadership of the community.

To answer the question, then: there was no single pattern for ordering the ministry in the first century Church, although, by the end of the century (when the Pastorals were written), more standard forms or uniformity was beginning to appear. Organization was borrowed from other models available in the environment, especially that of the synagogue, the larger household, and the club or association. Nor did the same vocabulary (diakonos, episkopos) mean the same thing everywhere. Our concerns for uniformity were not those of first century Christians.

How Were Ministerial Responsibilities

Passed on to the Next Generation?

An egalitarian spirit marked many of the first century communities, witnessed in Galatians 3:28, which may have been a baptismal acclamation. Indeed, it was this egalitarian spirit, evoking the memory of Jesus' invitation of all into the Kingdom of God, and now experienced in the outpouring of the gifts of the Spirit seemingly indiscriminately on believers, that attracted many Hellenistic Jews and Gentiles into the Christian movement. Thus the early Christian movement was made up of people from all classes, and seems to have had a disproportionate number of people whose upward social mobility was halted because of societal circumstances (e.g., wealthy slaves, aliens not eligible for Roman citizenship, women).

The problem with any movement strong in egalitarianism is the discernment of leadership. The spontaneous bestowal of gifts of the Spirit, and the resources of a large house or financial backing for the festive gatherings, seemed to be prominent factors in determining leadership, along with the direct commissionings from the Lord. More often than not, the problem was probably too many people in leadership rather than not enough.

The problem of discerning true from false leadership, that is, of discerning between those endowed with the Spirit of God and those endowed with other spirits, was clearly a problem. The silencing of women in I Timothy 2:11f. was probably directed at certain women teaching what was considered heterodox doctrine, probably of some Gnostic sort.

But how was leadership passed on to the next generation, especially when the gifts of the Spirit were less in evidence? The most obvious way was a direct commissioning from the leadership of the local community of the previous generation. A second way was the emergence of some one or some persons endowed with the gifts of the Spirit similar to those in the first generation. The practice of the laying on of hands was borrowed from rabbinic tradition, where the laying on of hands symbolized the transmittal of wisdom from teacher to disciple. This ritual came to be used widely in first century Christianity, certainly for the transmitting of the responsibility to teach or preach. Exegetes and historians of early Christianity see it used in either of two ways: either as the passing on of a commission, or as a way of a community affirming its recognition of the power of the Spirit in that individual.

2. THE SECOND TO THE FOURTH CENTURIES⁷

The second to the fourth centuries were times of the consolidation of forms of ministry. It was not until the end of that period that uniformity throughout Christianity was evident. A number of things from this period are important for our considerations here.

The Emergence of the Monoepiscopate: Ignatius of Antioch is a strong witness to the emergence of one person leading the community in the early second century. It was still not uniform throughout Christianity at this time, however, when Ignatius addresses the church at Rome, he singles out no single individual. It would seem that Rome at this time was still under the leadership of a group of elders (presbyteroi). One of the sociological factors which led to the monoepiscopate (that is, but one episkopos in each city or community) was probably the more widespread acceptance of Christianity. The one episkopos in a church paralleled the role of the episkopos as overseer or inspector in civil government. This was firmly established when Christianity took over the Roman civil forms for its organization a little later on.

Apostolic Succession: The idea of an unbroken succession has its roots in philosophical schools of the period. If one could establish the succession of one's teachers, one had guarantee of the quality of what one taught.

The later writings of the New Testament, and other writings of the turn of the century (I Clement, the Shepherd of Hermas) point to the problem of teaching in the early Christian communities. The genealogy of teachers became a way of assuring sound doctrine. Lists would be drawn up, similar to those found in the philosophical schools, showing how the teaching in a given community went back to the "apostoloi", those who had been commissioned to preach by the Lord Himself.

