

NEW CANONICAL IMPLICATIONS OF CLERICAL INCARDINATION

Rev. Roger Keeler

The theologian M. Hussey has commented:

Now it is important to remember that *Presbyterorum ordinis*¹ is not one of the more significant documents of Vatican II. In fact, the bishops of the council somewhat took the priesthood for granted and did not feel that there was much need to discuss the matter at great length. But indirectly and unwittingly, they severely undermined the traditional role and significance of the priest in the church. By insisting that the bishop is the primary minister in the church and that the priest is the helper of the bishop, the council demoted the priest from an *alter Christus* to an *alter Episcopus*. And by emphasizing the priesthood of the laity and de-emphasizing the sacred power that set the priest apart from the laity, the council deprived the priest of his traditional identity and clear self-image.²

Hussey's thought seems to imply a priesthood imperilled by the council, resulting in a lack of identity, of self-understanding, of a strong theological foundation capable of bearing the weight of an ordained ministry in a time of extraordinary challenge. In a sense, he is quite correct. A fast perusal of the literature today reveals a plethora of titles on the subject of the priesthood (the diaconate too), which would indicate a need for continued reflection and articulation on the matter. The simple fact that Pope John Paul II undertook the extraordinary task of writing to the priests of the world on Holy Thursday every year of his pontificate, the last one given just days before he died, seems to support the observation. The concern, however, is not limited to popes, theologians and clergy: thinkers from different disciplines have waded into the conversation offering their own points of view.

Sociologist James Davidson of Perdue University addressed the National Federation of Priests' Councils in April of 2006 and spoke of the challenges within the priesthood that obstruct fruitful ministry. In a presentation to them entitled: "Understanding Divisions, Building Community," Davidson identified "a widening cultural and political divide, power struggles among fellow priests and between priests and bishops, and differing models of priesthood." He identifies those differing, opposing models as "the cultic, which sees the priesthood as above the laity, and the servant-leader, which involves more of a team approach to ministry." In his words: "That's where I hear

¹ SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Presbyterorum ordinis* [= *PO*], 7 December 1965, in *AAS*, 58 (1966), pp. 991-1024. English translation in *FLANNERY* 1, pp. 863-902.

² M. HUSSEY, "The Priesthood after the Council: Theological Reflections," in K.S. SMITH (ed.), *Priesthood in the Modern World: A Reader*, Franklin, WI, Sheed and Ward, 1999, p. 22.

the greatest clash.” The result, says Davidson, is that priests “feel themselves caught in a vice of opposing views coming from their ordained brothers, from the people in the pews and even from their bishops. They do not know whom to trust. They do not know where to turn. So they have learned to lie low and dodge the bullets.”³

The stories are legion, the anecdotal evidence limitless, and the literature profuse: the dawn of the third millennium is a time of crisis for holy orders. See for example the statistics published in the 2007 *Annuario Pontificio* for an illustration of this. The diocese of Sao Paulo, Brazil, has a Catholic population of 5,215,000 served by a total of 941 diocesan and religious priests, a ratio of 5,542 Catholics/priest. Manila reports a population of 2,773,000 Catholics served by a combined total of 746 priests, a ratio of 3,717 Catholics/priest. Lagos says it has 2,138,993 Catholics cared for by a combined diocesan/religious contingent of 198 priests, for a staggering ratio of one priest for every 10,802 faithful. By contrast, Toronto, Canada’s largest diocese, reports a population of 1,853,582 Catholics in the care of 794 priests for a ratio of 2,334 Catholics cared for by one priest. My own diocese of Edmonton has a Catholic population of 353,543, served by 175 priests, resulting in a rate of one priest for every 2,020. These numbers are rising every day, carrying with them, ever new and increasing demands.

But crisis need not presage catastrophe, rather crisis can invite decision based upon prayerful discernment, sober reflection, and reasoned decision-making that proceeds from a grasp of the twin sources of scripture and tradition.

The law of the church is an ally in that process. However, a quick glance at the law that addresses incardination, perhaps the oldest of the church’s juridic institutes, correctly defined by Dominique Le Tourneau in *Le Dictionnaire historique* as: “a juridic relationship which joins the cleric to the bishop and which also unites him to a presbyterate and to other members of the faithful,”⁴ would not give one the impression of finding a secure and comforting ally. Just the opposite is more likely. Eager to ensure that the pastoral needs of the People of God were being met by a stable clergy whose own needs were met in kind, incardination – literally a hinging – sought to protect the Church from those clerics who were free of any ecclesial attachment – the wandering (*vagi*) or headless (*acephali*) ones. The ebb and flow of time being what it is has had its effect upon incardination such that, by the time of the *1917 Code*, it had become a somewhat rigid means of canonical discipline, vigilance and control. The canons defining it have a cold, hard, juridic ring to them that could easily leave one feeling like a piece in an ecclesiastical

³ The first three quotations are taken from a précis on the meeting found in *America*, 18 (2006), p. 7. Because the précis was so very brief, I telephoned Dr. Davidson to explore the matter further with him. His presentation, unfortunately, has not yet been published and he continues his work on it, with a view toward publishing it at some future date. He did, however, indicate that his findings were quite clear, and founded upon what he called a “clash of theological vision,” a clash that, in his opinion could only be healed with the articulating of a clear, unequivocal theology of the priesthood, emanating from the highest authority. “It’s only then that we might start to see peace. But there are so many things that are getting in the way.” Among his greatest fears is the sense of isolation and aloneness being felt by many priests today. “They just don’t know where to go or who to turn to. It just isn’t healthy.”

⁴ D. LE TOURNEAU, “Incardination,” *Dictionnaire historique de la papauté*, Paris, Fayard, 1994, p. 854.

game of chess, moved from position to position, according to strictly pre-determined rules of movement and engagement. It seems to lack a certain spirit, warmth of purpose, breadth of vision, pastoral and theological content. It seems to lack much meaning. Left to a cursory glance, the conclusion is not that unfair.

However, that conclusion would not take into account something said by the legislator himself, Pope John Paul II, on the day the new *Code* was given to the church. He spoke of an underlying principle that guided its genesis. He wrote:

As the church's fundamental legislative document, and because it is based on the juridical and legislative heritage of revelation and tradition ... [it] fully accords with the nature of the church, particularly as presented in the authentic teaching of the Second Vatican Council seen as a whole, and especially in its ecclesiological doctrine. In fact, in a certain sense, this new *Code* can be viewed as a great effort to translate the conciliar ecclesiological teaching into canonical terms.⁵

This, then, implies a larger, unwritten meaning for the nature of incardination that involves an entire spectrum of theological and pastoral thought. The Holy Father invites a reaching back to the earliest years of the church's experience, to Scripture itself, in order to commence a surveying of the broad sweep of history. Doing so shows us not only the genesis and evolution of incardination, but so much more, not the least of which is the evolving structure of the church itself. At each instance it is as if a photograph is taken: one that freezes in the millisecond of a shutter's spring, a moment in time – capturing not just an image, but the meaning of the image as well. That meaning needs to be liberated from the flat plane of its uni-dimensional constraint, in order that its voice be freed to tell the deeper story.

By the end of the journey the law as an ally is known, but in a wholly new way. For it is not the specific content of the law that matters the most, it is its intent, and discovering that intent results in a newfound meaning for this most ancient of juridic institutes.

And it is a good time to discover a new ally! As we all know, it was on the 16th of June that Pope Benedict XVI declared this to be the *Year of the Priest*. In the letter he used to make this announcement, the Holy Father wrote:

I would like to invite all priests, during this Year dedicated to them, to welcome the new springtime which the Spirit is now bringing about in the Church, not least through the ecclesial movements and the new communities. "In his gifts the Spirit is multifaceted... He breathes where he wills. He does so unexpectedly, in unexpected places, and in ways previously unheard of... but he also shows us that he works with a view to the one body and in the unity of the one body." In this regard, the statement of the Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis* continues to be timely: "While testing the spirits to discover if they be of God, priests must discover with faith, recognize with joy and foster diligently the many and varied charismatic gifts of the laity, whether these be of a humble or more exalted kind."

⁵ JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Constitution, *Sacrae disciplinae leges*, 25 January 1983, in AAS, 75, Part II (1983), pp. vii-xiv. English translation in *The Code of Canon Law*, pp. vii and viii.

These gifts, which awaken in many people the desire for a deeper spiritual life, can benefit not only the lay faithful but the clergy as well. The communion between ordained and charismatic ministries can provide “a helpful impulse to a renewed commitment by the Church in proclaiming and bearing witness to the Gospel of hope and charity in every corner of the world.” I would also like to add, echoing the Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* of Pope John Paul II, that the ordained ministry has a radical “*communitarian form*” and can be exercised only in the communion of priests with their Bishop. This communion between priests and their Bishop, grounded in the sacrament of Holy Orders and made manifest in Eucharistic concelebration, needs to be translated into various concrete expressions of an effective and affective priestly fraternity. Only thus will priests be able to live fully the gift of celibacy and build thriving Christian communities in which the miracles which accompanied the first preaching of the Gospel can be repeated.⁶

To highlight and paraphrase the Holy Father: we live in “a new springtime in the Church,” characterized by the emergence of “ecclesiastical movements and new communities.” In striving to preserve the “unity of the one body,” “priests must discover, recognize, and foster the charismatic gifts of the laity,” in such a way that a “desire for a deeper spiritual life” be enkindled, a more profound “communion” in ministry be achieved, and the Gospel message “of hope and charity” be shared with new vigour. At the heart of this is the sober recognition that the ordained ministry is characterized by a “communitarian form” between priests and their bishops, between priests themselves in the fraternity of their order, and finally, between priests and the thriving, dynamic, Christian communities they are called to build and serve.

