

SOME MISSION PRIORITIES THAT DETERMINE AND DEMAND NEW LAY MINISTERS

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At the level of the universal church post-Vatican theology has opened up fresh and hopeful ways towards recognising the services of lay charisms under a new concept of ministry and in a new ministerial structure. There comes simultaneously, at the level of the mission churches, another strong and important reason for the recognition of the same. It is the list of ministerial priorities in the mission churches.

If we are not to repeat the mistake made in the first period of evangelization, when ministers suited for one country and culture were imposed on another country with a different culture and hence with a different set of needs, then a study of the conditions and demands of the present missions by listing their priorities appears to us a very important and decisive factor in the matter of new ministries.

Not even the best kind of trees will grow well in all types of soil. Nor will even the best soil nurture equally well all types of trees. The nature both of the trees and of the soil must be studied, for the suitability of one for the other, before the trees are planted or the soil selected. This is true not only of trees and soil, but *positis ponendis*, of ministries and churches too. The biblical and the theological renewals about ministries by themselves will not tell us who is the best minister for a place. The strong and positive arguments from theology cannot assure to the ministries and to the ministers an unconditional success in all the mission churches. *The ecclesial and social conditions of the mission churches will determine and demand their own particular forms of ministers and also the structure necessary to accommodate these ministers. The particular conditions prevailing in the young churches will specify in greater detail the form which the ministers have to take in these areas.* We will not descend into the very particular or detailed conditions¹, but will limit ourselves to outlining the more common and general mission priorities that carry weight in almost all the mission churches.

A. PRIMARY EVANGELIZATION NEEDS LOCAL LAY PIONEERS

Although the first phase of missionary extension which operated parallel to the colonial conquests of Asia and Africa, has ended, and the young churches in these lands have attained a degree of stability, yet primary evangelization remains a number one priority for these churches. The stability of these churches in no way diminishes their missionary

¹ The national and the diocesan pastoral councils set up on the initiatives of Vatican II would do well to list the pastoral priorities of the region and indicate suitable changes in pastoral emphasis, ministerial re-shuffling, ministerial formation and ministerial lifestyles.

character², nor puts an end to the permanent missionary dynamism belonging to the essence of the church³ and hence to every period of the church⁴. On the contrary it is especially in these churches that the dominical command to evangelise, 'Go into the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation' (Mk. 16.15) should find a greater urgency. *These churches are called to be missionary not only by their inner nature but also by the surrounding situation of vast numbers who have yet to hear the gospel message*⁵. The mission churches have today, for this reason, a hitherto unknown chance for evangelization⁶. Hence the need for local missionaries or pioneers who will announce the gospel at the frontier⁷ and to the non-Christians living among the Christians⁸.

The specific purpose of this missionary activity is evangelization and the planting of the church among those peoples and groups where she has not yet taken root... The chief means of this implantation is the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ⁹.

This was a clear teaching of Vatican II on the duty of the church to extend itself and to do this mainly through the preaching of the word.

In the 1974 Synod on Evangelization, the importance of primary evangelization through direct preaching was repeatedly echoed especially by the Fathers from Asia and Africa. Bishop KALILOMBE, for example, speaking on behalf of the East African bishops, declared that while the churches of Europe rightly have their own preoccupations about dechristianisation, secularisation, indifference, materialism and marxism, the churches of Africa should not forget or minimise the fundamental question of what has to be done for all those who do not have the good fortune to know Christ¹⁰.

² Till the time of Vatican II, many of the established bigger parishes of the mission churches gave marginal importance to missionary activity and tended to be more like the parishes of Christian Europe, thinking only in terms of some material aid for the poor of the missions. But Vatican II has situated the missionary element at the very centre of the church. Cf. A. G. 2.

³ The usual tendency of the missionary as soon as the church is founded is to dismantle his missionary equipment and methods and operate a stable parish which demands mostly his pastoral concern. This was not so with the apostles and the early missionaries. They sought new pastures and new opportunities to win more disciples for Christ.

⁴ „And so the time of the missionary activity extends between the first coming of the Lord and the second.“ A. G. 9a. also Cf. A. G. 6g, 7c.

⁵ A. G. 10a; The number of those who have not yet heard of Christ is increasing steadily and the Christian community will always remain the 'pusillus grex' or little flock. Hence we speak of missionary impact, influence and penetration rather than quantitative extension.

