

ARTICLES

Laymen in the Church: Jesus and His People

INTRODUCTION

An extraordinary Synod of bishops of the Catholic Church was held in Rome (October 1-29, 1987), with the theme: "The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World." It was noted that of the 292 participants, only some 60 were laymen admitted as *auditores* (listeners). Still the number and involvement of such *auditores* was deemed as very significant (by comparison with previous ecclesiastical reunions).

A few days after the closing of the Synod, a symposium was organized inviting a very outstanding female auditor to speak on the participation of the laity in the work of the Synod. The hall was filled to capacity, which spoke for the quality of the lecturer and the interest of the theme. A side comment was made in regard to the audience which, it was pointed out, "consisted mostly of priests and nuns."

A pointer question from this and similar situations can be raised: Is the Church clergy or laymen? If the question were asked so squarely of members of the clergy, they would probably answer

that the Church is both clergy and laymen. But what would happen if such a question were asked of the "ordinary Catholics"? When they hear or talk about the Church, are they referring to the clergy, or to the laity? Or are they making a mental distinction implying primarily the clergy and secondarily (whatever that is left to imply) the laity?

If, further, the same question were asked of a number of neutral observers (non-Christian) who simply read or hear clerical pronouncements as well as observe the attitude of the laity at large, what would the result be? One may venture to say that such observers would end up confused and needing some clarification and perhaps one could even claim that such is probably the situation among most Catholics. For while we are being told that the Church is all of us, in practice, when we see how the Church operates, it seems that only the clergy at various levels prepare the pronouncements, institute the laws, execute the ecclesiastical policies and judge the events and people.

Undeniably, though, the Church (implying mostly the clergy) has lately come to recognize (by intuition or by force of circumstances) the ambivalent (others call it "unfair") situation existing, and it has started to take serious steps to involve the laity. This has been rather obvious since the celebration of Vatican II with its doctrinal and pastoral pronouncements; it has been also due to the subsequent congresses on the role of the laity, the creation of the Pontifical Commission on the Laity, and the convening of the VIIth Synod of Bishops dealing with the "Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World."

"Among the elements that express the true and proper image of the Church," affirmed John Paul II, "one has to mention mainly these: the doctrine proposing the Church as the People of God (*LG II*) and the hierarchical authority as a service (*LG III*); further the doctrine that presents the Church as communion and thereby states the interrelationship that should exist between the local and universal Church, and between the collegiality and the primacy; the doctrine also according to which all the members of the People of God, in their own way, share in the threefold function of Christ, namely, priestly, prophetic and royal, and to this

doctrine it has to be added the teaching on the duties and rights of the Christian faithful, and concretely of the laymen."¹

With all these new approaches and ideologies, the old "well established" mentality has somehow collapsed, creating what has been called "new uneasiness" where: "The priests feel themselves expropriated from what was their specific character. The laity develop an inferiority complex because they were always under the protection of the clergy. And females resent it even more."²

Have the issues been finally solved and the confusion cleared? Has the Synod taken the appropriate steps to let the laity into the main stream of the Church? Has the clergy come to accept the laity as "equal partners" in the People of God? These are some of the questions we would like to reflect and expand on in the present work.

FAMILY OF JESUS: SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

What is the meaning of Jesus' Family, his People, his Church? He is said to be its Head and Founder. As a preview to an analysis of the issues, it is appropriate to establish the accurate meaning of those concepts by starting with the Old Testament understanding and background.

The Old Testament envisions a very special relationship of Yahweh with the Israelites who come to be known as Yahweh's People. With them he establishes a Covenant. The history of Israel witnesses two phases in its relationship with Yahweh: one, that may be called the phase of Moses, characterized by the establishment and upholding of the Covenant; the other, the period of the Prophets when the Covenant, having been broken by the people, is looked upon as a Promise. How did these two phases come about?

¹ "Apost. Const. 'Sacrae Disciplinae Legis'" (15-1-1983), AAS, 75 (1983), p. xi.

² J. Comby, "L'Evolution du Laicat au Cours du XXe Siecle", *Lumiere e Vie*, 36 (1987), p. 15.

In polytheistic surroundings, every god has a *laos*, a nation; and every nation is under the protection of a divinity whom they look upon as their god. Thus, it is important to point out that not only the concept of *laos*, People of God, but the styles of leadership and government, as well as of wisdom, prophecy and priesthood are likewise found in extra-biblical sources. We stress this, because the foreign origin of those concepts has often been forgotten and attributed as revealed directly by God. The fact is that Yahweh allows for a pattern of integration arising from a leading learning process from the surrounding cultures to a native contextualization even through changes in their form of institution.³

The concept of *laos* is not structural, but a concept of belonging, of possession on the part of God that is ratified through a covenant.⁴ By the acceptance of such a covenant, the members of the *laos* agree to obey the conditions of the election and commit themselves to have as their God the one who has chosen them.

In the case of Israel, it is Yahweh who chooses the Israelites as his Family, liberates them, and after chastising them (making them holy) through the desert, makes a Covenant with them on Mount Sinai. In response, the Israelites worship Yahweh and offer Him sacrifices. The Covenant then is sealed in blood (*Ex.* 19:3-6). From there on, Yahweh will watch over Israel as his *Laos*, as his special possession, his Family, and this *Laos* or clan will hold Yahweh as their God. The choice then, comes from Yahweh. The people are a holy *Laos* because Yahweh has touched, chastised and cut them off from other people.

Such are the bases of the Old Covenant, namely, the choice and protection on the part of Yahweh under certain conditions established by him; the acceptance and worship of Yahweh by the People who pledge to fulfill the conditions; and the ratification of the Covenant in a sacrifice of blood (cf. *Zach.* 9:11).

With the passing of time, the Israelites waver in their commitment, come to worship other gods and turn a deaf ear to Yahweh's voice. They break the Covenant, but not all. A *remnant* is left. This remnant becomes thereby the symbol of the whole

³ Cf. Herman Hendrickx, "The People of God in the Old Testament", *EAPR*, 23 (1986), p. 222.

⁴ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 215.

Laos of Israel (cf. e.g. *Zach.* 13:8-9). Yahweh for his part remains committed to the Covenant and watches over this small group represented usually in the form of the poor, the abandoned, the oppressed. When this remnant turns to him, Yahweh raises an intercessor on their behalf (*Ex.* 32:31-35), announces a period of deliverance and brings a *nagid*, or *nahib*, a prophet, who becomes the spokesman of Yahweh, struggling to actualize the terms of the Covenant (e.g. *Zach.* 10).

The ministry of the prophets then becomes a sort of conglomerate witness to the ways of Yahweh. They struggle to articulate in words the experience of the encounter with Yahweh in the troubled waters of their social and historic situation. Thus they become incarnate witnesses of Yahweh's word. They are pastors who help the *Laos* to put their lives and experiences in harmony with God's voice.

From the previous situation of possession and salvation, the *Laos* (now oppressed and exploited) turns to an attitude of expectation and promise by virtue of Yahweh's willingness to relent from his destructive plans and remember his promise of old in the Covenant.

The stage of prophecy then marks the end of the concept of *Laos* from the sense of actualization of the Covenant to the sense of promise of deliverance based on repentance from evil and remembrance of the way of their forefathers by the People and on the faithfulness to his promises on the part of Yahweh.

Now, therefore, the concept of Yahweh's People is no longer focused on Israel as a structure, but directed by the witness of the prophet on the remnant, on the poor and oppressed in the form of a promise of deliverance, and it becomes a soteriological concept.⁵

That soteriological concept of *Laos* is assumed in its totality and unequivocally by Jesus, the one we call the Founder (*I Cor.* 3:11) and Head of the *Ekklesia* (assembly) so well described by Paul: "Before anything was created, he existed, and he holds all things in unity. Now the Church is his body, he is its head. As

⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 215.

he is the beginning, he was the first to be born from the dead, so that he should be first in every way; because God wanted all perfection to be found in him and all things to be reconciled through him and for him" (*Col.* 1:17-20).

As a preview to an analysis of the issues, it is appropriate to establish an accurate understanding of a number of concepts which will be the object of our discussion. Thus, for instance, who is that Jesus? What does he do? What is the meaning of the concepts of head, founder and church?

Admittedly, Jesus is the God-made-man, the divinity in human form, "the Word made flesh" (*Jn.* 1:14). What is the purpose for such a humanization of the divinity? What is, we may ask, the mission of the Word in human flesh? Is the divinity entering human history to make a show of his omnipotence and splendor? If so, why does he then assume such a humanly poor shape, a baby born in poverty, raised in obscurity and whose life terminates in the utmost humiliation? Or is the divinity entering human history, perhaps, for another purpose, not to show his almightiness, but rather to prove his concern for us, fallen humans, to extend us a helping hand and show us the way back to the Father?

If one hears the proclamations of Isaiah about the Suffering Servant of Yahweh (*Is.* 42-53), if one reads the infancy Gospel of Luke (*Lk.* 1-2), if one pays attention to the testing of the Messiah in the desert (*Mtth.* 4:1-11), the exaltation of the oppressed and persecuted, the proclamation on the mountain at the opening of his ministry (*Mtth.* 5:1-12), the constant and growing struggle with the representatives of power and oppression that leads him to the events of his trial and condemnation, then it would seem that the biblical reply as to Jesus' mission on earth is less for a show of divine power ("I could invoke the Father and he would send me a dozen legions of angels," *Mtth.* 26:53), than to assume in his life a humiliating role that would ironically bring about the final victory of the resurrection, for it is through this humiliation, not through the show of power, that the scriptural plans promised by the prophets for the restoration of the Covenant will be fulfilled (*Mtth.* 26:54-56).

Then, what can we learn from the constant call to repentance by the prophets from of Old and of the divine appeals to the chosen people to follow the path marked by Yahweh? What of Jesus' constant appeal to sinners to turn back to the Father, of his call to the disciples to follow him, to show them the utmost love not as servants but as "friends" (*Jn.* 15:15)? It is the biblical reply that Jesus' mission, aside from being a mission of humiliation (redemption), is likewise a mission of concern (salvation) and love, showing men the way back to the Father.

Jesus' ministry and the context of his passion indicate that somehow Jesus had a sort of Family described by him as "my followers" (*Jn.* 18:8), or by the authorities as "disciples of the Nazarean" (*Lk.* 22:59; *Mk.* 14:67-70). He is the Founder. The Acts of the Apostles relates to us how the disciples of Jesus were being persecuted as "followers of the Way" (*Acts* 9:1-2). Eventually, these believers became known as "Messianites", the disciples of the Messiah (*Acts* 11:26) who, when referred to by their location were called the "community" or *ekklesia* of believers of Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Rome, Laodicea, etc. (cf. *I Pet.* 12:1; *Apoc.* 1:4-11). Jesus not only had been their Founder and Master (*Jn.* 13:14), he continues to be their Head (*Col.* 1:17-20; *Eph.* 2:20-22; 4:15).

What seems then rather clear is that Jesus incarnates in himself the prophetic sense of *Laos* of Yahweh, and in his Person he clinches the Covenant bringing together Yahweh and his New People (priestly act), offering himself as the sacrifice of the Covenant. Thus a New Covenant takes place that overshadows the old one (cf. *Heb.* 3:1-6; 5:1-9; 7:11-19; 12:18-29). In this New Covenant, Jesus has chosen his Family as his own possession. It is the Family not of the structuralized nation of Israel, but of the "remnant" of the prophets, the Family of the persecuted, the poor and the oppressed, and this Family is to be known as the "*Laos* of Jesus", Christians, located though they may be in different communities and composed as they are going to be of Jews and Gentiles, males and females, slaves and masters..., as "they are all one in Christ" (*Gal.* 3:26-28).

Thus is the Founder and Head of the *Laos*. One easily understands this by simply reading the Gospels. Jesus calls him-

self the "shepherd" (*Jn.* 10:11). It is Jesus who says: "You call me Master and Lord, and you say well, for indeed I am" (*Jn.* 13:13). It is Jesus who also says that "whenever two or three of you are gathered in my name, I will be in the midst of you" (*Mtth.* 18:19).

What happened then to that *Laos*? To Simon, one of his chosen companions, he says: "You are Rock and on this Rock I will build my Church" (*Mtth.* 16:18). Scripture teaches us that the Rock signifies the salvific presence of Yahweh (e.g., *I Macc.* 4:36-60). Jesus is the Rock as prophesied by Isaiah (*Is.* 28:16), and now Jesus is passing that role on to Peter and from Peter to his *Kahal* (Church). But is that *Kahal*, a *Kirche* (Cathedral) of secular structures, or an *Ekklesia* (Community) of committed people ready to launch a mission? It has been pointed out that Jesus founded not a *Kirche* of secular structures but an *Ekklesia* of dynamic people, a movement.⁶ Without allowing oneself to be prejudiced by historical developments, it may be more appropriate to clarify the issue with the contextualization of the Gospel and the developments of the early stage of Christianity. One thing, though, remains unchallenged, the mind of the Founder in this regard: "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you" (*Jn.* 20:21; cf. *Jn.* 17:18). "Go out to the whole world, proclaim the Good News to all creation" (*Mk.* 16:15-16). "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (*Mtth.* 28:19). Definitely, Jesus' words identify the Church's mission with his own, namely, not a mission to bring about a show of almighty power, but a mission of salvation through humiliation and example as the means to attain the return of man to the Father.

In conclusion, the description of who Jesus is and what he comes to do among us is not better summarized than in the words of St. Paul to the Philippians: "Jesus Christ, though he was in the form of God, he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a Servant, being born in the likeness of man. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the NAME which is above every name, that at

⁶ Cf. Eugene Flameygh, "The Laity in History", *EAPR*, 23 (1985), p. 233.

the NAME of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (*Phil.* 2:6-11).

If with the fulfillment of the Promise, Jesus has brought about the restoration of Yahweh's friendship, what are the bases of the New Covenant? And how are those bases supposed to be carried on by his Family?

BASES OF THE NEW COVENANT

The Old Covenant had been seen established on the choice by God of a particular people whom he claimed as his possession and in exchange he expected them to heed his voice and fulfill his commandments. The people chosen manifested their agreement by worshiping Yahweh and ratified it by offering a sacrifice in blood.

The New Covenant does not break the old, but, in the words of its Founder, Jesus, brings it to perfection (*Mtth.* 5:17). Jesus is also the one who chooses his Family. He chooses first the twelve (*Mtth.* 4:18; *Mk.* 3:13-19; *Lk.* 6:12-16). He reminds his followers: "It is I who has chosen you, not you who chose me" (*Jn.* 15:16). The Founder also comes to consider them as his own, his possession (*Jn.* 17:6-19), and as a good shepherd he will lose none (*Jn.* 17:12) and he is ready to defend his flock to the point of laying down his life for his own (*Jn.* 10:11-15).

In exchange the Founder expects that his flock will hear his voice (*Jn.* 10:3) and not the voice of strangers (*Jn.* 10:5), other gods, and that his flock fulfill his commands, for so he says: "You are my friends if you do what I have commanded you" (*Jn.* 15:14).

The Covenant has been ratified. The Covenant, the conditions will not be altered. How is the Covenant supposed to be carried out by the People? In the language of St. John, this will take place through the underlying force of the Spirit, the Spirit who will be coming upon his Family: "He will teach you everything I have told you" (*Jn.* 14:26).

How then is his Family going to manifest its agreement with the Covenant, so as to be considered the Family of Jesus, Christians? This very same question was asked of Peter on the day of Pentecost, on the day the Spirit descended on the Family. Peter's reply was: "Repent and be baptized in the Name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38).

This is the "worship" of the New Family, faith, acceptance of the Founder without reservations, and of no other gods. Then, I will be baptized, and Jesus will hold me as a member of his Family, of his *Laos*, I will be a Christian.

What ever happened to the sacrifice? We know that it was Jesus who turned himself into the bloody sacrifice initiated in Nazareth and consummated on Mount Calvary, but he did this as a mediator of deliverance and became priestly through the anticipation of the new Passover "commemorating" the old liberation from Egypt (*Mtth.* 26:18), and at the end of the celebration of the new Passover told his followers: "Do this in remembrance of me" (*Lk.* 22:19; *I Cor.* 11:24-25). Thus his *Laos* gathers in common to commemorate the *agape* and persevere in prayer.

In this way the New Covenant in the New *Laos* of Jesus has been fulfilled and carried on for the salvation of all.

What then are the bases of the New *Laos*? From what has been said, we may conclude that the New Covenant implies the action of the Spirit in the People, and the faith of the Family in the Founder. The action of the Spirit is the choice and protection of Yahweh over the New People. The faith is the acceptance of the Name of Jesus, of Jesus as their Lord. The conditions of the New Covenant are to follow Jesus, that is the Way of Jesus, by being baptized, and being buried to sin with Jesus (*Rom.* 6:1-11), in order to learn "nothingness". The ratification of the New Covenant continues to be effected in blood, in the blood of the Founder whose sacrifice is prolonged in the continuous remembrance by the Community in the celebration of the *agape*, for he had authoritatively commanded that his Family

continued the priestly ratification when he told them: "Do this in remembrance of me" (*I Cor.* 11:24; *Lk.* 22-19).

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Jesus has established a very special Covenant with a New People, his Family. This Family has accepted Jesus and is bound to carry on the conditions of the Covenant: the Way of Jesus. The Covenant is ratified in blood, the blood of Jesus. Now we wonder: What kind of priesthood is Jesus' priesthood? What kind of sacrifice is his Family charged to "remember"? What kind of authority and mission is Jesus passing on to his Family? And, ultimately, what kind of Family is this New People? Has he left them with any organizational set up? How? These are some of the question we would like to clarify, but let us consider one question at a time.

Jesus' Priesthood

It has been stated that the concepts of priesthood and authority has been absorbed into Judaism from external pagan cultures and religions; and what is said of Judaism could likewise be affirmed of Christianity. The same could be asserted of the concepts of covenant and *laos*, mission, authority, ministry, etc., for after all, God's revelation does not imply a new vocabulary, but a new content, a new orientation, inculturalized within the historical context where it takes place.