So our task today is to explore the unwritten meaning for the nature of incardination as it involves the entire spectrum of theological and pastoral thought in such a way that it might enable us to embrace the law as an ally, and though it, to more fully celebrate the gift of the Holy Year given to the Church by Pope Benedict.

Canon 1008 of the *Code of Canon Law*, like each canon that introduces a sacrament, is somewhat atypical, not only in its content but also in its language. It is more theological than juridical in content:

By divine institution some among Christ’s faithful are, through the sacrament of order, marked with an indelible character and are thus constituted sacred ministers; thereby they are consecrated and deputed so that, each according to his own grade, they fulfil, in the person of Christ the Head, the offices of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling, and so they nourish the people of God.⁷

⁶ http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/letters/2009/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20090616_anno-sacerdotale_en.html

⁷ “*Sacramento ordinis ex divina institutione inter christifideles quidam, caractere indelebili quo signantur, constituuntur sacri ministri, qui nempe consecrantur et deputantur ut, pro suo quisque gradu, in persona Christi Captis munera docendi, sanctificandi et regendi adimplentes, Dei populum pascant.*”

Codex iuris canonici, auctoritate Ioannis Pauli PP. II promulgatus [= CIC/83], Vatican City, Libreria editrice Vaticana, 1983. British version of the English-language translation: *The Code of Canon Law: New Revised English Translation*, prepared under the auspices of The Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland in association with The Canon Law Society of Australia and New Zealand and The Canadian Canon Law Society, London, Harper Collins, 1997.

An analysis of the canon reveals not only its inherent theological richness, but also the wonderful way in which the unfolding of the two-thousand-year history of the church is so often synthesized in the 1983 *Code of Canon Law*. For within this canon is deposited, as it were, a portal through which one can pass to the very origins of the church, thence to travel forward to the dawning years of this third millennium. Taking this journey affords the opportunity of examining highlights in the theological evolution of the sacrament of order that lead to insights which lend themselves to a deeper understanding of the nature of incardination as it is found in the *Code*.

What is found having entered that portal? One travels backward in time arriving at a definitive moment, a moment of almost impenetrable profoundness, standing at the foot of the cross, witnessing “the church, [being] born from the side of Christ crucified [...] through the sacrifice which gave it life.”⁸ One stands before Jesus Christ Himself, for no meaningful conversation about the church or its ministry can be undertaken without first seeing and understanding the example of the Master.⁹

Sacred Scripture is the well-spring from whence this conversation must necessarily begin, for to ignore the Scriptures would be to ignore an essential – and fundamental – source of God’s own self disclosure to human beings. It is in the scouring of the Scriptures, in particular the New Testament, that the spiritual bond that identifies those in the priesthood finds its genesis and earliest evolution.

First of all, the ministry of Jesus is a ministry from God.¹⁰ Matthew, Mark, Luke and John make repeated references to the Father sending Jesus, who does the Father’s will: in total obedience and in dependence upon the graciousness of the Father’s benevolence.¹¹ It is a ministry directed solely to the glory of the Father (Jn. 17.4).¹²

⁸ The Prayer Over the Gifts, “For the Universal Church,” #497, in *Sacramentary: The Roman Missal: revised by decree of the Second Vatican Council and published by authority of Pope Paul VI*. Ottawa, ON, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1983, p. 952.

⁹ Of the many studies considered, it is remarkable how so few of them actually consider the ministry of Jesus himself. K. OSBORNE does do this in his book *Priesthood: A History of Ordained Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, New York, NY, Paulist Press, 1988, pp. 3-29.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-7.

¹¹ See for example Mt. 10.40 (“Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.”); Mk. 1.11 (“You are my Son, the Beloved ...”); Jn. 11.41 and 42 (“Father, I thank you for having heard me ... but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me.”) and Phil. 2.8 (“... he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross”).

¹² All references to Sacred Scripture are taken from *The Holy Bible: Containing the Old and New Testaments with the Apocryphal/Deutero-canonical Books*. New Revised Standard Version, New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 1989, unless specified otherwise.

Second, the ministry of Jesus is a ministry of love.¹³ Grounded in the mutual indwelling of the Trinity, it finds its human context in the Deuteronomic maxim of the Old Covenant, the *Shema Yisrael*.¹⁴ It is expressed in innumerable ways throughout the entire three-year period of Jesus' earthly work: in his words, his actions, and in the signs and wonders that constitute manifestations of the inbreaking of the Reign of God into time and history. Love rests at the very core of his authority as Lord, when he would express in suffering and death what he spoke at his last supper: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn. 15.12-13).

Third, the ministry of Jesus is a ministry of service.¹⁵ The gospels are replete with images, exhortations, injunctions, and commands concerning service.¹⁶ Yet surpassing all of these is the example of Jesus placing himself at the disposal of others over and again, teaching not only in what he spoke, but also in what he did.¹⁷ More often than not, the example was unequivocal: Jesus saw a need and responded to it.¹⁸ However, there would be other times when the servant archetype would be misunderstood, requiring a careful

¹³ K. OSBORNE, *Priesthood: A History*, pp. 7-9.

¹⁴ The entire text of the *Shema* runs over five full verses in Deut. 6.4 – 9: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." Most people seem content to cite only verse 5: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with your soul, and with all your might."

¹⁵ K. OSBORNE, *Priesthood: A History*, pp. 9-12.

¹⁶ See for example the *image* of the patient teacher in Mt. 13.1ff; or that of the guest at Cana in Jn. 2.1-11; or the image of the Good Shepherd in Jn. 10.1-10. Images also include the many stories of servants told by Jesus that illustrate the ideal of a good servant. See for example Lk. 12.35-38.

An *exhortation* is an admonishment which encourages a desired behaviour. Jesus' earnest plea cannot be lost in his words pertaining to children in Mt. 18.1-15: "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea."

The dispute about who is greatest among the twelve occasions Jesus to be rather emphatic concerning the nature of service, particularly in the way in which he rejects proud behaviour, holding in its stead another ideal. This is, in essence, what is meant by an *injunction*. See Mt. 20.24-28; Mk. 9.33-37 and Lk. 22.24-27.

His words are direct, in the nature of a *command* in Mt. 20.26 ("... but whoever wishes to be great among you *must* be your servant"), in Mk. 9.35 ("Whoever wants to be first *must* be last of all and servant of all"), and in Jn. 12.26 ("Whoever serves me *must* follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also"). Emphasis added.

¹⁷ There are so many examples that could be cited. Let it suffice to offer but one: Mk. 6.31 and 32: "He said to them, 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.' For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat."

¹⁸ The compassion illustrated by Jesus meeting the leper in Mt. 8.1-4 is a fine example of his eagerness to do good for another: "I do choose. Be made clean!"

explanation.¹⁹ Yet even then, word and behaviour would defy comprehension until after the full import of cross, resurrection, glorification, and Holy Spirit were woven into the fabric of individual and community faith.²⁰

Finally, the ministry of Jesus is a ministry of the word.²¹ Itinerant, with “nowhere to lay his head” (Lk. 9.58), Jesus would spend the three years of his public life wandering through Palestine fulfilling a prophetic mission by proclaiming what he himself had heard from the Father.²² “The word made flesh” (Jn. 1.14), he would speak the truth as the Father’s “faithful witness” (Rev. 1.5). His words would challenge and console, teach and explain, admonish and correct. In every instance, Jesus reveals the Father while at the same time extending an invitation for all to enter into fullness of life with Him (Jn. 14.6).

These features of Jesus’ ministry are points in the corners, as it were, each one essential for constructing the foundation of his divine priesthood.²³ Called and appointed by God, as was Aaron of old (Heb. 5.4 and 5), Christ’s priesthood would obviously be less configured to that priesthood, “[offering] sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of people” (Heb. 5.3), than to that of the mysterious, enigmatic Melchizedek, king of Salem (Gen. 14.4; Ps. 110.4; Heb. 5.5 and 10; 7.1). He belonged to no priestly caste, isolated behind the barriers of cult, but rather he “[directed] his attention to the ritually impure, the godless, and the lowest classes of society ... [entering] into all the dimensions of humanity.”²⁴ Jesus’ sacrifice was not that of sheep, oxen and goats (Heb. 9.13) offered within the confines of sacred precinct, but rather that of his very self, offered in utter abandonment to the Father, “with loud cries and tears” (Heb. 5.7), accomplished within sight of a city in festal gathering. His is a priesthood utterly dependent upon God, accomplished in an attitude of incontrovertible love, “operative in obedience and service,” unlike any other, proclaiming unambiguously “God’s saving love for all,” and the world’s definitive reconciliation with Him.²⁵

¹⁹ Jesus shows great patience in explaining his behaviour to his disciples in Jn. 13.1-20.