The Reduction of the Number and Kinds of Ministries: As the Church became more established after several generations, and its social acceptance led to increase in membership, leadership became more of an issue. From the second century onward, there was a concern for safeguarding the kerygma which led to

attempts to establish a canon of writings and a clearer regulation of who would do the teaching. In this period we see attempts, as in Irenaeus, to establish a norm or rule of faith for these purposes.

Ministry became more focused in a limited number of offices. Diakonos became more restricted in meaning, referring especially to the administrative assistants of the episkopos. We see church orders of a body of presbyteroi-diakonoi, or episkopoi-diakonoi or a combination of the three in larger cities. The other ministerial functions mentioned in the New Testament writings get absorbed into these three. Subsequent history in the Western Church shows a continued focusing of ministry until the time of the Second Vatican Council when the distinctiveness of separate ministries is again recognized.

Who May Lead the Eucharist? The first century Church does not give a clear answer on this. It seems that whoever was the acknowledged leader of a community, or whoever's house was the locus of the celebration, presided on behalf of the community. Leading the Eucharist was not seen as a separate ministry; it fell to whoever led the community in other things. This says two things to us: the Eucharist was seen as an act of the entire community; not just anyone could take it upon him or herself to lead the Eucharist. Because it was not a specialized ministry, the thought of a community not being able to celebrate the Eucharist would have been unthinkable.

As ministries became more focused in the second and ensuing centuries, so did the celebration of the Eucharist. The prophet no longer led the celebration; it fell rather to the episkopos or the presbyteroi, or these together. However, it seems that in emergency situations, other possibilities were still present at least as late as the fourth century. The Council of Arles in 314 (canon 5) forbids the celebration of the Eucharist by deacons, which had been going on in many places. It is speculated that this practice had been tolerated or permitted by bishops, especially during the Diocletian persecutions, when many presbyters had been arrested or executed, leaving the communities to be cared for by deacons. The purpose of the canon at Arles was probably to stop this practice now that the emergency situation had passed.⁸

The Emergence of the Priest: The New Testament writings scrupulously avoid designating ministers in the communities as hiereis or priests. It has been suggested that this was to distinguish Christians from Jewish cult, but after A.D. 72, this would not have been an issue. More likely it was a way of distinguishing Christian cult from mystery cults.

However, in the period in discussion it comes to be a common appellation for the one who leads the community. The full reason for this change is hard to discern. Seeing Christianity as the fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures in every detail led to comparisons between Jewish and Christian leadership patterns.

And the growing custom of paying the Church leaders for their services evoked memories of the levitic priesthood.

It has even been suggested that the title hiereus was taken over precisely to show that Christianity was the equal, and not the inferior, of other cults. To call one's leader "priest" sounded better than to call such a leader "inspector" (episkopos). Whatever the reason, the introduction of the title brought with it connotations from its other usages. It started to weaken the bond between the leader and the community which provided legitimation for the leader's tasks, and it also started to separate the leader's competence or license to lead from a clear sense of a gift of the Spirit. Both of these bonds, with the community and with the Spirit, were never broken. Canon 6 of the Council of Chalcedon in 451 condemned absolute ordination, that is, ordination without reference to a community. And Cyprian of Carthage's affirmation of the dignity of the priest even when signs of behaviour did not indicate the presence of the Spirit became an important grounding for a theology of the priesthood in the Donatist controversy. But the scene was set for talking about ministers and ministry in isolation from a concrete community.⁹

3. ISSUES IN THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

A number of things developed in the eighth to the sixteenth centuries which affect our contemporary discussion of ministry. Among them:

A Shift in the Understanding of the Eucharist¹⁰ Three factors have intertwined to shape an understanding of the Eucharist in the West, factors still strong today. The first of these had to do with the priest. Connotations of priesthood easily led to seeing priestly ritual activity as sacrifice. In the Christian community, this meant that the Eucharist came to be seen as a renewal of that great priestly sacrifice spoken of in Hebrews. Thus the action of the Eucharist came to be understood more and more as the action of the priest and less and less as the action of thanksgiving of the community under the leadership of the priest.

