

POST-SYNODAL APOSTOLIC
EXHORTATION
PASTORES GREGIS



OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
ON THE BISHOP, SERVANT OF THE
GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE HOPE
OF THE WORLD.

INTRODUCTION

1. The shepherds of the Lord's flock know that they can count on a special divine grace as they carry out their ministry as Bishops. In the Roman Pontifical, during the solemn prayer of episcopal ordination, the principal ordaining Bishop, after invoking the outpouring of the Holy Spirit who leads and guides, repeats a phrase already found in the ancient text of the *Apostolic Tradition* : “Grant, O Father, knower of all hearts, that this your servant, whom you have chosen for the office of Bishop, may shepherd your holy flock. May he fulfil before you without reproach the ministry of the High Priesthood.”¹ In this way there continues to be carried out the will of the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Shepherd, who sent the Apostles even as he himself was sent by the Father (cf. *Jn* 20 :21), and who wishes that their successors, the Bishops, should remain shepherds in his Church until the end of time.²

The image of the Good Shepherd, so dear also to ancient Christian iconography, was very much present to the Bishops from throughout the world who gathered from 30 September to 27 October 2001 for the Tenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. At the tomb

¹ *Rite of Ordination of a Bishop* : Prayer of Ordination.

² Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Lumen Gentium*, 18.

of the Apostle Peter, they joined me in reflecting on the figure of *The Bishop, Servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the Hope of the World*. We were all agreed that the figure of Jesus the Good Shepherd represents the primary image to which we must constantly refer. No one, in fact, can be considered a pastor worthy of the name, *nisi per caritate efficiatur unum cum Christo*.³ This is the fundamental reason why "the ideal figure of the Bishop, on which the Church continues to count, is that of the pastor who, configured to Christ by his holiness of life, expends himself generously for the Church entrusted to him, while at the same time bearing in his heart a concern for all the Churches throughout the world (cf. 2 Cor 11 :28)".⁴

The Tenth Assembly of the Synod of Bishops

2. We give thanks to the Lord, then, for having granted us the gift of celebrating once more an assembly of the Synod of Bishops and thus having a truly profound experience of *being Church*. Held in the wake of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000, at the beginning of the third Christian millennium, the Tenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops followed a long series of assemblies : both the

³ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Super Ev. Job.*, X, 3.

⁴ John Paul II, Homily at the Conclusion of the Tenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, 27 October 2001, 3 : *AAS* 94 (2002), 114.

Special Assemblies, all of which were marked by a concern for evangelization on the different continents – from Africa to America, Asia, Oceania and Europe; and the Ordinary Assemblies, the last of which were devoted to a reflection on the rich treasure which the Church possesses in the variety of vocations raised up by the Holy Spirit among the People of God. In this context, the attention devoted to the specific ministry of Bishops completed the picture of that ecclesiology of communion and mission which must always be our fundamental point of reference.

Consequently, the work of the Synod made constant reference to the teaching of the Second Vatican Council on the episcopate and the ministry of Bishops, especially as set forth in the third chapter of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* and in the Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops *Christus Dominus*. Of this luminous teaching, which repeats and develops traditional theological and juridical themes, my predecessor of venerable memory Pope Paul VI, could rightly say: "It seems to us that episcopal authority emerges from the Council vindicated in its divine institution, confirmed in its irreplaceable function, renewed in its pastoral powers of teaching, sanctifying and governing, honoured in its extension to the universal Church by way of collegial communion,

more clearly identified in its hierarchical aspect, strengthened in shared and fraternal responsibility with other Bishops for the universal and particular needs of the Church, and more strongly associated in a spirit of hierarchical union and joint cooperation with the head of the Church, the constitutive centre of the College of Bishops".⁵

At the same time, in keeping with the designated topic of the Synod, the Fathers reviewed their ministry in the light of the theological virtue of hope. This approach immediately appeared as especially pertinent to the mission of the pastor who, in the Church, is first and foremost to bear witness to the Paschal and eschatological mystery.

A hope founded on Christ

3. It is in fact the task of every Bishop to proclaim hope to the world, hope based on the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ : a hope "which not only concerns penultimate matters but also and above all that eschatological hope which awaits the riches of the glory of God (cf. *Eph* 1 :18), which surpasses anything that the human heart has ever conceived (cf. *1 Cor* 2 :9), and to which the sufferings of the present cannot be compared (cf. *Rom* 8 :18)".⁶ A stance of

⁵ Paul VI, Address to the Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops of Italy (6 December 1965) : *AAS* 58 (1966), 68.

⁶ *Propositio* 3.

theological hope, together with faith and love, must completely shape the Bishop's pastoral ministry.

The Bishop is called in a particular way to be a prophet, witness and servant of hope. He has the duty of instilling confidence and proclaiming before all people the basis of Christian hope (cf. *1 Pet* 3 :15). The Bishop is the prophet, witness and servant of this hope, especially where a culture of "the here and now" leaves no room for openness to transcendence. Where hope is absent, faith itself is called into question. Love too is weakened by the loss of this virtue. Especially in times of growing unbelief and indifference, hope is a stalwart support for faith and an effective incentive for love. It draws its strength from the certainty of God's desire for the salvation of all people (cf. *1 Tim* 2 :4) and from the constant presence of the Lord Jesus, the *Emmanuel* who remains with us always, until the end of the world (cf. *Mt* 28 :20).

Only by the light and consolation born of the Gospel can a Bishop succeed in keeping his own hope alive (cf. *Rom* 15 :4) and in nourishing the hope of those entrusted to his pastoral care. He must therefore model himself on the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Hope, who believed in the fulfilment of the Lord's words (cf. *Lk* 1 :45). Relying on the word of God and holding firmly to hope, which like a sure and steadfast anchor

reaches to the heavens (cf. *Heb* 6 :18-20), the Bishop stands in the midst of the Church as a vigilant sentinel, a courageous prophet, a credible witness and a faithful servant of Christ, "our hope of glory" (cf. *Col* 1 :27), thanks to whom "death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying nor pain any more" (cf. *Rev* 21 :4).

Hope, when hopes are dashed

4. Everyone will remember that the sessions of the Synod of Bishops took place at a dramatic time. The terrible events of 11 September 2001 were intensely felt by the Synod Fathers, with the dreadful fate of countless innocent victims and for the appearance in our world of grave new situations of uncertainty and fear, both for human civilization and the peaceful coexistence of nations. A new spectre of war and death appeared, which, when added to the already existing situations of conflict, made all the more evident the need to implore the Prince of Peace that human hearts might open once more to reconciliation, solidarity and peace.⁷

Together with its prayers, the Synodal assembly spoke out in condemnation of all forms of violence and identified their ultimate source in human sin. Acknowledging the failure of human hopes based on materialist, immanentist and market ideologies which claim to measure

⁷ Cf. John Paul II, Prayer in Commemoration of 11 September 2001 : *L'Osservatore Romano* (12 October 2001), p. 1.

everything in terms of efficiency, relationships of power and market forces, the Synod Fathers reaffirmed their conviction that only the light of the Risen One and the guidance of the Holy Spirit can enable people to base their expectations on the hope that does not disappoint. Thus, they proclaimed: "We should not allow ourselves to be intimidated by those doctrines which deny the existence of the living God and which strive, more or less openly, to undermine, parody or deride Christian hope. In the joy of the Spirit we profess: '*Christ is truly risen!*' In his glorified humanity he has opened up the prospect of eternal life for all those who accept the grace of conversion".⁸

The certainty of this profession of faith must be such that it daily strengthens a Bishop's hope and makes him increasingly confident of the unfailing power of God's merciful goodness to open up paths of salvation and propose them to the freedom of each person. Hope encourages a Bishop to discern, wherever he exercises his ministry, the signs of life which are able to uproot the seeds of destruction and death. Hope sustains him as he transforms conflicts themselves into an opportunity for growth and for reconciliation. Hope in Jesus the Good Shepherd will fill his

⁸ Synod of Bishops, Tenth Ordinary General assembly, *Message* (25 October 2001), 8: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 27 October 2001, p. 5; cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (14 May 1971), 41: *AAS* 63 (1971), 429-430.

heart with compassion, prompting him to draw near to the pain of every suffering man and woman and to soothe their wounds, ever confident that every lost sheep will be found. The Bishop will thus be an ever more luminous sign of Christ, the Shepherd and Spouse of the Church. Acting as father, brother and friend to all, he will stand beside everyone as the living image of Christ, our hope, in whom all God's promises are fulfilled and all the expectations of creation are brought to completion.⁹

Servants of the Gospel for the hope of the world

5. In issuing this Apostolic Exhortation, I now take up the reflections which developed during the Tenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, from the first *Lineamenta* to the *Instrumentum Laboris*, from the interventions made in the Hall by the Synod Fathers to the two Relations that introduced and summarized these interventions, from the theoretical and practical pastoral insights that emerged from the small groups to the *Propositiones* presented to me at the conclusion of the Synod to assist me in preparing for the whole Church a document on the Synod's theme of *The Bishop, Servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the Hope of the World*.¹⁰ In doing so, I send my fraternal greetings and the kiss of peace to all the Bishops in communion with this See, first

⁹ Cf. *Propositio* 6.

¹⁰ Cf. *Propositio* 1.

entrusted to Peter so that he might be a guarantee of unity and, as is recognized by all, preside in love.¹¹

To you, venerable and dear Brothers, I repeat the invitation that I addressed to the whole Church at the beginning of the millennium : *Duc in altum* ! It is Christ himself who repeats these words to the Successors of those Apostles who heard them from his lips and who, putting their trust in him, set forth on mission along the byways of the world : *Duc in altum* (Lk 5 :4). In the light of this pressing command from the Lord, "we may reread the triple *munus* entrusted to us in the Church : *munus docendi, sanctificandi et regendi...* *Duc in docendo* ! With the Apostle we will say : 'Preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke and exhort – be unfailing in patience and in teaching' (2 Tim 4 :2). *Duc in sanctificando* ! The 'nets' we are called upon to cast among men are, first of all, the sacraments, of which we are the principal dispensers, moderators, guardians and promoters. They form a sort of saving 'net,' which sets free from evil and leads to the fullness of life. *Duc in regendo* ! As pastors and true fathers, assisted by the priests and other helpers, we have the task of gathering together the family of the faithful and in it fostering charity and brotherly communion.

¹¹ Cf. Optatus of Milevis, *Contra Parmenianum Donat.*, 2, 2 : PL 11, 947 ; Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Romanos*, 1, 1 : PG 5, 685.

As arduous and laborious a mission as this may be, we must not lose heart. With Peter and the first disciples we too with great confidence renew our heartfelt profession of faith : Lord, 'at your word I will lower the nets' (*Lk* 5 :5) ! At your word, O Christ, we wish to serve your Gospel for the hope of the world !".¹²

In this way, living as men of hope and reflecting in their ministry the ecclesiology of communion and mission, Bishops will truly be a source of hope for their flock. We know that the world needs the "hope that does not disappoint" (cf. *Rom* 5 :5). We know that this hope is Christ. We know it and therefore we proclaim the hope that springs from the Cross.

Ave Crux, spes unica ! May this acclamation, which echoed in the Synod Hall at the central moment of the work of the Tenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, remain ever on our lips, for the Cross is a mystery of life and death. The Cross has become for the Church a "tree of life". For this reason we proclaim that life has triumphed over death.

In making this Paschal proclamation we follow in the footsteps of a great multitude of holy pastors who have been eloquent images of the Good Shepherd *in medio Ecclesiae*. This

¹² John Paul II, Homily at the Opening of the Tenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (30 September 2001), 6 : *AAS* 94 (2002), 111-112.

prompts us always to praise and thank almighty and eternal God, for, as we sing in the sacred Liturgy, he strengthens us by their example, instructs us by their teaching and gives us protection through their intercession.¹³ As I said at the conclusion of the Synod's work, the face of each of these holy Bishops, from the beginning of the Church's life to our own day, is like a tile placed in a sort of mystical mosaic forming the face of Christ the Good Shepherd. It is he, then, that we contemplate, setting an example for the flock entrusted to us by the Pastor of Pastors, so that we can become ever more committed *servants of the Gospel for the hope of the world*.

As we gaze upon the face of our Master and Lord at that hour when he "loved his own to the end", all of us, like the Apostle Peter, allow our feet to be washed so that we might have a part in him (cf. *Jn* 13 :1-9). And with the strength that comes to us from him in the Church, in the presence of our priests and deacons, before all men and women of the consecrated life and all our beloved lay people, we repeat aloud: "Whatever we may be, let not your hope be placed in us: if we are good, we are your servants; if we are bad, we are still your servants. But if we are good and faithful servants, it is then

¹³ Cf. Roman Missal, *Preface of Pastors*.

that we are truly your servants".¹⁴ *Servants of the Gospel for the hope of the world.*

CHAPTER ONE. THE MYSTERY AND MINISTRY OF THE BISHOP.

"... and he chose from them Twelve" (Lk 6 :13)

6. The Lord Jesus, during his earthly pilgrimage, proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom and inaugurated it in his own person, revealing its mystery to all people.¹⁵ He called men and women to be his followers, and from his disciples he chose Twelve "to be with him" (Mk 3 :14). The Gospel of Luke points out that Jesus made this choice after a night spent in prayer on the mountain (cf. 6 :12). The Gospel of Mark, for its part, appears to see in this action of Jesus a sovereign act, a constitutive act which gives an identity to those whom he chose : "he *appointed* Twelve" (3 :14). The mystery of the election of the Twelve is thus disclosed : it is an act of love, freely willed by Jesus in intimate union with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The mission entrusted by Jesus to the Apostles is to last until the end of time (cf. Mt 28 :20), since the Gospel which they have been charged to hand down is the life of the Church in every age. It was precisely for this reason that the

¹⁴ Saint Augustine, *Sermo* 340/A, 9 : PLS 2, 644.

¹⁵ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 3.

Apostles were concerned to appoint for themselves successors, so that, as Saint Irenaeus attests, the apostolic tradition might be manifested and preserved down the centuries.¹⁶

The special outpouring of the Holy Spirit with which the Risen Lord filled the Apostles (cf. *Acts* 1 :5 ; 8 ; 2 :4 ; *Jn* 20 :22-23) was shared by them through the gesture of laying hands upon their co-workers (cf. *1 Tim* 4 :14 ; *2 Tim* 1 :6-7). These in turn transmitted it by the same gesture to others, and these to others still. In this way, the spiritual gift given in the beginning has come down to our own day through the imposition of hands, in other words, by episcopal consecration, which confers the fullness of the sacrament of Orders, the high priesthood and the totality of the sacred ministry. Thus, through the Bishops and the priests, their co-workers, the Lord Jesus Christ, seated at the right hand of God the Father, remains present in the midst of believers. In every time and place it is he who proclaims the word of God to all peoples, administers the sacraments of faith to believers and guides the people of the New Testament on their pilgrimage to eternal happiness. The Good Shepherd does not abandon his flock but preserves and protects it always through those who, by their ontological share in his life and mission, carry out in an eminent and visible way the role of teacher,

¹⁶ Cf. *Adv. Haer.* III, 2, 2 ; 3, 1 : PG 7 : 847-848 ; *Propositio* 2.

shepherd and priest, who act in his name in exercising the functions associated with the pastoral ministry, and who are constituted his vicars and ambassadors.¹⁷

The Trinitarian foundation of the episcopal ministry

7. The Christological dimension of the pastoral ministry, considered in depth, leads to an understanding of the Trinitarian foundation of ministry itself. Christ's life is Trinitarian. He is the eternal and only-begotten Son of the Father and the anointed of the Holy Spirit, sent into the world ; it is he who, together with the Father, pours out the Spirit upon the Church. This Trinitarian dimension, manifested in every aspect of Christ's life and activity, also shapes the life and activity of the Bishop. Rightly, then, the Synod Fathers chose explicitly to describe the life and ministry of the Bishop in the light of the Trinitarian ecclesiology contained in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council.

The tradition which sees the Bishop as an image of God the Father is quite ancient. As Saint Ignatius of Antioch wrote, the Father is like an invisible Bishop, the Bishop of all. Every Bishop, therefore, stands in the place of the Father of Jesus Christ in such a way that, precisely because of this representation, he is to be revered by all.¹⁸ Consonant with this symbolism, the Bishop's

¹⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 27.

chair, which especially in the tradition of the Eastern Churches evokes God's paternal authority, can only be occupied by the Bishop. This same symbolism is the source of every Bishop's duty to lead the holy people of God as a devoted father and to guide them – together with his priests, his co-workers in the episcopal ministry, and with his deacons – in the way of salvation.¹⁹ Conversely, as an ancient text exhorts, the faithful are to love their Bishops who are, after God, their fathers and mothers.²⁰ For this reason, in accordance with a custom widespread in certain cultures, one kisses the Bishop's hand as one would kiss the hand of the loving Father, the giver of life.

Christ is the primordial icon of the Father and the manifestation of his merciful presence among men and women. The Bishop, who acts in the person and in the name of Christ himself, becomes in the Church entrusted to him a living sign of the Lord Jesus, Shepherd and Spouse, Teacher and High Priest of the Church.²¹ Here we find the source of pastoral ministry, and the reason why, as the homily outline in the Roman Pontifical suggests, the three functions of

¹⁸ Cf. *Ad Magnes.*, 6, 1 : PG 5, 764 ; *Ad Trall.*, 3, 1 : PG 5, 780 ; *Ad Smyrn.*, 8:1 : PG 5, 852.

¹⁹ Roman Pontifical, *Rite of Ordination of a Bishop* : Promise of the Elect.

²⁰ Cf. *Didascalia Apostolorum* II, 33, 1, ed. F.X. Funk, I, 115.

²¹ Cf. *Propositio* 6.

teaching, sanctifying and governing the People of God are to be carried out in imitation of the Good Shepherd : with charity, knowledge of the flock, concern for all, mercy towards the poor, the stranger and those in need, and a willingness to seek out the lost sheep and to bring them back to the one sheepfold.

Finally, the anointing of the Holy Spirit, by configuring the Bishop to Christ, enables him to be a living continuation of the mystery of Christ for the Church. Because of this Trinitarian shaping of his existence, every Bishop in his ministry is committed to keeping watch over the whole flock with love, for he has been placed in their midst by the Spirit to govern the Church of God : in the name of the Father, whose image he represents ; in the name of Jesus Christ his Son, by whom he has been established as teacher, priest and shepherd ; in the name of the Holy Spirit, who gives life to the Church and by his power strengthens us in our human weakness.²²

The collegial nature of the episcopal ministry

8. "And he appointed Twelve" (*Mk* 3 :14). The Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* employs this Gospel text to introduce its teaching on the collegial nature of the group of the Twelve, formed "after the manner of a college or a fixed group, over which he placed Peter, chosen

²² Cf. Roman Pontifical, *Rite of Ordination of a Bishop* : Homily.

from among them".²³ Similarly, through the personal succession of the Bishop of Rome to Saint Peter and the succession of all the Bishops as a group to the Apostles, the Roman Pontiff and the Bishops are united among themselves as a College.²⁴

The collegial union between the Bishops is based on both episcopal ordination and hierarchical communion. It thus affects the inmost being of each Bishop and belongs to the structure of the Church as willed by Jesus Christ. One attains to the fullness of episcopal ministry by virtue of episcopal consecration and through hierarchical communion with the Head of the College and with its members, that is, with the College, which always includes its Head. This is how one becomes a member of the College of Bishops,²⁵ and the reason why the three functions received in episcopal ordination – sanctifying, teaching and governing – must be exercised in hierarchical communion, even though, given their different immediate finalities, in a distinct way²⁶.

²³ No. 19.

²⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 22 ; Code of Canon Law, c. 330 ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, c. 42.

²⁵ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 22 ; Code of Canon Law, c. 336 ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, c. 49.

²⁶ Cf. *Propositio* 20 ; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 21 ; Code of Canon Law, c. 375 § 2.

This constitutes what is called "the spirit of collegiality" (*affectus collegialis*), or "affective" collegiality, which is the basis of the Bishops' concern for the other particular Churches and for the universal Church.²⁷ Consequently, if we must say that a Bishop is never alone, inasmuch as he is always united to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit, we must also add that he is also never alone because he is always and continuously united with his brothers in the episcopate and with the one whom the Lord has chosen as the Successor of Peter.

The spirit of collegiality is realized and expressed in different degrees and in various modalities, including institutional forms such as, for example, the Synod of Bishops, Particular Councils, Episcopal Conferences, the Roman Curia, *ad Limina* visits, missionary cooperation, etc. In its full sense, however, the spirit of collegiality is realized and expressed only in collegial action in the strict sense, that is, in the action of all the Bishops together with their Head, with whom they exercise full and supreme power over the whole Church.²⁸

²⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 23 ; Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 3 ; 5 ; 6 ; John Paul II, *Motu Proprio Apostolos Suos* (21 May 1998), 13 : *AAS* 90 (1998), 650-651.

²⁸ Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* (28 June 1988), Appendix I, 4 : *AAS* 80 (1988), 914-915 ; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 22 ; Code of Canon Law, c. 337 §§ 1, 2 ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, c.

This collegial nature of the apostolic ministry is willed by Christ himself. Consequently, the spirit of collegiality, or affective collegiality (*collegialitas affectiva*), is always present among the Bishops as *communio episcoporum*, but only in certain acts does it find expression as effective collegiality (*collegialitas effectiva*). The various ways in which affective collegiality comes to be realized in effective collegiality belong to the human order, but in varying degrees they concretize the divine requirement that the episcopate should express itself in a collegial manner.²⁹ The College's supreme authority over the whole Church is solemnly exercised in Ecumenical Councils.³⁰

The collegial dimension gives the episcopate its character of universality. A parallelism can thus be established between the Church as one and universal, and therefore indivisible, and the episcopacy as one and indivisible, and therefore universal. The principle and foundation of this unity, be it that of the Church or of the Bishops, is the Roman Pontiff. Indeed, as the Second Vatican Council teaches, the College, "insofar as it is composed of many, expresses the variety and

50 §§ 1, 2.

²⁹ Cf. John Paul II, Address at the Conclusion of the Seventh Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (29 October 1987), 4 : *AAS* 80 (1988), 610 ; Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* (28 June 1988), Appendix I : *AAS* 80 (1988), 915-916 ; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 22.

³⁰ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 22.

universality of the People of God, but insofar as it is assembled under one head, it expresses the unity of the flock of Christ".³¹ For this reason, "the unity of the episcopate is one of the constitutive elements of the unity of the Church".³²

The universal Church is not the sum of the particular Churches, or a federation of the latter, or even the result of their communion as such, since, in the expression of the early Fathers and the liturgy, in her essential mystery the Church precedes creation itself.³³ In the light of this teaching, we can add that the relationship of mutual interiority existing between the universal Church and each particular Church, whereby the particular Churches are "formed in the likeness of the universal Church, and in and from the particular Churches there comes into being the one and only Catholic Church",³⁴ is reproduced in the relationship between the College of Bishops in its entirety and each Bishop as an individual.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² John Paul II, *Motu Proprio Apostolos Suos* (21 May 1998), 8 : *AAS* 90 (1998), 647.

³³ Cf. Angoulême Sacramentary : *In dedicatione basilicae novae* : "Dirige, Domine, ecclesiam tuam dispensatione caelesti, ut, quae ante mundi principium in tua semper est praesentia praeparata, usque ad plenitudinem gloriamque promissam te moderante perveniat" : *CCSL* 159 C, rubr. 1851 ; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 758-760 ; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Letter Communionis Notio* (28 May 1992), 9 : *AAS* 85 (1993), 843.

³⁴ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 23.

For this reason, "the College of Bishops is not to be understood as the aggregate of the Bishops who govern the particular Churches, nor as the result of their communion ; rather, as an essential element of the universal Church, it is a reality which precedes the office of being the head of a particular Church".³⁵

We can better understand this parallelism between the universal Church and the College of Bishops in light of the Council's statement that "the Apostles were the first members of the new Israel, and at the same time the beginning of the sacred hierarchy".³⁶ In the Apostles, not considered individually but as a College, there was already contained the structure of the Church – which in them was established in her universality and unity – and the structure of the College of Bishops, their successors, the sign of this universality and unity.³⁷

It is thus that "the power of the College of Bishops over the whole Church is not the result of the sum of the powers of the individual Bishops over their particular Churches ; it is a pre-existing reality in which individual Bishops participate. They have no competence to act over

³⁵ John Paul II, *Motu Proprio Apostolos Suos* (21 May 1998), 12 : *AAS* 90 (1998), 649-650.

³⁶ Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 5.

³⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 22.

the whole Church except collegially".³⁸ Bishops share as a body in the power of teaching and governing, and they do so immediately by the very fact that they are members of the College of Bishops, in which the Apostolic College truly continues in being.³⁹

Just as the universal Church is one and indivisible, so too the College of Bishops is one "indivisible theological subject," and hence the supreme, full and universal power possessed by the College, and by the Roman Pontiff personally, is one and indivisible. Precisely because the College of Bishops is a reality prior to the office of heading a particular Church, there are many Bishops who, while carrying out tasks that are properly episcopal, are not heads of particular Churches.⁴⁰ Each Bishop, always in union with his brothers in the episcopate and with the Roman Pontiff, represents Christ the Head and Shepherd of the Church : he does this not only in a proper and specific manner when he receives the office of pastor of a particular Church, but also when he cooperates with the Diocesan Bishop in the governance of his Church ⁴¹ or when he shares in the Roman Pontiff's office of universal pastor in

³⁸ John Paul II, *Motu Proprio Apostolos Suos* (21 May 1998), 12 : *AAS* 90 (1998), 650.

³⁹ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 22.