⁶ Cf. J. VAN CAUWELAERT, *Les Catéchistes Collaborateurs Efficaces de l'ordre Sacerdotal In: 'Qui portera l'évangile aux nations?'* (Reports of exchanges and points of view at the 44th Missiological Congress in Louvain, 1974) p. 11.

⁷ A. G. 20a, c.

⁸ A. G. 13a.

⁹ A. G. 6e, f.

¹⁰ Cf. Bishop KALILOMBE (Malawi), *La prima evangelizzazione o evangelizzazione di frontiera*, in G. BUTTURINI (ed) *Le Nuove vie del Vangelo* pp. 123—124.

Although evangelization taken globally and integrally will demand the tridimensional ministry of preaching, witness and celebration of sacraments, *the pioneers that are needed for the frontier evangelization will be largely announcers, preachers and teachers of the gospel*. The exact method of the announcing of the gospel to the non-Christians and non-believers poses several problems to the universal and to the particular churches according to the milieu in which they live¹¹. However great these difficulties may be, the churches by their very nature have the duty to procure along with the clergy available, local lay pioneering ministers of the word, who will announce the gospel openly and courageously in their non-Christian or non-believing milieu. It is only men who live their faith among the people who can effectively carry the gospel message to the people around. It is for this reason that we insist that the ministers required be both lay and local.

B. CONTINUED EXISTENCE AND MISSIONARY EFFORTS OF SMALLER COMMUNITIES DEMAND LAY LEADERS

The mission territories, to a large extent, are dotted with a very large number of small communities. These communities are usually served from a main station which can afford a priest. Though at times separated from the main station by considerable distances, they manage to get their monthly or bi-monthly eucharistic celebrations and also have an annual festival in the church. Sustained greatly by the close community bond or blood relationship, they linger on in their faith amidst the non-Christian milieu in spite of a very frugal spiritual diet. While the concentrated population in the town-parish or in the main station receive almost more than their due share of sacramental and pastoral services from the priest, the smaller communities of the secondary sub-station or out-station parishes, as they are called, receive, if anything, the barest minimum. Yet these communities in the villages and the countryside recall to our minds the diaspora communities of the early churches, which were highly valued and adequately served; and also the basic communities of present day Europe, which are attracting so much attention. Both the magisterium and the theologians have made encouraging and hopeful remarks about the latter communities.

During the 1974 Synod on Evangelization, many episcopal conferences from Asia and Africa repeatedly emphasised *the role of smaller communities in evangelization*¹². The natural community-structure of the region, argued many bishops from Africa, should serve as a basis on which true

¹¹ The two declarations of Vatican II on Religious Freedom and on the relationship of the church to non-Christian religions and the creation of two secretariats for non-believers and non-Christians are initial attempts to tackle these problems.

¹² For Asian Bishops' interventions, Cf. D. COLOMBO (ed) *I Semi del Vangelo* pp. 76, 103, 115—116. For African Bishops' interventions, Cf. G. BUTTURINI (ed), op. cit. pp. 27—28, 88, 92, 116—117, 120, 136, 137, 204, 239—240, 235.

christian community should be built¹³. In fact, Bishop MWOLEKA (Tanzania) expressed the view that the only way to evangelise is to adopt 'a genuine mode of expressing the reality of the christian mode of life' which is firstly at the level of smaller communities founded on Christ in every living centre and open to all and linked to the neighbour¹⁴. Mons. CHUNG WAN TING (Malaysia) considered the formation of genuine christian communities as the first instrument of evangelization in his region where the church exists amidst multi-religious communities¹⁵.

PAUL VI in his recent Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* drew special attention to these ecclesial *communautés de base*. He declared that „if these communities springing from the need to live the church's life more intensely, or from the desire and quest for a more human dimension, appear and develop within the church having solidarity with her life, being nourished by her teaching and united with her pastors, not in a spirit of bitter criticism of the institutional church, then these communities will be a place of evangelization for the benefit of the bigger communities and will be a hope for the future“¹⁶.

KARL RAHNER speaking of the shape of the church of the future in Europe, mentions that if the church is to grow it will be through small basic communities of the 'little flock' which have a missionary offensive and opening into the future.

„It is all based on the fundamental understanding that concrete and living christianity today and particularly tomorrow can no longer be passed on simply by the power of a homogeneous christian society (examples of which are increasingly scarce), by administration from the top, by religious instruction as part of the compulsory education received by every child, but must be carried into the future through the life and witness of a genuine christian community living out what christianity really means. Such basic communities in future will no longer be able simply to cover territorially and socially the whole of a populated area; but if they are both intensely active and at the same time outward-looking, they will be able to be *the bearers of the real missionary power of the church for the future*“¹⁷ (italics ours).

