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## 聖職部 實施訓令 堂區團體的牧靈轉變 為推廣教會福傳使命服務

### 引言

1. 梵蒂岡第二屆大公會議對教會學的反思，以及近數十年社會文化層面上顯著的轉變，促使不少地方教會重組其堂區團體的牧靈事務。這使教會獲得新體驗、擴闊了共融的領域，並在牧者們的指導下，得以整合那些以宣揚福音為目標的神恩和召叫，使之更符合今天福傳上的需要。

教宗方濟各在上任之初，便提及「創意」的重要性。「創意」是指「尋找新的途徑」，即「尋找最佳的方式來宣揚福音」。就這一點，教宗曾總結說：「教會及《天主教法典》都給予我們許多可能性和很大的自由來尋找這些新途徑。」<sup>1</sup>

2. 就牧靈方向更新為傳教使命而言，以下實施訓令

<sup>1</sup> 教宗方濟各，〈對羅馬的堂區主任司鐸的訓話〉（2013年9月16日）：<http://cosarestadelgiorno.wordpress.com/2013/09/16>

綱要地提及的各種情況，意味著彌足珍貴的機遇。這訓令邀請所有堂區團體從自身走出去，並為它們提供改革——甚至是結構性的改革——的工具，使它們以共融和合作、相遇和陪伴、富於慈悲與關愛的方式，來宣揚福音。

## 1、牧靈方向轉變

3. 今日教會蒙召促進新福傳，而牧靈方向上的轉變（*La conversione pastorale*），就是「福傳新階段」<sup>2</sup>的基本主題之一，因為這轉變能使基督信徒團體一日比一日更成為有助於人們與基督相遇的聚集點。

為此，教宗曾提出：「如果應該有一些事令人不安，困擾我們良心的，應是這樣的事實：有那麼多弟兄姊妹經歷不到與耶穌基督為人所帶來的力量、光明和慰藉，沒有信仰團體的支持，生活上缺乏意義和目標。我希望，大家行事時莫讓怕出錯的心態作主，卻要怕被關在只有虛假安全感的架構裡，怕被困在只做苛刻判官的規條裡，怕被囚在只以安全為重的習慣裡，而且耶穌要我們照顧門外一大群饑腸轆轆的人，不厭其煩地說：『你們自己給他們一些吃的罷』（谷六37）。」<sup>3</sup>

4. 因受到這份神聖的不安所驅使，教會「雖忠於其傳統，但仍能深入並生活於各式文化中。其結果，則是

2 同樣，《福音的喜樂》宗座勸諭（2013年11月24日），287：《宗座公報》105（2013），1136。

3 同上，49：《宗座公報》105（2013），1040。

教會本身及各民族的文化內容，益加豐富。」<sup>4</sup>福音與文化之間有成果而具創意的交流，會帶來真正的進步：一方面，天主聖言降生在人類歷史中，使之更新；另一方面，「教會……可以並正在受惠於人類社會的進步」，<sup>5</sup>從而深化基督交託給她的使命，為更完善地把它向我們的世代表達出來。

5. 教會宣布：聖言「成了血肉，寄居在我們中間」（若一14）。那樂於與我們同居共處的天主聖言，已被世上的不同民族接納，並以其取之不盡的富饒，<sup>6</sup>啟迪他們去追求更高尚的事物，譬如對天主的渴求、每個人生命的尊嚴、人與人之間的平等、對同一個人類大家庭中的差異給予尊重、以對話作為共同參與的方式、對和平的渴求、以彼此接納作為兄弟情誼和團結互助的表現，以及負責任地關顧大自然。<sup>7</sup>

因此，令人難以想像的是，這訊息竟未傳遍普世，或正逐漸削弱，甚至消失。<sup>8</sup>為使聖言的傳播得以繼續，基督徒團體務必作一個堅持福傳的抉擇，要「足以轉化一切，好使教會的習俗、風格、時期、行事曆、語言和架

4 梵蒂岡第二屆大公會議，《論教會在現代世界》牧職憲章（1965年12月7日），58：《宗座公報》58（1966），1079。

5 同上，44：《宗座公報》58（1966），1065。

6 參閱：敘利亞人聖義範（Efreim il Siro），《四福音合參注》（*Commenti sul Diatessaron*），1，18~19：SC，121，52~53。

7 教宗方濟各，《願祢受讚頌》通諭（2015年5月24日），68：《宗座公報》107（2015），847。

8 參閱：保祿六世，《祂的教會》通諭（1964年8月6日）：《宗座公報》56（1964），639。

構，都足以成為今日世界福傳的管道，而不只是為了教會的自我保全。」<sup>9</sup>

## 2、當今環境下的堂區

6. 這種傳教上的轉變必定帶來一些架構上的改革，所觸及的尤其是那蒙召圍繞著聖言與聖體餐桌的堂區團體。

堂區有悠久的歷史，且自始便在基督徒生活和教會的發展與牧靈工作上扮演著基本的角色。就這一點，聖保祿的書信已露端倪。保祿所寫的一些章節，都向我們展示出像家庭教會一樣的小團體，保祿宗徒直接稱之為一個「家」（參閱：羅十六3~5；格前十六19~20；斐四22）。從這些「家庭」，我們能覺察到首批「堂區」的誕生。

7. 自始以來，堂區就是一個對牧靈特定要求的回應，亦即藉著宣揚信仰和舉行聖事，把福音帶給天主子民。「堂區」（parrocchia）一字的字源就說明了這制度的意義：它是在眾家庭中的一個家庭，<sup>10</sup> 而且它符合耶穌基督降生成人的邏輯——祂在信徒團體中生活和行事，而有形可見的禮儀建築物，正是復活的主在祂子民中間的永久臨在的標記。

<sup>9</sup> 《福音的喜樂》宗座勸諭，27：《宗座公報》105（2013），1031。

<sup>10</sup> 參閱：若望保祿二世，《基督信友平信徒》主教會議後宗座勸諭（1988年12月30日），26：《宗座公報》81（1989），438。

8. 然而，以地域來劃分的堂區，今天必須面對我們時代的一個特色：流動性的加增以及數位文化的興起，擴濶了人的生存空間。的確，一方面，人的生活越來越不被視為只局限於一個固定不變的範圍，卻發展為「一個多元化的地球村」；另一方面，數位文化以一種不可逆轉的方式改變了人類對空間的理解，以及人們——尤其是年輕一代——的語言與行為。

再者，可以很易設想：科技的不斷發展，最終將改變人的思考方式和人對自身和社交生活的理解。生活的迅速轉變、文化模式的交替、交通的便利，以及訊息交流的速度，正在改變人類對空間和時間的感覺。

9. 作為一個由信友所組成的生活團體，堂區所置身的處境就是：人對地域的感覺日漸減弱、人的歸屬地越來越多，而人際關係冒着消失在虛擬世界中的風險，使人對自己與他人的關係失去承擔與責任感。

10. 今天我們察覺到，這些文化上的改變，以及人與地域在關係上的轉變，藉著聖神的臨現，正在教會內推動一次由團體共同作出的嶄新的分辨，即「從合一與共融的角度，用天主的眼光來看實體界。」<sup>11</sup> 因此，有迫切的需要動員整個天主子民去接受聖神的邀請，共同推動與這項教會面容「再年輕化」的過程。

<sup>11</sup> 教宗方濟各，〈公開接見〉（2019年6月12日）：《羅馬觀察報》134（2019年6月13日），1。

### 3、堂區在今日的價值

11. 按照上述的分辨，堂區蒙召去辨別時代的徵兆，好使其服務能更適應信友的需要和時代的改變。堂區的活力需要更新，好讓堂區能按照梵蒂岡第二屆大公會議的文獻及其後的教會訓導，重新發現每位受了洗的信友作為耶穌的門徒及福傳者的召叫。

12. 事實上，有先見之明的梵二大公會議的主教們寫道：「照顧人靈時，該常有傳教精神。」<sup>12</sup> 聖若望保祿二世所指出的，也與此訓導如出一轍：「堂區可以許多其他的形式來加以完善和整合，但它卻常是教會可見架構中最為重要且不可或缺的有機組織」，「使福傳成為所有牧靈行動的樞紐，以及一項最優先、最重要和要特殊地看待的迫切需求。」<sup>13</sup> 本篤十六世便曾教導過：「堂區是一座燈塔，發射信仰之光，從而滿足人心最深層次而又最真誠的渴望，並為人的生命以及家庭生活賦予意義和希望。」<sup>14</sup> 最後，教宗方濟各曾提到：「堂區藉著它所有的活動來鼓勵和培訓它的成員成為福傳者。」<sup>15</sup>

12 梵蒂岡第二屆大公會議，《主教在教會內牧靈職務》法令（1965年10月28日），30：《宗座公報》58（1966），688。

13 若望保祿二世，〈致聖職部大會與會者的講話〉（1984年10月20日），3和4：《訓導》（*Insegnamenti*）VII/2（1984），984和985；參閱：同樣，《論我們時代的教理講授》宗座勸諭（1979年10月16日），67：《宗座公報》71（1979），1332。

14 本篤十六世，〈往羅馬的瑪利亞福傳之母（*Santa Maria dell'Evangelizzazione*）堂區作牧靈探訪時的講道〉（2006年12月10日）：《訓導》（*Insegnamenti*）II/2（2006），795。

15 《福音的喜樂》宗座勸諭，28：《宗座公報》105（2013），

13. 基督徒團體臨在世上，是以傳教作為重點。<sup>16</sup> 為了促進此種臨在，要重新考慮的不僅是一種嶄新的堂區經驗，而且也要考慮堂區司鐸們的職務和使命，讓他們與平信徒攜手合作，履行那作為「世界的鹽與光」（參閱：瑪五13~14）以及「燈台上的燈」（參閱：谷四21）的任務，藉此展現出一個福傳團體的面貌，它能夠正確地解讀時代的標記，為福音生活作言行一致的見證。

14. 由此可見，在聆聽聖神的同時，也需要產生新的標記：堂區不再像以往一樣，是人們聚集和社交的首要地點，卻奉召在慣常的活動之外尋找別的模式，讓人彼此來往接觸。這任務不應視為一個負擔，而是要以熱情來接受的一項挑戰。

15. 主的門徒們追隨他們的師傅，在聖人與眾牧者受教的學校，有時還要透過痛苦的經驗，學會如何期待天主的時機與方法，以滋養信心，確信天主常臨在人間，直到歷史的終結，而維持教會生命的搏動心臟的聖神，必定會把四散於世界各地的天主子女聚集起來。因此，基督徒團體切勿懼怕去開展和參與有不同文化共存的地區之中的各種進程，因為基督的門徒深信，「凡屬於人類的種種，在【他們的】心靈內，莫不有所反映。」<sup>17</sup>

1032。

16 參閱：梵蒂岡第二屆大公會議，《論教會在現代世界牧職憲章》，4：《宗座公報》58（1966），1027。

17 同上，1：《宗座公報》58（1966），1025~1026。

#### 4、福傳使命作為更新的指導原則

16. 在上述正發生的轉變中，儘管堂區勇於全情投入，有時仍難於充分地回應信友很多不同的期望，尤其考慮到團體中有多種不同的類型。<sup>18</sup> 的確，堂區的特性就是要在每個人的日常生活中扎根。然而，尤其在今天，「地域」（il territorio）不再只是一個有界限的地理空間，而是由每個人與他人之間的種種關係、彼此間的服務，以及種種悠久傳統所組成的生活環境。教會在團體中要面對的挑戰，就是這種「現實生活的地域」（territorio esistenziale）。往往，正是堂區教友不再把堂區理解為一個局限的四周環境，於是這種模式便越顯得過時，猶如使人只緬懷過去，而不是滿心鼓舞地邁向未來，勇往直前。<sup>19</sup> 另一方面，需要指出的是，法典對堂區所要求的地域原則，在法理上仍然生效。<sup>20</sup>

17. 再者，單單重複著一些與人的現實生活脫節的活動，是徒然掙扎求存的嘗試，而且常會受到大眾冷待。堂區假若活不出福傳所特有的靈性活力，便會陷入畫地

18 參閱：《福音的喜樂》宗座勸諭，72~73：《宗座公報》105（2013），1050~1051。

19 參閱：世界主教會議，第十五屆常務會議全體大會（2018年10月3~28日），《青年、信德與聖召辨明》總結文件，129：「在此環境下，要是僅以地域界線來劃定堂區的活動範圍，且未能吸引信友參與推行堂區各種各樣的項目，特別是吸引青年人的參與，那麼堂區將會停滯不前、行事因循守舊，這都是不能接受和令人憂慮的情況。」《羅馬觀察報》247，2018年10月29~30日，10。

20 參閱：如見《天主教法典》，102條；1015~1016條；1108條1項。

自限和墨守成規的危險，只提出一些或許只適合一小撮人的空洞經驗，卻已毫無福傳味道和傳教力量。

18. 福傳的革新要求新的關注點以及多元化的牧靈方案，使天主聖言和聖事生活能夠以切合每個人生活狀況的方式觸及每個人。事實上，時至今日，人們所加入的基督徒團體已越來越少與其出生或成長的地方有關，反而是偏向自己所選擇的團體，<sup>21</sup> 一個事實上由眾多肢體組成、各人都為了整體的利益而工作的團體（參閱：格前十二12~27），在那裡信友對天主子民會有更為寬廣的經驗。

19. 堂區團體，除了按地域和歸屬理由而選定以外，更是在傳教動力之下，教會福傳使命得以實現、各項聖事得以舉行和愛德得以實踐的地方。這份動力不僅屬於牧靈行動的本質，更成為堂區團體真實性的評核標準。在邊緣化以及孤獨的情況時有出現的這個時代，堂區團體奉召透過手足情誼，凸顯出對新類型貧窮的關注，從而成為基督與人們同居共處的活力標記。

20. 基於以上所述，我們需要辨認出一些角度，讓我們能以傳教作為軸心，來更新「傳統的」堂區架構。這就是我們欲達到的牧靈方向轉變的核心。這轉變必須觸及天主聖言的宣講、聖事生活和愛德見證，換言之，要觸及那些堂區在其內成長及與堂區所相信的奧蹟相符的必要範疇。

21 參閱：《基督信友平信徒》宗座勸諭，25：《宗座公報》81（1989），436~437。

21. 在閱讀《宗徒大事錄》的時候，我們察覺到天主聖言的主要角色——它是使人心悔改的內在力量。聖言是滋養主的門徒們的食糧，使他們在人生的各種際遇中成為福音的見證人。聖經擁有先知的威力，使聖言常顯活力。因此，堂區要以各種不同的宣講方式來教導信友如何閱讀及默想天主聖言，<sup>22</sup> 並採用種種清晰和容易理解的傳播方式，按照萬古常新的初傳（*kerigma*）見證，把主耶穌的生平敘述出來。<sup>23</sup>

22. 此外，感恩奧蹟的慶典就是「整個基督徒生活的泉源與高峰」，<sup>24</sup> 因此它是建構堂區團體的重要時刻。在這慶典中，教會意識到她自己名字的意義：一個被召集在一起，來讚美、祈求、代禱，以及感謝天主的子民。透過慶祝感恩祭，基督徒團體迎接那被釘死且已復活的主活生生的臨現，同時接受祂整個救恩奧蹟的宣講。