⁴⁰ Cf. John Paul II, *Motu Proprio Apostolos Suos* (21 May 1998), 12 : *AAS* 90 (1998), 649-650.

the governance of the universal Church. In the course of her history the Church has also recognized, in addition to the specific form of presidency over a particular Church, other forms of exercising the episcopal ministry – such as that of an Auxiliary Bishop or a representative of the Roman Pontiff in the offices of the Holy See or in Papal Legations ; today too, in accordance with the norms of law, she admits these other forms when they are needed.⁴²

The missionary character and the unitary nature of the episcopal ministry

9. The Gospel of Luke (cf. 6 :13) tells us that Jesus named the Twelve "Apostles", which literally means "envoys", "those who are sent". In the Gospel of Mark we read that Jesus also appointed the Twelve "to be sent out to preach" (3 :14). This means that both the election and the establishment of the Twelve as Apostles are directed towards mission. Their first sending (cf. *Mt* 10 :5 ; *Mk* 6 :7 ; *Lk* 9 :1-2) comes to its fulfilment in the mission that Jesus entrusts to them after the Resurrection, at the moment of his Ascension into heaven. The Lord's words remain as timely as ever : "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in

⁴¹ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 25-26.

⁴² Cf. *Propositio* 33.

the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you ; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (*Mt* 28 :18-20). This apostolic mission finds its solemn confirmation on the day of Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

In the text of the Gospel of Matthew just quoted, the entire pastoral ministry can be seen as organized according to the threefold function of teaching, sanctifying and governing. We see here a reflection of the threefold dimension of Christ's service and mission. We, as Christians, and in a qualitatively new manner as priests, participate in the mission of our Master, who is Prophet, Priest and King, and we are called to bear special witness to him in the Church and before the world.

These three functions (*triplex munus*) and the powers that derive from them express on the level of action the pastoral ministry (*munus pastorale*) that every Bishop receives with episcopal consecration. It is a share in Christ's own love that is given in the consecration ; this love is made concrete in the proclamation of the Gospel of hope to all peoples (cf. *Lk* 4 :16-19), in the administration of the sacraments to those who embrace salvation and in the guidance of God's holy people towards eternal life. These three

functions are, in fact, deeply interconnected ; they explain, influence and clarify one another.⁴³

For this reason, then, when the Bishop teaches, he also sanctifies and governs the People of God ; when he sanctifies, he also teaches and governs ; when he governs, he teaches and sanctifies. Saint Augustine defines the entirety of this episcopal ministry as an office of love : *amoris officium*.⁴⁴ This gives us the certainty that the pastoral charity of Jesus Christ will never be lacking in the Church.

"He called to him those whom he desired" (Mk 3 :13-14)

10. A great crowd was following Jesus when he decided to go up the mountain and call the Apostles. There were many disciples, but from them he chose Twelve alone for the specific role of Apostles (cf. Mk 3 :13-19). In the Synod Hall the words of Saint Augustine were often heard : "For you I am a Bishop and with you I am a Christian".⁴⁵

As a gift of the Holy Spirit to the Church, the Bishop is above all else, like every other Christian, a son and member of the Church. From this holy Mother he has received the gift of divine life in

⁴³ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 21, 27 ; John Paul II, Letter to Priests (8 April 1979), 3 : *AAS* 71 (1979), 397.

⁴⁴ Cf. *In Io. Ev. tract.* 123, 5 : *PL* 35, 1967.

⁴⁵ *Sermo* 340, 1 : *PL* 38, 1483 : "*Vobis enim sum episcopus ; vobiscum sum christianus*".

the sacrament of Baptism and his first instruction in the faith. Together with all the faithful he shares in the incomparable dignity of the children of God, a dignity to be lived out in communion and in a spirit of gratitude and fraternity. On the other hand, by virtue of the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders, the Bishop is also the one who, before the faithful, is teacher, sanctifier and shepherd, charged with acting in the name and in the person of Christ.

These are obviously two relationships which do not simply stand side-by-side but are deeply interconnected ; they are ordered to each other inasmuch as both draw upon the richness of Christ, the one High Priest. The Bishop becomes a "father" precisely because he is fully a "son" of the Church. This brings up once again the relationship between the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood : two modes of participation in the one priesthood of Christ, which involves two dimensions which unite in the supreme act of the sacrifice of the Cross.

This is reflected in the relationship which exists in the Church between the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood. The fact that for all their difference in essence each is ordered to the other ⁴⁶ gives rise to an interplay

⁴⁶ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 10.

that harmoniously structures the life of the Church as the place where the salvation brought about by Christ is made historically present. This interplay is present in the very person of the Bishop, who is and remains a baptized member of the Church, yet is incorporated into the high priesthood. This deeper reality of the Bishop is the foundation of his "being among" the other faithful and of his being placed "before" them.

The Second Vatican Council puts this nicely : "If therefore everyone in the Church does not walk along the same path, nevertheless all are called to sanctity and have received an equal privilege of faith through the justice of God (cf *2 Pet* 1 :1). And if by the will of Christ some are made teachers, dispensers of mysteries, and shepherds on behalf of others, yet all share a true equality with regard to the dignity and to the activity common to all the faithful for the building up of the Body of Christ. For the distinction which the Lord made between sacred ministers and the rest of the People of God entails a unity, since pastors and the other faithful are bound to each other by a common bond. The Church's pastors, following the example of the Lord, should minister to one another and to the rest of the faithful. The faithful in their turn should cooperate gladly with their pastors and teachers".⁴⁷

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

The pastoral ministry received in episcopal consecration, which sets the Bishop "before" the other faithful, finds expression in his "being for" the other members of the faithful while not detracting from his "being with" them. This is true with regard both to the Bishop's personal sanctification, which must be pursued and realized in the exercise of his ministry, and to the "style" with which he carries out this ministry in all its respective functions.

The interplay between the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood, present in the episcopal ministry itself, is manifested in a kind of "perichoresis" between the two forms of priesthood: a perichoresis between the common witness to the faith given by the faithful and the Bishop's authoritative witness to the faith through his magisterial acts; a perichoresis between the lived holiness of the faithful and the means of sanctification that the Bishop offers them; and finally, a perichoresis between the personal responsibility of the Bishop for the good of the Church entrusted to him and the shared responsibility of all the faithful for that same Church.

CHAPTER TWO. THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE BISHOP.

"... he appointed Twelve that they might be with him" (Mk 3, 14)

11. In the same act of love by which he freely established the Twelve as Apostles, Jesus called them to share his own life. This sharing, which is a communion of mind and heart with him, also appears as an inner demand of their participation in Jesus' own mission. The functions of the Bishop must not be reduced to those of administration alone. Precisely in order to avoid this risk, both the preparatory documents of the Synod and many interventions by the Fathers in the Synod Hall dwelt at length on what the reality of the episcopate as the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders – in its theological, Christological and pneumatological foundations – entails for the personal life of the Bishop and for the exercise of the ministry entrusted to him.

Objective sanctification, which by Christ's work is present in the sacrament through the communication of the Holy Spirit, needs to coincide with subjective sanctification, in which the Bishop, by the help of grace, must continuously progress through the exercise of his ministry. The ontological transformation brought about by episcopal consecration, as a configuration to Christ, demands a lifestyle that manifests a "being with him". Consequently, during the Synod sessions, emphasis was laid on pastoral charity as being the fruit of the character

bestowed by the sacrament and of its particular grace. Charity, it was said, is in a sense the heart of the ministry of the Bishop, who is drawn into a dynamic pastoral *pro-existence* whereby he is impelled to live, like Christ the Good Shepherd, for the Father and for others, in the daily gift of self.

It is above all in exercising his own ministry, inspired by imitation of the charity of the Good Shepherd, that the Bishop is called to be sanctified and to sanctify, taking as his unifying principle contemplation of the face of Christ and the proclamation of the Gospel of salvation.⁴⁸ His spirituality, therefore, draws direction and nourishment not only from the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation but also from his episcopal ordination, which commits him to living out in faith, hope and charity his ministry of evangelization, liturgical presidency and leadership in the community. The Bishop's spirituality will therefore be an *ecclesial spirituality*, since everything in his life is directed towards the building up of the Church in love.

This requires of the Bishop an attitude of service marked by personal strength, apostolic courage and trusting abandonment to the inner working of the Spirit. He will therefore strive to adopt a lifestyle which imitates the *kenosis* of Christ, the poor and humble servant, so that the

⁴⁸ Cf. *Propositio* 8.

exercise of his pastoral ministry will be a consistent reflection of Jesus, the Servant of God, and will help him to become, like Jesus, close to everyone, from the greatest to the least. Again, by a form of reciprocal interplay, the faithful and loving exercise of his ministry sanctifies the Bishop and on the subjective level configures him ever more closely to the ontological richness of sanctity which the sacrament has bestowed upon him.

The Bishop's personal holiness, however, is never limited to the purely subjective level, since in its efficacy it always proves beneficial to the faithful entrusted to his pastoral care. In the practice of charity, as the content of the pastoral ministry he has received, the Bishop becomes a sign of Christ and acquires that moral authority needed for the effective exercise of his juridical authority. Unless the episcopal office is based on the witness of a holiness manifested in pastoral charity, humility and simplicity of life, it ends up being reduced to a solely functional role and, tragically, it loses credibility before the clergy and the faithful.

The call to holiness in the Church in our time

12. There is a particularly apt Biblical image to describe the figure of the Bishop as the friend of God and the pastor and guide of his people. It is the figure of Moses. Looking to him, the Bishop can find inspiration for his life and

activity as a pastor, for Moses was chosen and sent by the Lord, courageous in leading his people toward the Promised Land, a faithful interpreter of the word and law of the living God, a mediator of the Covenant, ardent and confident in his prayer on behalf of his people. Like Moses, who after his dialogue with the Lord on the holy mountain returned among his people with his face radiant (cf. *Ex* 34 :29-30), so the Bishop will be able to show his brothers and sisters that he is their father, brother and friend only if he has entered the dark yet luminous cloud of the mystery of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Radiant with the light of the Trinity, he will be a sign of the merciful goodness of the Father, a living image of the love of the Son, and transparently a man of the Spirit, consecrated and sent forth to lead the People of God along the paths of history on their pilgrimage to eternity.

The Synod Fathers stressed the importance of spiritual commitment in the life, ministry and growth of the Bishop. I myself have spoken of its priority in conformity with the requirements of the Church's life and the call of the Holy Spirit, who in these years has made evident to everyone the primacy of grace, the widespread desire for spirituality and the urgent need for a witness of holiness.

The call for spirituality arises from a consideration of the work of the Holy Spirit in

salvation history, where his presence is active and dynamic, prophetic and missionary. The gift of the fullness of the Holy Spirit, which the Bishop receives at his episcopal ordination, is a precious and urgent call to cooperate with the Spirit's activity in ecclesial communion and in universal mission.

Held in the wake of the Great Jubilee of 2000, the Synodal Assembly made its own from the beginning the call to holiness of life which I set before the whole Church: "All pastoral initiatives must be set in relation to holiness... Once the Jubilee is over, we resume our normal path, but knowing that, stressing holiness remains more than ever an urgent pastoral task".⁴⁹ An enthusiastic acceptance of my appeal to give first place to the call to holiness was the atmosphere in which the synodal labours took place and the environment which, in a certain sense, unified the Fathers' interventions and reflections. In their hearts they heard resound Saint Gregory Nazianzen's admonition: "First be purified and then purify others, first allow yourself to be instructed by wisdom and then instruct others, first become light and then enlighten others, first draw close to God and then guide others to him,

⁴⁹ Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6 January 2001), 30: *AAS* 93 (2001), 287.

first be holy yourself and then make others holy".⁵⁰

For this reason frequent appeals were heard during the Synodal Assembly for a clearer specification of the properly "episcopal" character of the Bishop's path to holiness. This will always be a holiness lived with his people and for his people, in a communion which becomes a stimulus to and a mutual building up in charity. These are not secondary or marginal demands. It is precisely the Bishop's own spiritual life which favours the fruitfulness of his pastoral activity. Is not the ultimate basis of all pastoral effectiveness constant meditation on the mystery of Christ, passionate contemplation of his Face and generous imitation of the life of the Good Shepherd? If ours is indeed a time of continual movement and even at times of frenzied "doing for the sake of doing", then the Bishop must be the first to show by the example of his own life the need to re-establish the primacy of "being" over "doing" and, more importantly, *the primacy of grace*, which, in the Christian vision of life, remains the essential principle for any "planning" of pastoral ministry.⁵¹

The Bishop's spiritual journey

⁵⁰ *Oratio II*, No. 71 : PG 35, 479.

⁵¹ Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6 January 2001), 15, 31 : *AAS* 93 (2001), 276, 288.

13. A Bishop can be considered a genuine minister of communion and hope for God's holy people only when he walks in the presence of the Lord. It is not possible to be a servant of others unless one is first a "servant of God". And one can only be a servant of God if one is a "man of God". For this reason I stated in my homily at the beginning of the Synod : "The pastor must be a man of God ; his existence and his ministry are entirely under his divine glory and from the supereminent mystery of God they derive their light and vigour".⁵²

For Bishops the call to holiness is inherent in the sacramental event that stands at the origin of their ministry, that is, their episcopal ordination. The ancient *Euchology of Serapion* formulates the ritual invocation of the consecration thus : "God of truth, make thy servant a living Bishop, a holy Bishop in the succession of the holy Apostles".⁵³ Since episcopal ordination does not infuse the perfection of the virtues, "the Bishop is called to pursue his path of perfection with greater intensity so as to attain to the stature of Christ, the perfect Man".⁵⁴

The Christological and Trinitarian character of his mystery and ministry demands of the

⁵² No. 5 : *AAS* 94 (2002), 111.

⁵³ *Sacramentarium Serapionis*, 28 : ed. F.X. Funk, II, 191.

⁵⁴ John Paul II, Homily for the Opening of the Tenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (30 September 2001), 5 : *AAS* 94 (2002), 111.

Bishop a journey of holiness which consists in a progressive advance towards an ever more profound spiritual and apostolic maturity marked by the primacy of pastoral charity. This journey is obviously experienced together with his people, along a path which is at once personal and communitarian, like the life of the Church itself. Along this path, however, the Bishop becomes, in intimate communion with Christ and attentive docility to the Holy Spirit, a witness, a model, and a source of encouragement and help. This same idea is expressed by canon law : "Mindful that he is bound to give an example of holiness, charity, humility and simplicity of life, the Diocesan Bishop is to seek in every way to promote the holiness of Christ's faithful according to the special vocation of each. Since he is the principal dispenser of the mysteries of God, he is to strive constantly that the faithful entrusted to his care may grow in grace through the celebration of the sacraments, and may know and live the Paschal mystery".⁵⁵

The spiritual journey of the Bishop, like that of every Christian, is rooted in the sacramental grace of Baptism and Confirmation. He shares this grace in common with all the faithful since, as the Second Vatican Council notes, "all the faithful of whatever condition or rank are called

⁵⁵ Code of Canon Law, c. 387 ; cf. Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, c. 197.

to the fullness of Christian life and to the perfection of charity".⁵⁶ Here the celebrated expression of Saint Augustine, with its rich realism and supernatural wisdom, proves especially true : "If I am in fear because I am for you, I am consoled to be with you. Because for you I am a Bishop, with you I am a Christian. The first name is one of responsibility, the second, one of grace. The former is the name of a danger, the latter of salvation".⁵⁷ Thanks to pastoral charity, however, responsibility becomes a form of service and peril is transformed into an opportunity for growth and maturation. The episcopal ministry is not only a source of holiness for others, but is already a cause of sanctification for one who allows the charity of God to pass through his own heart and life.

The Synod Fathers presented in synthesis some of the demands of this journey. Above all they stressed the character given in Baptism and Confirmation, which from the beginning of our lives as Christians, through the theological virtues, makes us capable of believing in God, hoping in him and loving him. The Holy Spirit, in turn, infuses his gifts and fosters our growth in goodness through the exercise of the moral virtues that concretize, also on the human level,

⁵⁶ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 40.

⁵⁷ *Sermo* 340, 1 : *PL* 38, 1483.

our spiritual life.⁵⁸ By means of the Baptism he has received, the Bishop shares, like every Christian, in that spirituality which is rooted in incorporation in Christ and is manifested in following Christ in accordance with the Gospel. For this reason the Bishop shares the call to holiness proper to all the faithful. He must therefore cultivate a life of prayer and profound faith, and put all his trust in God, offering his witness to the Gospel in docile obedience to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, and maintaining a particular filial devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the perfect teacher of the spiritual life.⁵⁹

The spirituality of the Bishop will thus be a spirituality of communion, lived in harmony with the other baptized faithful who with him are children of one Father in heaven and one Mother on earth, Holy Church. Like all believers in Christ, he needs to nourish his spiritual life with the living and effective word of the Gospel and with the living bread of the Holy Eucharist, the food of eternal life. Because of his human frailty the Bishop is also called to have frequent and regular recourse to the sacrament of Penance, in order to obtain the gift of that mercy of which he himself has been made a minister. Mindful, therefore, of his human weaknesses and sins, each Bishop, along with his priests, personally

⁵⁸ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Nos. 1804, 1839.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Propositio* 7.

experiences the sacrament of Reconciliation as a profound need and as a grace to be received ever anew, and thus renews his own commitment to holiness in the exercise of his ministry. In this way he also gives visible expression to the mystery of a Church which is constitutively holy, yet also made up of sinners in need of forgiveness.

Like all priests and, obviously, in special communion with the priests of his diocesan presbyterate, the Bishop will strive to progress along a specific path of holiness. He is also called to holiness by a new title arising from Holy Orders. The Bishop thus lives by faith, hope and love, inasmuch as he is a minister of the Lord's word and of the sanctification and spiritual advancement of the People of God. He must be holy because he must serve the Church as teacher, sanctifier and guide. As such, he must also love the Church deeply and fervently. Each Bishop is configured to Christ in order to love the Church with the love of Christ the Bridegroom, and in order to be in the Church a minister of her unity, enabling her to become "a people gathered by the unity of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit".⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Saint Cyprian, *De Oratone Dominica*, 23 : PL 4 : 553 ; cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 4.

The specific spirituality of the Bishop, as the Synod Fathers repeatedly emphasized, is further enriched by the bestowal of that grace inherent in the fullness of the priesthood which is given to him at the moment of his ordination. As a pastor of the flock and servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in hope, the Bishop must become as it were a transparent reflection of the very person of Christ, the Supreme Pastor. In the Roman Pontifical this requirement is explicitly mentioned: "Receive the miter, and may the splendour of holiness shine forth in you, so that when the Chief Shepherd appears, you may deserve to receive from him an unfading crown of glory".⁶¹

Hence, the Bishop constantly needs the grace of God that strengthens and perfects his human nature. He can say with the Apostle Paul: "Our sole credit is from God who has made us qualified ministers of a new covenant" (2 Cor 3 :5-6). It needs to be emphasized that the apostolic ministry is a source of spirituality for the Bishop, who should derive from it all the spiritual resources which will make him grow in holiness and enable him to discover the workings of the Holy Spirit in the People of God entrusted to his pastoral care.⁶²

⁶¹ *Rite of Ordination of a Bishop* : Investiture with the Miter.

⁶² Cf. *Propositio* 7.

The spiritual journey of the Bishop coincides, from this perspective, with that pastoral charity which must rightly be considered the soul of his apostolate, as it is of the apostolate of priests and deacons. Here it is not only a matter of an *existentia* but indeed of a *pro-existentia*, that is to say, of a way of living inspired by the supreme model of Christ the Lord and which is spent totally in worship of the Father and in service of neighbour. The Second Vatican Council rightly states that pastors, in the image of Christ, must carry out their ministry with holiness and zeal, with humility and fortitude, "which, fulfilled in this way, will be for them an excellent means of sanctification".⁶³ No Bishop can fail to realize that the summit of Christian holiness is the crucified Christ in his supreme self-oblation to the Father and to his brothers and sisters in the Holy Spirit. For this reason configuration to Christ and a share in his sufferings (cf. *1 Pet* 4:15) becomes the royal road of the Bishop's holiness in the midst of his people.

Mary, Mother of Hope and teacher of the spiritual life

14. The Bishop will also find support for his spiritual life in the maternal presence of the Virgin Mary, *Mater spei et spes nostra*, as the Church invokes her. The Bishop will therefore nourish an

⁶³ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 41.

authentic and filial devotion to Mary, and feel himself called to make her *fiat* his own, re-experiencing and re-appropriating each day Jesus' entrusting of Mary at the foot of the Cross to the Beloved Disciple, and of the Beloved Disciple to Mary (cf. *Jn* 19 :26-27). The Bishop is also called to reflect the unanimous and persevering prayer of Christ's disciples and Apostles with his Mother in preparation for Pentecost. This icon of the nascent Church manifests the indissoluble bond uniting Mary and the successors of the Apostles (cf. *Acts* 1 :14).

The holy Mother of God will consequently be the Bishop's teacher in listening to the word of God and promptly putting it into practice, as a faithful disciple of the one Teacher, in firm faith, confident hope and ardent charity. As Mary was the "memory" of the incarnation of the Word in the first Christian community, so the Bishop must preserve and pass on the living Tradition of the Church, in communion with all the other Bishops, in union with, and under the authority of, the Successor of Peter.

The Bishop's solid Marian devotion will be constantly related to the liturgy, where the Blessed Virgin is particularly present in the celebration of the mysteries of salvation and serves as a model of docility and prayer, of spiritual oblation and motherhood for the whole Church. Indeed, it will be the Bishop's

responsibility to ensure that the liturgy always appears "as an 'exemplary form', a source of inspiration, a constant point of reference and the ultimate goal" for the Marian piety of the People of God.⁶⁴ While holding to this principle, the Bishop will also nourish his personal and communitarian Marian devotion by devotional practices approved and recommended by the Church, especially by the recitation of that compendium of the Gospel which is the Holy Rosary. Being himself completely familiar with this prayer, completely centred as it is on the contemplation of the saving events of Christ's life with which his holy Mother was closely associated, every Bishop is also called to promote diligently its recitation.⁶⁵

Entrusting oneself to the word

15. The assembly of the Synod of Bishops indicated several indispensable means for the sustenance and progress of the spiritual life.⁶⁶ First among these is reading and meditating on the word of God. Every Bishop should always commend himself and feel commended "to the Lord and to the word of his grace, which is able to build up and give the inheritance among all

⁶⁴ Cf. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy. Principles and Guidelines* (17 December 2001), 184 : Vatican City, 2002.

⁶⁵ Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* (16 October 2002), 43 : *AAS* 95 (2003), 35-36.

⁶⁶ Cf. *Propositio* 8.

those who are sanctified" (cf. *Acts* 20 :32). Before becoming one who hands on the word, the Bishop, together with his priests and indeed like every member of the faithful and like the Church herself,⁶⁷ must be a hearer of the word. He should live "within" the word and allow himself to be protected and nourished by it, as if by a mother's womb. With Saint Ignatius of Antioch the Bishop must say : "I commend myself to the Gospel as to the flesh of Christ".⁶⁸ Each Bishop will thus take to heart the well-known admonition of Saint Jerome quoted by the Second Vatican Council : "Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of Christ".⁶⁹ There can be no primacy of holiness without attentive listening to the Word of God, which is the guide and nourishment of all holiness.

To commend oneself to the word of God and to keep it, like the Virgin Mary, *Virgo audiens*,⁷⁰ requires the practice of certain aids constantly proposed by the Church's tradition and spiritual experience. These include, first of all, frequent personal reading and regular study of Sacred Scripture. A Bishop would try in vain to

⁶⁷ Cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 59 : *AAS* 68 (1976), 50.

⁶⁸ *Ad Philadel.* 5 : PG 5, 700.

⁶⁹ *Comm. in Is.*, Prolog. : PL 24, 17 ; cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 25.

⁷⁰ Cf. Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus* (2 February 1974), 17 : *AAS* 66 (1974), 128.

preach the word to others if he did not first listen to it within himself.⁷¹ Without frequent contact with Sacred Scripture a Bishop would hardly be a credible minister of hope, since, as Saint Paul reminds us, it is "from the lessons of patience and the words of encouragement in the Scriptures that we can derive hope" (cf. *Rom* 15 :4). The words of Origen remain ever applicable : "These are the two activities of the Bishop : learning from God by reading the divine Scriptures and meditating on them frequently, and teaching the people. But let him teach the things that he himself has learned from God".⁷²

The Synod recalled the importance of reading (*lectio*) and meditation (*meditatio*) on the word of God in the life of pastors and in their ministry of service to the community. As I wrote in my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, "it is especially necessary that listening to the word of God should become a life-giving encounter, in the ancient and ever valid tradition of *lectio divina*, which draws from the biblical text the living word which questions, directs and shapes our lives".⁷³ In the realm of meditation and *lectio*, the heart which has already received the word opens itself to the contemplation of God's work and, consequently, to a conversion of thoughts and

⁷¹ Cf. Saint Augustine, *Sermo* 179, 1 : *PL* 38, 966.

⁷² *In Lev. Hom.*, VI : *PG* 12, 474 C.

⁷³ No. 39 : *AAS* 93 (2001), 294.

life to him, accompanied by a heartfelt request for his forgiveness and grace.

Drawing nourishment from the Eucharist

16. Just as the Paschal Mystery stands at the centre of the life and mission of the Good Shepherd, so too the Eucharist stands at the centre of the life and mission of the Bishop, as of every priest.

At the daily celebration of Holy Mass, the Bishop offers himself together with Christ. When this celebration takes place in the cathedral or in other churches, especially parish churches, with the presence and the active participation of the faithful, the Bishop stands before all as *Sacerdos et Pontifex*, since he acts in the person of Christ and in the power of his Spirit, and as *hiereus*, the holy priest, devoted to enacting the sacred mysteries of the altar, which he proclaims and explains by his preaching.⁷⁴

The Bishop's love of the Holy Eucharist is also expressed when in the course of the day he devotes a fair part of his time to adoration before the tabernacle. Here the Bishop opens his heart to the Lord, allowing it to be filled and shaped by the love poured forth from the Cross by the great Shepherd of the sheep, who shed his blood and gave his life for them. To him the Bishop raises

⁷⁴ Cf. Ps.-Dionysius the Aeropagite, *De Hier. Eccl.*, III : PG 3, 512 ; Saint Thomas Aquinas, *S. Tb.* II-II, q. 184, a. 5.

his prayer in constant intercession for the sheep entrusted to his care.

Prayer and the Liturgy of the Hours

17. A second means (for the advancement of the Bishop's spiritual life) mentioned by the Synod Fathers is prayer, especially the prayer raised to the Lord in the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, which remains the distinctive prayer of the Christian community, carried out in the name of Christ and under the guidance of the Spirit.

