

CLERICALISM

Avoidable Damage to the Church

Address to Mixed Commission
Bishops/Major Superiors

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To recite examples of the more colourful or more obnoxious manifestations of clericalism would be easy to do, and probably interesting. To go no further than that, or merely to decry them, would contribute nothing useful. Examples do illustrate the problem, but, even more importantly, they point beyond themselves to a more fundamental, more subtly alienating and more intractable problem, which is where I would prefer our discussion to lead.

A Frank Admission

Let me start with a decision of the Second Vatican Council which only indirectly, but candidly, acknowledges the problem we are discussing. *“To administer baptism, to take Holy Communion to the sick and Viaticum to the dying, to preside at the worship and the prayer of the Church, to bless marriages and to officiate at funerals”* - these are activities which the Second Vatican Council called *“extremely necessary for the life of the Church”* (cf L.G.29). But it did so in the context of acknowledging that *“laws and customs of the Latin Church in force today make it difficult, in many places, to fulfil these functions.”*

Whatever else the Council had in mind, it was saying that the Church has difficulty carrying out functions that belong to its very life. Moreover, it attributed this difficulty to “laws and customs” in force in the Church of the Latin Rite - not to the bad faith or ill-will of other people. It went on to say that *“for this reason”* the ancient ministry of the diaconate could be restored. It also gave a second reason for restoring the diaconate, but let us not shy away from the implications of this first reason: why did the Council wish to put in place another ordained ministry to do what the ordained ministry of the priesthood already existed to do? Obviously, it envisaged that the diaconate would not

be encumbered by the kind of “laws and customs” which were already making it difficult, in many places, for priests to fulfil their ministry. Well, whatever about the proposed solution, at least the Council was acknowledging a serious problem.

What is this problem?

Obviously, it is not the ordained ministry as such. And yet it is a problem affecting the ministry of priests, and one which has been brought upon us by “laws and customs” of the Church’s own making. I do not think this refers only, or even mainly, to celibacy. I think it has to do with an accumulation of factors which, in effect, set the clergy apart as a subculture within the Church. I shall return to the reasons for this when comparing the 1917 and 1983 Codes of Canon Law. For now we can note that it affects the way the ordained ministry is perceived, and its ability to function. It was not for nothing that the International Theological Commission, in characteristically moderate language, urged that *“the tendency to form a separate ‘caste’ ought to be resisted, and new forms of communion of people ought to be invented”* (The Priestly Ministry, Rome, 1971, p 112).

This apartness, which was sanctioned by the “laws and customs” of the Church, is damaging enough even without the particular manifestations of clericalism which flow from it. But, of course, what people experience, and that by which they judge the Church adversely, are the more obvious and more immediate instances of clericalism.

Paternalism

Particular manifestations of clericalism are often unconscious, or at least well-intentioned.

Paternalism is an example: the Second Vatican Council found it necessary to say that clergy should not encroach on aspects of the Church’s activity in the world that are outside their competence, and that laity should not expect the clergy to do what they themselves should be doing; (G.S.43). Commenting on this passage before he became pope, Karol Wojtyla named both these mistakes as “clericalism” (quoted by Janicki, in The Code of Canon Law, A Text and Commentary, p. 431).

Pastoral Councils were to be one practical way of enabling priests and laity to support each other in carrying out their respective responsibilities (cf *Christifideles Laici*, n.25). Yet 25 years after the Council, a senior official in one of Karol Wojtyla's congregations told the New Zealand Bishops during their *ad limina* visit that "the Church" is not yet ready for pastoral councils. That is the kind of attitude that would prevent the Church from ever being ready, precisely because it is paternalistic. (In our country, I believe priests and laity are trying very genuinely to make pastoral councils fulfil their purpose, even though there are sometimes difficulties from either side.)

Other manifestations

In its *Reflections on the Problem of Clericalism in the Catholic Church*, the Task Force set up by the US Conference of Major Superiors of Men, claims that even though persons other than clerics can exhibit the traits of clericalism, the chief manifestations of clericalism are "*an authoritarian style of ministerial leadership, a rigidly hierarchical world view, and a virtual identification of the holiness and grace of the Church with the clerical state*". (Documentation, April 8, 1983, p.2)

Regarding the more oppressive forms of clerical domination and clerical privilege, it can suffice to note in passing that they breed anti-clericalism such as we have never known in our country. Historically, this has especially been the case where clerical domination has spilled over into civil life. But I believe it is also true where an increasingly well-informed laity resent paternalistic limitations on their life within the Church.

It should not be necessary to labour the point that where these features of clericalism still exist, they certainly do nothing to promote the unity of Christians. Clericalism is a scandal, even if it is carried on unconsciously and by well-meaning people.

What about New Zealand?

The fact that in New Zealand we have been spared the more extreme manifestations of clericalism and anti-clericalism should not make us complacent. It is a difference only of degree not of kind. Even seemingly small things can have significant pastoral

consequences. It was a senior and rather cautious member of the Tribunal in one of our own dioceses who recently told me he finds it important not to wear the Roman collar when he is interviewing for the Tribunal. It was in our own National Seminary that I recently had to assure candidates for priesthood that it is all right for them to feel repelled by certain imported manifestations of clericalism, provided they loved the priesthood. And in our country we find among Christ's faithful an antipathy towards worldly titles and trappings in ministers of the Gospel, which easily becomes a feeling of alienation from "the Church". Indeed, it further entrenches an already over-accentuated distinction between the "institutional Church" and "the rest". Who will say we don't experience that problem in NZ, or that it is due only to the ill-will of others?

A more fundamental problem

But it is time to leave these mere symptoms of our problem to focus on what I called a more fundamental, more subtly alienating and more intractable problem. I refer to a massive under-valuing of the sacrament of baptism, and a correspondingly significant departure from how the earliest Christians thought of themselves, i.e. of the Church. In one sense, this is the underside of clericalism. In other sense, it is the same phenomenon viewed from a different point on a spectrum. And it is damaging to the christian life, even for people who have never experienced the kind of symptoms I have already mentioned.

Ten years ago, I was explaining why the reforms of the Second Vatican Council would bring the Church back to a *"more normal" condition, and in that context I said "we can expect a shift in the popular image of the Church, from one which revolves round Holy Orders and religious life (or presbytery and convent) to one in which the primacy is restored to baptism."* (The Needs of the NZ Church in the 1980's, Address to Major Superiors, March, 1980, para 16). Although we always "defined" Church in terms of baptism, and therefore all the baptised, nevertheless people's concrete image of the Church centred around the Church's hierarchy and around its "professionals", including its professed religious.