23. 因此，教會覺察到有需要重新發掘「基督徒入門聖事」。這些聖事孕育新生命，因為它們是置身於天主的生命奧蹟當中。事實上，這是一個持續不斷的旅程，而且不僅與禮儀慶典或其他事件有關，因為，首要而言，「基督徒入門」並非取決於滿全一個「過渡儀式」，而是獨特地取決於持之以恆地追隨基督這一角

22 參閱：《福音的喜樂》宗座勸諭，174：《宗座公報》105（2013），1093。

23 參閱：同上，164~165：《宗座公報》105（2013），1088~1089。

24 梵蒂岡第二屆大公會議，《教會憲章》（1964年11月21日），11：《宗座公報》57（1965），15。

度。由此來看，建立一些真正觸碰到人生的釋奧過程是會有幫助的。<sup>25</sup> 教理講授本身就在於不斷地宣講基督的奧蹟，為透過已領洗者與生命之主的親身相遇，使基督在他們心中逐漸成長，為「達到（基督）圓滿年齡的程度」。（參閱：弗四13）

正如教宗方濟各提及，我們需要注意「兩個可使我們誤入歧途的錯誤成聖觀念：玄識論（*gnosticism*）與白拉奇論（*pelagianism*）。這兩個異端源於初期教會，但時至今日依然影響我們」。<sup>26</sup> 玄識論是一種抽象的信仰，只講求理智，由遠離現實生活的知識所構成；至於白拉奇論，則誘導人們只依靠其自身的力量，完全無視聖神的工作。

24. 藉著天主的行動與人的行動之間玄妙的交織，男女信徒在一個能夠產生信任與希望的人際關係網絡中，

25 參閱：《福音的喜樂》宗座勸諭，166~167：《宗座公報》105（2013），1089~1090。

26 教宗方濟各，《你們要歡喜踴躍》宗座勸諭（2018年3月19日），35：《宗座公報》110（2018），1120。有關玄識論與白拉奇論，教宗方濟各的說話值得我們繼續聆聽：「此俗化由兩種方式所推動，兩者深入地相輔相成：其一是玄識論的吸引力，即一種純粹主觀的信念，持此信念的人的唯一興趣就是某一種特定的經驗，或一套想法和一些資訊，他們以為能讓人得到慰藉和啟發，但最終人被困在自己的想法和感受裡。另一種是自大的普羅米修斯的新白拉奇論（*promethean neopelagianism*），有這樣想法的人，最終只相信自己的能力，又自命不凡，或許因他們遵守特定的規條，或許因他們頑強地執著天主教教會某種過時的生活方式」：《福音的喜樂》，94：《宗座公報》105（2013），1059~1060；參閱：信理部，《依照天主的計畫》（*Placuit Deo*）信函（2018年2月22日）：《宗座公報》110（2018），429。

透過能使人置信的生活見證，使福傳得以實現。對人冷漠、自我封閉，以及排斥別人，常是現今時代的特色；在這樣的時代，重新發掘手足情誼是十分重要的，因為福傳與各種人際關係的優劣是緊密地聯繫着的。<sup>27</sup> 耶穌敦促我們要「划到深處去」（路五4），因此基督徒團體就把主的話套用到自己身上，堅信既然主邀請我們撒網，我們就保證有「豐盛的收穫」。<sup>28</sup>

25. 「相遇文化」（*cultura dell'incontro*）正是促進對話、團結互助，以及向所有人保持開放，同時凸顯出：應以人（*persona*）為中心。因此，堂區必須成為一個有利於人們彼此相聚以及有助發展持久人際關係的「地方」，從而讓每個人都有一份歸屬感以及被接納的感受。

26. 堂區團體要發展出一套真正的「陪伴藝術」（*arte della vicinanza*）。只要這套藝術得以扎根，那麼堂區便能夠真正地成為克服孤獨感的地方，畢竟孤獨感影響著許多人的生活；堂區也可真正地成為一個「招呼旅途上口渴者飲水，使他們能繼續前進的聖所，以及不斷外展的傳教中心。」<sup>29</sup>

27 參閱：《致迪奧尼多書》（*Carta a Dioneto*）V，1~10：《宗徒時代的教父們》（*Patres Apostolici*），馮克（F.X. Funk）編，卷一，杜賓根，1901，398。

28 參閱：若望保祿二世，《新千年的開始》宗座書函（2001年1月6日），1：《宗座公報》93（2001），266。

29 《福音的喜樂》宗座勸諭，28：《宗座公報》105（2013），1032。

## 5、「團體中一個有如大家庭的團體」： 包容、福傳和關注窮人的堂區

27. 教會的傳教與福傳行動的主體始終是整個天主子民。《天主教法典》強調，堂區並不是一座建築物，也不是一套架構，卻是一個具體的信友團體，而堂區主任司鐸就是其本有牧者。<sup>30</sup> 就這一點，教宗方濟各曾提及「堂區是教會在一個地域內的臨在，一個造就聆聽天主聖言、基督徒的生命成長、交談、宣講、愛德外展、欽崇和慶祝」的環境；教宗也確認，堂區是「團體中一個有如大家庭的團體」。<sup>31</sup>

28. 堂區內的不同組成部分都蒙召邁向共融和團結。只要每個人都明認其固有的互補性並以之為團體服務，那麼，一方面，能使人看到堂區主任司鐸以及輔助他牧職的司鐸的職務圓滿實現；另一方面，執事、度獻身生活者，以及平信徒的各種神恩所具有的獨特性也能凸顯出來，因為每個人都為建設同一奧體而努力。（參閱：格前十二12）

29. 由此可見，堂區是一個蒙聖神召叫，為宣講天主聖言和在聖洗池讓新子女得以重生的團體；這團體由它的牧者舉行紀念主的苦難、死亡與復活的慶典，以愛德為信仰作見證，並活在一種恆常地傳教的狀態之中，為使沒有人會錯過那賜予人生命的救恩訊息。

30 參閱：《天主教法典》515；518；519條。

31 《福音的喜樂》宗座勸諭，28：《宗座公報》105（2013），1031~1032。



就這一點，教宗方濟各這樣說過：「堂區並不是落伍受淘汰的機構；正因為它有強大的靈活性，它的架構可以預設幾種不同的小組，按照牧者和團體的開放度及傳教創意而採取不同的活動方式。當然，堂區並不是福傳的唯一機構，如果它具備自我更新和不斷調適的能力，教會便繼續『生活在其子女們的家中』。這預設堂區確實和家庭以及百姓的生活相連，它沒有成為一個與人脫節的無用結構，或由一小撮孤芳自賞的特選者所組成的團體。……可是，我們必須承認，重新檢討和更新堂區這號召還沒有結出足夠的果實，使堂區更接近人群，使之成為活生生的共融和參與的環境，和完全以傳教為重的團體。」<sup>32</sup>

30. 「朝聖地的靈修和教會團體風格」，對堂區而言，並不陌生。朝聖地是名副其實的「傳教的前哨」，具備令人賓至如歸、使人恢復靈性活力的祈禱與靜默氣氛，以及舉行和好聖事和關顧窮人等特質。不同堂區團體前往各朝聖地的朝聖之旅，都是寶貴的方法來使堂區團體在弟兄的共融中成長，以及在賦歸後使自己日常生活的地方對他人更為開放和更富於款待精神。<sup>33</sup>

31. 從這角度來看，我們認為，朝聖地所擁有的這些特質與服務，堂區也應該類比地具備。對許多信友來說，堂區代表著的，是他們所渴求的探討內心世界的目的地，以及他們與基督慈悲的面容和好客的教會相遇的

<sup>32</sup> 同上。

<sup>33</sup> 參閱：教宗方濟各，《生活的基督》主教會議後宗座勸諭（2019年3月25日），238，梵蒂岡，2019。

地方。

在朝聖地，信友能夠重新發現那「聖者的傅油」（若一書二20），即他們自己藉洗禮而接受的祝聖。在這些地方，人們學習在禮儀中虔誠地慶祝天主臨在於祂子民當中的奧蹟、每位已受洗者的福傳使命的美妙，以及在生活中踐行愛德的召叫。<sup>34</sup>

32. 「朝聖地」是對所有人開放的，而堂區也蒙召去接觸每個人，無一例外。這提醒堂區，窮人與邊緣人士在教會的心中應常占的優先位置。正如本篤十六世曾說過：「窮人是福音優先的領受者。」<sup>35</sup> 至於教宗方濟各，他曾寫道：「福音新傳是一項邀請，要我們認同窮人生命中的救恩力量，並把他們放在教會朝聖之旅的中心。我們蒙召在窮人內找到基督、聲援他們的事跡，而且成為他們的朋友，聆聽他們，為他們發言，為擁抱奧妙的智慧，這智慧是天主願意藉著他們與我們分享的。」<sup>36</sup>

33. 很多時，堂區團體就是窮人與教會親身相遇會面的第一個地點。尤其是司鐸們、執事們，以及度獻身生活者，會因弟兄姊妹們「受創傷的軀體」<sup>37</sup> 而動了憐憫

<sup>34</sup> 參閱：同樣，《慈悲的面容》詔書（2015年4月11日），3：《宗座公報》107（2015），400-401。

<sup>35</sup> 本篤十六世，〈致巴西所有主教的講話〉（*Discorso ai Vescovi del Brasile*）（2007年5月11日），3：《訓導》（*Insegnamenti*）III/1（2007），826。

<sup>36</sup> 《福音的喜樂》，198：《宗座公報》105（2013），1103。

<sup>37</sup> 參閱：教宗方濟各，〈在聖瑪爾大之家的每日默想〉（*Meditazione quotidiana a S. Marta*）（2017年10月30日）。

的心，在他們患病時探望他們，支援那些失業的人和家庭，以及向那些有需要的人敞開大門。藉著關注社會最卑微的人，堂區團體向貧窮人福傳，同時讓自己接受窮人的福傳，由此重新發現福音宣講在不同範疇所涉及的社會關懷，<sup>38</sup> 同時不要忘記愛德這「至高之律」——我們將按此而受審判。<sup>39</sup>

## 6、從人的轉變到架構的轉變

34. 在這次更新和架構重組的過程中，堂區務須在各種事務上，避免以官僚作風過度地組織活動，以及避免在提供服務上，只表達着一種自我保存的準則，卻無法表達出福傳的動力。<sup>40</sup>

教宗方濟各以他慣常勇於宣講的口吻，引用聖保祿六世，指出：「教會須深入地反省自己的良知，默想自己作為一個獨有的奧蹟。……有些教會的架構可能成為福傳的障礙；即使架構優良，也當為它注入生命活力、支援它，並對它加以評估，惟有這樣，架構才有用。若欠缺了新的生命和真正的福傳精神，若無教會『對其召叫的忠誠』，任何新架構都會很快失效。」<sup>41</sup>

38 參閱：《福音的喜樂》宗座勸諭，186~216：《宗座公報》105（2013），1098~1109。

39 參閱：《你們要歡喜踴躍》宗座勸諭，95~99：《宗座公報》110（2018），1137~1138。

40 參閱：《福音的喜樂》宗座勸諭，27：《宗座公報》105（2013），1031；同上，189：《宗座公報》105（2013），1099：「改變結構而不裝載新信念和新態度，只註定失敗，同樣的結構早晚還是會成為貪污、壓迫他人和失去成效。」

41 同上，26：《宗座公報》105（2013），1030~1031。

35. 堂區在架構上所應作出的轉變，要求上層在觀念上的改變和內在更新，這為那些蒙召肩負牧靈領導責任的人是責無旁貸的。牧者們，尤其是堂區主任司鐸——「主教的重要助手」，<sup>42</sup>為了忠於基督的命令，務必察覺到要以傳教精神來革新牧靈工作的迫切性。

36. 每位牧者都不應忘記，基於基督徒團體與其歷史及與其成員之間情誼上的聯繫，天主子民的信仰與家族和團體的背景是有關連的。很多時，神聖地點會喚起人對祖先的人生歷程上重要時刻的回憶，以及使人緬懷那些標誌着個人及家族人生歷程的人物及事件。為避免心理上的創傷，有彈性和逐步地進行堂區團體的重組——有時教區團體亦然——是重要的。

教宗方濟各在談及羅馬教廷的改革時，就曾強調漸進的行動「是分辨工夫帶來的成果，這不可或缺的分辨意味着要有歷史上的過程、時機和步驟、查證、改正、嘗試，以及『試行』（*ad experimentum*）的批准。因此，在這些情況下，這做法並不能視為優柔寡斷，而是為達到真正的改革所必需的彈性。」<sup>43</sup> 問題在於要小心謹慎，不能「揠苗助長」，草草了事，只提出一些籠統的標準，「紙上空談」，卻不顧及那些活在某一地域內的具體人物。的確，每個方案必須考慮到該團體的現實生活處境，落實執行時不應帶來創傷，而且要有執行方

42 梵蒂岡第二屆大公會議，《主教在教會內牧靈職務》法令，30：《宗座公報》58（1966），688。

43 教宗方濟各，〈向羅馬教廷致以聖誕問候講話〉（*Presentazione degli Auguri Natalizi alla Curia Romana*）（2016年12月22日）：《宗座公報》109（2017），44。

案前必需的諮詢階段、逐步執行的階段，以及完成的階段。

37. 當然，這樣的革新所涉及的不僅是堂區主任司鐸，也不能夠由上而下地強制，把天主子民拒之門外。要進行這次在各種架構上的牧靈方向轉變，表示我們要意識到，「信友們——天主的神聖子民，是接受了聖神恩寵的傅抹；因此，在反省、思考、檢討，以及作分辨的時候，我們務須非常留意這傅油的恩效。無論何時，作為教會、作為牧者、作為度獻身生活者，假如我們忘記了這明確的事實，我們便是走錯了方向。每當我們想要排擠和取代、噤聲、徹底摧毀、不理不睬或把具有不同特色的整個天主子民縮減為一些小撮人士的時候，我們所建立的團體、牧靈計畫、神學重點、靈修以及架構都是沒有根基的、沒有歷史的、沒有面容的、沒有記憶的、沒有血肉的，甚至可以說，是沒有生命的。就在我們把自己從天主子民的生命中抽離出來的一剎那，我們便墜入荒蕪之地，敗壞了教會的本性。」<sup>44</sup>

按這種意義，由聖神所推動的轉變，並非靠聖職人員獨力推行，反之，在這次牧靈方向轉變中，組成整個天主子民的不同部分都參與其事。<sup>45</sup> 因此，我們需要「有意識且清晰地尋求共融和參與的空間，讓整個天主子民的

44 同上，《致往智利朝聖的天主子民書》（*Carta al Pueblo de Dios que peregrina en Chile*）（2018年5月31日）：[http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/letters/2018/documents/papa-francesco\\_20180531\\_lettera-popolodidio-cile.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/letters/2018/documents/papa-francesco_20180531_lettera-popolodidio-cile.html)。