Prayer is itself a particular duty for a Bishop, and for all those who "have received the gift of a vocation to the specially consecrated life : of its nature, their consecration makes them more open to the experience of contemplation".⁷⁵ The Bishop himself cannot forget that he is a successor of those Apostles who were appointed by Christ above all "to be with him" (*Mk* 3 :14), and who at the beginning of their mission made a solemn declaration which is a programme of life : "We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (*Acts* 6 :4). The Bishop will be a true teacher of prayer for the faithful only if he can draw upon his own personal experience of dialogue with God. He must be able to turn to God continually with the words of the Psalmist : "I hope in your word" (*Ps* 119 :114). From prayer

⁷⁵ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6 January 2001), 34 : *AAS* 93 (2001), 290.

he will gain that hope which he must in turn pass on to the faithful. Prayer is the privileged forum where hope finds expression and nourishment, since it is, in the words of Saint Thomas Aquinas, the "interpreter of hope".⁷⁶

The Bishop's personal prayer will be particularly and typically "apostolic," in the sense that it is presented to the Father as intercession for all the needs of the people entrusted to his care. In the Roman Pontifical this is the final commitment demanded of the candidate elected to the episcopacy before the rite of the imposition of hands: "Are you resolved to pray without ceasing for the People of God, and to carry out the office of high priest without reproach?".⁷⁷ The Bishop prays in a very special way for the holiness of his priests, for vocations to the ordained ministry and the consecrated life, so that missionary and apostolic commitment will be all the more ardent in the Church..

With regard to the *Liturgy of the Hours*, which is meant to consecrate and guide the course of the entire day through the praise of God, we cannot fail to recall the impressive statement of the Second Vatican Council: "When this wonderful song of praise is worthily rendered by priests and others who are deputed for this purpose by Church ordinance, or by the faithful

⁷⁶ Saint Thomas Aquinas, *S. Tb.* II-II, q. 17, a. 2.

⁷⁷ *Rite of Ordination of a Bishop* : Promise of the Elect.

praying together with the priest in an approved form, then it is truly the voice of the Bride addressing her Bridegroom ; it is the very prayer which Christ himself, together with his Body, addresses to the Father. Hence, all who perform this service are not only fulfilling a duty of the Church, but also are sharing in the greatest honour accorded to Christ's Spouse, for by offering these praises to God they are standing before God's throne in the name of the Church, their Mother".⁷⁸ Writing on the prayer of the Divine Office, my predecessor of venerable memory Pope Paul VI, called it "the prayer of the local Church", which expresses "the true nature of the praying Church".⁷⁹ The *consecratio temporis*, effected by the *Liturgy of the Hours*, brings about that *laus perennis* which is an anticipation and prefiguration of the heavenly liturgy and a bond of union with the angels and saints who glorify God's name throughout eternity. The Bishop will become, and will appear, as a man of hope to the extent that he enters into the eschatological dynamism of praying the Psalter. The Psalms resound with the voice of the Bride (*vox sponsae*) as she calls upon her Bridegroom.

Every Bishop therefore prays with his people and for his people. He himself is supported and

⁷⁸ Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 84-85.

⁷⁹ Apostolic Constitution *Laudis Canticum* (1 November 1970) : *AAS* 63 (1971), 532.

assisted by the prayer of his faithful : priests, deacons, consecrated persons and the lay people of all ages. In their midst the Bishop is a teacher and a promoter of prayer. He not only hands down what he himself has contemplated, but he opens to Christians the way of contemplation itself. The well-known motto *contemplata aliis tradere* thus becomes *contemplationem aliis tradere*.

The way of the evangelical counsels and the Beatitudes

18. To all his disciples, and especially to those who while still on this earth wish to follow him more closely like the Apostles, the Lord proposes the way of the evangelical counsels. In addition to being a gift of the Holy Trinity to the Church, the counsels are a reflection of the life of the Trinity in each believer.⁸⁰ This is especially the case in the Bishop, who, as a successor of the Apostles, is called to follow Christ along the path leading to the perfection of charity. For this reason he is consecrated, even as Jesus was consecrated. The Bishop's life is radically dependent on Christ and a completely transparent image of Christ before the Church and the world. The life of the Bishop must radiate the life of Christ and consequently Christ's own obedience to the Father, even unto death, death on a Cross (cf. *Phil 2 :8*), his chaste

⁸⁰ Cf. John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* (25 March 1996), 20-21 : *AAS* 88 (1996), 393-395.

and virginal love, and his poverty which is absolute detachment from all earthly goods.

In this way the Bishops can lead by their example not only those members of the Church who are called to follow Christ in the consecrated life but also priests, to whom the radicalism of holiness in accordance with the spirit of the evangelical counsels is also proposed. Indeed, this radicalism is incumbent on all the faithful, including lay people, for it is "a fundamental, undeniable demand flowing from the call of Christ to follow and imitate him by virtue of the intimate communion of life with him brought about by the Spirit".⁸¹

The faithful ought to be able to contemplate on the face of their Bishop the grace-given qualities which in the various Beatitudes make up the self-portrait of Christ: the face of poverty, meekness and the thirst for righteousness; the merciful face of the Father and of the peaceful and peacegiving man; the pure face of one who constantly looks to God alone. The faithful should also be able to see in their Bishop the face of one who relives Jesus' own compassion for the afflicted and, today as much as in the past, the face filled with strength and interior joy of one persecuted for the truth of the Gospel.

The virtue of obedience

⁸¹ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25 March 1992), 27 : *AAS* 84 (1992), 701.

19. By taking on these very human features of Jesus, the Bishop also becomes the model and promoter of a spirituality of communion, carefully and vigilantly working to build up the Church, so that all that he says and does will reflect a common filial submission in Christ and in the Spirit to the loving plan of the Father. As a teacher of holiness and minister of the sanctification of his people, the Bishop is called to carry out faithfully the will of the Father. The Bishop's obedience must be lived according to the example – for it could hardly be otherwise – of the obedience of Christ himself, who said that he came down from heaven not to do his own will, but rather the will of the One who sent him (cf. *Jn* 6 :38 ; 8 :29 ; *Phil* 2 :7-8).

Walking in the footsteps of Christ, the Bishop is obedient to the Gospel and the Church's Tradition ; he is able to read the signs of the times and to recognize the voice of the Holy Spirit in the Petrine ministry and in episcopal collegiality. In my Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* I stressed the apostolic, communitarian and pastoral character of priestly obedience.⁸² These hallmarks naturally appear even more markedly in the obedience of the Bishop. The fullness of the Sacrament of Holy Orders which he has received puts him in a special relationship with the Successor of Peter,

⁸² Cf. No. 28 : *AAS* 84 (1992), 701-703.

with the members of the College of Bishops and with his own particular Church. He must feel committed to living intensely this relationship with the Pope and his brother Bishops in a close bond of unity and cooperation, and thus conforming to the divine plan which willed to unite the Apostles inseparably around Peter. This hierarchical communion of the Bishop with the Supreme Pontiff strengthens his ability to make present, by virtue of the Order he has received, Jesus Christ, the invisible Head of the whole Church.

The apostolic aspect of obedience is necessarily linked also to its communitarian aspect, since the episcopate is by its nature "one and indivisible".⁸³ As a result of this communal dimension, the Bishop is called to live out his obedience by overcoming all temptations to individualism and by taking upon himself, within the wider context of the mission of the College of Bishops, concern for the good of the whole Church.

As a model of attentive listening, the Bishop will also strive to understand, through prayer and discernment, the will of God in what the Spirit is saying to the Church. Through the evangelical exercise of his authority, he will be ready to dialogue with his co-workers and the faithful in

⁸³ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 18.

order to build effective mutual understanding.⁸⁴ This will enable him to show a pastoral appreciation of the dignity and responsibility of each member of the People of God, fostering in a balanced and serene way their spirit of initiative. The faithful should be helped to grow towards a responsible obedience which will enable them to be actively engaged on the pastoral plane.⁸⁵ Here the exhortation which Saint Ignatius of Antioch addressed to Polycarp remains timely: "Let nothing be done without your consent, but do nothing yourself without the consent of God".⁸⁶

The spirit and practice of poverty in Bishops

20. The Synod Fathers, as a sign of collegial unity, responded to the appeal which I made at the opening Mass of the Synod that the evangelical Beatitude of poverty should be considered an indispensable condition for a fruitful episcopal ministry in present-day circumstances. Here too, amid the assembly of Bishops there stood out the figure of Christ the Lord, "who carried out the work of redemption in poverty and under oppression", and who invites the Church, and above all her pastors, "to follow the same path in communicating to humanity the fruits of salvation".⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 27, 37.

⁸⁵ Cf. *Propositio* 10.

⁸⁶ *Ad Polyc.*, IV : PG 5, 721.

Consequently, the Bishop who wishes to be an authentic witness and minister of the Gospel of hope must be a *vir pauper*. This is demanded by the witness he is called to bear to Christ, who was himself poor. It is also demanded by the Church's concern for the poor, who must be the object of a preferential option. The Bishop's decision to carry out his ministry in poverty contributes decisively to making the Church the "home of the poor".

This decision also provides the Bishop with inner freedom in the exercise of his ministry and enables him to communicate effectively the fruits of salvation. Episcopal authority must be exercised with untiring generosity and inexhaustible liberality. On the Bishop's part, this calls for complete trust in the providence of the heavenly Father, an open-hearted communion of goods, an austere way of life and continuous personal conversion. Only in this way will he be able to share in the struggles and sufferings of the People of God, whom he is called not only to lead and nourish but with whom he must show fraternal solidarity, sharing their problems and helping to build their hope.

He will carry out this service effectively if his own life is simple, sober and at the same time active and generous, and if it places those

⁸⁷ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 8.

considered least important in our society not on the fringes but rather at the centre of the Christian community.⁸⁸ Almost without realizing it, he will foster a "creativity in charity" which will bear fruit not simply in the efficiency of the assistance offered but also in an ability to live in a spirit of fraternal sharing. In the Church of the Apostles, as the Book of Acts clearly witnesses, the poverty of some members of the community called forth the solidarity of others, with the amazing result that "there was not a needy person among them" (4 :34). The Church needs to bear witness to this prophecy before a world assailed by the problems of hunger and inequality between peoples. In this perspective of sharing and of simplicity of life, the Bishop will administer the goods of the Church like the "good head of a household", and be careful to ensure that they are used for the Church's own specific ends : the worship of God, the support of her ministers, the works of the apostolate and initiatives of charity towards the poor.

The title *procurator pauperum* has always been applied to the Church's pastors. This must also be the case today, so that the Gospel of Jesus Christ can become present and be heard as a source of hope for all, but especially for those who can expect from God alone a more dignified life and a better future. Encouraged by the example of

⁸⁸ Cf. *Propositio* 9.

their pastors, the Church and the Churches must practise that "preferential option for the poor" which I have indicated as programmatic for the third millennium.⁸⁹

With chastity at the service of a Church which reflects the purity of Christ

21. "Receive this ring, the seal of fidelity : adorned with undefiled faith, preserve unblemished the Bride of God, the holy Church". These words of the Roman Pontifical ⁹⁰ urge the Bishop to realize that he is committed to mirroring the virginal love of Christ for all his faithful ones. He is called above all to foster relationships inspired by the respect and esteem befitting a family where love flourishes, in accordance with the exhortation of the Apostle Peter : "Love one another deeply, from the heart, for you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God (*1 Pet 1 :22-23*)".

While exhorting Christians by his example and words to offer their bodies as a living and holy sacrifice pleasing to God (cf. *Rom 12 :1*), the Bishop must remind everyone that "the form of this world is passing away" (*1 Cor 7 :31*), and that it is our duty to "wait in joyful hope" for Christ's return in glory (cf. *Tit 2 :13*). In his pastoral

⁸⁹ Cf. Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6 January 2001), 49 : *AAS* 93 (2001), 302.

⁹⁰ *Rite of Ordination of a Bishop* : Bestowal of the Ring.

concern he should be especially close with paternal affection to all who have embraced the religious life in the profession of the evangelical counsels and who offer their valuable service to the Church. He will support and encourage priests, who, called by God's grace, have freely assumed the commitment of celibacy for the Kingdom of Heaven, and remind himself and them of the evangelical and spiritual grounds of this choice, so important for the service of the People of God. In the reality of the Church and the world today, the witness of chaste love is, on the one hand, a form of spiritual therapy for humanity and, on the other, a form of protest against the idolatry of instinct.

In the present social context, the Bishop needs to remain particularly close to his flock and above all to his priests, showing a father's concern for their ascetic and spiritual difficulties, and providing them with appropriate support to encourage them in fidelity to their vocation and to the requirements of an exemplary life in the exercise of the ministry. In cases of grave lapses, and even more of crimes which do damage to the very witness of the Gospel, especially when these involve the Church's ministers, the Bishop must be firm and decisive, just and impartial. He is bound to intervene in a timely manner, according to the established canonical norms, for the correction and spiritual good of the sacred

minister, for the reparation of scandal and the restoration of justice, and for all that is required for the protection and assistance of victims.

By his words and example, and in his vigilance and paternal intervention, the Bishop fulfils his duty to offer the world the reality of a Church which is holy and chaste, in her ministers and in her faithful. When he does so, he walks as a pastor at the head of his flock, as did Christ the Bridegroom, who gave his life for us and who left to all the example of a love which is transparent and virginal, and therefore fruitful and universal.

The proponent of a spirituality of communion and mission

22. In my Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* I pointed out the need to "make the Church the home and the school of communion".⁹¹ This remark had a vast resonance and was taken up by the Synodal Assembly. Obviously the Bishop, in his own spiritual journey, has the primary duty of promoting and encouraging a spirituality of communion, and tirelessly working to make it a basic educational principle wherever human and Christian formation takes place: in parishes, Catholic associations, ecclesial movements, Catholic schools and youth groups. The Bishop will be particularly concerned to ensure that the spirituality of communion takes root and grows

⁹¹ No. 43: *AAS* 93 (2001), 296.

wherever future priests are trained, that is to say, in seminaries and in religious novitiates, in religious houses, in institutes and faculties of theology.

In that same Apostolic Letter I indicated the broad outlines of this promotion of a spirituality of communion. Here it will suffice to add that a Bishop must encourage this spirituality especially among his presbyterate, as well as among deacons and men and women religious. He will do so in personal dialogue and encounters, but also in community meetings. To this end he will make an effort to provide in his own particular Church special occasions which facilitate listening, especially to the Spirit "who speaks to the Churches" (*Acts* 2 :7, 11 et al.). Examples of the latter would be retreats, spiritual exercises and days of spirituality, and also a prudent use of new communications media, should this prove useful and effective.

For a Bishop, fostering a spirituality of communion also means nurturing his communion with the Roman Pontiff and with his brother Bishops, especially within the same Episcopal Conference and Ecclesiastical Province. Here too, as an important means of overcoming the risk of a sense of isolation and discouragement in the face of the immensity of the problems and the time spent in dealing with them, the Bishop, in addition to prayer, should

readily avail himself of the friendship and fraternal communion of his brother Bishops.

Communion, in its Trinitarian source and model, is always expressed in mission. Mission is the fruit and the logical consequence of communion. The dynamic process of communion is favoured by openness to the horizons and demands of mission, always ensuring the witness of unity so that the world may believe and making ever greater room for love, so that all people may attain to the Trinitarian unity from which they have come forth and to which they are destined. The more intense communion is, the more mission is fostered, especially when it is lived out in the poverty of love, which is the ability to go forth to meet any person or group or culture with the power of the Cross, our *spes unica* and the supreme witness to the love of God, which is also manifested as a universal love of our brothers and sisters.

A journey undertaken in everyday life

23. Spiritual realism enables us to see that the Bishop is called to live out his vocation to holiness in a context of difficulties within and without, amid his own weaknesses and those of others, in daily contingencies and personal and institutional problems. This is a constant feature of the life of pastors, as Saint Gregory the Great acknowledged when he admitted with regret :

"After having laid upon my heart the burden of the pastoral office, my spirit has become incapable of frequent recollection, because it remains divided among many things. I am obliged to judge the cases of Churches and monasteries ; often I am called to involve myself in the lives and actions of individuals... And so with my mind pulled and torn, forced to think of so many things, when can it recollect itself and concentrate totally on preaching, without withdrawing from the ministry of proclaiming the word ?... The life of the watchman must always be on high and on guard".⁹²

In order to counterbalance the centrifugal impulses which would disperse his inner unity, the Bishop needs to cultivate a serene lifestyle capable of ensuring his mental, emotional and affective equilibrium and enabling him to be open to individuals and communities, and to their needs, as one who truly shares in their different situations, their joys and their sorrows. Caring for one's own health in its various aspects is also for the Bishop an act of love for his faithful and a pledge of greater openness and docility to the prompting of the Spirit. Hence, the advice which Saint Charles Borromeo, himself an outstanding pastor, proposed in the last of his Synods : "Do you have the care of souls ? Do not on this account neglect the care of yourself, and do not

⁹² Saint Gregory the Great, *Hom. in Ez.* 1, 11 : PL 76, 908.

give yourself to others in such a way that nothing of you remains for yourself. You must certainly keep in mind the souls of which you are pastor, but do not forget yourself".⁹³

The Bishop will therefore be concerned to have a balanced approach to his many commitments, maintaining a harmony between them : the celebration of the divine mysteries and personal prayer, private study and pastoral planning, recollection and necessary rest. Supported by these aids to the spiritual life, he will find peace of heart and experience profound communion with the Holy Trinity who chose and consecrated him. With God's unfailing grace, he will carry out his daily ministry as a witness to hope, attentive to the needs of the Church and the world.

The permanent formation of Bishops

24. The Bishop's untiring commitment to the pursuit of holiness through a Christocentric and ecclesial spirituality was closely linked in the Synodal Assembly to his urgent need for permanent formation. As was stressed in previous Synods and reaffirmed in the successive Apostolic Exhortations *Christifideles Laici*, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* and *Vita Consecrata*, permanent formation is necessary for all the faithful and should be considered particularly necessary for

⁹³ *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, Milan, 1599, p. 1178.

the Bishop, who bears personal responsibility for the harmonious progress of all in the Church.

For the Bishop, as for priests and religious, permanent formation is an intrinsic requirement of his vocation and mission. Through permanent formation he is able to discern the new calls by which God clarifies the initial call and applies it to different situations. The Apostle Peter, after hearing the words "follow me" at his first meeting with Christ (cf. *Mt* 4:19), heard this command again from the Risen One, who before leaving the earth foretold to him the trials and tribulations of his future ministry and then added: "You follow me" (cf. *Jn* 21:22). "Consequently, there is a 'follow me' which accompanies the Apostle's whole life and mission. It is a 'follow me' in line with the call and the demand of faithfulness unto death, a 'follow me' which can signify a *sequela Christi* to the point of total self-giving in martyrdom".⁹⁴ Clearly it is not simply a matter of setting up adequate programmes of continuing education aimed at providing a realistic acquaintance with the situation of the Church and the world, which would then enable pastors to deal with contemporary issues with an open mind and a compassionate heart. This is in itself a good reason for permanent formation, but there are also anthropological reasons, based on the fact

⁹⁴ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25 March 1992), 70 : *AAS* 84 (1992), 781.

that life itself is a continuing journey towards maturity, as well as theological reasons, deeply connected to the sacrament once received: the Bishop in fact must "safeguard with vigilant love the 'mystery' which he bears within his heart for the good of the Church and mankind".⁹⁵

Periodic updating, especially on certain more important subjects, calls for longer periods for listening, fellowship and dialogue with experts – Bishops, priests, religious men and women, and lay people – in an exchange of pastoral experiences, sound doctrine and spiritual resources which will ensure genuine personal enrichment. To this end the Synod Fathers emphasized the usefulness of special courses of formation for Bishops, like the annual sessions sponsored by the Congregation for Bishops or by the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples for recently ordained Bishops. Likewise, there was a call to make available short courses of formation or days of study and updating, as well as programmes of spiritual exercises for Bishops, organized by Patriarchal Synods, Episcopal Conferences at the regional and national levels and also by the continental Assemblies of Bishops.

It would also be appropriate for the Officers of the Episcopal Conference to take on the responsibility of providing for the preparation

⁹⁵ *Ibid.* 72: *loc. cit.*, 787.

and implementation of such programmes of permanent formation, and to encourage Bishops to take part in these courses, so as to build greater communion among them and to ensure more effective pastoral care in the individual Dioceses.⁹⁶

It is in any case evident that, like the life of the Church itself, pastoral styles and initiatives and forms of episcopal ministry are evolving. For this reason too, updating is needed, in conformity with the norms of the Code of Canon Law and in view of the new challenges and commitments of the Church in society. In this context the Synodal Assembly proposed a revision of the Directory *Ecclesiae Imago*, issued by the Congregation for Bishops on 22 February 1973, and its adaptation to the needs of the times and the changes which have taken place in the Church and pastoral life.⁹⁷

The example of sainted Bishops

25. In their life and ministry, in their spiritual journey and their efforts to carry out their pastoral activity, Bishops have always found encouragement in the lives of the saints who were themselves pastors. In my homily at the concluding Eucharistic celebration of the Synod, I held up the example of the holy pastors canonized during the last century as a testimony to a grace of the Holy Spirit which has never

⁹⁶ Cf. *Propositio* 12.

⁹⁷ Cf. *Propositio* 13.

been lacking and will never be lacking in the Church.⁹⁸

Throughout the history of the Church, from the Apostles onwards, there has been an extraordinary number of pastors whose teaching and holiness are capable of giving light and direction for the spiritual journey of Bishops in the third millennium. The glorious witness of the great pastors of the early centuries of the Church, of the founders of particular Churches, of the confessors and martyrs who in times of persecution gave their life for Christ, remains as a beacon to which the Bishops of our time can refer and from which they can derive guidance and encouragement in their service to the Gospel.

Many of those Bishops were exemplary in the practice of the virtue of hope, when in difficult times they revived the spirits of their people, rebuilt churches after times of persecution or calamity, constructed hospices for pilgrims and the poor, and opened hospitals to care for the sick and the elderly. Many others were enlightened leaders who blazed new trails for their people. In times of difficulty, with their gaze firmly fixed on the crucified and risen Christ, our hope, they reacted positively and creatively to the challenges of the moment. At the beginning of the third millennium, some of those pastors are still among us, and they have a story to tell, a

⁹⁸ Cf. No. 6 : *AAS* 94 (2002), 116.

story of faith firmly anchored to the Cross. They are pastors who have a sense of people's aspirations and can take them up, purify them and interpret them in the light of the Gospel, and for this reason they too have a future to build, together with the people entrusted to their care.

Consequently, each particular Church should be concerned to celebrate its own saints who were Bishops and also to remember those pastors who by virtue of their holy lives and enlightened teachings handed down to their people a particular legacy of admiration and affection. They are the spiritual sentinels who from heaven guide the way of the pilgrim Church through time. In order to keep ever alive the memory of those faithful Bishops who were outstanding in the exercise of their ministry, the Synodal Assembly recommended that particular Churches or, when suitable, the Bishops' Conferences, should make the lives of these Bishops known to the faithful through updated biographies and, when the case warrants, consider the possibility of introducing their cause for canonization.⁹⁹

Today too, the testimony of a fully realized spiritual and apostolic life remains the greatest proof of the power of the Gospel to transform individuals and communities, thus enabling God's own holiness to break into the world and history. Here we find yet another reason for hope,

⁹⁹ Cf. *Propositio* 11.

especially for the younger generation, which looks to the Church for exciting ideas and a vision capable of inspiring their efforts to renew in Christ the society of our time.

CHAPTER THREE. TEACHER OF THE FAITH AND HERALD OF THE WORD.

"Go into all the world and preach the Gospel..."
(Mk 16, 15)

26. The risen Jesus entrusted to his Apostles the mission of "making disciples" of all nations, teaching them to observe all that he himself had commanded. The task of proclaiming the Gospel to the whole world has thus been solemnly entrusted to the Church, the community of the disciples of the crucified and risen Lord. It is a task which will continue until the end of time. From the beginning, this mission of evangelization has been an integral part of the Church's identity. The Apostle Paul was well aware of this when he wrote: "If I preach the Gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel! (1 Cor 9 :16).

If the duty of proclaiming the Gospel is incumbent upon the whole Church and each of her children, it is particularly so upon Bishops, who on the day of their sacred ordination, which places them in apostolic succession, assume as one of their principal responsibilities the

proclamation of the Gospel ; "with the courage imparted by the Spirit, they are to call people to faith and strengthen them in living faith".¹⁰⁰

The Bishop's work of evangelization, aimed at leading men and women to faith or to strengthening the faith within them, is an outstanding manifestation of his spiritual fatherhood. He can thus repeat with Paul : "Though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the Gospel" (*1 Cor* 4 :15). Precisely because of this constant process of begetting new life in the Spirit, the episcopal ministry appears in the world as a sign of hope for every individual and people.

The Synod Fathers rightly stated that the proclamation of Christ always takes first place and that the Bishop is the first preacher of the Gospel by his words and by the witness of his life. He must be aware of the challenges of the present hour and have the courage to face them. All Bishops, as ministers of truth, will carry out this task with strength and trust.¹⁰¹

Christ at the heart of the Gospel and of humanity

27. The proclamation of the Gospel emerged as a prominent theme in the interventions of the

¹⁰⁰ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 12 ; cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 25.

¹⁰¹ Cf. *Propositiones* 14 ; 15.

Synod Fathers, who on several occasions and in a wide variety of ways stated that the living centre of the preaching of the Gospel is Christ, crucified and risen for the salvation of all peoples.¹⁰²

Christ is in fact the heart of evangelization and, as I myself have often insisted, is the very programme of the new evangelization, which "ultimately has its centre in Christ himself, who is to be known, loved and imitated, so that in him we may live the life of the Trinity, and with him transform history until its fulfilment in the heavenly Jerusalem. This is a programme which does not change with shifts of times and cultures, even though it takes account of time and culture for the sake of true dialogue and effective communication. This programme for all times is our programme for the Third Millennium".¹⁰³

From Christ, the heart of the Gospel, all the other truths of faith are derived, and hope shines forth for all humanity. Christ is the light which enlightens everyone, and all those reborn in him receive the first fruits of the Spirit, which enable them to fulfil the new law of love.¹⁰⁴

By virtue of his apostolic mission the Bishop is enabled to lead his people to the heart of the mystery of faith, where they will be able to

¹⁰² Cf. *Propositio* 14.