It will be clear that I am not questioning the significance of Holy Orders or religious profession, but pointing out that these do not define the Church. Nor am I under any illusion that a problem which has lasted approximately 18 centuries is going to change overnight. Nevertheless, it helps to be clear about the direction in which we are called to move.

“Group Bias”

It also helps to ask how we got into the position whereby “the Church” came to be identified with its clergy. Social scientists speak of “group bias”, which means the tendency of a specialised group within an organisation to equate its specialised interests with the interests and the needs of the organisation as a whole. In the Church the specialised group which became predominant in the life of the Church, for all sorts of reasons including good reasons, was the clergy, (and others whose activities gave them a high profile.)

By a very natural dynamic, the result of group bias is that we all start from a clerical perspective when thinking about “the Church”. Perhaps the ultimate expression of this is when it is said of someone entering the ordained ministry is that he is “joining the Church”. Here the identification of “clergy” and “Church” is complete. This careless manner of speaking is not as innocuous as it might seem. Those lay people for whom belonging to the Church means belonging to the clergy do not see themselves belonging to the Church in quite the same way. Nor does this manner of speaking make it any easier for people to understand that they share responsibility for the mission of the Church. That responsibility would seem to them to come with ordination, or by some kind of delegation by those who are ordained.

Similarly, most Catholics inherited the impression that holiness was specially associated with being a priest or a religious. People are entitled to expect much of their priests and religious in this regard. But, unfortunately, that is not where the matter rests. It was not uncommon for people to think that holiness was less accessible to them, and even less expected of them, depending on how far their circumstances allowed them to do the

things that priests and religious do, which wasn't very much. The point here is not whether these impressions were theologically correct, but simply that they existed and shaped people's understanding of the Church, and for most of them, their seemingly disadvantaged place in it. The Council considered it necessary to speak emphatically against this serious misunderstanding.

Within the clerical subculture, we were also using language that did not quite equate with the language of the rest of the Church. For example, religious life and episcopacy were, for different reasons, both called "states of perfection". To canonists this might have meant one thing, but to people generally - if they ever heard of it - it probably meant just what it said. And that could only mean that some were called to perfection, or had it somehow guaranteed to them, and the rest travelled by foot.

Past or Present Problem?

You would be justified in asking whether these misunderstandings are still a problem today, seeing that the Council intended to correct them. The evidence is that the problem lives on. At Hato Paora College, there is a portrait photo of NZ's first Catholic Maori Bishop. The caption refers to his appointment as the flowering of the faith of the Catholic Maori people. I am sure we all recognise, and rejoice in, the hallmark which his appointment signifies. But surely the faith does not flower only in the sacrament of Holy Order. Once again, the faith and its flowering are being measured by a clerical frame of reference.

Another example is as contemporary as this meeting and shows how easily any of us can fall into the clericalist trap. The Sisters of St Joseph of Nazareth have made available to you a letter they have written to the Bishops' Conference, in which they acknowledge that some of their Sisters find the Eucharist "*a source of pain because....women are excluded from full participation*". I am sure the Sisters are justified in drawing our attention to the position and experience of women in the Church. But how are we to understand the assumption that those who are ordained participate in the Eucharist more fully than those who are not? Isn't that precisely the clericalist assumption, based on a massive under-

valuing of what baptism means, as well as an over-estimation of what ordination means? There is no way it could have occurred to the early Christians that there was anything greater, or any way of participating in the Christian life more fully, than participating in it through baptism and Eucharist. The question of who can be ordained is quite distinct and merits honest appraisal. But if anyone imagines that ordination somehow enables one to participate in the Eucharist more fully, or belong to the Church more fully, then they are right into clericalism even if, as in the earlier examples I gave, it is unconscious and well-intentioned. Whatever else might be said about the problems which the Sisters wished to address, the point I am making is that we don't solve the problem of clericalism by acting on clericalism's own assumptions.

Somewhere along the line, the marvellous privilege and sublime dignity of being united to Christ in baptism and in the Eucharist (and for that matter in matrimony) came to look second class by comparison with the privilege that was rightly attributed to ordained ministries, and second class to the privilege that was rightly attributed to religious life. But, it was not always so. For Christians who lived with the experience of the catechumenate during the first three centuries, baptism and Eucharist were the summit of their lives, and everything else was second to that.

A Radical Turnaround

In our own day, the beginnings of a turnaround are to be found in the Second Vatican Council, and significantly in its Constitution on the Church. This major document spoke first of the entire body of the faithful before it dealt with ministries; and it spoke of the call of everyone to holiness before it spoke of the particular vocations of some. But let us notice that in doing this, the Council was consciously correcting the previous distortions. It actually threw out a pre-conciliar draft document on the Church precisely because that document reflected the image of the Church I have been describing.

The same contrast of images can be seen by comparing the 1917 and 1983 Codes of Canon Law:

Underlying the 1917 Code is an understanding of the Church as composed of two

fundamentally distinct and unequal groups - clergy and laity... The roots of.... clerical domination are ancient, ranging from reform efforts and practical necessity to defence of Church interests against the encroachment of lay investiture and state domination. What is significant is that after centuries of attempting to implement such a system, the magisterium at the Second Vatican Council rejected such institutional clericalism and sought to locate sacred ministry within the people of God and the common condition of all the faithful... (J. Provost, the Code of Canon Law, A Text and Commentary, p.131.)

Canon 207 of the 1983 Code says that “*Among the Christian faithful by divine institution there exist in the Church sacred ministers who are called clerics in law, and other Christian faithful who are called laity.*” In other words, ordained ministry is of divine institution; but the “juridical status” of ordained ministers, and what it means to be “clergy”, is based on Church law, and is changeable. What we have to notice is how the 1983 Code intended it to change:

In the 1917 Code, *the clergy constituted a special socio-economic group whose standing was protected by special privileges...* (Provost, *ibid.*) A man entered this group or class not through the Sacrament of Holy Order, but through a rite by which one was set apart. Belonging to this group was a pre-condition for being eligible for the sacrament of Holy Order. So, the clergy were distinct from the laity on double grounds, viz. by belonging to the class or group which one entered through a rite called tonsure, and by being ordained.