Thus, while we admit that these concepts of priesthood and authority are engrained in pagan as well as in Jewish religion, nevertheless, we see them applied also in the New Covenant established by Jesus. Hence since these concepts do not have a claim to direct divine revelation, it would seem that they could be modified both in terms of institution and organization throughout their historical evolution, provided that their original Christian content and orientation were preserved.

That is precisely where our search should lead us in regard to the concepts of priesthood, mission, authority, ministry, etc., as found in the New Covenant. Has Jesus modified them? If he has, can we say that he has established such modifications as indispensable ingredients of the New Covenant?

If we start with the concept of priesthood, the very idea of it makes reference to mediation. Mediation implies the existence of two separated, even antagonized parties for which the mediator is in charge of bridging or reconciling.

Talking theologically, the two separated, even antagonistic parts, are God and man, and the bridging is done through the offering of a sacrifice by a mediator called priest who plays the double role of bringing man's requests to God and imploring God's graces over man.

The question then arises as to who would be the best mediator on such hostile ground? Who could best bridge that gulf? The obvious answer ought to be, he who would be on the best of terms with both parties, namely, with God and man; not with God alone or with man alone, but with both. This bridge is Christ, perfect God and perfect man.

How are the parties then bridged? Technically theologians call the bridge *hypostatic union*, which is precisely the union or bridging of the perfect divine and human natures in the utmost friendship or perfection called the divine hypostasis or personality. Such then is Jesus' perfect ontological bridging, his mediation, his priesthood.

Now, even an amateur metaphysician would know that subsistence, hypostasis, personality, is a concept which by definition does not admit any sharing, for it is completely "incommunicable". Such being the case, it is immediately concluded that this species of Jesus' mediation or ontological priesthood is exclusively his and it cannot, in any way, be passed on to others, or "shared" by others.

What do we make then of the so called Christian priesthood? Metaphysics teach us that the "hypostasis" or personality is the ultimate perfection in the substantial order, but beyond that are the existential and operational orders. In simple terms, the ontological mediation, once established (existence), becomes dynamic, is operational. At this point then, we ask ourselves, what is it that constitutes the dynamism of Jesus' mediation? How does he operate in his ontological priesthood? For it is indeed only from such dynamism that Christian mediation can share.

St. Paul gives us the answer when he describes the ontological and functional aspects of Jesus' priesthood saying: "Jesus Christ, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a Servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the NAME which is above every name, that at the NAME of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (*Phil.* 2:6-11).

Jesus' dynamic mediation consists then in the "learning obedience to the point of death and death on a cross." Modern theology calls this dynamism a *diakonia*, a service. And so all Christians, especially those elected for the ministry, are said to be called to a vocation of service. "The whole of Jesus' life" says Page, "was a priestly life, namely, a life dedicated to the service of God and men; it must be the same for the Christian willing to follow Jesus."⁷ Actually, though, this is a rather euphemistic language, for if one analyses deeply the words of St. Paul, what he is talking about is something well beyond the concept of service. He is talking about "learning obedience to the point of death and death on a cross." He is talking about mediating through a process of becoming "nothing", total *kenosis*. And Paul sees precisely in that *kenosis* the path for the liberating element of the New Covenant when he says: "As a result God exalted him."

How is this priesthood of the New Covenant shared by Jesus' *Laos*? The answer to this leads us to an analysis of the theology of the "ministry". Let it suffice for the moment to say that in whatever manner it may be, the *authentic* Christian priesthood has to be rooted ultimately in Jesus' ontological mediation ("Jesus, being God, does not cling to the divine form, but gives it up and takes the form of a slave"), and sharing in its dynamism can be of no other specific characteristic but *kenotic*. Any other content or orientation that society or religion may give to Jesus'

⁷ J. G. Page, "Les Fondaments Theologiques de la Mission du Laic", *Communio*, 12-1 (1987), p. 54.

priesthood may be historically acceptable or not, but it would definitely be non-Christian.

Jesus' Mission

There is in Jesus' Covenant a characteristic not found in the Old Covenant of Sinai, and it is its dynamism. The Old Covenant, both in its establishment and promulgation was given the aspect of perpetuity. Ingredient to such a promulgation was the inscribing of its conditions on tables of stone (*Ex.* 24:12). That gave to the agreement an added aspect of immobility, an static sense. The New Covenant, deriving as it also does from the divinity, imprints a sense of perpetuity; but on the other hand, it is promised to be inscribed not on tables of stone, but on "the hearts of men" (*Jer.* 32:4). Thus, incarnate in human life, it carries an intrinsic semblance of dynamism, particularly in its transmission through the priesthood, authority and power of its Founder who stated: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, go and teach all nation" (*Mtth.* 28:18-19). "As the Father sent me, so I am sending you" (*Jn.* 20:21; cf. *Jn.* 17:18).

This is the mission passed on from Jesus to his *Laos*. This mission is unique, the continuous transmission of the New Covenant but, it has to be made clear that, although the mission is rooted on the ontological mediation of Jesus ("As the Father sent me"), it is shared with his People through the *kenotic* dynamism of Jesus' mediation ("So I am sending you").

Two questions come into discussion at this point, namely, how is that mission received by the *Laos* of Jesus, and secondly, how is it passed on to others?

The answer to the first question lies, as we pointed out, in the acceptance of Jesus in *faith* and its externalization through *baptism*. Why through baptism? Because Jesus' mission, let us repeat once more, is a share in his kenosis, and such is the meaning of our baptism. In the words of St. Paul: "You have been taught that when we were baptised in Christ Jesus, we were baptised in his death, in other words, when we were baptised we went into the tomb with him and joined him in death" (*Rom.* 6:3-4). It is the theology of baptism, as the sacrament of *kenosis*, that

gives meaning to the sharing in Jesus' mission. And because of this, one has to conclude that the mission devolves on the whole *Laos* of Jesus, on all the baptized and not only on one sector of them. As Rosato says: "More than twenty years after Vatican II, the desired cooperation of the baptized and the ordained in the single mission of the Church in the world is still being hindered by unilateral theological emphases on one modality of Christian priesthood or the other."⁸

How is that mission passed on to others? The answer to this second question leads directly to the study of the theology of the ministry in the *Laos* of Jesus, but before engaging in such an analysis, the concepts of authority and power need to be clarified.

Jesus' Authority

What is the proper meaning of Christian authority? It should be relatively easy to accept the closeness and interrelationship existing between the term authority (*auctoritas*) and the terms power (*potestas*), ministry and hierarchy (*hierarchia*) or level of responsibility.⁹

A simple analysis of the terms would lead us to understand that while in the context outside Christianity such terms are associated with a peculiar meaning, their significance differs substantially in the context of the Gospel.

The Latin term *auctoritas* is socially accepted in the context of control, mandate, imposition, by one in possession of the *potestas* or power to dictate. The one who has no authority has no power, he is the inferior, the subject controlled and dominated by the one who is in authority and has the power to dictate and impose his will upon others.

On the other hand, *auctoritas* is a term that derives from *auctor*, and an *auctor* or author etymologically is one who authorizes, who creates, who brings about things. Under this interpretation, an author comes to be synonymous with a leader, with one who is creative and motivates others. *Auctoritas* then would be similar to leadership.

⁸ Philip J. Rosato, "Priesthood of the Baptized and Priesthood of the Ordained", *Gregorianum*, 62 (1987), p. 217.

⁹ Cf. B. Pena, *Catechetics*, Manila, 1982, pp. 119-124.

This is the more authentic meaning of authority and it is the meaning embedded in the context of the Gospel. Jesus, our Leader, inspires his audience with his creative words, authority (cf. *Mtth.* 7:28-29) for which he is called the "Good Master" (*Lk.* 18:18), the honest Rabbi with no regard for partiality (*Mtth.* 22:16). We see Jesus' example of word and conduct when he invites his disciples to "follow" him (*Mtth.* 4:18-22; 8:22; 9:9), or telling his disciples how to "know the tree by its fruits" (*Mtth.* 7:19-20). We see Jesus' generosity helping the needy in Cana (*Jn.* 2:1-11), the widow in Nain (*Lk.* 7:11-17), the mother-in-law of Peter (*Lk.* 4:38-39), the epileptic demoniac (*Lk.* 9:37-42), the dropsical man (*Lk.* 14:1-6), etc. We see Jesus' understanding in dialoguing with his disciples (*Mtth.* 16:13-17), in allowing the children to come to him (*Lk.* 18:15-17) and the paralytic (*Lk.* 5:17-26) and the sick to express their longings to him. Finally, we see Jesus prompting his listeners (*Mtth.* 5:17-48), correcting their views on power (*Lk.* 9:46-48; 22:24-30), their partiality for family relationships, their regard for the neighbor (*Mtth.* 5:21-26; 5:43-48) and the treasures from on high (*Lk.* 12:21; 12:33-34).¹⁰ The full biblical understanding of divine and human authority consists in "an attitude entailing compassion, dedication and generosity."¹¹

How is that kind of leadership or authority passed on to his *Laos*? This question, like the previous one on the priesthood and the subsequent ones on power and ministry, are crucial to Christian ecclesiology. For, while we may rightfully state that these concepts are pagan in origin, we cannot but claim that their Christian content and orientation derive directly from the Founder. Surrendering such a claim would be equivalent to a denial of the very foundations of our ecclesiology.

How then does Jesus pass his leadership on to his *Laos*? "If you wish to be my disciples" —he says—, "pick up your daily cross and follow me" (*Lk.* 9:22). Or perhaps even more directly to the point: "You call me Master and Lord and you say it well, for indeed I am. If then, I, being Your Master and Lord, have

¹⁰ Cf. B. Pena, *Soteriology*, Manila, 1985, pp. 509-528.

¹¹ Ph. J. Rosato, *a.c.*, p. 229.

washed your feet, you also should wash each other's feet. I have given you an example so that you will do as I have done" (*Jn.* 13:13-15).

Jesus' Power

The Latin term *potestas* is often taken as meaning power, dominion, superiority. It is like the seat of law and the determining factor to decide what is just or unjust, good and evil.

In its original meaning, however, *potestas* derives from the verb *potere*, and this means a capacity to do things, a potentiality to perform, an energy to act. *Potestas* then would be equivalent to a capacity, a ready attitude to do things, to help, to serve. "Service" could thus be a more appropriate way of understanding *potestas*.

"The letter to the Hebrews," explains Rosato, "attests that Jesus had to become the supreme intercessor by passing, as a true sharer in humanity, through temptation, suffering and death, and that his priestly power consists in mercy, credibility and self-giving rather than in the ability to dominate over others. In other words, Jesus' power involves *kenosis*."¹² "Seminarians should understand very plainly," says Vatican II, "that they are called not to dominion or to honors, but to give themselves over entirely to God's service and the pastoral ministry."¹³

This second kind of power seems to be much more in accordance with the understanding of the Gospels, of the Jesus who exercises that power from Bethlehem to Calvary, the power of the one born in total rejection, the power of the one described as "obedient" to Mary and Joseph (*Lk.* 2:52), who becomes known as the "Son of the Carpenter" (*Mtth.* 13:55); the power of the one tempted by the utmost seductions of the other kind of worldly power (*Mtth.* 4:1-11), the power of the one who launches a program of solidarity with the oppressed and persecuted (*Mtth.* 5:1-12), the power of the one who from the beginning of his ministry to the end does nothing but cure the lepers, the blind, the paraly-

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 229.

¹³ Vatican II, *Decree on Priestly Formation*, n. 9.

tic and ultimately is led to the climax of such power, the cross, the death of the nobody, from whose throne he exclaims: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (*Mk.* 15:34).¹⁴ Such power, then, Jesus shares with his *Laos*, challenging them: "If you wish to be my disciples, pick up your cross" (*Lk.* 9:22).

*Jesus' Ministry*¹⁵

The term ministry is described as "the act of ministering; the office or functions of a minister." A minister is "one authorized to conduct religious service as pastor or clergyman; one to whom the executive head of a government entrusts the direction of certain affairs of state." To minister is "to act as religious minister; to perform service."¹⁶

The meaning of ministry then is somehow the opposite of authority, of being superior. It implies the implementation of a directive given by somebody else.¹⁷ This concept implies an organizational set up of a group or society.

In an arranged society one has an organizational manual that states its own objectives and is composed of two parts, one called the organizational chart or line of command, and the other the job description, implying the work or responsibility assigned to each level of command. In the ecclesiastical context, we call the latter "ministry" and the former "ministers" or hierarchy (commonly it is known as the "clergy").

We have already stated that most of these terms have been derived from pagan religions and cultures. All the concepts, though, carry within the Christian *Laos* a characteristic in its set up and dynamism that is very peculiar to Christianity. And this is the target of our interest.

¹⁴ Cf. B. Peña, *Soteriology*, pp. 442-466.

¹⁵ Cf. Heinrich Fries, Ed., *Conceptos Fundamentales de la Biblia*, vol. 3, Madrid: Ed. Cristiandad, 1979.

¹⁶ *Webster International Dictionary*, Encyclopedic Edition.

¹⁷ Cf. Bernard Botte, "Le Vocabulaire du Ministère dans le Nouveau Testament", *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, 10 (1987), p. 83.

That in Jesus' *Laos* there are different ministries seems clear already from the very time of its Founder. In the Gospel it is said: "When Jesus heard that the Pharisees had found out that he was making and baptizing more disciples than John—though in fact it was his disciples who baptised, not Jesus himself—he left Judea and went back to Galilee" (*Jn.* 4:1). Those words indicate that in Jesus' time there were already the ministry of baptizing and of preaching, of announcing the Kingdom. In the Gospels Jesus is recorded as repeatedly stating that he has come to proclaim the Kingdom, that the apostles were sent by him to announce the "Good News" (*Mk.* 16:15-16), that "some women" administered to the needs of Jesus (*Lk.* 8:2-3; *Mtth.* 27:55-56; *Mk.* 15:40), and that Judas was in charge of the funds (*Jn.* 13:29).

Later on, at the early stage of the Church, St. Paul states that Jesus' *Laos* is set up as one body of which he is the Head and the components of the *Laos* are the members: "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). Then Paul goes on to clarify that as in a body there are so many members and all under the same head harmoniously perform their different functions, so it happens in Jesus' *Laos*.

What are those functions? Paul says some are to be apostles, others prophets, evangelizers, shepherds, doctors, etc. (*Eph.* 4:11). "For just as each of our bodies has several parts and each part has a separate function, so all of us, in union with Christ, form one body, and as parts of it we belong to each other. Our gifts differ according to the grace given us. If your grace is prophecy, then use it as your faith suggests, if administration, then use it for administration; if teaching, then use it for teaching. Let the preacher deliver sermons, the alms givers give freely, the officials be diligent, and those who do works of mercy do them cheerfully" (*Rom.* 12:4-8).

All the gifts, though, are meant for the building of Jesus' body, his *Laos*: "And to some, his gift was that they should be apostles; to some, prophets; to some, evangelists; to some, pastors and teachers; so that the saints together make a unity in the

work of service, building up the body of Christ" (*Eph.* 4:11-12). All of them are intended for the accomplishment of the objectives of the organization.

All the ministries or tasks of Jesus' *Laos* are rooted on the common faith and common baptism. From these derive the *Laos'* threefold Christian characteristics, namely, priestly, kingly and prophetic. These, in the Gospel context, mean to offer sacrifices, to rule ("to serve, not to be served", to lead with the example, not with the commands), and to proclaim the mission through testimony of life and word.

This is what could be known as the basis for the job description of the different Christian ministries. The prophetic, priestly and kingly functions constitute the three basic fields (objectives) of the *Laos'* (organization's) activity, from which derives the corresponding organizational chart of ministers or officials of the *Laos*.

One has to notice two things, namely, the three ministries are different areas of responsibility within the same society, Jesus' *Laos*. But beyond that *difference*, one observes in the Scripture also a hierarchy or line of *priorities* among these ministries. From where do we conclude that diversity and hierarchy of the ministry?

Holy Scripture says: "When Jesus heard that the Pharisees had found out that he was making and baptizing more disciples than John —though infact it was his disciples who baptized, not Jesus himself— he left Judea and went back to Galilee" (*Jn.* 4:1). "The twelve called a full meeting of the disciples and addressed them: 'It would not be right for us to neglect the Word of God so as to give out food; you, brothers, must select among yourselves seven men of good reputation, filled with the Holy Spirit and with wisdom; we will hand over this duty to them, and continue to devote ourselves to prayer and to the service of the Word'" (*Acts* 6:2-4). Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News" (*I Cor.* 1:17).

The Church states: "I know that your ministry as Bishops," says John Paul II, "is growing daily more complex and over-

whelming. A thousand duties call you: from the training of new priests to being actively present within the lay communities, from the living, worthy celebration of the sacraments and acts of worship to concern for human advancement and the defense of human rights. But let the concern to foster active and effective catechesis yield to no other care whatever in any way."¹⁸

From the above quotations, it follows clearly that there exists a diversity of functions in the Church's ministry, that there is a hierarchy of responsibility in those functions, and that the primacy in that hierarchy of functions belongs to the Pastors personally, those who have been consecrated primarily for that task.

The *diversity* of ministries refers to a threefold field: First, the Ministry of the Word, which basically consists in the proclamation of the Good News, in the work of telling people about Christ and of bringing them to him and to his ways. Secondly, the Sacramental Ministry, which would embrace mainly the ministry of Eucharist, baptism, marriage and anointing of the sick. Finally, the Administrative Ministry, which would be what we call nowadays the bureaucratic work, the administration of the goods of the community and the paper work in the office.

The *hierarchy* of those ministries is in the order of primacy of importance, according to those statements of Sacred Scripture and the words of the pope. First, the Ministry of the Word, above all other kinds of activities. Secondly, the Sacramental Ministry. Last of all, the Administrative Ministry. The words of Scripture and of the Church leave no room for mistakes about the hierarchy of the ministries.