¹⁰³ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6 January 2001), 29 : *AAS* 93 (2001), 285-286.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 22.

encounter the living person of Jesus Christ. In this way they will come to understand that all Christian experience has its source and its unfailing point of reference in the Paschal mystery of Jesus, the victor over sin and death.¹⁰⁵

The proclamation of the Lord's death and Resurrection thus includes "the prophetic proclamation of a hereafter, which is man's deepest and definitive calling, in continuity and discontinuity with his present situation : beyond time and history, beyond the reality of this world, which is passing away... Evangelization thus includes the preaching of hope in the promises made by God in the new Covenant in Jesus Christ".¹⁰⁶

The Bishop, bearer and guardian of the word

28. The Second Vatican Council, advancing along the path indicated by the Church's tradition, explains that the mission of teaching proper to Bishops consists in reverently safeguarding and courageously proclaiming the faith.¹⁰⁷

Here we see all the rich meaning of the gesture found in the Roman rite of episcopal

¹⁰⁵ Cf. *Propositio* 15.

¹⁰⁶ Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 28 : *AAS* 68 (1976), 24.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* 25 ; Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 10 ; Code of Canon Law, c. 747 §1. ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, c. 595 § 1.

ordination, when the open Book of the Gospels is placed on the head of the Bishop-elect. This gesture indicates, on the one hand, that the word embraces and watches over the Bishop's ministry and, on the other, that the Bishop's life is to be completely submitted to the word of God in his daily commitment of preaching the Gospel in all patience and sound doctrine (cf. *2 Tim* 4). The Synod Fathers often stated that the Bishop is one who keeps the word of God with love and courageously defends it as he testifies to its message of salvation. The meaning of the episcopal *munus docendi* is rooted in the very nature of what must be preserved, that is, the deposit of faith.

Christ our Lord in the sacred Scripture of the Old and New Testaments and in Tradition has entrusted to his Church the one deposit of divine revelation, which is like a mirror in which the Church during her pilgrim journey here on earth "contemplates God, from whom she receives everything, until such time as she is brought home to see him face to face as he really is".¹⁰⁸ This has happened down the centuries until our own day: the different communities, in welcoming the word, ever new and effective in the course of time, have listened with docility to the voice of the Holy Spirit, pledging themselves

¹⁰⁸ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 7.

to make it alive, applicable and effective in different times of history. In this way the word handed down – Tradition – has become ever more consciously a word of life, and at the same time the task of proclaiming and preserving it has progressively continued under the guidance and assistance of the Spirit of Truth, as a continuous passing on of all that the Church herself is and all that she believes.¹⁰⁹

This Tradition, which comes from the Apostles, makes progress in the life of the Church, as the Second Vatican Council has taught. There is likewise growth and development in the understanding of the realities and words handed down, so that in holding, practising and professing the faith that has been handed on, there comes about a unique harmony between the Bishops and the faithful.¹¹⁰ In striving to remain faithful to the Spirit who speaks within the Church, the faithful and the Bishops converge and create those profound bonds of faith which represent as it were the first stage of the *sensus fidei*. Here it is helpful to listen once more to the words of the Council: "The whole body of the faithful, who have an anointing that comes from the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Jn 2 :20,27), cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural sense of the faith (*sensus fidei*) of

¹⁰⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 8.

¹¹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, 10.

the whole people, when, 'from the bishops to the last of the faithful' they manifest a universal consent in matters of faith and morals".¹¹¹

Consequently, for every Bishop the life of the Church and life in the Church is the condition for exercising his mission to teach. A Bishop finds his identity and place amid the community of the Lord's disciples where he received the gift of divine life and his first instruction in the faith. Every Bishop, especially when he is seated in his cathedral before the faithful and exercising his role as a teacher in the Church, must be able to repeat with Saint Augustine : "With respect to the place which we occupy, we are your teachers ; with respect to the one Master, we are fellow disciples with you in the same school".¹¹² In the Church, the school of the living God, Bishops and the faithful are all fellow disciples, and all need to be taught by the Spirit.

Many indeed are the places from which the Spirit imparts his inner teaching : first of all, in the heart of every person, and then in the life of the various particular Churches, where the various needs of individuals and the various ecclesial communities emerge and make themselves heard, not only in languages that are known but also in those that are new and different.

¹¹¹ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 12.

¹¹² *En. in Ps.* 126, 3 : *PL* 37, 1669.

The Spirit also makes himself heard as he awakens in the Church different forms of charisms and services. For this reason too, there were frequent calls during the Synod for Bishops to have direct and personal contact with the faithful living in the communities entrusted to their pastoral care, following the example of the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep and calls each by name. Indeed, frequent meetings of the Bishop with his priests, in the first place, and then with the deacons, consecrated persons and their communities, and with the laity, individually and in their various forms of association, are of great importance for the exercise of effective ministry among the People of God.

Authentic and authoritative service of the word

29. At his episcopal ordination, each Bishop received the fundamental mission of authoritatively proclaiming the word of God. Indeed, every Bishop, by virtue of sacred ordination, is an authentic teacher who preaches to the people entrusted to his care the faith to be believed and to be put into practice in the moral life. This means that Bishops are endowed with the authority of Christ himself, and for this fundamental reason when they "teach in communion with the Roman Pontiff they are to be revered by all as witnesses of divine and catholic truth ; the faithful, for their part, are obliged to submit to their Bishop's decision,

made in the name of Christ, in matters of faith and morals, and to adhere to it with a religious assent of the mind".¹¹³ In this service of the truth, every Bishop is placed *before* the community, inasmuch as he is *for* the community, which is the object of his proper pastoral concern and for which he insistently lifts up his prayer to God.

That which every Bishop has heard and received from the heart of the Church he must then give back to his brothers and sisters, whom he must care for like the Good Shepherd. In him the *sensus fidei* attains completeness. As the Second Vatican Council teaches : "By the sense of the faith, which is aroused and sustained by the Spirit of truth, the People of God, under the guidance of the magisterium to which it is faithfully obedient, receives no longer the words of men, but truly the word of God (cf. *1 Th* 2 :13), it adheres 'indefectibly to the faith once for all delivered to the saints' (*Jude* 3). It penetrates more deeply into that same faith through right judgment, and applies it more fully to life".¹¹⁴ The word of the Bishop is thus, within the community and before it, no longer simply his private word, but rather the word of a pastor who strengthens the community in faith, gathers it around the mystery of God and gives it life.

¹¹³ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 25.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

The faithful need the word of their Bishop, they need to have their faith confirmed and purified. The Synodal Assembly for its part emphasized this need and drew attention to several specific areas in which it is particularly felt. One of these areas is that of the initial proclamation of the word, the *kerygma*, which is always needed for bringing about the obedience of faith, but is all the more urgent today, in times marked by indifference and by religious ignorance on the part of many Christians.¹¹⁵ In the area of catechesis too, the Bishop is clearly the pre-eminent catechist of his people. The decisive role in this area played by so many great and saintly Bishops, whose catechetical writings are still read with profit today, makes it clear that it remains the Bishop's duty to be ultimately in charge of the catechesis imparted in his Diocese. In carrying out this duty he will not fail to refer to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

The words which I addressed to Bishops in my Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* remain valid : "You have a special mission within your Churches, you are before all others the ones primarily responsible for catechesis".¹¹⁶ It is therefore the duty of every Bishop to give real priority in his particular Church to active and effective catechesis. He must demonstrate his

¹¹⁵ Cf. *Propositio* 15.

¹¹⁶ No. 63 : *AAS* 71 (1979), 1329.

personal concern through direct interventions aimed at promoting and preserving an authentic passion for catechesis.¹¹⁷

Conscious, then, of his responsibility in the area of transmitting and teaching the faith, every Bishop must ensure that a corresponding concern is shown by all those who by their vocation and mission are called to hand down the faith. This means priests and deacons, the faithful who have embraced the consecrated life, fathers and mothers of families, pastoral workers and in a special way catechists, as well as teachers of theology and teachers of the ecclesiastical sciences and religious education.¹¹⁸ The Bishop will thus take care to provide them with both initial and ongoing training.

In carrying out this duty Bishops will derive particular benefit from open dialogue and cooperation with theologians, whose task it is to employ an appropriate methodology in the quest for deeper knowledge of the unfathomable richness of the mystery of Christ. Bishops will not fail to encourage and support them and the schools or academic institutions where they work, so that they can carry out their service to the People of God in fidelity to Tradition and with attentiveness to changing historical

¹¹⁷ Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, *General Directory for Catechesis* (15 August 1997), 233 : Ench. Vat. 16, 1065.

¹¹⁸ Cf. *Propositio* 15.

circumstances.¹¹⁹ Whenever appropriate, Bishops must firmly defend the unity and integrity of the faith, judging with authority what is or is not in conformity with the word of God.¹²⁰

The Synod Fathers also called the Bishops' attention to their magisterial responsibilities in the area of morality. The rules that the Church sets forth reflect the divine commandments, which find their crown and synthesis in the Gospel command of love. The end to which every divine rule tends is the greater good of human beings. The exhortation of the Book of Deuteronomy is still valid today: "Walk in all the way which the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live, and that it may go well with you" (5 :33). Nor must we forget that the Ten Commandments have a firm foundation in human nature itself, and thus the values which they defend have universal validity. This is particularly true of values such as human life, which must be defended from conception until its end in natural death; the freedom of individuals and of nations, social justice and the structures needed to achieve it.¹²¹

Episcopal ministry for the inculturation of the Gospel

¹¹⁹ Cf. *Propositio* 47.

¹²⁰ Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction *Donum Veritatis* (24 May 1990), 19 : *AAS* 82 (1990), 1558 ; Code of Canon Law, c. 386 § 2 ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, c. 196 § 2.

¹²¹ Cf. *Propositio* 16.

30. The evangelization of culture and the inculturation of the Gospel are an integral part of the new evangelization and thus a specific concern of the episcopal office. Echoing in this regard several of my own statements, the Synod repeated: "A faith which does not become culture is not a faith which is fully accepted, integrated and faithfully translated into life".¹²²

This is, in fact, a task which is ancient yet ever new, a task which has its origin in the mystery of the Incarnation itself and its motivation in the innate ability of the Gospel to take root in every culture, shaping and developing it, purifying it and opening it to the fullness of truth and life which is realized in Jesus Christ. Great attention was paid to this theme in the course of the continental Synods and many valuable insights emerged. I myself have dealt with this subject on a number of occasions.

Consequently, every Bishop, taking into consideration the cultural values present in the territory of his particular Church, should strive to ensure that the Gospel is proclaimed in its integrity, so as to shape the hearts of men and women and the customs of peoples. In this work of evangelization a valuable contribution can be made by theologians and those expert in drawing

¹²² Address to those taking part in the Italian National Congress of the Ecclesial Movement of Cultural Engagement (16 January 1982), 2: *Insegnamenti* V/1 (1982), 131; *Propositio* 64.

upon the cultural, artistic and historical patrimony of the Diocese: this is true for both first evangelization and the new evangelization, and represents an effective pastoral tool.¹²³

Of equal importance for the proclamation of the Gospel in "new Areopagi" and for the handing down of the faith are the communications media. In considering these media the Synod Fathers encouraged Bishops to promote greater cooperation between Episcopal Conferences, on both the national and international levels, in order to ensure a high level of quality in the work being carried out in this sensitive and important area of social life.¹²⁴

Where the preaching of the Gospel is concerned, care must not only be shown for the orthodoxy of its presentation but also for its incisiveness and its ability to be heard and accepted. This, obviously, involves a commitment to setting aside, especially in seminaries, sufficient time for training candidates to the priesthood in the use of the communications media, so that evangelizers will be good proclaimers and good communicators.

Preaching by word and example

31. No full treatment of the ministry of the Bishop, as the preacher of the Gospel and guardian of the faith among the People of God,

¹²³ Cf. *Propositio* 65.

¹²⁴ Cf. *Propositio* 66.

can fail to mention the duty of personal integrity : the Bishop's teaching is prolonged in his witness and his example of an authentic life of faith. He teaches with an authority exercised in the name of Jesus Christ ¹²⁵ the word which is heard in the community ; were he not to live what he teaches, he would be giving the community a contradictory message.

It is clear, then, that all the activities of the Bishop must be directed towards the proclamation of the Gospel, "the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith" (*Rom* 1 :16). His essential task is to help the People of God to give to the word of revelation the obedience of faith (cf. *Rom* 1 :5) and to embrace fully the teachings of Christ. One could say that, in a Bishop, mission and life are united in such a way that they can no longer be thought of as two separate things : *we Bishops are our mission*. If we do not carry out that mission, we will no longer be ourselves. It is in the transmission of our faith that our lives become a visible sign of Christ's presence in our communities.

The witness of his life becomes for a Bishop a new basis for authority alongside the objective basis received in episcopal consecration. "Authority" is thus joined by "authoritativeness". Both are necessary. The former, in fact, gives rise

¹²⁵ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 10.

to the objective requirement that the faithful should assent to the authentic teaching of the Bishop ; the latter helps them to put their trust in his message. Here I would like to quote the words of a great Bishop of the ancient Church, Saint Hilary of Poitiers : "The blessed Apostle Paul, wishing to describe the ideal Bishop and to form by his teachings a completely new man of the Church, explained what was, so to speak, his highest perfection. He stated that a Bishop must profess sure doctrine, in accordance with what has been taught, and thus be able to exhort others to sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it... On the one hand, a minister of irreproachable life, if he is not learned, will only manage to help himself ; on the other, a learned minister will lose the authority which comes from his learning, unless his life is irreproachable".¹²⁶

Once again it is the Apostle Paul who defines in these words our rule of conduct : "Show yourself in all respects a model of good deeds, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity and sound speech that cannot be censured, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us" (*Tit 2 :7-8*).

CHAPTER FOUR. MINISTER OF THE GRACE OF THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD.

¹²⁶ *De Trinitate*, VIII, 1 : PL 10, 236.

"Sanctified in Jesus Christ, called to be saints" (1 Cor 1 :2)

32. As I prepare to deal with one of the prime and fundamental functions of the Bishop, the ministry of sanctification, my thoughts turn to the words addressed by the Apostle Paul to the faithful of Corinth, to remind them of the mystery of their vocation : "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1 :2). The sanctification of the Christian takes place in the waters of Baptism, is consolidated by the sacraments of Confirmation and Reconciliation, and is nourished by the Eucharist, the Church's greatest treasure, the sacrament by which the Church is constantly built up as the People of God, the Body of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit.¹²⁷

This sanctification permeates the whole life of the Church, and the Bishop is its minister, above all through the sacred liturgy. The liturgy, and the Eucharistic celebration in particular, has been called "the source and summit of the Church's life".¹²⁸ This statement is in a way reflected in the Bishop's own liturgical ministry,

¹²⁷ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17 April 2003), 22-24 : *AAS* 95 (2003), 448-449.

¹²⁸ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10.

which is the centre of his activity aimed at the sanctification of the People of God.

Hence the importance of liturgical life in the particular Church, where the Bishop exercises his ministry of sanctification, proclaiming and preaching the word of God, guiding prayer *for* his people and *with* his people, and presiding over the celebration of the sacraments. For this reason the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* gives the Bishop a striking title, taken from the prayer of episcopal consecration in the Byzantine rite : he is the "*steward of the grace of the high priesthood, especially in the Eucharist, which he offers himself or which he ensures is offered, and by which the Church continually lives and grows*".¹²⁹

Between the ministry of sanctification and the other two ministries of teaching and governance there is a profound and close correspondence. Preaching is in fact ordered to our sharing in the divine life, which we receive from the double table of the word and the Eucharist. This life develops and is made manifest in the daily life of the faithful, since all are called to express in their lives what they have received in faith.¹³⁰ The ministry of governance, like that of Jesus the Good Shepherd, is also expressed in functions and activities aimed at

¹²⁹ No. 26.

¹³⁰ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 10.

developing in the community of the faithful the fullness of life in charity, to the glory of the Holy Trinity and in testimony to its loving presence in the world.

Consequently, each Bishop, in exercising his ministry of sanctification (*munus sanctificandi*), effectively brings about all that his ministry of teaching (*munus docendi*) aims to achieve, while at the same time receiving grace for his ministry of governance (*munus regendi*) as he shapes his way of thinking according to the image of Christ the High Priest, so that all is ordered to the building up of the Church and to the glory of the Holy Trinity.

The source and summit of the life of the particular Church

33. The Bishop carries out his ministry of sanctification by celebrating the Eucharist and the other sacraments, by praising God in the Liturgy of the Hours, by presiding over the other sacred rites and by promoting liturgical life and authentic popular piety. Of all the celebrations at which the Bishop presides, special importance attaches to those which manifest the specific nature of the episcopal ministry as the fullness of the priesthood. These include especially the administration of the sacrament of Confirmation, sacred ordinations, the solemn celebration of the Eucharist at which the Bishop is surrounded by his presbyterate and the other ministers – as for

example in the Mass of Chrism – the dedication of churches and altars, the consecration of virgins and other rites of importance for the life of the particular Church. In these celebrations, the Bishop visibly appears as the father and the pastor of the faithful, the "great priest" of his people (cf. *Heb* 10 :21), the one who prays and serves as a model of prayer, the one who intercedes for his brothers and sisters and in the assembly beseeches and gives thanks to the Lord, making manifest God's primacy and glory.

In these various moments there springs up, as if from a fountain, the divine grace which permeates the whole life of the children of God during their earthly pilgrimage and which guides that life towards its culmination and fullness in the heavenly homeland. The ministry of sanctification is thus a fundamental moment in the building of Christian hope. By preaching the word, the Bishop not only proclaims God's promises and opens up paths for the future, but he also encourages the People of God on their earthly pilgrimage ; and in the celebration of the sacraments, the pledge of future glory, he gives them a foretaste of their final destiny in communion with the Virgin Mary and the saints, in the unwavering certainty of Christ's definitive victory over sin and death and of his coming in glory.

The importance of the Cathedral Church

34. The Bishop, while carrying out his ministry of sanctification in the whole Diocese, has as his focal point the Cathedral Church, which is as it were the Mother Church and the centre of convergence for the particular Church.

The Cathedral is the place where the Bishop has his Chair, from which he teaches his people and helps them to grow through his preaching, and from which he presides at the principal celebrations of the liturgical year and in the celebration of the sacraments. Precisely when he occupies his Chair, the Bishop is seen by the assembly of the faithful as the one who presides *in loco Dei Patris*; and it is for this reason, as I mentioned earlier, that, according to an ancient tradition of both East and West, only the Bishop may sit on the episcopal Chair. It is the presence of this Chair which in fact makes the Cathedral Church the physical and spiritual centre of unity and communion for the diocesan presbyterate and for all the holy People of God.

In this regard, we should recall the teaching of the Second Vatican Council that "everyone should regard the liturgical life of the diocese centring on the Bishop, *above all in the Cathedral Church*, as of the highest importance. They should be convinced that the Church is displayed with special clarity when the holy People of God, all of them, are actively and lawfully sharing in the same liturgical celebrations – especially when it is the

same Eucharist – sharing one prayer at one altar at which the Bishop is presiding, surrounded by his presbyterate and his ministers".¹³¹ Consequently, the Cathedral, where the supreme moment of the Church's life takes place, is also the setting for the most exalted and sacred act of the Bishop's *munus sanctificandi*, which involves, like the very liturgy at which he presides, both the sanctification of the people and the worship and glorification of God.

The special occasions for this manifestation of the mystery of the Church include certain particular celebrations. Among these, I would mention the annual liturgy of the Chrism Mass, which must be considered "one of the principal expressions of the fullness of the Bishop's priesthood and signifies the close unity of the priests with him".¹³² At this celebration, there is the blessing of the Oil of the Sick and the Oil of Catechumens, and the blessing of the sacred Chrism, the sacramental sign of salvation and perfect life for all those reborn of water and the Holy Spirit. The most solemn liturgies must certainly include those for conferring of Holy Orders: these rites properly and normally take place in the Cathedral church.¹³³ Other occasions

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹³² Roman Pontifical, *Blessing of Oils*: Introduction, 1.

¹³³ Cf. Roman Pontifical, *Rite of Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests and of Deacons*: Foreward, 21, 120, 202.

can be added, such as the celebration of the anniversary of the dedication of the Cathedral and the feasts of the patron saints of the Diocese.

These and other occasions, in accordance with the liturgical calendar of each Diocese, are valuable occasions for strengthening the bonds of communion with the presbyters, consecrated persons and the lay faithful, and for encouraging a commitment to mission in all the members of the particular Church. For this reason the *Caeremoniale Episcoporum* highlights the importance of the Cathedral Church and of the celebrations held therein, as a source of enrichment and an example to the whole particular Church.¹³⁴

The Bishop, moderator of the liturgy as a paedagogy of faith

35. The Synod Fathers wished in the present circumstances to call attention to the importance of the ministry of sanctification exercised in the liturgy, which must be celebrated in such a way as to enhance its didactic and educational effectiveness.¹³⁵ This calls for making liturgical celebrations truly an *epiphany of the mystery*. They should thus express with clarity the nature of divine worship, reflecting the genuine sense of the Church which prays and which celebrates the divine mysteries. If liturgical celebrations allow for the suitable participation of all in accordance

¹³⁴ Cf. Nos. 42-54.

¹³⁵ Cf. *Propositio* 17.

with their various ministries, they will not fail to be resplendent in their dignity and beauty.

I myself, in the exercise of my ministry, have sought to give priority to liturgical celebrations, both in Rome itself and in my Pastoral Visits to the various continents and nations. By making the beauty and the dignity of the Christian liturgy shine forth in all its expressions, I have tried to promote the genuine meaning of the sanctification of God's name in order to form the religious sentiment of the faithful and open it to the transcendent.

I therefore encourage my Brother Bishops, who are teachers of the faith and sharers in Christ's supreme priesthood, to work tirelessly for the authentic promotion of the liturgy. In the manner of its celebration the liturgy demands that revealed truth be clearly proclaimed, the divine life be faithfully handed down, and the genuine nature of the Church be unambiguously expressed. Everyone should be conscious of the importance of the sacred celebrations of the mysteries of the Catholic faith. The truth of the faith and of Christian life is not handed down by words alone, but also by sacramental signs and the liturgical rites as a whole. Well known in this regard is the ancient dictum which closely links the *lex credendi* to the *lex orandi*.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ "*Legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi*": Saint Celestine, *Ad Galliarum Episcopos*, PL 45, 1759.

Every Bishop should therefore be exemplary in the art of presiding, conscious that he is called to *tractare mysteria*. His life should be profoundly shaped by the theological virtues, which will inspire his conduct in all his dealings with God's holy people. He should be capable of transmitting the supernatural meaning of the words, prayers and rites, in a way that enables everyone to share in the sacred mysteries. Through the practical and suitable promotion of the liturgical apostolate in the Diocese, the Bishop should also ensure that the ministers and the people gain an authentic understanding and experience of the liturgy, so that the faithful can attain that full, conscious, active and fruitful participation in the holy mysteries called for by the Second Vatican Council.¹³⁷

In this way liturgical celebrations, especially those celebrated by the Bishop in his Cathedral, will be clear proclamations of the Church's faith, privileged occasions when the pastor presents the mystery of Christ to the faithful and helps them to enter progressively into it, experiencing it with joy and then testifying to it by works of charity (cf. *Gal* 5 :6).

Given the importance of the proper transmission of the faith in the Church's sacred liturgy, the Bishop will not fail to be vigilant and careful, for the good of the faithful, to ensure that

¹³⁷ Cf. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 11, 14.

existing liturgical norms are observed always and everywhere. This also calls for the firm and timely correction of abuses and the elimination of arbitrary liturgical changes. The Bishop himself should also be attentive, to the extent that it depends on him, in cooperation with the Episcopal Conferences and their respective liturgical commissions, to ensure that the dignity and authenticity of liturgical celebrations are maintained in radio and television broadcasts.

The centrality of the Lord's Day and the liturgical year

36. The Bishop's life and ministry must be permeated by the presence of the Lord in his mystery. The growth throughout the Diocese of a conviction of the spiritual, catechetical and pastoral centrality of the liturgy greatly depends on the example of the Bishop.

At the centre of this ministry is the celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ held on Sunday, the Lord's Day. As I have often repeated, including recently, in order to give a strong sign of Christian identity in our time it is necessary to restore the centrality of the celebration of the Lord's Day and, on that day, of the celebration of the Eucharist. Sunday is a day which should be experienced as "a special day of

faith, the day of the Risen Lord and of the gift of the Spirit, the true weekly Easter".¹³⁸

The presence of the Bishop, who on Sunday – which is also the Church's Day – presides at the Eucharist in his Cathedral or in the parishes of the Diocese, can be an exemplary sign of fidelity to the mystery of the Resurrection and a reason for hope for God's People as they make their pilgrim way, Sunday after Sunday, towards the unending eighth day of the eternal Easter.¹³⁹

In the course of the liturgical year the Church relives the whole Christian mystery, from the Lord's Incarnation and Nativity to his Ascension, to the day of Pentecost and the hope-filled expectation of his glorious return.¹⁴⁰ The Bishop will naturally devote particular attention to the preparation and celebration of the Paschal Triduum, the heart of the whole liturgical year, with the solemn Easter Vigil and its prolongation in the fifty-day Easter season.

The liturgical year with its cycle of celebrations can suitably serve as the basis for the pastoral planning of the life of the Diocese around the mystery of Christ. In this journey of faith, the Church is sustained by the “memory of the Virgin Mary, who, already glorified in body

¹³⁸ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6 January 2001), 35 : *AAS* 93 (2001), 291.

¹³⁹ Cf. *Propositio* 17.