Hence we tend to think that the smaller sub-stations or the diaspora communities spread out in the missions and relegated in the matter of services as 'sub' and 'secondary' in relation to the main stations, have the physiognomy of the basic communities in potential form and demand considerable attention from anyone looking into the future of evange-

¹³ So the episcopal conferences of Malawi and Tanzania. Cf. G. BUTTURINI, op. cit. p. 28.

¹⁴ Cf. Bishop MWOLEKA, *I Compiti urgenti del laicato e le Comunità di Base* in: G. BUTTURINI, op. cit. pp. 114—118; similarly Bishops ZOA (Cameroun) and FITZGERALD (South Africa) pp. 180, 253 resp.

¹⁵ Cf. Mons. CHUNG WAN TING, *Creare comunità* in: D. COLOMBO, op. cit. p. 115 Cf. *ibid.*, also the report of the first *East Asian Bishops' Conference* in Taipei (Aug. 1971) p. 30.

¹⁶ *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, AAS 68 (1976) n. 58.

lization. We mention here just two aspects demanding attention for the future of the mission churches: —

a) The Christian community is to be built not *merely* by blood or human relationships, but more by the spiritual relation built around the word and the Eucharist. The eucharist is the central event in which the church reveals herself most clearly¹⁸, and every effort should be made to increase the eucharistic services in the communities' assemblies. Similarly the service of the word too, independent of the eucharist, has its own nutritional value and must be celebrated regularly for the benefit of the communities¹⁹.

Hence these communities in order to exist, have a right to these two services at least, and refusing this right or overlooking it, for the lack of one particular form of minister, the priest, is injustice in a church where the supreme law is service for salvation — Salus animarum suprema lex.

b) Missionary extension, according to modern pastoral estimation and theological understanding, will be marked neither by an increase in the priestly presence on the front-line of evangelization, nor by a massive increase in the number of conversions, but mostly in terms of individual conversions and christian influence through 'little flocks' or small groups²⁰. This is similar to the small communities of the early churches which extended themselves by groups in cellular diffusion²¹. In such a perspective, the diaspora communities that lie surrounded by non-christian communities should become the centres of christian influence and sign-posts of salvation raised among the nations and bearers of the gospel²². Thus they assume a new strategy, a new sign-value and a new commission. *If the missionary strategy and missionary potentiality of these communities are to be actualised, then the due services of the word and the eucharist must be given to these communities.*

¹⁷ K. RAHNER, *The shape of the church to come*, p. 117.

¹⁸ Cf. S. C. 41b.

¹⁹ Cf. V. D. 21, 26a; S. C. 35 (4); *Evangelii Nuntiandi* AAS 68 (1976) n. 58.

²⁰ The possibility of having a sufficient number of priests to break new ground for evangelization and of having mass conversions by even hundreds is past. This is not so much due to a lessening of zeal or devotion to work on the part of the clergy. Nor is it due to the hardness of heart on the part of the people. It is due, we think, to the inevitable changes that have overtaken men and society. Hence the numerical size of the community or the scarcity of priests should not deter our zeal for evangelization, but only make us change the method of evangelization. Cf. also C. ALEXANDER in his introduction to *Ad Gentes* in *The Documents of Vatican II* (ed) W. M. ABBOT p. 583.

²¹ This is evident especially with regard to the Pauline communities. While the apostles travelled as itinerant preachers and left each community with a few disciples, among the communities there was concern over the material and ministerial needs of one another. The growth of these communities and those surrounding them, surely grew by the apostolic concern of the first community in that region. Cf. A. SEUMOIS, *Théologie Missionnaire* Vol. II, p. 218.

²² Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* AAS 68 (1976) n. 58; K. RAHNER, loc. cit. p. 117.

The two aspects of the smaller communities of the missions show how important and urgent are the services of ministers in these communities. A community that ceases to be missionary ceases to be catholic and faces slow extinction. Hence the desperate call of the bishops from mission lands to realize in the catechists and other lay leaders of these communities a type of minister, either by priestly ordination, or by diaconal ordination or by the creation of some new ministry. The exhortation of PAUL VI, we referred to above, exalts the ministry of catechists and other heads of small communities as tied up with the church's living experience down the centuries and valuable for the establishment and growth of the church²³.

