

**CONCLUSIONS
OF THE
ASIAN COLLOQUIUM ON MINISTRIES IN THE CHURCH**

Introduction

After two years of preparation the Asian Colloquium on Ministries was finally realized and held in Hong Kong last February 27 to March 6, 1977.

Sponsored by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) and with Bishop Patrick D'Souza as chairman, the Colloquium drew 114 participants from Asia, including some experts and observers from other countries. They were led by the Central Committee of the FABC, which is composed of the Presidents of the member Episcopal Conferences.

By the grace of Our Lord the FABC is proud and grateful to present and publish these Conclusions of the Colloquium.

The committee entrusted by the Plenary Assembly to prepare in final form the Conclusions was faithful to the amendments that were approved and carefully considered the other suggestions given. Hence, our regrets that the publication suffered a delay.

We join the wish of the delegates to the Colloquium that this opus may help the "particular Churches" in Asia, the members especially of FABC, and those in other continents, in their mission of evangelization and human development, as we affirm our loyalty and devotion to the See of Peter and to the universal Church.

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1. It was as long ago as October, 1974, during the days of the Synod of Bishops on the theme of Evangelization, that the initiative was taken by the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) to hold this Asian Colloquium on Ministries in 1977. It was born out of a gradual realization there that the Church must move along these lines, if it is to become more effectively a sacrament of salvation in the times in which we live.

2. More than two years have gone into the preparation of this Asian Colloquium, with background papers by experts in different fields that provided the theological context and the experiential reality of the Church's ministries. We have thus had the opportunity of coming to this meeting well aware of the issues involved and adequately prepared to discuss them in a meaningful way; yet honest enough to recognize our own limitations and our inability to find suitable answers to all the problems facing us.

3. What has encouraged us in our search and helped us to persevere in our endeavours has been the realization that the Holy See, in pursuance of the renewal initiated by the II Vatican Council, has herself taken the first steps in reconstituting the ministries of the Church by suppressing the sub-diaconate and 'minor orders' and instituting the two ministries of lector and acolyte. At the same time she has invited the bishops of the world, through their Episcopal Conferences, to request the Apostolic See to institute new ministries, if the establishment of such offices are thought to be necessary or useful.

4. We think of this our Asian Colloquium on Ministries in the Church as the response of our Episcopal Conferences of South, South East and East Asia to the invitation of the Holy See. With these Conferences we live in fraternal communion, fully aware that each of them will be strengthened and supported by the other members of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences in their common endeavor to make the ministries of our Churches more relevant to our times and better suited to meet the needs of our peoples. We are also aware of the very different situations obtaining in our various countries. In view of this diversity it will be for each Episcopal Conference to take the decisions that will best answer the needs of the particular Churches.

5. These conclusions, addressed as they are to the member Conferences of the FABC, are offered as mere suggestions. Hence, they have no binding force; nor are they meant to be imposed on any member church. It follows too that this Statement of Conclusions is also at the disposal of other Churches, should they find it helpful. The proposals contained in these Conclusions are not meant to be understood as implying any measure of compulsion; they are recommendations made, as such, with a view to providing assistance to those churches that may find them useful.

PART I: BACKGROUND

A. Asian Situation at Present

6. The Asia of today to which the Church has to minister is a continent where more than half of the world's people live. It is a

“continent of the young” where more than half of the people are below twenty-one years of age.

7. It is a curious blend of ancient cultures still visible in many areas and of modernity as seen in bustling metropolises, among the biggest in the world. Immensely diverse in race, color and creed, Asians can, nevertheless, recognize common values and aspirations that enable them to have a common Asian identity. Along these values are close family ties, smooth interpersonal relationships, religiosity, etc. Our common aspirations are the eradication of the glaring economic inequalities that characterize nearly all Asian societies and participation within small person-oriented communities.

8. In the aftermath of independence from colonial powers most Asian countries have yet to find stable political structures suitable to their history and culture — an Asian brand of participative leadership. This effort is made more difficult by economic, military and political power brought to bear on them by others.

9. Asia is the cradle of most of the world’s great religions. At the same time its religiosity is being shaken in the face of stark poverty and shameful inequalities of life styles. Thus, the young and modernizing elite tend increasingly towards agnosticism, secularism and materialism. Others, especially the poor and the oppressed, the studentry and the intellectuals, tend to look to revolutionary ideologies for hope.

10. These, then, are among the challenges to Christians in Asia. In these “signs of the times” may be discerned what the Spirit is saying to the Churches of Asia. It is a momentous hour, a decisive moment of grace (*kairos*), calling Asian Christians to contribute their faith-reflection towards the growth of Asian peoples to fuller personhood and a human community.

11. **The Christian Church in Asia** is extremely small in number, less than 3% of the total population. Nearly half of the Catholics of Asia are found in one country, which itself suffers from a dearth of ordained ministers. This is not to say that this small Christian population of Asia is without a significant influence in Asian society, especially in the field of education, health and social services. Nevertheless, it is largely looked upon as somewhat foreign to the Asian scene in its religious expressions, symbolism and organization.

12. **The situational challenges to the Christian Church in Asia** may be summed up thus:

In religious matters: how to preach the good news of Jesus to our brethren so that the Church may be and appear to be the sacrament of salvation and a community of love.

In relation to the world religions: how to enrich its own Christian identity and life by opening itself to the great religious traditions of Asia in inter-religious dialogue; and together with them, how to practise religion and promote moral and religious values in a way that will contribute to the total human development of our peoples.

In economics: how to contribute to the eradication of stark poverty by an authentic dialogue of life with the poor of Asia without fostering materialism.

In social life: how to preserve the authentic values of personalism and family life in the face of urbanization and technological progress.

In political matters: how to help our people find an Asian style of authentic participative leadership in government at all levels.

In cultural matters: how to find their own national and Asian identity, by blending ancient and modern values and in face of the future ahead.

B. A Vision of Things to Come

13. **The Asian World and the Catholic Church.** Though we are still too close to the events that have brought us where we are, we can already anticipate a basic fact: we are fast approaching one of the most decisive turning points of world history and church history in Asia. Asia, with 60% of the planet's population, will at the turn of the century be the most populous, but probably also the least Christian continent in terms of numbers. If Asian Christianity is not by then the leaven in the dough of the new Asia that is taking shape, it runs the risk of being wiped out in the dramatic events which might take place within the next few decades.

14. This vision leads us to two conclusions:

i) **For the Asian world:** the coming decades will not be a period of idyllic "peace" but of a gigantic crisis. Asia will be in great ferment. If their right to the common heritage of this earth is denied Asians, they may attempt to secure it by force, leading to conflicts of cataclysmic proportions.

ii) **For the Asian Churches:** the decisive new phenomenon for Christianity in Asia will be the emergence of genuine Christian communities in Asia — Asian in their way of thinking, praying, living, communicating their own Christ-experience to others. The consequences will be tremendous not only for the ministries the Asian Churches will have to perform but also for all aspects of their life. We should beware of seeing our future mission in categories that belong to the past, when the West shaped the Churches' history. If the Asian Churches do not discover their own identity, they will have no future.