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 102.

and soul in heaven... shines forth as a sign of sure hope and comfort for the pilgrim People of God".¹⁴¹ It is a hope which is likewise nourished by the commemoration of the martyrs and the other saints, who, "having attained perfection through the manifold grace of God and now possess eternal salvation, sing perfect praise to God in heaven and make intercession for us".¹⁴²

The Bishop as minister of the Eucharistic celebration

37. At the heart of the Bishop's *munus sanctificandi* is the Eucharist, which he himself offers or which he ensures is offered, and which particularly manifests his office as steward or minister of the grace of the supreme priesthood.¹⁴³

It is above all by presiding at the Eucharistic assembly that the Bishop contributes to the building up of the Church as a mystery of communion and mission. For the Eucharist is the essential principle of the life not only of the simple faithful but of the community itself in Christ. The faithful, gathered by the preaching of the Gospel, form communities in which the Church of Christ is truly present, and this becomes especially clear in the celebration of the

¹⁴¹ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 68.

¹⁴² Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 104.

¹⁴³ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 26.

Eucharistic Sacrifice.¹⁴⁴ Well-known is the teaching of the Council in this regard: "In any community of the altar, under the sacred ministry of the Bishop, there is made manifest the symbol of that charity and 'unity of the mystical body without which there can be no salvation'. In these communities, though often small and poor, or scattered, Christ is present and by his power the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church is gathered together. For 'sharing in the body and blood of Christ has no other effect than to make us become what we consume' ".¹⁴⁵

The Eucharistic celebration, then, which is the "source and summit of all evangelization",¹⁴⁶ is also the source of the Church's whole missionary commitment, which is aimed at manifesting to others, through the witness of our lives, the mystery which we live in faith.

Among all the responsibilities of the Bishop's pastoral ministry, that of celebrating the Eucharist is the most compelling and important. The Bishop also has the duty, as one of his principal tasks, of ensuring that the faithful are able to approach the Lord's table, especially on Sunday, which, as I just mentioned, is the day on which the Church, the community and family of

¹⁴⁴ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17 April 2003), 21 : *AAS* 95 (2003), 447-448.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Life and Ministry of Priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 5.

the children of God, rediscovers her specific Christian identity around her own priests.¹⁴⁷

It can happen, however, that in certain places, whether due to a lack of priests or to other grave and persistent reasons, it is not possible to ensure the celebration of the Eucharist on a regular basis. This increases the duty of the Bishop, as the father of the family and minister of grace, to be constantly attentive to discerning real needs and the seriousness of different situations. It will be necessary to ensure a prudent distribution of the members of the presbyterate, so that, also in other emergencies, the community is not deprived of the Eucharistic celebration for long periods.

In cases where the celebration of Holy Mass cannot be provided for, the Bishop will ensure that the community, while continuing to await the encounter with Christ in the celebration of his Paschal Mystery, will be able to have, at least on Sundays and feast days, a special celebration. In this case the faithful, led by responsible ministers, will be able to benefit from the gift of the word proclaimed and from communion in the Eucharist, thanks to the proper planning of Sunday gatherings in the absence of a priest.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 28; John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (17 April 2003), 41-42: *AAS* 95 (2003), 460-461.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Congregation for the Clergy (et al.), Interdicasterial Instruction *Ecclesiae de Mysterio* on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of

The Bishop's responsibility for Christian initiation

38. In the present circumstances of the Church and the world, both in the young Churches and in the countries where Christianity has been established for centuries, the restoration, especially for adults, of the great tradition of the discipline of Christian initiation has proved providential. This was a far-sighted decision of the Second Vatican Council,¹⁴⁹ which wished in this way to provide the means for an encounter with Christ and the Church to the many men and women touched by the grace of the Spirit and wishing to enter into communion with the mystery of salvation in Christ who died and rose for us.

Through the process of Christian initiation, catechumens are gradually introduced into knowledge of the mystery of Christ and the Church by analogy with the origin, development and growth of natural life. The faithful, reborn in Baptism and made sharers in the royal priesthood, are strengthened in Confirmation, of which the Bishop is the original minister, and thus receive a special outpouring of the gifts of the Spirit. Then by sharing in the Eucharist they are nourished with the food of eternal life and made full members of the Church, Christ's

the Non-Ordained Faithful with the Ministry of Priests (15 August 1997), "Practical Provisions", Art. 7 : *AAS* 89 (1997), 869-870.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 64.

Mystical Body. In this way, the faithful, "by the effects of these sacraments of Christian initiation, are enabled to taste ever more fully and better the treasures of the divine life and to progress to the attainment of the perfection of charity".¹⁵⁰

With due regard for present-day circumstances, Bishops will observe the prescriptions of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*. They will see to it that every Diocese has the structures and the pastoral workers necessary to ensure in the most dignified and effective way the implementation of the regulations and of the liturgical, catechetical and pastoral discipline of Christian initiation, duly adapted to the needs of our times.

By its very nature as a progressive insertion into the mystery of Christ and the Church, a mystery alive and at work in each particular Church, the itinerary of Christian initiation demands the presence and ministry of the Diocesan Bishop, especially at the culminating phase of the journey, namely, in the administration of the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist, which ordinarily takes place at the Easter Vigil.

It is also the Bishop's task to regulate, in accordance with Church law, all matters involving the Christian initiation of children and young

¹⁵⁰ Paul VI, Apostolic Constitution *Divinae Consortium Naturae* (15 August 1971) : *AAS* 63 (1971), 657.

people, and to lay down norms concerning their proper catechetical preparation and gradual involvement in the life of the community. The Bishop should also be vigilant that programmes for the catechumenate, or for the continuance or renewal of the process of Christian initiation, or for reaching out to members of the faithful who have fallen away from the normal and community life of faith, operate in accordance with the Church's laws and in full harmony with the life of parish communities in the Diocese.

Finally, with regard to Confirmation, the Bishop, as the ordinary minister of this sacrament, will ensure that he himself is its usual celebrant. His presence in the midst of the parish community which, by virtue of the baptismal font and the table of the Eucharist, is the natural and normal place for the process of Christian initiation, effectively evokes the mystery of Pentecost and proves most beneficial in consolidating the bonds of ecclesial communion between the pastor and the faithful.

The Bishop's responsibilities in the discipline of Penance

39. The Synod Fathers in their interventions paid particular attention to the Church's penitential discipline ; they stressed its importance and recalled the special care which, as successors of the Apostles, Bishops must show for the pastoral practice and the discipline of the

sacrament of Penance. I was glad to hear them reaffirm my own profound conviction that the greatest pastoral concern must be shown for this sacrament of the Church, the source of reconciliation, of peace and of joy for all of us who stand in need of the Lord's mercy and of healing from the wounds of sin.

The Bishop, as the one primarily responsible for penitential discipline in his particular Church, is particularly charged with offering a *kerygmatic* invitation to conversion and penance. It is his duty to proclaim with evangelical freedom the sad and destructive presence of sin in the lives of individuals and in the history of communities. At the same time, he must proclaim the boundless mystery of the mercy which God has bestowed on us in the Cross and Resurrection of his Son Jesus Christ, and in the outpouring of the Spirit for the forgiveness of sins. This proclamation, which is also an invitation to reconciliation and a call to hope, is the very heart of the Gospel. It was the first thing which the Apostles proclaimed on the day of Pentecost, a proclamation which reveals the very meaning of the grace of salvation communicated in the sacraments.

The Bishop should be, in suitable ways, an exemplary minister of the sacrament of Penance, and he himself will have regular and faithful recourse to that sacrament. He will not cease to exhort his priests to hold in high esteem the

ministry of reconciliation which they received at their priestly ordination, and he should encourage them to exercise that ministry with generosity and supernatural tact, in imitation of the Father who welcomes those who have come home, and of Christ, the Good Shepherd, who carries on his shoulders the lost sheep.¹⁵¹

The Bishop's responsibility extends also to the duty of exercising vigilance that recourse to general absolution does not take place outside the norms of law. In this regard, in my Apostolic Letter *Misericordia Dei* I stressed that Bishops have the duty to enforce the existing discipline whereby individual and integral confession and absolution constitute the only ordinary means by which members of the faithful conscious of grave sin are reconciled with God and with the Church. Only physical or moral impossibility dispenses from this ordinary means, in which case reconciliation can be obtained by other means. The Bishop will not fail to remind all those who by virtue of office are charged with the care of souls that they have the duty to provide the faithful with the opportunity of making an individual confession.¹⁵² He himself will make certain that the faithful are in fact being assisted in every way possible to make their confession.

¹⁵¹ Cf. *Propositio* 18.

¹⁵² Cf. *Motu Proprio Misericordia Dei* (7 April 2002), 1 : *AAS* 94 (2002), 453-454.

When one considers in the light of Tradition and the Church's Magisterium the close connection between the sacrament of Reconciliation and participation in the Eucharist, one sees how necessary it is today to form the consciences of the faithful so that they may partake worthily and fruitfully of the Eucharistic Banquet, and approach it in a state of grace.¹⁵³

It is also useful to mention that it is the Bishop's responsibility to regulate in a suitable way and through the careful choice of suitable ministers the discipline governing the practice of exorcism and the celebration of prayers to obtain healings, with due respect for recent documents of the Holy See.¹⁵⁴

Attention to popular piety

40. The Synod Fathers reaffirmed the importance of popular piety in the handing on and the growth of faith. As my predecessor of venerable memory Pope Paul VI once said, popular piety is rich in values both in reference to God and to our brothers and sisters,¹⁵⁵ and thus constitutes an authentic treasury of spirituality in the life of the Christian community.

¹⁵³ Cf. *Propositio* 18.

¹⁵⁴ Cf. Roman Ritual, *Rite of Exorcisms* (22 November 1998), Vatican City, 1999 ; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on Prayers for Healing (14 September 2000) : *L'Osservatore Romano*, 24 November 2000, p. 6.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 December 1975), 48 : *AAS* 68 (1976), 37-38.

In our time too, marked as it is by a widespread yearning for spirituality which often draws many to follow religious sects or other forms of vague spiritualism, Bishops are called to discern and to foster the values and forms of true popular piety.

The words of the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* remain timely: "Pastoral charity must dictate to all those whom the Lord has placed as leaders of the ecclesial communities the proper attitude in regard to this reality, which is at the same time so rich and so vulnerable. Above all one must be sensitive to it, know how to perceive its interior dimensions and undeniable values, be ready to help it to overcome its risks of deviation. When it is well oriented, this popular religiosity can be more and more for multitudes of our people a true encounter with God in Jesus Christ".¹⁵⁶

The forms in which popular piety is expressed should be shaped and, when necessary, purified in accordance with the principles of Christian faith and life. The faithful, through popular piety, should be led to a personal encounter with Christ and to fellowship with the Blessed Virgin Mary and the saints, especially through hearing the word of God, recourse to prayer, participation in the Church's sacramental

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

life, and the witness of charity and the works of mercy.¹⁵⁷

For a fuller consideration of this matter and for a valuable series of theological, pastoral and spiritual suggestions, I am pleased to refer to the documents issued by this Apostolic See, which state that all manifestations of popular piety fall under the responsibility of the Bishop in his Diocese. It is the Bishop's duty to regulate them, to encourage them as an aid to the faithful for Christian living, to purify them where necessary and to evangelize them.¹⁵⁸

Promoting holiness for all the faithful

41. The holiness of the People of God, to which the Bishop's ministry of sanctification is ordered, is a gift of divine grace and a manifestation of the primacy of God in the life of the Church. In his ministry, then, the Bishop must tirelessly promote a genuine pastoral and educational programme of holiness, in order to carry out the one set forth in the fifth chapter of the Constitution *Lumen Gentium* on the universal call to holiness.

I myself wished to propose this programme to the whole Church at the beginning of the third millennium, as a pastoral priority and as a fruit of

¹⁵⁷ Cf. *Propositio* 19.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* (17 December 2001), 21 : Vatican City, 2002, 28-29.

the Great Jubilee of the Incarnation.¹⁵⁹ Today too, holiness is a sign of the times and a proof of the truth of Christianity as it shines forth in its noblest representatives, both those who have been enrolled among the saints and the even greater numbers of those who have quietly enriched and continue to enrich human history with the humble and joyful holiness of daily life. Our own time too is not lacking in the precious witness of forms of holiness, personal and communal, which are a sign of hope to all, including the younger generation.

As a means of highlighting the witness of holiness, I urge my Brother Bishops to recognize and to call attention to the signs of holiness and heroic virtue which are also appearing in our own days, especially where these concern members of the lay faithful in their own Dioceses, above all Christian married couples. In appropriate cases, I encourage them to promote the relative processes of canonization.¹⁶⁰ This will prove a sign of hope for everyone and a source of encouragement for the pilgrim People of God in its witness before the world to the permanent presence of grace in the fabric of human history.

CHAPTER FIVE. THE PASTORAL GOVERNANCE OF THE BISHOP.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6 January 2001), 29-41 : *AAS* 93 (2001), 285-295.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. *Propositio* 48.

"I have given you an example" (Jn 13 :15).

42. In its treatment of the duty of governing the family of God and accepting the habitual and daily care of the Lord Jesus' flock, the Second Vatican Council explains that Bishops, in the exercise of their ministry as fathers and shepherds in the midst of their faithful, must act as "those who serve", keeping always before their eyes the example of the Good Shepherd who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life for the sheep (cf. *Mt* 20 :28 ; *Mk* 10 :45 ; *Lk* 22 :26-27 ; *Jn* 10 :11).¹⁶¹

This image of Jesus, the supreme model of the Bishop, finds one of its most eloquent expressions in the act of the washing of the feet, as recounted in the Gospel according to John : "Before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. And during supper... he rose from the table, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciple's feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. When he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them : 'I have given

¹⁶¹ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 27 ; Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 16.

you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you' " (13 :1-15).

Let us then contemplate Jesus as he performs this gesture that seems to provide us with a key for understanding his very being and mission, his life and death. Let us contemplate also the love of Jesus, which translates into action, into concrete acts. Let us contemplate Jesus who takes on completely, in an absolutely radical way, the form of a servant (cf. *Phil 2 :7*). He, our Teacher and Lord, who received everything from the hands of the Father, loved us to the end, to the point of putting himself totally in the hands of men and accepting all that they would do to him. Jesus' gesture is an act of love carried out in the context of the institution of the Eucharist and in the clear prospect of his Passion and Death. It is a gesture which reveals the meaning of the Incarnation but, even more, that of the very being of God. God is love, and for this reason he took on the form of a servant: God put himself at the service of mankind in order to bring mankind into full communion with himself.

If such is our Teacher and Lord, then the meaning of the ministry and the very being of those who, like the Twelve, are called to draw most closely to Jesus can only consist in complete and unconditional availability to others, both to those who are already part of the fold and to those who are not yet members (cf. *Jn 10 :16*).

The Bishop's authority as pastoral service

43. The Bishop is sent in Christ's name as a pastor for the care of a particular portion of the People of God. Through the Gospel and the Eucharist, he is to help his people to grow as a reality of communion in the Holy Spirit.¹⁶² This is the source of the Bishop's role of representing the Church entrusted to him and of governing it by the power needed for the exercise of the pastoral ministry sacramentally received (*munus pastorale*) as a sharing in the consecration and mission of Christ himself.¹⁶³ As a consequence, Bishops "govern the particular Churches entrusted to them as the vicars and ambassadors of Christ. This they do by their counsel, exhortation and example, as well, indeed, as by their authority and sacred power. This power they use only for the edification of their flock in truth and holiness, remembering that he who is greater should become as the lesser and he who is the more distinguished, as the servant (cf. *Lk* 22 :26-27)".¹⁶⁴

¹⁶² Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 11 ; Code of Canon Law, c. 369 ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, c. 177 § 1.

¹⁶³ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 27 ; Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 8 ; Code of Canon Law, c. 381 § 1 ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, c. 178.

¹⁶⁴ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 27.

This text of the Council is a marvellous synthesis of Catholic doctrine on the pastoral governance of the Bishop and is echoed in the Rite of Episcopal Ordination: "The title of Bishop is one of service, not of honour, and therefore a Bishop should strive to benefit others rather than to lord it over them. Such is the precept of the Master".¹⁶⁵ Here we find the fundamental principle that, as Saint Paul states, authority in the Church is meant for the building up of the People of God, not for their destruction (cf. *2 Cor* 10 :8). The building up of the flock of Christ in truth and in holiness demands of the Bishop, as was repeatedly stated in the Synod Hall, certain characteristics which include an exemplary life, the ability to enter into authentic and constructive relationships with others, an aptitude for encouraging and developing cooperation, an innate goodness and patience, an understanding of and compassion for those suffering in body and spirit, a spirit of tolerance and forgiveness. What is needed is in fact an ability to emulate as well as possible the supreme model, which is Jesus the Good Shepherd.

The power of the Bishop is true power, but a power which radiates the light of the Good Shepherd and is modelled after him. Exercised in the name of Christ, it is "proper, ordinary and

¹⁶⁵ Roman Pontifical, *Rite of Ordination of a Bishop* : Homily.

immediate, although its exercise is ultimately regulated by the supreme authority of the Church, and can be circumscribed by certain limits, for the advantage of the Church or of the faithful. In virtue of this power, Bishops have the sacred right and the duty before the Lord to make laws for their subjects, to pass judgment on them, and to moderate everything pertaining to the ordering of worship and the apostolate".¹⁶⁶ The Bishop, by virtue of the office that he has received, is thus invested with an objective juridical power meant to be expressed in authoritative acts whereby he carries out the ministry of governance (*munus pastorale*) received in the sacrament.

The Bishop's governance, nonetheless, will be pastorally effective – once again this must be recalled – only if it rests on a moral authority bestowed by his life of holiness. This is what will dispose hearts to accept the Gospel that the Bishop proclaims in his Church, as well as the rules which he lays down for the good of the People of God. Hence Saint Ambrose's admonishment : "Let nothing vulgar be sought in priests, nothing in common with the desires, the habits, the customs of the vulgar crowd. The priestly dignity demands a gravity which keeps

¹⁶⁶ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 27 ; cf. Code of Canon Law, c. 381 § 1 ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, c. 178.

apart from tumults, an austere life and a singular authority".¹⁶⁷

The exercise of authority in the Church cannot be understood as something impersonal or bureaucratic, precisely because it is an authority born of witness. All that the Bishop says and does must reveal the authority of Christ's word and his way of acting. Without the authoritativeness of his lived holiness – his personal witness of faith, hope and love – only with difficulty could a Bishop's governance be accepted by the People of God as a manifestation of the active presence of Christ in his Church.

As ministers by the Lord's will of the Church's apostolicity, endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit who leads and guides (*Spiritus principalis*), Bishops are successors of the Apostles not only in authority and sacred power but also in the form of apostolic life, in apostolic sufferings endured for the proclamation and spread of the Gospel, in their gentle and merciful care of the faithful entrusted to them, in their defence of the weak, and in their unremitting concern for the People of God.

In the Synod Hall it was observed that since the Second Vatican Council the exercise of authority in the Church has often proved taxing. Even though some of the more acute difficulties

¹⁶⁷ *Ad Irenaeum, Epistulae*, Bk. I, Ep. VI: *Sancti Ambrosii Episcopi Mediolanensis Opera*, Milano-Roma 1988 19, p. 66.

seem to have been overcome, this continues to be the case. The problem is therefore how the necessary service of authority can better be understood, accepted and carried out. A preliminary answer derives from the very nature of ecclesial authority: it is – and needs to be perceived as such in the clearest possible terms – a participation in the mission of Christ, to be lived and exercised in humility, dedication and service.

A renewed appreciation of the Bishop's authority will not find expression in outward signs but in a deeper understanding of the theological, spiritual and moral significance of his ministry, founded on the charism of apostolicity. All that was said in the Synod Hall about the image of the washing of feet, and the connection made in that context between the figure of the servant and that of the shepherd, helps us to understand that the episcopacy is truly an honour when it is a form of service. Every Bishop must apply to himself the words of Jesus: "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you: whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (*Mk*

10 :42-45). Mindful of these words of the Lord, the Bishop governs with the heart of a humble servant and a caring shepherd, who guides his flock as he seeks the glory of God and the salvation of souls (cf. *Lk* 22 :26-27). When exercised in this way, the Bishop's manner of governance is completely unique.

We have already mentioned the text of *Lumen Gentium* which states that Bishops rule the particular Churches entrusted to their care as vicars and legates of Christ, "by their counsel, exhortations and example".¹⁶⁸ There is no contradiction here with the words that follow, when the Council adds that the Bishops do in fact govern "by counsel, exhortations and example, but also by their authority and sacred power".¹⁶⁹ This "sacred power" is one which is rooted in the moral authority which the Bishop enjoys by virtue of his holiness of life. It is this which facilitates the acceptance of his every act of governance and makes it effective.

Pastoral style of governance and diocesan communion

44. A lived ecclesial communion will lead the Bishop to a pastoral style which is ever more open to collaboration with all. There is a type of reciprocal interplay between what a Bishop is called to decide with personal responsibility for the good of the Church entrusted to his care and

¹⁶⁸ No. 27.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

the contribution that the faithful can offer him through consultative bodies such as the Diocesan Synod, the Presbyteral Council, the Episcopal Council and the Pastoral Council.¹⁷⁰

The Synod Fathers made clear reference to these means by which episcopal governance is exercised and through which the pastoral care of the Diocese is organized.¹⁷¹ The particular Church involves not only the threefold episcopal ministry (*munus episcopale*), but also the threefold prophetic, priestly and kingly function of the entire People of God. All the faithful, by virtue of their Baptism, share in a proper way in the threefold *munus* of Christ. Their real equality in dignity and in acting is such that all are called to cooperate in the building up of the Body of Christ, and thus to carry out the mission which God has entrusted to the Church in the world, each according to his or her respective state and duties.¹⁷²

Every sort of differentiation between the faithful, based on the variety of their charisms, functions and ministries, is ordered to the service of the other members of the People of God. The ontological and functional differentiation that sets the Bishop *before* the other faithful based on his reception of the fullness of the Sacrament of

¹⁷⁰ Cf. Code of Canon Law, cc. 204 § 1 ; 208 ; 212 §§ 2, 3 ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, cc. 7 § 1 ; 11 ; 15 §§ 2,3.

¹⁷¹ Cf. *Propositio* 35.

¹⁷² Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 32 ; Code of Canon Law, cc. 204 § 1 ; 208.

Orders, is a manner of *being for* the other members of faithful which in no way removes him from *being with* them.

The Church is an organically structured community which finds expression in the coordination of different charisms, ministries and services for the sake of attaining the common end, which is salvation. The Bishop is responsible for bringing about this unity in diversity by promoting, as was stated in the Synodal Assembly, a collaborative effort which makes it possible for all to journey together along the common path of faith and mission.¹⁷³

This said, however, it must be added that the ministry of the Bishop absolutely cannot be reduced to the function of a simple coordinator. By its very nature, the *munus episcopale* entails a clear and unequivocal right and duty of governance, which also includes the element of jurisdiction. Pastors are public witnesses, and their *potestas testandi fidem* attains its fullness in the *potestas iudicandi*: the Bishop is not only called to bear witness to the faith, but also to evaluate and discipline its outward expression by the believers entrusted to his pastoral care. In carrying out this task he will do everything possible to win the consent of his faithful, but in the end he will have to take personal responsibility for decisions which he as their pastor considers in conscience to be

¹⁷³ Cf. *Propositio* 35.

necessary, concerned as he is above all for the future judgment of God.

Ecclesial communion in its organic structure calls for personal responsibility on the part of the Bishop, but it also presupposes the participation of every category of the faithful, inasmuch as they share responsibility for the good of the particular Church which they themselves form. What guarantees the authenticity of this organic communion is the working of the Spirit, who is at work both in the Bishop's personal responsibility and in the sharing of the faithful in that responsibility. It is the Spirit who, as the basis of both the baptismal equality of all the faithful and the diversity in charism and mission of each believer, is capable of effectively bringing about communion. These are the principles which govern Diocesan Synods, whose canonical profile, laid down in canons 460-468 of the *Code of Canon Law*, was specified by the *Interdicasterial Instruction* of 19 March 1997.¹⁷⁴ These norms must also be substantially followed by other Diocesan assemblies at which the Bishop presides ; he may never abdicate his specific responsibility.

Although every Christian receives the love of God in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Baptism, the Bishop – as the Synodal Assembly

¹⁷⁴ Cf. *AAS* 89 (1997), 706-727. An analogous point must be made for the Eparchal Assemblies, which are dealt with in cc. 235-242 of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches.

appropriately recalled – receives in his heart through the sacrament of Holy Orders the pastoral charity of Christ. The purpose of this pastoral charity is to create communion.¹⁷⁵ Before translating this love-communion into plans of action, the Bishop must commit himself to making it present in his own heart and in the heart of the Church by means of an authentically spiritual life.

If communion expresses the Church's essence, then it is normal that the spirituality of communion will tend to manifest itself in both the personal and community spheres, awakening ever new forms of participation and shared responsibility in the faithful of every category. Consequently, the Bishop will make every effort to develop, within his particular Church, structures of communion and participation which make it possible to listen to the Spirit who lives and speaks in the faithful, in order to guide them in carrying out whatever the same Spirit suggests for the true good of the Church.

The elements of the particular Church

45. Many of the interventions of the Synod Fathers referred to various aspects and moments of Diocesan life. Due attention was thus given to the Diocesan Curia as the structure employed by the Bishop to express his pastoral charity in its

¹⁷⁵ Cf. *Propositio* 35.

different aspects.¹⁷⁶ Particular mention was made of the appropriateness of entrusting the financial administration of the Diocese to individuals who are competent as well as honest, so that it can become an example of transparency for other similar Church institutions. If a spirituality of communion is lived out in the Diocese, special concern will certainly be shown for poorer parishes and communities, and every possible effort will be made to set aside a part of the Diocese's financial resources for the needier Churches, especially those in mission lands and areas affected by migration.¹⁷⁷

It was upon the parish, however, that the Synod Fathers felt it proper to focus their attention, realizing that it is this community, pre-eminent among all the other communities present in his Diocese, for which the Bishop has primary responsibility: it is with the parishes above all that he must be concerned.¹⁷⁸ The parish, it was frequently stated, remains the fundamental unit in the daily life of the Diocese.

The Pastoral Visit

46. It is precisely in this perspective that the importance of Pastoral Visits can be seen. These are an authentic time of grace and a special, indeed unique, moment for encounter and

¹⁷⁶ Cf. *Propositio* 36.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. *Propositio* 39.