At the 44th Missiological Congress in Louvain on the theme: Who will carry the gospel tomorrow to the nations?, Bishop CAUWELAERT concluded his address saying „It is the living christian community radiating the gospel in her milieu. But for this, the ministry of catechists and other layman who live in the community itself and are the animators in it by their special charism will be of capital importance²⁴.“

C. INTEGRAL EVANGELIZATION DEMANDS GREATER LAY PARTICIPATION

The missionary activity of early times, in spite of all the sincere efforts made through social and charitable institutions for human welfare, had the tendency to consider all that was outside the ‚sacred sector‘ of man as secular, and as such not a missionary concern, except in the order of means to an end. Catechising, preaching the word, dispensation of the sacraments and celebration of liturgy were the main events of missionary activity. Involvement in the social and charitable fields was deeply qualified more by its *pro-evangelical* than by its *pre-evangelical* character. Consequently the genuiness and the totality of the involvement was suspected of proselytising elements.

But Vatican II has widened the scope of missionary activity to say that, not only the religious and sacral aspirations of man, but the whole man in his entirety forms the object of missionary activity²⁵. Surely there is bound to be a priority of values, methods and action, but this in no way minimises the view that the missionary activity of the whole church is directed *towards the liberation of the whole man*. In a special manner, for the countries of the Third world — the home of the mission churches where man in many of his aspects remains poor and under-developed — *evangelization must be closely identified with the social, economic and political development of man*²⁶.

²³ Cf. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* AAS 68 (1976) n. 73.

²⁴ Loc. cit. p. 31.

²⁵ Cf. *A. G. 1b, 3d, 8a, 12b*.

²⁶ Bishop KABANGU of Luebo (Zaire), on behalf of the Episcopal Conference of Zaire declared: „The people of the Third World want at all costs to emerge from the under-developed condition to attain a life, worthy of human person“. Cf. his speech entitled *‚Human Integral promotion, sign of evangelization‘* in: G. BUTTURINI, op. cit. pp. 209—211.

Hence involvement in social, cultural and educational activities is not a mere means towards a conversion, but has in itself, — in so far as it contributes to the total liberation of man — a truly evangelical and missionary value²⁷. Such a view, in fact, has helped the mission churches to draw their schools, hospitals and charitable institutions from the parochial and denominational framework of services and to insert them instead, into the mainstream of national services.

The widening of the object of evangelization calls logically for a widening of the agents of evangelization in number and variety.

Consequently, not only the clergy and the religious, but the laity too must be active agents of evangelization. The Fathers of Vatican II, realizing the principles of the necessity of lay involvement for integral evangelization, repeated their call to the laity to actively contribute their due share in the missionary efforts of the church. After having dealt with the different aspects of community life that need evangelizing, namely, social, economic, cultural and political, the missionary decree solemnly declares the indispensability of the laity in the pursuit of all these goals.

„In the attainment of all these goals, laymen have the greatest importance and deserve special mention“²⁸.

In the Synod of 1974, the Fathers from the Third World were unanimous in accentuating such aspects of evangelization as humanization, liberation and human promotion²⁹. If these services in the cause of justice, development and liberation are to be organized to greater efficiency, lay participation in missionary efforts becomes all the more indispensable. Harnessing the lay forces in these missionary effort will mean opening new avenues for participation by the laity.

D. INDIGENISATION DEMANDS MINISTERS STEEPED IN THEIR CULTURE

The first phase of evangelization in the Third World was largely bound up with colonialism from the West. These countries have now emerged from political colonialism but not yet from the „spiritual colonialism“ of western thought and patterns of life³⁰. Hence arises the present importance of indigenisation or making the churches truly native. This consists not merely in indigenising the clergy or vernacularising the liturgy by some adaptation and accommodation, but above

²⁷ This view is prevalent in the new theologies of the world and of politics (J. B. METZ), of development (ALSZEGHY-FLICK) and of work (M. D. CHENU).

²⁸ A. G. 15h.

²⁹ Cf. Bishop KABANGU (Zaire): *Integral human promotion sign of evangelization*; Bishop MENSAH (Dahoumey): *The church humanises by evangelization*; Bishop TSADUA (Ethiopia): *The human promotion is an integral part of evangelization* in: G. BUTTURINI, op. cit. pp. 209, 213, 280resp. Card. ROSALES (Philippines) *Integral development, progress and justice* in: D. COLOMBO, op. cit. p. 141.

