

**SACRED CONGREGATION FOR RELIGIOUS AND FOR  
SECULAR INSTITUTES**

**SACRED CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS**

***DIRECTIVES FOR THE MUTUAL  
RELATIONS BETWEEN  
BISHOPS AND RELIGIOUS  
IN THE CHURCH***

**INTRODUCTION**

I. *Mutual relations* among the various members of the People of God have attracted particular attention today. In fact, the conciliar doctrine on the mystery of the Church and continuing cultural changes have brought present conditions to such a point of development that completely new problems have arisen. A good number of these, though delicate and complex, are without doubt positive. It is precisely within the context of these problems that the mutual relations between bishops and religious, which cause special concern, are situated. One cannot but be impressed if one considers the fact -- the importance of which deserves to be studied more deeply -- there are over one million women religious in the world -- one sister, that is, for every 250 Catholic women -- and that there are about 270,000 men religious, of whom the priests make up 35.6% of all the priests in the Church. In some areas they account for more than half of the total as, for example, in Africa and in some parts of Latin America.

II. The Sacred Congregation for Bishops and the Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes held a mixed Plenary Assembly (October 16-18, 1975) on the tenth anniversary of the promulgation of the Decrees *Christus Dominus* and *Perfectae Caritatis* (October 28, 1965). The National Conferences of Bishops and of Religious, as also the International Unions of Superiors General, Men and Women, were consulted and collaborated. The following questions, principally, were dealt with by the Plenary Assembly:

a) what bishops expect from religious;

b) what religious expect from bishops;

c) what means are to be used to arrive at orderly and fruitful cooperation between bishops and religious, both on diocesan and on national and international levels.

Subsequently, when the general criteria were established and various additions were made in the text of the proposals presented to the Fathers, the Plenary Assembly decided that a document giving pastoral guidelines

should be drawn up.

The contributions of the Sacred Congregations for Oriental Churches and for the Evangelization of Peoples are also contained in this document.

III. The matter treated is circumscribed by well defined limits. It deals with the relations between bishops and religious of all rites and territories throughout the Church and aims at making a practical contribution to the smooth functioning of the same. The direct subject of discussion are the relations which should exist between the local Ordinary, on the one hand, and Religious Institutes and Societies of Common Life on the other. Secular Institutes are not dealt with directly, except where general principles of the consecrated life (cf. *PC* 4) and the place of these Institutes within the particular Church (cf. *CD* 33) are involved.

The text is divided into two parts: one *doctrinal*, the other *normative*. The intention is to give some guidelines for an ever better and more efficient application of the principles of renewal set forth by the Second Ecumenical Vatican Council.

## **PART ONE**

### **SOME DOCTRINAL POINTS**

Before giving pastoral norms for some of the problems which have arisen in the relations between bishops and religious, it seems advisable that a brief doctrinal synthesis be presented to make it possible to recognize the principles on which these relationships are based. Moreover, the exposition of such principles, though concise, presupposes an ample doctrinal development of the Council documents.

## **CHAPTER I**

### **THE CHURCH AS A "NEW" PEOPLE**

*Not according to the flesh, but in the Spirit* (LG 9)

1. The Council has emphasized the singular constitutive nature of the Church, presenting her as *Mystery* (cf. *LG* ch. 1). Indeed, from Pentecost on (cf. *LG* 4), there exists in the world a *new* People, which, vivified by the Holy Spirit, assembles in Christ in order to have access to the Father (cf. *Eph* 2:18). The members of this People are gathered from all nations and are merged into such an intimate unity (cf. *LG* 9) that its reality cannot be explained by recourse to any mere sociological formula; for real *newness*, transcending the human order, is inherent in it. Only in this transcendent perspective can we rightly interpret the relationships among various members of the Church. The element on which the uniqueness of this nature is based is the very presence of the Holy Spirit. He, in fact, is the life and vitality of the People of God and the principle of unity in its communion. He is the vigor of its mission, the source of its multiple gifts, the bond of its marvelous unity, the light and beauty of its creative power,

the flame of its love (cf. *LG* 4; 7; 8; 9; 12; 18; 21).

In fact, the spiritual and pastoral awakening apparent in these recent years reveals, by virtue of the presence of the Holy Spirit -- on which some insidious abuses, though disquieting, give no evidence of having cast the slightest shadow -- a special privileged moment (cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 75) for a flourishing spousal newness of the Church as she tends towards the day of her Lord (cf. *Rev* 22:17).

**"One body and, as parts of it, we belong to each other"**  
(*Rm* 12:5; cf. *1 Cor* 12:13)

2. In the mystery of the Church, unity in Christ involves a mutual communion of life among her members. God, in fact, "willed to make men holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link between them, but rather to make them into a people" (*LG* 9). The very life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit (cf. *LG* 7) builds up organic cohesion in Christ: indeed, He unifies the Church "in communion and in the works of ministry, He bestows upon her varied hierarchic and charismatic gifts, and in this way directs her; and He adorns her with His fruits" (*LG* 4; cf. *Eph* 4:11-12; *1 Cor* 12:4; *Gal* 5:22).

The elements, then, which differentiate the various members among themselves, the gifts, that is, the offices and the various duties, constitute substantially a kind of mutual complement and are actually ordered to the one communion and mission of the self-same *Body* (cf. *LG* 7; *AA* 3). Consequently, the fact that in the Church there are pastors, laymen or religious does not indicate inequality in regard to the common dignity of the members; rather it expresses the articulation of the joints and the functions of a living organism.

***Called together to make up a "visible Sacrament"***

3. The *newness* of the People of God in its two-fold aspect, of a visible social organism and an invisible divine presence intimately united, is similar to the very mystery of Christ. In fact, "as the assumed nature, inseparably united to Him, serves the divine Word as a living organ of salvation, so, in a somewhat similar way, does the social structure of the Church serve the Spirit of Christ who vivifies it, in the building up of the body" (*LG* 8; cf. *Eph* 4:16). The intimate reciprocal connection of the two elements, therefore, confers upon the Church her special *sacramental* nature, by virtue of which she completely transcends the limits of any simply sociological perspective. The Council, in fact, was able to assert that the People of God is for all men "the visible sacrament of this saving unity" (*LG* 9; cf. *LG* 1; 8; 48; *GS* 42; *AG* 1; 5).

The present social evolutions and cultural changes, which we ourselves are witnessing, even though they evoke in the Church the need to renew not a few perhaps of her human aspects, are nevertheless unable to deface in the least her specific structure as *universal sacrament of salvation*. On the contrary, these very changes, which are to be promoted, will serve at the

same time to place her nature in ever greater evidence.

### ***Destined to witness and announce the Gospel***

4. All members -- pastors, laymen and religious -- each in his own manner, participate in the sacramental nature of the Church. Likewise, each one, according to his proper role, must be a sign and instrument both of *union with God* and of *the salvation of the world*. All, in fact, have this two-fold aspect in their calling:

a) to holiness: "all in the Church, whether they belong to the hierarchy or are cared for by it, are called to holiness" (LG 39).

b) to the apostolate: the entire Church "is driven by the Holy Spirit to do her part for the full realization of the plan of God" (LG 17; cf. AA 2; AG 1, 2, 3, 4, 5).

Therefore, before considering the diversity of gifts, offices and duties, we must recognize as fundamental the common vocation of all to union with God for the salvation of the world. This vocation requires in all, as a criterion for participating in ecclesial communion, the primacy of *life in the Spirit*: this is the basis for the privilege of hearing the Word, of interior prayer, of the realization of living as a member of the entire Body and of concern for its unity, of the faithful fulfillment of one's own mission, of the gift of self in service and of the humility of repentance.

From this common baptismal vocation to life in the Spirit flow clarifying exigencies and productive influences with respect to the relations which must exist between bishops and religious.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THE MINISTRY OF THE BISHOPS WITHIN ORGANIC ECCLESIAL COMMUNION**

#### ***The communion proper to the People of God and its excellence***

5. Organic communion among the members of the Church is the fruit of the Holy Spirit Himself, in such a way that it necessarily presupposes the historical initiative of Jesus Christ and His paschal exodus. The Holy Spirit is, in fact, the Spirit of the Lord: Jesus Christ, "now raised to the heights by God's right hand" (Acts 2:3), "poured out on His disciples the Spirit promised by the Father" (LG 5). Now, if the Spirit is like the soul of the Body (cf. LG 7), Christ is objectively its *Head* (cf. LG 7); both therefore are the source of the organic cohesion of its members (cf. 1 Cor 12-13; Col 2:19). Consequently they can have no true docility to the Spirit without fidelity to the Lord, who sends Him; Christ, in fact, "is the head that adds strength and holds the whole body together, with all its joints and sinews" -- and this is the only way in which it can reach its full growth in God (Col 2:19).