Jesus' Ministers

The issue now reverts to the Christian organizational chart, to the line of command. St. Paul talks about the different ministers in Jesus' *Laos*. He says: "And to some, his gift was that they should be apostles; to some, prophets; to some, evangelists; to some pastors and teachers; so that the saints together make a

¹⁸ John Pual II, *Catechesis Tradendae*, n. 63.

unity in the work of service, building up the body of Christ" (*Eph.* 4:11-12). "Now my dear brothers, I want to clear up a wrong impression about spiritual gifts. You remember that when you were pagans, whenever you felt irresistibly drawn, it was towards dumb idols. It is for that reason that I want you to understand that on the one hand no one can be speaking under the influence of the Holy Spirit and say, 'curse Jesus,' and on the other hand, no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord' unless he is under the influence of the Holy Spirit. There is a variety of gifts but always the same Spirit. There are all sorts of service to be done, but always to the same Lord; working in all sorts of different people; it is the same God who is working in all of them. The particular way in which the Spirit is given to each person is for a good purpose. One may have the gift of preaching with wisdom given him by the Spirit; another may have the gift of preaching instruction given him by the same Spirit; and another the gift of faith given by the same Spirit; another again the gift of healing, through this one Spirit; one the power of miracles; another prophecy; another the gift of recognising spirits; another the gift of tongues and another the ability of interpreting them. All these are work of one and the same Spirit, who distributes different gifts to different people just as he chooses. Just as a human body, though it is made up of many parts, is a single unit because all these parts, though many, make one body, so it is with Christ" (*I Cor.* 12:1-12).

To each minister, his own separate work: "Just as each of our bodies has several parts and each part has a separate function, so all of us, in union with Christ, form one body, and as parts of it we belong to each other. Our gifts differ according to the grace given us. If your grace is prophecy, then use it as your faith suggests, if administration, then use it for administration; if teaching, then use it for teaching. Let the preacher deliver sermons, the alms givers give freely, the officials be diligent, and those who do works of mercy do them cheerfully" (*Rom.* 12:4-8).

Beyond such diversity and distinction, Paul teaches us, there is also a priority, or hierarchy: "Now you together are Christ's body; but each of you is a different part of it. In the Church

God has given the first place to apostles, the second to prophets, the third to teachers; after them, miracles, and after them the gift of healing; helpers, good leaders, those with many languages. Are all of them apostles, or all of them prophets, or all of them teachers? Do they all have the gift of miracles, or all have the gift of healing? Do all speak strange languages, and all interpret them?" (*I Cor.* 12:27-30).

Logically it would seem that the objectives or fields of activity should dictate the line of command and the job description. In other words, that to each of those three fields of Christian activity should correspond a pertinent line of command, and that among them a hierarchy of priorities should exist.

St. Paul places the apostles first—"as witnesses of the resurrection" (*Acts* 1:21-22)—as the group who having been with Jesus from the beginning of his ministry can proclaim his deeds and words and thus be "spokesmen" of the Master on all things. But who after them can raise a claim to apostleship under those same grounds?

Aside from the apostles, then, Paul records the priorities of ministers placing prophets and teachers ahead of healers and miracle workers, and leaving the leadership or ruling ministry to the last of the gifts. It seems rather easy to conclude that Paul sets his priorities basing the criterion on the hierarchy of the ministries or fields of endeavor in Jesus' *Laos*. This would be but most appropriate, since in Jesus' *Laos*, like in a body, all members are in function of the welfare of the body (*Eph.* 4:12), for the building of the Church (*I Cor.* 12:7), and not for the uplifting of a particular minister. It is the hierarchy of the ministry (prophetic, priestly, kingly) that ought to guide the primacy of the ministers, not the hierarchy of the organizational chart which dictates the objectives and fields of responsibility of the organization. In this sense, then, it would be more appropriate to talk about the "order" or hierarchy of ministries, work, than about the "order" or hierarchy of persons, ministers.

Thus, if one would talk "hierarchically" concerning the kind of ministry assigned to each of the members of Jesus' *Laos*, it would seem clear that the pastors, from the pope and bishops to

the mere priests, ought to be involved "personally" and primarily in the Ministry of the Word, leaving to those in the "lower" hierarchy of service the Sacramental Ministry. As for the Administrative Ministry, certainly it should not occupy any primacy of importance among the tasks of the pastors-priests, even less of the bishops and least of all of the pope. This seems to be the mind of John Paul II when, after mentioning the different possible ministries that may be exercised by the pastors, he emphatically states: "Let the concern to foster active and effective catechesis [Prophetic Ministry] yield to no other care whatever in any way."¹⁹

Jesus' Hierarchy

Talking about Jesus' ministry and ministers, we have used the concept of "hierarchy". Although, from the etymological meaning of the terms "ministry" and "minister", one gets the idea that the whole discussion evolves around the concept of subjection or work under an authorized ruler, nevertheless one observes clear discrepancies between the etymological meaning and the actual thing as known to us at present, a discrepancy between theory and praxis in modern society. For while etymologically a minister may be a "subject" charged with the task of working for an authority, in practice a minister in civil society, for example, refers rather to one who enjoys a high dignity and from his raised position dictates orders to his subordinates and *laos*, so that his policies will be implemented. In what sense, then, are we referring about "hierarchy" in Jesus' *Laos*?

The term "hierarchy" refers to "hierarch"; etymologically a twofold word: *hieros*, that means sacred, and *arche*, rule. "One who rules or has authority in sacred things." Hierarchy then would refer to the chain of "hierarchs"; and its plural expression refers to "a ranking of individuals, as a group of officials, according to their authority or function in a church or government."²⁰ This latter meaning switches the concept of hierarchy from what is "sacred" to a "ranking official" in a church or government,

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, n. 63.

²⁰ *Webster's Dictionary*.

and this is the rather common understanding with the emphasis on rank and the actual sense of authority as a commanding, ruling function. Is this the authentic meaning of "hierarchy" in Jesus' *Laos*?

That Jesus' *Laos* is hierarchical (sacred) is a pillar of our Christian religion. That the ministries are "sacred" and that among them there is a ranking of priorities, as far as the true objectives of Jesus' *Laos* is concerned, it is well stated in the Scriptures; and so is the variety and "ranking" of the ministers in the functions of the *Laos*. But how is that "ranking" or prioritizing to be understood in authentic Christianity? The Gospels offer us three passages that give a good insight of Jesus' mind on the issue and they need little explanation:

"At that moment," says Matthew, "the disciples came to Jesus, asking, 'Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?' Jesus called a child, had him stand in front of them, and said: 'Remember this! Unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven. The greatest in the Kingdom of heaven is the one who humbles himself and becomes like a child. And the person who welcome in my name one such child as this, welcomes me' " (*Mtth.* 18:1-5).

"The mother of Zebedee's sons," says Matthew in another passage, "came to Jesus with her sons, bowed before him, and asked him for a favor. 'What do you want?' Jesus asked her. She answered, 'Promise that these two sons of mine will sit at your right and at your left when you are king.' 'You don't know what you are asking for,' Jesus answered them. 'Can you drink the cup that I am about to drink?' 'We can,' they answered. 'You will indeed drink from my cup,' Jesus told them, 'but I do not have the right to choose who will sit at my right and my left. These places belong to those for whom my Father has prepared them.' When the other ten disciples heard about this they became angry with the two brothers. So Jesus called them all together to him and said: 'You know that the rulers of the people have power over them, and the leaders rule over them. This, however, is not the way it shall be among you. If one of you wants to be great, he must be the servant of the rest; and if one

of you wants to be first, he must be your slave –like the Son of Man, who did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life to redeem many people'” (*Mtth.* 20:20-28).

“It was now the day before the Feast of Passover. Jesus knew that his hour had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. He had always loved those who were his own in the world, and he loved them to the very end. Jesus and his disciples were at supper. The Devil had already decided that Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, would betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had given him complete power; he knew that he had come from God and was going to God. So Jesus rose from the table, took off his outer garment, and tied a towel around his waist. He poured some water into a washbasin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and dried them with the towel around his waist. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him: ‘Are you going to wash my feet, Lord?’ Jesus answered him, ‘You do not know now what I am doing, but you will know later.’ Peter declared, ‘You will never, at any time, wash my feet!’ ‘If I do not wash your feet,’ Jesus answered, ‘you will no longer be my disciple.’ Simon Peter answered, ‘Lord, do not wash only my feet, then! Wash my hands and head, too!’ Jesus said: ‘Whoever has taken a bath is completely clean and does not have to wash himself, except for his feet. All of you are clean –all except one’ (Jesus already knew who was going to betray him; that is why he said, ‘All of you, except one, are clean’). After he had washed their feet, Jesus put his outer garment back on and returned to his place at the table. ‘Do you understand what I have just done to you?’ he asked. ‘You call me Teacher and Lord, and it is right that you do so, because I am. I am your Lord and Teacher, and I have just washed your feet. You, then, should wash each other’s feet. I have set an example for you, so that you will do just as I have done for you. I tell you the truth: no slave is greater than his master; no messenger is greater than the one who sent him. Now you know the truth: how happy you will be if you put it into practice!’” (*Jn.* 13:1-17).

In our present time, John Paul II illustrates the meaning of hierarchy when he writes in his *Catechesi Tradendae*: “Catechesis always has been and always will be a work for which the

whole Church must feel responsible and must wish to be responsible. But the Church's members have different responsibilities, derived from each one's mission. Because of their charge, pastors have, at different level, the chief responsibility for fostering, guiding and coordinating catechesis. For his part, the pope has a lively awareness of the primary responsibility that rests on him in this field: in this he finds reasons for pastoral concern but principally a source of joy and hope. Priests and religious have in catechesis a preeminent field for their apostolate. On another level, parents have a unique responsibility. Teachers, the various ministers of the Church, catechists, and also organizers of social communications, all have in various degrees very precise responsibilities in this education of the believing conscience, an education that is important for the life of the Church and affects the life of society as such. It would be one of the best results of the General Assembly of the Synod that was entirely devoted to catechesis if it stirred up in the Church as a whole and in each sector of the Church a lively and active awareness of this differentiated but shared responsibility."²¹

Jesus talks of hierarchy or ranking in terms of "the first being the last" and the "master being the servant of all." Vatican II spoke of the hierarchical ministry "as a service of authority within the People of God and no longer as an authority that imposes, rules and subjects the faithful."²² The present pope talks of responsibilities as derived from mission, and he ranks the responsibilities also in terms of service and work, assigning to himself the "primary responsibility." These clarifications will become still more relevant later in discussing the issue on the "presiding" ministry.

Did Jesus in the New Covenant pass into his *Laos* his priesthood and his authority? We asked this question above. The answer is yes! His priesthood he passed on when he said: "Do this in remembrance of me" (*Lk.* 22:19; *I Cor.* 11:24-25); and his authority, first to Simon when he said: "You are the Rock and

²¹ *Catechesi Tradendae*.

²² Jean Beyes, "Le Laicat et les Laïcs dans l'Eglise", *Gregorianum*, 68 (1987), p. 157; cf. Yves Congar, *Pour Une Eglise Servante et Pauvre*, Paris: Cerf, 1963, pp. 13-96.

upon this Rock I'll build my *Laos*" (*Mtth.* 16:18), and secondly, when he gathered his Family and told them: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me, go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (*Mtth.* 28:19). But let us not forget that before that he said: "As the Father sent me so I am sending you" (*Jn.* 20:21; cf. *Jn.* 17:18). In other words, no Christian ought to forget that what Jesus transmits is not the pagan brand of priesthood and authority, but his specific Christian orientation of priesthood, authority, power and hierarchy; and on this Christian orientation is the New Covenant, the New *Laos* founded and established so as to be authentically Jesus' *Laos*. Then, any other orientation of those concepts may be institutionally acceptable in other cultures or historical periods, but it cannot claim the character of "Christianity" or of divine origin. Hence if any other orientation has been instituted or practiced in the history of Jesus' *Laos*, it can and it must be subjected to possible change, removal or even abolition for the sake of new adaptation to cultural or historical evolution, and most of all for the sake of a more authentic Christian projection.

The Presiding Ministry

In the early practice of the Church, whenever the *Laos* assembles, especially to celebrate the *agape*, a peculiar function is reserved to the "elders"; it is the function of "presiding" over the sacred meal.

The institution of the elders has its roots in pagan religions. Judaism established such a group, the levitical priests, in order to take care of the temple and the ceremonies related to the worship of Yahweh and the offering of sacrifices (*Num.* 1:47-53; 3:12-13). Such elders or presbyters take over similar functions within the context of the New Covenant, as can be deduced from the words of St. Paul.²³ This happens particularly in the context of the celebration of the sacrifice in the New Covenant, the sacred *agape*, where a communion takes place and a reactualization of

²³ Cf. H. Hendrickx, *a.c.*, p. 222.

Jesus' sacrifice is commemorated. It is a celebration done to fulfill Jesus' command: "Do this in remembrance of me." The *agape* is, therefore, eminently "priestly" and sanctifying in its context.

Considering what has been said about Jesus' *Laos* being a *Laos* with priestly, kingly and prophetic functions, because of their baptism, then we ask: was the "presiding" ministry of the elders a prerequisite to activate any of those ministries of Jesus' *Laos*? Furthermore, was the "presiding" ministry of the elders a function requiring a special "ordination" that would enable the ordained to acquire an ontologically different priesthood from the baptized? Was the "presiding" ministry of the elders assigned by any peculiar characteristic of race, age, sex, training or alike? Finally, how has the "presiding" ministry in the New Covenant (eminently priestly in character) evolved from its original state at the time of the apostles to the present situation, when it practically monopolizes the prophetic, priestly and kingly function of Jesus' *Laos*?

Concerning the first question, authors like Albert Nolan, Raymon E. Brown, Wellhausen and E. Flameygh²⁴ insinuate that Jesus did not found a Church, but a "charismatic" movement. They would imply that the pre-existence or pre-ordination of a "presiding" ministry was not a pre-requisite to activate the functions of Jesus' *Laos*, for after all, they would say, charism is a free gift of the Spirit who himself blows wherever and in whomever he wishes (*I Cor.* 12:11).

Still, if one reads St. Paul, it seems rather clear that not every one can preside or even speak in the assembly of Jesus' *Laos* (cf. *I Cor.* 12:4-31; 14). If such would be the case, wouldn't it be implied that the pre-existence of somebody in charge of presiding is to be a pre-requisite?

Maybe, after all, one could assert that Jesus did not found a structuralized Church, if by this one wished to stress the juridical aspect of it as we know it later on, somehow overpowering the spontaneity, charismatic aspect. Correct. We may even say that in the early *Laos* the charismatic value was more prevalent and

²⁴ Cf. E. Flameygh, *a.c.*, pp. 233-235; H. Hendrickx, *a.c.*, pp. 229-230.

in that sense "enthusiasm gave birth to Christianity,"²⁵ but then even theologians stressing this aspect come to recognize that an "organizational," structural set up is an unavoidable result of any large movement if it wishes not to end up in a tornado.²⁶

One may well conclude that the Jesus' *Laos* born in Pentecost was overwhelmingly enthusiastic and charismatic, still we cannot forget that it was only to Peter to whom Jesus entrusted the keys of the Kingdom (*Mtth.* 16:19), that it was Peter the one who among the apostles first came to witness the event of the empty tomb (*Jn.* 20:3-8), and the one to whom the message of the resurrection was relayed (*Jn.* 20:2; *Mk.* 16:7). That Peter was the one who became the first spokesman of Pentecost (*Acts* 2:14), and the one for whom the Community prayed (*Acts* 12:5); and even further, that when the audience wanted to join the "charismatic *Laos*", a structural condition is already required: "To be baptized" (*Acts* 2:38).

As for the second question, namely, was the presiding ministry of the elders a function requiring a special ordination that would make the ordained ontologically different priests from the baptized? Categorically some authors state of the apostles: "They were not our kind of bishops; there is no evidence that any of the twelve presided over a local Church. And they were not men who ordained others and passed on powers to them."²⁷

One is left a bit puzzled with such statements, for there are some very obvious aspects of truth in them, such as that surely none of the apostles (Peter, perhaps, least of all) ever maintained a diocesan curia, much less wore a golden ring or that he ever used a silver staff. There is also the obvious aspect that none of them ever had a printed ritual in Latin or Greek to be followed at any given ordination; or that any Gregorian chant or litany was ever sung during the ceremony, or anything like these.

But then, we seem to go back to the first question and have a similar reply. For while all those aspects of, perhaps, an over-structuralized Church may correctly be said to be far and remote from the Founder's mind or the apostles' practice, that while one may accurately pinpoint the fact that the Founder was "charis-

²⁵ E. Flameygh, *a.c.*, p. 235.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

matic" and so were the apostles, one cannot overlook, on the other hand, that the Founder of the New Covenant himself used "saliva" to cure the sick, imposed his hands on those with diseases, told the apostles to perform a particular ceremony (cf. *Mtth.* 8-10), to "do this in memory of me" (*Lk.* 22:19; *I Cor.* 11:24-25) and sent his chosen ones with the formula that: "To whomever you will not forgive his sins they will not be forgiven" (*Jn.* 20:23), or with the final command: "Go and proclaim the Good News and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them" (*Mk.* 16:15-16).

One cannot deny that Ananias, an elder, was told to go and "impose his hands on Paul" (*Acts* 9:10-18), that Paul later on goes to Jerusalem to consult with the apostles regarding his teachings (*Acts* 9:27-29; 15:1-4; *Gal.* 1-2), and that the apostles "imposed their hands" on certain people entrusted with the "presiding" over the *Laos'* assembling: "So it was that after fasting and prayer they laid their hands on them and sent them off" (*Acts* 13:3); "In each of the Churches they appointed elders, and with prayer and fasting they commended them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe" (*Acts* 14:23). A note in the Jerusalem Bible making reference to this text says: "The elders, cfr. 11:30, are here chosen by the apostles, not by the community; see also Titus 1:5."