²⁰ The example just cited is evidence of this. Furthermore, it can be well argued that the very passion and death of Jesus, the Suffering Servant, is not only the supreme sacrifice, it is also an act of service without equal. R. BROWN develops this well in his book *The Gospel According to John: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, New York, NY, Doubleday and Company, 1970, p. 562. This an ongoing process for all disciples of the Lord, seeking to integrate his example into one’s own life.

²¹ While K. OSBORNE uses the word “preaching” to describe this aspect of Jesus’ ministry on pages 14 and 15, of *Priesthood and Ministry*, even a cursory reading of the four gospels illustrates that the prophetic mission is fulfilled in ways exceeding this one expression.

²² “... for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me” (Jn. 17.8).

²³ W. KASPER synthesizes this succinctly in “A New Dogmatic Outlook on the Priestly Ministry,” found in *Concilium*, 5 (1969), p. 12-18.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

From this divine priesthood a community is born: “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (1 Peter 2.9). It is called to participate in the very priesthood that brought it to birth, expressing itself through the selfsame obedience and willingness to serve, sent to “proclaim the mighty acts of him who called [us] out of darkness into his own marvellous light” (1 Peter 2.9). The “ones called out” of darkness are known by a new name – *ekklesia* – the assembly, the Body of Christ, the church.²⁶ *Ekklesia* “consists first and foremost in an internal, invisible, sacramental, and supernatural unity which holds all the baptized in a vital union with Christ and, in Christ, with the other members.”²⁷ This *ekklesia* is known by four hallmarks that characterize it and articulate its mission: *koinonia* (fellowship or collaboration), *diakonia* (service), *martyrion* (witness) and *leitourgia* (worship),²⁸ each one reflecting, as it were, the four corner points in the structure of Jesus’ own ministry.²⁹ *Koinonia* can be likened to his ministry of love; *diakonia* is equated to his ministry of service; *martyrion* as the proclamation of the word, and *leitourgia* expresses the origin and ultimate end of the whole of Jesus’ ministry, echoed by the church in the Doxology of the Eucharist: “all glory and honour is yours, Almighty Father, for ever and ever!”

²⁶ The classical definition found in any good dictionary will indicate that *ekklesia* is derived from the Greek words *kaleo* (to call), with the prefix *ek* (out). Thus, the word means “the called out ones.” However, the English word “church” does not come from *ekklesia* but from the word *kuriakon*, which means “dedicated to the Lord” or “Lord’s house.” This word was commonly used to refer to a holy place or temple. By the time of Jerome’s translation of the New Testament from Greek to Latin, it was customary to use a derivative of *kuriakon* to translate *ekklesia*. Therefore, the word “church” is a poor translation of the word *ekklesia* since it implies a sacred building, or temple. A more accurate translation would be “assembly” because the term *ekklesia* was used to refer to a group of people who had been called out to a meeting. It was also used as a synonym for the word synagogue, which also means to “come together,” that is, a gathering, for Christians, the living Body of Christ. See *Oxford English Reference Dictionary*, 2nd rev. ed, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003 pp. 262 and 445. This will be referred to as *OED*. A full rich etymology of “church” is found at: www.oed.com.

²⁷ B. KLOPPENBURG, *The Priest: Living Instrument and Minister of Christ, the Eternal Priest*, translated by M. O’CONNELL, Chicago, IL, Franciscan Herald Press, 1974, p. 164.

²⁸ D. POWER, *The Christian Priest: Elder and Prophet*, London, Sheed and Ward, 1973, p. 14. Power explains: “The fellowship is the bond of charity which brings the members together in Christ and includes a material as well as a spiritual sharing (cf. Acts 2.46 and 47). The service is that, spiritual and temporal, which the members render to one another and to the good of the entire human community, as this is dictated by their faith in Christ. The witness comprises the many ways, in life, work, proclamation and even suffering, of making Christ known and loved. The worship is constituted by all these elements together, since together they are the presence of God’s glory among men, and it is expressed and enriched by sacramental celebration.”

²⁹ But what of the priest, prophet and king typology that emerges from the Second Vatican Council? First it must be noted that it was none other than John Calvin who articulated the triple *munera*, seeing each of them as brought into being in Christ by virtue of sacred anointing. He brought this into mainstream Christian thought in his work *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, book II, chapter XV. See the translation done by H. BEVERIDGE, Grand Rapids, MI, W.B. Eerdmans, 1989, pp. 425-432. Because this has become the current standard to understand the mission and life of Christ, it could be said that the prophetic office encapsulates *martyrion*; the priestly office encapsulates both *diakonia* and *leitourgia*, while *koinonia* is sheltered under the kingly dimension. Power’s four-fold classification deals less with Christology than it does with ecclesiology, although it certainly does justice to the former. As such he offers the church a rich and comprehensive series that speaks clearly to its nature as a society, called into being by the Redeemer, and sent by him into the world.

That community is called to participate in the very life that brought it into being. It is a *koinonia* (a fellowship, communion or collaboration), a *diakonia* (in service to God and the whole of creation), a *martyrion* (in witness to God's holiness, compassion and goodness) and a *leitourgia* (a people of true worship). Those personally chosen as Christ's first witnesses, the twelve, were commissioned and sent forth (*apostoloi*/apostles) to proclaim the reign of God and Jesus Christ as risen. With the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit their numbers would grow and, divinely emboldened, would expand first beyond the geographical confines of Jerusalem, then beyond the theological confines of Judaism.

Initially the Judeo-Christian community would rely almost exclusively on the familiar: daily worship in the Temple, the council of presbyters – like that found in all synagogues – engaged in shared decision making, and the honoured position accorded to prophets. Indeed, these structures would be carried by emissaries (*apostoloi*) of the twelve to the farthest reaches of the Empire. But it did not remain static. Under the leadership of Paul in particular, new, unheard-of ministries would be added. Some were charismatic (utterances of wisdom and knowledge, gifts of healing, working of miracles, discernment of spirits, speaking in tongues and interpretation of tongues); others were needed for the building and strengthening of the nascent community (deeds of power, forms of assistance and leadership, words of exhortation, deeds of compassion and cheerfulness, pastors, preachers, and teachers). While some were common to their life among the children of Israel (presbyters), others were borrowed from the secular Hellenistic society prevalent in the eastern reaches of the Empire (*episkopoi* – overseer, administrator; *diakonos* – attendant). Roles were not always clearly defined, and words used interchangeably. Hence preaching and teaching is but one office known by several names: pastor, teacher, shepherd, instructor, presbyter, bishop. What was important was not a strict demarcation, but rather the preservation of *eusebeia* – the maintenance of proper interpersonal relationships on one level and between the realm of the human and that of the divine on the other. Furthermore, the concern that all be equipped to fulfil their unique role in the divine commission (Eph. 4.12), meant that ministry in its multi-faceted expressions always remained open to the impulse of the Holy Spirit – amorphous, pluriform, never rigidly pre-determined, and always concerned with the preservation of unity.

By the beginning of the seventies A.D., profound events exerted their influence on the Christian community: the twelve had died, the Jewish War was lost, the Temple lay in ruin, and the church was forced away from its Jerusalem centre. While on the surface this appeared disastrous, the opposite was in fact the case. Although the twelve had occupied a unique and powerful position in the life of the primitive community, none perceived himself to be either presbyter or *episkopos*. Theirs was a profoundly pastoral ministry: the shepherding of God's people in a posture of reverent receptivity, discernment and submission to the Holy Spirit. Remaining utterly faithful to the words and example of the Risen One, they sought to transmit authentically to others what they themselves had received, receiving from them, in turn, their assent of faith. They believed themselves entrusted to protect and enhance *koinonia*. They understood themselves bound to equip, animate and, with gratitude, to celebrate *diakonia*. They sought to preserve and defend the

divine truth, witnessing to it in *martyrion*, while transmitting it in a way that made it accessible to all. Finally, with the community of the faithful, they honoured worthily the One true God, from whom they drew all life and goodness, in acts of *leitourgia* – acts which expressed, deepened and vivified *koinonia*, *diakonia* and *martyrion* in divine and holy encounter.

The evidence from the New Testament illustrates that the Eucharist is not the critical locus for ministry, it was instead community leadership and all that it entailed. Over and again the appeal to unity rings out – the fruit of love, the hallmark of *koinonia*. This implies the complexity of mutual interdependence in human relationships: loving and being loved, forgiving and being forgiven, patiently bearing with one another, and patiently being borne by them, learning and teaching, growing and maturing, sharing all things together. Communion has its source in God, seeks its consummation in God and manifests the mystery of God's own self: Three in One. The preservation of unity, of right relationships in the community, in fidelity to what has been received from Christ, is the purview of community leadership. The one who presides over the community is the one who presides over the Eucharist. For Eucharist without *koinonia*, the ministry of love, is deprived of its full meaning. Eucharist without *diakonia*, the ministry of service, is deprived of its self-emptying context. Eucharist without *martyrion*, the ministries of word and witness, is deprived of its revelatory potential. *Leitourgia* on the one hand is the fruit and expression of *koinonia*, *diakonia* and *martyrion*; on the other it is their very origin and genesis.