45 參閱：同上。

傅油恩效以具體的方式展現出來。」<sup>46</sup>

38. 故此，很明顯的，現在是克服堂區自我封閉的觀念和「牧靈服務聖職化」的大好時機。要認真看待天主子民具有「天主兒女的地位與自由和天主聖神住在他們心中如在聖殿」<sup>47</sup>的事實，我們就有迫切的需要去促進不同的做法和模式，讓每個領了洗的人，藉著聖神的恩賜以及自己所領受的神恩，與堂區的其他團體，或與教區的總體牧靈事務，保持有組織的共融，從而成為福傳的積極主角。事實上，由於教會並不僅是聖統，而是由整個天主子民所組成，因此整個基督徒團體都有責任肩負傳教的使命。

39. 讓這動態保持活力，讓每個已領洗的人發現自己就是福傳的積極主角，是牧者們的任務。經常保持着持續進修<sup>48</sup>的司鐸團體，應明智地運用分辨技巧，使堂區在其生活上能辨認出各種不同的召叫和職務，從而使自身成長和日臻成熟。因此，一位司鐸，身為天主子民的一員和託付給他的天主子民的僕人，斷不能取代天主的子民。堂區團體是有資格去倡議不同類型的職務、信仰宣講和愛德見證。

40. 主要是仗賴聖神——聖父及聖子白白給予教會的恩賜（*dono gratuito*），信友才能有深度地活出不求回

46 同上。

47 梵蒂岡第二屆大公會議，《教會憲章》，9：《宗座公報》57（1965），13。

48 參閱：聖職部，《司鐸聖召的禮物——司鐸培育基本方案》（2016年12月8日），80~88，梵蒂岡，2016年，37~42頁。

報的精神，如同耶穌所教導的：「你們白白得來的，也要白白分施」（瑪十8）。聖神曾教導門徒們如何以慷慨大方的態度為人服務，如何成為眾人的恩賜（參閱：若十三14~15），如何要優先地關顧窮人。由此可見的其中一點就是：聖事生活絕對不能成為一種「交易」，更不能予人印象，以為舉行聖事，尤其至聖聖體聖事以及其他職務，好比是要收費的。

牧者既以慷慨無償之情為羊群服務，而在另一方面，也有義務培訓信友，使團體的每個成員都感受到，在堂區需要成立的各種互助和關懷事工上，他們要負起一些責任和直接參與，以支援教會的種種需要，好讓堂區能自由並有成效地履行其本有的牧靈服務。

41. 作為福傳的動力中心，堂區奉召去履行的使命涉及整個天主子民的不同部分：司鐸、執事、度獻身生活者與平信徒，按其神恩，各司其職。

## 7、堂區及教區其他內部重新劃分

42. 所以，堂區團體按傳教使命的意義的在牧靈方向上的轉變，是透過一些架構循序漸進的更新來成形和表達出來，而分擔（*affidamento*）及參與牧靈工作的方式也因此多元化，涉及全體天主子民。

43. 除了現行的《天主教法典》的詞彙——堂區和總鐸區——以外，<sup>49</sup> 也借用了教會訓導文憲數十年以來，

<sup>49</sup> 參閱：同上，第374條2項；參閱：主教部，《宗徒的繼承

就教區地域內部劃分所補充的用語，<sup>50</sup> 如「牧靈單位」（*unità pastorale*）和「牧靈區」（*zona pastorale*）等的新用語。這些名稱實際上界定了教區牧靈上的組織，表達出信友與地域間的一種新關係。

44. 就「牧靈單位」（*unità pastorale*）和「牧靈區」（*zona pastorale*）這些新字眼而言，當然沒有人會以為單以新的用語來稱呼現存的事物，眼前的眾多問題就能解決。一個更新過程的核心，不在於被動地接受、支持和順隨改變，卻在於今時今日，透過激發基督徒團體各個組成部分共有的福傳聖召，揀選出種種架構，為更有成效地為天主子民提供牧靈服務，而親近信友就是一個「關鍵因素」。

45. 從這角度來看，教律明顯地指出，每個教區應劃分為不同屬地部分，<sup>51</sup> 使之有可能相繼地結合為教區與個別堂區之間的中層架構。基於各教區的大小及其具體的牧靈實況，堂區可按多種不同的模式組合起來。<sup>52</sup>

在這些堂區組合的核心發揮着活力和產生作用的，就是教會的共融幅度。要特別注意所涉及的具體地域，因此，在組合時要盡量考慮當地的居民是否同類、他們的風俗習慣及共通特點，以便促進堂區主任與其他牧靈工

人》主教牧靈職務指南（2004年2月22日），217：《梵蒂岡手冊》（*Enchiridion Vaticanum*）22（2003~2004），2110。

<sup>50</sup> 參閱：《天主教法典》，第374條1項。

<sup>51</sup> 參閱：《天主教法典》，第374條1項。

<sup>52</sup> 參閱：同上，第374條2項。

作者之間的緊密聯繫。<sup>53</sup>

## 7a. 如何設立堂區組合

46. 首先，在著手設立堂區組合之前，主教必須遵照教律的規定，並依據教會內主教和諮議會成員按不同名義所分擔的共負責任制度，就此事諮詢司鐸諮議會。<sup>54</sup>

47. 首先，幾個堂區可以按一種簡單的「聯盟」方式（*forma federativa*）組合，為使相關的堂區能保留其個別的獨特身分。

然而，根據教律，在為鄰近的堂區設立任何種類的組合時，必須尊重教會普通法（*diritto universale*）為堂區作為法人所釐定的基本元素。這些元素是主教也不得豁免的。<sup>55</sup> 因此，他必須為他後來要廢除的每個堂區發出個別法令，並附上相關理由。<sup>56</sup>

48. 因此，基於前述，設立堂區組合，以及設立或廢除堂區，必須由教區主教根據教律的規定，透過合併（*incorporazione*）來執行，也就是讓一個堂區融入另一個堂區，被其吸納，從而喪失其原本的個體性及其法人身分；或者，透過真正的合併（*fusione*），形成一個全新而獨特的堂區，從而廢除那些現存的堂區及其法人

53 參閱：《宗徒的繼承人》主教牧靈職務指南，218：《梵蒂岡手冊》（*Enchiridion Vaticanum*）22，（2003~2004），2114。

54 參閱：《天主教法典》，第515條2項。

55 參閱：同上，第86條。

56 參閱：同上，第120條1項。

身分；最後，把一個堂區團體分為（*divisione*）數個獨立的堂區，亦即設立幾個新的堂區（*ex novo*）。<sup>57</sup>

再者，當直接牽涉到一個特定堂區時，因廢止性的合併（*unione estintiva*）而將之廢除是合法的。然而，下列情況並不算是充分的理由，如：僅因教區聖職人員的不足、基於教區的整體財務狀況，或基於團體其他短期內能夠扭轉的狀況（如：穩定的教友人數、堂區經濟上未能自給自足、市區基於重建計畫所帶來的變化等）。此等處理方式的合法條件，必須基於直接地和在組織上觸及相關的堂區團體，而不是從概括的、理論性的或者「原則性」（*di principio*）的角度來考慮。

49. 有關堂區的設立和廢除，切記每項決定都必須透過書面的正式法令來執行。<sup>58</sup> 因此，為了總體地重組整個教區、教區的一部分，或數個堂區，而透過一個單一的規範性公報、一般性法令或特別法作為唯一措施來執行，應被視為不符合教律。

50. 特別在廢除堂區的情況下，法令必須引證具體的情況，清楚地指出，是甚麼原因導致主教作此決定。因此，必須具體地指出原因，僅籠統地以「人靈的裨益」為理由是遠遠不足夠的。

最後，在廢除一個堂區時，主教也應按教律的相關守

57 參閱：同上，第121~122條；《宗徒的繼承人》主教牧靈職務指南，214：《梵蒂岡手冊》（*Enchiridion Vaticanum*）22（2003~2004），2099。

58 參閱：《天主教法典》，第51條。

則，分配或轉移其財產；<sup>59</sup> 主教也需要確保被解散的堂區的聖堂繼續開放予信友，但在聽取司鐸諮議會意見後，<sup>60</sup>基於嚴重理由而採取相反措施，不在此限。

51. 一個與成立堂區組合或可能廢除堂區相關的議題，就是有時候需要把一間聖堂改為俗世而不卑污的用途（*uso profano non indecoroso*）；<sup>61</sup>按《天主教法典》的規定，教區主教必須在諮詢司鐸諮議會後才有權作此決定。<sup>62</sup>

一般來說，即使是教區聖職人員人數的下降、堂區的人口減少，以及教區財政緊絀，也不是頒行此等改變聖堂用途法令的合法理由。然而，當聖堂建築已陷入無從用作敬禮天主的狀況，並且亦無可能修復，則可依據教會法將之改為世俗而不卑污的用途。

## 7b. 總鐸區

52. 首先，需要記得「為藉共同的行動推行牧靈工作，教區主教可聯合幾個臨近的堂區成為特別的組合，如總鐸區即是」；<sup>63</sup>不同地方冠以不同的名稱，如「*decanati*」或「*arcipreture*」——中譯統稱「總鐸

59 參閱：同上，第120~123條。

60 參閱：同上，第500條2項及第1222條2項。

61 參閱：宗座文化委員會，《教會棄用及重用聖堂之指引》（*La dismissione e il riuso ecclesiale di chiese. Linee guida*）（2018年12月17日）：<http://www.cultura.va/content/cultura/it/pub/documenti/decommissioning.html>。

62 參閱：《天主教法典》，第1222條2項。

63 同上，第374條2項。

區」，或稱作「牧靈區」（*zone pastorali*）或「牧區」（*prefecture*）。<sup>64</sup>

53. 總鐸不必是某特定堂區的堂區主任，<sup>65</sup>而且，為了實現設立總鐸區的目的，總鐸的主要職責是「推動並協調總鐸區內的共同牧靈活動」，<sup>66</sup>如此，便不致於使總鐸區淪為一個純粹形式上的架構。此外，總鐸「應按教區主教的指示，巡視本總鐸區內的堂區。」<sup>67</sup>為了使總鐸能夠更完善地履行其職責以及進一步推動堂區之間的合作，教區主教可按具體情況把其他被視為適當的權力（*facoltà*）授予他。

## 7c. 牧靈單位

54. 因應類似的目的，在有需要時，由於總鐸區的地域寬廣或信友人數眾多，為更促進鄰近堂區之間有組織性的合作，在聽取司鐸諮議會的意見，<sup>68</sup>並經考慮一些具體的準則後，主教也可頒布法令，把總鐸區內的一些堂區固定而且制度化地組合起來。<sup>69</sup>

55. 首先，宜將這些組合（稱為「牧靈單位」）：*unità*

64 參閱：《宗徒的繼承人》主教牧靈職務指南，217；《梵蒂岡手冊》（*Enchiridion Vaticanum*）22（2003~2004），2110。

65 參閱：《天主教法典》，第554條1項。

66 同上，第555條1項1°。

67 同上，第555條4項。

68 參閱：同上，第500條2項。

69 參閱：宗座移民與觀光牧靈委員會，《基督對移民的愛》（*Erga migrantes caritas Christi*）（2004年5月3日），95；《梵蒂岡手冊》（*Enchiridion Vaticanum*）22（2003~2004），2548。

pastorali) 70 盡可能按同類的形式規劃，也可從社會學的角度來考慮，使真正整體的或被整合的牧靈工作，從傳教使命的角度來看，得以實現。71

56. 此外，這組合中的每個堂區都必須交託給一位堂區主任來牧養堂區內所有的團體，甚或由一組司鐸來共同 (*in solidum*) 牧養。72 或者，當主教認為合適時，這堂區組合也可交託給同一位堂區主任。73

57. 在各情況下，也要給予司鐸們應有的關注；往往他們盡忠職守，獲堂區不同團體的認同。此外，也要顧及信友們的福祉，他們對自己的牧者既有情誼也心懷感激。因此，在建立堂區組合時，教區主教不應藉同一法令，在將多個組合在一起的堂區委託給一位堂區主任的同時，74 又將仍然在任的堂區主任75自動調任為堂區副主任，或實際上 (*di fatto*) 免除他們的職務。

58. 在這些情況下，除非是把牧靈職務交託給一小組司鐸共同負責 (*in solidum*)，否則教區主教有權按個別情況，釐定此堂區組合的主任 (*sacerdote moderatore*) 的職能，以及他與這組合 (牧靈單位：

70 參閱：《宗徒的繼承人》主教牧靈職務指南，215，(2)：《梵蒂岡手冊》(*Enchiridion Vaticanum*) 22 (2003~2004)，2104。

71 參閱：同上。

72 參閱：《天主教法典》，第517條1項。

73 參閱：同上，第526條1項。

74 參閱：同上。

75 參閱：同上，第522條。

*unità pastorale*) 的總鐸的關係。76

59. 一旦堂區組合按教律成立——無論是總鐸區抑或是「牧靈單位」——主教應根據情況決定其中的個別堂區會否成立本身的堂區牧靈委員會，77 抑或更合適把有關事務交託予一個由所有相關 (堂區) 團體所組成的聯合牧靈委員會。無論如何，由於組成這組合的個別堂區仍保留其法人身分和法律能力，故此應各自保留其經濟委員會。78

60. 為了提昇整體的福傳行動以及更有成果的牧靈工作，宜為組合的堂區之間，成立特定範疇 (如：教理講授、愛德行動、青年牧靈或家庭牧靈的共同牧靈服務，讓天主子民的所有組成部分——聖職人員、度獻身生活者及平信徒，共同參與。

## 7d. 牧靈區

61. 既然數個「牧靈單位」能夠組成一個總鐸區，那麼，同樣地，尤其在幅員遼闊的教區中，在諮詢過司鐸諮議會後，79 主教可以把數個總鐸區組合為「區域」(*distretti*) 或「牧靈區」(*zone pastorali*)，80 由一位

76 參閱：同上，第553~555條。

77 參閱：同上，第536條。

78 參閱：同上，第537條。

79 參閱：同上，第500條2項。

80 參閱：《宗徒的繼承人》主教牧靈職務指南，219：《梵蒂岡手冊》(*Enchiridion Vaticanum*) 22 (2003~2004)，2117。為避免混淆，應把「牧靈總區」(*zone pastorali*) 這稱呼只保留予此類組合。

在該地區擁有行政職權（*potestà esecutiva ordinaria*），以教區主教名義作牧靈管理的主教代表<sup>81</sup>來領導，而且隸屬他並與他保持着共融。該主教代表也可按個別情況，獲主教授予特別的權力。

## 8、分擔堂區團體牧靈的通常及特殊方式

62. 首先，與主教保持著共融的堂區主任與其他司鐸，因其所擔任的牧者職務，對堂區團體而言，實為一個基本的參照點。<sup>82</sup> 堂區主任及司鐸團，在善度團體生活和培養司鐸間手足情誼的同時，為堂區團體舉行聖事慶典，並與它一起蒙召組織堂區，使之成為共融的有效標記。<sup>83</sup>

63. 就司鐸們在堂區團體中的臨在和使命而言，團體生活尤其值得一提；<sup>84</sup> 它是《天主教法典》第280條所推薦的，即使它對教區聖職人員來說並非強制性。在這方面，聖職人員要謹記共融精神、祈禱，以及共同牧靈

