

of the mysteries of Christ for the salvation of the world

Ordinary Synod

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o holiness rist is mystery, she and instrument of the council pro- ll the faithful to im" 5). The call to to an intimate participation in the , and this signifies on of man's every ll, when so many and spiritual crisis, and energetically ce, prayer, adora- rity and justice. e have always been e in the most throughout the e have tremendous e must assiduously of consecrated life f the evangelical

counsels must be conscious of their special mission in today's Church, and we must encourage them in that mission. The apostolic movements and the new movements of spirituality are the bearers of great hope, if they properly remain in ecclesial communion. All the laity must perform their role in the Church in their daily occupations such as the family, the workplace, secular activities and leisure time so as to permeate and transform the world with the light and life of Christ. Popular devotion, rightly understood and practiced, is very useful in nourishing the holiness of the people. It therefore merits greater attention on the part of pastors.

The Blessed Virgin Mary, who is our mother in the order of grace (cf. "Lumen Gentium" 61), is an example for all Christians of holiness and of total response to God's call ("LG," ch. 8).

5. Suggestions

Today it is extremely necessary that the pastors of the Church excel in the witness of holiness. It is necessary already in seminaries and religious houses to give a formation that educates the candidates not only intellectually but also spiritually; they must be seriously introduced to a daily spiritual life (prayer, meditation, the reading of the Bible, the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist). According to what is expressed by the decree "Presbyterorum Ordinis," they should be prepared for the priestly ministry in such a way that they find nourishment for their spiritual life in pastoral activity itself (cf. "Presbyterorum Ordinis" 16). Thus, in the exercise of the ministry they will also be capable of offering the faithful the correct counsel for their spiritual lives. The true renewal of the institutes of consecrated life must be favored in every way. But the spirituality of the laity, founded on baptism, must also be promoted. In the first place, it is necessary to promote conjugal spirituality, which is based on the sacrament of marriage and is of great importance for the transmission of the faith to future generations.

B. Sources of life for the Church

a) The word of God

1. Scripture, tradition, magisterium

Hearing the word of God with reverence, the Church has the mission of proclaiming it with faith (cf. "Dei Verbum" 1). Consequently, the preaching of the Gospel is among the principal duties of the Church, and especially of the bishops, and today it takes on the greatest importance (cf. "Lumen Gentium" 25). In this context is seen the importance of the dogmatic constitution "Dei Verbum," which has been too neglected, but which Paul VI nonetheless repropounded in a more profound and timely way in the apostolic exhortation "Evangelii Nuntiandi."

For this constitution, too, it is necessary to avoid a partial reading. In particular, the exegesis of the original meaning of sacred Scripture, most highly recommended by the council, (cf. "DV," 12) cannot be separated from the living tradition of the Church (cf. "DV," 10).

The false opposition between doctrinal and pastoral responsibilities must be avoided and overcome. In fact, the true intent of pastoral work consists in actualizing and making concrete the truth of salvation, which is in itself valid for all times. As true pastors, the bishops must point out the right way to the flock, strengthen the faith of the flock, keep dangers away from it.

2. Evangelization

The mystery of divine life that the Church brings to all peoples to participate in must be proclaimed. The Church is missionary by her very nature (cf. "Ad Gentes" 2). Thus the bishops are not only teachers of the faithful but also heralds of the faith which leads new disciples to Christ (cf. "Lumen Gentium," 25). Evangelization is the first duty not only of the bishops but also of priests and deacons, indeed, of all Christians. Everywhere on earth today the transmission to the young of the faith and the moral values deriving from the Gospel is in danger. Often, knowledge of the faith and the acceptance of the moral order are reduced to the minimum. Therefore, a new effort in evangelization and in integral and systematic catechesis is required.

Evangelization does not regard only the mission in the common sense of the word, that is, "Ad Gentes." The evangelization of non-believers in fact presupposes the self-evangelization of the baptized and also, in a certain sense, of deacons, priests and bishops. Evangelization takes place through

witnesses. The witness gives his testimony not only with words, but also with his life. We must not forget that in Greek the word for testimony is "martyrium." In this respect, the more ancient churches can learn much from the new churches, from their dynamism, from their life and testimony even unto the shedding of their blood for the faith.

3. The relationship between the magisterium of the bishops and theologians

Theology, according to the well-known description of St. Anselm, is "faith seeking understanding." Since all Christians must account for the hope that is in them (cf. 1 Pt 3:15), theology is specifically necessary to the life of the Church today. With joy we recognize what has been done by theologians to elaborate the documents of Vatican Council II and to help toward their faithful interpretation and fruitful application in the post-conciliar period. But on the other hand, we regret that the theological discussions of our day have sometimes occasioned confusion among the faithful. Thus, communication and a reciprocal dialogue between the bishops and theologians are necessary for the building up of the faith and its deeper comprehension.