15. In this perspective, among the various challenges and needs to be met by the Church we could indicate three **priorities**:

16. i) **Evangelization.** The mission of the Church is primarily to lead men to repentance, and to a turning of the heart to Jesus as Lord. The Second Vatican Council, the Synod of Bishops in Rome and the Bishops of Asia have all insisted on evangelization as the highest priority in the mission of the Church.

17. ii) **Serving the Kingdom of God in the Asia of Tomorrow.** Asia will be the testing ground for religions. A big question remains unsolved for us: will religion in Asia remain free for the next twenty-five years? Will hostile powers wipe out religion from many parts of Asia? Will authoritarian and dictatorial regimes clamp down on it with serious restrictions, like the prohibition of mission work or conversion? These are no longer mere fears in more than one country of Asia but sad realities. The trend in most of the Asian countries points in the direction of a serious curtailment of religious freedom. If this is true, can our present approach to and training for ministries really be carried on in forms that will not prepare us for emergency situations which may become the normal case in many an Asian country, even should religious practice theoretically still be free? Have we not to create ministries that take the new situation into consideration and to find ways and means, as the first Christians did, to spread the Good News under trying conditions?

18. iii) **The Social Question.** As a consequence of preaching the Good News and working to spread the Kingdom of God, the social question is the third priority to be met by the Church among its needs and challenges. This will be a matter of life and death for the continent. There is no doubt that Asia will play the final act in the great human drama where man oppressed man and murdered his brother as Cain did to Abel, though both were the children of the same heavenly Father. It would be utterly unchristian if the Christian Churches in Asia would dispense themselves from contributing their best to the solution of the social question. If Christianity finally won the victory over the entire hostile Roman Empire, it was not by proclaiming theories and creating organizations but by the blood of the martyrs. As long as the ministers of the Churches in Asia — whatever ministry they fulfil — are not prepared to be martyrs for justice but are satisfied to live a life outside and above the life of their fellowmen, their impact will be mighty little. The mission of the Church in Asia was never more urgent and decisive than today. All we have to do is to start doing what Jesus did: "to preach the Good News" — not only by words but by deeds, and to do this with all the demands of the Gospel on Asia.

19. The Asian Churches will find themselves in a strange position in the years to come. They will have to wage a two-front

war and will find other religions both as allies and as opponents: as allies in their fight against atheistic and antitheistic humanism; as opponents to Christianity's claim for the uniqueness of Christ and His Church's mission. It would be unrealistic to expect mass conversions in the present situation. And yet the Asian Churches will have an opportunity they never had for the last 1600 years. They have now to resume the dialogue with the world religions that was broken off once Christianity became the majority religion of the Old World. Now that Christianity has again become a minority religion both in the former "Christian countries" and in the world at large, to begin this dialogue anew will be the great call of the Lord to the Churches in Asia. We must now start collecting again the "seminal reasons" (*logoi spermatikoi*) in modern man's old and new religions and integrate them into a new synthesis of the Gospel as it is experienced by today's man. This will lead to a new era of theological reflection, liturgical creativity and new forms of religious life—a new era that will make the Catholic Church for the first time really "catholic" by introducing into its life the riches of all nations, as the riches of some have been introduced into it in the past. No doubt this will not take place without hesitation and danger, insecurity and uncertainty. But this was always the price the Church had to pay in its greatest hours when a new age was being ushered in. It should not deter us in any way from going ahead.

20. **The conclusion** that emerges from this vision and reflection is obvious. Identifying and analyzing the signs of the times is our task, if we want to discover the path the Lord of History wants His Church in Asia to tread. But the correct interpretation of the facts can only be given to us by the Spirit of the Lord and it will be heard only by those who are attuned to His voice. For too long we have been accustomed to plan building up the Kingdom of God in Asia in our own way—and therefore with little success.

C. Theological Perspective

21. Faced as we are with the present situation of the Asian Continent and keeping before our eyes an uncertain and challenging future, we take a fresh look at the mission of the Church in our Asian context. The Spirit of the Lord is present to our Churches, calling them to continue His service to the world. He calls them to become, each in its own context, the embodiment of His own self-emptying and self-giving, that from death new life may arise. The Spirit urges them to renew their self-understanding and to project a new image, to read the signs of the times as signs addressed to them by the Lord Himself, to be discerned through the Spirit as the signs of His own active presence in the world and understood as part of His saving design, operative even today in our midst. In our desire to renew our vision of the Church's mission we turn to Jesus Himself.

22. "God so loved the world . . . that He sent His only Son into the world not to condemn the world but that the world might be saved by Him" (Jn 3, 16-17). To save, to liberate the world was the mission of Jesus, who "came not to be served but to serve and give His life as a ransom for many" (Mk 10, 45), that is, for all men. No one served as He did, Who is the one minister of mankind. Jesus fulfilled His ministry by emptying Himself, taking the form of a servant, becoming obedient unto death on a cross (Phil 2, 7-8). To follow Him means dying to oneself for the sake of the Gospel — a Gospel which announces that the Spirit stirs people to preach the good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives, give sight to the blind and liberate those who are oppressed (Lk 4, 18). Jesus Himself is always with His followers to the close of the ages (Mt 28, 20). Through His followers He continues to make all things new till all men will share in the communion of life which in God Himself exists among Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

23. Established as Lord and Christ when His Father raised Him from the dead (Acts 2, 36), Jesus sent the Holy Spirit on His disciples by Whose power they would become His witnesses (Acts 2, 8). It is this gift of the Holy Spirit that brought the Church into existence — a Church that would endure to the end of time and carry her mission to all the corners of the earth (*Lumen Gentium* 4). The Church, as a pilgrim people, continues the mission of Christ Himself, and so she must conform to the model of humble service set by the Master. For "just as Christ carried on the work of redemption in poverty and persecution, so the Church is called to follow the same route that she might communicate the fruits of salvation to men" (*L.G.* 8). The Church, then, is a communion in the Spirit, a community of sharing and fellowship, of witness and service.

24. Historically conditioned as Jesus of Nazareth Himself was, the Church has to fulfil her mission in each particular situation and culture. This is to say that her mission is bound by the same law of incarnation as is implied in the mystery of Christ Himself, which she signifies. Universal in intent, the Church's mission needs to be actualized by becoming incarnate in particular human situations. This is the mystery of the "local Church"; in Asia this is the mystery of the Asian Churches.

25. Each local Church is determined by her human context and lives in a dialectical relationship with the human society into which she is inserted as the Gospel leaven. Since each local Church should embody into that context the task entrusted to her by the Servant Lord, she has to discover time and again what ministries and what ministerial structures she requires in order to fulfil her mission to offer to a human society the salvation brought about by Jesus Christ and to enable the members of that society to become what God intends

them to be. Each local Church, in order to be viable, needs to become fully responsible and must have the legitimate autonomy which her natural and harmonious growth demands.

26. Asian Churches then must become truly Asian in all things. The principle of indigenization and inculturation is at the very root of their coming into their own. The ministry of Asian Churches, if it is to be authentic, must be relevant to Asian societies. This calls on the part of the Churches, for originality, creativity and inventiveness, for boldness and courage. Our Churches are called upon to take into their hands their own destiny not in an attitude of self-sufficiency and independence but with a deep sense of responsibility for the here and now. In their effort to give an adequate response to their calling they will be strengthened by the power of the Spirit whose promptings they must follow in fidelity and loyalty to their vocation and to the Lord.