Paul's writings show him to be the very personification of community leadership. Although he understood himself to be an apostle, he would not have seen himself as presbyter or *episkopos*. Nor is there anything found in the evidence offered by the New Testament of Paul's presiding at the Eucharist: it is leadership, not eucharistic presidency that rests at the heart of the apostle's ministerial activity. As such he remains the Lord's loyal servant and, in but a single reference, as "minister of Jesus Christ" – *leitourgos*. While the word implies a cultic, priestly service, it must be understood metaphorically, for, other than Christ himself, and Peter's single reference to the People of God as a royal priesthood (1 Pet. 2.5), the term "priest" is never used with regard to the followers of Jesus Christ.

It is in the rich theological ground of the Letter to the Hebrews that the notion of Christ's priesthood is developed. However, his priesthood is not grounded in that of Aaron, but rather in that of the enigmatic Melchizedek, separating Christ definitively from temple and cult, inaugurating something totally new and utterly unique. Christ is the "great high priest" of an entirely different order, who, though at the service of God, is also at the service of his sisters and brothers, always remaining in profound solidarity with them.

In the same way that the Letter to the Hebrews seeks to illustrate something new in Christ's priesthood, so too does it engage the twin themes of sacrifice and obedience. Once again, rather than casting Christ's sacrifice in terms familiar to an ancient Hebraic audience, the letter presents Christ's sacrifice as a covenant inaugurating event wherein his followers are made perfect and are drawn into a life sharing relationship of unity with God and with one another. The sacrificial language that runs through the entire letter is meant to

transcend the merely liturgical, embracing in its stead the whole of life and the totality of one's being, not limited to but one moment on Calvary's mount, but continuing throughout time and history as the compassionate intercessor for all of humanity. In this Christ shows himself obedient to the Father, freely choosing to co-operate with the Father in pure love, seeing on the horizon the fruit of that love fulfilled, namely, complete communion with God for all creation. Christ's obedience and his sacrifice, leads to his consecration as high priest, placing him in a position wherein he can save those who are obedient to him. Sacrifice is understood as a reconciling of humanity with God and not God with humanity. Human beings are made perfect and are drawn into God's own life in a covenant inaugurating sacrifice, one that creates a new *koinonia*. Christ emerges not only as a type for the priesthood, he emerges as its supreme expression, its archetype. His priesthood and its sacrifice are that by which all discipleship, ministry and sacrifice must be measured.

However, it is ironic to note that where the Letter to the Hebrews illustrates the priesthood of Christ as one which was intended to fulfil, complete and replace the priesthood of Aaron and the cult of the old dispensation, by the fifth century, the priesthood is seen as an extension of its Aaronic predecessor, the diaconate likened to the Levites of old, and Christ seen as the lamb slain anew.

The implications for the priesthood today are manifold. Faith and obedience are so closely associated as to be virtually indistinguishable. Walking in obedience, then, is to walk in faith: consciously to entrust oneself wholly and freely to God in all aspects of life, even in its most mundane, routine, familiar and, because they are necessary, inescapable aspects. It is to consciously choose even in the face of those aspects of life that are veiled by the future, hidden, uncertain, obscure and therefore, inescapable. Obedience is to conform oneself over and again, day by day, to the likeness of him who was obedient unto death (Phil. 2.8). Obedience demands commitment, even commitment to obedience itself. Obedience is possible only when a certain level of maturity has been achieved. Once embraced, obedience in its turn, gives rise to greater maturity. Obedience makes authentic relationship possible. "The official ministry of the church demands the coordinated action of all those taking part in it. Organic work is possible, however, only if all submit to the direction of those having ultimate responsibility."³⁰

Precisely how the priesthood has evolved from this new and dynamic vision presented in the New Testament, and in the Letter to the Hebrews in particular, to one that represents a fundamental continuity to its Old Testament antecedents is where we now turn our attention. For there have been innumerable shifts in tack and course. The shifts for the most part have not occurred in quantum leaps, they have been subtler, sometimes almost imperceptible. Yet those shifts have borne astonishing results, enabling the Barque of Peter to navigate the waters of history to arrive at the tumultuous shores of this new millennium equipped and ready to address the myriad challenges that confront it.

³⁰ F. WULF, "Commentary on the Decree," p. 244.

Ministry evolved gradually from that which was known and familiar, the council of synagogue elders, presbyters, to include a multiplicity of previously unknown roles that reflected the divergent needs of emerging communities. Borrowing freely from various cultural milieux, *episkopoi* laboured side-by-side with *presbyteroi*, often with little distinction made between them. Soon, however, the *episkopoi* moved to a place where they headed the council of *presbyteroi*. The dawn of the Diaspora, combined with challenges posed by itinerant prophets, the danger inherent in persecution, apostasy, and heresy, witnessed the emergence of a clearly delineated structure. Bishops became monarchs each in his own see, able to claim that his continued a tradition, a charism of truth and revelation, that reached back to the apostles in Jerusalem and thence to Christ himself. Soon that claim would be expanded to include the notion of a line of direct appointment, or even of ordination, to one apostle or another. Apostolic authority was not only required for the validity of office, it was its sure guarantor.

Deacons soon became the principal social and liturgical aids to the bishop, powerful figures in their own right, functioning as chief agents of the bishop, in constant contact with the faithful largely because of their involvement in the social ministry of the church. Presbyters, meanwhile, became somewhat more honorary, except in time of need when they could be delegated priestly powers.³¹

This delegation illustrates the emerging power of the bishops. Indeed, if in the first century “one could say: ‘Because the *episkopos* was a leader of the Christian community, therefore he was also the leader of the liturgy,’ one would, in the second half of the third and from the fourth century onward say: ‘Because the *episkopos* is the ordained liturgist, therefore he is also the leader of the ecclesial community.’”³²

This reflects a movement begun in the *Didachè* (the late first, or early second century) towards a sacerdotal view of ministry. Until this point, the church had not spoken of the priesthood or priestly ministry: that was the unique purview of the old dispensation associated with Temple cult. Christ was the only priest, indeed, *the* high priest, modelled not after Aaron, but rather after the enigmatic Melchizedek, king of Salem. This was meant to illustrate a complete break with the past, its radical fulfilment and its replacement in the unique event of the incarnation, the obedient sacrifice of Christ on the cross, his resurrection, ascension and glorification. His priesthood continues in an unending intercession before the throne of grace for all who seek his aid. However, by the time of Tertullian (c. 160-220 AD) and Irenaeus (c. 115-202 AD), the church was not seen as something that had broken with the past, fulfilling it and replacing it, but as the New Israel, only modifying the past and continuing it in a new way. The result is that the church adopted what was familiar: a full-fledged priesthood modelled after Aaron. Sacerdotal terminology and practice become normative, including the notion of *ordo*, of ordination, and of consecration with its incumbent honorary status and separation from the lay faithful.

³¹ See J. MOHLER, J., *The Origin and Evolution of the Priesthood: A Return to the Sources*, Staten Island, NY, Alba House, 1970, pp. 112-115.

³² K. OSBOURNE, *Priesthood: A History*, p. 138.

Hence, the priesthood bore all of the privileges and obligations of the old, even carrying with it an exaggerated need for purity and sanctity.

The church celebrates that which it believes – the liturgy is always a faithful reflection of faith. At the time the first of the Fathers were writing, Hippolytus, a presbyter of Rome, was recording how the church celebrated the ordinations of bishops, priests and deacons. Those ordination rites yield rich insight as do those that followed it during the first millennium. The *Apostolic Tradition* (third century) speaks of one being ordained for a specific community of faith, to serve it and care for it. It was understood that the community would, in some way, care for its clergy.

However, by the time of the Council of Chalcedon, one was ordained, not for a community of faith, but for the place where the community met, a sanctuary of one sort or another. The title of ordination was introduced, a notion that even has a remnant in the current *Code*. This signals the beginning in a shift from connecting ordination with the community and its service, to one linking ordination with the means of providing sustenance to the new cleric. Eventually, the notion of title would broaden giving rise to the notion of benefice, which by the time of 1917 *Code of Canon Law*, had grown to such an extent that an entire portion of the *Code* was devoted to its preservation and protection. But there was another reason for these developments: ensuring an attachment for clergy.

This sacerdotal shift had a tremendous impact upon the eucharist: for the Christian priest was now seen as offering sacrifice at the altar, under the authority of the high-priest, the bishop, and serving, not as the successor of Christ, but of the priests of the Old Law. The notion of sacrifice returned to its ancient holocaust typology, submerging within itself the covenant inaugurating, sin forgiving, life-sharing, fellowship meal that seems to have been associated with the “breaking of bread” known to the Jerusalem church.

This, then, is not a denial of a decidedly priestly quality that can be found in ministry, but rather points to something larger. Christian ministry, in all of its expressions, is apostolic. It follows from, is dependent upon, and remains faithful to, its origin in Christ and what was given to the apostles. It is the means by which human beings are drawn into the life of the Divine, and the means by which the Divine is actualized in the here and now, in time and history, in the lives of human beings. Those engaged in its efforts do so, not solely on their own volition, but in response to God’s invitation and call. They recognize that in their willingness to place themselves at the pleasure of God, they become God’s instruments in the building of an eternal reign. With Paul they can exclaim: “Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen” (Eph. 3.20 and 21). It is Christ at work in them, through them and with them. When sacraments are celebrated, although the ritual action belongs to the church through “perceptible signs (words and actions) accessible to our human nature,”³³ it

³³ See *Catechismus Ecclesiae Catholicae*, [= CCC] Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 1997. English translation, *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Modifications from the Editio Typica*, 2nd edition,

is really Christ himself who acts, communicating his own grace. As such, Christian ministry is a “sacramentalization” of the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

Shortly after Augustine’s death (28 August, 430), the sacrificing priesthood acquired such prominence that it ascended even beyond the diaconate in honour and importance. The result is that as a unique ministry, the diaconate descends and all but disappears, save as a step to the real ministry: the priesthood that is empowered to offer the sacrifice. Indeed, so important did this singular typology become that the episcopate, called by Tertullian *summus sacerdos* – the ordinary minister of baptism, confirmation, penance, and the eucharist – would no longer be considered an order in its own right, but merely the priesthood with additional jurisdiction.