The organic communion of the Church, therefore, is not exclusively

*spiritual*, born, that is, in whatever manner it may be, of the Holy Spirit, and of itself preceding the ecclesial function and creative of them, but is simultaneously *hierarchic* inasmuch as by a vital impulse it is derived from Christ, the Head. The very gifts given by the Spirit are willed precisely by Christ and are of their nature directed to the contexture of the Body in order to vivify its functions and activities. "Now the Church is His body, He is its head. As He is the Beginning, He was first to be born from the dead, so that He should be first in every way" (*Col* 1:18; cf. *LG* 7). In this manner the organic communion of the church, both as to its spiritual aspect and its hierarchical nature, has its origin and vitality simultaneously in Christ and in His Spirit. Rightly and appropriately, therefore, the Apostle Paul has used the formulas "in Christ" and "in the Spirit" a number of times, making them converge in an intimate and vital way (cf. *Eph* 2:21-22; and in various places in the Epistles).

### ***Christ the Head is present in the Episcopal ministry***

6. The Lord Himself "set up in His Church a variety of offices which aim at the good of the whole Body" (*LG* 18). Among these ministries, that of the episcopate is fundamental to all the others. The bishops, in hierarchic communion with the Roman Pontiff, make up the College of Bishops in such a way that jointly they manifest and carry out in the Church-Sacrament the function of Christ, the Head: "In the person of the bishops, then, to whom the priests render assistance, the Lord Jesus Christ, supreme High Priest, is present in the midst of the faithful.... [Bishops] in a resplendent and visible manner, take the place of Christ Himself, teacher, shepherd and priest, and act as His representatives" (*LG* 21; cf. 27, 28; *PO* 1, 2; *CD* 2). No one in the Church other than a bishop carries out an organic function of fecundity (cf. *LG* 18, 19), unity (cf. *LG* 23), and spiritual authority (cf. *LG* 22) which is so basic that it influences all ecclesial activity. Even though the exercise of manifold other tasks and initiatives is distributed diversely among the People of God, nevertheless, the Roman Pontiff and the Bishops have the ministry of discernment and harmony (cf. *LG* 21) which involves an abundance of special gifts of the Holy Spirit and the distinctive charism of ordering the various roles in intimate docility of mind to the one and only vivifying Spirit (cf. *LG* 12, 24, etc.).

### ***The indivisibility of the ministry of Bishops***

7. The bishop with the collaboration of his priests renders a three-fold service to the community of the faithful, namely that of teaching, sanctifying and ruling (cf. *LG* 25-27; *CD* 12-20; *PO* 4-6). There is no question, however, of three separate ministries. Since, in the New Law, Christ has essentially fused the three functions of Teacher, Priest and Pastor into one, there is only one ministry unique in its origin. Consequently the bishop's ministry is exercised in its different functions in an indivisible way.

If circumstances at times require that one of these three aspects be given greater prominence, the other two are never to be separated or disregarded, lest the inner unity of the entire ministry be weakened in any way. The bishop, then, not only governs, not only sanctifies, not only teaches, but, with the help of his priests, he feeds his flock by teaching, by sanctifying,

by governing, as a unique and indivisible action. Hence the bishop, by virtue of his very ministry, is responsible, in a special way for the growth in holiness of all his faithful inasmuch as he is the principal dispenser of the mysteries of God and the sanctifier of his flock according to the vocation proper to each one (cf. *CD 15*) -- likewise, therefore, and above all according to the vocation of religious.

### ***The duty of the sacred hierarchy with respect to religious life***

8. Careful reflection on the functions and duties of the Roman Pontiff and the bishops in regard to the practical life of religious leads one to discover with particular concreteness and clarity its ecclesial dimension, namely the unquestionable bond of religious life with the life and holiness of the Church (cf. *LG 44*). Through the action of the sacred hierarchy, God *consecrates* religious for a more generous service of Him within the People of God (cf. *LG 44*). Likewise the Church, through the ministry of her Pastors, besides giving legal sanction to the religious form of life and thus raising it to the dignity of a canonical state... sets it forth liturgically also as a state of consecration to God" (*LG 45*; cf. *SC 80, 2*).

Bishops, furthermore, as members of the Episcopal College, in harmony with the will of the Supreme Pontiff, are united in this: namely, in wisely regulating the practice of the evangelical counsels (cf. *LG 45*); in authentically approving Rules proposed to them (cf. *LG 45*) in such a way that a mission recognized as typically theirs is conferred on Institutes; that a commitment to found new churches is fostered in them, and that specific duties and mandates are entrusted to them; in seeing to it, by their concern, that Institutes "upheld by their supervisory and protective authority... may develop and flourish in accordance with the spirit of their founders" (*LG 45*); in determining the exemption of some institutes "from the jurisdiction of local ordinaries for the sake of the general good" (*LG 45*) of the universal Church and to better "ensure that everything is suitably and harmoniously arranged within them, and the perfection of the religious life promoted" (*CD 35, 3*).

### ***Some consequences***

9. These brief considerations on "hierarchical communion" in the Church shed much light on the relations that should be fostered between bishops and religious.

a) Christ is the *Head* of the ecclesial Body, the eternal Pastor, who has given precedence to Peter and the Apostles and their successors, namely the Roman Pontiff and the bishops, constituting them sacramentally his *Vicars* (cf. *LG 18, 22, 27*) and granting them appropriate charisms. No one else has the power to exercise any function, whether of teaching, sanctifying or governing, except by participation and in communion with them.

b) The Holy Spirit is called the soul of the ecclesial body. No member of the People of God, no matter what ministry he may exercise, possesses personally in himself, in their totality, gifts, offices and duties, but must enter into communion with the others. Differences in the People of God,

whether of gifts or functions, converge and mutually complement one another, for the unique communion and mission.

c) Bishops, in union with the Roman Pontiff, receive from Christ the Head the duty (cf. *LG* 21) of discerning gifts and competencies, of coordinating multiple energies, and of guiding the entire People in living in the world as a sign and instrument of salvation. They, therefore, are also entrusted with the duty of caring for religious charisms, all the more so because the very indivisibility of their pastoral ministry makes them responsible for perfecting the entire flock. In this way, by fostering religious life and protecting it in conformity with its own definite characteristics, bishops fulfill a real pastoral duty.

d) All pastors, mindful of the apostolic admonition never to be a "dictator over any group that is put in [their] charge, but [to] be an example that the whole flock can follow" (*1 Pt* 5:3), will rightly be aware of the primacy of *life in the Spirit*. This demands that they be at the same time *leaders and members*; truly *fathers*, but also *brothers*; *teachers* of the faith, but especially *fellow disciples* of Christ; those indeed, *responsible for the perfection* of the faithful, but also true *witnesses of their personal sanctification*.

### CHAPTER III

#### RELIGIOUS LIFE WITHIN ECCLESIAL COMMUNION

##### *The "ecclesial" nature of Religious Institutes*

10. The religious state is not *a kind of intermediate way between the clerical and lay condition of life*, but comes from both as a special gift for the entire Church (cf. *LG* 43).

It consists in the following of Christ, by publicly professing the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, and by assuming the commitment of removing all obstacles which could detract from the fervor of charity and from the perfection of divine worship. A religious, in fact, "dedicates himself wholly to God, his supreme love. In a new and special way he makes himself over to God, to serve and honor Him;" this unites the religious "to the Church and her mystery in a special way" and urges such a one to work with undivided dedication for the good of the entire Body (cf. *LG* 44).

This clearly indicates that religious life is a special way of participating in the *sacramental* nature of the People of God. Indeed, the consecration of those professing religious vows is especially ordained to this purpose, namely of offering to the world visible proof of the unfathomable mystery of Christ, inasmuch as in themselves they really present "Christ in contemplation on the mountain, or proclaiming the kingdom of God to the multitudes, or healing the sick and maimed and converting sinners to a good life, or blessing children and doing good to all men, always in obedience to the will of the Father who sent Him" (*LG* 46).

### ***The distinctive character of every Institute***

11. There are many Religious Institutes in the Church, each differing one from the other according to its proper character (cf. *PC* 7, 8, 9, 10). Each, however, contributes its own vocation as a gift raised up by the Spirit through the work of *outstanding men and women* (cf. *LG* 45; *PC* 1; 2), and authentically approved by the sacred hierarchy.