27. Since Christ's mission is universal, all local Churches are called to live in communion with each other. This bond of unity, visibly expressed in the college of bishops presided over by the Bishop of Rome, implies that the search of each Church for ministries adapted to her needs is subject to verification and testing by the other Churches. In this bond of union lies the guarantee of the true apostolicity and catholicity of each local Church. The same bond will ensure that she will never depart from the basic ministerial structure given to the Church by her Founder.

28. But, as the life of the apostolic Churches of which the New Testament gives us the authentic record testifies, fidelity to the basic structure imparted to the Church by Jesus Himself does not militate against a variety of organizational structures. The apostolic Churches equipped themselves with various modes of organizational and ministerial structures in response to local needs and situations. This creativity in the Spirit shown by the early Church remains with the Church of all ages and places. It must be emulated today by the Churches of Asia. Our Churches can no longer be satisfied with maintaining imported models inadequate for the fulfilment of their mission. Rather, it is their task to devise new structures ordained to meeting their own situation in Asia today in all its newness.

D. Concept of Church Ministry and Ministries

29. It seems necessary to clarify the theological terms which are being used here with regard to Church ministry and ministries.

i) The Church's universal ministeriality

30. By this term we understand that the Christian mission is incumbent on the entire Christian community of each local or particular

Church in its own situation and human environment. Just as the whole Church is missionary, so is it ministerial in its entirety, for all her members participate in the common mission, though in various ways. All Christians are called to serve as Christ did. The Church is a communion of service in which, even though there are a variety of functions, services and ministries, all persons are equal, co-responsible and interdependent. It is within this context and against this background that the various distinctive ministries of the Church find their *raison d'être* and their specific character.

ii) Charisms — Services — Ministries

31. **Charisms** are enduring gifts of the Spirit given to Church members to be put to use in services and ministries. Endowed with them, different members render different services, thereby contributing, each in his or her own manner, to the Christian mission. All Christians are charismatic by vocation and in virtue of their baptismal consecration but not all are engaged in the ministry of the Church in the same manner and with the same intensity. We term **services** those ways of sharing in the Church's ministeriality which are undertaken spontaneously and on occasions. These are already in their own manner an expression of the Church's service (*diakonia*) and indeed indispensable for the Christian presence in the world.

32. **Ministries** apply more properly to those services which Church members undertake with a certain stability and exercise on a sufficiently broad basis, thus sharing formally in the Church's responsibility to signify the presence to men of Christ's saving action. All such ministries must be recognized by the community and authenticated by it in the person of its leader. Thus, every service and ministry of the Church suppose a charism but not every charism blossoms into a ministry.

iii) Ministries conferred by "installation"

33. The services, based on personal charisms and rendered by lay people with a certain stability and on a sufficiently broad basis, are established today by the Church as ministries. The installation of lay people into those ministries supposes the recognition of their charism and services by the community and its confirmation by its leader.

34. It must be clearly perceived that ministries of lay people are in no way "clerical"; nor are lay people who exercise them set apart from the community. On the contrary, these ministries belong to lay people as lay people and are exercised by them in their own right. Lay ministers are not auxiliaries of priests; their legitimate freedom of action must be ensured while at the same time collaboration with ordained ministers is to be preserved. Nor is the installation of

lay people into ministries to be viewed as an undue institutionalization of services rendered by them. It is not a juridical institutionalization but an official recognition gratefully given by the community to services exercised by its members.

iv) **Ministries conferred by ordination**

35. The apostolic ministry of leadership belongs to the essential structure of the Church. It is now embodied in the college of bishops, into which individual bishops are inscribed by episcopal ordination. From the early tradition the ministry of leadership, whose specific function is to signify in the community the Headship of Jesus Christ over His Church, has taken on two additional forms in the ministries of the presbyterate and the diaconate. Common to the three forms of the ministry conferred by ordination, though differently realized in each, is a charism of unity and spiritual leadership.

v) **Sacramental and non-sacramental ministries**

36. Thus there arises in the Church's structure a distinction between those ministries which from the early tradition were conferred through ordination and a laying on of hands and those into which community members were installed without ordination. They correspond to the ministries which today we call sacramental and non-sacramental respectively. Distinct as they are, the sacramental and non-sacramental ministries are interrelated and interdependent, for all are, even if differently, true expressions of the Church's *diakonia* in the world.

vi) **Office and Authority**

37. **Office** is a defined role of service based on a charism within community with leadership-authority attached to it. *Leadership-authority* in the Church signifies the Headship of Christ in the community of faith. Those offices which represent the Headship of Christ in the community of faith are given by appointment and characterized by ordination.

PART II: CONTEXT OF MINISTRIES

A. The Mystery of the Church Realized at Various Levels

38. The reality of the Church becomes actualized in diverse ways at various levels; this is the mystery of the "local church" in its many forms. Among these, Vatican II has signaled out the "*particular Church*" or *diocesan community* as having special ecclesial significance. This special significance is due to the presence in its midst of the bishop, by whose ministry of unity and presidency the diocesan community is linked in space with all other Churches and in

time with the Church of the apostles. According to Vatican II the constitutive elements of the particular Church of the diocese are a community of believers, the Holy Spirit in whom they are gathered, the Gospel which is preached in their midst, the Eucharist which they celebrate, and the bishop who, as "visible principle and foundation of unity" (L.G. 23), exercises among them his teaching, sacramental and pastoral ministry (*Christus Dominus* 11; L.G. 26). At the source of all these elements is to be found the transforming paschal experience or the saving encounter with the Risen Lord, which makes men believers. Likewise, the whole process of Christian experience of the community creates within it an irresistible urge and dynamism to open itself to society by means of a powerful witness through humble service in love, and to other Churches by means of sharing. This creates the ecclesial bond of fellowship between the Churches.

39. This special ecclesial reality of the "particular Church" or diocesan community notwithstanding, other modes of Christian assembly operating at lower levels have their own significance in the Church's life which must be neither overlooked nor underestimated. The traditional *parish community*, while it needs to be open to the diocese because apostolic communion is fully expressed at that level, nevertheless embodies the mystery of the Church in a genuine sense, inasmuch as it is endowed with the life organs, the priestly ministry included, which the day-to-day life of the community requires. In a true sense, its ecclesial reality is even more basic and fundamental than that of the diocese, for it represents a living organism with proportions more conducive to community living and shared witness.

40. In some areas a form of Christian community living has developed which is termed the "*Basic Christian Community*". It must be said that these small communities operating at a still lower level than the parish, allowing for even deeper human and Christian relationships, are the most fundamental ecclesial realities, provided they too are equipped with proportionate services and ministries, including the priestly ministry. This amounts to saying that, while these communities need to be linked to the ministry of the bishop, they nevertheless embody the mystery of the Church in their own right; they are in a true sense "local Churches". In reality, the closer to life, the more "local" the Church is. Incomplete therefore as Christian communities at the grass-roots level may be, they are nevertheless the most basic reality in the Church's life. In this sense the term "basic communities" by which they are called is not without theological significance.