Paralleling all of this, the church in its need for stability, both in structure and with regard to the content of faith, met from time to time in councils, each of which nudged the Barque. The Council of Arles (314) sought to attach a cleric definitively to the community that called him to orders and for which he was ordained. The Council of Nicea (787), employing marital imagery, understood clerics leaving one church for another as tantamount to divorce, something both unacceptable and intolerable. The Council of Chalcedon (451) decried absolute ordination as invalid, while it made a subtle, almost imperceptible shift in attaching ordination, not to a specific community of believers, but rather to specific locale – a *titulus* – capable of ensuring adequate sustenance. By the time of the Third Lateran Council (1179), the separation of the ordained from a community that called him and welcomed him as its minister, was all but complete, when it affirmed the benefice system while at the same time broadening the accepted parameters defining titles for ordination that would be sufficient to ensure suitable sustenance.

Eager to provide for the internal reform of the church by correcting discipline, the Council of Trent (1545-1563) addressed myriad issues including the system of ordination titles. Although the council re-affirmed it and expanded it with a new innovation seen in the title of *familiaritas*, a relationship of intimacy or familiarity, titles were in fact somewhat eclipsed by the matter of benefices. The benefice system, inherited from an earlier time, is thoroughly addressed in decidedly pragmatic and disciplinary ways. Acknowledging that its primary purpose was to provide a respectful living for clerics, Trent forbade the holding of more than one benefice at a time, moving from benefice to benefice, or of holding a benefice without actually caring for it. Yet, in a minor expansion of previous legislation, Trent permitted an alternative to a benefice in the holding of either patrimony or pension, provided it be adequate and in peaceful possession.

Regrettably, what emerges is that ordination becomes even more distanced from a pastoral connection with a community of faith as seen in the ordination rites of earlier times. In its stead, such great emphasis is placed upon the provision of a benefice that, at the time of ordination, one could simply not be advanced to orders if there were no way of ensuring adequate support, no matter how great the need or how useful the candidate. This

prepared under the auspices of the United States Catholic Conference, New York, NY, Doubleday, 2003, #1084, p. 239.

distancing is further exacerbated by a theology that emphasized the power to “confect” or consecrate the Lord’s body and blood in the Eucharist as one given at ordination, quite independent of any pastoral connection with the community of faith.

The scholastic teaching of the period argued that because priests offer the sacrifice of the Eucharist, the priesthood and the Eucharist are inextricably bound together – priesthood is derived from the Eucharist; priesthood focuses its energy upon the Eucharist; priesthood is the power to provide the Eucharist. This cultic, eucharistically oriented theology of the priesthood, overshadows the preaching of the word, leadership in the Christian community, and the pastoral care of the faithful. Eucharist is finally, definitively, and effectively separated from its ecclesiological roots. Furthermore, the priesthood eclipses both the diaconate and the episcopacy, making the former simply a step on the way to the priesthood, and relegating the latter to a place of dignity or excellence without the benefit of an *ordo* of its own, free to rule their subjects, including their priests, in a fashion resembling feudal vassalage.

This is the theological framework codified in the *Pio-Benedictine Code* of 1917. Like a child that can see in her or his parents the qualities and traits she or he carries, so too does the 1917 *Code* reflecting, as it does, the centuries that preceded it. Yet, just like that child, there is a certain uniqueness that makes the *Pio-Benedictine Code* unlike anything encountered before. Here is found a certain reiteration of previous legislation, together with a certain expansion of it.

What does this mean for incardination? In short the 1917 *Code* describes a clearly juridic bond of a contractual nature that echoes duty, obligation, and personal piety, that could easily lead one to believe that incardination lacks a relational quality, creating in its stead, two distinct and seemingly irreconcilable solitudes: one clerical, the other lay.

It would not take the church long to realize that the *Pio-Benedictine Code* was not adequate to address the needs of a church that found itself in a rapidly growing world characterized by a burgeoning technology compounded by a knowledge base increasing at an exponential rate. A new mind-set would be needed.

Preparatory work for the Second Vatican Council was well underway in 1959, when the responses to the surveys sent out to the world’s bishops dealing with the priesthood “manifested a juridical rather than pastoral [concern], thus making it clear that many bishops were preoccupied mainly with the duties of the clergy, their discipline, their obligatory pious exercises, the associations designed to advance their spirituality, and so on.”³⁴ The decree to be written needed to set a new course: “the scholastic interpretation of priesthood based essentially on eucharist was not accepted by the bishops at Vatican II. Rather, the theology of ministry, presented in the documents of Vatican II, goes back to the New Testament understanding of ministry, which is seen as leadership and preaching,

³⁴ J. LÉCUYER, “History of the Decree,” translated by R.Walls, in H. VORGRIMLER (ed.), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Freiburg, Herder and Herder, 1967-1969, vol. 4, p. 183.

teaching and sanctifying.”³⁵ The fruit of this intention is the decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*.³⁶

PO, 10 states: “In addition, the rules about incardination and excardination should be revised in such a way that, while this ancient institution remains intact, it will answer better to the pastoral needs of today.”³⁷ It is clear from both the balance of *PO*, 10 and in its implementation in *Ecclesiae sanctae*, I, 3, 1-5,³⁸ that the conciliar fathers had uppermost in mind the movement of clergy from areas of great numbers to those suffering from a dearth of vocations. However, to limit the call for revision to this one aspect would be to do the whole of *PO* an injustice. The decree has a decided pastoral tenor that speaks of the building up of the entire the people of God (*PO*, 1); the strengthening of relationships between priests and bishops (*PO*, 7); encouraging a deepening of the bond of cooperation among priests (*PO*, 8), and of fostering new relationships between priests and the people of God (*PO*, 9). Indeed, within paragraph 10 is found the phrase: “not only the proper distribution of priests should be made easier but also the carrying out of special pastoral projects ...”³⁹ A broad reading is needed for this phrase.

In *PO*, 2, the fathers write: “Through that sacrament [holy orders] priests by the anointing of the Holy Spirit are signed with a special character and so are configured to Christ the priest in such a way that they are able to act in the person of Christ the head.”⁴⁰ In describing ordained ministry as a participation in Christ’s headship, “the council is certainly thinking of the powers and functions of word, sacrament and government ... it also describes holiness as an integral part of the ministry, for it makes a man a living instrument of Christ, a model of Christian living, and a witness to the truth of the gospel which it is his function to preach in word and deed.”⁴¹ Here are brought together word (*martyrion*), sacrament (*leitourgia*), government (essential to preserve *koinonia*) and ministry (*diakonia*).

The notion of the character of orders, originally developed by Augustine and given final shape by Thomas Aquinas, has in recent times been cast in ecclesial, incarnational, diaconal and relational terms. Yet what underlies it is a sense of communion with the self-

³⁵ K. OBORNE, *Priesthood: A History of Ordained Ministry in the Roman Catholic Church*, New York, NY, Paulist Press, 1988, p. 80.

³⁶ See SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Presbyterorum ordinis* [= *PO*], 7 December 1965, in *AAS*, 58 (1966), pp. 991-1024. English translation in FLANNERY, A. (gen. ed.), *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, vol. 1, new revised edition (=FLANNERY 1), Northport, NY, Costello Publishing Company, 1998, pp. 863 ff.

³⁷ FLANNERY 1, p. 882.

³⁸ PAUL VI, *Motu proprio, Ecclesiae sanctae I*, 6 August, 1966, *AAS* 58, (1966), pp. 735-757. English translation in FLANNERY 1, pp. 591-610.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 882.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 865.

⁴¹ D. POWER, *Ministers of Christ and His Church: The Theology of the Priesthood*, London, G. Chapman, 1969, p. 167.

emptying obedience of Christ, such that one is able to strive under the impulse of grace, toward a radical re-configuring of the self in such a way as to place one's entire life at Christ's disposal through the ministry of the church.⁴² The sacrament of orders, then, belongs not to the individual receiving it, but to the local community and through it, to the entire church. In other words, ordained priesthood exists for and is ordered to the priesthood of the faithful.⁴³ One could say that the sacrament of order and the character it imparts makes one an icon of Christ for the community of faith.