The very charism of the Founders (*Evang. nunt.* 11) appears as an "experience of the Spirit," transmitted to their disciples to be lived, safeguarded, deepened and constantly developed by them, in harmony with the Body of Christ continually in the process of growth. "It is for this reason that the distinctive character of various religious institutes is preserved and fostered by the Church" (*LG* 44; cf. *CD* 33; 35, 1; 35, 2; etc.). This *distinctive character* also involves a particular style of sanctification and of apostolate, which creates its particular tradition, with the result that one can readily perceive its objective elements.

In this hour of cultural evolution and ecclesial renewal, therefore, it is necessary to preserve the identity of each institute so securely, that the danger of an ill-defined situation be avoided, lest religious, failing to give due consideration to the particular mode of action proper to their character, become part of the life of the Church in a vague and ambiguous way.

### ***Some signs of a genuine "charism"***

12. Every authentic charism implies a certain element of genuine originality and of special initiative for the spiritual life of the Church. In its surroundings it may appear troublesome and may even cause difficulties, since it is not always and immediately easy to recognize it as coming from the Spirit.

The specific charismatic note of any institute demands, both of the Founder and of his disciples, a continual examination regarding fidelity to the Lord; docility to His Spirit; intelligent attention to circumstances and an outlook cautiously directed to the signs of the times; the will to be part of the Church; the awareness of subordination to the sacred hierarchy; boldness of initiatives; constancy in the giving of self; humility in bearing with adversities. The true relation between genuine charism, with its perspectives of newness, and interior suffering, carries with it an unvarying history of the connection between charism and cross, which, above every motive that may justify misunderstandings, is supremely helpful in discerning the authenticity of a vocation.

Individual religious, too, certainly possess personal gifts, which without doubt usually come from the Spirit. They are intended for the enrichment, development and rejuvenation of the life of the institute, in the unity of the community and in giving proof of renewal. Discernment of such gifts, however, and their correct use will be measured according to the consistency they show both with the community commitment of the Institute and with the needs of the Church as judged by legitimate authority.



### ***Service characteristic of religious authority***

13. *Superiors* fulfill their duty of service and leadership within the religious institute in conformity with its distinctive character. Their authority proceeds from the Spirit of the Lord through the sacred hierarchy, which has granted canonical erection to the institute and authentically approved its specific mission.

Considering then the fact that the *prophetic, priestly and royal* condition is common to all the People of God (cf. *LG* 9, 10, 34, 35, 36), it seems useful to outline the competency of religious authority, paralleling it by analogy to the three-fold function of pastoral ministry, namely, of teaching, sanctifying and governing without, however, confusing one authority with the other or equating them.

a) Regarding the *office of teaching*, religious superiors have the competency and authority of spiritual directors in relation to the evangelical purpose of their institute. In this context, therefore, they must carry on a veritable spiritual direction of the entire Congregation and of its individual communities. They should accomplish this in sincere harmony with the authentic magisterium of the hierarchy, realizing that they must carry out a mandate of grave responsibility in the evangelical plan of the Founder.

b) As to the *office of sanctifying*, the superiors have also a special competency and responsibility, albeit with differentiated duties. They must foster perfection in what concerns the increase of the life of charity according to the end of the institute, both as to formation, initial and ongoing, of the members and as to communal and personal fidelity in the practice of the evangelical counsels according to the Rule. This duty, if it is rightly accomplished, is considered by the Roman Pontiff and the bishops a valuable help in the fulfillment of their fundamental ministry of sanctification.

c) As to the *office of governing*, superiors must render the service of ordering the life of the community, of organizing the members of the institute, of caring for and developing its particular mission and of seeing to it that it be efficiently inserted into ecclesial activity under the leadership of the bishops.

Institutes then have an internal organization all their own (cf. *CD* 35, 3) which has its proper field of competency and a right to *autonomy*, even though in the Church this autonomy can never become independence (cf. *CD* 35, 3 and 4). The correct degree of such autonomy and the concrete determination of competency are contained in common law and in the Rules or Constitutions of each institute.

### ***Some conclusions as guidelines***

14. From the above reflections on religious life, we can deduce some specific conclusions:

a) Religious and their communities are called to give clear testimony in the

Church of total dedication to God. This is the fundamental option of their Christian existence and their primary duty in their distinctive way of life. Whatever the specific character of their institute may be, religious are, in fact, consecrated in order to show forth publicly in the Church-Sacrament "that the world can not be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes" (LG 31).

b) Every institute exists for the Church and must enrich her with its distinctive characteristics, according to a particular spirit and a specific mission. Religious, therefore, should cultivate a renewed ecclesial awareness, by offering their services for the building up of the Body of Christ, by persevering in fidelity to their Rule, and by obeying their superiors (cf. PC 14; CD 35, 2).

c) Religious superiors have a grave duty, their foremost responsibility in fact, to assure the fidelity of the members to the charism of the Founder, by fostering the renewal prescribed by the Council and required by the times.

They should strive zealously, therefore, to direct and continually animate their members to pursue this goal. They should, moreover, consider it their privileged duty to bring about fitting and updated formation (PC 2d; 14; 18).

Finally, aware of the fact that religious life of its very nature requires a special participation on the part of the members, superiors should strive to encourage it, since "effective renewal and right adaptation cannot be achieved save with the cooperation of all the members of an institute" (PC 4).

## CHAPTER IV

### BISHOPS AND RELIGIOUS PURSUING THE SELF-SAME MISSION OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

*Ecclesial mission flows from the "fountain of love" (AG 2)*

15. The mission of the People of God is one. In a certain sense it constitutes the heart of the entire ecclesial mystery. The Father, in fact, "has consecrated the Son and sent [Him] into the world" (Jn 10:36), "Mediator between God and men" (AG 3). On Pentecost "Christ sent the Holy Spirit from the Father to exercise inwardly His saving influence, and to promote the spread of the Church" (AG 4). Thus the Church, throughout her history, "is by her very nature missionary" (AG 2; cf. LG 17), in Christ and in virtue of the Spirit. All -- pastors, laymen and religious -- each according to his specific vocation, are called to be apostolically committed (cf. n. 4). This commitment arises from the love of the Father; the Holy Spirit, then, nourishes it, "giving life to ecclesiastical structures, being as it were their soul, and inspiring in the hearts of the faithful that same spirit of mission which impelled Christ Himself" (AG 4). Consequently the mission of the People of God can never consist solely in the activity of the exterior life, since apostolic commitment cannot in the absolute be reduced to mere human promotion, however efficacious it be, because every pastoral and

missionary initiative is rooted in participation in the mystery of the Church. And, in fact, the Church's mission is by its very nature nothing else than the mission of Christ continued in the history of the world. It consists principally in the co-participation in the obedience of Him (cf. *Heb* 5:8) who offered Himself to the Father for the life of the world.

### ***The absolute necessity of union with God***

16. Mission, which begins with the Father, requires that those who are sent exercise their awareness of love in the dialog of prayer. Therefore, in these times of apostolic renewal, as always in every form of missionary engagement, a privileged place is given to the contemplation of God, to meditation on His plan of salvation, and to reflection on the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel so that prayer may be nourished and grow in quality and frequency.

It is urgently necessary that everyone appreciate prayer and have recourse to it. Bishops and their priest-collaborators (cf. *LG* 25; 27; 28; 41), "dispensers of the mysteries of God" (*1 Cor* 4:1) "should aim to make of one mind in prayer all who are entrusted to their care, and to ensure their advancement in grace through the reception of the sacraments, and that they become faithful witnesses to the Lord" (*CD* 15). Religious, in turn, inasmuch as they are called to be, as it were, *specialists in prayer* (Paul VI, Oct. 28, 1966), "should seek and love above all else God..." and "in all circumstances they should take care to foster a life hidden with Christ in God (cf. *Col* 3:3) which is the source and stimulus of love of neighbor" (*PC* 6).

By disposition of divine Providence, today many of the faithful are led by an inner impulse to gather in groups to hear the Gospel, to meditate and give themselves up to contemplation. Consequently for the very efficacy of mission, it is indispensable to make certain that all, especially pastors, give themselves up to prayer, and likewise that religious institutes preserve in their form of dedication to God, both by fostering the *eminent role* that communities of contemplative life hold in this field (cf. *PC* 7 and *AG* 18), and by providing that religious, dedicated to apostolic work nourish their intimate union with Christ and give clear witness of it (cf. *PC* 8).

### ***Different forms of apostolic commitment***

17. Cultural situations in which apostolic activity is carried out vary; differences, therefore, can be noticed in the unity of mission. These, however, "do not flow from the inner nature of the mission itself, but from the circumstances in which it is exercised. These circumstances depend either on the Church itself or on the peoples, classes, or men to whom its mission is directed" (*AG* 6).