B. Developing Basic Christian Communities

41. In parts of Asia today the need for forming Basic Christian Communities is becoming more strongly felt. The people are expressing their need for some kind of basic social grouping whose members

can express real interpersonal relationships and feel a sense of communal belonging. Many different forms are evolving leading to a fuller participation in Christian living. These groups are not the only way of participating in the life of the Church; still the Spirit seems to be moving the Church strongly in this direction.

42. These Basic Christian Communities have arisen as a response to different needs and situations, such as:

- i) Existing parish structures sometimes are not conducive to intensive Christian life. They can become inadequate to ministering to the growing needs of people.
- ii) Our people are too many and too spread out for the number of priests available to minister to them.
- iii) The people need a sense of belonging and support, especially in a non-Christian environment.
- iv) People are taking more and more responsibility for their Church and are responding to new ministries to serve their small Christian communities.
- v) There is growing urgency for genuine Christian witness in community among the ideological struggles taking place in Asia.

43. These Basic Christian Communities have been developing in the rural areas among the villages and out-stations. There are also neighbourhood or block groups in the towns and cities, as well as interest groups, professional groups and age groups, in all of which people come together to deepen their faith commitment.

44. A group of people is described as a basic community when the number of members is such that they can really know one another, meet with one another, relate to one another. The members are not too far apart to come together fairly frequently. There is a certain degree of permanence among the members. There is also mutual caring, sharing and support. The community strives for common goals and concerns. There is unity and togetherness.

45. A basic community becomes a Christian community when its inspiration, model and center is Jesus, the Risen Lord. There is openness to the charisms of the Holy Spirit, a praying and worshipping together. The members of the community share the Word of God, integrate it into their daily lives and proclaim it to others. "No Christian community, however, can be built up unless it has its basis and center in the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist" (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* 4). Thus the members of the community must have the Eucharistic celebration as the source of its Christian life. They struggle with their own sinfulness and selfishness and continue

working together, helping one another in building a community of peace, based on justice, freedom, truth and love. For the pilgrim Church that we are community building is a never-ending process.

46. These Basic Christian Communities are raising questions about leadership styles in the Church. Bishops and priests must learn to listen to the voice of their people. The local Christian community leaders have also to develop a style of leadership that fits the culture, attitudes and values of their local situation. We believe that shared participative leadership can be promoted as a style for our Basic Christian Communities where there is consultation, dialogue and sharing. Thus the people will feel responsible for and part of the decision-making process in matters that affect the whole community.

47. Leadership roles in the Christian communities are slowly emerging. Among the important services and functions that are developing are community leader, minister of the Eucharist, prayer leader, catechist, treasurer, social worker, youth leader, educator, facilitator or harmonizer of differences, etc.

48. Basic Christian Communities also have their problems and difficulties. There is the possible danger of their becoming too inward-looking and too exclusive. Hence the need for a continuing reflection process on their lived experience within the larger community. They have to be linked to the local parish, diocese and the Universal Church. Among other dangers there may be within the groups themselves situations of unrest and destruction that prevent the community from growing. There may also sometimes be rivalries and conflicts about leadership.

49. But the basic fact is that today in our Asian context we are in the process of re-discovering that the individual Christian can best survive, grow and develop as a Christian person in the midst of a self-nourishing, self-governing, self-ministering and self-propagating Christian community.

50. Hence we formulate the following recommendations:

- i) There should be an exchange of experiences and developments of Basic Christian Communities among the different countries of Asia.
- ii) We should promote leadership styles that fit the local Asian context, keeping in mind national, regional and even local needs.
- iii) The leaders of the Church at all levels should exercise participative leadership and promote such styles of leadership as a means to further man's dignity and freedom.

- iv) We should study the problem of providing the Eucharistic celebration for our Basic Christian Communities.

PART III: FORMS OF MINISTRY AND TRAINING

51. The Churches of Asia are called not only to emphasize and actualize their ministerial character at all levels of life from the grass-roots to the universal level but also to *articulate* and give *expression* to this mission by creating new forms of ministries, alongside the existing ones. This call is primarily urged by the specific mission they assume in the varying religious, cultural and socio-economic situations of our countries.

52. Fortunately, the response to this call is facilitated by post-Vatican II ecclesiology which promotes a wider and more flexible structure of ministries and the enrolment of lay people as full-fledged members of the ministerial church, contributing their own charisms to its life and growth. Hence, it is the duty of the Churches of Asia to identify their present and future needs and also to recognize and encourage the corresponding charisms with which the Lord never fails to endow His Churches. Such discernment and recognition of charisms in individuals do not dispense the rest of the community from its obligation to be ministerial but rather help articulate and give expression in a concrete manner to possibilities of ecclesial services by lay people. Thus ministries will become nerve centers of life for the ministerial action of the community.

53. The servant Church can never adequately exercise her ministeriality through one uniform type of ministry. Various forms of the one ministry of the Church — the salvific ministry — must come into operation in order that the Church may respond adequately and meaningfully to the various needs of the milieu in which she exists. Just as the nascent Churches of the apostolic age instituted ministries according to the various needs of times and places, the present Churches of Asia are called by the Spirit to institute new ministries adapted to place and time. They are encouraged in this effort by the new awareness they have acquired of the role of the laity and their charisms. The exact form of these ministries will depend to a great extent on the local situations in our countries.

A. Ministries of Lay People

54. Most of the needs for service that emerge in our Asian context could be met effectively by calling on lay people with special charisms to exercise ministries. Those called in this way will, in virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation and for the benefit of the

community, exercise in a public manner some aspects of the Christian's triple function of priest, prophet and pastor.

55. Depending on the types of needs that call for services and the emergence and spontaneity of charisms in the community, various forms of services could be recognized with due stability as ministries for lay people. However, in the recognition of services as ministries there is need for prudence and caution. Not every charism or service needs to be recognized as ministry but only those which the life and growth of the community require to be exercised with stability, continuity and responsibility. Hence the local Churches should not be over-hasty in recognizing new ministries, while at the same time being aware of the urgent call for services in the community and alert to the emergence of charisms and talents among the laity. It is the duty of the Churches, especially of those exercising leadership in them, to be sensitive to the needs of the place and attentive to the emergence of corresponding charisms.

56. The institution of ministries for lay people should not be impeded by the fear of increasing the financial burden of the diocese or the parish. If the need of the community is felt as a just one and the genuineness of the charism is duly discerned, then the means for due maintenance of the minister will be found. The more the community grows in awareness of its felt needs and of the services rendered by lay people exercising a ministry, the greater will be its sense of obligation to support them. The whole Church — bishops, priests and laity — needs to be gradually but unceasingly educated and urged towards this responsibility.

57. Against this background it is obviously not possible to indicate a priori which and how many ministries should be instituted for lay people. This will depend upon place and time. Ministries will emerge gradually according to the needs of a particular community in the very process of its growth. Nevertheless, by way of example, we mention the following:

58. i) **Evangelist:** In a non-Christian context this ministry assumes a special importance. It could be entrusted to those who have the ability and dedication to share the joy of the Good News with their non-Christian brothers and sisters.

59. ii) **Catechist/Preacher/Religion Teacher**

This ministry already exists in many parts of Asia under different names. It is necessary for educating the Christian communities in faith. There could be specialists for different groups of people, as children, youths, adults, workers in urban areas, etc.