In the 1983 Code, the only distinction retained is that which is constituted by the Sacrament of Holy Order. Consequently, attempts to retain distinctions and modes of separateness or privileges based on the 1917 Code, do not belong to the theology or the law or the pastoral needs of the present-day Church. If anything, they belong to those “laws and customs” which the Council was trying to circumvent by re-instituting the diaconate. Eliminating distinctions which are not based on the sacrament of Holy Order has many consequences, including the fact that lay men and women are, in principle, eligible for any position in the Church that does not require ordination, (cf e.g. cc 129/2, 1421/2, 483/2).

Of course, the corrections expressed theologically in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and canonically in the 1983 Code of Canon Law will take time to seep into the spontaneous thinking of everyone.

Harmless?

Precisely because that has not yet happened, we still live with clericalism and the antipathy it causes, and the harm. Should anyone think this whole business is a bit academic or harmless, I ask: Is it really harmless for people to think that some belong to the Church more and some less, depending on whether or not they are ordained? Or that holiness of life is less accessible to those who are not priests or religious? Or that responsibility for the mission of the Church does not come with one's baptism? Is it really harmless to be under the impression that those who are not ordained participate in the Eucharist less than those who are ordained? Is it really Catholic to think that particular callings within the Church are greater than baptism into Christ? Is it being faithful to the Church not to personally identify with the Church's official efforts to correct these previous impressions?

What would be harmful would be our failure, even by default, to address this deeply entrenched problem. Can the Church afford for its ordained ministers to be the subject of harsh criticisms which should properly be levelled against clericalism and not against the Gospel reality of ordained ministry? Can religious life afford to be harshly criticized by those lay people who perceive themselves as disadvantaged vis-a-vis religious?

Legitimate Grievances

Of course, the fact that criticism is sometimes misdirected, or not always expressed with theological accuracy, does not excuse us from the need to look at what lies behind the complaints of those who feel disadvantaged. After all, there are inequalities and hurts and oppressive experiences. And I agree with the Task Force's comment that

In its assumptions about social structures, vertical power relationships, and the privileges of class or status, clericalism has clear affinities with patriarchal culture. Most clericalist attitudes, habits and patterns of relationship reflect a

patriarchal world-view. (Documentation, p.8)

One of the consequences of this state of affairs is that by their involvement, women are at risk of being moulded into the image of what is already there. Power-sharing, by those who want it, and power, by those who have it, belong equally to the clericalist mindset, and not to the Gospel understanding of authority.

Getting it right again

The corrections put in place by the Second Vatican Council are radical because they are based on restoring the primacy of baptism. If that seems like cold comfort to anyone, I suggest that only highlights how deeply our thinking is rooted in clericalist assumptions. But there are other practical things that can be done. One of them has to do with getting the language right. Much has been written in recent times about the fact that language influences the way we think and act.

At the Second Vatican Council, there was already dissatisfaction with the negative way the laity were usually defined. In effect, they were the non-ordained - so much did the clerical perspective pervade the whole Church's thinking.

In its origins, the word "laity" did not have a narrow and negative meaning. It translated the word *laos*, which meant the whole consecrated people of God. Nevertheless, the word has since come to mean those members of the faithful who - from a clerical frame of reference - were the non-clerics. It followed, logically enough, that "the apostolate of the laity" had to be the apostolate of the non-ordained. This premise still leads writers and commentators down a wrong track. For example, it is true that lay people have a special calling to take the Gospel into the temporal order (cf c.225/2; *Christifideles Laici*, 15). But if the vocation of the laity is defined in those terms, then it is being overlooked that taking the Gospel into the world is the vocation of the whole Church - carried out differently according to different particular vocations within the Church.

Likewise, when it is said that the spirituality of the laity is based on baptism, nothing distinctive is being said because the spirituality of all Christians is rooted in baptism, and

different particular spiritualities are different ways of living out our baptism (cf *Christifideles laici*, nn 15, 17).

For does it take us any further to say that some are called to live out their baptism “as lay persons”. This still defines people in terms of what they are not - not clerics - instead of in terms of what they are. The reality is that we live out our baptism as husbands or wives or parents or singles or religious or priests, etc. That is different from living out one’s baptism by not being something else.

Even attempts to find a more suitable word than “laity” presuppose that there is some reason why some Christians should be grouped according to what they are not, i.e. the non-clergy. As Teresa Pirola has said:

We don't need a single word to refer generally to the non-clergy of the Church! What we need is a new mentality - a mentality free from all clerical tendencies - that renders unnecessary such quests for non-clergy terms. (Laity - A Block to the Mission of the Church? The Australasian Catholic Record, October, 1989, p. 431).

If, however, our primary frame of reference is the Church - not the clergy, - then what we come to identify are the different ways of sharing in the mission and the spirituality of the Church: The role of priests within the mission of the Church; the role of families within the mission of the Church; the role of parents, youth, singles, religious.....within the mission of the Church! (cf L.G. 34, *Christifideles Laici*, 14).

A Different Model

The “new mentality” which Pirola advocates will correlate with what I have described as the shift from Holy Orders and religious life to Baptism and Eucharist in the way the Church is perceived. Teresa Pirola’s suggestion for a better model than our present one merits citing at length and reflection:

I would strongly endorse the recent synod's choice of 'communio' which permeates Christifideles Laici in a way which does a great service to the direction of a future church. Put another way, this is the 'family' model. In the family model the fundamental distinctions between family members are made on the basis of relationship bonds, not on the basis of jobs or functions. Thus we may speak of one family, or else we may speak of the couple, the sons, the

daughters, the parents, grandparents, the brothers and sisters. But these distinctions all point to the essential oneness of the family as persons with a unique bonding with one another. We do not, for instance, draw general distinctions between the bread winners and home-makers and school students, etc. These may be valid distinctions from a particular perspective (i.e. occupation), but they are very much secondary to the essence of what family is all about.

Family is fundamentally about relationship. It is from this context of relationship that each member draws his/her deepest sense of self-worth and identity. It is only from this context of relationship that the identity of the family as a communion of loving persons can truly be seen - in all its beauty, and also in all its brokenness. A family may be involved in all sorts of activities in the community and carry out a variety of roles, but this does not define it as a family. A group of totally unrelated people could carry out the same jobs with absolute perfection, but that would not make them a family.

So it is with the church. Being the body of Christ means belonging in loving communion, fidelity and unity, to one another in Christ. Any functionary role carried out by a member or sector of that Body must flow from, through, and towards that basic relationship (ibid. pp 428, 429).

