

Mission of the Church to the Diocese

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beginning to take root in the hearts of men. The radical transformation of the world in the Paschal Mystery of the Lord gives full meaning to the efforts of men, and in particular of the young, to lessen injustice, violence and hatred and to advance all together in justice, freedom, brotherhood and love.

At the same time as it proclaims the Gospel of the Lord, its Redeemer and Savior, the Church calls on all, especially the poor, the oppressed and the afflicted, to cooperate with God to bring about liberation from every sin and to build a world which will reach the fullness of creation only when it becomes the work of man for man.

"A Message of Hope", JUSTICE IN THE WORLD, a document of the Synod of Bishops in Rome, ratified in November, 1971 by Pope Paul VI.

C) THE WORSHIPPING CHURCH:

23. The believing, serving Church finds the source of its strength and the summit of its praise in worship.²² It is in prayerful worship that we live out the hope "Thy Kingdom come" in a special way. It is particularly in the Eucharistic celebration that we relive the mystery of the Father's reign. We thank Him and praise Him for the gift of His Son to us. This Eucharistic sacrifice than becomes a pledge of our own continual self-giving to the Father, the joyful worship of our lives shaped by the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

24. Christ, the unique priest, the one Lord came to introduce His Father's Kingdom and to show us His Father's love.²³ Our worshipping role in the Kingdom attempts then to unite Christ's worship with our own gifts of self to the Father. This gift of ourselves in Eucharistic prayer is both personal and communal.²⁴ It is personal insofar as it stems from a deep interior faith, from a oneness with Christ through Baptism; it is communal insofar as we celebrate the Mass publicly as the new People of God, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.²⁵

25. Since the role of Christ is constant in worship, it is to the fullness of our own participation that we must give creative attention today.²⁶ The coordination of our liturgical efforts should be examined. There are many roles to play in the liturgy, and each participant should fulfill his role as well as possible: e.g. our congregational role as one family, the role of the priest who presides and preaches, the role of the choir, the lector.

26. All liturgy is anticipated within the family. In the family we learn to relate to ourselves what God is doing in the world. As we make our own the sufferings of others — the people in Attica, Viet Nam, North Ireland and elsewhere — we learn compassion and can understand redemption. As members of one human family we learn to appreciate real-life applications of the Word of God. As we all thank God for the bread we eat, we grow to understand that this bread has been produced from grains of wheat by the sun and the rain and human sweat (Gn. 3:19). We accept our food as a sacred trust which we must transform into life-giving energy for others. Family life introduces us into the unity of all men with each other and with nature. It prepares us for the liturgy of the Eucharist which shows us the root and source of that unity, God Himself.

27. At the Mass, by the power of the Holy Spirit, the priest changes bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. When we eat it, we manifest our unity with Christ and with each other. St. Paul said that in Christ there is neither "male nor female, slave nor free, Jew nor Greek" (Gal. 3:28). In Christ, one people becomes one body which recognizes no distinction of class, race or economy, but competes with itself to see who can give the most of what he is and has for others. (1 Cor. 12:12 ff.). In this way the eucharistic liturgy reveals to the world Jesus Christ, the person in whom we believe and through whom we were made and saved. Thus the liturgy of the Mass

brings us into person-to-person contact with the very source of our being.

28. Eating, listening and talking are basic components of every Mass. We listen to what God would say to us. An effective liturgy demands a people who are attentive to what the Spirit is doing in the world and to what He would have us understand in the Scriptures. The more a congregation has read and reflected before it comes to the Eucharistic liturgy, the more fruitful will that liturgy be. Where feasible, priests and people might meet together during the week to help each other understand what is written in the Word of God, what the Spirit is saying to us in the world and what He would have us say in the sermon. Preaching will become more meaningful to the degree that each one learns to listen, to read, to pray, and to speak together. The one voice of the community should incorporate the voices of all its members. The man who stands at the altar and speaks from the pulpit stands and speaks with, and for, the entire community. The responses of the Mass and especially the "Amen" indicate the community's agreement with what he is saying and doing.

29. The choir is on hand, not to entertain the community but to help it to sing. The priest should preside at the liturgy but not monopolize the praying, speaking and reading. The congregation should be active, participating with lively attention.

30. Because all age groups contribute to the totality of the human family, the liturgical participation of people of all ages is to be expected. Many people, from the very young to the very old, find our liturgies unpleasantly constraining experiences. And yet liturgy is our communion with our Lord; it should be happy and hopeful for people of all ages. Children, teenagers, and the elderly should be encouraged to take some active part in the eucharistic celebrations. Such participation will make it their celebration.