60. iii) **Ministry for Liturgy and Liturgical Animation/Prayer Leaders/Acolyte/Lector/Cantor**

These will mainly focus on the services rendered around the Table of the Word and the Table of the Bread.

61. iv) Ministry of Family Apostolate

This ministry is geared to the fundamental call of both the human and the Christian community. The service of the Church is needed to help build this unit into one of love and communion, able to provide in the most favorable manner for the needs of growing children. The minister will also guide people to solve modern problems of family planning and population.

62. v) Ministry of Healing/Health Services/Health Education/Counselling

Persons selflessly dedicating themselves to serve the sick, the invalid and the aged in the community by their visits, qualified advice, counselling, or physical help. We think here of Catholic doctors, nurses, attendants and counsellors for various types of needs caused by the pressures of modern living.

63. vi) Ministry of Inter-religious Dialogue

Persons knowledgeable in the tradition of other religious communities and in contact with their concrete religious life could be given a special ministry of inter-religious dialogue. They would promote mutual understanding and appreciation between the living faiths of the world and, together with the members of those other religious traditions, foster concerns for men and society as these spring from a faith commitment.

64. vii) Ministry of Social Concern/Social Leaders/Community Service Peace Officers/Peacemakers

Persons who can help the community to be aware of its social and civil duties and needs and organize their resources to overcome the evils of societal and civil life. Those who have the ability to focus the attention of the community on social injustices or needs of the community and harness the forces within the community in the light of human and Christian principles, in order to lift up the poor and unfortunate, to help drug addicts, prostitutes, unmarried mothers, etc.

65. viii) Ministry for Youth/University Students/High School Students/Campus Leaders

Able young people with a charisma for leadership among youth, sensitiveness to youth problems and anxieties could be trained to infuse human and Christian principles and ideals into these areas of concern, open youth centers, plan realistically for youth, provide recreational facilities for youth, take care of delinquents, etc.

66. ix) Ministry to Workers/Farmers/Other Occupations

The specific character of the problems related to work and workers, their inhuman conditions of work, their unjust wages and sufferings, their oppression by unjust means — all these in our countries call for good Church leaders among the workers themselves. They could be trained to tackle labor problems and conditions.

67. x) Ministry for Education, Formal and Non-Formal/Adult Education/Social Education/Literacy

Especially in rural areas and small communities where there is a lack of means and concern for education and thereby the growth of advancement of the community is impeded, there is urgent need for education regarding basic needs to better life and human conditions.

68. xi) Community Builders/Community Leaders/Presidents of Rural Communities / Basic Community Leaders / Organizers / Rural Leaders/Rural Development Workers

Many of our Asian countries are dotted with smaller communities which are isolated or surrounded by a non-Christian majority. These urgently need the services of at least one leader for the purposes of feeding them with the Word of God, enlightening them with the fundamentals of human living, organizing them into society life, building them into a community, etc. The community has a right to at least one minister for its minimal existence and initial growth.

69. xii) Ministry of Communication/Mass Media/Group Media

The importance and impact of the communications media — T.V., cinema, radio, press — urge us to have specially qualified people to educate groups and communities to make better use of these media, to influence these media with human and Christian principles and to fight against the possible evils inherent in them.

70. xiii) Ministry of Pastoral Community Leadership

Persons recognized to collaborate with the parish priest in his pastoral care for the community by assisting him in his traditional functions in the community — by visiting families, the sick, and by organizing community activities.

B. Formation for Ministries of Lay People

71. Since they are a concrete expression of the common ministeriality of the community, ministries of lay people have the community itself as the matrix of their formation. The awareness which a community will have acquired of its ministerial role will ensure the necessary conditions for the formation of its ministers.

72. The very character of the person (his charisma, talents and maturity) and the situational needs of the place or region will determine largely the *type of formation*. In training lay people for ministries, if we are not to fall into past errors in this area of formation, the following tendencies should be noted:

73. i) Because of the specific character of the layman a clerical (or celibate) formation that ignores the demands and responsibilities of a lay situation (family and profession) and alienates him from his context of life should be avoided.

74. ii) Since a lay minister is found already possessing a charisma for a specific function in a particular community or situation, a uniform or streamlined training may not produce the desired results. Such a training may be an obstacle preventing the operation of the charisma.

75. iii) The lay minister remains a member of the Christian community. Neither his specific gift for service nor its ecclesial recognition raises him above the other members. Hence, he should be trained to live *with* and *among* others as a true brother. He has no power to lord it over others but only to render a service as an expression of his charisma.

76. iv) He is a man *for* the community. The charisma that is in him obliges him to make the best use of it, not for himself but for the good of the community. Hence, formation is intended to bring into focus his specific gift and to make him discover ways and means of using it so as to respond to the needs of his community.

77. The **formation program** should be clearly Christ-centered, enabling the candidate to develop a deep personal relationship with Christ which will lead him to an ever-growing commitment to Him through study, personal prayer and contemplation. This Christ-centeredness will give him a Christian vision of life and the ability to live Christian values. This will equip the lay minister to practise a true Christian discernment in the situations in which he or she may find himself or herself.

78. The planning and structuring of the formation program should be based on a study, analysis and understanding of the concrete situation, prevailing conditions and actual needs of the community which the lay minister is called to serve. This involves an awareness and evaluation of the existing social, economic, political, cultural and religious situation of the local community.

79. The **method of formation** should be experiential and concrete rather than only abstract and theoretical. It should consist in a continual movement from actual experience or action to a communitarian reflection and evaluation, and then move on to new action.

80. The actual formation will be continuous, consisting of three stages:

81. **1st stage: Helping to emerge.** The future lay minister will be helped to emerge within the community. Opportunities of general apostolate will be provided to identify the persons with charisms, to know their situation and their relation to the community. These are basic to the next stage of formation.

82. **2nd stage:** The person selected to be a lay minister could ideally undergo training at two levels, basic and specific:

83. i) **Basic Training** geared to:

- realizing one's vocation as lay minister and one's consequent relation to the community, to other ministers and to one's bishop.
- improving one's human qualities of leadership, communication, human relations, team and group work, etc.
- acquiring basic knowledge regarding the language, culture, religions and history of the people and region.
- helping towards a better understanding of the Word of God, the Church, Sacraments and Liturgy.

84. ii) **Specific Training**

This is closely related to (a) the charism already discerned in the person and (b) the felt needs of the community.

For this training the person could be enrolled in an institution for a brief period of intense preparation or attend lectures conveniently scheduled to suit the laity. The prospective lay minister must learn the fundamental elements of his specific field of service and the techniques of operating within it. For example, the catechist lay minister will become familiar with the Word of God in its kerygmatic presentation and should acquire techniques of preaching to groups, youths, adults, etc. The lay minister of social concern will learn fundamental principles of social justice, how to conscientize the community to a social awareness of injustices, how to mobilize them for action against social evils, etc.

85. In organizing both the basic and the specific training resources of personnel and institutions of various dioceses could be pooled together.

86. **3rd stage: Continuing or In-Service Formation**

This is an absolute requirement for the lay minister. Given the

fact that the service performed by the minister is largely motivated, specified or determined and then evaluated by his or her situation, some form of assistance should be provided at the regional level to revise, evaluate and vitalize his or her services by means of conferences, discussions and reflections. Periodic renewal is also required for the continuing spiritual growth of the person of the minister.