³⁰ Cf. J. MASSON, *Qui portera l'évangile aux nations?* (Postface) p. 167.

all, in a deeper incarnation of the christian faith in the local culture³¹. In this sense a better terminology for the process intended will be inculturation or acculturation. The word of God has the potentiality to take deep roots in the different cultures of the world in order to reach the innermost depths of the people³². Hence the word must be sown in such a manner so as to allow it to grow and develop in a particular culture and to express itself in every aspect of life according to the resources and geniuses of that culture. Only when the last and the deepest stage of inculturation is attained can we speak of an indigenised church³³. The need for such churches and their requirements have been repeatedly emphasised by Vatican II, the 1974 Synod on Evangelization and by PAUL VI

a) The Decree on the Missions draws attention to the mutual enrichment which accompanies the process of indigenisation.

The seed, which is the word of God, sprouts from the good ground watered by divine dew. From this ground the seed draws nourishing elements which it transforms and assimilates into itself. Finally it bears much fruit. Thus in imitation of the plan of incarnation, the young churches rooted in Christ and built up on the foundation of the apostles, take to themselves in a wonderful exchange all the riches of the nations which were given to Christ as an inheritance (Cf. Ps. 2.8). From the customs and traditions of their people, from their wisdom and their learning, from their arts and sciences, these churches borrow all these things which can contribute to the glory of their creator, the revelation of the saviour's grace, or the proper arrangement of christian life³⁴.

b) In the 1974 Synod, many bishops from the Third World, especially those of Africa, were very eloquent in emphasising the need for the indigenisation of their churches³⁵. During the first phase of evangelization, the courageous efforts of some of the missionaries, led the church to speak of missionary adaptation³⁶. Today the church is called to speak incul-

³¹ Cf. *ibid.*; also A. SEUMOIS, *Théologie Missionnaire* vol. II p. 96—98.

³² Cf. G. S. 58; A. SEUMOIS, *loc. cit.* p. 96.

³³ This inculturation and indigenisation have their limits before the gospel message and should not in any way displace the essential elements of this message. Cf. A. SEUMOIS, *Meaning and limits of the christianisation of culture*, P. ROSSANO, *Acculturation of the Gospel in: International Missiological Congress*, Rome (1975).

³⁴ A. G. 22a.

³⁵ This is not to say that they were all unanimous and held an unequivocal opinion about indigenisation. Within the African episcopate itself there were reservations and even oppositions, as indicated by the initial report of Mons. SANGU of Tanzania. „The notion of africanisation has become a myth and now it ought to be dymythologised“ in: G. BUTTURINI *op. cit.* p. 48.

³⁶ At the time of the first phase of evangelization, one spoke of adaptation already, thereby implying that christianity was in a certain way foreign to the local people, culture and language. Missionaries like De Nobili, Ricci, Beschi and de Rhodes made courageous moves to adapt themselves in many ways

turation or acculturation³⁷. Just as in missionary adaptation the process was slow, spread out and had its own phases of difficulties and discouragements, even from those enlightened, here too in the indigenisation of churches, the process is bound to be similar³⁸.

„If the process of inculturation is considered to have three phases, namely, reception, assimilation and re-expression of the message, then we are in the last stage“, declared Bishop ZOA (Cameroun) in the Synod Hall³⁹. Although he was speaking for his country, his division into three phases — considered more in the logical than in the chronological order — finds validity, we think, for most of the young churches. While reception and assimilation of the message are in constant development in our young churches, re-expression comes as a necessary consequence and fruit of the first two stages. In this way all the churches of the mission countries are necessarily drawn into the process of indigenisation.

The long discussion at the Synod made two points clear. One is that the accent on indigenisation is first on the churches as visible institutions and then on christianity as faith. There were moves on the part of some Fathers to put the accent in the reversed order, but the choice of the majority was for indigenising the local churches in form and then through the assimilation and re-expression of the faith see the reality of an „indigenised christianity“⁴⁰. This is quite logical when we

(language, style of life) to penetrate into the milieu. Although these moves were at first misunderstood and condemned, later they were acclaimed by Rome. But this adaptation was not continued. Now the missions are in a different situation and to speak of adaptation or mere accommodation is superfluous. *What is needed is a deeper change, christianisation of culture and inculturation of the gospel.* Only in the case of liturgy, where celebration of mysteries are concerned, Vatican II speaks often of adaptation. „*No more adaption but africanisation*“ declared Bishop ZOA (Cameroun) in the 1974 Synodal Hall. Cf. G. BUTTURINI, op. cit. p. 246.