Provided Pirola is not reducing ordained ministry to the "jobs" ordained people do, (for it is more fundamentally a matter of re-presenting Christ - and in that sense involves a different relationship within the community of the Church), then I concur with her substantive point: the identity of each of us within the Church is rooted first of all in our union with Christ and each other through baptism, and after that in the different relationships constituted by different vocations. These, too, are real, and enter into our identity, but they "flow from, through, and towards that basic relationship".

"Hierarchy"?

There is another change of language which I would like to see considered by theologians, and it has to do with the word "hierarchy". I think that this term is a social construct that has been superimposed on the original Gospel reality which it is intended to signify with the use of that construct. As the Task Force noted:

An experience of the corporateness of salvation in and through the community, and of ministry arising from within it for the sake of service and good order, were central features of early Christian life. As the community grew in numbers and in historical experience, there gradually evolved a complex social structure organised along hierarchical and patriarchal lines (Documentation, p.4).

For a long time now, I have thought that all the documents which use the term “hierarchy” to describe the distinctions created by the Sacrament of Holy Order could be re-written, eliminating the term hierarchy, without comprise to the content of our faith regarding ordained ministries. Can these only be thought of in terms of vertical relationships? Are vertical relationships the best way to reflect Christ’s teaching regarding leadership?

Changes Affecting the Church and the Priesthood

A further reason for hope that clericalism will give way to a “more normal” ecclesiology is to be found in the Church’s new openness to the cultures of the world. The creation of a clerical subculture was reinforced by the more defensive stance which the Church had taken vis-a-vis the world in recent centuries, and by the provisions the Church made for the formation of priests in that context. Indeed, a new openness to the world has been one of the factors bearing on the personal crises of priests. As the International Theological Commission noted:

Vatican II has brought the whole Church to face the world in a positive manner. It has broken ecclesial isolation and has opted for solidarity and communication with the world..... This openness to the world demands then from many priests that they reconsider their way of thinking, their language and their style of life, and that they accept the uncertainty of unforeseen situations and associate themselves in the searchings of a fast changing world (The Priestly Ministry, pp. 12, 13).

Crises affecting priestly identity merit all the pastoral sensitivity we can muster. But it is pastoral sensitivity that also requires us to abandon clericalism. Part of the tragedy is that for some priests their identity as priests has been too strictly tied to the modalities of the clerical subculture. And that doesn’t change overnight.

Nevertheless, it is appropriate to hope that just as Church structures have been shaped in part by the social and cultural circumstances of previous centuries, so too they can be reshaped by the requirements of communication with the world of today. In the end, all this boils down to being appropriately incarnate in the work of evangelisation.

Conclusion

The nett effect of clericalism is a diffuse impression among people that belonging to the Church, being Church, or being significant in the Church are related to certain roles and groups within the Church, more than to baptism. Correcting this impression involves a whole re-focusing, in which the unspeakably marvellous privilege of belonging to Christ and with Christ becomes central to our vision of Church and central in each one's thoughts and motives and moods. There could be no more radical or thorough-going renewal of the Church than that.

A Church refocused in that way could be expected to breed its own vocations attuned to, and demanded by, a Church which glories above all in sharing Christ's destiny and living his life. Vocations to priesthood and religious life would be appreciated all the more on that account, and certainly more than they could hope to be in a Church that is still under any shadow of clericalism. There is already evidence that some young people who would give themselves gladly to ministering to our life in Christ do not particularly want to be associated with the subculture into which that ministry has been inserted. And the same applies to those who would witness to it in religious life.

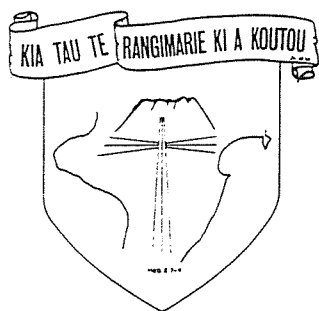
But bringing about this refocusing also requires that we have the will and the loyalty to let go of anything that perpetuates the bias and distortions of clericalism, even if they have been sanctioned by "laws and customs" of the Church's own making in a previous era. It means moving out of that era into the Church's today.

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A diminished and lop-sided picture of “the Church” results from thinking of it primarily in terms of its ordained ministries. Refocusing our perception, centred around the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist, will result in a fuller and healthier picture. It will take time, but it has begun.

The formation of lay people for their greater participation in the life and work of the Church is an essential part of that process.

The pastoral letter Guiding Principles for the Development of Lay Ministries, 1994, was written to assist programmes operating in the Diocese of Palmerston North.



Diocese of Palmerston North

Guiding Principles for the Development of Lay Ministries

Pentecost 1994

+P J Cullinane

During the Easter season we were treated to readings from the Acts of the Apostles - wonderful vignettes of the life of the early Church. We need constantly to measure ourselves - our parishes, our diocese - against how it was in the beginning, when the impact of the Resurrection was fresh, and the gospel really was exciting good news.

It's interesting also to see how the early Church organised itself and dealt with difficulties. Often it was a crisis that led to new developments and growth.

For example, when the Apostles realised they simply couldn't keep up with it all, (Acts 6:1-7). They called a meeting of "the whole people" (consulted the parishes, so to speak). First, they clarified their own position: they said their first responsibilities were prayer and preaching the good news, and that this was a full-time job. Then the community agreed to choose others who would share the rest of the work. The apostles set the criteria: they were to be people of good reputation, filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Eventually they were chosen, prayed over and mandated.

You will recognise the parallel between this and what is happening in our own diocese right now. All the parishes have been consulted; they have told us they want to keep their identity as communities which have their own celebration of the Eucharist - they don't want to lose their identity through being submerged in some other parish. If there aren't enough priests for residence in each community, they want to select parishioners for special formation and leadership.

I want to share with you what I believe should be the guiding principles of this development:

1. What it means to be Church:

I think St Peter's definition is still the best: "you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people set apart to proclaim the wonders of God who has called you out of darkness into his own wonderful light." This means that however we organise ourselves, it needs to be for the purpose of better proclaiming the wonderful things God has done. This is what we do in worship and in sharing the news with others.

2. The Church's job is not

to save the world. Jesus has already done that. Our job is to prepare for the victory celebrations, and make sure everyone knows they are invited. Knowing the outcome of human history makes it possible for people to live their lives with meaning, joy and thanksgiving. But how shall they know if we don't share the good news with them, and invite them to belong to the "people set apart to proclaim the wonders of God..."?

3. Responsibility for the Mission of the Church

belongs to the whole consecrated people of God, not just to those who happen to be in ministries of one kind or another. The real reason for this is not the shortage of priests, but what it means to be a baptised/confirmed people. The shortage of priests is only a reason for not kidding ourselves that priests can do it all.