The new role in and for the community is expressed principally in the celebration of the eucharist. The priest's position in the celebration of the Lord's supper is much greater than merely "saying Mass." As he presides, the relationship of Christ to the assembled community of faith is expressed and served. The relationship between the local community of faith and the universal community is expressed and made visible. Finally, the relationship between the community and that of the apostles stretching back to the very genesis of the church is also accomplished: a living link of being.⁴⁴

However,

If we reduce the specific nature of this office to the power to pronounce certain words of consecration, then the priestly office is hardly a human vocation that can satisfy the heart of a young man. If, on the other hand, it involves the task of leading the ecclesial community, then it does indeed involve real human charisms: the ability to meet people and talk with them, the ability to organize and direct human beings, and the capacity for management (in the best sense of that word). Such a task calls for a courteous, responsible and balanced human being, and it demands initiative, imagination and real knowledge of human nature.⁴⁵

The orientation of priestly ministry, then, lies open once again to its foundational energy and potential, willing to encounter the Spirit of creativity who engenders new pluriform expressions of ministry within the community of faith. This priestly ministry is not willing to see the pneumatic hindered by predetermined conclusions and lingering "archaicisms." It is a priestly ministry that is confident and trusting, secure enough in its identity to risk enabling others. It is always eager to serve. It is always mindful of unity and the charisma of truth. It is characterized by the generation of new and more vibrant ministry.

This, then, is the gift of *Presbyterorum ordinis*, an extraordinary expansion of an old framework, and the establishment of values rich in their colour and hew, and multi-faceted enough to embrace and reconcile the polarities that confronted its drafters.

⁴² D. BUECHLEIN, D., "The Sacramental Identity of the Ministerial Priesthood," in R. WISTER (ed.), *Priests: Identity and Ministry*, Wilmington, DL, Glazier, 1990, p. 146.

⁴³ P. FINK, P., "The Priesthood of Jesus Christ in the Ministry and Life of the Ordained," in R. WISTER (ed.), *Priests: Identity and Ministry*, Wilmington, DL, Glazier, 1990, p. 76.

⁴⁴ See D. POWER, *Ministers of Christ*, pp. 126 and 127.

⁴⁵ W. KASPER, "A New Dogmatic Outlook on the Priestly Ministry," in *Concilium*, 3 (1969), p. 15.

As we noted in the introductory remarks, the current situation in the church with regard to a theology of the ministerial priesthood is far from being in peaceful possession. The very tension already exhibited by the world's bishops when work on *Presbyterorum ordinis* was begun, between a scholastic interpretation of priesthood based essentially in the eucharist, and a broader New Testament conception based on leadership, preaching, teaching and sanctifying, is still very much before us today. Indeed, much of the current literature, even that emanating from the highest authority, echoes the tension.⁴⁶ So, then, if contemporary theology is not in peaceful possession, then neither can be the law on incardination, for that very law must, by definition, depend upon that theology for its foundation.

The questions that arise as a result of this are legion, and each of them worthy of lengthy study. Bishops and chancery offices are continually faced with exigencies rarely encountered before. Priests often turn to canonists for help in resolving issues that arise between themselves and their brother priests, their bishops, dioceses, and even parish communities. The answers, of course, are not easy and myriad new questions arise just as solutions seem to emerge from the haze. Perhaps a new definition needs to be developed, one that will offer some light to penetrate that haze.

As has been seen earlier, incardination has been as: “a juridical relationship which joins the cleric to the bishop and which also unites him to a presbyterate and to other members of the faithful.”⁴⁷ This definition, however, has a certain lifelessness about it: it is devoid of a certain spirit, warmth and breadth of vision. It certainly does not reflect in any way the gift of *Presbyterorum ordinis*, which sought to establish a plethora of rich values that were multifaceted enough to attempt a reconciliation between the polarities that confronted its drafters. Any new definition must reflect those values, while at the same time broadening the horizon, yet taking into account the fundamental ground of relationship enshrined in a more traditional definition. The following is offered:

Incardination is the juridic protection of a permanent relational bond wherein the ministry of Christ, in all its richness, is incarnated in the person of one called by Christ through the community to serve it, care for it, love it, and which, in its turn, gives rise to reciprocal rights and obligations.

This definition of incardination is steeped in a theology of priesthood that is profoundly pastoral (leadership, preaching/teaching, sanctifying; *diakonia*, *koinonia*, *martyrion* and *leitourgia*), and imbued by a decided vocational quality (a set of attitudes, as well as spiritual and pastoral decisions). It is predicated upon a spiritual, and therefore uniquely personal and existential, decision for relationship with the people of God, with the bishop, and with others in Holy Orders – most especially those in the order of presbyter – for the evangelical care and building up of the Body of Christ. Taken as a whole, this

⁴⁶ See for example the final *Holy Thursday Letter to Priests* penned by POPE JOHN PAUL II a year before his death as found in *AAS*, 96 (2004), pp. 541-546; English translation in *Origins*, 33 (2003-2004), pp. 753-757. One would not be faulted for concluding that the Holy Father sided quite definitively on the scholastic side of the divide if one read only this one letter.

⁴⁷ D. LE TOURNEAU, “Incardination,” in *Dictionnaire historique de la papauté*, Paris, Fayard, 1994, p. 854.

indicates that the relationship thus established is necessarily permanent, one akin to marriage, which demands an entire range of actions and decisions enveloped by the concept of obedience. By this fact alone, incardination must necessarily be reciprocal for it requires maturity, charity, trust, a consciousness of other/Other, of sacrifice, and of genuine discernment in a posture of willing listening. Its fruit is new life realized in fresh potency discovered in self and in the other/Other that gives rise to increased reciprocity and new-found connections with other/Other.

However, the definition is also juridic in that it seeks to protect the spiritual, pastoral and vocational dimensions of priestly ministry by making the self-donation demanded on the part of the priest possible by presenting him with a context within which that self donation can be realized. That context could be defined in four ways. First, it is a context of stability understood as freedom from uncertainty born of the shifting sands of change in all of its myriad manifestations. Second, it is one of a safe environment, namely, a freedom from conditions that could potentially stifle personal, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral growth. Third, it is a context of sustained personal relationships whether with ordained or lay, women or men, with those engaged in a life of ministry or not, with Christians and non-Christians alike, each relationship unique, each one essential for healthy self-actualization and growth in perfection. Finally, it is a context of just sustenance as an antidote to an itinerancy born of need, one that is consistent with the particular socio-economic conditions of time and place.

Conversely, the definition seeks to protect the spiritual, pastoral and vocational dimensions of the priesthood of the baptized as well, by ensuring them of the full benefit of one utterly devoted to their service and care in a spirit of self-emptying love. In leading them, teaching them and aiding them to grow in holiness, their full participation in *diakonia*, *koinonia*, *martyrion* and *leitourgia* – the God-life – is realized.

Finally the definition offers precisely the same protection and guarantees for the bishop in offering him spiritual sons and collaborators who are a willing, ready and capable confraternity upon whom he can depend and from whence he can draw in the realization of the ministry entrusted to him by Christ – the care of this portion of the people of God.

It could well be argued that should a priest, bishop, or Christian community refuse to participate actively in this sort of relational dynamic, they do so at the peril of the bond meant to protect, unite and strengthen them, jeopardizing thereby rights incumbent upon its preservation.

However, this seems to imply that the bond itself can be imperilled by the actions and behaviours of those party to it. Is it not the case that incardination is, by virtue of the definition presented, a *permanent* relational bond? If it is indeed permanent, how can it then be imperilled? Distinctions are in order.

First, the word permanent implies something that is enduring, lasting, stable and continuing. Something that is permanent, though sharing these characteristics, is

nevertheless subject to fluctuation or even change. For example, one may have a domicile (c. 102, §1) which is by definition one's permanent home. However, extensive renovations to the house may cause that home to be so altered as to be a completely new, even unrecognizable domicile. Permanent does not mean perpetual. When something is perpetual, it is everlasting or eternal and therefore not subject to change in any fashion. At virtually every instance that the word permanent is used in the *Code*, it is in relation to something that has this enduring constancy about it. It is never read in the context of something that is by definition perpetual. The relational bond spoken of in incardination is permanent, not perpetual.

Second, permanent does not mean the same thing as indissoluble. Indissoluble means that something cannot be destroyed, put to an end, or abolished. It is, for all intents and purposes, indestructible. Indissoluble is not the same as permanent, nor is it a synonym for perpetual. The word is used carefully in the *Code* and never directly in connection with the word permanent. One arguable instance could be c. 1096, §1 that speaks of a "permanent partnership between a man and a woman." However, one must understand that it is the "lawfully manifested consent of persons who are legally capable" (c. 1057, §1) that constitutes a marriage, not the "partnership for the whole of life" (c. 1055, §1) that is its result. The relational bond spoken of in incardination is permanent, not indissoluble.

Therefore, the permanent relational bond protected by the church's law could well be imperilled by the refusal of those party to it to participate actively in its relational dynamic, thereby jeopardizing the rights that are incumbent upon its preservation. In other words, for the bond that is incardination to bear fruit, the specific intent of those party to it is fundamental, as is their capacity to effect it. Two more distinctions are in order: intent and capacity.

By intent is meant the interior resolve or determination to do or to accomplish something. It is a state of mind that requires at least a fundamental knowledge and understanding of what is being sought; an appreciation of, or desire for, the value of that striven for; a grasp, even if only rudimentary, of the alternatives, and an awareness of the consequences to be had for a different resolution.