81 參閱：《天主教法典》，第134條1項及第476條。

82 切記：（一）凡提及「教區主教」的，也適用於其他在法律上與他身分相等的人；（二）凡提及堂區及堂區主任的，對準堂區（*quasi-parrocchia*）及準堂區主任（*quasi-parroco*）同樣有效；（三）就平信徒所言的，也適用於獻身生活團體和使徒生活團（*Società di vita apostolica*）中的非聖職成員，除非文中有明確特別提及平信徒的本質；（四）「主任」（*moderator*）一詞，按《天主教法典》的訓示，在不同語境下，有不同意思。

83 參閱：梵蒂岡第二屆大公會議，《教會憲章》，26：《宗座公報》57（1965），31-32。

84 參閱：《司鐸聖召的禮物——司鐸培育基本方案》，83；88e，37；39頁。

行動有十分重要的價值，<sup>85</sup> 為使他們之間聖事性的手足情誼能成為更有效的見證，<sup>86</sup> 並使他們的福傳行動更有成效。

64. 當司鐸團嘗試度團體生活，他們的司鐸身分便鞏固起來，對物質生活的顧慮會減低，而個人主義的誘惑會被深厚的人際關係所取代。司鐸生活中不可或缺的共同祈禱、反省分享，以及一同學習，能夠對司鐸日常生活的靈修培育有莫大的幫助。

無論如何，主教宜按其分辨力，盡其所能，在把一個堂區或堂區組合交託給一些司鐸，邀請他們慷慨地接受新的牧靈使命和過一種團體生活時，要考慮到他們在人性和靈性上的相似程度。<sup>87</sup>

65. 在某些情況下，尤其在那些沒有教律法定住所傳統或習慣的地方，或基於某種原因，暫時沒有該法定住所作為司鐸的居所時，可能會發生的就是，他們回到其本家與家人同住，那裡正是他們最先接受人格培育和發掘聖召的處所。<sup>88</sup>

這樣的安排，一方面對司鐸的日常生活有正面的影響，確保他有一個寧靜而穩定的家居環境，尤其是當其父母

85 參閱：《天主教法典》，第275條1項。

86 參閱：梵蒂岡第二屆大公會議，《論司鐸職務與生活》法令（1965年12月7日），8：《宗座公報》58（1966），1003。

87 參閱：《司鐸聖召的禮物——司鐸培育基本方案》，88。

88 參閱：教宗方濟各，致由聖職部主辦為慶祝梵二《司鐸之培養》和《司鐸職務與生活》法令頒布五十周年會議與會者講話（2015年11月20日）：《宗座公報》107（2015），1295。



仍然健在。另一方面，應該避免司鐸內心過分依賴這家庭關係，以致受不良影響，無法全心專注職務，或以此家庭關係，排除——而非補足——與司鐸團和教友團體的關係。

## 8a. 堂區主任

66. 堂區主任的職務涉及對人靈的全面照顧，<sup>89</sup> 因此，必須是已領受司鐸聖秩的信友，才可有效地被任命為堂區主任；<sup>90</sup> 即使在司鐸短缺的情況下，也絕不可能將此職務或相關職能授予無司鐸聖秩者。正因為牧者與堂區之間的關係要求他認識和陪伴該團體，堂區主任職務不可交託給任何法人。<sup>91</sup> 除了《天主教法典》517條1~2項所預見的情況外，尤其不得將堂區主任的職務委託給一個由聖職人員和平信友所組合的小組。因此，應避免使用儼然代表著集體領導堂區的稱謂，如：「領導小組」、「領導團隊」（「team guida」，「équipe guida」），或類似的稱謂。

67. 既身為「受託管理堂區的本有牧者」，<sup>92</sup> 堂區主任是堂區的『法定』（*ipso iure*）代表。<sup>93</sup> 他是負責堂區財產的管理者，而這些財產既是「教會財產」，應受相關的教律守則所約束。<sup>94</sup>

89 參閱：《天主教法典》，第150條。

90 參閱：同上，第521條1項。

91 參閱：同上，第520條1項。

92 同上，第519條。

93 參閱：同上，第532條。

94 參閱：同上，第1257條1項。

68. 誠如梵蒂岡第二屆大公會議明確指出：「本堂司鐸在本堂區內，該享有其職務的穩定性，這是人靈利益所要求的。」<sup>95</sup> 因此，一般原則上要求堂區主任的「任期應是無限期的。」<sup>96</sup>

然而，假若主教團有頒行相關法令，教區主教可有限期地任命堂區主任。由於堂區主任需要與所受託之團體建立有成效的連繫，主教團不宜制定太短——即少於五年——的有限任期。

69. 無論如何，即便司鐸已「無限期」地獲委為堂區主任，或在「既定任期」屆滿之前，「如為人靈之益處或教會之需要或利益」，<sup>97</sup> 仍應樂意其後被調任至另一堂區或擔任其他職務。切記，是堂區主任為堂區服務，反之不然。

70. 通常來說，如可能，應讓一位堂區主任只負責一個堂區的牧靈工作，「但由於司鐸短缺或其他情況，可將數個鄰近的堂區委託同一堂區主任管理」，<sup>98</sup> 例如，「其他情況」可包括地域狹小或人口稀少，以及相關堂區接壤毗鄰。若將數個堂區委託給同一位堂區主任，教區主教應謹慎斟酌該司鐸能否擔任每個堂區的堂區主任，並完全及切實地履行其職責。<sup>99</sup>

95 《主教在教會內牧靈職務》法令，31：《宗座公報》8（1965），689。

96 《天主教法典》，第522條。

97 同上，第1748條。

98 同上，第526條1項。

99 參閱：同上，第152條。

71. 一旦被任命，堂區主任便可完全行使交託給他的職能，並享有全部權利和負起全部責任，直至其牧靈職務依法終止。<sup>100</sup> 若在任期結束前免除其職務或作出調任，則教會須遵從相關的教律程序，分辨該如何適當地處理該具體個案。<sup>101</sup>

72. 幾時因信友的裨益有其需要，即使沒有其他原因，凡年滿七十五歲的堂區主任，宜接受教區主教要求其放棄堂區工作的邀請。<sup>102</sup> 凡因年滿七十五歲而提出的辭呈，<sup>103</sup> 如不視為法定義務，仍應視為一項倫理義務，然而，辭呈本身並不自動使堂區主任喪失其職務。唯獨在教區主教經書面通知該堂區主任，其辭職申請已獲接納，其職務才告終止。<sup>104</sup> 另一方面，即使堂區主任僅因年齡已滿七十五歲之故而提出辭職申請，主教也應善意地考慮其辭呈。

73. 無論如何，為了避免純粹功能性地看待牧靈職務，教區主教在接受辭職申請之前，應審慎地權衡人事與地點的所有情況，例如是否有健康或紀律上的原因、司鐸的短缺、堂區團體的裨益，或其他相關的因素。然後，在有正當與相稱理由的情況下，他才能接受辭呈。<sup>105</sup>

100 參閱：同上，第538條1~2項。

101 參閱：同上，第1740~1752條，同時考慮第190~195條。

102 參閱：同上，第538條3項。

103 參閱：同上。

104 參閱：同上，第189條。

105 參閱：同上，第189條2項及《宗徒的繼承人》主教牧靈職務指南，212：《梵蒂岡手冊》（*Enchiridion Vaticanum*）22（2003~2004），2095。

74. 在另一情況下，只要該司鐸的個人狀況容許，以及符合牧靈的需要，主教應考慮可否讓他保留堂區主任的職務，甚至可以為其配一助手，以準備接任工作。再者，「根據實際情況，主教可以把一個規模較小、職務較輕的堂區交託給已經辭職的堂區主任管理」，<sup>106</sup>或按他的實際情況而委任他負責另一份牧靈工作，並且有需要時讓他明白，他不應為這一種調職而感到「被降級」或「被懲罰」。

## 8b. 堂區署理

75. 假若無法即時任命堂區主任，堂區署理的指派，<sup>107</sup> 須根據教律的規定才得以落實。<sup>108</sup>

事實上，這主要是一項過渡性的職務，是在等待新堂區主任上任而行使的。因此，若教區主教長時間地任命一位堂區署理，超過一年，甚或永久地留任，以避免任命一位堂區主任，則此舉並不合法。

經驗證明，這做法經常被用來規避法典所指定的堂區主任職務的穩定原則，卻是違反教律，並損及有關司鐸及團體的使命，因為堂區在未有牧者的不明確情況下，無法全面地釐定長遠的福傳計畫，就不得不局限於保持現狀的牧靈工作上。

106 《宗徒的繼承人》主教牧靈職務指南，212：《梵蒂岡手冊》（*Enchiridion Vaticanum*）22（2003~2004），2095。

107 參閱：《天主教法典》，第539~540條。

108 尤見：同上，第539條、第549條、第1747條3項。

## 8c. 共同負責

76. 作為另外一種可能，「如環境有需要時，一個堂區或數個堂區的牧靈工作，可委託給數個司鐸『共同』負責」。<sup>109</sup> 按主教的判斷，當實際情況有需要時，便可採取此等措施，尤其是為透過共同分擔牧靈工作而更有效地促進相關團體的裨益，並為推動司鐸彼此間在共融上的神修。<sup>110</sup>

在這些情況下，這組司鐸，與各堂區團體的其他組成部分保持共融的同時，經共同商議後行事。身為主任（*il Moderatore*）者，在其他同樣享有堂區主任身分的司鐸同儕中，享有首席身分（*primus inter pares*）。

77. 本訓令鄭重建議，每組受託共同（*in solidum*）負責一個或多個堂區的牧靈職務的司鐸團體，釐定內部守則，使每位司鐸都能更完善地履行屬他權責下的任務和職能。<sup>111</sup>

主任（*il Moderatore*）本有的責任，就是協調被委託予該組司鐸的堂區或數個堂區的共同工作、在法律上代表該堂區或數個堂區、<sup>112</sup> 協調證婚權和法律賦予堂區主

109 同上，《天主教法典》第517條1項；另參閱：《天主教法典》第542~544條。

110 參閱：同上，《天主教法典》第517條1項及《天主教法典》第526條1項。

111 參閱：同上，《天主教法典》第543條1項。

112 參閱：同上，《天主教法典》第543條2項3°；在堂區被政府承認為法人的國家，他在民事上也擔當該堂區或數個堂區的法定代表。

任的豁免權的行使，<sup>113</sup> 以及就司鐸小組的所有活動向主教負責。<sup>114</sup>

## 8d. 堂區副主任

78. 作為對上述各種可能性的補充，仍有一種可能，即：可任命一名司鐸為堂區副主任，負責牧靈工作的某特定範疇（青年、長者、病人、善會、協會、培育事工、教理講授等），或是「跨越」不同堂區，或只在其中一個堂區協助該範疇全部牧靈職務或其中一部分。<sup>115</sup>

如任命一位堂區副主任負責多個由不同堂區主任管理的堂區，在其任命狀上，宜明確指定其對每個堂區團體所負責之職務及細節，以及在有關住宿、生活費及舉行彌撒的相關事宜上與各堂區主任應保持之關係。

## 8e. 執事

79. 執事は歸屬於一個教區或其他有權設立此聖秩的教會團體的聖職人員；<sup>116</sup> 藉著他們所領受的聖事，他們是主教和司鐸的合作者，在同一的福傳使命中肩負特定的任務，即「在禮儀、聖道和愛德服務上，為天主子

113 參閱：同上，《天主教法典》第543條1項。

114 參閱：同上，《天主教法典》第517條1項。

115 參閱：同上，《天主教法典》第545條2項；例如，一位具靈修經驗但健康不佳的司鐸被任命為五個毗鄰的堂區為常設的聽告解司鐸。

116 參閱：同上，《天主教法典》第265條。

民服務。」<sup>117</sup>

80. 為保障執事的身分，並為了推廣此項聖職，教宗方濟各首先對一些危及對執事職本質之理解的思想作出警告：「我們務必小心，不要視執事為半司鐸、半平信徒。……同樣，把執事想像為介於信友與牧者之間的一種人士，也不妥當。他們既不是半司鐸和半平信徒，也不是半牧者和半信友。有兩種誘惑：其一是聖職專權的危險：過於聖職化的執事。……；其二是功能主義：執事只是司鐸用於做這事或那事的一個助手。」<sup>118</sup>

在同一篇講辭中，教宗繼而就（終身）執事在教會團體內的特定角色作出澄清：「執事職是一項特定的聖召，家庭式服務的聖召。……『服務』一詞正是理解你們的神恩的關鍵。服務是天主子民的特恩之一。可以說，執事是教會中服務的守護者。這裡每個字都是有分量的。你們是教會中的服務——聖言服務，祭台服務，以及關顧窮人的服務——的守護者。」<sup>119</sup>

81. 在歷史上，有關執事職的教會訓導曾經歷了重要的發展。梵蒂岡第二屆大公會議恢復終身執事職的同時，也就此職務作出了一項教義上的澄清並擴展了這職務的範圍，不再把執事職「局限於」愛德服務，或——按特倫多大公會會議的定義——只保留此職務作為過渡性的短暫職務，並且幾乎只局限於禮儀服務。梵蒂岡第

117 參閱：同上，《天主教法典》第1009條3項。

118 教宗方濟各，〈與米蘭的司鐸和度獻身生活者會面時的講話〉（2017年3月25日）：《宗座公報》109（2017），376。

119 同上，376~377。

二屆大公會議指明執事職乃聖秩聖事中的一個等級，因此，執事「因聖事的聖寵受到強化，與主教及其司鐸團保持着共融，為天主的子民作禮儀、講道及愛德上的服務。」<sup>120</sup>

梵二後，對執事職的認定，再度以《教會憲章》作為基礎。執事職務漸漸更貼切地被界定為對聖秩聖事的參與，雖然其參與程度有別於其他聖秩等級的程度。教宗保祿六世接見討論執事職的國際會議的出席者時，就曾再次強調，執事「在宣講天主聖言、主持聖事，以及愛德工作上」<sup>121</sup> 為基督徒團體服務。另一方面，儘管在《宗徒大事錄》（宗六1~6）上，那七人看來好像只是為了餐桌服務而被揀選，但事實上，同一經書講述了斯德望和斐理伯如何履行了「聖言服務」。因此，作為那十二位宗徒及保祿的合作者，那七人在兩個領域行使其職務：福傳和愛德工作。

因此，可以委託給一位執事的教會任務有許多，包括所有不涉及全面關顧人靈的事務。<sup>122</sup> 然而，縱使《天主教法典》釐定了那些職務是保留給司鐸的，以及那些是也能夠委託給平信徒的，卻未有指明那些具體職務能夠展現出執事職的獨特性。

120 梵蒂岡第二屆大公會議，《教會憲章》，29：《宗座公報》57（1965），36。

121 保祿六世，〈向論執事職的國際會議的與會人士的講話〉（1965年10月25日）：《執事職手冊》（*Enchiridion sul Diaconato*）（2009）：147~148。

122 參閱：《天主教法典》第150條。

82. 無論如何，執事職的歷史告訴我們，它是在一個著眼於教會職務的背景下而建立，因此，這職務為是聖言和愛德服務而設；後者也包括教會財產的管理。執事的雙重使命也在禮儀中展現出來，他蒙召去宣講福音和為聖祭的餐桌服務。所提及的這些實例，可幫助我們勾勒出執事的獨特職務，同時可促使執事聖職對其本有的職務加以重視。