Again, therefore, one may accurately accept the more "spontaneous" ways of carrying out the Christian themes in the early stage of Jesus' *Laos*; one may accurately complain of the over stress of rubrics in some present Christian ceremonies that perhaps look more theatrical than Christian; one may wish that a more moderate balance might prevail. Yes, because an overstress in either direction may lead either into chaos or into total paralysis of the Spirit's motion. After all, it may be wise to remember that as early as the first century, Paul had sternly called the attention of the *Laos* to its allowing that in certain reunions held to celebrate the *agape* "some of the brethren filled up their stomachs to the brim, while others had to go home hungry" (*I Cor.* 11:17-34).

Obviously something was not functioning well in Jesus' *Laos*, and hence a presiding bishop or apostle called their attention and tried to establish order. "It was inevitable..." comments Flameygh. "Organized leader-types replaced the Charis-

matics. This is but normal. This happened to all great movements."²⁸ Still one cannot talk about the ordained priesthood as something ontologically different from the priesthood of the baptized. To speak in such a fashion, it has been pointed out, "could lead some in the Church and many outside it to regard the Catholic teaching on the two different yet correlated modes of priesthood to be an intellectual ploy of ecclesiastics so as to guarantee absolute control by maintaining among the baptized a submissive respect for the ontologically superior share in divine power claimed to be reserved for the ordained."²⁹ That ontological distinction in Christian priesthood, we have said, is metaphysically impossible.

As for the third question, namely, whether the presiding ministry of the elders was assigned by any peculiar characteristic of race, age, sex, training or the like? This is a rather extensive and comprehensive response. At the moment, we will simply state some relevant pointers that may, in future discussions, throw light on some wider and deeper replies.

Jesus chose twelve men from among the large number of his followers. These twelve belonged to a variety of social professions, from fishermen to tax collectors. Among them, some were married, some were single. All were definitely Jews. Perhaps it would be wise to remember the interlink between the Old and the New Covenant, to remember that Yahweh remains *faithful* to his commitment; and also that Yahweh is the one who chooses.

In the early Church, Medes, Egyptians, Libians, Mesopotamians, etc., come into the *Laos* (*Acts* 2:9-11). Still all of them are Jews! From among them, some (others than the apostles) are chosen to a variety of ministries (*Acts* 6:1-7). Here one comes to understand already the existence of the so called Ministry of the Word, of the Sacraments and of Administration of material goods. A common characteristic: all are members of the *Laos* filled with the Holy Spirit (*Acts* 6:3).

In some very important announcements in Jesus' ministry, females are called to a special place, e.g.: to the Samaritan woman (*Jn.* 4), to the Canaanite (*Mtth.* 15:21-28), to Martha (*Jn.* 11), to the Mary of the resurrection (*Jn.* 20) and above all, to Mary,

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

²⁹ Ph. J. Roseto, *a.c.*, pp. 229-230.

Jesus' mother (*Lk.* 1:26-38). For some ministries, females are called into service and from all appearances they are accepted by Jesus' *Laos* and perform their ministry to satisfaction (cf. *Lk.* 8:1-3; *Acts* 18:26).

Of Timothy and Titus, it is said that they are young, but they should not be underestimated or downgraded by the others (members of the *Laos*) because of their youth. They are not fully Jews, they belong, in part in the case of Timothy, wholly in the part of Titus to another race.

It is St. Paul who says of Jesus' *Laos*: "Among you there should be not slave or master, male or female, married or single...", namely, no discrimination or distinction, for "you are all one in Christ" (*Gal.* 3:28).

Let it suffice to say, as a final pointer, that God does not destroy human cultures and values. Rather, he borrows from them for his Covenant with man (e.g., priesthood, civil authority, ceremonies, etc.), while the Covenant, the Spirit animating the Covenant, remains the same.

Now, concerning the fourth question, namely, how did the presiding ministry in the New Covenant evolve from its original state at the time of the apostles to the present situation? It is somehow a history of that presiding ministry that we are searching for. As for the origin of that growth of the presiding ministry, we can count on a well researched study by Alexandre Faivre.³⁰

The present status refers to the popular conception of Church as synonymous with the "presiding elders" or clergy, while the *Laos* are the rest, the faithful left to heed and follow whatever they are told. "The Church," observes Libanio, "has created ecclesiastical structures strongly clerical and little open to the laity..." The challenge to present theology, he adds, is "to denounce its excess of clericalism and its strictness in relation to the laity, especially towards the poor."³¹

The situation then boils down to a consideration of the

³⁰ Alexandre Faivre, *Naissance d'une Hierarchie*, Paris: Beauchesne, 1977.

³¹ J. B. Libanio, "Les Defis Actuels de la Theologie du Laicat", *Convergence*, 3 (1986-1/1987), p. 14.

Church as separated into two groups: the *clergy*, considered the Church proper, priestly, prophetic and kingly; and the *laity*, the passive mass of the faithful. In the best of cases, the clergy would be paternalistic and the laity docile. But other times such polarization leads to what is called the "mistake", that "often happens when clergy and laity are presented as opposites";³² or, what is worse, to the conflicting views of *clericalism* (or absorption of all ecclesiastical authority) and *laicism* (or disregard for all kinds of clerical authority) with the consequent extremes of anti-clericalism among the laics, and anti-laicism among the clerics. Such views of Jesus' *Laos* and such a situation is, to put it mildly, traumatic. "Things, though," observes a theologian, "were not always this way."³³ How has the presiding ministry in the New Testament evolved from its original state at the time of the apostles, to the present situation?

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE CLERGY-LAOS ROLES³⁴

The dichotomy between laity and clergy dates back to the era of Constantine, when the concept of 'sacred' shifted from the *Laos* as a whole, to the clergy, leaving the non-clergy in the realm of the profane, *laicus*.³⁵ This dichotomy, though, was not instantaneous. A rather long and contested process takes place in the history of Christianity. Some of its most relevant features are pointed out by Flameygh in his article entitled: "The Laity in History."³⁶ In the article, Flameygh takes notice of some other similar works written by authors like Stephen Neill, Christopher Dawson, Albert Nolan and, we add, Juan A. Estrada.³⁷ The his-

³² E. Flameygh, *a.c.*, p. 231.

³³ Joaquin Losada, "¿Que Es un Laico? Una Pregunta Fundamental de la Iglesia de Hoy", *Sal Terrae*, 75 (1987), p. 345.

³⁴ Cf. Yves Congar, *o.c.*, pp. 97-127; A. Faivre, *Naissance d'une Hierarchie*, Paris: Beauchesne, 1977; Idem, "Clercs-Laïcs. Histoire d'une Frontiere", *Rev. Sc. Rel.*, 57 (1983), pp. 195-220; Idem, *Les Laïcs aux Origines de l'Eglise*. Paris: Le Centurion, 1984.

³⁵ Cf. J. A. Estrada, *a.c.* pp. 355-367.

³⁶ E. Flameygh, "The Laity in History", *EAPR*, 23 (1986), pp. 231-250.

³⁷ Stephen Neill, *The Layman in Christian History*, 1963; Christopher Dawson, "The Sick Ages of the Church". *The Historic Reality of Christian Culture*, N.Y.: Harper and Brothers, 1960, pp. 47-59; Albert Nolan, *Jesus before Christianity*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1978; Juan A. Estrada, "Clerigos y Laicos. Teología y Balance de una Relación Difícil", *Sal Terrae*, 75 (1987), pp. 355-369.

torical as well as the theological accuracy of their statements may be debatable, and some lacunae may easily be pinpointed in their work, but they certainly offer a varied interesting analysis of Church's history and some very good insights precisely on the issue we are discussing, the historical evolution of the role of the presiding elders and what ever happened to Jesus' *Laos*.

Flameygh, following Dawson, outlines the Church's history into six periods of apostolic creativity, namely: a) 30-325; b) 325-640; c) 640-960; d) 960-1517; e) 1517-1830; f) 1830-to Vatican II.

a) In the first period (30-325), Jesus' mission was spread not only by the "twelve", but overwhelmingly by "the enthusiasm of the converts to the *Laos*-idea", namely the Hellenists, the God-fearers, the travelling artisans and the soldiers.³⁸

b) The second period (325-640) marks the clericalization and sacralization of the clergy. "The clericalization process," according to Flameygh, "begins, most probably in relation to whoever was presiding over the Eucharistic celebration, and precisely because of the great importance of this central celebration. There was no Church-wide planning and plotting in a sly attempt to corner 'power'. On the other side, once power has been given to the Eucharistic minister, there were soon those who came to love power and its privileges. This power development is very human. Leadership in its evangelical sense (*Mtth.* 20:25 ff) seems to be all burden and little reward. Why not sweeten it with some little worldly tricks: some glad rags borrowed from the Roman authorities, some important sounding titles and the feudal pyramid of power from the German empire, and all these made easy with the insistence of only too many of the faithful to have quite a bit of hocus-pocus in our celebration."³⁹

As for the sacralization of the clergy, Flameygh writes: "The clergy at first were not sharply differentiated from the laity in their lifestyle: they were married, raised families, and earned their livelihood at some trade or profession. But as the practice grew of paying them for their clerical work, they withdrew more and more from their secular pursuits, until by the fourth century

³⁸ E. Flameygh, *a.c.*, p. 235.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 236-237.

such withdrawal was deemed obligatory. An important factor in this change was the increasing stress laid on the cultic and ritualistic aspects of the ministry. At first the Christian elder avoided any resemblance to the pagan or Jewish priest."

"This sacralization of the clergy was brought about by various developments: theological, liturgical and legal. The Old Testament priesthood was re-evaluated as the type and model for the New Testament priesthood. The more elaborate liturgy of the post-Constantinian era (after 325), with its features borrowed from religious paganism, enhanced the image of the minister as a sacred personage."

"In line with these developments, there was a big shift in the idea of the sacred. Before Constantine the whole Church was considered the realm of the sacred as opposed to the profane world outside: after Constantine, the polarity between sacred and profane was transformed into one between sacred clergy and profane laity."

"A clear indication of this trend in the Western Church is found in the requirement for celibacy for the clergy... Another development of some importance is the issue of clerical dress. During the first four centuries, ministers and priests dressed like everybody else... To dress differently from the common faithful was originally a Roman pagan practice. It was also from the beginning of their history a practice of the monks. Things begin to change in the fifth century, quite in line with the sacralization of the clergy, and the growing distance between clergy and laity."⁴⁰

c) The third age (640-960) is called the feudalization of the Church or the emergence of the "priestly kings." "Misreading the anointing introduced by the Church to replace their claim to authority based on pagan genealogies, they ended up thinking that they were priests. Obliging theologians told Charlemagne (d. 814) that his priestly position in the Church was more important than that of popes and bishops. They represented only the humanity of Christ... Most of the financial burdens fell on the king and his vassals. And it is but human that, little by little, they asked, and received, a say in the appointment of the 'beneficiaries', the clergy. The whole process leads to the infamous

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 237-238.

case of lay investiture, the lay authorities cornering the final say over the appointments in the Church. This reached the papacy in the tenth century, the 'iron age' of the papacy. This represents an altogether different aspect of the laity in history... A ceremony called Lay Investiture reflected this: the bishop-to-be knelt before the lay lord, rendered him homage and fealty, and received from him his staff and ring. The land and attached jurisdiction conferred on him at the same time were regarded as a fief whose feudal obligations took precedence over ecclesiastical ones. The whole transaction was tainted with simony besides, since the new bishop ordinarily paid a heavy fee for his promotion. The parish priest too was subject to laymen by the proprietary system of ownership and hired the priests they pleased. This control by laymen was in obvious contradiction with the ancient canon law and tradition of the Church. It was at the same time a far cry from the *Laos*."⁴¹

d) The fourth period (960-1517) is somehow the reverse, and it is called the age of the "kingly priests." Initiated as a movement of reform against the abuses of the priestly laymen, it was pioneered first by the Benedictine monastery of Cluny (910). Then came Cardinal Humbert (d. 1061) who wrote the *Libri adversus Simoniacos* denouncing the proprietary system and lay investiture as a perversion of proper order.

"It was the first frontal attack on the whole position of laymen in the Church, and it would eclipse for centuries the idea of the *Laos*. The principle of right order in the Church, he argued, demanded that laymen be obedient to the clergy. Bishops must first be elected by the clergy, then acclaimed by the people. But he went even farther. He concluded by rigorous logic from his basic premise: the unitary nature of society, that Church and State together form one body, Christendom; since its animating principle is the faith, it can be directed to its final goal, salvation, only by the priesthood. Therefore, whenever the spiritual and the temporal come into conflict—as often they must—the spiritual authority must have the final word."⁴²

Another aspect of this period is called "the total clericalization of the Church." "It's a long story, with many roots and causes

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 239-240.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 240-241.

all along the lines of history, with many swing of the pendulum, from the ascendancy of the priestly kings in the third age, via the ascendancy of the kingly priests in the fourth age, to the renewed power of the kings and their national Churches in the fifth age, with the Church finally wholly in the defensive. In the process, the lay people disappear from the official Church picture; they have become people who 'belong to the Church.'"⁴³ The clericalization of the Church has taken place.

Then comes the centralization. "The elaborate machinery"—says Flameygh—"needed to build this out was developed over the next several centuries. Councils, legates, papal letters and Roman tribunals as well as taxation machinery knew an amazing growth. The popes became the busiest men of Europe and their interventions reached down into the lowest strata of society... Laymen and priests were subject to a discipline that was clear-cut, providing rules for all the main occasions of life: baptism, confirmation, confession, communion, penance, alms, usury, last wills and testaments, graveyards and clerical dress. But it would be wrong to say that the popes had started from the intention to centralize."

"At first they did not claim the power to appoint the bishops. They fought a mighty battle over lay investiture to restore the right of election to the clergy and the people. They succeeded to some degree, but in a clericalizing way. By the middle of the 12th century there was a general recognition of the right of the clergy to elect the bishop. However, the elections were often disputed, forcing the pope to step in. This often developed into long quarrels. By the 14th century, the popes had solved the problem by reserving to themselves the right to make all episcopal appointments. There was no bad will involved in the process. All the same, such developments remove the laity farther and farther from any participation in decision making."⁴⁴

From the state of priestly kings ruling the affairs of the Church, the fourth period sees a threefold development affecting both clergy and laity, but in opposite directions. On the side of the clergy, we see them becoming the kingly priests, clericalizing the Church and centralizing power in the clerical hierarchy, ulti-

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

mately in the papacy. On the side of the laity, first we see their position frontally attacked, eclipsing their power; then they disappeared from the official Church picture becoming the people who "belong to the Church"; and ultimately they are removed farther and farther from any participation in the decision making that would lead to the situation (perpetuated in later centuries) where having some laymen as *auditores* in official gatherings would be considered an extreme privilege granted to them.

What ever happened to Jesus' *Laos*? Did everything function well in the Church with the insertion of those ecclesiastical changes, namely, the priestly kings, the clericalization of the Church and the centralization of power?

Certainly not everything turned out as expected by the regal clergy. Some positive results undoubtedly took place during those periods and are benefitting the Church even now, as it has been pointed out; but in the overall, as Flameygh observes: "Much energy and money had to be spent on dubious task of waging war, and in double-dealing politics. Often, the Church leaders appear in an unfavorable light, as perversers of spiritual powers to secular ends. This obscured the real causes of the conflicts, and often offended the otherwise not very delicate medieval opinion, where clerics use the power-world's dirt. Only too often did the pope's plans end in disaster. In the case of Innocent III alone, we note him as the cause of civil war in Germany, massacres in France, and the fourth Crusade which ended in the sack of Constantinople. It is no doubt for this reason that historians have denied him the title of '*the Great*' which he would otherwise seem to have deserved. Papacy and laity were both victims in this process... On the positive side there were some of the canons of the 4th Lateran Council, over which Innocent presided in 1215. Its canon 21, for instance, proclaimed the famous decree prescribing annual confession and Easter Communion. Important as this became for the pious laity, it did not stop the rampant anti-papalism and the growing anti-clericalism due to other actions of the pope. We are well on our way to the 'spirit of laicism' as not only anti-clerical but also anti-religious. The masses of the laity were the main victims in all the developments of this period."⁴⁵

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

The end result was that both papacy (clergy) and laity suffered because of such a situation; but the masses, the laity and the so called clerical "proletariat" or clerics of the lower ranks, were the main victims. And the Church as a whole was led into what has been called "mechanical Christianity", an "all-embracing, controlling every aspect of life, with magic ideas about sacraments, blessings, devotions, pilgrimages and saints."⁴⁶

Was everything accepted in full silence and docility? Definitely not. A number of voices, both from the clergy and the laity, made themselves heard. Proposals were aired, demanding that the community of the faithful be involved in the choice of its ministers, that a re-activation of the practices of the early Church in the process of election, consensus and acceptance would be implemented, that power on all levels must be the servant of the flock in accordance with the teachings of the Gospel, that all the leaders were to exercise their government on the basis of real, not manipulated consensus. People like Nicholas de Cusa, Thomas More, Juan Luis Vives and Desiderius Erasmus made their positions well known along those lines trying to regain for the laity the role they felt was rightfully theirs in Jesus' *Laos*: "That educated laymen should play their full part in the direction of the Church."⁴⁷

The warning was that, should such cries for "renewal" be ignored, it would plunge the masses into an unacceptable level of superstition and the educated faithful would be pushed into a radical anticlericalism.

e) The fifth period (1517-1830) saw the explosion within the Church of the warnings anticipated by the reformers, plus a severe resurgence of anti-papal and anti-clerical feelings fostered by the vested interests of ambitious nationalism.