¹⁷⁸ Cf. *Propositio* 37.

dialogue between the Bishop and the faithful.¹⁷⁹ Bishop Bartolomeu dos Mártires, whom I beatified a few days after the conclusion of the Synod, in his classic work *Stimulus Pastorum*, a work greatly esteemed by Saint Charles Borromeo, defines the Pastoral Visit as *quasi anima episcopalis regiminis* and describes it effectively as an extension of the spiritual presence of the Bishop among his people.¹⁸⁰

In making his Pastoral Visit to the parish, the Bishop should delegate to others the study of administrative questions and give first place to personal meetings, beginning with the parish priest and the other priests. This is the time when he is closest to his people in carrying out the ministry of the word, of sanctification and of pastoral leadership, when he most directly encounters their anxieties and cares, their joys and their expectations, and is able to address to all an invitation to hope. Here above all the Bishop comes into direct contact with the poor, the elderly and the infirm. When it is carried out in this way, the Pastoral Visit appears for what is truly is : a sign of the presence of the Lord who visits his people in peace.

The Bishop with his presbyterate

47. With good reason the conciliar Decree *Christus Dominus*, in describing the particular

¹⁷⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Romae, 1572, cf. 52 v.

Church, defines it as a community of faithful entrusted to the pastoral care of a Bishop *cum cooperatione presbyterii*.¹⁸¹ Indeed, between the Bishop and his presbyters there exists a *communio sacramentalis* by virtue of the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood, which is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ, and consequently, albeit in a different degree, in virtue of the one ordained ministry and the one apostolic mission.

The presbyters, and among them parish priests in particular, are therefore the closest cooperators in the Bishop's ministry. The Synod Fathers renewed the recommendations and exhortations already present in the Council documents and reiterated more recently by the Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* ¹⁸² about the special quality of the relationship between the Bishop and his presbyters. The Bishop will always strive to relate to his priests as a father and brother who loves them, listens to them, welcomes them, corrects them, supports them, seeks their cooperation and, as much as possible, is concerned for their human, spiritual, ministerial and financial well-being.¹⁸³

The Bishop's special affection for his priests is demonstrated by his accompanying them as a father and brother in the fundamental stages of

¹⁸¹ No. 11.

¹⁸² Cf. Nos. 16-17 : *AAS* 84 (1992), 681-684.

¹⁸³ Cf. *Propositio* 40.

their ministerial life, starting with their first steps in the pastoral ministry. The permanent formation of priests remains essential and represents for all a kind of "vocation within a vocation", since in its different and complementary aspects it is aimed at helping priests to live and minister after the example of Jesus.

Each Diocesan Bishop has as one of his primary duties the spiritual care of his presbyterate: "The action of the priest who places his hands in the hands of the Bishop on the day of his priestly ordination, as he professes to him 'filial respect and obedience', can at first sight seem a one-way gesture. In reality, the gesture commits them both: priest and Bishop. The young presbyter chooses to entrust himself to the Bishop and the Bishop for his part obliges himself to look after those hands".¹⁸⁴

In two other moments, I would like to add, the presbyter can rightly expect his Bishop to show a particular closeness to him. The first is when the Bishop entrusts him with a pastoral mission, either for the first time, as in the case of a recently-ordained priest, or later for a change of assignment or the conferring of a new pastoral mandate. For the Bishop himself, conferring a pastoral mission is a significant moment of

¹⁸⁴ John Paul II, Address to a group of newly-appointed Bishops (23 September 2002), 4: *L'Osservatore Romano* (23- 24 September 2002), p. 5.

paternal responsibility towards one of his priests. The words of Saint Jerome are quite applicable to this circumstance : "We know that the same relationship that Aaron had with his sons is also present in a Bishop and his priests. One alone is the Lord, one is the temple : let there also be oneness in the ministry... Is not the glory of a father a wise son ? Let the Bishop congratulate himself for having wisely chosen such priests for Christ".¹⁸⁵

The other moment is when a priest, because of advanced age, resigns the actual pastoral leadership of a community or other positions of direct responsibility. In these and similar circumstances, the Bishop has the duty of ensuring that the priest is made aware both of the gratitude of the particular Church for his past apostolic labours and of the new role which he now plays within the Diocesan presbyterate : he still contributes, and can now contribute even more fully, to the building up of the Church by his exemplary witness of assiduous prayer and his willingness to share his past experience as a way of helping his younger confreres. The Bishop will also show his fraternal closeness to priests in a similar situation because of grave illness or some other form of persistent disability, helping them to keep alive the conviction that "they continue to be active members for the building up of the

¹⁸⁵ *Ep. Ad Nepotianum presb.*, LII, 7 : PL 22, 534.

Church, especially by virtue of their union with the suffering Christ and with so many other brothers and sisters in the Church who are sharing in the Lord's Passion".¹⁸⁶

The Bishop will also follow with prayer and genuine compassion priests who for whatever reason are questioning their vocation and their fidelity to the Lord's call and have in some way failed in the performance of their duties.¹⁸⁷

Finally, he will not fail to examine the possible evidence of heroic virtue shown by diocesan priests and, when he deems it appropriate, to proceed to their public recognition, taking the required steps for the opening of a cause of Canonization.¹⁸⁸

The formation of candidates for the priesthood

48. Reflecting more deeply on the theme of priestly ministry, the Synod Fathers paid particular attention to the training of candidates for the priesthood which takes place in the seminary.¹⁸⁹ Since it involves much prayer, commitment and effort, the training of priests is one of the primary concerns of the Bishop. In this regard, the Synod Fathers, fully conscious that the seminary is one of the most precious

¹⁸⁶ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25 March 1992), 77 : *AAS* 84 (1992), 795.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 16.

¹⁸⁸ Cf. *Propositio* 40.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. *Propositio* 41.

treasures of any Diocese, gave it careful attention and reaffirmed the undeniable need of major seminaries, without however neglecting the significance of minor seminaries, for handing on Christian values directed to the following of Christ.¹⁹⁰

Consequently, each Bishop will show his concern above all by selecting with great care those charged with the training of future priests and by establishing the most suitable and appropriate means of preparing them to exercise their ministry in a setting so fundamental for the life of the Christian community. The Bishop will not fail to visit the seminary frequently, even when particular circumstances have caused him to join other Bishops in making the at times necessary and even preferable choice of an interdiocesan seminary.¹⁹¹ A genuine personal knowledge of the candidates for the priesthood in his particular Church is indispensable for the Bishop. On the basis of these direct contacts he will ensure that the seminaries form mature and balanced personalities, men capable of establishing sound human and pastoral relationships, knowledgeable in theology, solid in the spiritual life, and in love with the Church. Similarly he will make every effort to provide

¹⁹⁰ Cf. *ibid.*, John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (25 March 1992), 60-63 : *AAS* 84 (1992), 762-769.

¹⁹¹ Cf. *ibid.*, 65 : *AAS* 84 (1992), 771-772.

financial support and assistance for young candidates for the priesthood.

It is clear, nonetheless, that the force which inspires and forms vocations is primarily prayer. Vocations need a vast network of people who pray fervently to "the Lord of the harvest". The more the problem of vocations is confronted in the context of prayer, the more prayer will help those whom God has called to hear his voice.

When the time comes to confer Holy Orders, each Bishop will carry out the necessary investigation.¹⁹² In this regard, conscious of his grave responsibility for the conferring of priestly Orders, only after careful inquiry and ample consultation according to the norms of law will the Bishop receive into his Diocese candidates coming from other Dioceses or from a Religious Institute.¹⁹³

The Bishop and permanent deacons

49. As ministers of Holy Orders, Bishops also have direct responsibility for permanent deacons, in whom the Synodal Assembly saw authentic gifts of God for proclaiming the Gospel, instructing Christian communities and promoting the service of charity within God's family.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Cf. Code of Canon Law, c. 1051.

¹⁹³ Cf. *Propositio* 41.

¹⁹⁴ Cf. *Propositio* 42.

Each Bishop will therefore show great care for these vocations, for the discernment and formation of which he is ultimately responsible. Although he must normally exercise this responsibility through trusted collaborators committed to acting in conformity with the prescriptions of the Holy See,¹⁹⁵ the Bishop will seek in every way possible to know personally all the candidates for the diaconate. After their ordination he will continue to be a true father for them, encouraging them to love the Body and Blood of Christ whose ministers they are, and Holy Church which they have committed themselves to serve ; he will also exhort married deacons to lead an exemplary family life.

The Bishop's concern for persons of consecrated life

50. The Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* emphasized the importance of the consecrated life in the ministry of the Bishop. Appealing to that text during this last Synod, the Fathers stated that in the Church as communion the Bishop must esteem and promote the specific vocation and mission of the consecrated life, which belongs stably and solidly to the Church's life and sanctity.¹⁹⁶ In the particular Churches too,

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Congregation for Catholic Education, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Diaconorum Permanentium* (22 February 1998) : *AAS* 90 (1998), 843-879 ; Congregation for the Clergy, *Directorium pro Ministerio et Vita Diaconorum Permanentium* (22 February 1998) : *AAS* 90 (1998), 879-926.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 44.

the consecrated life fulfils its duty of exemplary presence and charismatic mission. The Bishop will therefore examine carefully whether, among the consecrated persons who have lived in the Diocese, there were testimonies of a heroic exercise of the virtues and then, if he considers it appropriate, take steps to begin the process of Canonization.

In his careful concern for all forms of consecrated life, a concern which finds expression in both encouragement and vigilance, the Bishop should reserve a special place for the contemplative life. Consecrated persons, for their part, will heartily welcome the pastoral directions of the Bishop and strive for full communion in the life and mission of the particular Church in which they live. The Bishop is in fact the one responsible for apostolic activity in the Diocese : consecrated men and women must cooperate with him so as to enrich ecclesial communion by their presence and ministry. In this regard, due attention must be paid to the document *Mutuae Relationes* and all that concerns existing canon law.

A special concern was recommended for Institutes of diocesan right, and especially for those experiencing serious difficulties : the Bishop will show a special fatherly care for them. Finally, in the process of approving new Institutes founded in his Diocese the Bishop will take care to act in accordance with the indications

and prescriptions found in the Exhortation *Vita Consecrata* and in the other instructions issued by the competent offices of the Holy See.¹⁹⁷

The lay faithful in the pastoral care of the Bishop

51. In the lay faithful, who are the majority of the People of God, the missionary power of Baptism must be clearly evident. To this end, lay people need the support, encouragement and help of their Bishops, who can guide them in developing their apostolate in accordance with their specific secular character, drawing on the grace of the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation. It will consequently be necessary to set in place specific programmes of formation which will enable the laity to take on responsibilities in the Church within diocesan and parochial participatory structures, as well as in the different services of liturgical planning, catechesis, the teaching of the Catholic religion in schools, etc.

The laity have special responsibility – and here they need encouragement – for evangelizing culture, making the power of the Gospel part of the life of the family, the workplace, the mass media, sports and leisure, and for promoting Christian values in society and public life, both national and international. By the fact that they are in the world, the lay faithful are in a position to exercise great influence on their environment

¹⁹⁷ Cf. *Propositio* 43.

and to offer great numbers of men and women broader horizons of hope. On the other hand, committed as they are by their vocation to living amid temporal realities, the lay faithful are called, in accordance with their specific secular character, to give an account of their hope (cf. *1 Pet 3 :15*) wherever they work and to cultivate in their hearts "the expectation of a new earth".¹⁹⁸ Bishops, for their part, should be close to the lay faithful who, since they are immersed in the complex problems of today's world, are particularly exposed to bewilderment and suffering ; they should help them to be Christians of firm hope, solidly anchored in the certitude that the Lord is ever at his children's side.

Consideration must also be given to the lay apostolate in the form of associations, both the more traditional groupings and those represented by the new ecclesial movements. All these forms of association enrich the Church, yet they are always in need of the service of discernment proper to the Bishops. It is part of the Bishop's pastoral mission to foster complementarity between movements of diverse inspiration and to exercise vigilance over their development, the theological and spiritual formation of their leaders, and their adaptation to diocesan and parochial communities, from which they must

¹⁹⁸ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Council on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes*, 39.

not be separated.¹⁹⁹ The Bishop will also seek to ensure that associations of the laity support the pastoral work of promoting vocations in the Dioceses and foster an acceptance of all vocations, especially those to the ordained ministry, the consecrated life and missionary work.²⁰⁰

The Bishop's concern for the family

52. The Synod Fathers frequently spoke up in favour of the family, which is rightly called a "domestic Church", a space open to the presence of the Lord Jesus and a sanctuary of life. Founded on the sacrament of Matrimony, the family is seen to be a community of primary importance, since in the family both the spouses and their children live out their proper vocation and are perfected in charity. The Christian family – as was emphasized in the Synod – is an apostolic community open to mission.²⁰¹

It is the Bishop's particular task to ensure that within civil society the values of marriage are supported and defended by means of correct political and economic decisions. Within the Christian community he will not fail to encourage the preparation of engaged couples for marriage, the pastoral accompaniment of young couples and the formation of groups of families who can

¹⁹⁹ Cf. *Propositiones* 45, 46 and 49.

²⁰⁰ Cf. *Propositio* 52.

²⁰¹ Cf. *Propositio* 51.

support the family apostolate and, not least, be in a position to assist families in trouble. The closeness of the Bishop to married couples and their children, expressed also by various initiatives on the Diocesan level, will prove a source of encouragement to them.

In considering the family's responsibilities in the area of education, the Synod Fathers unanimously acknowledged the value of Catholic schools for the integral formation of the younger generation, for the inculturation of the faith and for dialogue between different cultures. Bishops need to support and enhance the work of Catholic schools, seeking to establish them where they do not yet exist and, to the extent of his ability, calling upon civil institutions to favour effective freedom of instruction within the country.²⁰²

Young people, a pastoral priority for the future

53. The Bishop, as pastor and father of the Christian community, will be particularly concerned for the evangelization and spiritual accompaniment of young people. A minister of hope can hardly fail to build the future together with those to whom the future is entrusted, that is, with young people. Like "sentinels of the morning", young people are awaiting the dawn of a new world. The experience of the World Youth Days, which the Bishops heartily encourage,

²⁰² Cf. *ibid.*

shows how many young people are ready to commit themselves in the Church and in the world, if only they are offered real responsibility and an integral Christian formation.

Here, voicing the thought of the Synod Fathers, I make a special appeal to persons of consecrated life from the many Institutes engaged in the area of educating and training children, adolescents and young people. They should not yield to discouragement because of the difficulties of the moment or give up their commendable work, but rather intensify their efforts and aim at ever better results.²⁰³

Young people, through personal relationships with their pastors and teachers, must be encouraged to grow in charity and be trained for a life of generosity and availability for the service of others, especially the needy and the infirm. In this way it will be easier to speak with them about the other Christian virtues, especially chastity. By taking this path they will come to know that life is "something beautiful" when it is given to others, following the example of Jesus. Thus, they will be able to make responsible and binding decisions, whether about marriage, the sacred ministry or the consecrated life.

The promotion of vocations

54. It is essential to promote a vocational culture in the broadest sense : young people, in

²⁰³ Cf. *Propositio* 53.

other words, need to be helped to discover that life itself is a vocation. The Bishop would do well, then, to appeal to families, parish communities and educational institutes to assist boys and girls in discovering God's plan in their lives and in embracing the call to holiness which God from the beginning addresses to each person.²⁰⁴

It is very important in this regard to reinforce the vocational dimension of all pastoral activity. The Bishop must ensure that the pastoral care of young people and the promotion of vocations is entrusted to priests and to persons capable of passing on their love for Jesus by their enthusiasm and the example of their lives. It will be their responsibility to accompany young people personally, by their friendship and, when possible, by spiritual direction, in order to help them to grasp the signs of God's call and to discover the strength to respond to it in the grace of the sacraments and in the life of prayer, which is above all an attentive listening to God who speaks.

These are a few of the spheres in which every Bishop exercises his ministry of governance and manifests to the portion of the People of God entrusted to his care the pastoral charity which impels him. One of the characteristic forms of this charity is *compassion*, like that of Christ, our High Priest, who was able to sympathize with our

²⁰⁴ Cf. *Propositio* 52.

human weaknesses because he himself, like us, was tempted in every respect yet, unlike us, without sin (cf. *Heb* 4:15). This compassion is always linked to the responsibility which the Bishop has accepted before God and the Church. It is in this way that he fulfils the promises and carries out the commitments made on the day of his episcopal ordination, when he freely assented to the Church's charge to care for the holy People of God as a devoted father and to guide them in the way of salvation ; to be always welcoming and merciful, in the name of the Lord, to the poor, the sick and all those in need of comfort and help ; and, like a good shepherd, to go in search of the sheep who stray, in order to bring them back to the fold of Christ.²⁰⁵

CHAPTER SIX. IN THE COMMUNION OF THE CHURCHES.

"Anxiety for all the Churches" (2 *Cor* 11 :28)

55. Writing to the Christians of Corinth, the Apostle Paul recalls everything he suffered for the Gospel : "frequent journeys, danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from the Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren, in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

²⁰⁵ Cf. Roman Pontifical, *Rite of Ordination of a Bishop* : Promise of the Elect.

And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the Churches" (2 *Cor* 11 :26-28). Paul concludes with an impassioned question : "Who is weak, and I am not weak ? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant ?" (2 *Cor* 11 :29). This same question is asked of the conscience of every Bishop, as a member of the College of Bishops.

The Second Vatican Council mentions this expressly when it states that all Bishops, as members of the College of Bishops and legitimate successors of the Apostles by Christ's institution and command, are obliged to extend their concern to the entire Church. "All the Bishops, in fact, have a duty to promote and defend the unity of faith and discipline common to the whole Church, to instruct the faithful in the love of the whole mystical body of Christ – especially those members who are poor and suffering and those who are undergoing persecution for righteousness' sake (cf. *Mt* 5 :10) – and finally to promote every activity that is common to the whole Church, especially that which is aimed at the spread of the faith and the rising of the light of full truth over all people. For the rest, it is a holy truth that by governing well their own Church as a portion of the universal Church, they themselves make an effective contribution to the

whole mystical body, which is also a body of Churches".²⁰⁶

As a consequence, each Bishop is simultaneously in relation with his particular Church and with the universal Church. The Bishop, who himself is the visible principle and foundation of unity in his own particular Church, is also the visible bond of ecclesiastical communion between his particular Church and the universal Church. All the Bishops, residing in their particular Churches throughout the world, yet always preserving hierarchical communion with the Head of the College of Bishops and the College itself, thus give consistency and expression to the Church's catholicity, while at the same time conferring this mark of catholicity upon their own particular Church. Each Bishop is consequently a kind of meeting-point between his particular Church and the universal Church, and a visible witness of the presence of the one Church of Christ within his particular Church. In the communion of the Churches the Bishop thus represents his particular Church and in it he represents the communion of the Churches. Through the episcopal ministry the *portiones Ecclesiae* participate in the totality of the *Una Sancta*, while the latter, again through their

²⁰⁶ Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 23.

ministry, is made present in each individual *Ecclesiae portio*.²⁰⁷

The universal dimension of the episcopal ministry is fully manifested and realized when all the Bishops, in hierarchical communion with the Roman Pontiff, act as a College. Solemnly gathered in Ecumenical Council or dispersed throughout the world yet always in hierarchical communion with the Roman Pontiff, they are the continuation of the College of the Apostles.²⁰⁸ In other forms too, all the Bishops cooperate among themselves and with the Roman Pontiff *in bonum totius Ecclesiae*; this happens primarily so that the Gospel will be proclaimed to all the world and also to confront the various problems faced by the different particular Churches. At the same time, the exercise of the ministry of the Successor of Peter for the good of the whole Church and of every particular Church, and the action of the College as such, help greatly to ensure that the unity of faith and discipline common to the entire Church will be preserved in the particular Churches entrusted to the pastoral care of individual Diocesan Bishops. In the Chair of

²⁰⁷ Cf. Paul VI, Address for the Opening of the Third Session of the Council (14 September 1964) : *AAS* 56 (1964), 813 ; Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter *Communiois Notio* (28 May 1992), 9, 11-14 : *AAS* 85 (1993), 843-845.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 22 : Code of Canon Law, cc. 337, 749 § 2 ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, cc. 50, 597 § 2.

Peter the Bishops, both as individuals and united among themselves as a College, find the perpetual and visible principle and foundation of unity in faith and of communion.²⁰⁹

The Diocesan Bishop in relation to the Church's supreme authority

56. The Second Vatican Council teaches that, "as successors of the Apostles, the Bishops in the Dioceses entrusted to them possess *per se* all ordinary, proper and immediate power needed for the exercise of their pastoral office (*munus pastorale*), with no prejudice whatsoever to the power which, by virtue of his office, the Roman Pontiff possesses of reserving cases to himself or to some other authority".²¹⁰

In the Synod Hall the question was raised whether the relationship between the Bishop and the Church's supreme authority could be treated in the light of the principle of subsidiarity, especially with regard to relations between individual Bishops and the Roman Curia. Hope was expressed that this relationship, in accordance with an ecclesiology of communion, could be characterized by respect for the competence of each and thus contribute to a greater decentralization. It was also asked that a

²⁰⁹ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 23.

²¹⁰ Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 8.

study be made of the possibility of applying this principle to the life of the Church, without prejudice however to the fact that a constitutive principle for the exercise of episcopal authority is the hierarchical communion of the individual Bishops with the Roman Pontiff and the College of Bishops.

As we know, the principle of subsidiarity was formulated by my venerable predecessor Pope Pius XI with reference to civil society.²¹¹ The Second Vatican Council, while never employing the term "subsidiarity", did encourage a sharing between Church structures and opened the way for new reflection on the theology of the episcopate, and this is bearing fruit in the concrete application of the principle of collegiality to ecclesial communion. All the same, the Synod Fathers considered that, as far as the exercise of episcopal authority is concerned, the concept of subsidiarity has proved ambiguous, and they called for a deeper theological investigation of the nature of episcopal authority in the light of the principle of communion.²¹²

In the Synodal Assembly there was considerable discussion of the principle of communion.²¹³ This is an organic communion

²¹¹ Cf. Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo Anno* (15 May 1931) : *AAS* 23 (1931), 203.

²¹² Cf. *Propositio* 20.

²¹³ Cf. *Relatio post disceptationem*, 15-17 : *L'Osservatore Romano*, 14 October 2001, p. 4 ; *Propositio* 20.

inspired by the image of the Body of Christ which the Apostle Paul uses in order to emphasize the functions of complementarity and mutual help between the different members of the one body (cf. *1 Cor* 12 :12-31).

If recourse to the principle of communion is to be made correctly and effectively, certain points of reference must always be kept in mind. Account will first have to be made of the fact that within his particular Church the Diocesan Bishop possesses all ordinary, proper and immediate power needed for carrying out his pastoral ministry. He therefore has a proper sphere for the independent exercise of this authority, a sphere recognized and protected by universal law.²¹⁴ On the other hand, the Bishop's power coexists with the supreme power of the Roman Pontiff, which is itself episcopal, ordinary and immediate over all the individual Churches and their groupings, and over all the pastors and faithful.²¹⁵

Another firmly established point to be kept in mind is that the unity of the Church is grounded in the unity of the episcopate, which, in order to be one, requires that there be a Head of the College. Analogously, the Church, in order to be one, calls for a Church that is Head of the

²¹⁴ Cf. Code of Canon Law, c. 381 § 1 ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, c. 178.

²¹⁵ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 22 ; Code of Canon Law, cc. 331 and 333 ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, cc. 43 and 45 § 1.

Churches, the Church of Rome, whose Bishop, the Successor of Peter, is the Head of the College.²¹⁶ Consequently, "for each particular Church to be fully Church, that is, the particular presence of the universal Church, with all its essential elements, and hence constituted after the model of the universal Church, there must be present in it, as a proper element, the supreme authority of the Church [...] The primacy of the Bishop of Rome and the Episcopal College are proper elements of the universal Church that are 'not derived from the particularity of the Churches', but are nevertheless interior to each particular Church [...] The ministry of the Successor of Peter as something interior to each particular Church is a necessary expression of that fundamental mutual interiority between universal Church and particular Church".²¹⁷

The Church of Christ, in her mark of catholicity, is fully realized in each particular Church, which receives all the natural and supernatural means needed to carry out the mission which God has entrusted to the Church to accomplish in the world. Among these means there is also the ordinary, proper and immediate power of the Bishop, required for the exercise of his pastoral ministry (*munus pastorale*), but whose

²¹⁶ Cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter *Communiois Notio* (28 May 1992), 12 : *AAS* 85 (1993), 845-846.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 13 : *loc. cit.*, 846.

exercise is subject to universal laws and to cases established by law or by a decree of the Supreme Pontiff where it is reserved to the supreme authority or to some other ecclesiastical authority.²¹⁸

The capacity of proper governance, including the exercise of the authentic magisterium,²¹⁹ which of its nature pertains to the Bishop in his Diocese, is an inherent part of the mysterious reality of the Church, whereby the universal Church is immanent within the particular Church together with her supreme authority, that is, the Roman Pontiff and the College of Bishops, who possess supreme, full, ordinary and immediate power over all the faithful and their pastors.²²⁰

In accordance with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, it must be stated that the functions of teaching (*munus docendi*) and governing (*munus regendi*) – and hence the corresponding power of magisterium and of governance – are by their nature to be exercised in the particular Church by each Diocesan Bishop in hierarchical communion with the Head of the

²¹⁸ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 27 ; Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 8 ; Code of Canon Law, c. 381 § 1 ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, c. 178.

²¹⁹ Cf. Code of Canon Law, c. 753 ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, c. 600.

²²⁰ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 22 ; Code of Canon Law, cc. 333 § 1, 336 ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, cc. 43, 45 § 1, 49.

College and the College itself.²²¹ This does not weaken episcopal authority, but reinforces it, for the bonds of hierarchical communion linking the Bishops to the Apostolic See necessarily demand a coordination of responsibilities on the part of Diocesan Bishops and the supreme authority which is dictated by the nature of the Church herself. It is the same divine law which limits the exercise of both. Consequently, the power of Bishops "is not diminished by the supreme and universal power, but on the contrary it is affirmed, strengthened and vindicated by it, since the Holy Spirit unfailingly preserves the form of government established in his Church by Christ the Lord".²²²

Pope Paul VI expressed this well at the opening of the third session of the Second Vatican Council : "Just as you, venerable Brothers in the episcopate, spread throughout the world, in order to bring about and demonstrate the Church's true catholicity, have need of a center, of a principle of unity in faith and communion, such as you find in this Chair of Peter ; so too We need you to be closely associated with Us, in order to enable the Apostolic See always to reflect its eminence and its human and historical

²²¹ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 21 ; Code of Canon Law, c. 375 § 2.