4. Suggestions

Very many have expressed the desire that a catechism or compendium of all Catholic doctrine regarding both faith and morals be composed, that it might be, as it were, a point of reference for the catechisms or compendiums that are prepared in the various regions. The presentation of doctrine must be biblical and liturgical. It must be sound doctrine suited to the present life of Christians. The formation of candidates to the priesthood must be looked after in a particular way. In it, the philosophical formation and the manner of teaching theology proposed by the decree "Optatum Totius" (No. 16) merit attention. It is recommended that the manuals, besides offering an exposition of sound theology in a scientific and pedagogical manner, be permeated by a true sense of the Church.

b) The sacred liturgy

1. Internal renewal of the liturgy

The liturgical renewal is the most visible fruit of the whole conciliar effort. Even if there have been some difficulties, it has generally been received joyfully and fruitfully by the faithful. The liturgical renewal cannot be limited to ceremonies, rites, texts, etc. The active participation so happily increased after the council does not consist only in external activity, but above all in interior and spiritual participation, in living and fruitful participation in the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ (cf. "Sacrosanctum Concilium" 11). It is evident that the liturgy must favor the sense of the sacred and make it shine forth. It must be permeated by the spirit of reverence, adoration and the glory of God.

2. Suggestions

The bishops should not merely correct abuses but should also clearly explain to everyone the theological foundation of the sacramental discipline and of the liturgy.

Catecheses must once again become paths leading into liturgical life (mystagogical catecheses), as was the case in the Church's beginnings.

Future priests should learn liturgical life in a practical way and know liturgical theology well.

C. The Church as communion

1. The meaning of communion

The ecclesiology of communion is the central and fundamental idea of the council's documents. Koinonia-communion, founded on the sacred Scripture, have been held in great honor in the early Church and in the Eastern Churches to this day. Thus, much was done by the Second Vatican Council so that the Church as communion might be more clearly understood and concretely incorporated into life. What does the complex word "communion" mean? Fundamentally it is a matter of communion with God through Jesus Christ, in the sacraments. Baptism is the door and the foundation of communion in the Church. The Eucharist is the source and the culmination of the whole Christian life (cf. "Lumen Gentium," 11). The communion of the eucharistic body of Christ signifies and produces, that is, builds up, the intimate communion of all the faithful in the body of Christ which is the Church (1 Cor 10:16).

For this reason, the ecclesiology of communion cannot be reduced to purely organizational questions or to problems which simply relate to powers. Still, the ecclesiology

of communion is also the foundation for order in the Church, and especially for a correct relationship between unity and pluriformity in the Church.

2. Unity and pluriformity in the Church

Just as we believe in one God alone and one mediator, Jesus Christ, in one Spirit, so we have but one baptism and one Eucharist with which the unity and the uniqueness of the Church are signified and built up. This is of great importance especially today, because the Church, inasmuch as she is one and unique, is as a sacrament, a sign and instrument of unity and of reconciliation, of peace among men, nations, classes and peoples. In the unity of the faith and the sacraments and in the hierarchical unity, especially with the center of unity given to us by Christ in the service of Peter, the Church is that Messianic people of which the constitution "Lumen Gentium" speaks (No. 9). In this way, ecclesial communion with Peter and his successors is not an obstacle but the anticipation and prophetic sign of a fuller unity. On the other hand, the one and unique Spirit works with many and varied spiritual and charisms (1 Cor 12:4ff). The one Eucharist is celebrated in various places. For this reason, the unique and universal Church is truly present in all the particular churches ("Christus Dominus," 11), and these are formed in the image of the universal Church in such a way that the one and unique Catholic Church exists in and through the particular churches ("Lumen Gentium," 23). Here we have the true theological principle of variety and pluriformity in unity, but it is necessary to distinguish pluriformity from pure pluralism. When pluriformity is true richness and carries with it fullness, this is true Catholicity. The pluralism of fundamentally opposed positions instead leads to dissolution, destruction and the loss of identity.

3. The Eastern churches

In terms of this aspect of communion, the Catholic Church today holds in great esteem the institutions, liturgical rites, ecclesiastical traditions and discipline of Christian life of the Eastern churches, because they are resplendent in their venerable antiquity and because in them is present the tradition of the apostles through the fathers ("Orientalium Ecclesiarum," 1). In them, dating back to ancient times, the patriarchal institution is in effect, an institution which was recognized by the first ecumenical councils ("OE," 7). It should also be added that the Eastern churches have given testimony with the death and the blood of their martyrs for Christ and his Church.