4. Disciples first

The ones Jesus “sent out” were first of all called to be “with him”, and to know him well. Only those who talk with Jesus can talk about him. The witness of one’s personal life is the first requirement of every ministry; cf Pope Paul VI, *Evangelisation*, nn 21, 26, 76. And, only those can be leaders who, like Jesus, are servants.

5. Differences of Role

result from different charisms, different services, and different ministries:

- a charism is a grace given by God to individuals for the benefit of others. We have all been gifted in various ways.
- services are ways of using our gifts or charisms for the good of the Church. For example, one might put one’s trade skills or professional skills at the service of the Church; or participate in works of mercy or in the work for justice and peace; or help with other needs of the parish. “Services” are offered, and freely given, as occasion arises.

Many young people, married couples, and even retired people have given a generous part of their lives to Catholic Overseas Volunteer Service; perhaps we need something like that “at home”.

- ministries are ongoing ways of serving, which require formation, a mandate, and in some cases ordination.
- apostolates are ways of putting the Church at the service of the world, whereas ministries are ways of serving the Church itself. (Sometimes the term ministries is used to include apostolates.)

6. To be a Sign

of God’s gift of salvation and God’s love for the world is the vocation of the whole Church. In different ways, it is also the vocation of individuals. For example, the vocation of Christian spouses is to be signs of what God’s love is like - faithful and forgiving, life-long and life-giving.

Persons whose lives are consecrated to God through the vows of poverty, chastity

and obedience put aside personal family, earning power, independence, and career opportunities not only in order to serve, but first of all to be signs. Their choice signifies that nothing is too much to give up for the sake of the wonderful destiny still waiting for us. The world needs their sign.

Priests are authorised by Christ (in the sacrament of Holy Orders) to speak for him, as when they say “your sins are forgiven,” “this is my body....” In this way they make visible (are signs of) Jesus’ relationship to his body. We need more priests to make visible the ministry of the Good Shepherd.

An aspect of “sign” is the public commitment which spouses, religious and priests make. But this is not the measure of one’s contribution to the reign of God. As Pope John Paul II recently said: “The greatest in the kingdom of God are not the ministers, but the saints.” No matter what our state in life, we are all equally called to love.

7. In the name of the Church

A vocation carried out in the name of the Church must first be recognized by the Church. That is why the Church is officially involved in Christian marriages, the vows to Religious life, and Ordination.

The same applies to ministries carried out in the name of the Church; God’s call is made known through the Church’s call.

Even God’s call to belong to the Church and to share its mission is mediated, or given voice, through the Church’s sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.

8. “In the world”

The ordinary apostolate of lay people is to make the Church present in the wider community. To be a “leaven” in the world is a requirement of our baptism and confirmation, and does not require being in any particular ministry. (cf Pope Paul VI, *Evangelisation* n.70; Pope John Paul II, *Laity*, n.15)

There are particular apostolates - e.g. in health, social services, education, communications media, etc.

We are all called to share the Church's mission; some are called to ministries; (cf Evangelisation, n.73; Laity n.23).

9. Pastor - Good Shepherd - Servant of all

In Catholic theology and in Church law, the "pastor" is the ordained priest, (c.519). The same is true of the "chaplain" (c.564 ff). When lay persons exercise pastoral ministry, in a parish or a chaplaincy, they are said to "participate" in pastoral care, alongside a priest.

This participation can be in the form of a team looking after a parish or several parishes. Or, when lay persons are appointed to take charge of a parish, the bishop is to appoint a priest from some other parish to provide pastoral oversight; (c.517). The same applies to chaplaincies (cf c.516)

The priest exercises his pastoral ministry by calling forth, encouraging and uniting all the other ministries. He would be failing in his own ministry if he were not promoting the participation of others.

10. Ordinary and Extraordinary Ministries

Extraordinary ministries for lay persons are those whose ordinary minister is a priest or deacon (and who, in the circumstances, is not easily available.) For example, presiding over liturgical prayers, exercising the ministry of the word, baptising, distributing Holy Communion, taking Holy Communion to the sick in the form of Viaticum, and exposing the Blessed Sacrament for adoration; (there can be circumstances when lay persons may be invited to preach even though the ordinary minister of the word is present); cf cc.230/3, 766, 767, 861, 911, 943.

Ordinary ministries for lay persons include catechising, the ministries of the RCIA, readers in the liturgy, altar service (acolyte), administration, etc; cf cc.230/1 & 2, 1282.

Lay persons may also be authorised by the bishop to assist at marriages and to conduct funeral services; cf c.1112, Congregation Div. Worship Prot.N.720/69.

11. No vocation is at the expense of others:

Each has its own dignity and purpose; each needs the others.

There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit; there are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different ways in different people, it is the same God who is working in all of them. The particular way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose. (1 Cor. 12:4-7)

12. New vocations

When people's experience of the Church is focused predominantly around the work of priests and religious, only some aspects of the Church's life are being experienced. By activating the greater variety of charisms, services, ministries and apostolates that have their origin in the sacraments of baptism, confirmation and eucharist, we effectively re-focus people's experience around "what it means to be Church" (cf above).

This makes for greater vitality in the Church; after all, these are the sacraments through which we all enter the life and mission of the Church. Out of this greater vitality, people will experience the need for new vocations, including vocations to priesthood and religious life, and a new appreciation of the sacredness of marriage, and the specialness of every person's life and every calling.

13. Now is the time:

We are not waiting for some future moment when all this will happen. We need to bring it about - with sensitivity, imagination and courage.

A glance at the origins of the Church is very illuminating, and gives the benefit of an early experience in the matter of ministries. It was an experience which was all the more valuable in that it enabled the Church to consolidate herself and to grow and spread.

Attention to these sources, however, has to be complemented by attention to the present needs of people and of the Church.

....(From both these sources) it will be possible to seek wisely and to discover the

ministries which the Church needs and which many of her members will gladly embrace for the sake of ensuring greater vitality in the Church community. (Pope Paul VI, Evangelisation, n.73.)

The promotion of the Hands On programme in the parishes, the methods used to help people reach good decisions, and the plans for providing formation have all been excellent. The response of the people has been overwhelming. I congratulate all concerned.