²²² Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 27 ; cf. Code of Canon Law, c. 333 § 1 ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, c. 45 § 1.

significance, and, indeed, so that its faith will be harmoniously preserved, its duties carried out in exemplary manner and comfort given to it in its tribulations".²²³

The reality of communion, which is the basis of all intraecclesial relationships²²⁴ and which was also emphasized in the Synod discussions, is a relation of reciprocity between the Roman Pontiff and the Bishops. Indeed, if on the one hand the Bishop, in order to express fully his own office and to establish the catholicity of his Church, must exercise the power of governance proper to him (*munus regendi*) in hierarchical communion with the Roman Pontiff and with the College of Bishops, on the other hand the Roman Pontiff, the Head of the College, in the exercise of his ministry as Supreme Pastor of the Church (*munus supremi Ecclesiae pastoris*) must always act in communion with all the other Bishops and indeed with the whole Church.²²⁵ Consequently, in the communion of the Church, just as the Bishop is never alone but always related to the College and its Head and sustained by them, so also the Roman Pontiff is never alone but is always related

²²³ Cf. Paul VI, Address for the Opening of the Third Session of the Council (14 September 1964) : *AAS* 56 (1964), 813.

²²⁴ Cf. Synod of Bishops, Second Extraordinary General Assembly, Final Report *Exeunte Coetu* (7 December 1985), C.1 : *L'Osservatore Romano*, 10 December 1985), 7.

²²⁵ Cf. Code of Canon Law, c. 333 § 2 ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, c. 45 § 2.

to the Bishops and sustained by them. This is yet another reason why the exercise of the supreme power of the Roman Pontiff does not destroy, but affirms, strengthens and vindicates the ordinary, proper and immediate power of each Bishop in his particular Church.

Visits "ad Limina Apostolorum"

57. A manifestation and means of communion between the Bishops and the Chair of Peter is the visit *ad Limina Apostolorum*.²²⁶ This event has three principal moments, each with its own proper meaning.²²⁷ The first is the pilgrimage to the tombs of the Princes of the Apostles Peter and Paul, which evokes that one faith to which they bore witness in Rome by their martyrdom.

Closely linked to this moment is the meeting with the Successor of Peter. On the occasion of their visit *ad Limina*, the Bishops gather round him and bring about, in accordance with the principle of catholicity, a sharing of gifts between all those goods which the Spirit makes present in the Church on both the particular and local level and on the universal level.²²⁸ What then takes place is not simply an exchange of information but primarily the affirmation and the

²²⁶ Cf. *Propositio* 27.

²²⁷ Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* (28 June 1988), Art. 31 : *AAS* 80 (1988), 868 ; *Adnexum* I, 6 : *ibid.*, 916-917 ; Code of Canon Law, c. 400 § 1 ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, c. 208.

²²⁸ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 13.

consolidation of collegiality (*collegialis confirmatio*) in the body of the Church, which gives rise to unity in diversity and generates a kind of "perichoresis" between the universal Church and the particular Churches which can be compared to the movement whereby the blood sets out from the heart for the extremities of the body and from them returns to the heart.²²⁹ The vital lymph which comes from Christ unites all the parts like the sap of the vine which goes out to the branches (cf. *Jn* 15:5). This is made particularly clear in the Eucharist which the Bishops celebrate with the Pope. Every Eucharist is celebrated in communion with one's own Bishop, with the Roman Pontiff and with the College of Bishops, and through them with the faithful of the particular Church and of the whole Church, so that the universal Church is present in the particular Church and the particular Church becomes part, together with the other particular Churches, of the communion of the universal Church.

From the earliest centuries the ultimate reference of communion is to the Church of Rome, where Peter and Paul gave their testimony of faith. Indeed, by virtue of her pre-eminent position, every Church has to agree with this Church, for she is the ultimate guarantee of the

²²⁹ Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus*, *Adnexum* I, 2; I, 5: *AAS* 80 (1989), 913, 915.

integrity of the tradition handed down by the Apostles.²³⁰ The Church of Rome presides over the universal communion of charity,²³¹ safeguards legitimate differences and yet is vigilant to ensure that particularity not only does not harm unity but serves it.²³² All this involves the need for communion on the part of the various Churches with the Church of Rome, so that all may remain in the integrity of the Apostolic Tradition and in the unity of canonical discipline for the safeguarding of the faith, the sacraments and the concrete life of holiness. This communion of the Churches is expressed by the hierarchical communion of the individual Bishops and the Roman Pontiff.²³³ From the communion *cum Petro et sub Petro* of all the Bishops, brought about in charity, there emerges the duty for all to cooperate with the Successor of Peter for the good of the whole Church and therefore of every particular Church. The visit *ad Limina* is directed precisely to this end.

The third moment of the visit *ad Limina* is the meeting with those in charge of the offices of the Roman Curia: in these discussions the Bishops have direct access to the individual

²³⁰ Cf. Saint Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 3, 3, 2 : PG 7, 848.

²³¹ Cf. Saint Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Romanos*, 1 : 1 : PG 5 : 685.

²³² Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 13.

²³³ Cf. *ibid.*, 21-22 ; Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 4.

offices responsible for handling certain issues and problems, and thus are introduced to various aspects of common pastoral concern. In this regard, the Synod Fathers asked that, as a sign of mutual knowledge and trust, there be more frequent contacts between the Bishops, individually or assembled in Episcopal Conferences, and the offices of the Roman Curia,²³⁴ so that the latter, by being directly informed about the concrete problems of the Churches, will be better able to carry out their universal service.

It cannot be doubted that the visits *ad Limina*, together with the quinquennial report on the state of the Dioceses,²³⁵ are an effective way of meeting the need for shared knowledge which is part of the reality of communion between the Bishops and the Roman Pontiff. The presence of Bishops in Rome for this visit can be a fitting occasion for them to obtain a quick reply to questions which they have presented to the various offices and, on the other hand, in response to a desire which they themselves have expressed, an opportunity for an individual or collective consultation about the preparation of documents of general importance. On occasion the Bishops can be appropriately informed, prior to publication, of documents

²³⁴ Cf. *Propositiones* 26 and 27.

²³⁵ Cf. Code of Canon Law, c. 399 ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, c. 206.

which the Holy See intends to issue for the Church as a whole or specifically for their particular Churches.

The Synod of Bishops

58. In accordance with a now consolidated experience, every General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, which is in some way expressive of the episcopate, demonstrates in a particular manner the spirit of communion uniting the Bishops with the Roman Pontiff, and the Bishops among themselves, by making a solid ecclesial judgment, through the working of the Spirit, concerning various problems affecting the life of the Church.²³⁶

As we know, during the Second Vatican Council the need was felt for the Bishops to be able to assist the Roman Pontiff more effectively in the exercise of his office. It was precisely in view of this that my venerable predecessor Pope Paul VI instituted the Synod of Bishops.²³⁷ Through this body concrete expression is given to the spirit of collegiality and the solicitude of the Bishops for the good of the whole Church.

The passage of the years has demonstrated how the Bishops, in union of faith and charity, can by their counsel offer significant assistance to

²³⁶ Cf. *Propositio* 25.

²³⁷ Cf. *Motu Proprio Apostolica Sollicitudo* (15 September 1965): *AAS* 57 (1965), 775-780; Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 5.

the Roman Pontiff in the exercise of his apostolic ministry, both for the preservation of faith and morals and for the observance of ecclesiastical discipline. The exchange of information about particular Churches, also by facilitating a convergence of judgments on questions of doctrine, is a valuable means of reinforcing communion.²³⁸

Every General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops is a powerful ecclesial experience, even if some of its practical procedures can always be perfected.²³⁹ The Bishops assembled in Synod represent in the first place their own Churches, but they are also attentive to the contributions of the Episcopal Conferences which selected them and whose views about questions under discussion they then communicate. They thus express the recommendation of the entire hierarchical body of the Church and finally, in a certain sense, the whole Christian people, whose pastors they are.

The Synod is an event which makes it particularly evident that the Successor of Peter, in carrying out his office, is always closely joined in communion with the other Bishops and with the

²³⁸ Cf. Paul VI, *Motu Proprio Apostolica Sollicitudo* (15 September 1965), II : *AAS* 57 (1965), 776-777 ; Address to the Synod Fathers (30 September 1967) : *AAS* 59 (1967), 970-971.

²³⁹ Cf. *Propositio* 25.

whole Church.²⁴⁰ In this regard, the Code of Canon Law states : "It is the role of the Synod of Bishops to discuss the questions on their agenda and to express their desires about them but not to resolve them or issue decrees about them, unless the Roman Pontiff in certain cases has endowed the Synod with deliberative power, and, in this event, it is his role to ratify its decision".²⁴¹ The fact that the Synod ordinarily has only a consultative role does not diminish its importance. In the Church the purpose of any collegial body, whether consultative or deliberative, is always the search for truth or the good of the Church. When it is therefore a question involving the faith itself, the *consensus ecclesiae* is not determined by the tallying of votes, but is the outcome of the working of the Spirit, the soul of the one Church of Christ.

Precisely because the Synod is at the service of truth and the Church, as an expression of true co-responsibility by the whole episcopate in union with its Head for the good of the Church, when the Bishops give their vote, be it consultative or deliberative, together with the other members of the Synod who are not Bishops, they express their participation in the governance of the universal Church. Like my

²⁴⁰ Cf. Code of Canon Law, c. 333 § 2 ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, c. 45 § 2.

²⁴¹ c. 343.

venerable predecessor Paul VI, I have always valued the proposals and views expressed by the Synod Fathers, and have included them in the process of drawing up the document which presents the results of the Synod and which, precisely for this reason, I like to describe as "post-synodal".

Communion between the Bishops and the Churches at the local level

59. In addition to the universal level, there are many different forms which can and do express episcopal communion and therefore solicitude for all the sister Churches. The relationships of exchange between Bishops thus go well beyond their institutional meetings. A lively awareness of the collegial dimension of the ministry bestowed on them should impel them to bring about among themselves, especially within the same Episcopal Conference, on both the provincial and regional levels, a variety of expressions of sacramental fraternity, ranging from mutual acceptance and esteem to the various manifestations of charity and practical cooperation.

As I have written, "Much has been done since the Second Vatican Council for the reform of the Roman Curia, the organization of Synods and the functioning of Episcopal Conferences. But there is certainly much more to be done, in order to realize all the potential of these

instruments of communion, which are especially appropriate today in view of the need to respond promptly and effectively to the issues which the Church must face in these rapidly changing times".²⁴² The new century must find us more committed than ever to improving and developing ways and means of ensuring and guaranteeing communion between the Bishops and between the Churches.

Every action of the Bishop carried out in the exercise of his proper pastoral ministry is always an action carried out *in the College*. Whether it is an exercise of the ministry of the word or of governance in his particular Church, or a decision made with his brother Bishops regarding other particular Churches within the same Episcopal Conference in the area of the province or region, it always remains an action *in the College*, since it is carried out while preserving communion with other Bishops and with the Head of the College, as well as engaging the Bishop's own pastoral responsibility. All this takes place not just for the sake of humanly convenient coordination, but rather out of a concern for the other Churches, based on the fact that each Bishop is part of and assembled in a Body or College. Every Bishop is at once responsible, albeit in different ways, for

²⁴² Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6 January 2001), 44 : *AAS* 93 (2003), 298.

his particular Church, the neighbouring sister Churches and the universal Church.

The Synod Fathers rightly reaffirmed that : "Living in episcopal communion, the individual Bishops should sense as their own the difficulties and sufferings of their brother Bishops. In order to reinforce and strengthen this episcopal communion, individual Bishops and individual Episcopal Conferences should carefully consider the means that their own Churches have for helping their poorer counterparts".²⁴³ We know that such poverty can consist in a severe shortage of priests or other pastoral workers, or in a serious lack of material resources. In both cases it is the proclamation of the Gospel which suffers. For this reason, following the exhortation of the Second Vatican Council,²⁴⁴ I endorse the thinking of the Synod Fathers, who expressed the hope that relations of fraternal solidarity will be promoted between the Churches of ancient evangelization and the so-called "young Churches", also by setting up forms of "twinning" which find concrete expression in the sharing of experiences and pastoral workers, and financial aid. This will confirm the image of the Church as

²⁴³ *Propositio* 31 ; Cf. John Paul II, *Motu Proprio Apostolos Suos* (21 May 1998), 13 : *AAS* 90 (1998), 650-651.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops *Christus Dominus*, 6.

"God's family," in which the stronger support the weaker for the benefit of all.²⁴⁵

In this way the communion of the Bishops finds embodiment within the communion of the Church. Their communion is also expressed in loving concern for those pastors who, more than their brother Bishops, and for reasons primarily linked to local situations, have endured or sadly continue to endure sufferings, most often in union with the sufferings of their faithful. One category of pastors worthy of particular attention, due to the growing numbers of its members, is that of Bishops Emeritus. To them, in the concluding liturgy of the Tenth Ordinary General Assembly, together with the Synod Fathers, I often turned my thoughts. The whole Church has great respect for these our dear Brothers who are still important members of the College of Bishops, and is grateful for the pastoral service which they rendered and continue to render by putting their wisdom and experience at the disposal of the community. Competent authority will not fail to make good use of their personal spiritual patrimony, which also includes a valuable part of the historical memory of the Churches which they led for many years. It is our duty to see that they are ensured conditions of spiritual and financial security in the humane conditions which they reasonably desire. Study should also

²⁴⁵ Cf. *Propositio* 32.

be given to the possibility of continuing to make use of their skills in the various agencies of the Episcopal Conferences.²⁴⁶

The Eastern Catholic Churches

60. In the same context of communion between the Bishops and the Churches, the Synod Fathers paid particular attention to the Eastern Catholic Churches, and once again considered the richness of their venerable and ancient traditions, which constitute a living treasure which coexists with comparable expressions in the Latin Church. Together they shed greater light on the Catholic unity of God's holy people.²⁴⁷

There can be no doubt that the Catholic Churches of the East, due to their spiritual, historical, theological, liturgical and disciplinary closeness to the Orthodox Churches and the other Eastern Churches not yet fully in communion with the Catholic Church, are especially entitled to contribute to the promotion of Christian unity, especially in the East. Like all the Churches, they are called to do this through prayer and an exemplary Christian life ; moreover, as their own specific contribution, they are called to unite their religious fidelity to the ancient Eastern traditions.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Cf. *Propositio* 33.

²⁴⁷ Cf. *Propositio* 21.

²⁴⁸ Cf. *Propositio* 22.

The Patriarchal Churches and their Synods

61. Among the institutions characteristic of the Eastern Catholic Churches are the Patriarchal Churches. These belong to those groupings of Churches which, as the Second Vatican Council states,²⁴⁹ by God's Providence, were organically constituted with the passage of time and enjoy both proper discipline and liturgical usages, and a common theological and spiritual heritage, even as they continue to preserve the unity of faith and the one divine constitution of the universal Church. Their particular dignity comes from the fact that they, somewhat like mothers of faith, have given birth to other Churches which are in some sense their daughters, and have remained linked to them by a close bond of charity in the sacramental life and in mutual respect for rights and duties.

In the Church the institution of the Patriarchate is truly ancient. Already attested to at the first Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, it was recognized by the first ecumenical Councils and remains the traditional form of governance in the Eastern Churches.²⁵⁰ In its origin and particular structure, however, it is of ecclesiastical institution. For this reason the Second Vatican

²⁴⁹ Cf. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 23 ; Decree on the Eastern Catholic Churches *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 11.

²⁵⁰ Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution *Sacri Canones* (18 October 1990) : *AAS* 82 (1990), 1037.

Ecumenical Council expresses the desire that : "Where there is a need, new patriarchates [are] to be set up. This is reserved to an ecumenical council or to the Roman Pontiff".²⁵¹ Those in the Eastern Church who exercise supra-episcopal and supralocal power – such as the Patriarchs and the Synod of Bishops of the Patriarchal Churches – participate in the Church's supreme authority which the Successor of Peter has over the entire Church and they exercise this power with respect not only to that of the primacy of the Roman Pontiff,²⁵² but also to that of the office of the individual Bishops, without intruding into their areas of competence or limiting the free exercise of the functions proper to them.

Relations between the Bishops of a Patriarchal Church and the Patriarch, who for his part is Bishop of the Patriarchal Eparchy, develop on the foundation already laid down in antiquity in the Canons of the Apostles : "The Bishops of each nation should know who among them is the first and should consider him as their head and do nothing of importance without his assent. Each should be concerned only with what regards his own district and its dependent territories ; but at the same time he should do nothing without the assent of all. In this way concord will reign and God will be glorified through Christ in the

²⁵¹ Decree on the Catholic Eastern Churches *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 11.

²⁵² Cf. Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, cc. 76 and 77.

Holy Spirit".²⁵³ This canon expresses the Eastern Churches' ancient practice of synodality, while presenting its theological basis and its doxological significance, for it clearly affirms that the synodal action of the Bishops in concord gives worship and glory to the Triune God.

The synodal life of the Patriarchal Churches must therefore be acknowledged as an effective implementation of the collegial dimension of the episcopal ministry. All legitimately consecrated Bishops take part in the Synod of their Patriarchal Church as the pastors of a portion of the People of God. Nonetheless, the role of the "*primus*," that is, the Patriarch, is acknowledged as an element which in its own way is constitutive of the collegial action. There can be no collegial action without a "*primus*" who is recognized as such. Synodality does not destroy or diminish the legitimate autonomy of each Bishop in the governance of his own Church ; rather it affirms the spirit of collegiality of the Bishops who are coresponsible for all the particular Churches within the Patriarchate.

The Patriarchal Synod is recognized as possessing true power of governance. It elects the Patriarch and the Bishops for offices within the territory of the Patriarchal Church, and chooses candidates for the episcopacy for offices beyond the confines of the Patriarchal Church who are

²⁵³ Cf. *Canones Apostolorum*, VIII, 47, 34 : ed. F.X. Funk, I, 572-574.

then proposed to the Roman Pontiff for appointment.²⁵⁴ In addition to the consent or consultation needed for the validity of determined acts within the competence of the Patriarch, the Synod can also issue laws which are binding within – and in the case of liturgical laws even beyond – the confines of the Patriarchal Church.²⁵⁵ The Synod is also, without prejudice to the competence of the Apostolic See, the superior tribunal within the confines of the Patriarchal Church.²⁵⁶ For the handling of more important affairs, especially those regarding the updating of the forms and modalities of the apostolate and ecclesiastical discipline, the Patriarch and the Patriarchal Synod will make use of the consultative collaboration of the Patriarchal Assembly, which the Patriarch convenes at least once every five years.²⁵⁷

The organization of the Metropolitan See and of Ecclesiastical Provinces

62. One concrete way of fostering communion between the Bishops and solidarity between Churches is to restore vitality to the ancient institution of Ecclesiastical Provinces, in which the Metropolitan is an instrument and sign both of fraternity between the Bishops of the

²⁵⁴ Cf. Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, cc. 110 § 3 and 149.

²⁵⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, cc. 110 § 1 and 150 §§ 2, 3.

²⁵⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, cc. 110 § 2 and 1062.

²⁵⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, cc. 140-143.

Province and of their communion with the Roman Pontiff.²⁵⁸ Given the similarity of the problems encountered by individual Bishops and the fact that their limited number can enable greater understanding, common pastoral undertakings will certainly be better planned in meetings of Bishops from the same Province and especially in Provincial Councils.

Wherever it is considered appropriate for the common good to erect Ecclesiastical Regions, a similar function can be carried out by meetings of Bishops of the same Region or by Plenary Councils. Here it is necessary to reaffirm what was stated by the Second Vatican Council : "The venerable institutions of Synods and Councils should flourish with renewed vigour, so that by this means more suitable and effective provision may be made for the increase of faith and the maintenance of discipline in the different Churches as required by the circumstances of the times".²⁵⁹ In these assemblies the Bishops will be able to act in expressing their communion not only with one another but with all the components of that portion of the People of God entrusted to them ; in Councils these components are represented by the norm of law.

²⁵⁸ Cf. *Propositio* 28 ; Code of Canon Law, c. 437 § 1 ; Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches, c. 156 § 1.

²⁵⁹ Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, 36.

Particular Councils, precisely because they involve the participation of priests, deacons, men and women religious and lay persons, albeit with a consultative vote only, are an immediate expression not only of communion between the Bishops but also of communion between the Churches. As a solemn ecclesial occasion, Particular Councils also demand careful thought in their preparation, which involves all the categories of the faithful, so that they can be a fitting place for decisions of greater importance, especially regarding the faith. The place of Particular Councils cannot therefore be taken by Episcopal Conferences, as the Second Vatican Council made clear when it expressed the hope that Particular Councils would take on renewed vigour. Episcopal Conferences can however be most helpful for the preparation of Plenary Councils.²⁶⁰

Episcopal Conferences

63. The foregoing is in no way meant to play down the importance and usefulness of Conferences of Bishops, which were given an institutional configuration by the Council and more precisely determined by the Code of Canon Law and the recent *Motu Proprio Apostolos Suos*.²⁶¹ In the Eastern Catholic Churches, comparable institutions are the assemblies of hierarchs of the

²⁶⁰ Cf. Code of Canon Law, cc. 441, 443.

²⁶¹ Cf. *AAS* 90 (1998), 641-658.

different Churches *sui iuris* provided for by the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches. In these assemblies, "by sharing the insights of wisdom born of experience and by the exchange of views, the pooling of resources is achieved for the common good of the Churches, so that unity of action is fostered, common works are facilitated, the good of religion is more readily promoted and ecclesiastical discipline is preserved more effectively".²⁶²

Today, as the Synod Fathers observed, these assemblies of are a valuable means for giving expression and practical implementation to the Bishops' collegial spirit. Episcopal Conferences should therefore be used to their full potential.²⁶³ Indeed, "they have developed significantly and have become the preferred means for the Bishops of a country or a specific territory to exchange views, consult with one another and cooperate in promoting the common good of the Church ; 'in recent years they have become a concrete, living and efficient reality throughout the world.' Their importance is seen in the fact that they contribute effectively to unity between the Bishops, and thus to the unity of the Church, since they are a most helpful means of strengthening ecclesial communion".²⁶⁴

²⁶² c. 322.

²⁶³ Cf. *Propositiones* 29 and 30.

Since membership in Episcopal Conferences is limited to Bishops and all those equivalent in law to Diocesan Bishops, even if not possessing the episcopal character,²⁶⁵ the immediate theological foundation of Episcopal Conferences, unlike that of Particular Councils, is the collegial dimension of responsibility for episcopal governance. Only indirectly is it communion between the Churches.

In any event, since Episcopal Conferences are permanent bodies which meet periodically, they will be effective if their role is considered auxiliary vis-à-vis the role which the individual Bishops carry out by divine law in their Church. On the level of the individual Church, the Diocesan Bishop, in the Lord's name, shepherds the flock entrusted to him as a proper, ordinary and immediate pastor, and his acts are strictly personal, not collegial, albeit prompted by a spirit of communion. Consequently, on the level of groupings of particular Churches by geographical areas (nations, regions, etc.), the Bishops set over the individual Churches do not jointly exercise their pastoral care through collegial acts comparable to those of the College of Bishops, which as a theological subject is indivisible.²⁶⁶ The

²⁶⁴ John Paul II, Motu Proprio *Apostolos Suos* (21 May 1998), 6 : *AAS* 90 (1998), 645-646.

²⁶⁵ Cf. Code of Canon Law, c. 450.

²⁶⁶ Cf. John Paul II, Motu Proprio *Apostolos Suos* (21 May 1998), 10, 12 : *AAS* 90 (1998), 648-650.

Bishops of the same Episcopal Conference, assembled at their meetings, exercise jointly, for the good of their faithful and within the limits of the areas of competence granted them by law or by mandate of the Apostolic See, only some of the functions deriving from their pastoral ministry (*munus pastorale*).²⁶⁷

Certainly the more numerous Episcopal Conferences, in order to carry out their service to the individual Bishops who are members, and consequently to the individual Churches, require a complex organization. Even so, "an excessively bureaucratic development of offices and commissions operating between plenary sessions"²⁶⁸ is to be avoided. "Episcopal Conferences with their commissions and offices exist to be of help to the Bishops and not to substitute for them",²⁶⁹ and even less to create an intermediate structure between the Apostolic See and individual Bishops. Episcopal Conferences can provide valuable assistance to the Apostolic See by expressing their views with regard to specific problems of a more general nature.²⁷⁰

Episcopal Conferences also express and encourage the collegial spirit of union between

²⁶⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, Nos. 12, 13, 19 : *loc. cit.*, 649-651, 653-654 ; Code of Canon Law, c. 381 § 1 ; 447 ; 455 § 1.

²⁶⁸ John Paul II, Motu Proprio *Apostolos Suos* (21 May 1998), 18 : *AAS* 90 (1998), 653.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁰ Cf. *Propositio* 25.

Bishops and, consequently, communion between the different Churches ; they establish between Churches, especially neighbouring ones, close relations in the pursuit of a greater good.²⁷¹ This can be done in various ways, through councils, symposia and federations. Of particular importance are continental Bishops' meetings, which nonetheless never assume the areas of competence belonging to Episcopal Conferences. Such meetings are of great help in fostering between the Episcopal Conferences of different nations that cooperation which in this time of "globalization" is particularly necessary for meeting challenges and for bringing about a true "globalization of solidarity".²⁷²

The Church's unity and ecumenical dialogue

64. The Lord Jesus' prayer for unity between his disciples (*ut unum sint* : Jn 17 :21) is for every Bishop a pressing summons to a specific apostolic duty. This unity is not to be looked for as the fruit of our own efforts ; it is first and foremost a gift of the Holy Trinity to the Church. This however does not dispense Christians from making every effort, beginning with prayer itself, to hasten the journey towards full unity. In response to the Lord's prayers and his will and to the offering he made on the Cross in order to gather together the scattered children of God (cf.