For example, what of the case of a priest who refuses to participate in the care of the people of God in one way or another due to anything less than advanced age, verifiable infirmity or genuine incapacity. Here, despite what could well have been intended at the time of ordination, is an evident lack of that intentionality by which one willingly devotes oneself to the service, care and love of God's people. The consequence of an obdurate decision to absent oneself from something so fundamental would necessarily be the jeopardizing of the rights incumbent upon its preservation. In this case, incardination is meant neither to encourage nor to protect such ones; it is to meant to protect the church from them. One therefore wonders whether or not the priests' own lack of intention should not be sufficient to move toward a severing of the bond.

By capacity is meant the actual ability, be it material, physical, mental or intellectual, to accomplish a specific act. Material capacity would relate to those things one

has that makes an act possible. One requires, for example, sufficient funds in order to make a purchase of one sort or another. Or, one must not be restricted by a sanction or penalty from acting in a certain way. Physical capacity refers to one's state of health. One cannot, despite how much one would intend it, run a marathon if one had a broken leg. Mental capacity is that associated with one's mental condition, namely that required to posit a human act. Canon 99 of the *Code* says: "Whoever habitually lacks the use of reason is considered as incapable of personal responsibility and is regarded as an infant."⁴⁸ It is virtually synonymous with intellectual capacity that pertains to the ability to maturely understand the nature, subtleties, nuances and consequences of a decision or action. In this context, perhaps one could even suggest the existence of something that could rightly be called a spiritual capacity: the ability to live one's life in such a way that it honours and is vivified by the instincts, impulses and tendencies associated with spirituality as that is lived and expressed in the larger context of religion.

One must be capable of fulfilling that which one intends.

For example, if a man seeks ordination for any intent less noble than that of the self-donation and ministry of Christ whom he "incarnates," then one is fair in questioning his genuine devotion to the evangelical care of the people of God. One would correctly question his attitude with regard to ministry and service, to obedience and sacrifice, and to membership in the fraternity of presbyters. One would correctly wonder about his ability to make those spiritual and pastoral decisions that are at the very heart of the ministerial priesthood. Presuming their lack, it could be asked just what – or whom – is being protected in the context of incardination. It would seem that the candidate neither intends what is meant by the ministry of Christ, nor does he seem capable of achieving it. In this case, should he even be ordained with consequent incardination?

Could one impugn the decision of a bishop, eager for priests, who rushes to ordain a man clearly unfit for ministry in all of its defined complexity and nuance? When advice coming from those responsible for the candidate's formation argues against ordination, the considered opinion of the people of God repeats the caution, and observations offered by priests familiar with the candidate are less than favourable, and the bishop nevertheless proceeds with the ordination, has he not effectively shut out the call of Christ echoed through the community, making it his own call instead? It would seem that, despite the noble desire of that bishop to provide his particular church with the sacraments, he could well be denying the community of much more: of one capable of offering it solid leadership, effective preaching, and sound teaching in the four-fold impulse defined in *koinonia*, *diakonia*, *martyrion* and *leitourgia*. It would not be hard to imagine that he is potentially doing his diocese a tremendous disservice, even exposing it to a potential burden that none – including himself! – would welcome. Perhaps the ancient practice of the church should be reinstated for this bishop: he should not be allowed to ordain for an entire year and he personally assumes full financial responsibility for his ordinand for life.

⁴⁸ Canon 99: "*Quicumque usu rationis habitu caret, censetur non sui compos et infantibus assimilatur.*"

Incardination should not be quickly granted, even if the perceived need is urgent and great, nor should it be offered by any bishop without first seeking the considered opinion of those genuinely capable of critically evaluating the needs, gifts, strengths and weaknesses of the particular church. Indeed, it might be well for the Legislator to amend 1° of c. 269 with something like:

He has consulted with an advisory panel comprised of clergy and laity whose reputation proves them well versed in the conditions and needs of the particular church so that those are critically evaluated, and the provisions of law concerning the worthy support of the cleric can be observed;

Incardination is not a glib idea that lacks *gravitas*: it stands as a venerable ancient guarantor of the church's highest values with regard to community, holy orders, ministry, the content of faith, and the relational context essential for these to be vivid, dynamic, and life/Life giving. In "juridicizing" these values, the Legislator is urging a deeper reflection not only on the specific features of a priestly vocation, but on that of the priesthood of the faithful as well, especially as these are in a divinely ordered relationship.

Be that as it may, there are innumerable cases that present themselves that beg further exploration and that the current law is at a seeming loss to redress.

Although incardination is a juridic protection of a relational bond that ultimately gives rise to reciprocal rights and obligations, how far does it extend in the case of a priest who stands accused of sexual impropriety or worse, of a criminal act? One can appreciate that placing a priest on "administrative leave" during the time of investigation or trial is necessary to ensure a modicum of privacy and freedom from further allegations. One can also understand that the bishop is obliged to provide for his decent support during this time. But what happens if the evidence is insufficient to sustain or prove the charge? With a reputation undoubtedly besmirched by the notoriety such matters engender, he is, for all intents and purposes, odious to the people of God and therefore incapable of public ministry. Is the bishop responsible for finding him a ministry that does not fall under public scrutiny? Or is the bishop responsible for maintaining him even though he contributes little to the evangelical care of God's people? In light of the current climate, would a bishop be justified in seeking another bishop willing to give this priest "a break"? Or would the bishop be correct in urging this priest to seek secular employment with a view toward becoming self-sufficient?

In this present context, incardination is clearly focussed upon the particular church, its care, service and growth. Some of the more baffling cases rising today deal with those seeking ordination for service within any number of new emerging associations of the faithful celebrated by Pope Benedict in his letter of the 16th of June: Our Lady of Combermere, Marie Jeunesse, and the Neo-Catechumenate to name but a few. It is very clear that none of these has the juridic ability to incardinate its own members, yet priests are essential for the very lifeblood of the community itself. The only way in which the community can benefit from those in holy orders, and one can belong to such an association with the grace of priestly ordination, is to seek a bishop willing to ordain him.

However, that ordination carries with it an automatic incardinating into the particular church of which the bishop is its head. The attachment to the particular church that ordination brings is neither intended nor even desired. Conversely, the potential entanglement for the bishop and his diocese both canonically and civilly are neither intended nor desired either! It is only the sacrament of orders that is given because it is intended and desired, with the charism, mission and grounding of the community as its locus. The incardination in this case is utterly fictitious, and seems to suggest that perhaps either the institute of incardination itself needs to be radically amended to meet these new exigencies, or that the privilege of incardinating clerics be granted to the communities at a very early stage of their evolution and growth.

Bearing in mind this focus upon the particular church, what of the current situation through much of North America of priests from countries rich with missionary potential, who, because they appear to have an abundance of clergy, are “exporting” their priests to places who appear to suffer from a “shortage” of vocations? Even a cursory glance at the *Annuario Pontificio* points out the vast discrepancies with regard to the distribution of priestly vocations that exist throughout the world, between north and south, and between those churches in relative infancy and those who are older, even ancient. A singular concern to provide the sacraments in parts of the north appears to ignore the impulse of the Spirit who calls many to labour in new missionary fields rich and ripe for harvest in the south. Furthermore, it prevents a longitudinal migration of clergy to areas of genuine need. The potential for harm is enormous. The harvest itself is imperilled in the south and the full actualization of potential wrought by the presence of an eager cadre of young priests serving, caring and loving into maturity a nascent church in various distinctive cultural *milieux* is lost. At the same time, a narrow defining of ministry as only sacramental opens the floodgates of mediocrity *vis à vis* a larger vision of ministry and priesthood, while stifling the Spirit of Creativity who engenders new and pluriform expressions of service and care within the community of faith precisely in order to ensure its needs are met.

This is but a small, arguably even negligible, contribution to the situations mentioned above. It is offered by way of illustrating the application of a definition that is new, albeit imperfect. And it gives rise to even more questions: how are priests, bishops and communities to foster a culture that honours and fosters the four-fold context articulated as being the ground of incardination? How are they to be held accountable for its preservation? What mechanisms exist or need to be created in order to evaluate progress? What structures exist or need to be created in order to resolve disputes or arbitrate conflicts? If the defined context is the ground of incardination as it pertains to the ordained, can it not be argued that this context is precisely the same for any Christian community? If so, how can priests and bishops be encouraged to be more proactive in making this a reality for the people of God? How is that brought about and evaluated? If incardination involves the active cooperation of the presbyterium, how is that fostered? What structures are needed to support it?

It is clear that a fully unified understanding has yet to be achieved in the church. That will be the task of the generations that will follow the current one.

Through the sacred ordination and mission which they receive from the bishops priests are promoted to the service of Christ the teacher, priest and king; they are given a share in his ministry, through which the church here on earth is being ceaselessly built up into the people of God, Christ's Body and the temple of the Spirit. For that reason the council has made the following decree with the aim of giving more effective support to the ministry of priests and making better provision for their life in the often vastly changed circumstances of the pastoral and human scene (*PO*, 1).⁴⁹

But if this is the conciliar vision, what of the law? Is not the law on incardination cold, hard, and juridic? Does it not lack a certain spirit, warmth of purpose, breadth of vision, pastoral and theological content? Yes. This is true. This is how the *Code* presents the law on incardination. It is not the fault of the law: it simply conveys what the law is. The *Code* describes how something shall be done (c. 266, §1 for initial incardination), or what is possible (c. 268, §1 for automatic incardination). It presents in very general terms what is needed (c. 269, 1° speaks of the "need or advantage of his particular church"), or it can be very specific in making sure that what is needed is in fact done (c. 267, §1 speaks of the requirements for validity). It states categorically what is not permitted (c. 265 is quite emphatic). That is the content of the law itself. Commentators on the law refine this and sometimes offer clues to aid in the interpretation of the law.