31. Family meals are happy occasions. The liturgy of the Mass is also a meal. At the Mass, we are one family in Christ gathered together to eat His body and drink His blood. The Sunday Mass is a happy meal because it is our weekly celebration of Christ's resurrection, which is the guarantee of our own resurrection. And yet the Mass is also a solemn meal, because we offer His sacrifice to the Father, and eat His flesh and drink His blood. We identify with the Victim who stretched Himself upon the cross for all men, at the same time that we identify with all creation for whom Christ lived and died. The liturgy of the Mass brings us to the roots of the unity of the universe. Through Him, with Him, and in Him, by whom all things were created and redeemed, we offer all honor and glory to the Father by the power of the Holy Spirit.

D) THE LISTENING CHURCH:

32. To pray "Thy Kingdom come," to admit one Lord, Jesus, Christ, means to associate ourselves with the "poor ones" of Sacred Scripture. One of the best examples of this attitude is the Blessed Virgin Mary who listened to the Word announced to her, then said: "I am the handmaiden of the Lord, let what you have said be done to me" (Luke 1:38). Praying "Thy Kingdom come" is an admission of our humanity, our need for grace, our dependence upon both the Father and each other. It is a reaffirmation of contemporary man's need for humility, his essential condition as "pilgrim," seeker, one who gropes for value.

33. Humble prayer in no way lessens the dignity of man, in no way denies his potential in our technological world. It is rather a recognition of the Father's dominion and consequently our brotherhood in Christ and with each other, with the consequent obligation of listening to each other.

34. Our age has an abiding dislike for, and mistrust of paternalism. We tend to suspect and even to resist those who would exercise authority over us in a manner reserved to the one whom we revere as Father. This attitude is not anti-authoritarian or anti-system. It is an implicit plea that

we not confuse time-conditioned and culturally-conditioned realities with lasting values in His Kingdom. (E. g., During the Middle Ages the bishop's relationship to his people was somewhat akin to the prince-peasant relationship role of that era. The reduction of the court ceremonial of prelates in our day is in no way a denial that there are and will continue to be differing responsibilities in the Kingdom intended by Christ.) Anti-paternalism pleads that we think first of the over-all good of the Kingdom of God rather than that of my parish, my school, my diocese, my special project. Anti-paternalism pleads that we become in fact servants of the Kingdom, poor in spirit and ready to do all and give all as Christ did, rather than to seek to dominate others, or to substitute human brilliance and efficiency for the "powerless power" of the cross. Popes, bishops and priests who show true witness to Christ and His Father's Kingdom seldom have a lasting problem with obedience in carrying out their ecclesial responsibilities. The "instinct of the faithful" (consensus fidelium) is nowhere more accurate than in this matter. Our people are eager to follow leaders who point out Christ the Lord by the serving witness of their own lives.

35. We pray, "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven". How does one know the Father's will? To whom does one listen? We listen to the Father as He reveals Himself in creation, in the saving history of Israel, in the person of His Son. We listen to Jesus — through the Sacred Scriptures, through the centuries of testimony of Christian men. We listen to the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth who issues from the Father and the Son. We listen to the voice of Peter and that of our local shepherds, both bishops and priests. We listen to our neighbors. We listen to our world, speaking with its computer technology. We listen to all men, groaning out of the pain of war, of racial injustice, of a society in which human life is progressively questioned. We listen to our own consciences.

36. The danger of our age is not a failure to listen, but a selective listening. The danger of our age is an isolated listening based on what we want to hear as though the Holy Spirit could be building up the Father's Kingdom one way in the Southern Tier, another in the suburbs, a third in the inner city, a fourth in the Third World. The Second Vatican Council teaches otherwise,

It is the Holy Spirit, dwelling in those who believe, pervading and ruling over the entire Church, who brings about that marvelous communion of the faithful and joins them together so intimately in Christ that He is the principle of the Church's unity.²⁷

37. How do we describe the listening Church? She is a Church whose members are initially dependent upon the Father, and fraternally interdependent within His Kingdom. The listening Church is a pilgrim Church, a Church of dialogue, a Church which values shared responsibility. She is a confident, forward looking Church unafraid of reality because she believes that each voice speaking among us for good ultimately interprets the voice of the loving Father.

III. Particular Questions:

38. Each time we celebrate the Eucharist, we pray "Thy Kingdom come." As we have seen, this has a double meaning. On the one hand, the fullness of the Kingdom is coming from the Father; on the other hand, it is already here in Jesus, who asks us to cooperate in its growth. This creative tension between past and future characterizes the dynamic contemporary mission of the Church in all its aspects. The Church is by nature a mystery,²⁸ a pilgrim seeking to realize the Father's Kingdom ever more fully through fidelity to her one Lord as indicated by the Holy Spirit.²⁹

39. Because of this twofold nature of the Kingdom reflected in the Church, we