## 8f. 度獻身生活者

83. 許多時候，在堂區團體內，有些人屬度獻身生活者。「事實上，獻身生活並不是地方教會生活以外，與之無關的一個實體，而是地方教會內一種以徹底的福音精神為標記，且擁有特殊恩賜的獨特存在方式。」<sup>123</sup>再者，與聖職人員和平信徒一起融入團體之中的度獻身生活者，「置身於教會的神恩幅度之內。（……）獻身生活團體的靈修，既可成為平信徒的靈修，也可成為司鐸的靈修，作為他們活出自己本有聖召的一個重要資源。」<sup>124</sup>

84. 度獻身生活者能夠為堂區團體的福傳使命所帶來的貢獻，首要來自他們的「所是」，也就是藉宣發踐行福音勸諭的聖願而徹底跟隨基督的見證，<sup>125</sup>其次才在於他們的「所為」，也就是他們按各團體的神恩而履行

123 信理部，《教會重振朝氣》信函（2016年5月15日），21：《梵蒂岡手冊》（*Enchiridion Vaticanum*）32（2016），734。

124 同上，22：《梵蒂岡手冊》（*Enchiridion Vaticanum*）32（2016），738。

125 參閱：《天主教法典》第573條1項。

的工作（如：教理講授、愛德事工、培育事工、青年牧靈、照顧病患等）。<sup>126</sup>

## 8g. 平信徒

85. 堂區團體特別是由平信徒組成。<sup>127</sup> 他們憑藉聖洗聖事和基督徒入門禮的其他聖事，以及他們當中許多人也領受了婚配聖事，<sup>128</sup> 參與着教會的福傳事業，因為「平信徒的基本聖召和使命就是使世俗現況和人類活動得到福音的轉化。」<sup>129</sup>

平信徒有其專屬和特定的世俗特質，也就是「要在世俗事務中，照天主的計畫去安排，而企求天主之國。」<sup>130</sup> 他們，以一種特別的方式，也「能自己感覺被徵召，或能被徵召，與他們的牧人們共同服務教會團體，為教會團體的成長及生活而工作，每人按照天主樂於給與他們

126 參閱：獻身生活團及使徒生活會部——主教部《主教與修會士彼此間應有的關係》（1978年5月14日），10；14（a）：《梵蒂岡手冊》（*Enchiridion Vaticanum*）6（1977~1979），604~605；617~620；也參閱：《宗徒的繼承人》主教牧靈職務指南，98：《梵蒂岡手冊》（*Enchiridion Vaticanum*）22（2003~2004），1803~1804。

127 參閱：《福音的喜樂》宗座勸諭，102：《宗座公報》105（2013），1062~1063。

128 參閱：《基督信友平信徒》宗座勸諭，23：《宗座公報》81（1989），429。

129 《福音的喜樂》宗座勸諭，201：《宗座公報》105（2013），1104。

130 梵蒂岡第二屆大公會議，《教會憲章》，31：《宗座公報》57（1965），37。

的聖寵及特恩執行不同的職務。」<sup>131</sup>

86. 今天，所有平信徒都被要求慷慨地投身於福傳使命。首先，整體而言，他們要在日常生活中，在一般的生活環境和在不同層面的職責上，為福音作證；然後，特別是在堂區中，他們負起與自己相稱的責任，為團體服務。<sup>132</sup>

## 8h. 分擔牧靈的其他方式

87. 如《天主教法典》第517條2項所示，假若主教由於司鐸短缺而不能任命一位全職工作的牧者或堂區署理，主教還有另一種方式為一個團體提供牧靈服務。在這種困難的牧靈情況下，為了維持該團體的基督信仰生活並確保該團體的福傳使命得以持續，教區主教可委託一位執事、一位度獻身生活者或一位平信徒，甚或一組人（例如：一個修會團體、一個善會）參與堂區的牧靈工作。<sup>133</sup>

88. 受委託參與堂區牧靈工作者，將由一位司鐸來協調和指導。該司鐸擔任「牧靈主任」（Moderatore della cura pastorale），享有合法權力。他雖不是堂區主任，卻享有堂區主任的一切權力和職能，以及相關的義務和權利。

131 保祿六世，《在新世界中傳福音》勸諭（1975年12月8日），73；《宗座公報》68（1976），61。

132 參閱：《福音的喜樂》宗座勸諭，81；《宗座公報》105（2013），1053~1054。

133 參閱：《天主教法典》第517條2項。

值得謹記，這委託牧靈工作的特殊方式，是基於無法委任一位堂區主任或堂區署理，不應將之混淆為全體信友有如正規地與司鐸積極合作和承擔牧靈上的職責。

89. 為使採取這種特殊措施時有成果，必須充分地準備天主子民，且務須注意，不是無限期地，而只在有需要時才採用這方法。<sup>134</sup> 為正確地理解及執行法典的相關條文，有關規定「只在嚴格地遵守符合其指定的條件下才可應用，即：a) 『由於司鐸缺少』，而不是基於方便，或基於一種曖昧的『平信徒的提昇』……；b) 是『分擔牧靈工作』，而不是指揮、協調、督導或管理堂區；根據法典條文，這幾方面屬司鐸的權限。」<sup>135</sup>

90. 為有成果地按照《天主教法典》第517條2項作牧靈上的委託，<sup>136</sup> 必須遵守一些準則。首先，由於這是一項非常規且暫時性的牧靈解決辦法，<sup>137</sup> 容許採取此

134 參閱：《宗徒的繼承人》主教牧靈職務指南，215，（c）：《梵蒂岡手冊》（*Enchiridion Vaticanum*）22（2003~2004），2105。

135 聖職部，《有關非晉秩信友協助司鐸聖職的某些問題》教廷八部會聯合訓令（1997年8月15日），第四節1項甲~乙：《宗座公報》89（1997），866~867；另參閱：《宗徒的繼承人》主教牧靈職務指南，215，（c）：《梵蒂岡手冊》（*Enchiridion Vaticanum*）22（2003~2004），2105。在國家法律適用時，則不論是按教會法還是民法，這位司鐸也是堂區的法律代表。

136 教區主教在採用《天主教法典》第517條2項所容許的方法之前，需要先審慎地評估另類選擇是否可行，如任命仍能夠工作的年長司鐸擔任該職務、把數個堂區委託給同一位堂區主任，或把數個堂區委託給一組司鐸共同負責（*in solidum*）。

137 參閱：《有關非晉秩信友協助司鐸聖職的某些問題》教廷八部會聯合訓令（1997年8月15日），第四節1項乙：《宗座公報》89（1997），866~867，及聖職部，《司鐸：牧者及堂區團

辦法的唯一合法理由是司鐸短缺，以致無法任命一位堂區主任或堂區署理來負責堂區團體的牧靈工作。此外，就這種形式的牧靈管理而言，應優先選用一位或多位執事，然後才考慮度獻身生活者及平信徒。<sup>138</sup>

91. 無論如何，按上述方式安排的牧靈活動的協調權屬於由教區主教指定為主任（Moderatore）的那位司鐸；唯獨這位司鐸擁有專屬於堂區主任的職權和代行權（facoltà）；至於其他信友，則可「參與堂區的牧靈工作」。<sup>139</sup>

92. 無論是執事或是其他未領受聖秩的人，在參與堂區的牧靈工作時，只能履行那些相稱於其執事或平信徒身分的職能，藉此遵循「已領受聖秩者與平信徒之間在恩賜及職能上的多元化和互補的原始性質，即教會按天主意願而定的有機架構的兩個屬性。」<sup>140</sup>

93. 最後，本訓令鄭重建議主教，在任命一位司鐸為牧靈關懷主任（Moderatore）的任命狀中——至少扼要

體的領袖》訓令（Istruzione - Il presbitero, pastore e guida della comunità parrocchiale）（2002年8月4日），23及25，這特別是一個「就堂區牧靈關懷的行使權的暫時性（ad tempus）合作」的問題，參閱：23：《梵蒂岡手冊》（*Enchiridion Vaticanum*）21（2002），834~836。

138 參閱：《司鐸：牧者及堂區團體的領袖》（Istruzione - Il presbitero, pastore e guida della comunità parrocchiale），25：《梵蒂岡手冊》（*Enchiridion Vaticanum*）21（2002），836。

139 《天主教法典》第517條2項。

140 《司鐸：牧者及堂區團體的領袖》（Istruzione - Il presbitero, pastore e guida della comunità parrocchiale），23：《梵蒂岡手冊》（*Enchiridion Vaticanum*）21（2002），834。

地——解釋為一個或多個堂區團體採用這種牧靈特殊方式的原因，以及該位負責此職務的司鐸行使職權的各種方式。

## 9、堂區任務與職務

94. 每個善心的人，縱使是未受洗的人，都可偶爾在堂區的日常活動中提供幫助。除此之外，信友可按時間的長短，在堂區團體中負起某些固定的任務，例如：教理導師、祭台服務員、在團體和善會中擔任導師的人、負責慈善愛德事工的人士、那些投身於不同類型的諮詢或聆聽中心的人士，和那些探訪病患的人士等。

95. 對於那些參與堂區牧靈工作的執事、度獻身生活者及平信徒，在每次委派其任務時，需要運用能正確的術語來表達各人按其身分所能行使之職能，以便清楚地區分普通司祭職和公務司祭職，並讓各人所領受之職責的性質更為彰顯出來。

96. 按這種意義，首先，教區主教和堂區主任（在其權限內）有責任避免稱呼那些在堂區中負起任務的執事、度獻身生活者及平信徒為「堂區主任」、「堂區共同主任」（co-pastor）、「牧人」（pastore）、「專職司鐸」（cappellano）、「主任」（moderatore）、「協調人」（coordinatore）、「堂區負責人」（responsabile parrocchiale）或其他類似的稱呼。<sup>141</sup> 根

141 參閱：《有關非晉秩信友協助司鐸聖職的某些問題》教廷八部會聯合訓令（1997年8月15日），第1節3項：《宗座公報》89

據《天主教法典》，這些稱呼只保留給司鐸，<sup>142</sup>因為他們與公務司祭職直接相關。

在論及上述的平信徒和執事時，採用「獲委託負責一個堂區的牧靈工作」、「主持堂區團體」，以及其他類似的說法，也是不合法的，並且也不符合他們的聖召身分；那些說法涉及司鐸職務之獨特性，只適用於堂區主任。

更合適的用語似乎是，例如，可稱執事為「執事同工」，以及稱度獻身生活者和平信徒為「牧靈協調人」、「牧靈同工」、「牧靈助理」和「牧靈（某一範疇）的負責人」。

97. 根據《天主教法典》第230條1項，平信徒依法並按適當的儀式，可擢升為固定的讀經員和輔祭員。非晉秩信友，唯獨在得到主管當局<sup>143</sup>的指派，方可以「非常務服務人員」之名暫代執行《天主教法典》第230條3項以及第943條中所規定的職能。《天主教法典》第230條2項提及的禮儀行為的臨時指派，即使是持續一段時間，也不賦予非晉秩信友任何特別的職稱。<sup>144</sup>

(1997)，863。

142 《司鐸：牧者及堂區團體的領袖》(Istruzione - Il presbitero, pastore e guida della comunità parrocchiale)，23：《梵蒂岡手冊》(Enchiridion Vaticanum) 21 (2002)，835。

143 《宗徒的繼承人》主教牧靈職務指南，112：《梵蒂岡手冊》(Enchiridion Vaticanum) 22 (2003~2004)，1843。

144 應謹記，除了讀經職 (ministerium del lettorato) 外，教區主教在諮詢主教團後，按相關教會法規定，可暫時委託信友——不論男女——的各種禮儀職能之中，也包括服務祭台 (servizio

此等平信徒必須保持與天主教會圓滿的共融，<sup>145</sup> 對奉召履行之職務，已接受適當培育，並且在個人和牧靈表現上堪當模範，使他們能有權威地履行服務。

98. 除了以固定方式設立的讀經員與輔祭員之外，<sup>146</sup> 主教按其明智的判斷，可正式地把一些任務<sup>147</sup> 委託給執事、度獻身生活者和平信徒，讓他們在堂區主任的指導下服務，並向堂區主任負責。這些任務包括：

- 1° 當信友「因缺乏聖職人員或因其他重大原因，不能參與感恩祭時」，<sup>148</sup> 在主日和當守的法定節日，為他們主持聖道禮儀。這是例外情況，只適用於真正無法以一般形式舉行感恩祭的情況；而且幾時有執事在場，總要是把這些禮儀交託給他們；
- 2° 施行洗禮，但應謹記「洗禮的職權施行人是主教、司鐸、和執事」，<sup>149</sup> 而且《天主教法典》第861條2項的情況只屬例外；這些情況應由教區教長酌情決定；

all'altare)；參閱：宗座法律委員會，〈答覆〉(Riposta) (1992年7月11日)，《宗座公報》86 (1994)，541；禮儀及聖事部，〈通函〉(Lettera circolare) (1994年3月15日)，《宗座公報》86 (1994)，541~542。

145 參閱：《天主教法典》，第205條。

146 參閱：同上，第230條1項。

147 主教在把上述任務交託給執事或平信徒的文件中，應清楚指明他們獲授權去履行的職能及時限。

148 《天主教法典》，第1248條2項。

149 同上，第861條1項。



3° 按《基督徒殯葬禮》（*Ordo exsequiarum*）的〈導言〉（*Praenotanda*）的第19項規定，主持殯葬禮。

99. 信友可「按主教團的規定」，<sup>150</sup> 並「在符合教律或禮規及遵守它們所載的「細則」的情況下」，<sup>151</sup> 視乎環境、需要，或某個別場合，在教堂或聖堂中講道。然而，信友無論如何也不能在感恩祭中負責講經。<sup>152</sup>

100. 再者，「在缺少司鐸與執事的地區，教區主教獲得主教團的贊同和聖座的許可後，得委任平信徒證婚。」<sup>153</sup>

## 10、教會內共負責任的組織

### 10a. 堂區經濟委員會

101. 管理每個堂區在不同程度上可運用的財產，相對教會和相對公民社會而言，都是福傳和為福音作見證的

<sup>150</sup> 同上，第766條。

<sup>151</sup> 《有關非晉秩信友協助司鐸聖職的某些問題》教廷八部會聯合訓令（1997年8月15日），第3節4項：《宗座公報》89（1997），865。

<sup>152</sup> 參閱：《天主教法典》，第767條1項；《有關非晉秩信友協助司鐸聖職的某些問題》教廷八部會聯合訓令（1997年8月15日），第3節1項：《宗座公報》89（1997），864。

<sup>153</sup> 《天主教法典》，第1112條1項；參閱：若望保祿二世，《善牧》宗座憲章（*Constitutio apostolica Pastor Bonus*）（1998年6月28日），63：《宗座公報》80（1988），876，論禮儀及聖事部之權限。

一個重要範疇。正如教宗方濟各曾說過：「我們擁有的一切財富，都是上主為使世界繼續進步、為使人類繼續進步、為使人守望相助，而給予我們的。」<sup>154</sup> 因此，堂區主任不能，也不應單獨負起這任務，<sup>155</sup> 而要有合作者，尤其滿懷福傳熱忱和傳教精神的人士，來協助他管理教會的財產。<sup>156</sup>