However, there is more to the church's law than its mere content.

L. Örsy has written:

[...] theology identifies the Christian values the law is meant to serve. Since canon law has no other purpose than to serve those values, and there is no other science to identify them than theology, there is no wholesome interpretation of canon law without theology.⁵⁰

What has been expressed thus far is the work of theology. However, it is not a personal theology reflecting the body of work presented by this or that theologian – it is not, for example, Rahner's theology of priesthood. It is instead the church's theology of the priesthood as that is found in *PO*. That theology has been commented upon by several theologians, each one engaged in the task of finding deeper insights and discovering new layers of meaning, just as theology is wont to do.⁵¹ One of the first layers of insight added to the triple *munera* as found in *PO*, 1, was the work of David Power who offers the ecclesiological constructs *diakonia*, *koinonia*, *martyrion* and *leitourgia*, but applied in this work christologically in an effort to connect more closely the ministry and priesthood of Christ with the life of the community in general, and to that of priests more specifically.

⁴⁹ See SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, *Presbyterorum ordinis* [= *PO*], 7 December 1965, in *AAS*, 58 (1966), pp. 991-1024. English translation in FLANNERY, A. (gen. ed.), *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, vol. 1, new revised edition (=FLANNERY 1), Northport, NY, Costello Publishing Company, 1998, p. 863.

⁵⁰ L. ÖRSY, *Theology and Canon Law: New Horizons for Legislation and Interpretation*, Collegeville, MN, The Liturgical Press, 1992, p. 109.

⁵¹ ÖRSY expresses it this way: "The internal dynamics of theology prompt a person toward seeking deeper insights and discovering more meanings." See p. 167.

Yet, fundamentally, it faithfully echoes *Presbyterorum ordinis* and, as such, it represents the values of the church. It represents the church's expression of its highest ideals *vis à vis* the priesthood. These values are then placed before the law and asked for their juridic service.

L. Örsy observes:

Laws are norms of action for the whole community, set by legitimate authority, for the appropriation of values by the community. They are instruments of life, growth and perfection because they point to needed values and prompt the community to reach out for them.⁵²

The service the law offers to theology is to focus its scattered light like a prism, until a single, sharp and clear beam is shone.⁵³ The result is a norm of action, expressed with juridic economy, containing within it another horizon of meaning, but one not readily discernable. These are set before the community by the Legislator for their appropriation – that the community would make them their own. But it seems that more is implied here. It is not just that the community would make the norm its own, that they would abide by it, which is indisputably the attainment of one level of value, but rather, that the community would gaze into that norm of action – that beam – and see in it a flicker of something worthy of pursuit. It is in the pursuit that the larger horizon of meaning emerges, recognized for its inherent value, and given the honour it deserves. A necessary part of this process is a newfound appreciation for the norm itself.

From the analysis done on the canons dealing with incardination, part of that hidden value emerged in the conversation dealing with c. 269. That canon linked service, ordination and incardination together unlike any other, and its analysis yielded rich insight. Yet it still seems as if something is missing.

Pope John Paul II, said this about incardination:

[...] the priest's *relationship with his bishop* in the *one presbyterate*, his sharing in the bishops' ecclesial concern, and his *devotion to the evangelical care of the people of God* in the specific historical and contextual conditions of *a particular church* are elements which must be taken into account in sketching the proper configuration of the priest and his spiritual life. In this sense, "*incardination*" *cannot be confined to a purely juridic bond, but also involves a set of attitudes as well as spiritual and pastoral decisions which help to fill out the specific features of the priestly vocation.*⁵⁴

A short while later, the Holy Father writes:

⁵² Ibid., p. 92.

⁵³ ÖRSY writes: "... the internal dynamics of canon law direct a person to narrow the search steadily until the intended actions are determined" (p. 173).

⁵⁴ JOHN PAUL II, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores dabo vobis*, 25 March, 1992, in AAS, 84 (1992), pp. 657-804. English translation in *Shepherds After My Own Heart: Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation of His Holiness John Paul II on the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day*, Sherbrooke, PQ, Éditions Paulines, 1992, p. 82. Emphasis added.

More specifically, the priest is called to deepen his awareness of being a member of the particular church in which he is *incardinated, joined by a bond that is juridical, spiritual and pastoral*. This awareness presupposes a particular love for his own church and it makes that love grow. This is truly the living and permanent goal of the pastoral charity which should accompany the life of the priest and lead him to share in the history or life experience of this same particular church, in its riches and weaknesses, in its difficulties and in its hopes, working in it for its growth.⁵⁵

Pope John Paul is indicating that incardination is not merely a **juridical bond**, it is a **spiritual bond** and it is a **pastoral bond**. He identifies three spheres in which this juridical, spiritual and pastoral bond operates. First, the priest is in relationship with his bishop. This relationship is articulated in several ways: as individual priest and bishop; as a member of the presbyterium and bishop; as priest sharing the bishop's concern for the entire church; as priest sharing in the bishop's evangelical care of the people of God in this particular church. Second, the priest is in relationship with his brother priests. Third, the priest is in relation to the people of God of the particular church in its specific historical and contextual condition, in other words, its history, life experience, riches, weaknesses, difficulties, hopes and desire for growth.

By stating that it involves a series of attitudes, John Paul is indicating that incardination requires active volition on the part of the cleric, causing him to choose in the light of grace how his vocational commitment is to be expressed and lived in this specific context. This is re-enforced when he speaks of the decision to love that is the foundation of pastoral charity in the example of St. Paul.

As a **spiritual bond**, incardination attaches the very soul of the priest to that of his community in a way that their sorrows become his sorrows; their pain becomes his pain; their joy becomes his joy. This is not unlike that spoken of by Tertullian, Augustine and the Council of Nicea: it is rather like a marriage, wherein the good of the other is sought over that of the self. It is the choice to seek the way of sacrifice in the example of Christ, who lays down his life for his friends (Jn. 15.13). The very notion of relationship implies reciprocity, the accepting/taking of this man to be our minister, allowing him to become one with us in trust, faith, esteem and affection.

As a **pastoral bond**, incardination attaches the priest to this community in such a way that he cares for it and attends to it, builds it and protects it, in the example of Christ, the Good Shepherd (Jn. 10.30) and, more importantly, in the example of Christ the obedient one of God. Obedience, as has been explored, calls forth maturity, confidence, loyalty, trust, respect, reciprocity and a willingness to listen to and look at the needs of those in the "big picture." Obedience is not uni-dimensional but is a two-way street that prohibits mere submission to the decrees of another. Instead, it is founded upon a relationship of mutual respect and responsibility one toward the other.

⁵⁵ Ibid., Emphasis added.

As a **juridic bond**, incardination attaches the priest to this community in such a way that the context of his ministry is protected and he is able to explore the full potential of the gift given to him in ordination. It attaches the priest to this community in such a way that he is freed from the anxiety associated with want. It attaches the priest to the bishop in such a way that his mission is protected, and his rights and obligations ensured.

As a juridic bond, incardination affords the community protection from those whose ministry could cause them harm, for only those who are deemed suitable will be chosen for them. It implies that the one sent to them by the bishop is one who knows, and is imbued with, the charism of truth. It preserves and enhances the presbyterium. As a juridic bond it insures the bishop a pool of ready ministers to meet the needs of his particular church. Thus it protects the authority of the bishop.

In a very real way incardination is given the opportunity to reflect those notions that have lingered on throughout this discussion: *koinonia*, *martyrion*, *diakonia* and *leitourgia*, not in the sense that the institute itself reflects these dimensions of Christ's ministry, but rather in that these dimensions of Christ's ministry are given the stable protection they need to grow, mature and develop in the life of the priest himself, and in the life of the church with whom he journeys.

As was seen earlier, all of seems to invite a new definition for incardination. Indeed, in light of this, it would seem to be the Legislator's very intent. So incardination was redefined in the previous chapter as: "the juridic protection of a permanent relational bond wherein the ministry of Christ, in all its richness, is incarnated in the person of one called by Christ through the community to serve it, care for it, and love it, and which, in its turn, gives rise to reciprocal rights and obligations." This attempt to recast incardination in a fashion that reflects a stronger spiritual and pastoral content brings to it an explicit warmth and breadth of vision not readily apparent in the current law. However, while the current law appears in its content to be devoid of significant meaning, spirit and life, it is nevertheless surprisingly rich in its veiled, hidden intent. Indeed, rich beyond expectation.

It seems only right that *Presbyterorum ordinis* be given the last word:

Let priests remember that in carrying out their task they are never alone but are supported by the almighty power of God. Believing in Christ who has called them to share in his priesthood, let them devote themselves to their office with all trust, knowing that God is powerful to increase charity in them. Let them remember too that they have their brothers in the priesthood and indeed the faithful of the entire world as allies (*PO*, 22).⁵⁶

⁵⁶ See FLANNERY 1, p. 901.