³⁷ Cf. *The Acts of the International Missiological Congress on the theme Evangelization and Culture* held in Rome (1975). Of special interest are the contributions of Y. CONGAR — *Christianity as faith and as culture*; PH. DELHAYE — *Culture and cultural pluralism*; A. SEUMOIS — *Meaning and limits of christianisation of culture*; P. ROSSANO *Acculturation of the gospel*; C. M. MULAGO *Africanity and evangelisation*.

³⁸ One encouraging difference is that while in adaptation, only the mission churches were involved and the matter was sectorially handled by the then Congr. for the Prop. of Faith, in the case of inculturation, the universal church is interested and is making its contribution with a view to mutual enrichment between the gospel and the culture.

³⁹ G. BUTTURINI, op. cit. p. 309.

⁴⁰ Some episcopal conferences appeared very insistent on this and Pope PAUL VI in his conclusive address to the Synod of 1974, sounded a warning about exceeding the limits of acculturation. „Thus we consider necessary a word on the need of finding a better expression of faith to correspond to the racial, social and cultural milieu. *This is indeed a necessary requirement of authenticity and effectiveness of evangelisation; it would nevertheless be*

understand that only communities are made to the measure of men and only in these are possible a living and community experience of the Church.

The other point made clear by the discussions is that the road that leads to complete indigenisation passes through pastoral initiatives at the level of the local churches and small communities. In other words, the major share of initiative, effort and responsibility for indigenisation is on the local churches, on the pastoral programmes they make for their communities⁴¹.

c) PAUL IV during his discourse to the African bishops at in Kampala 1969 had already posed the problem of tension between christianisation of Africa and africanisation of christianity. „Though the problem appears difficult, and in fact it is, the solution is ready with two answers: *your church ought to be above all catholic ...* But this answer being given, it is necessary to pass to the second. The expression, that is the language — the mode of manifesting the unique faith — could be multiple and consequently original, conforming to the language, to the style, to the temperament, to the genius, to the culture of those who profess this unique faith. *In this sense you could, and you ought to, have an african christianity*“⁴².

Speaking 6 years later about the workers of evangelization in general and about the fidelity in the adaptation going on in the young churches in particular, he drew attention to giving due weight to ‘secondary ecclesial structures and ministries’. The transposition has to be done with the discernment, seriousness, respect and competence which the matter calls for in the field of liturgical expression and in the areas of catechesis, theological formation, secondary ecclesial structures and ministries⁴³.

In the above perspective of the importance and initiatives of smaller communities in the role of indigenisation, *it is logical and urgent that these communities be fitted with ministers steeped in the culture of the people, living close to the people, speaking their own language and very familiar with the logic of their mentality*. In short, they must be ‘full-men’ of the place and not those imposed or imported from outside⁴⁴.

Instead of forcing a trained and commissioned man from outside to become one with the people and share all that is characteristic of the

dangerous to speak of diversified theologies according to continents and cultures. The content of the faith is either catholic or it is not.“ *L'Osservatore Romano*, of 27/9/1974. Cf. also art. cit. in note 37.

⁴¹ Y. CONGAR, art. cit. *Thesis V*; G. BUTTURINI, *L'Indigenizzazione della chiesa via all' evangelizzazione dell'Africa*, in: op. cit. pp. 295—336 esp. 324, 331.

⁴² Cf. AAS 61 (1969) pp. 573—578.

⁴³ *Evangelii Nuntiandi* AAS 68 (1976) n. 63.

⁴⁴ Indigenisation of clergy as a *conditio sine qua non* may not be applicable to those in greater responsibility — Pope, Bishops, but for those ministers in closer and constant contact with the people — priest, deacons and lay ministers — it must be a *conditio sine qua non* Cf. A. SEUMOIS, *Theologie Missionnaire* vo. II p. 99.

people (by adaptation and accommodation), the reverse process of choosing an man of the place, having already to some measure the natural talent to be fully involved with the people and giving him the necessary training and commission to be the agent of evangelization (and of inculturation too) would be more logical, meaningful and effective. Until now such a course of action was impeded by the high scholastic standard set out for ministers and by the uniform pattern of one priestly ministry. But such insistence goes against the responsibility of the church to evangelize the people by means proportionate to them and in harmony with their culture, language and habits.