A Council, Trent, was finally convened by Rome, of which it has been said: "Trent came in good time to save the Church in the Latin countries. It came too late to remedy the ills of the north."⁴⁸ On the issue of the laity, Paul III, who opened the Council seeking an authentic reform, appointed a group of laymen as

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

cardinals, charging them with the task of implementing the necessary changes.

The clergy, papacy and the rest, were called in for a radical change in terms of training and discipline, but as far as the laity was concerned, they "remained, more and more intensively every year, the people 'who belong to the Church', the mere beneficiaries of clerical administration and ministry."⁴⁹

f) The sixth stage (1830 - to Vatican II) studies what happened or is happening in the final stage, in our century, concerning the role of the laity in the Church. What is the position of the Church on the issue in this final period before the celebration of the Vatican II Council?

Pius X in 1906 summarized the official position of the Church in the words that clarified the roles of clergy and laity: "These two categories are so mutually distinct that only in the hierarchical clergy reside the right and power to rule, to teach and to sanctify. With regard to the multitude of the laity, it has no other right than the one to be guided [by the clergy] and the right to follow with docility their pastors."⁵⁰

The spirit of those papal pronouncements were codified in the ecclesiastical law (1917) that defined the laity as "neither a cleric nor a religious" and granted them the right to receive from the clergy spiritual gifts for their salvation (c. 683), but prohibited them to wear clerical garb (c. 683).

The overall clericalization and centralization had taken hold in the Church. The corresponding submission and docility (proclaimed as a virtue) was expected from the laity following the trend printed in the legislation of the Church. Society at large, in its relation with the Church, went from bad to worse in terms of indifference or rejection; whole sectors of society deserted the Church and became alienated especially after the Communist revo-

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

⁵⁰ "Est igitur haec societas, vi et natura sua, inaequalis; duplicem scilicet complectitur personarum ordinem, pastores et gregem, id est eos qui in variis hierarchiae gradibus collocati sunt et multitudinem fidelium; atque hi ordines ita sunt inter se distincti, ut in sola hierarchia ius acque auctoritas resideat movendi ac dirigendi consocietas ad propositum societatis finem; multitudinem autem officium sit, gubernari se pati, et rectorum sequi ductum obedienter", Pius X, "Vehementer", 11 Feb., 1906, *Pius X Actes*, I-II, 1904-1905, tom. I, Paris, pp. 132-133.

lution (1917); all papal and clerical efforts seemed helpless in reversing the growing tide of desertion. Yet, not all voices within the Church were muted and not all expectations were suppressed.

Witnessing the deteriorating situation, and heeding the loud cries within the Church, Pius XI launched several papal appeals to the laity. He is known as the pope of the Catholic Action,⁵¹ to which he refers as "very dear to us".⁵² He promoted the organization of Catholic Action throughout the Church allowing the lay people "to participate in the apostolate of the hierarchy."

Pius XII in his *Mystici Corporis* (1943) provided the theological background for the re-statement of the laity by describing the Church not so much in terms of juridical and clerical terms, but through the principles laid down by St. Paul: "The Body of Christ." He gave his official approval to "secular" institutes engaged in "secular" apostolate and finally in 1946 he made the following statement: "The faithful, and more precisely the laity, are stationed in the front ranks of the life of the Church, and through them the Church is the living principle of human society. Consequently they, they especially, must have an ever clearer consciousness, not only of belonging to the Church, but of *being the Church*, that is, of being the community of the faithful on earth under the guidance of their common head, the pope, and the bishops in communion with him. They are the Church."⁵³ The laity are not any longer the masses of Christians who belong to the Church, they *are* the Church. This is a very significant progress, even a historical reversal, in the ecclesial perception of the "Laity".

Looking in retrospective, one can claim that what we call Church as founded by Jesus is a *Laos*, a Family, a special group of people chosen by him. Etymologically *laos* means people, adding to it the suffix *ikos* we have the adjective *laicus* which comes to mean a sector among the *laos* in opposition to another, the masses as opposed to the rulers or princes.⁵⁴

Biblically such a concept is rooted in the Old Testament des-

⁵¹ *Enciclopedia Cattolica*, 2, "Azione Cattolica", col. 596.

⁵² Pius XI, "Encyclical 'Urbi Arcano'", *AAS*, 14 (1922), p. 149.

⁵³ Pius XII, "Allocutio", 20-Feb., 1946, *AAS*, 38 (1946); p. 149.

⁵⁴ Cf. Enrico Viganò, "Impegno 'Ministeriale' dei Fedeli: Dalla Celebrazione alla Vita", *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, 101 (1987), p. 106.

cription of Israel as the chosen People or Nation of Yahweh with whom he established a Covenant. In Israel the whole nation, all the Israelites, are God's People regardless of whatever position or ministries each may perform. God had chosen Israel as his special *Laos*. Thus the dichotomy between laity (*laicus*) and ministers (clergy) did not exist in the context of the Old Testament.⁵⁵

Jesus comes and chooses his own Family, forms his own *Laos*, not based on race or nationality, but on water and the Spirit, and with them establishes a New Covenant sealed in his own blood. In his *Laos* Jesus does not establish a dichotomy between layman (*laicus*) and ministers (clergy); all are his Family, his *Laos*. From among the members, not due to a hierarchy of power or dominion, but due to a mission of his own priesthood of service and *kenosis*, Jesus assigns some of them the shepherding, the evangelizing, the baptizing, the administration of the *Laos*. The division between laity and clergy as two components of Jesus' *Laos* is not of his doing. The term *laicus* cannot be traced to Jesus' concept of his *Laos*.

It is after Jesus' time, with the historical evolution of his *Laos* when the concept of ministry is reversed within the Family from its evangelical to its secular meaning. Then certain ministries are emphasized, the presiding ministry especially is given a more and more sacralized and centralized meaning, gradually monopolizing all other leading ministries within the *Laos*. In the process this presiding ministry assumes more and more the role of representing and speaking for the *Laos*, with a lesser and lesser role played by the non-presiding members of the Family, thus giving birth to what comes to be called in the Church as the *laicus* (layman) in counter-distinction to the leaders called clergy. Alexandre Faivre dates back to the time of Tertullian (a. 220) the establishment of the opposition between clergy and laity.⁵⁶ In this sense a layman in the Church is everyone who is not a "presiding" member, clergy, whether the layman be a ruler of civil society (prince or monarch) or an ordinary member of the crowd. Laymen are "those who have not yet received a special consecration for the service of God."⁵⁷ In the birth and evolution of the concept of layman in

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁵⁶ A. Faivre, *Naissance d'une Hierarchie*, p. 201.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

the Church, though, the term has not always had that neutral meaning, for, e.g., at the time of the priestly kings, the secular rulers were not to be considered as laymen, for laymen then would be identified with the crowd, the ignorant, the low masses in contrast with the noble, the knowledgable, the high people, the clergy. Aside from that, the sacralization (or mythification) of the presiding ministry led further to a consideration of the laymen as secular, worldly, in opposition to the holy, the segregated, the sacred, attached to the ministry of the clergy.

Within the Church that polarization remained up to the beginning of the present century. The words of Pius X in his encyclical *Vehementer* are a reminder of such an ecclesial conception. With the pontificate of Pius XI, the trend started to change "theoretically". First, it was a point of acceptance of the laymen in the apostolate of the hierarchy. Then the Church, with Pius XII, acknowledged the laymen not only as belonging, but as being the Church. What has happened since?

VATICAN II AND THE LAITY

The Vatican II Council (1962-1965) marks a cornerstone in the theology of the laity. Three of its documents are of primary importance to perceive properly the position of the Council on the laity, namely: *Lumen Gentium*, chapters II and IV dealing with "The People of God" and "The Laity", where the theological principles are established; *Apostolicam Actuositatem* ("The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity"), where the field of involvement is described; and *Gaudium et Spes* ("The Church in the Modern World"), where the Church envisions her role and involvement in the worldly events. The theological principles are the main target of our interest as presented by Vatican II.

* * *

(1) "*The People of God*". The chapter of the *Lumen Gentium* dealing with "The People of God" gives us a sort of summary of how the concept of People of God has evolved in Salvation History from its widest consideration to the present understanding. Thus the Conciliar Fathers established several fields where God's salvific influence is felt:

(a) "At all times and among every people, God has given welcome to whoever fears Him and does what is right."

(b) "It has pleased God, however, to make men and women holy and save them not merely as individuals without any mutual bonds, but by making them into a single people, a people which acknowledges him in truth and serves him in holiness."

(c) "He therefore chose the race of Israel as a people unto himself. With it He set up a covenant."

(d) "All these things, however, were done by way of preparation and as a figure of that new and perfect covenant which was to be ratified in Christ, by calling together a people made up of Jew and Gentile, making them one, not according to the flesh but in the Spirit. This was to be the New People of God. For, those who believe in Christ... are finally established."⁵⁸

The characteristics of that People of God include namely, its head, Christ; the heritage, the dignity and freedom of the sons of God; its law, the new commandment of love as Christ loved us; its goal, the kingdom of God; its membership that does not actually include all men, but it is nonetheless a lasting and sure seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race; its mission, to extend to all regions of the earth Jesus' message of salvation; its method, through trial and tribulation, through the cross.⁵⁹

Jesus, the head, makes his People a priestly,⁶⁰ prophetic,⁶¹ and kingly Family.⁶²

The *priestly* consecration is brought about by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The theology of Baptism and Confirmation is the basis of the priestly function; a theology of *kenosis*, of being buried with Christ to be born in the Spirit. With this priestly consecration, "all the disciples of Christ... should present themselves as living sacrifice... and must bear witness."⁶³

Through the *prophetic* office, Jesus' People "spreads abroad a living witness to Him, especially by means of a life of faith and

⁵⁸ LG., n. 9; cf. n. 13.

⁵⁹ LG., n. 9.

⁶⁰ LG., n. 10 & 11.

⁶¹ LG., n. 12.

⁶² LG., n. 13.

⁶³ LG., n. 10.

charity and by offering to God a sacrifice of praise, the tribute of lips which give honor to His name."⁶⁴ This prophetic office, like the priestly function, is also based on the theology of Baptism and the Anointing. With it "the body of the faithful as a whole, anointed as they are by the Holy one (cf. *Jn.* 2:20-27) cannot err in matters of belief."⁶⁵

As for the *kingly* office, Vatican II presents the image of Jesus as Head, symbol of unity and source of life for the body. Then the Council adds: "For this God finally sent his Son's Spirit as Lord and Lifegiver. He is it who, on behalf of the whole Church and each and everyone of those who believe, is the principle of their coming together and remaining together in the teaching of the apostles and in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers."

The less Family of Jesus shares in that kingly office by making all the members "citizens of a kingdom which is of a heavenly and not an earthly nature."⁶⁶

Such kingly citizenship has, according to Vatican II, two characteristics, namely, universality and diversity. The universality which is "a gift from the Lord Himself," consists in the fact that it "takes its citizens from every race." The variety derives from the very openness or catholicity of the kingdom: "In virtue of this catholicity" —says Vatican II— "each individual part of the Church contributes through its special gifts to the good of the other parts of the whole Church... Not only, then, is the people of God made up of different people but even in inner structure it is composed of various ranks. This diversity among its members arises either by reason of their duties, as in the case with those who exercise the sacred ministry for the good of their brethren, or by reason of their situation and way of life, as in the case with those many who enter the religious state and, tending towards holiness by narrower path, stimulate their brethren by their example."⁶⁷

It is important at this stage, to underline two pointers in relation to the kingly function of Jesus' Family, namely: first,

⁶⁴ *LG.*, n. 12.

⁶⁵ *LG.*, n. 12.

⁶⁶ *LG.*, n. 13.

⁶⁷ *LG.*, n. 13.

that it is "of a heavenly and not an earthly nature"; and secondly, that the variety of ranks in the kingly functions "arises either by reason of their duties or by reason of their example."

Two conclusions then can be drawn from the analysis of the threefold functions of Jesus' People, i.e.: first, that such functions are *kenotic* by nature, for they are based on Jesus' dynamic mediation that we are made to share through baptism; and secondly, that nothing of the "earthly nature" can be claimed in Jesus' People as part of the kingly office.

* * *

(2) "*The Laity*". The chapter on "The Laity"⁶⁸ is a follow up of the dichotomy established by Vatican II. The Council dealt with "The People of God" in chapter II and then went on to show us the components of God's People: first, "The Hierarchy" (bishops, priests and deacons) in chapter III; and then, "The Laity" in chapter IV. What chapter IV does is to apply in particular to the laity what has been said in chapter II about the People of God.

Chapter II had said that the diversity among the members arises either "by reason of their duties or by reason of their situation and way of life." And so in this chapter IV, Vatican II states: "There are certain things which pertain in a particular way to the laity, both men and women, by reason of their situation and mission."⁶⁹

Number 32 re-states the doctrine of the oneness, universality and variety related to the laity. As sharers of Jesus' priestly, prophetic and kingly functions, the laity are called to sanctify the world (n. 33), to offer spiritual worship (n. 34), to teach by means of spoken word (n. 35), and to spread Jesus' Kingdom of truth, life, holiness, grace, justice, love and peace (n. 36).

The two numbers which interest us in this chapter are most of all, nn. 31 and 37. Number 31 establishes what the Council considers to be the meaning of the laity and its mission. Laity is described to mean "all the faithful except those in holy orders, and those in religious state sanctioned by the Church." The theo-

⁶⁸ LG., chapter IV.

⁶⁹ LG., n. 30.

gical basis is baptism, and through it "they are in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of Christ. They carry out their own part in the mission of the whole Christian people with respect to the Church and the world."⁷⁰

One may wonder to what extent a whole (the People of God) can be defined as something consisting of its 99% (laity), except the 1% (clergy and religious)? It does not seem very congruous to state that one is going to discuss a whole body by its functional parts and then give a definition of the 1% (clergy) and immediately consider the only other "function", the 99% (laity) and define it as the whole body minus the 1% function. The incongruity will still remain even if it is tempered by statements like: the "laity (99%) "contributes" to the welfare of the entire Church; "the pastors" (1%) "are not meant by Christ to shoulder alone the entire saving mission of the Church"; and the pastors should "recognize their services and charismatic gifts to cooperate in this common undertaking."⁷¹

One may be tempted to compare the People of Jesus to a very large manufacturing corporation, e.g., of some 50,000 members, all with the same basic value, the same number of shares, where the directors (some 15 of them) would claim that they are the corporation and the rest (the remaining 49,985) are recognized for the services they render in creating the products. But then, of course, the Church is not such a thing; or, rather, it should not be.

Another seeming incongruity is the fact that while laymen are recognized as Jesus' People, and they are sharers in the priestly, prophetic and kingly functions of Christ,⁷² then they (the 99%) are told that "a secular quality is proper and special to laymen," even when it was stated in chapter II that the kingly function "is of a heavenly and not an earthly nature,"⁷³ for after all, at the beginning of this IVth chapter, the Council states that: "Everything which has been said so far concerning the People of God applies equally to the laity, religious, and clergy."⁷⁴ Why, then,

⁷⁰ *LG.*, n. 31.

⁷¹ *LG.*, n. 30.

⁷² *LG.*, n. 31.

⁷³ *LG.*, n. 13.

⁷⁴ *LG.*, n. 30.

that "secular quality" as "proper and special to the laymen"? Even the statement: "It is true that those in holy orders can at times engage in secular activities, and even have a secular profession,"⁷⁵ seems to be made for clerical self-service.

Number 37 analyzes the inner relationship between laity and clergy. The article stresses first the *rights* of the laity and then the duties of the pastors toward them: (1) "The laity" —says the Council— "have the right, as do all Christians, to receive in abundance from their pastors the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the assistance of the Word of God and the sacraments...". (2) "An individual layman, by reason of the knowledge, competence, or outstanding ability which he may enjoy, is permitted and sometimes obliged to express his opinion on things which concern the good of the Church...". (3) "With ready Christian obedience, laymen as well as all disciples of Christ should accept whatever their sacred pastors, as representatives of Christ, decree in their role as teachers and rulers of the Church." (4) "Let laymen follow the example of Christ, who, by His obedience even at the cost of death, opened to all men the blessed way to the liberty of the children of God." (5) "Nor should they omit to pray to God for those placed over them."⁷⁶

As for the *duties* of the pastors, the Council states: (1) "Let sacred pastors recognize and promote the dignity as well as the responsibility of the layman in the Church." (2) "Let them willingly make use of his prudent advice." (3) "Let them confidently assign duties to him in the service of the Church, allowing him freedom and room for action." (4) "Further, let them encourage the layman so that he may undertake tasks on his own initiative." (5) "Attentively in Christ, let them consider with fatherly love the projects, suggestions, and desires proposed by the laity." (6) "Furthermore, let pastors respectfully acknowledge that just freedom which belongs to everyone in this earthly city."⁷⁷

From this set of rights and duties, the Council expects that a "familiar dialogue between the laity and their pastors" will develop. What is the end result expected from such a "dialogue"? "In the laity, a strengthened sense of personal responsibility, a

⁷⁵ LG., n. 31.

⁷⁶ LG., n. 37.

⁷⁷ LG., n. 37.

renewed enthusiasm, a more ready application of their talents to the projects of their pastors." As for the pastors: "The latter, for their part, more suitably come to decisions regarding spiritual and temporal matters."⁷⁸

As a chapter of 'ecclesiastical' rights and duties, the words of the Council would not seem to be the best model for enticing modern man to enter into any kind of meaningful dialogue. Still, one could hardly deny that there is an improvement in the mere fact that the Council mentions something like "the right", the being "permitted" and even the "obliged" in relation to the laity; also the words addressed to the pastors "to recognize and promote the dignity as well as the responsibility of the laymen in the Church," "to assign duties, to allow them freedom for action, to encourage their own initiatives, to consider their projects, suggestions and desires," all these expressions are certainly a long shot from the official words of the Church heard a few decades before, when it was said that the laity have "no right other than letting themselves be led, as a docile flock to follow its shepherds."⁷⁹

* * *

(3) "*The Decree on the Lay Apostolate*" (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*). It was approved on November 18, 1965, a year after the "Constitution on the Church" had been promulgated. The title of the Decree might have been theologically more appealing if it had been something like "The Participation of the Laity in the Mission of the Church," as some Fathers suggested. Still, it is already very significant that a universal council of the Church for the first time would dedicate an entire document to study the role expected from the laity in the apostolate of the Church.