87. **Inter-relationship with the Community.** The minister's family as a whole should be involved to some extent as a supporting group in the ongoing formation of the minister. Properly oriented to the ministry, the family should also provide a climate conducive to fostering priestly and religious vocations among some of its members.

88. Given the newness of the forms of ministries for lay people and the need for their growth and development, ministers should constantly keep in mind the great importance of an ongoing dialogue, consultation and interaction with their community. Only if this is done, will the community itself come to realize that those ministries are gifts of God to the community itself and that the lay ministers are one with it, enjoying among brothers and sisters both rights and duties. Only then will the community readily accept the services of its ministers as done in the name of the Church and develop as well a sense of its being responsible for maintaining them to the best of its ability.

C. Women in Ministry

89. In Asia today the growing awareness of the basic equality of women and men, together with the realization of their complementary roles and functions both in society and in the Church, is a sign of the times. The Asian context demands special attention be given to women in ministry. This must be based on the recognition of their fundamental equality in the Church's universal ministeriality.

90. The aptitudes and charisms of woman enable her to participate in areas of ministry especially suited to her. Her special capacities to love and give life make her receptive, sensitive and reflective, thus equipping her for a more person-oriented ministry.

91. Because of the important role the Asian woman plays in the family, her participation is of very great importance in the Asian context. In certain cultural settings only women can reach out to other women and exercise a meaningful ministry among them. The Church should consider very seriously ministry to women by women. It is woman who can most influence members of the family. She plays a singular role in the formation of values and attitudes and in the up-bringing of the family. Hence her importance in the transmission of faith, in building Christian families, in family planning, in the preparation and enrichment of marriage. In short, our Asian reality demands the presence and activity of women in all spheres.

92. Their sharing in the decision-making processes of the Church will bring a new dimension to the life of the Church. Their participation in theological reflection will enrich the understanding of the Christian mysteries in relation to human situations.

93. In the light of the above, the missionary situation of the Church in Asia makes imperative the inclusion of women in the ministry. Hence, taking into account their special charisms, women must be recognized as full partners and their sharing in the ministry accepted as their duty and right.

D. The Ministry of Deacons

94. Vatican II has restored the diaconate, once seen only as a transitory ministry which had become almost exclusively a stepping stone to the presbyterate and now is understood to be a permanent ministry exercised in its own right. The Apostolic Letter *Ad Pascendum* of Pope Paul VI has provided norms for the implementation of the reform. The response to this conciliar reform has differed in various parts of the world. In Asia some Episcopal Conferences have in principle made the reform their own in accordance with the conciliar document (*L.G.* 29), leaving the implementation to individual bishops. Other Episcopal Conferences have thought it expedient to postpone introducing the reform until such time as the experience of other Churches with the permanent diaconate would have proved positive. The ensuing situation is that, apart from a few isolated attempts which must be placed on record with appreciation, the restoration of the permanent diaconate has not yet become a reality in the Asian Churches.

95. The difficulties raised against the restoration of the ministry of deacons are partly theological, partly of a practical nature. It is often argued that deacons are not necessary because lay people can without ordination do all that belongs to this ministry, including preaching the Word, assisting at the Liturgy and performing various services of charity. Nor are they really useful, for deacons cannot in any way substitute for priests in the presidency of the Eucharist and the sacrament of reconciliation. Hence the ordination of deacons appears as unwarranted "clergification" of services rendered by lay people. The answer to these difficulties must be sought along the following lines: people exercising de facto the ministry of deacon should be recognized as such by the community and given the sacramental grace conferred by ordination, which the Church attaches to their specific service. The practical difficulty is the financial burden which would be imposed on dioceses if to the ranks of the clergy were added permanent deacons for whose remuneration adequate provision would have to be made. This difficulty, however, can be

overcome by fostering in Christian communities a sense of responsibility for the maintenance of ministers who serve them.

96. Another important reason for the lack of enthusiasm with which the restoration of the diaconate has met seems to be that the significance of the ministry of deacons in the life of the Church, and more particularly its relevance to the Asian context, have not been sufficiently perceived. Hence the need to rethink the meaning of the diaconate in the context of our Churches.

97. It is the commitment of the Church to the service not only of fellow Christians but also of fellow men at large that is embodied in a particular manner in the office of deacon. The early tradition found a model for it in the "service of the tables" mentioned in Acts 6, 3. In keeping with this basic intuition of early tradition the specific significance of the ministry of deacon seems to be in the Church's service to society. It does not merely consist in a human commitment to social uplift and liberation; rather it is the embodiment today of Jesus' own service to make men and human society whole. The deacon's office both pledges and embodies the Church's own commitment to the urgent task of building up a new society. This ministry of service is symbolized in the deacon's special role in the liturgical life of the Church, especially in the celebration of the Eucharist, but the significance of his ministry lies primarily not in the liturgical and sacramental realm but in the sphere of Christian service to society.

98. If this is a role of the diaconate in the ministry of the Church, its relevance to the Churches of Asia should become apparent. Those Churches, though placed in very diverse situations, must all convey the Christian message to human communities in the process of self-realization and development, in keeping with the demands of a truly human quality of life. In this context it seems to become imperative for the Christian mission to engage in a particular manner in the ministry of service, responding to basic human calls, such as that of social justice. The ministry of deacon, then, is perhaps an important organ for the fulfilment of the mission of the Churches in our Asian countries.

99. We envisage two types of deacons, depending on the needs of local communities:

- i) Deacons as ministers of unity and spiritual leadership of the Church in her social concern. Those who are involved, on a sufficiently stable basis, competently and responsibly, in the leadership of the social services of the Church could be ordained deacons and made responsible in the field of Christian social concern.
- ii) Deacons as leaders of basic communities. Though they cannot substitute for priests, they can exercise in those com-

munities the spiritual leadership corresponding to their ministry.

100. When we speak of deacons we have in mind men, married or unmarried, who may be full-time or part-time workers, depending on the needs and circumstances of particular Christian communities.

101. The relationship of deacons to presbyters and bishops needs to be clearly perceived; the early tradition established a close bond between the exercise of the ministry of deacon and that of bishop. This bond, however, is not exclusive, for the deacon may in many instances have to exercise his ministry in close relation to the presbyter. What matters here is that, while deacon and presbyter operate with the legitimate autonomy required for the exercise of their ministries, communion and co-operation be maintained between all ordained ministers — a communion which it is the bishop's task to preserve and foster.

102. **Formation.** Since the ministry of deacon embodies in a special and unique manner the Church's mission of service to the world, the formation of future permanent deacons should be geared to the goal of preparing them for this involvement in service. Candidates for this ministry should be selected from among persons already providing Christian witness through the exercise of leading functions in spheres of service. The training for this ministry will have to be adapted to the state of life and conditions of work of the candidates. In particular, it will be of great importance not to segregate them, by prolonged periods of absence, from the very communities in which they already exercise their service. Consequently, their training in professional skills, human relationships and doctrinal matters will have to be largely of the nature of in-service training, eventually supplemented by periods of limited duration in special pastoral centers.