A second factor was a shift away from the emphasis on the action of the Eucharist to a focus almost entirely on the Eucharistic elements of bread and wine. This was prompted partially by the role of relics in Christianity from the sixth century onward, the Eucharist becoming the relic par excellence. Controversies about the Eucharist led to an ever greater focus on the elements as the physical presence of Jesus Christ. The consecration of these elements becomes more and more the focus of the Eucharistic celebration, enhancing the role of the priest.

A third factor was the role of the people. As Latin became less the common language, the language of the Eucharistic ritual took on more a sense of mystery. The action of the priest took on a corresponding greater sense of awe, creating an ever greater distance between priest and people.

While all three of these factors have been recognized and to some extent corrected by the liturgical reform since the Second Vatican Council, they continue to inform understanding of the Eucharist, the priest, and of ministry in general.

The Private and the Daily Mass: The factors mentioned in the previous section led to a more individualistic sense of the Eucharist, and a focusing upon the priest as the consecrator of the Eucharistic elements. Increasingly, this meant less emphasis on the leadership of the community in Eucharistic thanksgiving and prayer, and more emphasis on the power of the priest as renewing Christ's sacrifice in the Eucharist. It became possible to consider celebrating the Eucharist with no congregation at all. The power of the priest and the efficacy of the renewal of Christ's sacrifice meant that the Eucharist could be offered for specific "intentions", for the dead or for some other boon. This led to a proliferation of the number of masses. This same emphasis on efficacy also led to the practice of daily mass in monasteries and then in other churches throughout the West, a practice which **has** never been followed in the East.

What this has meant for ministry is that not only has ministry been focused more and more in a single person, but that this person's prime ministry is the celebration of the Eucharist. This makes it hard to establish any other ministries alongside this one, or to consider other ministries of equal status.

A Shift in Sacramental Theology: All of these factors had their impact on how the priest as minister came to be understood in the Middle Ages. The Gift of God which makes leadership of the community possible is seen less as a gift of the Spirit or the Spirit of the Lord, and more as participation in the activity of Christ. In other words, ministry comes to lose its pneumatological character, (a gift of the Spirit on behalf, or for the sake of the community), and becomes more a replication of the person of Christ Himself. The priest sacrifices by participating in the one sacrifice of Christ. This christological understanding of the priest comes to be mirrored in medieval sacramental theology ¹¹ and makes the priestly character one of an alter Christus, with all the sacrality which that implies. The priest then becomes the mediator between the people and God, rather than the leader of a community before God. Any diminution of priesthood becomes a diminution of the Christ's presence in the Church. A highly sacral image of the priest results, and a spirituality is developed which centers upon the person of the priest rather than the gifts of leadership of a community. This spirituality also means that it becomes harder to share out those focused functions of ministry to others or to reshape them into separate ministries.

The Reformation: The sixteenth century Reformation, in the persons of Luther and Calvin, tried to bring about a restructuring of ministry which would both reflect the New Testament reality more faithfully and meet the needs of the world **then** emerging.

Luther re-emphasized the priesthood of all believers, grounding ministry in baptism rather than in the sacrament of holy orders. The threat of the radical Reformation, however, led Luther back to an emphasis on the ordering of this baptismal charism by the community.

Calvin also tried to "de-sacerdotalize" the ministry by returning to some of the New Testament ministries. But despite three- or four-fold orderings still found in Reformed churches today, the role of pastor still predominates in the minds of most people.¹²

The sixteenth century experience speaks to the twentieth century experience in a number of ways:

- a de-emphasis on some order for leadership can leave a community open to manipulation by powerful, charismatic individuals;
- a genuinely shared ministry between a number of equals, each exercising different ministries, is difficult to establish and to maintain;
- to see Christian action in the various walks of life as ministry (as Calvin suggested) may so dilute the sense of ministry that the community becomes actually impoverished rather than enriched.