The doctrine laid down in the document can be found throughout other Counciliar documents, e.g., "The Constitution on the Church," "The Constitution on the Liturgy," "The Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," and "The Decree on Ecumenism," "The Instruments of Social Communication," "Christian Education," "Missionary Activity of the Church," "The Bishops' Pastoral Office," and "Priestly Life and Ministry." Still,

⁷⁸ LG., n. 37.

⁷⁹ Pius X, "Vehementer", l.c.

a careful study of the "Decree on the Lay Apostolate" is worth a serious analysis by anybody who would like to see the path that the Church has undertaken in relation to the involvement of the laity in the mission of the Church. On our part, we would like to make some observations which, without going into repetitions, may help us to clarify the principles already laid down in the *Lumen Gentium*.

In the very words of the introduction, the Decree states: "Wishing to intensify the apostolic activity of the People of God, this most holy Synod earnestly addresses itself to the laity, whose proper and indispensable role in the mission of the Church it has already called to mind in other documents. The layman's apostolate derives from his Christian vocation, and the Church can never be without it."⁸⁰

"By its very nature the Christian vocation is also a vocation to the apostolate. No part of the structure of a living body is merely passive."⁸¹

"The laity derive the right and duty with respect to the apostolate from their union with Christ their Head. Incorporated into Christ's Mystical Body through baptism and strengthened by the power of the Holy Spirit through confirmation, they are assigned to the apostolate by the Lord Himself." And "in so doing, believers need to enjoy the freedom of the Holy Spirit."⁸²

"Since Christ in his mission from the Father is the fountain and source of the whole apostolate of the Church, the success of the lay apostolate depends upon the laity's living union with Christ... This life of intimate union with Christ in the Church is nourished by spiritual aids which are common to all the faithful, especially active participation in the sacred liturgy."⁸³

"Christ's redemptive work, while of itself directed toward the salvation of men, involves also the renewal of the whole temporal order. Hence the mission of the Church is not only to bring to men the message and grace of Christ, but also to penetrate and perfect the temporal sphere with the spirit of the Gospel.

⁸⁰ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (AA), n. 1.

⁸¹ AA, n. 1.

⁸² AA, n. 3.

⁸³ AA, n. 4.

In fulfilling this mission of the Church, the laity, therefore, exercise their apostolate both in the Church and in the world, in both the spiritual and the temporal orders."⁸⁴

"As sharers in the role of Christ the priest, the prophet, and the king, the laity has an active part to play in the life and activity of the Church."⁸⁵

"There are many forms of the apostolate in which the laity build up the Church, sanctify the world, and give it life in Christ. A particular form of the individual apostolate... is the testimony of a layman's entire life... Then by the apostolate of the word, which is utterly necessary under certain circumstances, lay people announce Christ, explain and spread His teaching according to their situation and ability, and faithfully profess it."⁸⁶

"There are innumerable opportunities open to the laity for the exercise of their apostolate of making the Gospel known and men holy. The very testimony of their Christian life... However, an apostolate of this kind does not consist only in the witness of one's way of life; a true apostle looks for opportunities to announce Christ by words... to explain and defend Christian principles, and to apply them rightly to the problems of our era."⁸⁷

"Many elements make up the temporal order: namely, the good things of life and the prosperity of the family, culture, economic affairs, the arts and professions, political institutions, international relations, and other matters of this kind, as well as their development and progress."⁸⁸

"The apostolate of the social milieu, that is, the effort to infuse a Christian spirit into the mentality, customs, laws, and structures of the community in which a person lives, is so much the duty and responsibility of the laity that it can never be properly performed by others... There are many persons who can hear the Gospel and recognize Christ only through the laity who live near them."⁸⁹

⁸⁴ AA, n. 9.

⁸⁵ AA, n. 10.

⁸⁶ AA, n. 15.

⁸⁷ AA, n. 6.

⁸⁸ AA, n. 7.

⁸⁹ AA, n. 13.

"A vast field for the apostolate has opened up on the national and international levels where most of all the laity are called upon to be stewards of Christian wisdom."⁹⁰

"Depending on the various forms and goals, the lay apostolate admits the different types of relationships with the hierarchy. For in the Church there are many apostolic undertakings which are established by the free choice of the laity and regulated by their prudent judgment. The mission of the Church can be better accomplished in certain circumstances by undertakings of this kind."⁹¹

"Thus, making various dispositions of the apostolate according to circumstances, the hierarchy joins some particular form of it more closely with its own apostolic function. Yet the proper nature and individuality of each apostolate must be preserved, and the laity must not be deprived of the possibility of acting on their own accord."⁹²

A simple comparison of the terminology used in *Lumen Gentium* and here in *Apostolicam Actuositatem* reveals a tremendous advance in the clarification of the threefold functions, namely, priestly, prophetic and kingly, shared by the laity by virtue of their baptism. These functions are seen not in a passive way, as being permitted or allowed, but in an active manner, as being indispensable for the fulfillment of the mission of the Church. The mission of the Church is seen more globally as the task of bringing Christ both within the Community and in the world, and in such wholistic mission the laity has an active, free, and responsible role to play not simply as part of the apostolate of the hierarchy, as assigned by the clergy, but on their own initiative derived directly from Christ, head of the Church, the fountain of all apostolate by virtue of which "the laity build up the Church, sanctify the world, and give it life in Christ."⁹³

The elements of the temporal order are spelled out, and about them the Decree goes so far as to say that "the apostolate of the

⁹⁰ AA, n. 14.

⁹¹ AA, n. 24.

⁹² AA, n. 24.

⁹³ AA, n. 15.

social milieu . . . is so much the duty and responsibility of the laity that it can never be properly performed by others."⁹⁴

One does not need to go back to the vision of the laity as merely passive with no other right than "letting themselves be led"; one does not think of them as permitted participants in the apostolate of the hierarchy according to Pius XI. "They are the Church" and so their involvement in the mission and apostolate of the Church is assigned to them "by the Lord Himself."⁹⁵ Even in comparison with the words of "The Constitution on the Church," especially n. 37, the statements laid down one year later in the Decree seem to have come after several centuries of theological development. Can we talk of the doctrine of the Decree as contradicting the teachings of *Lumen Gentium*? Or contradicting the words of Pius XI, or Pius X? The social milieu, as well as the "ecclesiastical" milieu, has undoubtedly evolved a lot and so have doctrinal expressions, but the theology of Yahweh's Family, the theology of the New Covenant and its kenotic aspect imprinted through baptism in the New Family of Jesus remains the same. It is there, waiting to be tapped.

ECCLESIASTICAL LEGISLATION: THE CODE OF CANON LAW (CIC)

A statement of "The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity" calls for legislative action, it says: "In this decree the Council seeks to describe the nature, character, and diversity of the lay apostolate, to state its basic principles, and to give pastoral directives for its more effective exercise. All these should be regarded as norms in the revision of canon law as it pertains to the lay apostolate."⁹⁶

What is the present legislation saying on the laity and its role in the Church and her mission? The new code is divided into seven books, i.e.:

1. General Norms.
2. The People of God.

⁹⁴ AA, n. 13.

⁹⁵ AA, n. 3.

⁹⁶ AA, n. 1.

3. The Teaching Office of the Church.
4. The Office of Sanctifying in the Church.
5. The Temporal Goods of the Church.
6. Sanctions in the Church.
7. Processes.

Book two, dedicated to "The People of God" (cc. 204-746), is divided into three parts, i.e.:

1. The Christian Faithful (cc. 204-329).
2. The Hierarchical Constitution of the Church (cc. 330-572).
3. Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (cc. 573-746).

The first part, on "The Christian Faithful", is subdivided into five titles, i.e.:

1. The Obligations and Rights of All Christian Faithful (cc. 208-223).
2. The Obligations and Rights of the Lay Christian Faithful (cc. 124-231).
3. Sacred Ministers or Clerics (cc. 232-293).
4. Personal Prelatures (cc. 294-297).
5. Associations of the Christian Faithful (cc. 298-329).

Observations: (1) It is quite evident that the new code has given far more importance to the laity than the old one, both in terms of attention and participation. About laymen, the new code deals with their rights and duties (cc. 224-231); their associations (c. 329); their role as evangelical witnesses and their cooperation with the bishops and priests (c. 759); their permission to preach (cc. 759, 766); as catechists (c. 785); their participation in the eucharistic assembly (c. 899, §2); their participation in the eucharistic celebration (907); as extra-ordinary ministers to expose the Blessed Sacrament (c. 943), and as administrators of pious causes (c. 956).

(2) It is very encouraging to notice that the new code does not follow the old system of: persons-things-actions, as found in an essentially un-equal perfect society (Church); but it takes a new approach where the Church is seen mainly as the "mystery of

Christ on earth," and the actions as a "communion among the members."⁹⁷

(3) Following the outline of *Lumen Gentium*, it is also theologically very satisfying to notice that in the new code, in its book n. II, the expression "The People of God" has been given priority, even if some reluctance on the part of some jurists had to be overcome.⁹⁸

(4) The *CIC* considers the People of God as a whole, the main subject responsible for the mission of the Church in the World.

Evaluation. To appreciate the evolution from the old to the new legislation, it is not as important to look at the accumulation of volume and attention given to the laity, as at the analysis of quality. Concretely one may wonder: Is the new canon law reflecting truly the theology of Vatican II, thereby implementing the directive of the Council when it said: "All these [points] should be regarded as norms in the revision of canon law as it pertains to the lay apostolate"?⁹⁹

Some very authoritative studies have been done on the issue.¹⁰⁰ Undoubtedly, the overall conclusion on the main issues raised by Vatican II is positive. The *CIC* reflects the essential theological elements laid down by the Council.¹⁰¹ There are some indications, however, from voices of disappointment which have been heard, so that a further codifying evolution seems to be expected.

(1) In the words of canon 20,§1, that affirms that by "divine institution" the fundamental structure of the Church is divided into two categories of people: the laity and the consecrated ministers, it is observed that such a division seems to perpetuate

⁹⁷ Cf. Angel Anton, "Teologia del Laicado en la Ecclesiología del Vaticano II, *Gregorianum*, 68 (1987), p. 123.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁹⁹ *AA.*, n. 1.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. A. Anton, *a.c.*, pp. 103-155; Cettina Militello, "Statuto Ecclesiale del Laico: Superamento dei Dualismi e Ministerialità Globale", *Rivista di Pastorale Liturgica*, 140 (1987), pp. 20-27; Francesco Coccopalmerio, "I Fedeli-Laici e i Sacramenti nel Codice di Diritto Canonico", *Rivista di Pastorale Liturgica*, 140 (1987), pp. 13-19; Gerald W. Healy, "Laity in the Revised Code of Canon Law", *East Asian Pastoral Review*, 23 (1986), pp. 251-254; Dario Composta, "Ecclesiologia Giuridica e Laicato nel Nuovo Codice", *Pa-lestra del Clero*, 66 (1987), pp. 717-731.

¹⁰¹ Cf. A. Anton, *a.c.*, p. 128.

the dichotomising, rather than the complimentary vision of the Church as the People of God (all members) from whose members some are called and consecrated to carry on certain ministries.

Vatican II teaches the basic equality of all members in the Community, yet the inequality or hierarchical aspect is said to be of divine institution. Thus, if one tends to see the hierarchical aspect as a polarization and a structure imposed over the members of God's People at large, then the position would not seem to follow the theological thinking of Vatican II. But if, on the other hand, one affirms that God's People (all members) have their *origin* in God's choice, and that from among the members some are tasked by divine call with the performance of a variety of ministries to carry on smoothly the mission entrusted to his People, then one would seem to put into focus the *CIC* with the theology of Vatican II.¹⁰²

(2) Vatican II in its *Lumen Gentium* makes it clear that all members of God's People are chosen by God and that baptism and the Holy Spirit make them all equal in the basic kenotic mission of Jesus. From there God chooses some members to perform a variety of divine ministries and charisms. Those so called are entrusted with the divine ministries not to rule or to impose themselves upon God's People, but in order to share more deeply in Jesus' kenosis, to be of more service to the Community, to be of more benefit to the other members.

The *CIC* certainly projects that kind of equality among all the members, an equality brought about through baptism and manifested in a "communion" among all the members of God's chosen People (c. 204,§1);¹⁰³ yet, after a kind of prenotanda, most of the canonical legislation sounds hierarchical in a ruling-ruled, superior-inferior vision; a pyramidal line, "reductive vision", where the ones below, the laity, can bring forward and elevate their "consultative" voices, but the decisions are handled down by those in the echelons of the hierarchy, and the final say on all matters is assumed exclusively by the one voice on top who, in relation to the ones below, enjoys "supreme, full, immediate and universal ordinary power" (c. 331).

¹⁰² Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 112-113.

¹⁰³ Cf. G. Lo Castro, "I Laici e l'Ordine Temporale". *Studi Cattolici* 31 (1987), p. 13.

(3) The Fathers of Vatican II enumerate a series of prerogatives or rights that the laity are supposed to have and the clergy are called upon to respect and to foster.¹⁰⁴ Yet it is interesting to notice that, although the *CIC* inserts almost literally the directives of the Council (cf. cc. 208-216), yet it does it not within the title on "The Laity" (cc. 224-231) as the other branch of the Church other than the clergy (c. 207,§1), but on "The Duties and Rights of All the Faithful" (cc. 208-223), a terminology which according to c. 240,§1, includes also the clergy. Such a legal structure may lead one to think that it has been done in order for the "clergy" to control the "kingly" function even over matters of "secular quality" which are said to be "proper and special" of the laity.¹⁰⁵

The words of cc. 227, 229, 299, §3 and 323 still seem to project a language much in consonance with the exclusive kingly power of the clergy, for the ecclesiastical authority is said to be the one in charge of deciding when the laity are "qualified" even in "secular" matters to assume some functions offered by their pastors (cf. c. 228,§1), or when some laity, "who excel in the necessary knowledge, prudence and uprightness are capable of assisting the pastors of the Church as experts or as advisers" (c. 228,§2).

(4) Canon 204 establishes the conciliar doctrine on the faithful as sharing through baptism in Jesus' priestly, prophetic and kingly functions; and c. 224 reaffirms the same about the laity "according to their condition." Yet, when it comes to the specific legislation, something is established about the priestly and prophetic roles of the laity, but their kingly function is hard to find throughout the canonical legislation.

Concerning the *priestly function*, c. 835 states: §1. "First and foremost, the bishops exercise the office of sanctifying; they are the high priests, principal dispensers of the mysteries of God and moderators, promoters and custodians of the whole liturgical life of the Church committed to them."

§2. "The presbyters also exercise this office; they are in fact sharers of the priesthood of Christ Himself so that they are

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *LG.*, n. 37.

¹⁰⁵ *LG.*, n. 31.

consecrated as his ministers under the authority of the bishops to celebrate divine worship and sanctify the people."

§3. "Deacons have a part in the celebration of the divine office in accord with the prescription of the law."

§4. "The rest of the Christian faithful [the 99% of the People of God] by active participation in celebrations of liturgy especially in the Eucharist in their own way also have their own part in the office of sanctification; parents share in the office of sanctification in a particular way by leading a conjugal life in the Christian spirit and by seeing to Christian education of their children."

Canon 749 establishes the *prophetic function* as shared by the different sectors of the Community:

§1. "The Supreme Pontiff, in virtue of his office, possesses infallible teaching authority when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful, whose task is to confirm his fellow believers in the faith, he proclaims with a definite act that a doctrine of faith or morals is to be held as such."

§2. "The college of bishops also possesses infallible teaching authority when the bishops exercise their teaching office gathered together in an ecumenical council when, as teachers and judges of faith and morals, they declare that for the universal Church a doctrine of faith or morals must be definitely held; they also exercise it scattered throughout the world but united in a bond of communion among themselves and with the successor of Peter when together with that same Roman Pontiff in their capacity as authentic teachers of faith and morals they agree on an opinion to be held as definitive."

§3. "No doctrine is understood to be infallibly defined unless it is clearly established as such."

Nothing is said of the teaching office of the presbyters and deacons in this canon, and nothing of the *sensus fidelium* in matters of faith, this being part of the prophetic role of the believer. The only legislation found in relation to the faithful in this regard are cc. 753 and 754.

Canon 753 says: "The faithful must adhere to the authentic teaching of their own bishops with a sense of religious respect."

Canon 754 establishes: "All Christian faithful are obliged to observe the constitutions and decrees which the legitimate authority of the Church issues in order to propose doctrine and proscrib[e] erroneous opinions; this is especially true of the constitutions and decrees issued by the Roman Pontiff or the college of bishops."

As for the ministry of the word, canon 759 summarises the role of the laity in these words: "In virtue of their baptism and confirmation lay members of the Christian faithful are witnesses to the Gospel message by word and by example of a Christian life; they can also be called upon to cooperate with the bishops and presbyters in the exercise of the ministry of the word."

It is striking to notice the brief points of legislation related to the prophetic function of the non-clergy (laity) and to contrast it with the immensely large role actually played by the laity in the transmission of the Christian faith. One could, for example, imagine what would happen to the People of God if all of a sudden Christian mothers and fathers would cease to transmit Christian doctrine and holiness to their Children in the "home churches".¹⁰⁶ Would the "clergy" be able to take charge? Or what would happen to the centers of Christian teaching if lay religion teachers or catechists, and above all "Sisters" (not clergy) would resign from their work. Could the "clergy" take care of all that work? One could not be tempted to affirm that a 15 minute weekly homily has a more significant impact on the transmission of faith than a religion teacher's teaching load of 18 hours a week. One understands the theological importance of universal synods, councils, and ex-cathedra definitions, but the legislation ought to be for ordinary, daily procedures to guide the People of God, not for extra-ordinary, centennial events.