E. The Ministry of Presbyters

103. The specific function of the presbyter in the Christian community is that of unifying spiritual leadership. This is how the presbyter signifies and represents in a special manner the Headship of Jesus Christ over his Church, sharing thereby in the ministry of the bishop. This function of the presbyter expresses itself in his proclamation of the Word, his presidency at the liturgical celebrations, especially the Eucharist, and in his pastoral care and concern. In these various tasks he is at the service of the community, building it up into a Christian fellowship and providing it with spiritual guidance as he participates in the bishop's commitment to his flock.

104. The role of the presbyter is to inspire, to encourage, to foster initiatives, and to help charisms to develop. After the pattern of Christ the Good Shepherd, Whose saving action he makes present

to his flock, the presbyter is sensitive to its diverse needs, especially those of the underprivileged and the poor. He is quick to come to their assistance and to be present to them in moments of crisis, not content with showing solicitude but being deeply involved in their life and sharing their lot. His one concern is to form his community into a living sign of the presence in the world of the Risen Lord Who assumes and heals all human situations and brings to fulfilment all hopes and aspirations. The prophetic role of the presbyter, then, consists in building up a committed Christian fellowship as a prophetic sign of the future kingdom already operative in the world.

105. Since this is the role of the presbyter, it becomes evident that no Christian community can live its normal life without the presbyteral ministry being exercised in its midst on a permanent and residential basis. The life of the Christian community must find its climactic expression in the celebration of the Eucharist. We are, therefore, faced with the realization that in the present pastoral situation or due to prevailing circumstances innumerable Christian communities in Asia are in the absence of a local presbyter deprived of their legitimate right and prevented from attaining their natural growth. This realization urges us to suggest that serious consideration be given to the possibility of acknowledged leaders emerging from basic communities of various types being made eligible for ordination to the presbyterate. These leaders will normally be people exercising a secular profession. If and when they are ordained, they would, therefore, exercise their priestly ministry on a part-time basis.

106. Apart from this specific need of providing presbyters for communities where there are no presbyters, the need is also felt for a diversification in the exercise of the presbyteral ministry. This is largely due to a sociological phenomenon which is rapidly growing, namely that of homogeneous groups based on various human factors and cutting across existing pastoral units now determined by geographical boundaries. Presbyters specialized in ministering to such homogeneous groups will be needed to help them form communities in which they will develop a true sense of Christian belonging, while integrating themselves into the larger communities of which they form a part. This way of operating will greatly enrich the potential of the pastoral clergy of the area, thereby contributing to the revitalisation of the larger communities themselves.

107. **Formation.** To cope with the specific needs arising from the diverse modalities in which the presbyteral ministry needs to be exercised it is clear that a corresponding diversification is required in the training of candidates.

108. With regard to the formation of prospective presbyters emerging from basic communities it is essential that entirely new

forms be sought and means be devised to give such men an in-service training in the Faith, Christian living and pastoral guidance without their having to break contact with their people. This in-service training should be complemented by sessions of study at special pastoral centers.

109. With regard to the formation of presbyters in general it will entail serious renewal in the light of the needs and stresses of today's communities. The pastoral ministry must more and more be viewed on a 'professional' basis. Preaching the Word of God, presiding at the liturgy and furnishing pastoral guidance require new skills on the part of presbyters. They should, therefore, learn the techniques of effective communication and inspiring celebration and also the art of promoting truly human relationships. More important still is that they be deeply identified with their people, sharing their joys and sorrows, their anxieties and aspirations. Added to these skills is the need for candidates for the presbyteral ministry to be adequately trained for the exercise of their future coordinating role as pastors in team ministries.

F. The Ministry of Bishops

110. The mystery of the Church becomes fully incarnate in a human situation by the presence and exercise in a local community of the ministry of the bishop. The bishop, as a member of the episcopal college, is the rallying point by which the community is constituted a "particular Church" and the visible sign of communion of that church with all the other particular churches — a communion presided over by the successor of Peter. The specific charism of unity and spiritual leadership finds its full expression in the local Church in the ministry of the bishop. This is how the bishop signifies and represents in a special manner the Headship of Christ over His Church.

111. The image of the bishop, therefore, is after the model of Jesus Himself, that of the Shepherd of His flock, Who did not come "to be served but to serve" (Mk 10, 45). He exercises His ministry "not as domineering over . . . the flock" (1 Pet 5, 3) but in the spirit of the "suffering servant of Yahweh" (Is 52, 53), offering His life for His sheep. His concern is eminently pastoral rather than of an administrative nature; and so His priority of interests is vested in persons.

112. The bishop's function in particular requires him to foster, sustain, and encourage the pastoral initiatives manifested by the members of his ecclesial community. He will consider it his main task to discern the voice of the Spirit speaking through his people, to listen to His promptings even as he helps them to interpret His voice and leads them to respond to His call.

113. On the part of the bishop this task calls for a deep sense of responsibility in the discharge of his function. It also requires a freedom of action, unhindered by the pressures of organizational structures. Moreover, there are times when the bishop will be called upon to proclaim boldly the gospel message in the face of adverse circumstances, exercising the prophetic function of his ministry in the context of concrete challenges. All this indicates that a deep renewal of the episcopal ministry is called for, if the bishop is to be the effective sign of unity in the ecclesial community and the guiding spirit of the Christian mission in the world.

PART IV: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LIFE AND STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH

114. The development of varied forms of ministries heralds a new era in the life of the Church in Asia. More people will be reached. Their needs will be better met. More communities will be served. Their support and continued growth will be facilitated. Christians being served, as well as those Christians rendering services, will deepen their realization and their appreciation of *being Church*.

The world at large will see the Church more clearly as the *Servant Church*, a true, living, vibrant witness to Christ. The world will hear more distinctly the Good News, Christ's message of salvation. Christ's presence in the midst of Asia's teeming millions will be felt more strongly.

115. This hoped-for era brought on by the development of varied forms of ministries, as in all periods of growth and change, demands of the People of God an openness to new horizons, a flexibility to adapt new structures, a creativity to explore new avenues. It challenges every Christian, be he or she bishop, priest, religious sister or brother, lay woman or man, to look more closely and reflect more deeply on his or her personal identity, present role, status and function, relationship with the people he or she serves, indeed his or her very being a Christian.

116. This era likewise challenges all groups of Christians to examine the very nature of their communities, to ask whether or not they are true Christian communities shaped in the pattern given in the Acts of the Apostles. It motivates them to work intensively at imitating that pattern more and more. In particular, it challenges the women of Asia to come forward and take their rightful place of service in the community. It challenges the local Churches to be more deeply sensitive to the needs of their people and to be more acutely aware of their social, economic, political and cultural context. It

challenges the whole People of God to be more fully involved, more participative, more outward looking, more responsive and more self-giving, thereby bringing about a style of leadership that underscores genuine coresponsibility.

117. All this poses basic questions. What will be the impact of the new ministries, and of the new focus of priestly ministry, on the Church of today? What are the implications of these winds of change for the existing ministries? Will the new vision of the Church, called for by Vatican II and spelt out here in some of its many implications, find the community of God's people prepared for this crossing over from the status quo of yesterday to the concretization of new ideals for tomorrow?

118. This new face of the local Church will become more and more explicit in the measure in which each local community of God's people discovers itself more deeply, united in prayer in the Risen Lord and giving concrete expression to His new commandment of love in its day-to-day living. In order to become a reality this new vision of the Church needs to pervade all relationships and attitudes of clergy and people, thus becoming incarnate in a spirit of coresponsibility, of mutual esteem and trust, based on the common commitment of all to the mission of the Lord.