Seven years ago, the Catholic Maori people asked for my blessing on a programme of formation for lay ministers over a 6 year period. They thought of it, they planned it, and they successfully carried it out. It has given them a whole new sense of what it means to be the Church, and they have found great gladness in it. But they did something special: when they selected and sent people forward for this training, they accompanied them: they physically accompanied them on the training weekends. I wouldn't take a chance on asking others to do that, but I'm sure we can think of some ways of showing our support for those who are selected. Put it

this way: if you send them forward, you're responsible for what happens to them! If they are good enough to step forward for us, we should want to show an ongoing interest in them.

14. Most important - prayer

The early Church turned difficulty into opportunity - so shall we. The early Church consulted the people - so have we. The early Church set criteria for the selection of new leaders - so shall we. The early Church prayed about it and expected the Holy Spirit to guide them - so shall we. (I am grateful to the Task Force for giving prayer such a central place in the Hands On programme, and to all the parishes for participating so fully in the Holy Hours.) In the early Church God's choice was manifested through the Church's choice - so it is for us.

In 1982 I invited the diocese to look to the Acts of the Apostles for a sense of how to be Church (This is Your Diocese, p.28). For Pentecost 1994, I renew that invitation. We need to have a feel for the ways of the Holy Spirit. This is something we can all do together.

How to structure a satisfactory working relationship between the “local” churches and Rome is also an unresolved matter. An unsatisfactory relationship creates a tendency to exaggerate both the rights of “Rome” and the rights of the “local” churches, and to see them in some kind of antithesis. Bishops are obliged, by virtue of their ordination, to be concerned not only for the “local” church but also for the universal church.

The address on The Universal Church as a Communion of Particular Churches, 1987, seems painstakingly careful, even tame, given the frustrations caused by recurring ineptness within the Roman curia. But that is a personnel and administrative problem. What had been requested by the Australia, New Zealand Canon Law Society was a treatment of the theological and canonical relationship between the universal and local churches. As reproduced here, this address has been substantially abridged and simplified.



THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH AS A COMMUNIO OF PARTICULAR CHURCHES

Address to Australia-New Zealand & Canon Law Society

November 1987

Bishop P J Cullinane

Terminology

The title you have given me reflects Lumen Gentium 23 where the universal church is said to exist “in” and “out of” the particular churches which are entrusted to the pastoral care of bishops.

The term “particular church” is used in various senses by the Second Vatican Council..... (see Thomas Green, *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*, Paulist Press 1985, p.316). Canon 368 defines the term as meaning “first of all dioceses, to which.... are likened” various other territorial groupings. I shall prefer to use the term “local” churches, which includes dioceses but also other localisations of the church, for reasons that will become apparent in the theological argument of this paper.

Introduction - Before and After Vatican II

It was a commonplace before the Second Vatican Council for local churches to be thought of rather as administrative subdivisions of the universal church. Consistent with this, it was also a commonplace to think of bishops somewhat as delegates of the pope. Even if this way of thinking did not represent what was ultimate or best in the church’s self-understanding, it nevertheless existed as a popular impression in the minds of many, and even in the praxis of bishops and of Rome.

The Second Vatican Council quite explicitly corrects both these popular misunderstandings. Its ecclesiology, reflecting a more ancient understanding of the church is explicit in, for example, LG 23, 26; CD 11, AG 19, UR 15, etc. The 1983 Code of Canon Law in its turn substantially reflects this corrected ecclesiology, and c.368 consciously uses the language of LG when speaking of “particular churches in which and from which exists the one and unique

Catholic Church.”

The Council’s corresponding teaching on the episcopal office is given in, for example, LG 21; CD 2, 8, etc. This too is reflected in the Code (cf c.87/1).

I shall return later to discuss the relationship between the Code and the Council, and to elaborate on why I said the Code “substantially” reflects the ecclesiology and sacramental theology of Vatican II. Before that, though, let us turn to the heart of the matter - to what it means to say that the local churches and the universal church (i.e. “the one and unique Catholic Church”) are in some sense one and the same reality. Here we are at the heart of Catholic ecclesiology.

The fact that there are still unresolved juridical and practical problems arising from the relationship between local churches and the universal church is one further reason why we need to start with the theological basis for our claim that local churches and the universal church are ontologically one and the same reality.

Local Churches and Universal Church, The Same Reality

Our theological starting point is what scripture calls the mystery or hidden plan of God, now revealed; cf Eph. 1:3-14. The understanding of church which comes out of this perspective is precisely the basis on which we can recognise an ontological unity between local churches and the universal church. God’s eternal plan, progressively revealed in salvation history, is to bring us into a communion of life with God and with each other that will be forever. This plan is accomplished in Christ, who so identifies with us that we become sons and daughters of the Father and heirs with Christ to everlasting life with God. Our union with Christ is accomplished through the power of the Holy Spirit. As the liturgy for the twenty-third Sunday of the year puts it we are “drawn into the circle of God’s own life”, and this was God’s purpose in sending the Son and sending the Holy Spirit. This plan has its origins in God’s free choice and is accomplished by his power at work in us; (cf Col. 1:25-27).

Even though this divine mercy is intended for all, not all know it. The community which on earth knows of this “plan” because God has revealed it, the community which nurtures and celebrates this sharing of God’s own life, and reaches out to share it with others, is called the church. Since the essence of this “mystery” is God’s life shared with us, it is the same wherever it is actualised, i.e. in every community which celebrates this life, enters more deeply into it, and shares it with others.

(I am thinking here primarily and directly of the Roman Catholic Church,..... But, of course, the Council’s historic description of the body of Christ as “subsisting in” the Roman Catholic Church was intended to allow for the fact that “ecclesial” reality exists also outside the Roman Catholic Church’s boundaries (cf LG 8, UR 1,3.)

Another key New Testament term for describing the same reality is *koinonia*, which means our participation in the life of the risen Christ, and resulting from it, our union with each other “in Christ”. If Christ’s life in us is the heart and soul of the church, how could the community not be ontologically the same in every one of its local manifestations, i.e. in every local church?

Some theologians come to the same point from the premise that the church is, in some sense, an event. It is that which results from the word of God being proclaimed and received in faith. What results is the *Qahal Yahweh*, the gathering of God’s people. And this gathering is necessarily a local event:

The Church as a whole, where she really becomes an event in the full sense of the term, is necessarily a local church. In the local church the whole church becomes tangible. (Rahner K, The Episcopate and the Primacy. Quaest. Disp. Herder & Herder, p.23)

Of course, the word itself is supremely effective at that point where there is no gap at all between what is proclaimed and what is effected, viz. in the sacraments and above all the Eucharist.....