Concerning the *kingly function*, the CIC does not have a separate book to deal with it, as it has with the priestly and teaching functions. But somehow one can say that most of the CIC, as it is, irradiates legislation on that kingly function. For what interests us, it is worth quoting two canons taken from the "General

¹⁰⁶ LG., n. 11.

Norms" in the title on the "Power of Regime" (the "kingly" function?).

Canon 135, §1 says: "The power of governance is distinguished as legislative, executive and judicial."

Canon 129 states: §1. "In accord with the prescriptions of the law, those who have received sacred orders are capable of the power of governance, which exists in the Church by divine institution and is also called the power of jurisdiction."

§2. "Lay members of the Christian faithful can cooperate in the exercise of this power in accord with the norm of law."

It would be very hard for theologians to uncover here the "basic equality" among all the People of God, or to see in those pieces of legislation any meaningful role assigned to the kingly function of the laity. The "pyramidal" model of Church is still present in this portion of canon law.¹⁰⁷ It would be likewise difficult to screen what is "kenotic" from what is "secular" and "worldly" in the canonical legislation dealing with the kingly function, unless one identifies the kenotic with the attitude expected from the layman, and secular with the power wielded by the clergy.

THE SYNOD ON THE LAITY (1987)

The Church finds herself now more than twenty years after Vatican II (1962-1965) and a few years after the promulgation of the new CIC (1983). During this period of time much has been written about conciliar doctrine, to the point of "inflation".¹⁰⁸ Has the Church assimilated the innovations of Vatican II? If one talks about the laity, the conciliar documents raised a lot of expectations; expectations concerning the development of a "theology of the laity", the "mission" of the Church, the "ministry" in the Church, the proper conception of the Church, but most of all, issues related to the "due participation" of the laity in Jesus' priestly, prophetic and kingly functions that have led to discussions

¹⁰⁷ Cf. A. Anton, *a.c.*, p. 139.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. A. Anton, *a.c.*, p. 109, bibl. p. 103; Jacques Depuis, "Lay People in Church and World", *Gregorianum*, 68 (12, 1987), pp. 347-390; Rose Mary Goldie, *Laici. Laicato. Laicity. Bilancio di Trent'Anni di Bibliografia*, Rome: Ave, 1986.

on the ordination of laymen (married or single) to some priestly ministries, the possible inclusion of females in those ministries, and the possibility of such persons "presiding" in Christian assemblies when or where "consecrated" ministers are not available; discussions on a delineation of the "kingly" ministry of Christ from a secular kingly exercise and the proper involvement of the clergy or laity in such roles.

Varied research was done on these subjects right after the Council and much more in preparation for the celebration of the VIIth Synod of Bishops scheduled to be held in Rome (October 1-29, 1987) with the declared purpose of studying "The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and in the World." The number of anticipated suggestions was very abundant. The work of the Fathers during the Synod was intensive; their proposals were challenging and at times even daring. The expectations were even higher. Someone voiced his anxieties saying: "From the Synod a change of mentality on the part of the clergy is expected above all."¹⁰⁹ A layman voiced his expectations in a series of questions: "Does the Church truly value lay people as competent and committed? Is the Church willing to support and encourage the theological education of the laity? Does the Church believe in the equality of all its members? Are we aware of how much the lack of women's full participation in the life of the Church impoverishes us all? What guidance are lay people receiving in the areas of spirituality and vocational discernment?" Then he concludes: "I do not want a synod which presents us with a set of 'answers' at its conclusion that we as laity passively accept or ultimately ignore. My vision of the synod itself would be that of a gathering in which ordained leaders and lay representatives meet to discuss together the collaborative efforts that would benefit the Church, rather than a conclave, with doors closed, in which *we* are analysed by *them*."¹¹⁰

Somehow, the "faithful", even if it seemed reluctantly, were watching. Would the meeting become another "clerical" assem-

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Felice Scalia, "Ne Clericali, ne Laicisti, ma Inviati", *Presbyteri, Quaderni di Spiritualità*, 21 (1987), pp. 165; "Editoriale", *Studi Cattolici*, 31 (1987), p. 3; G. G. Campanini, "Maturità dei Laici. Promesse e Fatica di un Cammino", *Presbyteri*, 21 (1987), p. 186.

¹¹⁰ E. C. Sellner, "Professional Lay Ministry and the Synod", *The Furrow*, 38 (1987), pp. 368-373.

bly of *deja-vu*? Or would the Synod catch up with the world and come forward with up to date proposals to answer the problems that besiege the Church? Would the "hierarchical Church" finally allow the laity to enter into its *sancta sanctorum* as full members, instead of merely letting them to peep in as "seculars" connected with the People of God?

Actually the Synod of Bishops is an assembly that does not hold in the Church the clout which perhaps many people think it does. Seven Synods have taken place since the closing of Vatican II, each with a specific relevance to a specific theme. A Synod's composition and role are determined by the present legislation as stated in the *CIC* (cc. 342-348). Its role is to deliberate on pre-assigned topics and it has only a consultative power. Hence it does not come forward with decisions or signed documents as a body. The participants present their views and opinions, deliberate on certain topics in small committees and forward their suggestions. Then the permanent Secretariat works on those suggestions to help the pope prepare a pertinent document, "An Apostolic Exhortation,"¹¹¹ that may or may not be published later on, in accordance with the pope's final decision.

The procedure may raise disappointment among observers who are unaware of what the Synods are all about. Yet one cannot rush into judgment as far as the work of the Synod is concerned. Rather, one ought to perceive the participation of the Fathers, their suggestions, and then wait to see what the final outcome will be. In other words, the Synod is not an assembly called to produce immediate results, but rather it is called to forward views and suggestions that may help to prepare a long range program so to speak.

In the interventions of the Fathers of the last Synod, one sensed the vibration of all the vocal cords of the universal Church, from the sense of mission, to the priestly, prophetic and kingly roles of the laity; from the ministries to the new charismatic movements through the BBC, liberation theology, laity's activism, women's emancipation, calls for democratization, evangelical radicalism or clerical monopoly. Somehow all the themes written about in the post-conciliar times found an echo in the halls of the

¹¹¹ Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 31-Ott., 1987, p. 1.

Synod. Hence few can claim that their themes or voices were not dealt with or heard of.

As for the immediate reactions and appraisals, one heard voices clamoring for higher expectations, and also voices expressing satisfied opinions. Such satisfaction rose mainly on three grounds, namely: firstly, the Synod was able to feel the true "ecclesial communion," meaning to say, the living and working together (hierarchy and laity) as members of the same People of God. Secondly, the Synod as a whole, was able to reassert the spirit and even the letter of Vatican II. The implication of this would be that a fear of regressiveness was floating around the halls of the Synod, and also that no evolution had taken place or was even expected. Finally, the third source of satisfaction rose from the final "Message of the Synodal Fathers Addressed to the People of God".¹¹² What are the most relevant points of this message as regards the laity?

The Synod pointedly admits the existence of new challenges as a result of the new social situations in which the laity have an "indispensable" role to play.¹¹³ There is no sickness more difficult to heal than the one of a patient who refuses to acknowledge the presence of his sickness. "It would be tragic," Scalia said, "to conclude that everything is going well, and that the present difficulties will disappear by themselves as the rain under the sun."¹¹⁴ The acknowledgement of existing problems in the Church by the synodal Fathers is in itself a positive sign.

The Vatican II, like the *CIC*, had left the definition of the laity as well as the clear delineation of their role still unanswered. The Synod for its part confesses that it has engrossed itself in a serious reflexion to establish "the identity, the dignity and the responsibility of the Christian laity."¹¹⁵ In this regard, the document establishes the principle of "equal dignity" among the components of the People of God, i.e., "the laity, the clergy and the religious" (in that order!).¹¹⁶ The bases derive from the sacrament of baptism that draws its power from its Trinitarian grace and its call to holiness "mainly through its own profession."

¹¹² Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, 31-Ott., 1987, p. 4.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 4, n. 2.

¹¹⁴ Cf. F. Scalia, "Editoriale", *Presbyteri*, 21 (1987), p. 164.

¹¹⁵ *L'Osservatore Romano*, 30-Ott., 1987, p. 4, n. 3.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4, nn. 3, 12 & 13.

What are the "professions" of the People of God? For the majority of the laity "with preference in those environments we call the 'world': family, work, local community, etc." As for the "other faithful" (the clergy!), they "receive the sacrament of ordination that grants unto them a special dignity, and capacitates them, in the name of Christ the Shepherd, to unite the community, to nourish it with the word and the sacraments and to keep it in unity," that is the additional "profession" of those "other faithful" (clergy). Finally, "the other Christians," the religious, are those "who are called to witness radically God's love through the practice of the evangelical counsels."¹¹⁷

It seems to us very highly significant to note these three kinds of "professions" and the sense of their priorities among the People of God, the faithful laymen, the faithful clergy and the faithful religious. This classification is especially significant if one compares it with the components of the Church according to c. 207 of the CIC, i.e.: §1. "Among the Christian faithful by divine institution there exists in the Church the sacred ministers, who are called clerics in law, and other Christian faithful, who are also called laity."

§2. "From both groups there exist Christian faithful who are consecrated to God in their own special manner and serve the salvific mission of the Church through the profession of evangelical counsels by means of vows or other sacred bonds recognized and sanctioned by the Church; such persons also are of service to the saving mission of the Church; although their state does not belong to the hierarchical structure of the Church, they nevertheless do belong to its life and holiness."

The origin of the People of God is the same for all the faithful, baptism, and so is the target, holiness, Trinitarian communion; only the profession (state of life) is different,¹¹⁸ according to each one's condition of life.

Then, from the synodal Fathers comes a reaffirmation of "communion" among the members of the People of God: "Christians with you, bishops for you."¹¹⁹ The Fathers affirm through those words the principle of equality derived from baptism and

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4, n. 3.

¹¹⁸ *LG.*, nn. 3 & 4.

¹¹⁹ St. Augustine, "Sermon 340, 1", *PL.*, 39, 1483.

the principle of hierarchy through service. They stress "communion" rather than monologue: "In these days of listening and of dialogue we have experienced that the risen Lord was with us... In this Marian year, and at this end of this Assembly of intimate ecclesial sharing."¹²⁰

The statements of the declaration are certainly not revolutionary. But then, the Church has never been known for revolutionary, daring moves, much as many of us, perhaps, would like her to be so known once in a while. Yet it is undeniable that not only have the Fathers striven to pursue the path of Vatican II,¹²¹ one can assert that the declaration goes beyond legislative language and orientation. Even more, slow as the moves may have been, the sense of ongoing reality is there and the signals for development are shining.

CONCLUSION

What, then, remains to be done? Words may be nice to hear, but as somebody (pessimistic?) has pointed out, once the Fathers disperse, a group of stalwarts seem to gather together to plot the moves in order to block the implementation of whatever innovations have been suggested and try to redress and undo whatever advances had taken place.¹²²

That may well be the case, but then one has to remember that the People of God is not a democracy, but a Theo-cracy; besides, one has to remember that union in the Community means harmony more than identity, and one cannot realistically expect nowadays either that those members of Jesus' People who deem it that the Community should go faster and further will all of a sudden sit down and docily play one hundred per cent by the bureaucratic rules. The tension between the historical forms of ministry and the pneumatic freedom has been part of the living organisms of Christianity for a long time already.¹²³ What is needed now is the courage to go forward.¹²⁴ The charisms of the Spirit

¹²⁰ *L'Osservatore Romano*, 30-Ott., 1987, p. 4, n. 4.

¹²¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, n. 14.

¹²² Cf. E. Flameygh, *a.c.*, 250.

¹²³ Cf. L. Goppelt, *Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Times*, p. 56.

¹²⁴ Cf. A. Bonivento, "Solo Insieme si Cresce", *Presbyteri*, 21 (1987), p. 198; Ph. Rosato, "Laici in Quale Chiesa. Per Quale Mondo", *Presbyteri*, 21 (1987), p. 170.

are better known for their spontaneity more than for their compliance with bureaucratic rules.

What can we expect then? John Paul II, our "Presiding 'Brother'", has summarized the answer in the headline of his speech to the final gathering of the Synod: "From the Affective Synod to the Effective Synod".¹²⁵ It is a call for action, for implementation of the suggestions and sentiments of the Synod. But this is not going to be easy, for to achieve an "effective" improvement, a number of sectors within the Church need to be deeply involved.

(1) The most important in a "hierarchical" structure to achieve an effective result is usually the initiative and support of the Presiding Brother. In this regard, the words of John Paul II at the last session of the Synod are encouraging: "In accordance with the wishes of the Synodal Fathers, all the pointers that have been expressed, will constitute the bases for the elaboration of the post-Synodal document and it is my intention to engage myself immediately to prepare it... with the collaboration of the Council for the Secretariat of the Synod, but not without having in mind the 'right of author' that belongs to the Synod itself. I hope that this way it would be possible to satisfy completely the reason for that collegial collaboration that in this final session of the Synod has had such a meaningful and imposing manifestation."¹²⁶

(2) It is important that theologians develop clearer ideas of the meaning of People of God and laity. The terms laity and layman as polarizing concepts by contrast with sacred and clergy, as concepts expressing inferiority or less dignified elements, have to be eliminated within the Church. Could we not all be called what we really are: MESSIAHNITES, Jesus' Family?

"Neither clerics, nor laymen, but missionaries," editorialized Scalia.¹²⁷ The common ground as God's People is what needs to be emphasized, not the distinctions, as if Christians belonged to different ontological species.¹²⁸ "The great Christian originality lies precisely, among other elements, in the egalitarian and com-

¹²⁵ *L'Osservatore Romano*, 31-Ott., 1987, p. 5.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 6, n. 2.

¹²⁷ F. Scalia, *l.c.*, p. 161.

¹²⁸ Cf. J. Beyer, "Le Laicat et les Laics dans l'Eglise", *Gregorianum*, 68 (1987), p. 157; F. Scalia, *a.c.*, pp. 166-169.

munitarian sense, in the functional and service character of all the different jobs and ministries . . . All are first of all Christians, and then they fulfill a function."¹²⁹ In a different way, another author put it like this: Is the Church the *sine qua non* condition for the hierarchy, or the hierarchy the *sine qua non* condition for the Church? "The ministry is not the *sine qua non* of the Church; rather, the Church is the *sine qua non* of all ministries."¹³⁰

This is what has been called "the rediscovery of the central role played by the concept of 'People of God' originated from a historic, salvific fact, the election."¹³¹ "The laymen are not a second class faithful, to be defined only through a negative way as those who have not managed yet to emancipate themselves."¹³²

It is of the utmost importance and urgency to dipolarize within the Church the concept of laity and ministers, and see these latter as a group of additionally engaged members in the service of the Communities.¹³³ That seems to be the mind of St. Augustine when he wrote: "Christians with you, bishops for you."¹³⁴ As the "Decree on the Ministry and Life of the Priests" had recalled the clerics: "From all those who have been regenerated by the water of baptism, the priests are brothers among brothers, as members of the one and the same Body of Christ."¹³⁵

One may say that this has to do with an image building problem, with "the use of language."¹³⁶ There is more to it than mere "language". There is a theological perception behind it as well as a historical discrimination, but if one has to start a changing process, "language" may very well be the initial step. A prolongation of the present dichotomy between laity and clergy as two separate components of Jesus' *Laos* is bound to lead to a further isolation of the clergy from the faithful and to an even further indifference of the laity for the clergy and eventually a total rejection of the Church for being seen as synonymous with clergy.

¹²⁹ J. A. Estrada, *a.c.*, p. 359.

¹³⁰ Anton Hautepen, *People of God. A Plea for the Church*, London: SCM Press, p. 147.

¹³¹ Maria Clara Lucchetti Bingemer, "Da Teologia do Laicado a Teologia do Batismo", *Perspectiva Teologica*, 19 (1987), p. 30.

¹³² G. Lo Castro, *a.c.*, p. 13; cf. M. C. Lucchetti, *a.c.*, p. 34.

¹³³ A. Anton, *a.c.*, p. 125.

¹³⁴ St. Augustine, *i.c.*

¹³⁵ Vatican II, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 9.

¹³⁶ Cf. Peter Verity, "Who are the Laity?", *The Clergy Review*, 62 (1987), p. 102.

(3) It is important that exegetes, theologians and historians work together in order to clarify further the meaning of "ministry", the kinds of ministries and their separate role in the Community. This would facilitate the perception of whether or not all the ministries need to be centralized, and monopolized by one "category" of people, the clergy; or rather whether or not in the Church it would be possible to have a category of people, a group from among the People of God, consecrated for the function of "teachers"; another group (different) for the function of ecclesiastical "lawyers"; another group (different) for the proclamation of the word, "preachers"; another distinct one to manage the temporal goods of the Church, "financiers"; another one likewise different to implement the sacrament of reconciliation, "confessors"; another distinct one to "preside" over the Eucharistic celebration, "presbyters"; another to represent the Community as "elders", bishops; still another to deal with civil societies outside the Community, "diplomats", etc. Even the Motu Proprio "*Ministeria Quaedam*" seems to insinuate the creation of other ministries within the Church.¹³⁷

Then one could see more in perspective the relevance of the "presiding" ministers in the sanctification of God's People without taking away the sanctifying importance of other ministries, such as Christian parenthood, religious life, liturgical participation by the faithful through their living testimonies and proclamations.¹³⁸ Then, perhaps, we could have ONE Family of Jesus but many ministers engaged in a variety of ministries; instead of ONE Church "composed of clergy, religious and laity," a distinction inadequate in itself because, as philosophers would teach us, such a division is not based on the same "fundament" (baptism); rather, the distinction is based part on the "fundament" (the laity), and the other two parts on the "functions" (clergy and religious). It is a very poor division indeed! What is needed is a shift from an institutional Ecclesiology, that of a perfect society, to an Ecclesiology of "mystery" and "communion".¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Paul VI, "Motu Proprio '*Ministeria Quaedam*'", 15-Sept., 1972.