²⁷¹ Cf. Code of Canon Law, c. 459 § 1.

²⁷² Cf. *Propositio* 30.

Jn 11 :52), the Catholic Church is irrevocably committed to the ecumenical dialogue, which is crucial for the effectiveness of her witness before the world. It is essential to persevere on the path of the dialogue of truth and love.

Many Synod Fathers mentioned the specific vocation of each Bishop to promote this dialogue in his Diocese and develop it *in veritate et caritate* (cf. *Eph* 4 :15). The scandal of division between Christians is felt by all to be a sign which contradicts Christian hope. The practical means for promoting ecumenical dialogue have been shown to consist in a better mutual understanding between the Catholic Church and the other Churches and Ecclesial Communities which are not in full communion with her, in suitable meetings and initiatives, and above all in the witness of charity. Indeed, there exists an ecumenism of daily life, made up of mutual acceptance, listening and cooperation, the last of which is singularly effective.

On the other hand, the Synod Fathers also noted the danger of ill-considered gestures, signs of an "impatient ecumenism" which can do harm to the journey being made towards full unity. For this reason it is most important that the correct principles of ecumenical dialogue be accepted and practised by all, and emphasized in the seminary training of candidates for the sacred ministry, in parishes and in other ecclesial structures. The

inner life of the Church must offer a witness of unity in respect and a greater openness to the acceptance and growth of the great treasure represented by the different theological, spiritual, liturgical and disciplinary traditions.²⁷³

Missionary spirit in the episcopal ministry

65. As members of the Episcopal College, Bishops are consecrated not just for a single Diocese but for the salvation of all mankind.²⁷⁴ This teaching of the Second Vatican Council was recalled by the Synod Fathers in order to emphasize the fact that each Bishop needs to be conscious of the missionary character of his pastoral ministry. All his pastoral activity should be marked by a missionary spirit capable of awakening and maintaining among the faithful a zeal for the spread of the Gospel. It is the duty of the Bishop to bring about, promote and direct missionary activities and initiatives in his Diocese, including the provision of financial support.²⁷⁵

As was stated in the Synod Hall, it is no less important for him to encourage the missionary dimension in his own particular Church by promoting, in accordance with different situations, fundamental values such as the acknowledgement of one's neighbour, respect for

²⁷³ Cf. *Propositio* 60.

²⁷⁴ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes*, 38.

²⁷⁵ Cf. *Propositio* 63.

cultural diversity and a healthy interaction between different cultures. On the other hand, the increasingly multicultural character of cities and societies, especially as a result of international migration, is creating new situations which present a particular missionary challenge.

During the Synod there were also interventions which raised certain issues about the relationship between Diocesan Bishops and missionary Religious Congregations, and which stressed the need for deeper reflection in this regard. At the same time, there was an acknowledgement of the wealth of experience which a particular Church can receive from Congregations of consecrated life, as a means of keeping the missionary dimension alive among the faithful.

In his zeal for mission, the Bishop should be seen as the servant and witness of hope. Mission is the sure index of our faith in Christ and his love for us : ²⁷⁶men and women of all times are thereby inspired to a new life motivated by hope. In proclaiming the Risen Lord, Christians present the One who inaugurates a new era of history and announce to the world the good news of a complete and universal salvation which contains in itself the pledge of a new world in which pain and injustice will give way to joy and beauty. At

²⁷⁶ Cf. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Missio* (7 December 1990), 11 : *AAS* 83 (1991), 256-260.

the beginning of a new millennium marked by a clearer awareness of the universality of salvation and a realization that the Gospel daily needs to be proclaimed anew, the Synodal Assembly raised an appeal that our commitment to mission should not be lessened but rather expanded, through ever more profound missionary cooperation.

CHAPTER SEVEN. THE BISHOP BEFORE THE CHALLENGES OF THE PRESENT.

"Be of good cheer ; I have overcome the world !" (Jn 16 :33)

66. In sacred Scripture the Church is compared to a flock "which God himself foretold that he would shepherd, and whose sheep, even though governed by human shepherds, are continuously led and nourished by Christ himself, the Good Shepherd and the Prince of Shepherds".²⁷⁷ Does not Jesus himself call his disciples a *pusillus grex* and exhort them not to fear but to have hope (cf. *Lk* 12 :32) ? Jesus often repeated this exhortation to his disciples : "In the world you will have fear ; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world !" (Jn 16 :33). As he was about to return to the Father, he washed the feet of the Apostles and said to them : "Let not your hearts be troubled," and added : "I am the way... No one comes to the Father, but by me" (cf. *Jn*

²⁷⁷ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 6.

14 :1-6). On this "way" which is Christ, the little flock, the Church, has set out, and is led by him, the Good Shepherd, who, "when he has brought out all his own, goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice" (*Jn* 10 :4).

In the image of Jesus Christ, and following in his footsteps, the Bishop also goes forth to proclaim him before the world as the Saviour of mankind, the Saviour of every man and woman. As a missionary of the Gospel, he acts in the name of the Church, which is an expert in humanity and close to the men and women of our time. Consequently, the Bishop, with the strength which comes from the radicalism of the Gospel, also has the duty to unmask false conceptions of man, to defend values being threatened by ideological movements and to discern the truth. With the Apostle he can repeat : "We toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, especially of those who believe" (*1 Tim* 4 :10).

The Bishop's activity should thus be marked by that *parrhesía* which is the fruit of the working of the Spirit (cf. *Acts* 4 :31). Leaving behind his very self in order to proclaim Jesus Christ, the Bishop takes up his mission with confidence and courage, *factus pontifex*, becoming in truth a "bridge" which leads to every man and women. With the burning love of a shepherd he goes out in search of the sheep, following in the footsteps

of Jesus who says : "I have other sheep that are not of this fold ; I must bring them also and they will hear my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd" (*Jn 10 :16*).

The Bishop, promoter of justice and peace

67. Within this missionary context, the Synod Fathers described the Bishop as a prophet of justice. The war of the powerful against the weak has, today more than ever before, created profound divisions between rich and poor. The poor are legion ! Within an unjust economic system marked by significant structural inequities, the situation of the marginalized is daily becoming worse. Today, in many parts of the world, people are starving, while in other places there is opulence. It is above all the poor, the young and refugees who are the victims of these dramatic cases of inequality. In addition, women in many places are demeaned in their dignity as persons, victims of a hedonistic and materialistic culture.

In the face of, and often in the midst of these situations of injustice which inevitably open the door to conflicts and death, the Bishop is the defender of human rights, the rights of human beings made in the image and likeness of God. He proclaims the Church's moral teaching by defending life from conception to its natural end. He likewise proclaims the Church's social teaching, based on the Gospel, and he shows

profound concern for the defence of all who are poor, raising his voice on behalf of the voiceless in order to defend their rights. The Church's social teaching is able to offer hope even in the worst of situations, because, if there is no hope for the poor, there will be no hope for anyone, not even for the so-called rich.

The Bishops vigorously condemned terrorism and genocide, and raised their voice on behalf of those who cry out because of injustice, those who are being persecuted and those who are unemployed, as well as children who are being abused in various and increasingly serious ways. Like holy Church herself, which is in the world the sacrament of intimate union with God and of the unity of the whole human race,²⁷⁸ the Bishop is the defender and the father of the poor, concerned for justice and human rights, and one who brings hope.²⁷⁹

The words of the Synod Fathers, and my own, were explicit and forceful. "During this Synod, we could not close our eyes to many other collective tragedies... A drastic moral change is needed... Some endemic evils, when they are too long ignored, can produce despair in entire populations. How can we keep silent when confronted by the enduring drama of hunger and extreme poverty, in an age where humanity, more

²⁷⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, 1.

²⁷⁹ Cf. *Propositiones* 54-55.

than ever, has the capacity for a just sharing of resources? We must also express our solidarity with the flood of refugees and immigrants, who, because of war, political oppression or economic discrimination, are forced to flee their homeland in search of employment or in the hope of finding peace. The ravages of malaria, the spread of AIDS, illiteracy, the hopelessness of so many children and youth abandoned to life on the streets, the exploitation of women, pornography, intolerance and the unacceptable exploitation of religion for violent purposes, drug trafficking and the sale of arms : the list is not exhaustive ! Still, in the midst of all this distress, the humble take new heart. 'The Lord looks at them and strengthens them. 'Because they rob the afflicted, and the needy sigh, now I will arise,' says the Lord" (*Ps* 12 :5).²⁸⁰

The dramatic picture just painted can only evoke an urgent appeal for peace and a commitment to building peace. The hotbeds of conflict inherited from the past century and from the whole past millennium continue to smoulder. Numerous local conflicts are creating profound wounds between different cultures and nationalities. And how can we fail to mention forms of religious fundamentalism, a constant enemy of dialogue and peace? In many areas the

²⁸⁰ Synod of Bishops, Tenth Ordinary General assembly, *Message* (25 October 2001), 10-11 : *L'Osservatore Romano*, 27 October 2001, p. 5.

world resembles a powder-keg ready to explode and shower immense suffering upon the human family.

In this situation the Church continues to proclaim the peace of Christ who in the Sermon on the Mount proclaimed blessed those who are peacemakers (cf. *Mt* 5 :9). Peace is everyone's responsibility, a responsibility which passes through the thousand little acts which make up everyday life. It awaits its prophets and builders, who should be found especially in the ecclesial communities of which the Bishop is the pastor. Following the example of Jesus, who came to announce freedom to the oppressed and to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord (cf. *Lk* 4 :16-21), the Bishop will be ever ready to show that, as the Church's social teaching makes clear, Christian hope is deeply linked to zeal for the integral promotion of individuals and society.

In the midst of tragically frequent situations of armed conflict, the Bishop, even as he exhorts people to assert their rights, must always remind them that Christians are obliged in all cases to reject vengeance and to be prepared to forgive and to love their enemies.²⁸¹ There can be no justice without forgiveness. Hard as it may be to accept, for any sensible person the matter seems

²⁸¹ Cf. *Propositio* 55.

obvious: true peace is possible only through forgiveness.²⁸²

Interreligious dialogue, especially on behalf of world peace

68. As I have insisted on various occasions, dialogue between the religions must be put at the service of peace between peoples. The different religious traditions possess the resources needed to overcome divisions and to build reciprocal friendship and respect. The Synod appealed to Bishops to promote meetings with the representatives of the world's peoples, in order to reflect carefully on the conflicts and wars which are tearing our world apart, and to identify the paths which can be taken towards a common commitment of justice, concord and peace.

The Synod Fathers strongly emphasized the importance of interreligious dialogue for peace, and asked the Bishops to commit themselves to engage in this important activity in their respective Dioceses. New paths to peace can be blazed by defending religious freedom, which the Second Vatican Council discussed in the Decree *Dignitatis Humanae*, and by working for the education of the younger generation and the proper use of the communications media.²⁸³

²⁸² Cf. John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 2002* (8 December 2001), 8 : *AAS* 94 (2002), 137.

²⁸³ Cf. *Propositiones* 61 and 62.

The horizons of interreligious dialogue, however, are surely wider, and so the Synod Fathers stated once more that such dialogue belongs to the new evangelization, especially in these times when people belonging to different religions are increasingly living together in the same areas, in the same cities and their daily workplaces. Interreligious dialogue thus has a place in the daily life of many Christian families ; for this reason too the Bishops, as teachers of the faith and shepherds of the People of God, must give it proper attention.

When Christians live side-by-side with persons of other religions, they have a particular obligation to testify to the oneness and universality of the saving mystery of Jesus Christ and to the consequent necessity of the Church as the means of salvation for all humanity. "This truth of faith does not lessen the sincere respect which the Church has for the religions of the world, but at the same time, it rules out, in a radical way, that mentality of indifferentism characterized by a religious relativism which leads to the belief that 'one religion is as good as another' ".²⁸⁴ It is clear, then, that interreligious dialogue can never be a substitute for the proclamation and propagation of the faith, which

²⁸⁴ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Christus Dominus* (6 August 2000), 22 : *AAS* 92 (2000), 763.

constitute the primary goal of the Church's preaching, catechesis and mission.

A frank and unambiguous affirmation that human salvation depends on the redemption accomplished by Christ is not an obstacle to dialogue with other religions. In the context of our profession of Christian hope, it cannot be forgotten that it is precisely this hope which is the basis of interreligious dialogue. As the conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate* states: "All nations are one community and have one origin, because God caused the whole human race to dwell on the whole face of the earth. They also have one final end, God, whose providence, manifest goodness and plan of salvation extend to all, until the elect be gathered together in the holy city which the glory of God will illuminate and where the peoples will walk in his light".²⁸⁵

Civil, social and economic life

69. The pastoral activity of the Bishop cannot fail to manifest particular concern for the demands of love and justice arising from the social and economic situation of the poor, the abandoned and the mistreated. In every poor person believers see a special image of Jesus. Their presence within the ecclesial and civil communities is a litmus test of the authenticity of our Christian faith.

²⁸⁵ No. 1.

I would also like to mention briefly the complex phenomenon of globalization, which is one of the features of our world today. Certainly there exists a "globalization" of the economy, finances and culture which is expanding as a result of the rapid progress of information technology. As I have observed on other occasions, this phenomenon calls for careful discernment in order to identify its positive and negative aspects and their consequences for the Church and the whole human race. Bishops can make an important contribution to this discernment by insisting on the urgent need for a globalization in charity, without marginalization. In this regard, the Synod Fathers spoke of the duty of promoting a "globalization of charity" and considered issues associated with the cancellation of foreign debt, which compromises the economies of entire peoples, holding back their social and political progress.²⁸⁶

Without entering into the details of this serious problem, I would only repeat several fundamental points already indicated elsewhere. The Church's vision in this area has three essential and concomitant points of reference: the dignity of the human person, solidarity and subsidiarity. It follows that "the globalized economy must be analyzed in the light of the principles of social justice, respecting the

²⁸⁶ Cf. *Propositio* 56.

preferential option for the poor who must be allowed to take their place in such an economy, and the requirements of the international common good".²⁸⁷ When globalization is joined to the dynamism of solidarity, it is no longer a source of marginalization. Indeed, the globalization of solidarity is a direct consequence of that universal charity which is the heart of the Gospel.

Respect for the environment and the protection of creation

70. The Synod Fathers also addressed the ethical dimension of the ecological question.²⁸⁸ In the deepest sense, a call for the globalization of solidarity also involves the urgent question of the protection of creation and the earth's resources. The "crying out of all creation" spoken of by the Apostle (cf. *Rom* 8 :22) seems today to occur in a reversal of perspectives, since it is no longer a matter of an eschatological tension which awaits the revelation of the sons of God (cf. *Rom* 8 :19), but rather of a paroxysm of death which strives to grip humanity itself in order to destroy it.

Here in fact we encounter the ecological question in its most insidious and perverse form. In effect, "the most profound and serious indication of the moral implications underlying

²⁸⁷ John Paul II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America* (22 January 1999), 55 : *AAS* 91 (1999), 790- 791.

²⁸⁸ Cf. *Propositio* 56.

the ecological problem is the lack of respect for life evident in many of the patterns of environmental pollution. Often, the interests of production prevail over the dignity of workers, while economic interests take priority over the good of individuals and even entire peoples. In these cases, pollution or environmental destruction is the result of an unnatural and reductive vision which at times leads to a genuine contempt for man".²⁸⁹

Clearly, what is called for is not simply a physical ecology, concerned with protecting the habitat of the various living beings, but a *human ecology*, capable of protecting the radical good of life in all its manifestations and of leaving behind for future generations an environment which conforms as closely as possible to the Creator's plan. There is a need for an *ecological conversion*, to which Bishops themselves can contribute by their teaching about the correct relationship of human beings with nature. Seen in the light of the doctrine of God the Father, the maker of heaven and earth, this relationship is one of "stewardship : " human beings are set at the centre of creation as stewards of the Creator.

The Bishop's ministry in the field of health

71. Human concern leads the Bishop to imitate Jesus, the true "Good Samaritan", filled

²⁸⁹ John Paul II, *Message for the 1990 World Day of Peace* (8 December 1989), 7 : *AAS* 82 (1990), 150.

with compassion and mercy, who cares for others without discrimination. Health care represents one of the outstanding challenges of the present time. Tragically, many forms of sickness still persist in different parts of the world, and although science is making tremendous strides in the search for new solutions and better treatments, there are always new situations which pose a threat to physical and mental health.

Within his own Diocese each Bishop, with the help of qualified persons, is called to work for an integral proclamation of the "Gospel of life". When Christians try to humanize medicine and the care of the sick by showing personal concern and closeness to the suffering, they become for everyone a powerful image of Jesus himself, the healer of bodies and souls. Among the instructions which he gave to his Apostles, the Lord included an exhortation to heal the sick (cf. *Mt 10 :8*).²⁹⁰ The organization and promotion of adequate pastoral care for health-care workers should thus be a priority close to the heart of every Bishop.

In a special way, the Synod Fathers felt the need to give forceful expression to their concern for the promotion of an authentic "culture of life" in contemporary society : "Perhaps what most upsets us as pastors is the contempt for human life, from conception to death, as well as the

²⁹⁰ Cf. *Propositio 57*.

breakdown of the family. The Church's 'No' to abortion and euthanasia is a 'Yes' to life, a 'Yes' to the fundamental goodness of creation, a 'Yes' which can move every person in the depths of his conscience, a 'Yes' to the family, the most basic community of hope, which so pleases God that he calls it to become a domestic Church".²⁹¹

The Bishop's pastoral care of migrants

72. The movement of peoples has assumed unprecedented proportions in our day and takes the form of mass movements involving an enormous number of persons. Many of them have fled their countries or been forced to leave them as a result of armed conflicts, unstable economic conditions, political, ethnic and social conflicts, and natural disasters. Despite their differences, all these migrations pose serious questions to our communities about pastoral issues such as evangelization and interreligious dialogue.

Dioceses should make suitable provision for the establishment of pastoral structures capable of receiving these persons and providing them with appropriate pastoral care adapted to their different situations. There is also a need for greater cooperation between neighbouring Dioceses in offering efficient and competent services and in training priests and lay workers

²⁹¹ Synod of Bishops, Tenth Ordinary General assembly, *Message* (25 October 2001), 12 : *L'Osservatore Romano*, 27 October 2001, p. 5.

who are particularly generous and open to this demanding work, above all when it involves legal problems associated with enabling these persons to fit into a new social structure.²⁹²

In this context, the Synod Fathers from the Eastern Catholic Churches once again raised the issue, in some ways new and fraught with serious practical consequences, of the emigration of members of their communities. It is now a fact that a significant number of the faithful of the Eastern Catholic Churches reside habitually and stably outside their countries of origin and the Sees of the Eastern Hierarchies. Understandably, this is an issue which presents daily challenges to the pastoral responsibility of the latter.

The Synod of Bishops consequently called for a deeper study of the ways in which the Catholic Churches of both East and West can establish suitable pastoral structures to meet the needs of members of the faithful living in a state of "diaspora".²⁹³ In any case, it remains the duty of the local Bishops, their differing rites notwithstanding, to act as true fathers to these faithful of the Eastern Rite, and to ensure that they are given pastoral care which respects the specific religious and cultural values which they received at birth and in their earliest Christian formation.

²⁹² Cf. *Propositio* 58.

²⁹³ Cf. *Propositio* 23.

These are only some of the situations which present an especially urgent challenge to Christian witness and to the ministry of Bishops. Accepting responsibility for the world, its problems, its challenges and its hopes is part of our commitment to proclaiming the Gospel of hope. What is at stake is always the future of man, as a "being of hope".

It is understandable that all these new challenges to hope can lead to a temptation to scepticism and loss of confidence. But Christians are capable of facing even the most troubling situations, for the basis of their hope is found in the mystery of the Lord's Cross and Resurrection. This alone is the source from which they draw the strength to take heart and persevere in the service of God, who wills the salvation and integral liberation of all humanity.

CONCLUSION

73. The sheer human complexity of the settings in which the Gospel must be proclaimed today brings spontaneously to mind the Gospel account of the multiplication of the loaves. The disciples are worried about the crowds who, hungering for Jesus' word, have followed him even into the desert. They bring their worries before Jesus and they tell him : "*Dimitte turbas...* Send the crowd away..." (*Lk 9 :12*). Perhaps they

were afraid, genuinely not knowing how to satisfy the hunger of so many people.

Our own hearts might be similarly troubled by the enormity of the problems confronting the Churches and ourselves personally as Bishops. In that case, we should respond with a new *creativity in charity* which is shown not only in more efficient forms of charitable assistance, but even more in an ability to be close to those in need and to make the poor feel that every Christian community is truly their home.²⁹⁴

Jesus, however, has his own way of solving our problems. As if to challenge the Apostles, he tells them: "Why do you not give them something to eat yourselves?" (*Lk* 9:13). We know how the story ended: "All ate and were satisfied. And they took up what was left over, twelve baskets of broken pieces" (*Lk* 9:17). That residual abundance is still present today in the life of the Church!

The Bishops of the third millennium are called to do what was done by so many saintly Bishops throughout history, up to our own time. Like Saint Basil, for example, who even built at the gates of Caesarea a large hospice for those in need, a true citadel of charity, which was called after him the Basiliad: this clearly demonstrates that "the charity of works ensures an

²⁹⁴ Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6 January 2001), 50: *AAS* 93 (2001), 303.

unmistakable efficacy to the charity of words".²⁹⁵ This is the path that we too must walk : the Good Shepherd has entrusted his flock to each Bishop to feed it with his word and to form it by his example.

Where then will we Bishops get the "bread" needed to respond to the many requests which come to us from within and without the Churches and the Church ? We could easily complain, as the Apostles did to Jesus : "Where are we to get bread enough in the desert to feed so great a crowd ?" (*Mt* 15 :33). Where can we find the resources we need ? We can at least point to a few fundamental answers.

Our first, transcendent resource is the love of God poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (cf. *Rom* 5 :5). The love with which God has loved us is so great that it can always sustain us in finding the right ways to touch the hearts of men and women today. At every moment the Lord gives us, by the power of his Spirit, an ability to love and to find the best and most beautiful ways to express that love. We are called to be servants of the Gospel for the hope of the world, yet we know that this hope does not come from us, but from the Holy Spirit, who "does not cease to be the guardian of hope in the human heart : the hope of all human creatures, and especially of those who 'have the

²⁹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*

first fruits of the Spirit' and 'wait for the redemption of their bodies' ".²⁹⁶

Our second resource is the Church, whose members we have become through Baptism, together with countless other brothers and sisters with whom we confess one heavenly Father and drink of the one Spirit of holiness.²⁹⁷ The present situation urges us to make the Church "the home and the school of communion," if we truly wish to respond to the expectations of the world.²⁹⁸

Our communion in the body of Bishops, of which we became members by our consecration, is itself a remarkable resource, since it provides us with valuable support in our efforts to read carefully the sign of the times and to discern clearly what the Spirit is saying to the Churches. At the heart of the College of Bishops there is the support and the solidarity of the Successor of the Apostle Peter, whose supreme and universal power does not destroy but rather affirms, strengthens and vindicates the power of the Bishops, the successors of the Apostles. Here we will need to make the most of the means of building communion which are to be found in the great directives of the Second Vatican Council. Certainly there are circumstances – and

²⁹⁶ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dominum et Vivificantem* (18 May 1986), 67 : *AAS* 78 (1986), 898.

²⁹⁷ Cf. Tertullian, *Apologeticum*, 39, 9 : CCL 1, 151.

²⁹⁸ Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6 January 2001), 43 : *AAS* 93 (2001), 296.

today they are not rare – in which an individual Church or a number of neighbouring Churches find it difficult or practically impossible to provide an adequate response to major problems. It is above all in these cases that recourse to the means of building episcopal communion can provide genuine help.

A final, immediate recourse for a Bishop in search of "bread" to satisfy the hunger of his brothers and sisters is his own particular Church, when the spirituality of communion has taken root as an educative principle "wherever individuals and Christians are formed, wherever ministers of the altar, consecrated persons and pastoral workers are trained, wherever families and communities are built up".²⁹⁹ It is here that we see once more the connection between the Tenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops and the three General Assemblies which immediately preceded it. For a Bishop is never alone : he is not alone in the universal Church and he is not alone in his particular Church.

74. The duty of Bishops at the beginning of a new millennium is thus clearly marked out. It is the same duty as ever : to proclaim the Gospel of Christ, the salvation of the world. But it is a duty which has a new urgency and which calls for cooperation and commitment on the part of the whole People of God. The Bishop needs to be

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

able to count on the members of his diocesan presbyterate and on his deacons, the ministers of the Blood of Christ and of charity ; he needs to be able to count on his consecrated sisters and brothers, called to be for the Church and the world eloquent witnesses of the primacy of God in the Christian life and the power of his love amid the frailty of the human condition ; and he needs to be able to count on the lay faithful, whose greater scope for the apostolate represents for their pastors a source of particular support and a reason for special comfort.

At the conclusion of these reflections, we appreciate how the theme of the Tenth Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops leads each of us Bishops back to all our brothers and sisters in the Church and to all the men and women of the world. Christ sends us to them, even as he once he sent the Apostles (cf. *Mt 28 :19-20*). We need to become, for each and every person, in an outstanding and visible way, a living sign of Jesus Christ, Teacher, Priest and Pastor.³⁰⁰

Venerable Brothers in the Episcopate, Jesus Christ is the icon to which we look as we carry out our ministry as heralds of hope. Like him, we must be ready to offer our own lives for the salvation of those entrusted to our care, as we

³⁰⁰ Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 21.

proclaim and celebrate the triumph of God's merciful love over sin and death.

Let us implore for this great undertaking the intercession of the Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church and Queen of the Apostles. May she, who in the Upper Room supported the prayers of the Apostolic College, obtain for us the grace never to fail in the task of love which Christ has entrusted to us. As a witness to true life, Mary "shines forth for the pilgrim people of God" – and in a particular way for us, their pastors – "as a sign of sure hope and comfort, until the day of the Lord arrives".³⁰¹

Given in Rome, at Saint Peter's, on 16 October 2003, the twenty-fifth anniversary of my election to the Pontificate.

JOHN PAUL II

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 68.