E. LOCAL CHURCHES NEED LOCAL AND SELF-SUPPORTING MINISTERS

The countries of the Third World, while putting the final touches to the process of decolonisation (or dewesternisation) and helped by the general spirit of resurgence, are marshalling all their forces towards national stability, maturity and identity. Towards this goal we witness their concerted effort, not only for political independence, but also for economic, social and cultural independence. Most of the mission churches in the Third World, supported by the same general spirit of their countrymen, justly and worthily, seek a similar goal for their churches. We have spoken above of the cultural independence of the local churches with respect to indigenisation. For a church to be truly local, it should be *self-ministering, self-supporting and self-propagating*. In such a view there is no absolute independence but a relative one which accepts the necessary and intimate relation between the particular and the universal church. This relative independence is not contrary to the unity, universality and communion of the churches. In such an understanding, what will localisation of churches imply in terms of its ministers?

a) *Self-ministering*

Vatican II which saw dioceses and parishes not merely as administrative districts but more as communities, called for a revision of these divisions⁴⁵, and emphasised the building up of communities as the primordial task of the apostolate — one which should not be even postponed as a later stage in the development of christian life.

„From the very start, the christian community should be so formed that it can provide for its own necessities in so far as this is possible. This congregation of the faithful endowed with the riches of its own nation's culture should be deeply rooted in the people⁴⁶.“

If the community building is to be taken seriously from the start, the missionary — foreigner or native — must have a constant concern to provide the community as early as possible with its own minister. Waiting or postponing until the community as a whole reaches a certain standard of christian living, is neither prudent nor advisabel⁴⁷. Instead,

⁴⁵ Cf. C. D. 22, 32; *Motu Proprio Ecclesiae Sanctae* 1.21 in *AAS* 58 (1966) p. 76.

⁴⁶ *A. G.* 15c.

⁴⁷ A false 'pastoral prudence' is to wait for the community to attain a certain level of education, customs and a sense of responsibility found in some advanced

the required attention must be paid to train the leaders put forward by the community itself, so that at least one among them takes up the responsible leadership of the community. *Only such a man, endowed with the riches of his national culture, the mentality of his people and the sensitiveness to detect their needs, can help in the structure of a community deeply rooted in the people.*

The concentration of all the ministries of the N.T. into one uniform type of priestly ministry and the limitation of this one ministry by high scholastic standards, have left many communities without the required minister for existence as ecclesial communities. In the case of certain communities, low social standards, a poor economy and little education were reasons for people not attaining the standards established for ecclesiastical life, and why they were not encouraged by the church to follow a priestly or religious vocation. These communities were always served by a priest from a higher social rank (or caste). Consequently, in spite of all the good will of the priest to identify himself with the community, he was not a man of their own community and so could not fully identify himself with them.

One major obstacle at present to the communities providing their own ministers is that all services are given by *one type of minister*, and the ideal sought after is often beyond their reach.

Another obstacle is the attempt made to serve all places with *one type of ministry* without due regard for the differences in needs. The natural and innate secular structure of the community is not taken into account, but an attempt is made to structure a parallel community, mostly based on its liturgical assembly. This *modus agendi* needs reversal in a certain manner. The attempt should be made to take the natural community as it is, in its unity of blood, profession or interest and to *build the community of grace on that community of nature*. Consequently the assumption of spiritual responsibility and service by the natural leaders of the community will foster a more integrated (sacred secular) christian life in the community.

b) Self-supporting

The question of finance has been prominent in discussions about autonomous churches, and rightly so. The churches of the Third World are all poor and finance has a big say with regard to the ministries of the churches. Since the period of the first evangelization, Rome, with the generosity of the churches of Europe and North America, has been procuring for the missions the necessary help in personnel and finance. Though indigeneous clergy have to a great extent taken over the responsibility of providing the personnel, the total financial burden rests on the generosity of the European and North American churches. This state of affairs is not in keeping with the autonomous character of the churches.

countries. St. Paul never waited for such standard and yet he found all the required ministers for the community. Cf. J. VAN CAUWELAERT, art. cit. pp. 19—20.

ches; moreover there is no assurance that this help can or will continue. Hence one wonders *wether the church, as it is, is too expensive an organization for the Third World.*

Financial assistance for development projects, social welfare and education are understandable, especially when they are given for a definite period and place. This is so even in the secular sector. But in the matter of ministries, ministers and their formation or maintenance, can we dare to say the same thing? The structure of ministries, formation of ministers, life-style of ministers and pattern of administration — all these consume large sums of money that can hardly be afforded by the local coffers. Hence comes *the cry for a revision of this expensive ministerial stucture, life-style and administration.*