These assuredly real differences, although contingent, affect notably not only the exercise of the pastoral ministry of bishops and priests, but also the particular life-style and duties of religious. They exact difficult adaptations, especially on the part of institutes dedicated to apostolic activity on an international level.

Regarding the relations between bishops and religious, therefore, in addition to the differences in functions (cf. *AA* 1) and charisms (cf. *LG* 2) the concrete difference existing within nations must likewise be carefully considered.

### ***Reciprocal influence between universal and particular Churches***

18. The problem of the mutual influence between universal and particular values of the People of God arises from the need to insert the mystery of the Church into the setting distinctive of each region.

Vatican Council II dealt not only with the universal Church but also with particular and local Churches, which it presented as one of the aspects of renewal in ecclesial life (cf. *LG* 13; 23; 26; *CD* 3; 11; 15; *AG* 22; *PC* 20). In this light, a certain process of decentralization, which necessarily has its consequences in the relations between bishops and religious (cf. *Evang. nunt.* 61-64), can have a positive significance.

Every particular Church becomes enriched by sound human elements, characteristic of the genius and nature of each nation. Such elements, nevertheless, are not to be regarded as indications of division, of particularism or of nationalism, but as expressions of variety within the same unity and of the fullness of that incarnation which enriches the entire Mystical Body (cf. *UR* 14-17). The Church universal, in fact, is not the *sum total* of particular Churches, nor is it a *federation* of them (cf. *Evang. nunt.* 62), but it is the total and enlarged presence of the unique universal sacrament of salvation (cf. *Evang. nunt.* 54). This multiform unity, however, carries with it various concrete exigencies for bishops and religious in the fulfillment of their duties.

a) Bishops and their priest-collaborators are responsible before all others both for the correct discernment of the local cultural values in the life of their Church, and of the clear perspective of universality, by reason of their missionary role of successors to the Apostles, who were sent out into the whole world (cf. *CD* 6; *LG* 20; 23; 24; *AG* 5; 38).

b) Religious, then, even if they belong to an institute of pontifical right, should feel themselves truly a part of the "diocesan family" (cf. *CD* 34) and accept the duty of necessary adaptation. They should foster local vocations both for the diocesan clergy and for religious life. Furthermore, they should form candidates for their congregation in such a way that these really live according to the actual local culture. At the same time, however they should be watchful that there be no deviation from the missionary call inherent in the religious vocation, or from the unity and distinctive character of each institute.

### ***Missionary duty and the spirit of initiative***

19. A clear missionary obligation, rooted in their very ministry and charism, emerges for bishops and religious. This obligation becomes more pressing each day as present cultural conditions evolve in the form of two principal trends, namely materialism, which is invading the masses even in regions

Christian by tradition, and the increase in international communications, whereby all peoples including non-Christians can readily be united one with the other. Moreover, the deep upheavals of situations, the growth of human values, and the manifold needs of the world today (cf. *GS* 43-44), press ever more insistently on the one hand for the renewal of many traditional pastoral forms of activity, and on the other for the search for new forms of apostolic presence. In such a situation a certain apostolic diligence is urgently necessary in order to devise new, ingenious, and courageous ecclesial experiments under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who is by His very nature *Creator*. A responsiveness rich in creative initiative (cf. n. 12) is eminently compatible with the charismatic nature of the religious life. In fact, the Holy Father Pope Paul VI himself affirmed this: "thanks to their religious consecration, [religious] are above all free and can spontaneously leave everything and go to announce the Gospel even to the ends of the earth. They are prompt in acting; and their apostolate frequently excels because of the ingeniousness of their projects and undertakings, which evoke admiration in all who observe them" (*Evang. nunt.* 69).

### ***Coordinating pastoral activity***

20. The Church was not established to be an organization for activity, but rather to give witness as the living Body of Christ. Nevertheless the Church necessarily carries on the concrete work of planning and of coordinating the manifold offices and services, so that together they may merge into one unified pastoral action in which the choices to be made and the apostolic engagements to be given preference are decided (cf. *CD* 11; 30; 35, 5; *AG* 22; 29). Today, in fact, it is necessary to set in motion on the various levels of ecclesial life a fitting system of research and action, so that the mission of evangelizing may be carried out in the way most consonant with the different situations.

There are three principal operative centers for such desirable coordination: the Holy See, the diocese (cf. *CD* 11) and successively, in its own proper sphere, the Episcopal Conference (cf. *CD* 38). In addition to these centers, then, other organs of cooperation are set up according to ecclesial and regional needs.

### ***Mutual collaboration among religious***

21. Within the setting of religious life the Holy See establishes Conferences of Major Superiors and of Superiors General, both on the local and on the universal level (cf. *PC* 23; *REU* 73, 5). Obviously, these differ from Episcopal Conferences in nature and authority. Their primary purpose is the promotion of religious life as it is inserted into the contexture of ecclesial mission, and their activity consists in offering common services, suggesting fraternal initiatives and proposals for collaboration, respecting, of course, the distinctive nature of each institute. This will undoubtedly contribute also to offering valuable assistance for pastoral coordination especially if a suitable examination of the operative statutes is made at fixed times, and if, above all, the mutual relationships between Bishops' Conferences and Conferences of Major Superiors are carried out according to the directives issued by the Holy See.

### ***The pastoral meaning of exemption***

22. The Supreme Pontiff, in view of the good of the Church itself (cf. *LG* 45; *CD* 35, 3), grants exemption to a number of religious families, so that institutes can express their identity more adequately and devote themselves to the common good with special generosity and on a wider scale (cf. n. 8).

Actually, exemption does not of itself create any obstacle either to pastoral coordination or to reciprocal good relations among the People of God. In fact, it relates to the internal organization of their institutes. Its purpose is to ensure that everything is suitably and harmoniously arranged within them, and the perfection of the religious life promoted. The privilege ensures also that the Supreme Pontiff may employ these religious for the good of the universal Church or that some other competent authority may do so for the good of the churches under its jurisdiction" (*CD* 35, 3; cf. *CD* 35, 4; *Eccl. Sanctae* I, 25-40; *Evang. nunt.* 69).

Consequently exempt religious institutes, faithful to "their own proper characters and functions" (*PC* 2b), should cultivate above all special attachment to the Roman Pontiff and to the bishops, placing their liberty and apostolic availability at their disposal effectively and generously in conformity with religious obedience. Similarly, they should devote themselves with full awareness and zeal to the task of incarnating and manifesting in the diocese the specific witness and the genuine mission of their institute. Finally they should always reanimate that apostolic sensitivity and initiative, which are characteristic of their consecration.

Bishops certainly recognize and appreciate greatly the specific contribution with which these religious come to the assistance of the particular Churches and find in their exemption a certain expression of that pastoral concern which unites them intimately with the Roman Pontiff for the universal care of all people (cf. n. 8).

This renewed awareness of exemption, if it is really shared by the various collaborators in pastoral endeavor, will promote greatly increased apostolic initiative and missionary zeal in every particular Church.

### ***Some criteria for a just ordering of pastoral activity***

23. The above considerations on ecclesial mission suggest the following directives:

a) First of all, the very nature of apostolic action requires that bishops give precedence to interior recollection and to the life of prayer (cf. *LG* 26; 27; 41); it requires, moreover, that religious, in conformity with their distinctive nature, renew themselves in depth and be assiduous in prayer.

b) Special care should be taken to foster "the various undertakings aimed at establishing the contemplative life" (*AG* 18), since it holds a very honored place in the mission of the Church, "no matter how pressing may be the needs of the active ministry" (*PC* 7). Especially today as the danger of materialism grows more serious, the vocation of all to the perfection of love

(cf. *LG* 40) is made radically evident by institutes entirely dedicated to contemplation, in which it is more clearly apparent that, as St. Bernard says, "the motive for loving God is God; the limit is to love Him without limit" (*De diligendo Deo* c. 1; *PL* 182, n. 548).

c) The activity of the People of God in the world is by its nature universal and missionary, both by the very character of the Church (*LG* 17) and by Christ's mandate, which conferred a universality without boundaries on the apostolate (*Evang. nunt.* 49). Bishops and superiors must, therefore, give attention to this dimension of apostolic awareness and foster concrete initiatives to promote it.

d) The particular Church is the historic space in which a vocation is exercised in the concrete and realizes its apostolic commitment. Here, in fact, within the confines of a determined culture, the Gospel is preached and received (cf. *Evang. nunt.* 19; 20; 32; 35; 40; 62; 63). It is necessary, therefore, that this reality of great importance in pastoral renewal be also kept duly present in the work of formation.

e) The mutual influence between the two poles, namely between the active co-participation of a particular culture and the perspective of universality, must be founded on unalterable esteem and constant protection of those values of unity, which under no circumstance may be renounced, whether the unity in question is that of the Catholic Church -- for all the faithful -- or that of each religious institute -- for all its members. The local community which would break away from this unity would be exposed to a two-fold danger: "on the one hand the danger of segregation, which produces sterility...; on the other, the danger of losing one's own liberty when, separated from the head..., isolated it becomes subject in many ways to the forces of those who attempt to subdue and exploit it" (*Evang. nunt.* 64).

f) Especially in our times that same charismatic genuineness, vivacious and ingenious in its inventiveness, is expected of religious, as stood out so eminently in their Founders, so that they may the better and with zeal engage in the apostolic work of the Church among those, who today constitute, in fact, the majority of humanity and are the specially beloved of the Lord: the *little ones* and the *poor* (cf. *Mt* 18:1-6; *Lk* 6:20).