....The Eucharistic gathering, therefore, is the local church, and presupposing that it is celebrated in communion with the local bishop and the bishop of Rome, that local gathering,

or event, lacks in its life nothing that the universal church has. The local church is the universal church's manifestation in a particular locality, and this is what is most intensely actualised in the liturgy.

This is the ecclesiology that underlies c.369 which says of a diocese that gathered by its pastor "in the Holy Spirit through the gospel and the Eucharist, it constitutes a particular church in which the one, holy, Catholic and apostolic church of Christ is truly present and operative."

So much, then, for establishing that the universal church is ontologically the same reality as that which is actualised in the local churches.

A Social Reality, in Need of Pastoral Government

The Eucharist effects a real union with Christ (1 Cor. 10:16) and with each other (10:17), and it is this new and unique reality that produces a new kind of community between people across every kind of boundary - race, sex, economic circumstances, etc. (cf Gal. 3:28). But precisely because this *koininia* is made manifest in the life of human beings, it will necessarily be shaped differently according to social, cultural and historical circumstances. This brings us to those dimensions of church life which need to be regulated, in order to safeguard both the unity and the proper diversity of the local churches; cf LG 13. Even the idealisation of church life that is drawn in Acts 2:42-47 needed and presupposed pastoral government.

The 1917 Code, to a larger extent than the 1983 Code, regulated the life of the church on the model of the "complete society" (*societas perfecta*). This organisational model was not unique to the church. Indeed it was borrowed directly from secular society, and it developed "out of the church's two-fold confrontation with the Reformation and with the modern state"; (Pötz, R. The Concept and Development of Law According to the 1983 CIC, Concilium June 1986, p. 16).

The model most closely related to the theology I have outlined above is that of "communio".

The Second Vatican Council espoused a variety of images and “models” of church, and some of these are reflected in the 1983 Code. It has been observed that “there are unresolved competing ecclesiologies at Vatican II which appear often in the same document. The same lack of consensus marks the ecclesiologies in the new Code.” (Provost, J, Church Law - Church Reality, Concilium June 1986 p xi).

.....This seems to be the appropriate point at which to treat the other subject pertinent to the relationship between local churches and the universal church, namely, the relationship between the episcopate and the bishop of Rome.

The tendency towards excessive centralisation has deep historical roots, which have touched, it seems, the very psyche of the Catholic community. The real meaning of the petrine ministry is something every Catholic can be proud to own. But, for a variety of reasons, this ministry took on an image bigger than its own self:

....in the west he who is known as the Roman Pontiff possesses three distinct primacies. As bishop of Rome....he holds a “regional” primacy, a patriarchal primacy (as patriarch of the west) and an “apostolic” primacy, special and unique in the heart of the universal episcopal college. Little by little these three primacies, each by nature very different from the others, have come to be embraced as one....

Acting sometimes under the pressure of circumstances, sometimes profiting from favourable situations, the church of Rome was to combine into a single embrace the regional primacy, the patriarchal primacy and her distinct “apostolic” responsibility in the communion of churches. (Tillard, J.M., The Bishop of Rome, Michael Glazier, inc., 1983 pp 49, 51)

It can be shown that the Roman claim to an “apostolic” primacy is not based on that See’s social or political importance. It is related to the role of Peter among the twelve. The distinctive position given to Peter somehow mattered even after he was dead. Some of the most important scriptural references to Peter - relating to his role - were written after his death: Mat. 16:17-18; Luke 22:32; Jn. 21:15-17. His role was seen as somehow continuing. In continuity with that belief, the Catholic Church has always recognised the Bishop of Rome as having the same role among the other bishops of the Church as Peter had among the apostles. In him, the role given to Peter lived on and his voice was regarded as,

so to speak, the voice of Peter.

But it can also be said that many of the functions that came to be exercised by the bishop of Rome belong more to the special claim of patriarchal Sees based on administrative, political and geographical factors, as those Sees developed after Constantine, than they do to the Petrine ministry as such.....

It is hardly surprising that the church's theology was affected by its praxis:

*In the model of the church as a "perfect society" this picture is predominantly based on the papal "fullness of power"..... In the episcopal ministry a distinction is made between the power of ordination and the power of government. The bishop receives the first in his own sacramental ordination, whereby he obtains "power" to perform the "sacred" actions of ordaining priests and bishops and administering confirmation. His power of government he receives through the *missio canonica* on his appointment by the pope.*

*This idea was the result of centuries of development that diverged more and more strongly from an original tradition that itself lasted for centuries. In the first centuries bishops were elected by their own ecclesial communities, clergy and people together, and afterwards ordained by bishops of neighbouring churches. In the name of the Lord and his spirit they were appointed to the one indivisible office as presidents of the liturgy, proclaimers of the gospel and administrators of their own ecclesial community. It was only from the late middle ages onwards, that gradually in the Latin Church the appointment of bishops was reserved more and more to the Popes and finally became their exclusive right; with the result that the separation between administrative appointment and *missio canonica*, on the one hand, and, on the other, sacramental ordination led to the idea of the two "powers" in the episcopal ministry. (Huizing, P, The Central Legal System and Autonomous Churches, Concilium, June 1986 pp 25, 26.)*

The Second Vatican Council's distinctive contribution is described by Tillard as follows:

It concerns the movement from an ecclesiology starting with the idea of the universal church divided into portions called dioceses, to an ecclesiology which understands the church as the communion of all the local churches: the universal church arises from the communion of churches....

*The ecclesiology of the church as a communion of local churches entrusted to the episkope of bishops in communion with each other should be considered in close connection with another major theme of *Lumen Gentium*: the fact that episcopal authority and its juridical institution is founded on a sacrament - the episcopate. The full weight of this assertion from *Lumen Gentium* needs to bear on the theology of the papacy. For it is clear that whatever is founded upon a sacrament must have*

priority within the church of God. The church comes about by faith and sacraments and all its essential marks are to be found in the osmosis of faith and sacraments. (Tillard, op. cit. pp 37, 38)

Precisely because bishops are vicars of Christ in their own dioceses and share collegial responsibility for the universal church, it is incumbent on them, as a responsibility resulting from their ordination, to help restore a proper balance between central authority and local autonomy.