4. Collegiality

The ecclesiology of communion provides the sacramental foundation of collegiality. Therefore the theology of collegiality is much more extensive than its mere juridical aspect. The collegial spirit is broader than effective collegiality understood in an exclusively juridical way. The collegial spirit is the soul of the collaboration between the bishops on the regional, national and international levels. Collegial action in the strict sense implies the activity of the whole college, together with its head, over the entire Church. Its maximum expression is found in an ecumenical council. In the whole theological question regarding the relationship between primacy and the college of bishops a distinction cannot be made between the Roman pontiff and the bishops considered collectively, but between the Roman pontiff alone and the Roman pontiff together with the bishops ("Lumen Gentium," expl. note 3), because the college exists with its "head" and never without him, the subject of supreme and full power in the whole Church ("LG," 22).

From this first collegiality understood in the strict sense one must distinguish the diverse partial realizations, which are authentically sign and instrument of the collegial spirit: the synod of bishops, the episcopal conferences, the Roman Curia, the "ad limina" visits, etc. All of these actualizations cannot be directly deduced from the theological principle of collegiality; but they are regulated by ecclesial law. Nonetheless, all of these other forms, like the pastoral journeys of the supreme pontiff, are a service of great importance for the whole college of bishops together with the pope, and also for the individual bishops whom the Holy Spirit has made guardians in the Church of God (Acts 20:28).

5. The episcopal conferences

The collegial spirit has a concrete application in the episcopal conferences ("Lumen Gentium," 23). No one can doubt their pastoral utility, indeed their necessity in the present situation. In the episcopal conferences the bishops of a nation or a territory jointly

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debate on Church collegiality

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from the NCCB's recent report (recently published) as well as the report (such as abortion, moral education, the role of the laity, etc.) in his remarks he stressed the positive aspects of the

of their own bishops has been a major factor in the development of the Church's life in the United States.

the bishops have indicated their belief that this is a fitting instrument for the responsibilities assigned by the Second Vatican Council. It has become more and more apparent that a movement affecting a particular nation or region should be examined at that level and that such a movement serve, as John Paul II declared in his 1984 Apostolic Exhortation, as a "laboratory" for the Church.

well-being of the life of the Church in their territory. For this responsibility to have its full stature, there are areas where greater freedom of decision should rest with them." ("Tablet," August 7, 1985, p. 313).

With such responses preliminary to the actual synod, it was not surprising that Cardinal Christoph Duenow, recording secretary for the synod, in his overview of the reports submitted, gave special emphasis to ecclesiology (theology of the Church), which he termed "the heart of the crisis." He cited, for example, "the relationship between the universal Church and the particular churches, the promotion of collegiality, the theological status of the episcopal conference..." ("Origins," Vol. 15, No. 26, p. 428).

In preparing the text, the bishops of the synod had before them a vital determining factor of the successful implementation of the Vatican II decree, "Lumen Gentium" (the Decree of Constitution on the Church).

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Although the text of the document that took place at the synod is not available, the tenor of the reports that have been made public reveals a clear recognition of the need. An revised and updated U.S. document, "The Church in the United States," is being prepared by the bishops and will be presented to the general assembly of the synod in 1986.

bringing about a proper balance between central authority and local autonomy, allowing a plurality within unity." (Thomas Cardinal Williams, Archbishop of Wellington, New Zealand, as reported in the New York Times, Dec. 1, 1985).

Extremely encouraging was the suggestion that appeared in the synod document issued by the bishop. "Because episcopal conferences are so useful, even necessary in the modern pastoral work of the Church, it is desired that a theological study of their status be made, and most of all, the question of their doctrinal teaching authority more clearly and profoundly explained, always considering that which the Council in the decree 'Christus Dominus' 38 and in the Code of Canon Law, Canons 447 and 753 expound." (New York Times, December 8, 1985).

Such conclusions and observations from the synod articulate a positive assessment from a wide spectrum of regions of the journey since the Council, which also acknowledged the pain and confusion that always accompany new ventures in uncharted areas.

Whether the questions concerning collegiality and cooperation between the universal Church and local churches is definitively or manifestly answered is subject to such conjectures. More positively, the synod has put itself on record for continuing its journey. Full consensus among us has been reached. The further necessity of promoting an understanding and an application of the Council. Unquestionably we believe the Second Vatican Council is a work of God and a gift of the Holy Spirit.