## **PART TWO**

### **DIRECTIVES AND NORMS**

The experience of recent years has, in the light of the above principles, led to the formulation of some directives and norms dealing especially with the practical aspects of life. From this it will undoubtedly follow that the mutual relations between bishops and religious will be further facilitated to the advantage of the building up of the Body of Christ.

We shall present these directives, which are mutually complementary, under three distinct headings, namely:

- a) the formative aspect,
- b) the operative aspects,
- c) the organizational aspect.

The text presupposes the juridical prescriptions already in force, and at times makes reference to these; it does not therefore derogate from any of the prescriptions of preceding documents of the Holy See still in force in this matter.

## **SOME POINTS REGARDING THE FORMATIVE ASPECT**

### **CHAPTER V**

The Roman Pontiff and the bishops carry out in the Church the supreme role of *authentic Teachers* and *Sanctifiers* of the entire flock (cf. Part I, ch. II). Religious superiors, in turn, are vested with special authority for the direction of their own institute and carry the heavy burden of the formation of the members (cf. *PC* 14; 18; Part I, ch. III).

Consequently bishops and superiors, each according to his specific role, but in harmony and united effort, should give precedence to their responsibilities regarding formation.

24. Bishops, in accord also with religious superiors, should promote, especially among diocesan priests, zealous laity and local religious, a clear awareness and experience of the mystery and structure of the Church and of the vivifying indwelling of the Holy Spirit, by jointly organizing special seminars and encounters on spirituality. They should, moreover, insist without ceasing that both public and personal prayer be appreciated and intensified, even by means of appropriate initiatives, carefully prepared.

25. On their part, religious communities, especially of contemplative life, maintaining, of course, fidelity to their distinctive spirit (cf. *PC* 7; *AG* 40), should offer people appropriate aids for prayer and for their personal spiritual life, so that they can respond to the pressing need, today more deeply felt than ever, for meditation and the deepening of faith. They should also offer them the opportunity and facility to participate suitably in their liturgical functions, always respecting the requirements of the enclosure and the rules laid down in this regard.

26. Superiors should see to it with all solicitude that their religious remain faithful to their vocation. They should foster opportune adaptations to cultural, social and economic conditions, according to the needs of the times, being vigilant however, lest these adaptations go beyond just limits in the direction of customs contrary to religious life. Cultural updating and specialized studies taken up by religious should deal with subjects pertinent to the distinctive nature of the institute. Such studies should not be programmed with a view to achieving personal goals as if they were a means of wrongly understood self-fulfillment, but with a view to responding to the requirements of the apostolic commitments of the



religious family itself, in harmony with the needs of the Church.

27. In promoting ongoing formation of religious, it is necessary to insist on the renewal of the witness of poverty and of service to the most needy and to bring about, furthermore, that through a renewed spirit of obedience and chastity communities become signs of brotherly love and unity.

In institutes of active life, for which the apostolate constitutes an essential element of their religious life (cf. *CD* 12; 15; 35, 2; *LG* 25; 45), as both initial and ongoing formation progress, the apostolate itself should be duly emphasized.

28. It is the duty of bishops as authentic teachers and guides of perfection for all the members of the diocese (cf. *CD* 12; 15; 35, 2; *LG* 25; 45) to be the guardians likewise of fidelity to the religious vocation in the spirit of each institute. In carrying out this pastoral obligation, bishops in open communion of doctrine and intent with the Supreme Pontiff and the offices of the Holy See, and with the other bishops and local Ordinaries, should strive to promote relations with superiors, to whom the religious are subject *in the spirit of faith* (cf. *PC* 14).

Bishops, along with their clergy, should be convinced advocates of the consecrated life, defenders of religious communities, promoters of vocations, firm guardians of the specific character of each religious family both in the spiritual and in the apostolic field.

29. Bishops and religious superiors, each according to his specific competency, should zealously foster knowledge of the doctrine of the Council and of the pontifical pronouncements on the episcopacy, on religious life and on the local Church, and also on the mutual relationships existing among them. To this end the following initiatives are desirable:

a) meetings of bishops and religious superiors to study these topics together;

b) special courses for diocesan priests, for religious and for the laity engaged in the active apostolate, in order to arrive at new and more appropriate adaptations;

c) studies and experiments especially appropriate for the formation of lay religious men and religious women;

d) the preparation of suitable pastoral documents for the diocese, the region or the nation, that present these subjects in a challenging way for the reflection of the faithful.

Care must be taken, however, lest this formation remain limited to only a few. All should have the possibility to benefit by it, and it should become a common effort of all the members.

It seems opportune, moreover, that this doctrinal study be also given sufficient publicity through the press, other means of social communication,

conferences, exhortations, etc.

30. Right from the initial stages of both ecclesiastical and religious formation, the systematic study of the mystery of Christ, of the sacramental nature of the Church, of the ministry of bishops and of religious life in the Church should be programmed. Therefore:

a) religious from the novitiate on should be brought to a fuller awareness and concern for the local church, while at the same time growing in fidelity to their own vocation;

b) bishops should see to it that the diocesan clergy understand well the current problems of religious life and the urgent missionary needs, and that certain chosen priests be prepared to be able to help religious in their spiritual progress (cf. *OT* 10; *AG* 39), though generally it is preferable that this task be entrusted to prudently chosen religious priests (cf. n. 36).

31. Greater maturity of the priestly and religious vocation depends also, and to a decisive degree, on the doctrinal formation given usually in centers of study on the university level or in institutes of higher studies or in other institutes specially adapted to this purpose.

Bishops and religious superiors involved in this work should offer effective collaboration for the upkeep of these centers of study and their proper functioning, especially when such centers are at the service of one or more dioceses and religious congregations, and guarantee both the excellence of the teaching and the presence of teachers and of all others who, duly prepared, are able to meet the requirements of formation. They should, moreover, assure the most effective use of personnel and facilities.

In preparing, reforming and implementing the statutes of these study centers, the rights and duties of each participant, the obligations which by virtue of his very ministry belong to the bishop or bishops, ways of operating and the measure of responsibility of religious superiors who have a shared interest, should be clearly defined. In this way an objective and complete presentation of doctrine, structured in harmony with the Church's Magisterium, can be fostered. On the basis, then, of the general criteria of competency and responsibility and according to the statutes, the activity and initiatives of these centers should be diligently followed up. And in all this delicate and important discipline, the norms and directives of the Holy See should always be observed.

32. An adequate renewal of pastoral methods in the diocese requires a deeper knowledge of whatever concretely affects the local human and religious life, so that from this source can flow objective and appropriate theological reflection, priorities in the field of action can be established, a plan of pastoral action can be formed and, finally, what has been realized can be examined periodically. This work may require that bishops, with the help of competent persons, chosen also from among religious, create and maintain study commissions and research centers. Such undertakings appear more and more necessary not only to offer people a more updated formation but also to give pastoral activities a rational structure.

33. Religious have the special and delicate obligation of being attentive and docile to the Magisterium of the Hierarchy and of facilitating for the bishops the exercise of the ministry of *authentic teachers and witnesses of the divine and catholic truth* (cf. *LG 25*), in the fulfillment of their responsibility for the doctrinal teaching of faith both in the centers where its study is promoted and in the use of means to transmit it.

a) As to the publication of books and documents, edited by publishing houses of religious or by organizations under their care, the norms given by the S. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (March 19, 1975) regarding the competent authority for the approval of texts of Sacred Scripture and their translation, liturgical books, prayer books and catechisms or any other type of work containing topics which are connected in a special way with religion and morals are to be observed. Disregard of these norms, at times speciously and cleverly contrived, can cause serious harm to the faithful. This must be avoided at all costs and with sincerity, especially by religious.

b) The necessary understanding with the competent Ordinaries is always to be safeguarded, even in the case of documents and editorial initiatives of religious institutes, local or national, which, although not destined for public consumption, can nevertheless exert a certain influence in the pastoral sphere of activity, as, for example, texts dealing with the new and serious problems on social, economic and political questions connected in one way or another with faith and the religious life.

c) Bishops, taking into careful consideration the special mission of some institutes, should encourage and support religious who are engaged in the important apostolic field of the written word and social communications. In this regard, they should foster wider apostolic collaboration, especially on the national level; likewise they should be concerned about the formation of specialized personnel for this activity, not only as regards their technical competency but also and especially as regards their sense of ecclesial responsibility.