102. 職是之故，每個堂區必須設立經濟委員會，作為一個諮詢性組織，以堂區主任為主席，並由至少另外三位信友組成；<sup>157</sup> 為使這委員會可被視為具有「集體」的性質，三人這數目是至少的；值得謹記，堂區主任並不包括在經濟委員會的成員之內，但他是主席。

103. 在教區主教沒有給予具體守則的情況下，堂區主任可按堂區規模的大小來決定委員會成員的人數，以及委員應否由他提名，抑或由堂區團體選出。

此委員會的成員，不一定隸屬該堂區，但必須具有良好信譽，並精於處理財經和法律事務，<sup>158</sup> 從而勝任提供有成效和稱職的服務，而不至於使委員會只是形同虛設。

<sup>154</sup> 教宗方濟各，〈在聖瑪爾大之家的講道〉（2013年10月21日）：《羅馬觀察報》242（2013年10月21日），8。

<sup>155</sup> 參閱：《天主教法典》，第537條及1280條。

<sup>156</sup> 根據《天主教法典》第532條，負責堂區財產的是堂區主任，即使在管理它們時，他必須借助平信徒專業人士。

<sup>157</sup> 參閱：《天主教法典》，第115條2項，及相近的第492條1項。

<sup>158</sup> 參閱：同上，第537條，及《宗徒的繼承人》主教牧靈職務指南，210：《梵蒂岡手冊》（*Enchiridion Vaticanum*）22（2003~2004），2087。

104. 最後，除非教區主教經過適當考慮而另有規定，只要行事審慎並遵守相關的民法，有需要時，同一個人可成為多個堂區的經濟委員會的成員。

105. 教區主教頒布的相關守則，應考慮各堂區的獨特狀況，例如，那些收入特別微薄的堂區，或隸屬牧靈單位的堂區。<sup>159</sup>

106. 在堂區團體內部，經濟委員會於促進共負責任的文化、行政透明度和支援教會的需要等方面，能夠扮演一個相當重要的角色。特別是，透明度不應僅被理解為形式上呈遞數據，而是給團體提供它應享有的資訊和讓它有創意地參與其事的良機。對教會的公信力來說，這是不可或缺的行事方式（*modus agendi*），尤其是在教會要管理可觀財產的情況下。

107. 通常來說，透過公布年報，詳細列出各項收支，以及事前必定向教區教長呈交該報告，<sup>160</sup> 行政透明的目的便可達到。如此，這些財產既然屬於堂區，而不是屬於作為財產管理者的堂區主任，整個團體便能知悉這些財產是如何管理、堂區的經濟狀況如何，以及那些是堂區能有效地動用的資源。

## 10b. 堂區牧靈委員會

108. 按現行教律的規定，<sup>161</sup> 教區主教可斟酌是否在各

159 參閱：《天主教法典》，第517及526條。

160 參閱：同上，第1287條1項。

161 參閱：同上，第536條1項。

堂區設立牧靈委員會，但在通常情況下，成立該委員會是獲大力推薦的；正如教宗方濟各曾說過：「我們多麼需要牧靈委員會！沒有牧靈委員會，主教便不能好好地領導一個教區。沒有牧靈委員會，堂區主任也不能領導一個堂區。」<sup>162</sup>

然而，教律的規定也有其彈性，容許按具體情況，作出合宜的適應，例如，在多個堂區被委託給同一位堂區主任，或有牧靈單位存在的情況下，可為數個堂區單獨設立一個牧靈委員會。

109. 牧靈委員會的神學意義根源於教會的結構本質，即根源於教會作為「基督奧體」；「共融靈修」由此而生。事實上，在教會內，神恩和職務的多元化是根源於信友加入了基督奧體，也來自聖神的恩賜還多元化總不可被渾然一體，甚至變成「整齊劃一，要求凡事千篇一律，人人都有同一思維。」<sup>163</sup> 反之，憑藉從洗禮所分擔的司祭職，<sup>164</sup> 每位信友都有責任去建構整個奧體，而同時，整個天主子民，各司其職，共負責任地參與教會的使命，亦即在歷史中辨認出天主的臨在，並成為祂國度的見證人。<sup>165</sup>

162 教宗方濟各，〈在亞西西與聖職人員、度獻身生活者和牧靈委員會成員會面時的講話〉（2013年10月4日）：《訓導》（*Insegnamenti*）I/2（2013），328。

163 同樣，〈五旬節彌撒講道〉，2017年6月4日：《宗座公報》109（2017），711。

164 參閱：梵蒂岡第二屆大公會議，《教會憲章》，10：《宗座公報》57（1965），14。

165 參閱：聖職部，《牧靈委員會》通函（*Lettera circolare Omnes christifideles*）（1973年1月25日），4及9；：《梵蒂岡手

110. 牧靈委員會毫不是一個純粹的官僚組織：它不僅凸顯而且落實天主子民作為福傳使命的行動者和主角的核心身分。這身分是來自每位信友透過聖洗和堅振聖事所領受的聖神恩賜：「第一步，就是藉洗禮得以重生，進入天主性的生命；然後，行為在表現上要像天主子女，也就是要肖似在聖教會內一直運作和讓信友參與祂在世使命的基督。聖神的傅油也是為此：『若非聖神助祐，世人一無所有』（參閱：五旬節繼擘詠）。……正如耶穌的整個生命是由聖神所推動，教會的生命和她每個成員的生命，也都是受同一位聖神所引領。」<sup>166</sup>

在這深層次觀念的光照下，我們應謹記聖保祿六世的話：「牧靈委員會的職責是要研究、檢視關於牧靈活動的一切，從而提出可行的結論，為促進天主子民的生活和行動與福音相符」，<sup>167</sup>正如教宗方濟各曾提及，這委員會的「主要目標不應是組織教會，而應是激發傳教的切願，以圖接觸每一個人。」<sup>168</sup>

111. 牧靈委員會是個諮詢組織，在其組織架構、揀選委員的方式、宗旨，以及運作模式上，受教區主教釐定

冊》（*Enchiridion Vaticanum*）4（1971~1973），1199~1201及1207~1209；《基督信友平信徒》宗座勸諭，27；《宗座公報》81（1989），440~441。

166 教宗方濟各，〈週三公開接見〉（2018年5月23日）。

167 保祿六世自動手諭《聖的教會》法令（1966年8月6日），I，16，第一項；《宗座公報》58（1966），766；參閱：《天主教法典》，第511條。

168 《福音的喜樂》宗座勸諭，31；《宗座公報》105（2013），1033。

的守則約束。<sup>169</sup> 無論如何，為避免扭曲這委員會的性質，宜避免稱之為「小組」，或「團隊」，意即：採用不合適的術語來表達堂區主任與其他信友之間在教會和教律角度上的關係。

112. 根據教區的相關守則，牧靈委員會需要有成效地代表整個（堂區）團體的不同組成部分（司鐸、執事、度獻身生活者及平信徒）。這委員會構成一個特定的環境，讓信友能夠行使他們的權利和義務，就有關堂區團體的福祉，向牧者們表達他們的見解，並將之也傳達給其他信友。<sup>170</sup>

因此，堂區牧靈委員會的主要職能，在於對堂區在牧靈和愛德工作的可行計畫，進行研究，並與教區的發展保持一致。

113. 堂區牧靈委員會「只享有諮詢權」，<sup>171</sup> 意思是其提案開始落實之前，必須先獲堂區主任同意採納。同時，堂區主任應認真考慮牧靈委員會的意見，尤其是在共同分辨的過程中，全體一致表達的意見。

為使牧靈委員會的服務能有裨益且有成效，必須避免兩個極端：一方面，堂區主任只向牧靈委員會轉達他已經作了的決定，或事前不提供應有的資訊，或甚少，而且僅形式上召開會議；另一方面，堂區主任僅是牧靈委員會的成員之一，而事實上卻被剝奪了身為牧者和團體領

169 參閱：《天主教法典》，第536條2項。

170 參閱：同上，第212條3項。

171 同上，第536條2項。

導的角色。<sup>172</sup>

114. 最後，牧靈委員會應盡可能由那些在堂區牧靈生活中實際上負起責任，或具體地投入牧靈生活的人士組成，以免委員會的會議變成抽象的思想交流，而不考慮團體的實際生活、其資源為何、其面對的難題又是如何。

### 10c. 在牧靈上共負責任的其他方式

115. 在無法把一個信友團體成立為一個堂區或準堂區的情況下，<sup>173</sup> 教區主教在諮詢司鐸諮議會之後，<sup>174</sup> 可以用另一種方式為其提供牧靈服務，<sup>175</sup> 例如，可斟酌能否成立作為「傳教站」並附屬當地堂區主任的牧靈中心，以促進福傳和愛德事工。在這些情況下，要為這牧靈中心設一間合適的教堂或聖堂，<sup>176</sup> 並為其活動釐定可供參考的教區守則，以協調其活動，使之補充堂區的活動。

116. 此類中心——在一些教區稱之為「服務中心」（*diaconie*）——盡可能交託予一位堂區副主任，或甚以特定方式，交託予一位或多位終身執事及他們的家

172 參閱：《司鐸：牧者及堂區團體的領袖》（*Istruzione - Il presbitero, pastore e guida della comunità parrocchiale*），26：《梵蒂岡手冊》（*Enchiridion Vaticanum*）21（2002），843。

173 參閱：《天主教法典》，第516條1項。

174 參閱：同上，第515條2項。

175 參閱：同上，第516條2項。

176 參閱：同上，第1214條；第1223及1225條。

人，在堂區主任的督導下，管理這些中心。

117. 這些中心可成為傳教的哨站和人與人之間彼此關懷的工具，尤其在地域廣闊的堂區為然。那些中心應確保有祈禱和朝拜聖體的時間，以及教理講授及其他為信友的裨益而設的活動，特別是那些為窮人、有需要者，以及照顧病人而設的愛德事工，並可為此招募度獻身生活者和平信徒，甚至每位善心的人，來一起合作。

牧靈中心的負責人有責任盡力確保由堂區主任和其他司鐸盡量常常舉行聖事，尤其是彌撒及和好聖事。

## 11、 聖事獻儀

118. 另一個與堂區生活及其福傳使命相連的議題，就是為求獻彌撒而給予主祭司鐸的獻儀，以及為舉行其他聖事而給予堂區的獻儀。<sup>177</sup> 這些獻儀，按其本質，應是奉獻者自願給予，而且是取決於其良知和對教會的責任感，但不可視之為「應付的代價」或「應課的稅款」，彷彿是一種「聖事稅」。事實上，「信徒為其意向獻彌撒，不但為教會有益，且因此奉獻得參與教會照顧聖職人員生活及教會之事工。」<sup>178</sup>

177 參閱：同上，第848條及第1264條2°，以及第945~958條，和聖職部，《彌撒獻儀》法令（*Mos iugiter*）（1991年2月22日），由教宗若望保祿二世依特別方式（*in forma specifica*）核准：《梵蒂岡手冊》（*Enchiridion Vaticanum*）13（1991~1993），6~28。

178 《天主教法典》，第946條。

119. 按此理解，提昇信友在這方面的意識培育十分重要，好使他們樂意為堂區的種種需要作貢獻。堂區畢竟是「他們的家」，他們學會照顧堂區的需要是一件好事，尤其在那些彌撒獻儀仍然是司鐸生活費及福傳資源唯一來源的國家。

120. 無論是在個人層面上度簡樸而有節制的生活，或是在堂區財務管理上有透明度，司鐸們在使用金錢上越樹立「有德行」的善表，上述意識便越有效。財產的運用不是為配合堂區主任或一小撮人的「計畫」——或許是好的但流於空泛的計畫；反之，應恰如其分地為了信友們的實際需要，尤其是為那些最貧困的和最需要的人士。

121. 無論如何，「關於彌撒獻儀，任何形式的買賣或商業性的行為，即使只是表面形象，也絕對禁止」，<sup>179</sup> 因為（法典）「誠懇地奉勸司鐸們，即使不收任何獻儀，仍應按信徒的意向，尤其是窮苦者的意向，獻彌撒。」<sup>180</sup>

為達此目的，做法之一是以不具名字的方式收集獻儀，這樣，讓每個人都可自願地按自己的能力，或以各人認為合理的金額來作奉獻，而不會感到被強迫或要符合既定的期望，或是要按一個定價來付費。

## 結 論

122. 透過重溫梵蒂岡第二屆大公會議的教會學和借助近年來教會的訓導，以及考慮到已經歷鉅變的社會和文化背景，本訓

<sup>179</sup> 同上，第947條。

<sup>180</sup> 同上，第945條2項。

令按傳教的意義，聚焦於堂區的更新。

為使人能與基督相遇和與祂建立有活力的關係，並與基督信仰中的弟兄姊妹們相遇和建立有活力的關係，堂區仍舊是不可或缺的制度。然而，堂區也同樣要不斷地面對當下文化及人羣生活的改變，好能有創意地探索新的途徑和方法 and 工具，讓堂區能達致其最基本的任務，亦即成為福傳動力的中心。

123. 因此，牧靈行動需要跨越堂區按地域所定的界限，使教會團體的共融，透過不同職務和神恩的通力合作，能更清晰地綻放光芒，並使堂區把自身建構成一種「全體牧靈」行動，為造就教區及其使命。

這種牧靈行動，旨在透過司鐸、執事、度獻身生活者及平信徒之間，以及在同一大、小地區的不同堂區團體之間有成效和有活力的合作，嘗試找出與福傳有關連的問題、困難和挑戰，並整合各種適切的途徑、工具、提案和方式來面對這一切。這類共同傳教計畫可在彼此毗鄰的地域及彼此近似的社會脈絡中詳細安排和推行，亦即在毗鄰或有相同社會文化條件的團體中推行，或在彼此有類似牧靈範疇的團體當中推行，例如：一些教區按需要並已進行的對青少年、大學和職業訓練事工上的協調。

因此，全體牧靈，除了協調各種牧靈活動和彼此能夠聯繫和合作的架構以外，還要求全體已受洗信友的貢獻。正如教宗方濟各所言：「當我們談及『大眾』時，我們不是指社會或教會的組織架構，而是指全部不是獨個兒走路的人士，即一

個包羅所有人，彼此緊密地聯繫、服事所有人的團體。」<sup>181</sup>

這樣，要求有長遠歷史的堂區制度不自我束縛，以致停滯不前，或在牧靈上墨守成規，反之，要它把「外展的動力」發揮出來，透過不同堂區團體之間的合作，以及聖職人員和平信徒之間更強化的共融，使堂區制度更有效地面對福傳使命。這使命是全體天主子民的任務。他們作為「天主的大家庭」，在歷史上向前邁進，彼此同心協力，使整個教會團體得以成長。

因此，本份文件，除了證明這類更新的迫切性之外，也提供了一種應用教律守則的方法，以釐訂牧者和平信徒在行事上的可能性、限制、權利和義務，從而使堂區重新發掘，它本身是一個福音宣講和慶祝感恩祭的基本地點、一個活出兄弟情誼和愛德善行的場所，使基督徒的見證得以向世界發放光芒。換言之，堂區「必須繼續成為一個有創意、可作為依據點、富母性慈懷的地方。在那裡，創新的能力能得以落實；當一個堂區能這樣發展下去時，我所稱的『外展的堂區』便可得以實現。」<sup>182</sup>

124. 教宗方濟各邀請我們呼求「瑪利亞——福傳之母」，好使「童貞瑪利亞幫助我們，在這有迫切性地再宣揚福音的時代，對這使命說『是』，使我們能以已復活者的一般新熱忱，把戰勝死亡的生命福音帶給所有的人；願聖母為我們代禱，使我們能獲得神聖的勇氣，敢於探索新的途徑，使救贖

<sup>181</sup> 教宗方濟各，世界主教會議後《生活的基督》宗座勸諭（2019年3月25日），231，梵蒂岡，2019。

<sup>182</sup> 同上，〈與波蘭主教團的會面〉，克拉科夫（2016年7月27日）：《宗座公報》108（2016），893。

之恩得以惠及眾人。」<sup>183</sup>

2020年6月27日，聖父批准聖職部此份文件。

羅馬，2020年6月29日，聖伯多祿及聖保祿節日

✠ **Beniamino Card. Stella**  
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<sup>183</sup> 同上，2017年《世界傳教節文告》（2017年6月4日），10：《宗座公報》109（2017），764。

## INSTRUCTION

### The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church

#### INTRODUCTION

1. The ecclesiological reflection of the Second Vatican Council, together with the considerable social and cultural changes of recent decades, has resulted in various Particular Churches having to reorganise the manner in which the pastoral care of Parish communities are assigned. This has made it possible to initiate new experiences, enhancing the dimension of communion and implementing, under the guidance of pastors, a harmonious synthesis of charisms and vocations at the service of the proclamation of the Gospel, which better corresponds to the demands of evangelisation today.