4. OTHER FACTORS SHAPING OUR CONTEMPORARY UNDERSTANDING

A number of historical factors have been mentioned in the course of this presentation which have contributed to our contemporary understanding of ministry. We have seen that the beginnings of the Christian movement are now most often read through the lenses of the end of the first century, when a greater ordering of the Church was needed. We saw models of priesthood from the Jewish tradition and a Hellenistic environment help shape our notion of community leadership. We saw how Eucharistic piety played a major role in defining the relationship of the leader to the community.

Not only the past shapes our current sense of ministry; factors in our own environment play a role too. I would like to note a couple of such factors which are operative in some of the cultures where the Church is present.

- 1) To what extent does the experience of religious community life shape our understanding of ministry?

Through long periods of history, religious orders and institutes have been special repositories of Christianity's egalitarian ethos. They have structured their leadership according to their perceived needs, from powerful Celtic abbots to highly egalitarian models in contemporary religious life. If we look at the contemporary situation: the fact that we elect our leaders from our own midst for a term of appointment;

that it is the Chapter or some similar body which constitutes the highest authority; that we have tried to reduce internal differences of status (say, between priests and brothers in male communities);- how do we experience ministry within such a context? Does not ministerial leadership become something growing out of the community, for the period that it is needed, and more accountable to the community and its needs? When this model is placed alongside models of a more hierarchical ordering, can we see how our own situation is influencing our understanding of what ministry ought to be?

2) What effect do things like professionalism or profession have on our sense of ministry and the minister?

Does part of our sense of a need for a plurality of ministries grow out of the sense of professionalism common among communities primarily situated in the North Atlantic community? In other words, a sense of division of labour, of competence, and of accountability. The idea of professionalism in its nineteenth and twentieth century forms derives from medicine and law particularly, when attempts were made to standardize the licensing procedures. That such professionalism is most successful only in certain kinds of societies (technologized and urbanized ones, mainly) has been clear in many parts of the Third World. Part of it, too, grows from the experience of many women in ministry being far more capable than their ordained male counterparts to perform effectively in certain areas of ministry. How does professionalism interact with our sense of the charism of ministry?

3) What is the relationship between forms of ministerial activity and models of leadership in a culture?

There are two aspects to this question. On one hand, to be prescriptive of what forms ministry ought to take, based upon the models of leadership in the dominant cultures of our institutes, may simply be a shifting of hegemonies. In cultures where leadership, and especially spiritual leadership, is based upon age or demonstrated ability to communicate with the spirit world, Western democratic models may be so countercultural as not to be understood at all. While pleading for a greater sensitivity to modern Western patterns, one cannot forget other cultures as well.

Secondly, we come back to a question implicit in this whole presentation. What is the dogmatic value of those points in our history to which I have pointed here? How is one to discern revelation within these historical situations? Is it simply a matter of choosing what is most convenient?

My intention here is certainly not to denigrate the history of ministry as it has developed. One cannot simply sweep this history aside as though a thousand years of history has no significance for us today. That history has to be taken as seriously, if not more seriously,

than those elements I have mentioned here. But the situation in which we now find ourselves is one where the models given us in our most recent tradition are not working, and so we have a responsibility to reflect on the entirety of our tradition.

One cannot jump back to the first century and canonize that as the only way to go, or as the pure revelation prior to contamination. To engage in such positivistic approaches to revelation and tradition is a little simple-minded; it is like saying that the acorn is in every instance superior to the oak tree. Calvin and the Reformed tradition has tried to do this with their concepts of "the New Testament Church". But there is a plurality of churches in the New Testament, and our choice of a model will probably say more about our own times than the first century. So what are we to do?

A Possible Key: To go into all the hermeneutics of reapproaching historical materials is too complicated for our purposes here. But let me suggest at least one key which might be of use: some of the hermeneutics of the Second Vatican Council, especially Sacrosanctum Concilium and subsequent documents on the reform of the liturgy.