34. It would be a serious mistake to make the two realities -- religious life and ecclesial structures -- independent one of the other, or to oppose one to the other as if they could subsist as two distant entities, one charismatic, the other institutional. Both elements, namely the spiritual gifts and the ecclesial structures form *one*, even though *complex reality* (cf. *LG 8*).

Wherefore religious, even while showing a particular spirit of enterprise and foresight for the future (cf. Part I, ch. III), should be intensely loyal to the intention and spirit of their institute, in full obedience and adherence to the authority of the hierarchy (cf. *PC 2*; *LG 12*).

35. The bishop, as Shepherd of the diocese, and religious superiors inasmuch as they are responsible for their institute, should promote the participation of men and women religious in the life of the local Church and in their knowledge of the directives and ecclesiastical rules. Likewise, they (especially the superiors) should strive to increase supra-national unity within their own institute and docility to their superiors general (cf. Part I,

ch. IV).

## CHAPTER VI

### COMMITMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE FIELD OF ACTION

The Church lives in the Spirit and rests on the foundation of Peter and the Apostles and their successors, so that the episcopal ministry is in fact the guiding principle of the pastoral dynamism of the entire People of God. Consequently the Church works in harmony both with the Holy Spirit who is her soul and with the Head operative in the Body (cf. Part I, ch. II). This evidently has well determined consequences for bishops and religious in the carrying out of their initiatives and activities, even though they are vested with a specific competency, each according to his own role.

The practical directives set forth here refer to two kinds of needs in the field of action: namely, the pastoral and the religious.

#### ***Requirements of pastoral mission***

36. The Council affirms that "members, too, of religious institutes, both men and women, also belong in a special sense to the diocesan family and render valuable help to the sacred hierarchy, and in view of the growing needs of the apostolate they can and should constantly increase the aid they give" (*CD*

34).

In places where there are more than one rite, religious, when carrying out activities on behalf of the faithful of rites different from their own, should follow the norms regulating the relationships between themselves and bishops of other rites (cf. *Eccl. Sanctae* I, 23).

It is important that such criteria be applied, not only in the final stages but also in determining and elaborating a plan of action, without prejudice, however, to the role proper to the bishop of making the decisions.

Religious priests, by virtue of the very unity of the priesthood (cf. *LG* 28; *CD* 28; 11) and inasmuch as they share in the care of souls, "may be said, in a certain sense, to belong to the diocesan clergy" (*CD* 34); therefore, in the field of activity, they can and should serve to unite and coordinate religious men and women with the local clergy and bishop.

37. Efforts should be made to renew the bonds of fraternity and cooperation between the diocesan clergy and communities of religious (cf. *CD* 35, 5). Great importance should therefore be placed on all those means, even though simple and informal, which serve to increase mutual trust, apostolic solidarity and *fraternal harmony* (cf. *ES* I, 28). This will indeed serve not only to strengthen genuine awareness of the local Church, but also to encourage each one to render and request help joyfully, to foster the desire for cooperation, and also to love the human and ecclesial community, in

whose life each one finds himself a part, almost as if it were the fatherland of his own vocation.

38. Major superiors will take great care not only to have a knowledge of the talents and possibilities of their religious but also of the apostolic needs of the dioceses where their institute is called to work. Wherefore it is desirable that a concrete and global dialog be carried on between the bishop and the superiors of the various institutes present in the diocese, so that, especially in view of certain precarious situations and the persistent vocational crisis, religious personnel can be more evenly and fruitfully distributed.

39. Pastoral commitment for vocational recruitment is to be considered a privileged area for cooperation between bishops and religious (cf. *PO* 11; *PC* 24; *OT* 2). Such pastoral commitment consists in a united effort on the part of the Christian community for all vocations, in such a way that the Church is built up according to the fullness of Christ and according to the variety of charisms of His Spirit.

Regarding vocations, this above all else must be kept in mind, namely that the Holy Spirit, who "breathes where He wills" (*Jn* 3:8) calls the faithful to various offices and states for the greater good of the Church. It is evident that no obstacles should be placed in the way of such divine action; on the contrary, each one should be enabled to respond to his calling with the greatest freedom. For that matter, history itself can testify to the fact that the diversity of vocations, and particularly the coexistence and collaboration of secular and religious clergy are not detrimental to dioceses but rather enrich them with new spiritual treasures and increase notably their apostolic vitality.

Wherefore, it is fitting that the various initiatives be wisely coordinated under the bishops --according, that is, to the duties proper to parents and educators, to men and women religious, to diocesan priests and to all others who work in the pastoral field. This commitment will have to be carried out harmoniously and with the full dedication of each one. And the bishop himself should direct the efforts of all, causing them to converge toward the self-same purpose, always mindful that such efforts are basically inspired by the Holy Spirit. In consideration of this fact, therefore, the promotion of frequent prayer initiatives is also urgently necessary.

40. In renewing pastoral methods and updating apostolic works, the profound upheavals which have taken place in our modern world (cf. *GS* 43; 44) are to be taken seriously into consideration. Wherefore at times it is necessary to confront situations which are quite difficult, especially, "to help in the ministry in its various forms in the dioceses or regions where the urgent needs of the Church or shortage of clergy require it" (*Eccl. Sanctae* I, 36).

Bishops, in dialog with religious superiors and with all who work in the pastoral sector of the diocese, should try to discern what the Spirit wills and should study ways to provide new apostolic presences, so as to be able to deal with the difficulties which have arisen within the diocese. The search, however, for this renewal must not in the least lead to a depreciation of the

still actually valid forms of apostolate, which are properly traditional, such as that of the school (cf. S. Congregation for Catholic Education, *The Catholic School*, March 19, 1977), of the missions, of effective presence in hospitals, social services, etc. All these traditional forms, moreover, must be, without delay, suitably updated according to the norms and guidelines of the Council and the needs of the times.

41. Apostolic innovations, which are later to be undertaken, should be planned with careful study. On the one hand, it is the duty of the bishops through their office not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to what is good (cf. *1 Thes* 5:12 and 19-21; *LG* 12), in such a way however, "that the spontaneous zeal of those who engage in this work may be safeguarded and fostered" (*AG* 30); religious superiors, on their part, should cooperate actively and dialog with the bishops in seeking solutions, in arranging the programming of choices made, in launching experiments, even completely new ones, always acting in view of the most urgent needs of the Church and in conformity with the norms and directives of the Magisterium and according to the nature of their institute.

42. The commitment to a mutual exchange of help between bishops and superiors in appraising objectively and judging with equity experiments already undertaken should never be disregarded. In this way, not only evasions and frustrations but also the dangers of crises and deviations will be avoided.

Periodically, therefore, such undertakings should be reviewed; and if the endeavor has not been successful (cf. *Evang. nunt.* 58), humility and at the same time the necessary firmness should be exercised to correct, suspend or direct more adequately the experiment examined.

43. Great harm is done to the faithful by the fact that too much tolerance is granted to certain unsound initiatives or to certain accomplished facts which are ambiguous. Consequently bishops and superiors, in a spirit of mutual trust, in fulfillment of the obligations incumbent upon each and in keeping with the exercise of each one's responsibility, should see to it with the greatest concern that such errors are forestalled and corrected with evident decisiveness and clear dispositions, always in the spirit of charity but also with due resoluteness.

Especially in the field of liturgy there is urgent need to remedy not a few abuses introduced under pretexts at variance one with another. Bishops as the authentic liturgists of the local Church (cf. *SC* 22; 41; *LG* 26; *CD* 15; cf. Part I, ch. II), and religious superiors in what concerns their members should be vigilant and see that adequate renewal of worship is brought about, and they should intervene early in order to correct or remove any deviations and abuses in this sector, which is so important and central (cf. *SC* 10). Religious, too, should remember that they are obliged to abide by the laws and directives of the Holy See, as well as the decrees of the local Ordinary, in what concerns the exercise of public worship (cf. *Eccl. Sanctae* I, 26; 37; 38).