Pope Francis, at the beginning of his Petrine ministry, recalled the importance of “creativity”, meaning thereby “*seeking new ways*”, that is “*seeking how best to proclaim the Gospel*”; in respect of this, the Holy Father concluded by saying, “*the Church, and also the Code of Canon Law, gives us innumerable possibilities, much freedom to seek these things*”<sup>1</sup>.

2. The situations outlined in the following *Instruction*, represent a valuable opportunity for pastoral conversion that is essentially missionary. Parish communities will find herein a call to go out of themselves, offering instruments for reform, even structural, in a spirit of communion and collaboration, of encounter and closeness,

<sup>1</sup> FRANCIS, *Discussion with Parish Priests of Rome* (16 September 2013): <http://cosarestadelgiorno.wordpress.com/2013/09/16/>

of mercy and solicitude for the proclamation of the Gospel.

#### I. PASTORAL CONVERSION

3. Pastoral conversion is one of the central themes in the “*new phase of evangelisation*”<sup>2</sup> that the Church is called to foster today, whereby Christian communities be ever more centres conducive to an encounter with Christ.

The Holy Father, in this regard, recommends that: “*If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: “Give them something to eat” (Mk6:37)*”<sup>3</sup>.

4. Urged on by this concern, the Church “*faithful to her own tradition and at the same time conscious of her universal mission, she can enter into communion with the various civilizations, to their enrichment and the enrichment of the Church herself*”<sup>4</sup>. The fruitful and creative encounter between the Gospel and the culture leads to

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *ID.*, Apostolic Exhortation *Evaneglii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), n. 287: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1136.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 49: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1040.

<sup>4</sup> SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world *Gaudium et Spes* (7 December 1965), n. 58: *AAS* 58 (1966), 1079.

true progress: on the one hand, the Word of God is incarnate in the history of men, thus renews it; on the other hand, “*the Church [...] can and ought to be enriched by the development of human social life*”<sup>5</sup>, enhancing thereby, in our present age, the mission entrusted to her by Christ.

5. The Church proclaims that the Word, “*became flesh and lived among us*” (Jn 1:14). This Word of God, who loves to dwell in our midst, in his inexhaustible richness<sup>6</sup>, was received the world over by diverse peoples, inspiring in them the most noble of aspirations, such as the desire for God, the dignity of every human life, equality among men and respect for difference within the single human family, dialogue as a means to participation, a longing for peace, welcome as an expression of fraternity and solidarity, together with a responsible care for creation<sup>7</sup>.

It is unthinkable, therefore, that such newness, whose propagation to the ends of the earth remains incomplete, abates or, worse still, disappears<sup>8</sup>. In order for the journey of the Word to continue, the Christian community must make a determined missionary decision “*capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today’s world rather than for her self-preservation*”<sup>9</sup>.

5 *Ibid.*, n. 44: AAS 58 (1966), 1065.

6 Cf. SAINT EPHREM, *Commentary on Tatian's Diatessaron* 1, 18-19: SC 121, 52-53.

7 FRANCIS, Encyclical Letter *Laudato si* (24 May 2015), n. 68: AAS 107 (2015), 847.

8 Cf. PAUL VI, Encyclical Letter *Ecclesiam Suam* (6 August 1964): AAS 56 (1964), 639.

9 *Evangelium Gaudium*, n. 27: AAS 105 (2013), 1031.

## II. THE PARISH IN A CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

6. The aforesaid missionary conversion, which naturally leads to a reform of structures, concerns the Parish in particular, namely that community gathered around the Table of the Word and the Eucharist.

The Parish has a long history and from the outset, it has played a fundamental role in the life of Christians and in the development and pastoral work of the Church. We can see this in the writings of Saint Paul. Several of the Pauline texts show us the formation of small communities as domestic churches, which the Apostle simply calls a “house” (cf., for example, Rm 16:3-5; 1 Co 16:19-20; Phil 4:22). With these “houses”, we get a foretaste of the birth of the first “Parishes”.

7. Since its inception, the Parish is envisioned as a response to a precise pastoral need, namely that of bringing the Gospel to the People through the proclamation of the faith and the celebration of the Sacraments. The etymology of the word makes clear the meaning of the institution: the Parish is a house among houses<sup>10</sup> and is a response to the logic of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, alive and active among the community. It is visibly characterised then, as a place of worship, a sign of the permanent presence of the Risen Lord in the midst of his People.

8. The territorial configuration of the Parish, however, must confront a peculiar characteristic of our contemporary world, whereby increased mobility and the digital culture have expanded

10 Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* (30 December 1988), n. 26: AAS 81 (1989), 438.



the confines of existence. On the one hand, people are less associated today with a definite and immutable geographical context, living instead in “a global and pluralist village”; on the other hand, the digital culture has inevitably altered the concept of space, together with people’s language and behaviour, especially in younger generations.

Moreover, it is quite easy to hypothesise about how the continuous development of technology will ultimately change our way of thinking, together with the understanding of self and of social living. The speed of change, successive cultural models, the ease of movement and the speed of communication are transforming the perception of space and time.

9. As a living community of believers, the Parish finds itself in a context whereby the territorial affiliation is increasingly less evident, where places of association are multiplied and where interpersonal relationships risk being dissolved into a virtual world without any commitment or responsibility towards one’s neighbour.

10. It is noteworthy how such cultural changes and the evolving territorial ties are fostering within the Church, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, a new discernment around community, “*which consists in seeing reality with the eyes of God, with a view to unity and communion*”<sup>11</sup>. The whole People of God must urgently embrace the Holy Spirit’s invitation to begin the process of “renewing” the face of the Church.

<sup>11</sup> FRANCIS, *General Audience* (12 June 2019): *L’Osservatore Romano* 134 (13 June 2019), 1.

### III. THE VALUE OF THE PARISH TODAY

11. In virtue of this discernment, the Parish is called upon to read the signs of the times, while adapting both to the needs of the faithful and to historical changes. A renewed vitality is required that favours the rediscovery of the vocation of the baptised as a disciple of Jesus Christ and a missionary of the Gospel, in light of the Second Vatican Council and subsequent Magisterium.

12. The Council Fathers were prescient in writing: “*the care of souls should always be infused with a missionary spirit*”<sup>12</sup>. In continuity with this teaching, Saint John Paul II specified that: “*Whilst the Parish is perfected and integrated in a variety of forms, it nevertheless remains an indispensable organism of primary importance in the visible structure of the Church*”, whereby “*evangelisation is the cornerstone of all pastoral action, the demands of which are primary, preeminent and preferential*”<sup>13</sup>. Subsequently, Benedict XVI taught, “*the parish is a beacon that radiates the light of the faith and thus responds to the deepest and truest desires of the human heart, giving meaning and hope to the lives of individuals and families*”<sup>14</sup>. Lastly, Pope Francis recalled how “*the parish encourages and trains its members to be*

<sup>12</sup> SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus* (28 October 1965), n. 30: *AAS* 58 (1966), 688.

<sup>13</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Discourse to Participants at the Plenary of the Congregation for the Clergy* (20 October 1984), ns. 3 and 4: *Insegnamenti* VII/2 (1984), 984 and 985; cf. also ID., Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* (16 October 1979), n. 67: *AAS* 71 (1979), 1332.

<sup>14</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Homily during the pastoral visit to Our Lady Star of Evangelisation Parish of Rome* (10 December 2006): *Insegnamenti* II/2 (2006), 795.

*evangelisers*”<sup>15</sup>.

13. In order to promote the centrality of the missionary presence of the Christian community in the world<sup>16</sup>, it is important not only to think about a new experience of Parish, but also about the ministry and mission of priests, who, together with the lay faithful, have the task of being “salt and light of the world” (cf. Mt 5:13-14), a “lamp on a lamp-stand” (cf. Mk 4:21), showing forth the face of an evangelising community, capable of an adequate reading of the signs of the times and of giving witness to coherent evangelical living.

14. Beginning with a consideration of the signs of the times, it is necessary, in listening to the Spirit, to produce new signs. With the Parish no longer being the primary gathering and social centre, as in former days, it is thus necessary to find new forms of accompaniment and closeness. A task of this kind ought not to be seen as a burden, but rather as a challenge to be embraced with enthusiasm.

15. Imitating their Master, the Lord’s disciples, in the school of Saints and shepherds, learned, not without suffering, how to await the times and ways of God, thus nurturing the certainty that He is present until the end of time, and that the Holy Spirit – the beating heart in the life of the Church – gathers together the children of God dispersed throughout the world. As a result, the Christian community should not be afraid to begin and accompany processes within territories that are host to diverse cultures, in the sure and certain hope that, for the disciples of Christ, “*nothing genuinely*

<sup>15</sup> *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 28: AAS 105 (2013) 1032.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 4: AAS 58 (1966), 1027.

*human fails to raise an echo in their hearts*”<sup>17</sup>.

#### IV. MISSION: THE GUIDING PRINCIPLE FOR RENEWAL

16. Given the above-mentioned changing realities, their generous dedication notwithstanding, the current Parish model no longer adequately corresponds to the many expectations of the faithful, especially when one considers the multiplicity of community types in existence today<sup>18</sup>. It is true that a characteristic of the Parish is that its rootedness at the centre of where people live from day to day. However, the Parish territory is no longer a geographical space only, but also the context in which people express their lives in terms of relationships, reciprocal service and ancient traditions. It is in this “existential territory” where the challenges facing the Church in the midst of the community are played out. As a result, any pastoral action that is limited to the territory of the Parish is outdated, which is something the parishioners themselves observe when their Parish appears to be more interested in preserving a nostalgia of former times as opposed to looking to the future with courage<sup>19</sup>. It is worth noting, however, that from a canonical perspective, the territorial principle remains in force, when required

<sup>17</sup> Cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 1: AAS 58 (1966), 1025-1026.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, ns. 72-73: AAS 105 (2013), 1050-1051

<sup>19</sup> Cf. SYNOD OF BISHOPS, XV Ordinary General Assembly (3-28 October 2018): “Young people, the faith and vocational discernment”, Final Document, n. 129 “*In this context, an understanding of the parish defined solely by territorial borders and incapable of engaging the faithful in a wide range of initiatives, especially the young, would imprison the parish in unacceptable stagnation and in worryingly repetitive pastoral cycles*”: *L’Osservatore Romano* 247(29-30 October 2018), 10.

by law<sup>20</sup>.

17. Moreover, mere repetitive action that fails to have an impact upon people's concrete lives remains a sterile attempt at survival, which is usually welcomed by general indifference. If the Parish does not exude that spiritual dynamic of evangelisation, it runs the risk of becoming self-referential and fossilised, offering experiences that are devoid of evangelical flavour and missionary drive, of interest only to small groups.

18. The renewal of evangelisation requires a new approach with diverse pastoral proposals, so that the Word of God and the sacramental life can reach everyone in a way that is coherent with their state in life. Ecclesial membership in our present age is less a question of birthplace, much less where someone grew up, as it is about being part of a community by adoption<sup>21</sup>, where the faithful have a more extensive experience of the Word of God than they do of being a body made up of many members, with everyone working for the common good (1 Co 12:12-27).

19. Over and above places and reasons for membership, the Parish community is the human context wherein the evangelising work of the Church is carried out, where Sacraments are celebrated and where charity is exercised, all with missionary zeal, which, apart from being an intrinsic part of pastoral action, is a litmus test of its authenticity. In this present age, marked at times by marginalisation and solitude, the Parish community is called to be a living sign of the proximity of Christ through fraternal bonds, ever attentive to new forms of poverty.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. for example, C.I.C., cann. 102; 1015-1016; 1108, §1.

<sup>21</sup> *Christifideles Laici*, n. 25: *AAS* 81 (1989), 436-437.

20. In view of what has been said so far, it is necessary to identify perspectives that allow for the renewal of "traditional" Parish structures in terms of mission. This is the heart of the desired pastoral conversion, which must touch the proclamation of the Word of God, the sacramental life and the witness of charity, in other words the essential areas in which the Parish grows and conforms to the Mystery in which it believes.

21. Perusing the Acts of the Apostles, one realises the transformative effect of the Word of God, that interior power that brings about the conversion of hearts. The Word is the food that nourishes the Lord's disciples and makes them witnesses to the Gospel in the various circumstances of life. The Scriptures contain a prophetic impetus that makes them into a living force. It is necessary to provide instruction on how to listen and mediate on the Word of God through a variety of different approaches to proclamation<sup>22</sup>, adopting clear and comprehensible means of communication that announce the Lord Jesus according to the ever new witness of the *kerygma*<sup>23</sup>.

22. The celebration of the Eucharistic mystery is "*the source and summit of the whole Christian life*"<sup>24</sup> and accordingly, the essential moment for building up the Parish community. Therein, the Church becomes aware of the meaning of her name (*Ecclesia*): the coming together of the People of God to praise, implore, intercede and give thanks. In celebrating the Eucharist, the Christian community welcomes the living presence of the Crucified and Risen Lord,

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 174: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1093.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, n. 164-165: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1088-1089.

<sup>24</sup> SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* (21 November 1964), n. 11: *AAS* 57 (1965), 15.

receiving the announcement of the entire mystery of salvation.

23. The Church perceives here the need to rediscover Christian initiation, which generates new life, as it is placed within the mystery of God's own life. It is a journey that is ongoing, that transcends celebrations or events, because, in essence, it is defined, not as a duty to fulfil a "rite of passage", but rather as a perpetual *sequela Christi*. In this context, it would be useful to establish a mystagogical itinerary that genuinely affects existence<sup>25</sup>. Catechesis needs to be presented as an ongoing proclamation of the Mystery of Christ, the objective of which is to foster in the heart of the baptised that full stature of Christ (cf. Eph 4:13) that is derived from a personal encounter with the Lord of life.