¹³⁸ Cf. E. Vigano, *a.c.*, pp. 97-123; Margaret Hebbethwaite, "Vers des Changements dans l'Organisation de l'Eglise", *Convergence*, 3 (1986-1/1987), pp. 20-24.

¹³⁹ Cf. A. Anton, *a.c.*, pp. 112-113.

(4) When one talks about the mission of the laity as being in the Church and in the world, it is important that theologians clarify for us whether the People of God have two or only one mission and whether the mission is different for the clergy (ministers) and for the laity (non-clergy). In the People of God, theology points to one single basis, baptism, one single mission, the transmission of the Good News, and different modes of carrying on the mission, i.e., according to one's own "profession".¹⁴⁰ The Synodal message to the People of God seems to point in that direction. Still, the concepts need to be further identified and clarified by theologians.¹⁴¹

The insistence in assigning the "secular" (associated with the worldly, pagan, non-sacred) to the layman and the "sacred" (the holy, perfect, good) to the clergy, will only serve to continue the dividing polarization of laity-clergy, people-hierarchy within the Church leaving the layman as a second class Christian contaminated by the world, and the clergy as the permanent monopolizer of holiness to be kept in isolation, untouched by and unable to relate to the secular. God's People is but one, and one is its mission, and to bring that mission "to all the nations," to the whole world is the task of all members of God's People, and more so the frontier challenge for the more engaged members, for the clergy. In this sense, it has been said that "it is impossible to conceive a sector of the ecclesiastical life that could be defined outside the secular."¹⁴² "The whole Church," insists Canobbio, "is in, for and with the world... The whole Church is secular."¹⁴³ The officials and high commanders of a secular army stay safely in the rearguard, planning and directing the battle while launching the masses (soldiers) to touch the "war", the blood, with the enemy. Jesus' People, in its mission to spread the "war" of the Gospel, demands that its officials be in front, not in the bunker. Such is the message of the Gospel about the greatest (*Mtth.* 20:20-28) and the message of primacy of responsibility by John Paul II.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ *LG.*, nn. 13 & 17.

¹⁴¹ Cf. Julian Herranz, "Nella Chiesa e nel Mondo Senza Dualismi", *Studi Cattolici*, 31 (1987), pp. 4-8.

¹⁴² S. Dianich, "Laicete Sacerdotale et Sacerdoces des Laics", *Convergence*, 3 (1986-1/1987), p. 19.

¹⁴³ Giacomo Canobbio, "L'Attuale Dibattito Teologico sul Laicato", *Rivista di Pastorale Liturgica*, 140 (1987), p. 9.

¹⁴⁴ John Paul II, *Catechesi Tradendae*, n. 16.

(5) The theology of baptism is kenotic (*Rom.* 6:1-11) and it constitutes the sacrament of God's choice to make us his People, "children of God" (*Jn.* 1:12), all equal in dignity. Through baptism, all of God's People share in Jesus' priestly, prophetic and kingly function. It is imperative that theologians identify further the meaning of those functions and the fields of application within the People of God as they belong by "divine right" to all the members.

Jesus' *Laos*, we can say loudly, is by divine institution hierarchical in service. But we can state as loudly that by divine institution Jesus' *Laos* is radically democratic in dignity, the kenotic dignity of baptism that makes of all of us "children of God" (*Jn.* 1:12). That is why, Rosato affirms: "The existentially formulated texts of Vatican II, which have been cited above, frequently reiterate the fundamental right of the laity to freedom in expressing their charisms in the Church and in the world, the genuine equality which should characterize both correlated modalities of exercising the apostolate, and the inherent dignity of the common priesthood as originating from Christ and guided by his Spirit. If these texts were to be juxtaposed, the magisterial statements, issued during the last two centuries, concerning the danger of liberal and democratic ideologies, it would be obvious that the bishops of Vatican II were implicitly redressing the exaggerated fears and reactions of their predecessors."¹⁴⁵

(6) The theology of baptism should undoubtedly help to project properly the meaning of ministers (clergy), not as an ontologically different entity, but as an answer to a divine vocation (call) confirmed in the sacrament of ordination that confers an additional dignity of *kenosis* (service for the Community), and to understand why what makes the clergy or ministers essentially different priests, prophets and kings, is not the fact that they are given a key, a ring, a scepter or a certificate of consecration, but the kenotic target, namely, a key for, a ring for, a scepter for, a certificate of consecration to be more ready *for* service. What "sets apart" the ministers (clergy) is not the robe or the certificates, but the additional task to serve the Community.¹⁴⁶ Philosophers tell us that what differentiates actions essentially is not

¹⁴⁵ Ph. Rosato, *a.c.*, p. 237.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. Bernard Botte, *a.c.*, pp. 83-96.

the basis (*fundamentum*) but the target (*finis*). Hence that all ministries are generically the same; rooted in baptism, in Jesus' kenotic priesthood, but they are specifically, essentially different one from the other because of the "function" assigned to each of them.

As Reegen has said, "It is conclusive that in Christ's Church there is no difference between the rights of the faithful with ecclesiastical positions and those who have none; between clerics and laymen. Whenever there are specific and different rights they derive only from the function."¹⁴⁷ It is necessary to break with the defects of what has been called "intrinsic clericalism", namely: a radical mistrust of the laity by the clergy; the confinement of the laity to a condition of subordinated schemes of obedience; the vision of absolutism and power inherent in the mind of the clergy, a hierocratic rather than kenotic approach towards the priestly offices.¹⁴⁸

(7) Assuming that the clergy will continue maintaining the monopoly of the ministry, it is theologically important to differentiate the secular from the evangelical meaning of priest, prophet and king. Additionally, it is important to stress theologically the priorities among the different ministries. For if one is going to accept that the "laity" are going to be more involved in carrying on the functions of the Church, obviously certain "kingly" functions are less "prior" for the ministers and more "prior" for the laity, as seen in the example of Jesus and the apostles.

"The laity," says Bombault, "reject the image of the priest who all by himself has access to power over the sacraments, over the Word of God and control over decisions."¹⁴⁹

Someone has asked: "Does the gift of leadership [kingly role] necessarily reside in the person who presides at the Eucharist?"¹⁵⁰ In a more positive way, Botte affirms, in relation to the different

¹⁴⁷ Otto Ter Reegen, "I Diritti dei Laici", *Concilium*, 4, n. 8 (1968), p. 42.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. A. Bonivento, *a.c.*, pp. 198-199; CAGA, "Place et Role du Laicat dans l'Eglise", *Convergence*, 3 (1986-1/1987), p. 38.

¹⁴⁹ A. Gombault, "Laics et Pretres: Roles et Identite", *Lumiere et Vie*, 36 (1987), p. 82.

¹⁵⁰ P. Verity, *a.c.*, p. 102.

ministries, but more in reference to the apostolic task: "The apostle is not the only channel of the Spirit."¹⁵¹

In the past, laymen may have been kept in the outer circles of ecclesiastical affairs under the excuse that only the clergy were well trained and trustworthy, while "laymen" were the masses, ignorant for the most part and not trustworthy in "sacred" matters. That medieval mentality may have created a radical anti-secularism on the part of the clergy, but the reverse of it would be a radical anti-clericalism by well trained Christian laymen who are aware of their superior educational training and experience and yet are reduced to the role of servants and of the untrustworthy by a proud patriarchal clergy.

That is the challenge to present theology, a kind of internal self liberation. "The new situation of the layman in our country," elaborates Libanio, "impels us to reappraise a number of categories that up to now have been developed with an impact of clericalism and its alliance with the prevailing social powers. There is a need for a true task of liberation theology. Turning to within the Church, theology is aware that our movements of the poor among the laity . . . are pressing for a review of the structures of the past and to liberate them from the clerical and oppressive elements alien to Christ's will."¹⁵² "Catholic lay people" -points out Rosato- "are hearing many strong voices which challenge them to realize themselves by expressing their talents, either in other religious communities, in secular institutions or in radical movements, all promising them a close community, a practical program and a clear direction as helps to do so. These helps are said to be denied them in the Catholic Church which is hopelessly divided about the proper identity and function of the baptized. As other claims are made on the allegiance of the laity, it is imperative that the teaching of the Council about their essential part in the mission and goal of the Church be made more widely known and put into practice."¹⁵³

(8) Somehow connected with the previous consideration is what was said about the "power of regime" as spelled out by the *CIC* (c. 135,§1). Theologically one is entitled to wonder: are the

¹⁵¹ B. Botte, *a.c.*, p. 95.

¹⁵² J. B. Libanio, *a.c.*, p. 16.

¹⁵³ Ph. Rosato, *a.c.*, pp. 217-218.

legislative, executive and judicial powers a monopoly of the ministry performed by the "consecrated persons" (i.e. the clergy) as the *CIC* seems to imply (cf. c. 129,§1)? Further, is the power of regime the first theological priority for the ministers? What the *CIC* says seems to be clear. What theology has to say, remains to be further clarified. In fact a theologian calls it "the widest field where the baptismal priesthood ought to be exercised and the one which is the most specific for the laity."¹⁵⁴

What is rightly being looked for in the Church is not the clericalization of the laity, neither the secularization or laicalization of the clergy, it is more a longing for a kind of theological clarification of roles and ministries, for a sort of de-monopolizing of control by the clergy of what has been called its "historical usurpations."¹⁵⁵ Laws have been self serving as prepared and promulgated by the clergy. People now ask, what is theologically the proper role of the faithful in the People of God? And what is the function of the faithful called to an additional service through ordination?

The faithful understand that lately the concept of "hierarchy" has been proclaimed in the Church as meaning not control and rank, but service and duty. Now they want that proclamation to become a reality. In evangelical language, it is "giving to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God."

(9) The Church is the People of God chosen by him and entrusted with a revealed covenant. The New Family of Yahweh, though, like the Old Family, lives in a historical context, a world composed of many different societies; and from among all of them God calls people to become members of his Family. All this challenges theologians to reflect deeply on the concept of inculturation. In this reflection sociologists, historians, anthropologists and the like have a role.

Much is talked about "inculturation" nowadays, but it is a two sided coin, for many cultures could and do have liberating values; but many cultural heritages are repressive and pagan in nature. Thus both sides imply a challenge, for the Gospel without

¹⁵⁴ J. G. Page, *a.c.*, p. 57.

¹⁵⁵ F. Scalia, *a.c.*, p. 162; cf. M. Paternoster, "I Ministeri dei Laici nella Celebrazione: Possibilit  e Significato", *Rivista di Pastorale Liturgica*, 140 (1987), pp. 31-33.

inculturation would always remain superficial; and "accommodating" the Gospel by subordinating it to culture could turn out to be self-destroying under the cover of "inculturation".

Civil societies are organized with legislative, executive and judicial branches. Such societies evolve and adjust at the three levels, or else they disappear. The New People of God is presently organized also as a society with its legislative, executive and judicial arms. In the Church, however, the evolution and adjustment are found to be very slow and usually involve reluctance. One gets a feeling that in the Church a sort of "legislative assembly" should exist to introduce periodically some new legislation and to modify it whenever necessary. A legislative assembly "dominated", perhaps, by lawyers, but with a need for exegetes, historians, theologians, sociologists, scientists, etc., a mixed assembly (mixed in all senses) not necessarily composed of members "appointed" for life, or of exclusively "consecrated" members. Does theology find any "Theo"-logical arguments against such a procedure?

"The hierarchical structure of the People of God, however," says Anton, "in which by the will of its Founder there is a sacred power with a proper mission entrusted by Christ, according to the principle of succession, to its ministers, is not opposed to the introduction in the exercise of authority of new forms in the performance of the solidarity and corresponsibility of all its members derived from the principle of basic equality among themselves."¹⁵⁶

In summary, it seems that while theologically one accepts the divine origin, structure and mission of the People of God as revealed to us by Yahweh, still there is a lot of room for clarification, evolution, adaptation and participation.¹⁵⁷

(10) Ignorance of the "affairs of the Church", whatever they may be, has often been claimed as the deterrant for allowing the "laity" or other people to take part in Church administration. But this could turn out to be a vicious circle, for ignorance can be either a factor to be remedied or a factor to be fostered or imposed so as to continue manipulating certain positions. Secrecy is a sure

¹⁵⁶ A. Anton, *a.c.*, p. 131.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Herve Legrand, "La Relation Clerge-Laïcat", *Convergence*, 3 (1986-1/1987), p. 17.

way of maintaining the primacy of knowledge; and total secrecy could lead to total manipulation.

It has often been commented that the best tool to perpetuate dictatorship is not for the dictator to maintain a strong army, but to suppress knowledge among his people. Training is definitely the solution for the proper understanding of the ecclesiastical affairs.¹⁵⁸

Centres of theological training have finally been opened to the "laity". "It is a simple fact," observes Libanio, "classic as well as modern theology have been elaborated mainly by clerics. For this reason, the ideologic, institutional, corporative clerical interests prevail within these theologies. Even if these theologians are critical in front of prevailing clericalism, they are nevertheless clerics."¹⁵⁹

Aside from theological training, other areas demand equal openness so that *we run our Church ourselves*, and take proper responsibility for the successes and mistakes.

(11) Observing the present state of affairs, as far as the call of the hierarchy asking for the involvement of the laity in the Church, one cannot avoid to speculate on what is really the motivation of the hierarchy in all this?

One, for instance, still hears a lot of speculation about "permitting" the laity to get more involved. Is giving what belongs to somebody part of the virtue of generosity, or of justice? "The access of the laymen to the new forms of ministry is not based on the present need to have collaborators in the performance of the liturgical action. It is right-duty that concerns all the baptized as such."¹⁶⁰

It is hard then to accept that one needs to get permission to use what is rightfully his. One gets the feeling that the "patriarchal", paternalistic attitude of some sectors of the clergy is bound to continue in circulation for a while, even if we all claim to be-

¹⁵⁸ Cf. M. Audinat, "Un Pari: La Formation des Laïcs", *Lumière et Vie*, 36 (1987), pp. 29-38.

¹⁵⁹ J. B. Libanio, *a.c.*, p. 13.

¹⁶⁰ M. Paternoster, *a.c.*, p. 32.

lieve in the principle of "equality" as faithful (Messiahrites) of the one People of God.¹⁶¹

A related question concerning the motivation would be: is the hierarchy "permitting" a more active involvement of the laity in the affairs of the Church because that is the way things ought to be theologically, or because there is a shortage of clergy? What would happen to the laity the day one saw "clerical" vocations blooming in the Church at the rate of the late fifties? What would the clergy do with the "committed" laity? "Thanks, thanks for your service! We do not need you anymore"? This is not a far-sighted view of the state of mind of certain sectors of the clergy. Who, for instance, has not witnessed the heroic dedication (total service for totally free compensation!) of lay ministers proclaiming the liturgy of the Word, serving as extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist throughout the year because there is a shortage of "available" priests? Then comes the concelebrated Mass on Christmas or Holy Thursday, when there are enough priests to perform those functions, and the laity are "politely" asked to go back to the crowd because they are not needed, and there is where they belong?

It is ultimately an issue of convenience, or of sheer selfishness on the part of the clergy. Many laymen do accurately perceive it this way.¹⁶² Hence they long (even if unconsciously) for true equality to guide the People of God, that the affairs of the Church be guided not by the feelings of the clergy as dictated by the need as they may arise on the spur of the moment. They long that theology, not politics, be the guiding principle in envisioning the role of the laity in the Church.

* * *

In the present discussion of the meaning of laity and clergy, of ministry and mission, of People of God and hierarchy, etc., one notices a kind of reversal, a sort of self-purification or chastening of the Church searching for a more authentic view of itself, trying to shed the crusts of secularism and paganism that have clung to its structures through the passing of the centuries, a search for a

¹⁶¹ Cf. Luca Blandolini, "I Ministeri dei Laici: A che Punto Siamo?", *Ephemerides Liturgicae*, 101 (1987), p. 127; F. Scalia, *a.c.*, pp. 166-167.

¹⁶² Cf. J. Comby, *a.c.*, p. 16.

Church authentically in the image, and according to the plan of the Founder. All this we see coming not from new visions of Ecclesiology or even less of Canon Law, but from a more biblical view of the Founder, from Soteriology.

Jesus Son of Mary has been primarily projected, ever since Nicea (325), I Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431) and Chalcedon (451), first and foremost as the supreme ruling and glorious God-Man, and secondarily from such a vision as the Jesus of Nazareth. More accurately since Vatican II,¹⁶³ theology has taken up the vision of Philippians and presented a Jesus who "being divine yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross." It is after that, continues St. Paul, that "as a result God raised him high and gave him the NAME which is above all other names" (*Phil.* 2:6-11). It is the same Jesus, but a different Soteriology, a presentation of Jesus above, starting from below, from incarnation (*kenosis*) to resurrection (glory). Then Jesus tells his People: "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you" (*Jn.* 20:21). This is Ecclesiology. Paul, in the mentioned passage, had warned Jesus' People: "In your minds you must be the same as Jesus Christ" (*Phil.* 2:5). This is already the theology of baptism, but fundamentally the theological *metanoia* has to derive from Soteriology, from the proper presentation of Jesus and his mission.

The Church is moving. Slowly? Definitely, yes! But one cannot expect changes easily. The history of the Church teaches us that changes have usually taken place through previous dramatic confrontations, blood or crises, heresies or schisms. "Pioneering" has been rare since Constantine raised the Church to the "establishment". "Prudence", or reluctance to move, has been rather the guiding motto. One can but be optimistic and hope that the forthcoming changes and expected moves and longings will arrive without the "blood" and confrontations of previous history.

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¹⁶³ *LG.*, nn. 30-38.