### ***Requirements of Religious Life***

44. With regard to the pastoral activities of religious, the Council expressly declares: "All religious, whether exempt or non-exempt, are subject to the authority of the local ordinary in the following matters: public worship, without prejudice, however, to the diversity of rites; the care of souls; preaching to the people; the religious and moral education, catechetical instruction and liturgical formation of the faithful, especially of children. They are also subject to diocesan rules regarding the comportment proper to the clerical state and also the various activities relating to the exercise of their sacred apostolate. Catholic schools conducted by religious are also subject to the local ordinaries as regards their general policy and supervision without prejudice, however, to the right of the religious to manage them. Likewise, religious are obliged to observe all those prescriptions which episcopal councils or conferences legitimately decree as binding on all" (*CD 35, 4; Eccl. Sanctae I, 39*).

45. In order that the relations between bishops and superiors produce increasingly more fruitful results, they must be developed in cordial respect for persons and institutes, in the conviction that religious must give witness of docility towards the Magisterium and of obedience to their superiors, and with the mutual understanding to act in such a way that neither transgresses the limits of competency of the other.

46. As to religious who engage in apostolic activities beyond the works of their own institute, their participation in the life of the community and their fidelity to their rule and constitutions must be safeguarded -- "bishops should not fail for their part to insist on this obligation" (*CD 35, 2*). No apostolic commitment should be an occasion to deviate from one's vocation.

Regarding the situation of certain religious who would like to withdraw from the authority of their superior and have recourse to that of the bishop, each case should be studied objectively. It is necessary, however, that after suitable exchange of views and a sincere search for solutions, the bishop support the provision made by the competent superior, unless it is evident to him that some injustice is involved.

47. Bishops and their immediate collaborators should see to it not only that they have an exact idea of the distinctive nature of each institute but that they keep abreast of their actual situation and of their criteria for renewal. Religious superiors, in turn, in addition to acquiring a more updated doctrinal vision of the particular Church, should also strive to keep themselves factually informed with respect to the current situation of pastoral activity and the apostolic program adopted in the diocese in which they are to offer their services.

In case an institute finds itself in the situation of being unable to carry on a given undertaking, its superiors should in good time and with confidence make known the factors hindering its continuance, at least in its actual form, especially if this is due to a lack of personnel. For his part, the local Ordinary should consider sympathetically the request to withdraw from the undertaking (cf. *Eccl. Sanctae I, 34, 3*) and in common accord with the superiors seek a suitable solution.

48. A deeply felt need, rich in promises also for the activities and apostolic dynamism of the local Church, is that of fostering, with concerned commitment, exchanges of information and better understanding among the various religious institutes working in a given diocese. To this end, superiors should do their part to bring about this dialog in suitable ways and at regular times. This will certainly serve to increase trust, esteem, mutual exchange of aids, in-depth study of problems and the mutual communication of experiences, so that as a consequence, the common profession of the evangelical counsels may be more clearly expressed.

49. In the vast pastoral field of the Church, a new and very important place has been accorded to women. Once zealous helpers of the Apostles (cf. *Acts* 18:26; *Rom* 16:1 ff.), women should contribute their apostolic activity today in the ecclesial community realizing faithfully the mystery of their created and revealed identity (cf. *Gen* 2; *Eph* 5; *1 Tim* 3 etc.) and taking notice of their growing influence in civil society.

Religious women therefore, faithful to their vocation and in harmony with their distinctive character as women, should seek out and propose new apostolic forms of service in response to the concrete needs of the Church and of the world.

After the example of Mary who in the Church holds the highest place of charity among believers, and animated by that incomparably human trait of sensitivity and concern which is so characteristic of them (cf. Paul VI, *Discourse to the National Congress of the Centro Italiano femminile, Oss. Rom.*, December 6-7, 1976), in the light of a long history offering outstanding witness to their undertakings in the development of apostolic activity, women religious will be able more and more to be and to be seen as a radiant sign of the Church, faithful, zealous and fruitful in her preaching of the kingdom (cf. Declaration *Inter Insigniores*, S. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, October 15, 1976).

50. Bishops, together with their collaborators in the pastoral field, and superiors, both men and women, should see to it that the apostolic service of women religious be better known, intensified and increased. They should, therefore, in view not only of the number of religious women, but especially of their importance in the life of the Church, do their utmost to see that the principle of their greater ecclesial promotion be put into effect, lest the People of God remain deprived of that special assistance, which they alone, by virtue of the gifts conferred on them by God in their quality of woman, can offer. Always, however, special attention is to be given to this that religious women be held in high esteem and be justly and deservedly appreciated primarily for the witness given by them as consecrated women, and then for the useful and generous services they offer.

51. In some regions there is noticeable a certain overabundance of initiatives to found new religious institutes. Those who are responsible for discerning the authenticity of each foundation should weigh with humility, of course, but also objectively, constantly, and seeking to foresee clearly the future possibilities -- every indication of a credible presence of the Holy



Spirit, both to receive His gifts "with thanksgiving and consolation" (*LG* 12) and also to avoid that "institutes may be imprudently brought into being which are useless or lacking in sufficient resources" (*PC* 19). In fact, when judgment regarding the establishment of an institute is formulated only in view of its usefulness and suitability in the field of action, or simply on the basis of the comportment of some person who experiences devotional phenomena, in themselves ambiguous, then indeed it becomes evident that the genuine concept of religious life in the Church is in a certain manner distorted (cf. Part I, ch. III).

To pronounce judgment on the authenticity of a charism, the following characteristics are required:

- a) its special origin from the Spirit, distinct, even though not separate, from special personal talents, which become apparent in the sphere of activity and organization;
- b) a profound ardor of love to be conformed to Christ in order to give witness to some aspect of His mystery;
- c) a constructive love of the Church, which absolutely shrinks from causing any discord in Her.

Moreover the genuine figure of the *Founders* entails men and women whose proven virtue (cf. *LG* 45) demonstrates a real docility both to the sacred hierarchy and to the following of that inspiration, which exists in them as a gift of the Spirit.

When there is question, therefore, of new foundations, all who have a role to play in passing judgment must express their opinions with great prudence, patient appraisal and just demands. Above all, the bishops, successors of the Apostles, "to whose authority the Spirit himself subjects even those who are endowed with charisms" (*LG* 7), and who, in communion with the Roman Pontiff, have the duty "to give a right interpretation of the counsels, to regulate their practice, and also to set up stable forms of living embodying them" (*LG* 43), should feel themselves responsible for this.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SUITABLE COORDINATION

The varied and fruitful vitality of the Churches necessitates a real commitment to coordinating action in order to renew, create and perfect the manifold pastoral means of service and animation. We shall consider some of these according to their different levels: diocesan, national, universal.

#### ***On the diocesan level***

52. In each diocese the bishop should strive to understand what the Spirit wants to manifest, even through his flock and especially through the individuals and religious families present in the diocese. This is why it is

necessary for him to cultivate sincere and familiar relations with superiors, in order the better to fulfill his ministry of Shepherd towards men and women religious (cf. *CD* 15; 16). In fact, it is his specific office to defend consecrated life, to foster and animate the fidelity and authenticity of religious and to help them become part of the communion and of the evangelizing action of his Church, according to their distinctive nature.

All this, of course, the bishop will have to realize in close collaboration with the episcopal conference and in harmony with the voice of the Head of the Apostolic College.

Religious, on the other hand, should consider the bishop not only as Shepherd of the entire diocesan community, but also as the one who guarantees fidelity to their vocation as they carry out their service for the good of the local Church. Indeed they "should comply promptly and faithfully with the requests or desires of the bishops when they are asked to undertake a greater share in the ministry of salvation," due consideration being given "to the character of the particular institute and to its constitutions (*CD* 35, 1).

53. The following dispositions of the Apostolic Letter *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, issued *motu proprio*, should always be kept in mind:

"1. All religious, even exempt, are bound by the laws, decrees and ordinances laid down by the local ordinary affecting various works, in those matters which concern the exercise of the sacred apostolate as well as the pastoral and social activity prescribed or recommended by the local ordinary.

"2. They are also bound by the laws, decrees and ordinances of the local ordinary or the episcopal conference" -- or, according to the locality, the patriarchal synod (cf. *CD* 35, 5) -- laws, that is, regarding various elements referred to in them (*ES* I, 25, 1-2, a, b, c, d).

54. It is advisable that the office of episcopal vicar for religious be set up in the diocese to render a service of collaboration, in this field, with the pastoral ministry of the bishop. This office, however, does not assume any role proper to the authority of superiors. It is up to each residential bishop to determine clearly the specific competencies of such an office and, after careful examination, entrust it to a competent person, well acquainted with the religious life, who knows how to appreciate it and desires to see it prosper.