119. The emergence of ministries by which lay people take up responsible functions in the Church may precipitate a new crisis of identity for those priests who as of now are engaged primarily in works which do not strictly pertain to their presbyteral ministry. On the other hand, it may also lead them to re-discover the 'heart of the priesthood', which is one of unifying spiritual leadership.

120. The permanent deacon will not undermine the authority of the priest, if both remember that their ministries are complementary services to the community. A supportive attitude from both priest and people will help the deacons who will have to assume the task of being in a special manner "the sacrament of ecclesial commitment to social uplift" — a task which finds its apt liturgical expression in the Eucharistic celebration when the deacon brings the gifts of the community to the altar. The same supportive attitude will be needed in the case of deacons assuming in basic communities the spiritual leadership corresponding to their ministry. It is only with proper planning and preparation of all concerned that the ministry of deacons will be smoothly and effectively reintroduced, to take again its rightful place in the ecclesial context.

121. The ministries of lay women will give fuller expression to the partnership of the sexes in the manifestation of God's love to the world and lead to a fuller representation of the community in the

mission of the Church, both within and beyond the Christian fellowship. In the Asian context in particular, women in ministries will bring the presence of the Church more directly into the lives and homes of Asia, hitherto only insufficiently reached because of social differences and the particular patterns of many of our Asian societies.

122. Even independently of the introduction of new ministries but much more so when these come into operation, there is urgent need for all ministries to be exercised in a team as a sign of co-responsibility and cooperation. *Team ministry* will not become effective unless both clergy and laity have radically changed their attitudes.

123. This concept of team ministry, with the presbyter as the center of unity, bringing coordination and exercising spiritual leadership, calls for far-reaching changes and adaptations in the preparation imparted to future presbyters in the seminaries of tomorrow. Not only will our seminarians need to receive adequate academic formation but also the inclusion of new disciplines will have to be considered for urgent implementation. The priest of the future will have to deal more closely with people. He will be called upon to work shoulder-to-shoulder with the lay ministers on his team. This necessitates an updating of the formation he receives in the seminary. Human relations and inter-personal relationships, so necessary for his work, will occupy a larger part of his formation program which must be adapted to the needs of the pastoral setup of the future.

124. Within this program, in fact, provision will have to be made for the seminarian to experience the kind of coordinating ministry he will have to exercise later. This cannot be achieved merely by the addition of academic subjects in the seminary curriculum. Rather it calls for an experiential acquaintance with the kind of work he will have to engage in later and with the interpersonal relationships it involves.

125. Hitherto the seminarian has been exposed to reality during the period sometimes known as "regency", when he was given an interval in his academic formation to be involved directly in pastoral work for the duration of a year or two. The seminarian of the future will need a much greater and more frequent exposure to such reality. Through the main part of his formation he will have to be in contact with real-life situations and called upon to work with people. Only thus will he be adequately prepared for team ministry.

126. Moreover, the addition of qualified and carefully selected lay members to the seminary staff cannot but bring an enrichment to the seminarian's formation.

127. What is true of the change in seminary formation applies as well to renewal programs destined for all priests. Inservice training

for the priests of today will become an essential requirement in view of the changeover to forms of team ministry. A thorough updating of our priests along the lines of the new disciplines to be introduced in seminaries; refresher courses and exposure to the experience of working in teams, as these are provided today by guided pastoral work in formation institutes for new priests; systematic courses with well-oriented inculturation programs — all these will in the future have to become part of the regular ingredients of continuing education and refresher courses for priests.

128. To ensure careful and appropriate formation geared to the changing demands of the ministry, every experimentation will have to be followed up by a full and frank assessment of the attempts made. A continuous revision of training programs will be required.

129. These adjustments and changes do not in any way imply destroying the forms we have grown accustomed to; they arise from an exercise of greater participation in the life of the Church and from our willingness to go where the Spirit is leading us, in an attitude of openness and humble expectancy.

130. We can envisage that the eventual implementation of those changes will have to take place at the local level through a phased program of preparation and action. Choices will have to be made regarding the ministries which best answer the needs of various regions, dioceses and communities. These choices will require a process of discernment on the part of our Christian communities, together with their leaders. As we submit our findings to the whole Church for consideration, we wish to express again our firm conviction that the Church will continue to grow into her true self only if the love and service of Christ become more evident to all men. This conviction has given us a sense of urgency with regard to the Church's ministry and ministries and we hope that this will spread and develop as we come to a better understanding of the meaning of the Church and her mission today.

CONCLUSION

131. Thus, gathered together here in Hong Kong in a spirit of fellowship, mutual concern and prayerful reflection, we have examined this most important aspect of the Church's life, her ministry and ministries, in all its manifold facets, against the background of the Asian scene. Even as we proceeded to do this, we have been aware of the needs of the hour and of our mission to make the Church of Christ present to the teeming millions of our Asian countries, faced as they are with the many problems and stresses of life today.

132. We are aware of the implications and consequences that new ministries are bound to have for the whole life of the Church.

We are also conscious that further research and study are required in order that our renewal may respond to the needs of our Asian countries in these difficult times. We are equally conscious of the need for wider consultation and for the education of the entire Christian community, if we are to make Christ present effectively in the world today. In this regard we recommend that similar colloquia be conducted in each of our Asian countries, especially where this has not been done so far. A suitable follow-up on previous meetings is equally important.

133. In a spirit of humble service we wish to offer our Conclusions to the member Episcopal Conferences of our Asian Federation. As we present these to them, we are painfully aware of the absence of our brother bishops and the members of their teams from those countries where trying circumstances prevent them from being represented here: Burma, the People's Republic of China, the Khmer Republic, Laos and Vietnam. We wish to assure their Churches that we are united with them in prayer and in that closely-knit fellowship of the Mystical Body of Christ which we have so tangibly experienced in this gathering of love over the past few days. To those Churches too, in a very special manner, we lovingly offer as a service the fruits of our life together and of our common reflection here in Hong Kong.

134. As we present these Conclusions as well to our sister Churches around the world, we count on their support and understanding, even as they in their own particular manner and against the background of the needs of their peoples are engaged in their own prayerful reflection on the same issues, so vitally important for all the Churches if they are to meet the needs of our times. In a spirit of loyalty and fellowship we also look in the task before us for understanding and continued guidance on the part of the Holy See, mindful always of the bond of unity that binds us to the Successor of Peter.

135. We pray that the spirit of service which has inspired us to look for new opportunities to make the Risen Lord's presence more and more manifest among our brothers and sisters in Asia today may continue to inspire our efforts hereafter. May the Lord help us to be ever faithful to our mission in the world, truly open to the presence of His Spirit in our lives, eager to extend to all men His own ministry — He who taught us by His example of service.

136. Aware as we are of the difficulties that surround our undertakings, we put our trust in the assistance of the Lord, hoping to answer His calling, our eyes lighted with courage as we rely on the strength that comes only from Him. In Him do we place our hope, in Him do we seek our assurance through the difficulties that will beset our path. For we know that our work, as our message, is not ours but His, and we trust in His Word as even today He tells us, "I am with you always".

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