Both that Constitution and subsequent documents, building upon historical research, saw fit to find their models for reform of the liturgy in patristic models of worship. That is, they reached back beyond the medieval patterns which shaped our liturgical experience up into the middle of this century. There were many reasons for this, - historical, dogmatic, ecumenical, and cultural. But it seems to me that the historical reasons (growing out of a vision of the history of liturgy), the dogmatic reasons (the authority of the patristic period's theology for subsequent theology), and the ecumenical reasons (the liturgy of the undivided Church), had to come together with the cultural; in other words, those factors had to come together in a model which represented more adequately patterns of experience and leadership within Western, secularized culture.

Could not a similar interpretive key be used in ministry, bringing together historical, dogmatic and ecumenical concerns within a meaningful cultural pattern? That might provide a way of respecting both the present, the immediate past, and the origins of the Christian movement.

It is not the purpose of this presentation to go into that possibility. But it is hoped that some of the reflection here might help us all find a way through our current difficulties.

NOTES

- 1 Bernard Cooke's Ministry to Word and Sacrament (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976) is the most extensive. Perhaps the best known at the moment is that of Edward Schillebeeckx, Kerkelijk Ambt (Bloemendaal: Nelissen, 1980), translated as Ministry (London: SCM, 1981). This book has evoked a good deal of discussion and critique. Most of the disagreement centers around his interpretation of data rather than the data themselves. Schillebeeckx has refined his argument on developments from the second to the thirteenth century in "De sociale context van de verschuivigen in het kerkelijk ambt," Tijdschrift voor Theologie 22 (1982), 24-59. This article is being incorporated into a revised version of his book.

- 2 One strain of Catholic exegesis is anxious to restrict the origins of Christian ministry to the Twelve, and is much taken with questions of authority and its transmission. Albert Vanhoye's review of Schillebeeckx's use of the New Testament material in Ministry is an example of this. First published in Nouvelle Revue Théologique 114 (1982), 722-738, it has been reprinted in Clergy Review and Vidjayoti. Despite its widespread dissemination, it should not be taken as representative of contemporary exegesis in these matters. A more refined version, sensitive to both contemporary exegesis and the concerns of conservative Catholics is Pierre Grelot's booklength response to Schillebeeckx, Eglise et ministères (Paris: Cerf, 1983).

- 3 The Twelve are certainly essential to any discussion of ministry, but hardly constitute the entirety thereof. For a comprehensive survey of the current consensus of exegesis on ministry and the New Testament, see Jürgen Roloff, "Apostel/Apostolat/Apostolizität: I. Neues Testament," Theologische Realenzyklopädie (TRE) III, 430-445; idem, "Amt/Amtsverständnis: IV. Im neuen Testament," TRE II, 509-533, with extensive literature. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her (New York: Crossroad, 1983) presents extensive literature on the leadership roles of women in the first century. The disciple category is complex and has not yet been studied comprehensively, particularly in its relation to other categories of following Jesus and leading the community. My colleague Robert Karris at CTU in Chicago has been helpful to me in seeing the complexities involved. For one such example of the complexities, see Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, "Fallible Followers: Women and Men in the Gospel of Mark," Semeia 28 (1983), 29-48.

4. On the issue of women serving as leaders of a synagogue, see Bernadette Brooten, Women Leaders in the Ancient Synagogues (Chico, CA: Scholar's Press, 1982).

- 5 Much of this history has been explored in the study of the social world of early Christianity. See the treatment of this question especially in Wayne Meeks, The First Urban Christians (New Haven:

Yale University Press, 1983).