As regards the discharge of such an office, it is strongly recommended that the various categories of religious: namely priests, brothers and women religious possessing the necessary qualities, have a part in it in a suitable way (for example, as consultors or under some other similar title).

The mandate, then, of episcopal vicar for religious congregations consists in helping accomplish a task which of its nature pertains exclusively to the bishop, that is, watching over religious life in the diocese and integrating it into its complex of pastoral activities. Wherefore, it would likewise seem

desirable that bishops prudently consult religious on the choice of the candidate.

55. In order that the diocesan presbyterium express due unity and that the various ministries be better fostered, the bishop should with all solicitude exhort the diocesan priests to recognize gratefully the fruitful contribution made by religious to their Church and to approve willingly their nomination to positions of greater responsibility, which are consonant with their vocation and competency.

56. Provisions should be made for religious priests to be part, in due proportion, of the Priests' Council; similarly religious priests, brothers and sisters should be fairly represented on pastoral councils (cf. *PR* 7; *CD* 27; *ES* I, 15 and 16). To define justly the suitability and proportions of representation, the local ordinary should set the criteria and necessary modalities.

57. In order to foster a certain stability in pastoral cooperation,

a) the difference existing between the *distinctive works* of an institute and *works entrusted* to an institute should be kept in mind by the local ordinary. In fact, the former depend on the religious superiors according to their constitutions, even though in pastoral practice they are subject to the jurisdiction of the local ordinary according to law (cf. *ES* 1, 29).

b) "Whenever a work of the apostolate is entrusted to any religious institute by a local ordinary in accordance with the prescriptions of law, a written agreement shall be made between the local ordinary and the competent superior of the institute which will, among other things, set down precisely all that concerns the work to be done, the members of the institute assigned to it and the finances" (*ES* I, 30 §2).

c) "For works of this nature members of the religious institute who are really suitable should be selected by the religious superior after discussion with the local ordinary and, where an ecclesiastical office is to be conferred on a member of the institute, the religious should be nominated by the local ordinary himself for a definite time decided upon by mutual agreement, his own superior presenting the candidate or at least assenting to the nomination" (*ES* I, 30 §2).

58. Without infringing on the right of arranging situations differently or of changing them in a way which is more in accord with the urgent needs of renewal of institutes, it seems opportune to determine in advance and in detail what works and especially what offices are to be entrusted to individual religious, for whom a written convention may be deemed necessary, as, for example, for pastors (cf. *ES* I, 33), deans, episcopal vicars, assistants for catholic action groups, secretaries of pastoral action, diocesan directors, Catholic university teachers, professional catechists, directors of Catholic colleges, etc. in view both of the stability of those in office and of the devolution of goods in case the undertaking should be suppressed.

If a religious is to be removed from an office entrusted to him, the following dispositions should be recalled: "Any religious member of an institute may for a grave cause be removed from an office entrusted to him either at the wish of the authority who entrusted him with the office, who should inform the religious superior, or by the superior, who should inform the authority who entrusted the office; this by equal right, the consent of the other party being required in neither case. Neither party is required to reveal to the other the reasons for his action, much less to justify them. There remains the right to appeal *in devolutivo* to the Apostolic See" (ES I, 92).

59. Associations of religious on the diocesan level have proved to be very useful; therefore, with due consideration for their distinctive character and goals, they should be encouraged,

a) both as organisms of mutual liaison and of promotion and renewal of religious life in fidelity to the directives of the Magisterium and with respect to the distinctive character of each institute;

b) and as organisms for the discussion of *mixed problems* between bishops and superiors, as well as for coordinating the activities of religious families with the pastoral action of the diocese under the direction of the bishop, without prejudice to the relationship and negotiations, which will be carried on directly by the bishop himself with each individual institute.

#### ***On the national, regional and ritual level***

60. In episcopal conferences of a country or region (cf. CD 37) the bishops themselves "exercise their pastoral office jointly in order to enhance the Church's beneficial influence on all men" (CD 38). In the same way patriarchal synods exercise their ministry for their own rite (cf. DE 9) and inter-ritual Assemblies of Ordinaries for relations among various rites, within the sphere of their particular situation (CD 38).

61. In many countries or regions, through the medium of the Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes -- and in regions dependent on the Sacred Congregations for the Evangelization of Peoples and for Oriental Churches, with the consent of the respective Congregations -- the Holy See has set up Councils or Conferences of Major Superiors (both of men and women or mixed). Such Councils must be deeply sensitive to the diversity of institutes, work to enhance common consecration and to channel the energies of all dedicated to apostolic work toward the pastoral coordination of the bishops (cf. n. 21).

Wherefore, in order that Councils of Major Superiors fulfill their purpose with necessary effectiveness, it is highly useful that an opportune review of their activity be made periodically and that, in harmony with the different missions of institutes an equitable division of commissions or rather similar groups, duly united with the Council of Major Superiors itself, be organized.

62. Relations between the council of major superiors and the patriarchal

synod, and similarly, relations between the same councils of major superiors and the episcopal conferences as well as inter-ritual assemblies, should be regulated according to criteria which determine the rapport between the individual institute and the local ordinary (cf. *ES I*, 23-25; 40); therefore indicative guidelines should also be set up according to the different needs of regions.

63. Since it is of utmost importance that the council of major superiors collaborate diligently and in a spirit of trust with episcopal conferences (cf. *CD 35*, 5; *AG 33*), "it is desirable that questions having reference to both bishops and religious should be dealt with by mixed commissions consisting of bishops and major religious superiors, men or women" (*ES II*, 43).

Such a mixed commission should be structured in such a way that even if the right of ultimate decision making is to be always left to the councils or conferences, according to the respective competencies, it can, as an organism of mutual counsel, liaison, communication, study, and reflection, achieve its purpose efficiently.

It is the competency, then, of the Shepherds to foster the coordination of all apostolic undertakings and activities, each in his own diocese; the same holds for the patriarchal synod and episcopal conferences for their respective regions (cf. *CD 36*, 5).

In questions regarding religious, bishops, if the need or utility require it -- as in fact it has in many places -- should create a special commission within the episcopal conference. Nevertheless, the presence of such a commission not only does not hamper the operation of the mixed commission, but rather postulates it.

64. Participation of major superiors, or, according to the statutes, of their delegates, also in other various commissions of the episcopal conferences or inter-ritual assemblies of local ordinaries (as, for example, in the commission on education, health, justice and peace, social communications, etc.), can be of great utility for the purposes of pastoral action.

65. The mutual presence by means of delegates both of episcopal conferences and of the conferences or councils of major superiors in each of the unions or assemblies of one and the other is recommended. Evidently, the necessary norms must be established in advance whereby each conference would treat by itself alone the matters of its exclusive competency.

### ***On the supra-national and universal level***

66. Regarding the international, continental or infra-continental sphere, among various countries united together, some form of coordination, both for bishops as well as for major religious superiors, can be created with the approval of the Holy See. A suitable liaison on this level of the individual centers of service helps a great deal towards achieving an ordered and harmonious action on the part of bishops and religious. In those areas

where such forms of organization on the continental level already exist, this task of cooperation can be profitably accomplished by the permanent committees or councils themselves.

67. On the universal level, the successor of Peter exercises a ministry specifically his own on behalf of the entire Church; however "in exercising his supreme, full and immediate authority over the universal Church the Roman Pontiff employs the various departments of the Roman Curia" (CD 9).

The Roman Pontiff himself has promoted some forms of cooperation of religious with the Holy See, by approving the council of the union of both men and women superiors general at the Sacred Congregation for Religious and for Secular Institutes (cf. *ES II*, 42) and by allowing the introduction of representatives of religious at the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (cf. *ES II*, 16) .

### CONCLUSION

Dialog and collaboration are already a reality on various levels. There is no doubt, however, that they have to be developed further, so that they produce more abundant fruit. The need therefore is evident to remember that in the work of collaboration, a real efficacious thrust will be had only when the leaders are convinced that such a thrust originates first of all in their own persuasion and formation. Indeed, everything will progress better if they are deeply convinced of the necessity and of the nature and importance of such cooperation, of mutual trust, of respect for the role of each individual, of mutual consultation in determining and organizing undertakings on every level. Then indeed the mutual relations between bishops and religious, carried on sincerely and readily, will be of great value in achieving in the most suitable and adequate way the dynamic vitality of the Church-Sacrament in its admirable mission of salvation.

The Apostle Paul, "prisoner in the Lord," writing to the Ephesians from Rome, thus counseled them: "I... exhort you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all humility and meekness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, careful to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (*Eph 4:1-3*).

The foregoing was submitted for the examination of the Holy Father, who, on April 23, 1978, benevolently approved it and mandated its publication.

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