Further Reform

Correcting tendencies which have deep historical roots does not come easily. One thing is the orthodoxy of the church's teaching; another is its practice. The shift of emphasis intended by Vatican II does not mean an abandonment of the teaching of Vatican I, but it does mean a more wholesome and more ancient context in which to interpret Vatican I. Although the revised Code of Canon Law is, on the whole, faithful to this more nuanced ecclesiology, it would be fair to say that the Roman Catholic Church is still working its way towards the practical differences which this ecclesiology ultimately requires. In spite of assurances by Pope Paul IV and John Paul II to the Anglican and Orthodox churches concerning appropriate local autonomy, etc, centralist tendencies and interventionist excesses on the part of the Roman curia have not yet disappeared.

Vatican II's Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the church says: bishops... enjoy as of right in the diocese assigned to them all ordinary, special and immediate power which is necessary for the exercise of their pastoral office, but always without prejudice to the power which the Roman pontiff possesses, by virtue of his office, of reserving certain matters to himself or to some other authority". (CD 8) This power is indeed given to them by the sacrament of episcopal ordination itself, and so by the Holy Spirit. Yet the actual practice seems to be carried out in the spirit of the Motu Proprio "Pastorale Munus" of 3 December 1963. According to this document the Roman pontiff concedes to the bishops and episcopal conferences the powers and privileges (which they already have through the sacrament). And some of the rights "granted" by the sacrament are as it were, "withdrawn" by virtue of the Roman pontiff's power to do so intuitu boni Ecclesiae. The sacramental is thus restricted in favour of the canonical. Once again it is thought better for safety's sake or for fear of "a certain disorder" for the Roman pontiff to have the privilege over against his brother bishops of "conceding" juridically at his pleasure (in fact restoring to them) that which they certainly need to remain true bishops, but bishops now in complete dependence. Once more, for all the grace of sacramental

episcopacy, the ineradicable ultramontane attitude has meant another fall into the temptation of making the pope "more than a pope" - and the bishops correspondingly less than bishops. (Tillard, op. cit. pp 46, 47)

How does the Code itself measure up to the ecclesiology of Vatican II? Earlier I suggested that it reflects the teaching of Vatican II "substantially", but not as fully as many would wish, cf Thomas Green, The Revised Code of Canon Law: Some Theological Issues, Theological Studies, 47 (1986), pp 640, 641.

Perhaps these deficiencies in the new Code were inevitable in view of the fact that further clarification is still needed on how to conceptualise the concurrence of two jurisdictions in the local churches, - that of the pope and that of the local bishop - both of which are immediate, ordinary and episcopal, and neither of which can be validly used to the detriment of the other.

It can be expected that as the church gradually and increasingly bases its actual practice on the ecclesiology of Vatican II, the Code itself will be brought into line with that practice. Such continuing revision of the 1983 Code is explicitly anticipated in the Preface to the Code itself, and Pope John II in promulgating the Code made it clear that the Code is to be seen as an "effective instrument which the church can use to perfect itself according to the spirit of the Second Vatican Council."

Consistent with this important statement by Pope John Paul II, I wrote, in preparation for the extraordinary synod in 1984, that it was

.....important to ensure that post-conciliar events are measured against the main thrusts of the Council. Popular ultramontan^{ism} can create the impression that official pronouncements, decrees of Roman Congregations, and the new Code of Canon Law may be intended to supersede, or even correct, directions taken by the Council.As an expression of church life and of church authority, the Council stands above all such decrees, interventions, etc. They must be measured by the Council, not vice versa.

This is not a denial of the pope's supreme authority, but a statement of historical fact, attested by the pope himself, that none of the church's post-conciliar decrees, including the Code, have been intended to supersede or correct the Council, but must themselves be

interpreted in the light of the Council. I went on to claim that not all post-conciliar documents interpret the Council with equal accuracy or appropriateness.

The Implications of Subsidiarity and Inculturation

One of the guiding principles in formulating the 1983 Code was, of course, the principle of subsidiarity. As the implementation of the principle gradually becomes a reality, it can be expected that the church will move from the "policy of concessions" of which Tillard speaks to a policy more in line with the ecclesiology of *Lumen Gentium* and *Christus Dominus*.

Subsidiarity is not a mere principle of organisational expediency. It has its roots in the dignity of persons, and as we could expect, it concurs with the ecclesiology of *communio*. However, its implementation involves our not yet fully redeemed human nature. Those who serve as part of the church's centralised bureaucracy need to remember that a church which continually comes into being through the activity of Christ and the Holy Spirit cannot be entirely contained within the status quo of existing regulations. Even pastoral evaluations which are made in the name of the common good must reflect this fact. Similarly, those who represent local churches need, even for the accuracy of their own discernment and the prudence of their judgements, a perspective wider than just the single local churches. Acceptance of wider perspectives and of change and organic growth is a necessary part of accepting the church's own nature as a communion of local churches having its origin in God's involvement in our still unfolding human history.

Subsidiarity means that central authority does not do what can appropriately be done as local level, and that central authority does do what cannot be adequately done by local churches on their own. Failure on either count violates the church's catholicity.

In virtue of this catholicity each part contributes its own gifts to other parts and to the whole church so that the whole and each of the parts are strengthened by the common sharing of all things and by the common effort to attain the fullness of unity..... Holding a rightful place in the communion of the church there are also particular churches that retain their own traditions, without prejudice to the Chair of Peter which presides over the whole assembly of charity, and protects their legitimate variety while at the same time taking care that these differences do not

hinder unity, but rather contribute to it. (LG 13)

For these same reasons, an ecclesiology based on the "mystery" (cf Eph. above) will not fear but will welcome that diversity between the local churches which is rooted in diversity of cultures. The church seems poised for a new era of more authentic catholicity resulting from a more world-wide inculturation. It was suggested some years ago by Karl Rahner that this contemporary development in the church's history is comparable only to that earlier step of inculturation which was the church's breaking out of its narrow Jewish matrix into the world of Rome and Greece, which became the world of Europe. It was a difficult process then, leading to very real tensions in the early christian church. But, together with all its risks, it was recognised as a requirement of the Holy Spirit. Now the church is poised to break out of the limited culture and experience of "Europe" and find new expression in all the other cultures of the world. This will also involve tensions, but is clearly where the spirit is leading "the churches" (cf Rahner, K. Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II, Theological Studies, 1979, p.721).

Now, as then, failure to take this step would constitute unfaithfulness to the church's own mission. Failure to inculturate is failure properly to evangelize, as Pope Paul VI has explained in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. And not to inculturate is not to take seriously the church's nature as a communion of local churches.

The implementation of both subsidiarity and inculturation will intensify the church's catholicity. This enhancement of the life of the local churches is by that very fact an enhancement of the life of the universal church.