Many of the smaller communities of the young churches are not in a position to maintain financially the present type of priest. Hence many communities taken together pay — and often that too only partially — the expenses of a visiting priest. The communities have a duty, it may be argued from the N.T. to maintain their ministers (Cf. *Gal. 6.6; 1 Cor. 9, 11—15*). True, but then the ministers of the N.T. churches were chosen in consultation with the community, from among the community, and their life-style was no burden to the community. Hence the churches of the missions need ministers who can support themselves, as much as possible from their own means, and who can be supported in part, according to the financial ability of the communities. A minister maintained from the outside is very easily a person with less concern for and from the community, but a local self-supporting minister shares the ordinary and professional life of the people, demands respect for his services and is not a burden on the community. If, on the other hand, he is unable to be fully self-supporting, the community will readily maintain him, for he is From them and For them.

c) Self-propagating

The responsibility for the propagation of the faith was once conceived as a responsibility solely of the universal church and this was mainly centred around the activities of the then congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. In the era of the great missionary conquests, the Congregation encouraged several missionary societies and religious congregations in Europe to send their sons and daughters into the territories not yet reached by the gospel. It was then the unique organ for channelling personnel and finance to plant the churches in the new missions; to foster and to direct them too. But now the situation has changed. In view of the rediscovery of the missionary dimension of the whole church and all its 'parts', down to every christian, the young churches of the mission territories are assuming the responsibility of being missionaries to their neighbors⁴⁸.

⁴⁸ Some of the young churches are already sending their priests and religious generously to work in other dioceses or even other countries (From our own country — Sri Lanka — many have gone to Malaysia, Pakistan, Bangladesh).

Speaking of the missionary responsibility of christian communities Vatican II stressed the testimony of both word and deed.

„But it is not enough for the christian people to be present and organized in a given nation. Nor is it enough for them to carry out an apostolate of good example. *They are organized and present for the purpose of announcing Christ to their nonchristian fellow citizens by word and deed and of aiding them toward the full reception of Christ*⁴⁹.“

Irrespective of whether a community is old or young, rich or poor, by reason of its essence and existence as a christian community, it has the duty to be missionary to those around it in an active manner. We have already spoken of the mission-strategy of smaller communities in the missions and their cellular mode of propagation. For such cellular diffusion, what is needed in terms of ministers are men who are open to the outside, with the ability to influence men of other communities, with the ability to inspire their own community with a missionary vision and, above all, men who can sacrifice themselves and inspire their fellowmen to similar ventures.

F. CONCLUSIONS

These common mission priorities have been considered in a very general manner and exclusively in terms of ministerial needs. Nonetheless some conclusive remarks could be made.

a) The priorities are very closely related one to the other; they are inter-dependent; they cannot be tackled or realized individually in isolation.

b) If taken at the pastoral level a convergence of priorities can be detected. It is this convergence of various priorities towards the importance and strategy of smaller communities and their ministers. All the roads that lead to the realization of various priorities pass through the ministerial needs of the smaller communities.

c) The indispensable role of the laity is evident. The two statements of the missionary decree, namely, that „the church has not been truly established, and is not yet fully alive, nor is it a perfect sign of Christ among men, unless there exists a laity, worthy of the name, working along with the hierarchy“⁵⁰ and that „the laymen have the greatest importance and deserve special attention in all the missionary efforts“⁵¹ are strongly indicative that *for the churches of the missions, the involvement of the laity in active ministry is a matter of life and death*. The hope of the mission churches is in lay ministers or lay missionaries.

d) The qualities of the ministers required for these small communities are determined by the nature and needs of these communities and as such can never be met by a minister coming from outside (except, of course, for the initial preaching of the gospel). The communities demand

⁴⁹ A. G. 15i.

⁵⁰ A. G. 21a.

⁵¹ A. G. 15h.

a local man, from among them, deeply involved in human life and its problems, steeped in the culture and traditions of the people and, at least partly, self-supporting by practising a suitable profession.

e) The ministerial demands based on the nature, importance and strategy of the small communities are in the order of existential rights and not in the order of favours. If these communities of the baptised are to exist as ecclesial communities and actualise their missionary potentialities to the full, then their ministerial claims are serious. And *a denial of these rights, on the grounds of the communities not attaining a certain standard set for another region or milieu, or on the grounds of fear about the impact on the universal standard of ministers, is unjust and sinful.*