- 6 Thomas O'Meara, Theology of Ministry (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 79-87, gives a good but succinct treatment to the question of nomenclature.
 - 7 Knut Schäferdiek, "Amt/Ämter/Amtsverständnis. V. Alte Kirche," TRE II, 533-552 gives a comprehensive overview of this period.
 - 8 Schillebeeckx, "De sociale context...", op. cit., 58, note 129, both corrects his statement from Kerkelijk Ambt, 94, on this and develops the hypothesis presented here.
 - 9 Schäferdiek, op. cit., 541-545.
 - 10 Schillebeeckx, "De sociale context...", op. cit., 43-47.
 - 11 Ibid., 56-58.
 - 12 O'Meara, op. cit., 114-116 is a good discussion of this. The issue of reformation ministry is important for Roman Catholics since attempts to rethink ministry within the Roman Catholic Church are often branded as reformation or "protestantization" of Catholic ministry. For example, Walter Kaspar accuses Schillebeeckx of doing this in his book Ministry in a review published in Theologische Quartal-schrift 163 (1983), 185-195, which has also appeared in English in Communio 10 (1983), 185-195. Kaspar characterizes Schillebeeckx's approach as a "free-church" approach.
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APPENDIX I

CREATIVE REFLECTION: AN EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH - METHODOLOGY

SEDOS SEMINAR, MARCH 20 - 24, 1984

Thomas Farrelly, CSSp.

INTRODUCTION

An experiential approach, as contrasted with a deductive approach, introduces us to a typically biblical form of reflection, made popular again by Vatican II, where we seek guidance by asking; What is God saying to us in the experiences of our lives? A model of this approach is Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman beside Jacob's well.

We have used the word "creative" to describe the proposed reflection process. While the process includes critical reflection on our experiences, it goes further and, under the direction of the Spirit, seeks guidance for the future.

PRESUPPOSITIONS

Since creative reflection in this seminar is carried out in dialogue, many of the criteria for dialogue identified by the SEDOS seminar in March '83 are relevant here. The process of creative reflection should:

1. facilitate listening to the Spirit speaking to us through our experiences of ministry;
2. facilitate the development of guidelines for future reflection and action in the field of ministry by members of missionary institutes.

CREATIVE REFLECTION

The process of creative reflection may be described in five movements. This description refers particularly to reflection in small groups. There is no intention of imposing a rigid procedure on the discussions, but rather to raise participants' awareness of the dynamics of the seminar.

Getting to Know One Another: The purpose of this movement is to establish a climate of mutual trust as a basis for dialogue. Members of the group learn one another's names and some biographical details. Among various methods the following is useful. Divide up by twos. Each partner interviews the other and then introduces him or her to the group.

Expressing our Involvement: The purpose of this movement is to allow expression of our personal involvement in the issues identified in the presentation of experiences by speakers in the assembly or by members of one's group.

Participants express their reactions, feelings, and points of view or describe their activities and experiences in relation to the issues. A relevant question for each person is; What does this issue mean to me?

There should be a climate of acceptance for different viewpoints and feelings and for a preference to remain silent, if one so chooses. Discussion at this point centres on explanation and clarification, leaving evaluation to the next stage.

Analysing our Experiences: The purpose of this movement is to facilitate analysis of our experiences of the issues. This is the beginning of creative reflection properly speaking. The question, "Why?" becomes important. Discussion centres on discerning the characteristics, causes and consequences of present practice.

A positive and respectful critique of fellow-participants' experiences and views in a spirit of dialogue is part of this movement. Good faith on both sides is a basic assumption.

Evaluating our Experiences: The purpose of this movement is to evaluate our experiences of the issues, affirming what is good and true in the present situation, recognising its limitations and moving forward in a creative way. This is the heart of the creative reflection process. The emphasis is on discovering what is creative in view of the Kingdom.

Evaluation implies criteria by which to judge experiences, activities and situations related to the issues. Among the more important criteria are, Gospel values contained in the scriptures, their interpretation in the ongoing Christian tradition, and ecclesial realities today. On another level there are the findings of the sciences concerning the human condition.

The theological reflections presented to the seminar by specialists in various aspects of ministry are intended to help the process of evaluation.

Developing Conclusions: The purpose of this movement is to develop conclusions as guidelines for decision and action in the field of ministry. The conclusions may point the way to a continuation of our ministerial practice or to needed changes, to a new awareness, to a new hope or to a decision to seek the guidance of the Spirit in further reflection.

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