Pope Francis has recalled the need to "*mention two false forms of holiness that can lead us astray: gnosticism and pelagianism. They are two heresies from early Christian times, yet they continue to plague us*"<sup>26</sup>. In the case of gnosticism, one is dealing with an

25 Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, ns. 166-167: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1089-1090.

26 FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation on the call to holiness in the contemporary world *Gaudete et Exultate* (19 March 2018), n. 35: *AAS* 110 (2018), 1120. The following words of Pope Francis with regard to *gnosticism* and *pelagianism* are also worth recalling here: "*This worldliness can be fuelled in two deeply interrelated ways. One is the attraction of gnosticism, a purely subjective faith whose only interest is a certain experience or a set of ideas and bits of information which are meant to console and enlighten, but which ultimately keep one imprisoned in his or her own thoughts and feelings. The other is the self-absorbed promethean neopelagianism of those who ultimately trust only in their own powers and feel superior to others because they observe certain rules or remain intransigently faithful to a particular Catholic style from the past*". *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 94: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1059-1060; cf. also CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Letter *Placuit Deo* (22 February 2018): *AAS* 110

abstract faith that is purely intellectual and made up of knowledge that is far from lived reality; meanwhile, pelagianism leads man to depend on his own abilities, thus ignoring the action of the Holy Spirit.

24. In the mysterious interplay between the action of God and that of man, the proclamation of the Gospel comes through men and women who give credibility to what they say through the witness of their lives, together with their interpersonal relationships that inspire trust and hope. In these times, marked as they are by indifferentism, individualism and the exclusion of others, the rediscovery of brotherhood is paramount and integral to evangelisation, which is closely linked to human relationships<sup>27</sup>. In this way, the Christian community makes Our Lord's words their own, as they spur us to "*put out into the deep*" (Lk 5:4), trusting in the Master as we pay out the nets in the assurance of hauling a "*large catch*"<sup>28</sup>.

25. The 'culture of encounter' is conducive to dialogue, solidarity and openness to others, as it is person-centred. Naturally, a Parish must be a place that brings people together and fosters long-term personal relationships, thereby giving people a sense of belonging and being wanted.

26. The Parish community is called truly to master the "art of accompaniment". If deep roots are planted, the Parish will become a place where solitude is overcome, which has affected so

(2018), 429.

27 Cf. *Letter to Diognetus* V, 1-10: *Patres Apostolici*, ed. F.X. Funk, vol. 1, Tubingae 1901, 398.

28 Cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6 January 2001), n. 1: *AAS* 93 (2001), 266.

manylives, as well as being “*a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey and a centre of constant missionary outreach*”<sup>29</sup>.

### V. “ACOMMUNITY OF COMMUNITIES”: APARISH THAT IS INCLUSIVE, EVANGELISING AND ATTENTIVE TO THE POOR.

27. The subject of the missionary and evangelising action of the Church is always the People of God as a whole. The Code of Canon Law emphasises that the Parish is not identified as a building or a series of structures, but rather as a specific community of the faithful, where the Parish Priest is the proper pastor<sup>30</sup>. Pope Francis recalled that “*the parish is the presence of the Church in a given territory, an environment for hearing God’s word, for growth in the Christian life, for dialogue, proclamation, charitable outreach, worship and celebration*”, and affirmed that it is “*a community of communities*”<sup>31</sup>.

28. The various components that make up the Parish are called to communion and unity. When each part recognises its complementary role in service of the community, on the one hand, we see the fulfilment of the collaborative ministry of the Parish Priest with his Assistant Priests, while on the other hand, we see how the various charisms of deacons, consecrated men and women and the laity, cooperate in building up the singular body of Christ (cf. 1 Co 12:12).

29. The Parish is a community gathered together by the Holy Spirit

29 *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 28: AAS 105 (2013), 1032.

30 Cf. C.I.C. cann. 515; 518; 519.

31 *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 28: AAS 105 (2013), 1031-1032.

to announce the Word of God and bring new children of God to birth in the baptismal font. Assembled by the pastor, the Parish celebrates the memorial of the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord, bearing witness to faith in charity, living in a permanent state of mission, whilst ensuring that no one is excluded from the salvific, life-giving message. Pope Francis expressed it thus: “*The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community. While certainly not the only institution which evangelises, if the parish proves capable of self-renewal and constant adaptability, it continues to be “the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters”. This presumes that it really is in contact with the homes and the lives of its people, and does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few. [...] We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, and to make them completely mission-oriented*”<sup>32</sup>.

30. The “spiritual and ecclesial style of Shrines” – which are true “missionary outposts” in their own right – is not extraneous to the Parish, characterised as they are by their spirit of welcome, their life of prayer and silence that renews the spirit, the celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation and their care for the poor. Parish pilgrimages to various Shrines are precious instruments that can serve to strengthen fraternal communion, openness and welcome upon return to the Parish<sup>33</sup>.

32 *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 28: AAS 105 (2013), 1031-1032.

33 Cf. FRANCIS, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* (25 March 2019), n. 238, Vatican City 2019.

31. A Shrine, then, is analogous to a Parish in that it encompasses all the characteristics and services that ought to be found in the parish community, as it represents for the faithful the desired goal of their interior searching and a place where they can encounter the merciful face of Christ in a welcoming Church.

Frequenting Shrines can help the faithful rediscover their being “anointed by the Holy One” (1 Jn 2:20), that is to say their baptismal consecration. At such places, one learns to celebrate with fervour the mysterious presence of God in the midst his people in the liturgy, in the beauty of the evangelising mission of the baptised, and in the call to exercise charity in daily life<sup>34</sup>.

32. A ‘sanctuary’ open to all, the Parish, called to reach out to everyone, without exception, should remember that the poor and excluded must always have a privileged place in the heart of the Church. As Pope Benedict XVI affirmed: “*The Gospel is addressed in a special way to the poor*”<sup>35</sup>. In addition, as Pope Francis observed “*the new evangelisation is an invitation to acknowledge the saving power at work in their lives and to put them at the centre of the Church’s pilgrim way. We are called to find Christ in them, to lend our voice to their causes, but also to be their friends, to listen to them, to speak for them and to embrace the mysterious wisdom which God wishes to share with us through them*”<sup>36</sup>.

33. Oftentimes, the Parish community is the first place of personal human encounter that the poor have with the face of the Church.

34 Cf. ID., Bull of Indiction *Misericordiae Vultus* (11 April 2015), n. 3: *AAS* 107 (2015), 400-401.

35 BENEDICT XVI, *Address to the Bishops of Brazil* (11 May 2007), n. 3: *Insegnamenti* III/I (2007), 826.

36 *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 198: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1103.

Priests, deacons and consecrated men and women are among the first to have compassion for the “*wounded flesh*”<sup>37</sup> of their brothers and sisters, to visit the sick, to support the unemployed and their families, thereby opening the door to those in need. With their gaze fixed upon them, the Parish community evangelises and is evangelised by the poor, discovering a new the call to preach the Word in all settings<sup>38</sup>, whilst recalling the “supreme law” of charity, by which we shall all be judged<sup>39</sup>.

## VI. FROM THE CONVERSION OF PEOPLE TO THAT OF STRUCTURES

34. In the process of renewal and restructuring, the Parish has to avoid the risk of falling into an excessive and bureaucratic organisation of events and an offering of services that do not express the dynamic of evangelisation, but rather the criterion of self-preservation<sup>40</sup>.

Quoting Saint Paul VI, Pope Francis, with his usual *parrhesia*, stated: “*The Church must look with penetrating eyes within herself, ponder the mystery of her own being (...) There are ecclesial structures which can hamper efforts at evangelisation, yet even good structures are only helpful when there is a life constantly*

37 Cf. FRANCIS, *Morning Meditation at Santa Marta* (30 October 2017).

38 Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, ns. 186-216: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1098-1109.

39 Cf. *Gaudete et Exultate*, ns. 95-99: *AAS* 110 (2018), 1137-1138.

40 Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n.27:*AAS* 105(2013),1031; cf. also *ibid.*, n. 189: *AAS* 105 (2013),1099: “*Changing structures without generating new convictions and attitudes will only ensure that those same structures will become, sooner or later, corrupt, oppressive and ineffectual*”.

*driving, sustaining and assessing them. Without new life and an authentic evangelical spirit, without the Church's "fidelity to her own calling", any new structure will soon prove ineffective*<sup>41</sup>.

35. The conversion of structures, which the Church must undertake, requires a significant change in mentality and an interior renewal, especially among those entrusted with the responsibility of pastoral leadership. In order to remain faithful to the mandate of Christ, pastors, especially Parish Priests who "*are co-workers of the bishop in a very special way*"<sup>42</sup>, must resolutely grasp the need for a missionary reform of pastoral action.

36. Taking into consideration the profound emotional and nostalgic bonds within a Christian community, pastors ought not to forget that the faith of the People of God is interwoven with familial and communal memories. Often, a sacred place can evoke important milestones in the life of past generations, where faces and occasions have influenced personal and familial journeys. In order to avoid trauma and hurt in the process of restructuring a Parish or, at times, diocesan communities, it is imperative that it be carried out with flexibility and gradualism.

In reference to the reform of the Roman Curia, Pope Francis emphasised that gradualism "*has to do with the necessary discernment entailed by historical processes, the passage of time and stages of development, assessment, correction, experimentation, and approvals ad experimentum. In these cases, it is not a matter of indecisiveness, but of the flexibility needed to be able to achieve a true reform*"<sup>43</sup>. Accordingly, one should not act

41 *Ibid.*, n. 26: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1030-1031.

42 *Christus Dominus*, n. 30: *AAS* 58 (1966), 688.

43 FRANCIS, *Presentation of Christmas Greetings to the Roman Curia*

"hastily" in an attempt, as it were, to bring about immediate reforms by means of generic criteria that obey a "rational decision" to the detriment of those who actually live within the territory. Every plan must be situated within the lived experience of a community and implanted in it without causing harm, with a necessary phase of prior consultation, and of progressive implementation and verification.

37. Naturally, a renewal of this sort is not the responsibility solely of the Parish Priest, nor should it be imposed from above in such a way as to exclude the People of God. The pastoral conversion of structures implies the understanding that "*the faithful Holy People of God are anointed with the grace of the Holy Spirit; therefore when we reflect, think, evaluate, discern, we must be very attentive to this anointing. Whenever as a Church, as pastors, as consecrated persons, we have forgotten this certainty, we have lost our way. Whenever we try to supplant, silence, look down on, ignore or reduce into small elites the People of God in their totality and differences, we construct communities, pastoral plans, theological accentuations, spiritualities, structures without roots, without history, without faces, without memory, without a body, in the end, without lives. To remove ourselves from the life of the People of God hastens us to the desolation and to a perversion of ecclesial nature*"<sup>44</sup>.

It does not pertain to the clergy alone, therefore, to carry out the transformation inspired by the Holy Spirit, since this involves the

(22 December 2016): *AAS* 109 (2017), 44.

44 *ID.*, *Carta al Pueblo de Dios que peregrina en Chile* (31 May 2018): [www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/letters/2018/documents/papa-francesco\\_20180531\\_lettera-popolodidio-cile.html](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/es/letters/2018/documents/papa-francesco_20180531_lettera-popolodidio-cile.html)

entire People of God<sup>45</sup>. It is necessary, however, “*to consciously and lucidly seek areas of communion and participation so that the anointing of the People of God may find its concrete mediations to express itself*”<sup>46</sup>.

38. Consequently, the need to overcome a self-referential conception of the Parish or the “clericalisation of pastoral activity” becomes apparent. When it is acknowledged that the state of the People of God “*is that of the dignity and freedom of the children of God, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells as in His temple*”<sup>47</sup>, this inspires practises and models by which all the baptised, by virtue of the gift of the Holy Spirit and their infused charisms, become active participants of evangelisation, in the style and modality of an organic community, together with other Parish communities or at the diocesan level. In effect, the whole community, and not simply the hierarchy, is the responsible agent of mission, since the Church is identified as the entire People of God.

39. Pastors have the task of keeping this dynamic alive, so that the baptised realise that they are protagonists of evangelisation. The presbyterate, whose formation is ongoing<sup>48</sup>, must exercise the art of discernment with prudence, in such a way as to allow the life of the Parish, with its diversity of vocations and ministries, to grow and mature. As a member and servant of the People of God entrusted to his care, the Priest cannot supplant this discernment. The Parish community has the ability to propose forms of ministry, to proclaim

45 Cf. *ibid.*

46 *Ibid.*

47 *Lumen Gentium*, n. 9: AAS 57 (1965), 13.

48 Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis* (8 December 2016), ns. 80-88, Vatican City 2016, pp. 37-42.

the faith and to bear witness to charity.

40. The centrality of the Holy Spirit – a free gift from the Father and the Son to the Church – profoundly enlivens the aspect of generosity, in accord with the teaching of Jesus, who said: “You received without charge, give without charge” (Mk 10:8). The Lord taught his disciples to have a generous spirit of service, to be a reciprocal gift for the other (cf. Jn 13:14-15), and to have a special care for the poor. From this derives the need not to “commercialise” the sacramental life, and not to give the impression that the celebration of the Sacraments, especially the Holy Eucharist, along with other ministerial activities, are subject to tariffs.

The pastor who willingly serves his flock with generosity, must instruct the faithful, however, in such a way that each member of the community feels responsible and directly involved in caring for the needs of the Church in a variety of ways and in a spirit of solidarity, which the Church requires in order to carry out her pastoral service with freedom and efficacy.

41. The mission required of the Parish, as a central driving force of evangelisation, concerns the People of God in its entirety: priests, deacons, consecrated men and women, and the lay faithful, each according to their respective charisms and the responsibility that corresponds to them.

## VII. THE PARISH AND OTHER SUBDIVISIONS WITHIN THE DIOCESE

42. The pastoral conversion of the Parish community, in terms of mission, takes shape and finds expression in a gradual process of a renewal of structures; consequently, different forms of shared



pastoral care emerge, as well as forms of participation in it that involve the entire People of God.

43. Using language borrowed from Magisterial documents regarding subdivisions within the diocesan territory<sup>49</sup>, new expressions have been added to those of Parish and Vicariates Forane, which are foreseen in the current Code of Canon Law<sup>50</sup>, namely “pastoral units” and “pastoral regions”. These appellations effectively define new forms of pastoral organisation within a Diocese, thus reflecting a new relationship between the faithful and the territory.

44. In using terms like “pastoral units” and “pastoral regions”, naturally one does not envisage that by simply giving a new name to already existing realities, a myriad of current problems are overcome. At the heart of a process of renewal, instead of passively undergoing change by supporting and going along with it, there exists today the need to individuate new structures that will incite all those who make up the Christian community to fulfil their vocation to evangelise, with a view to a more effective pastoral care of the People of God, the “key factor” of which is proximity.

45. With this in mind, the canonical norm underlines the need to individuate different territories<sup>51</sup> within each Diocese, with the possibility of these being assembled into intermediate realities between a given Diocese and an individual Parish. Furthermore, by taking the size of the Diocese and its pastoral reality into

49 Cf. C.I.C., can. 374, §1.

50 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 374, §2; cf. also CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops *Apostolorum Successores* (22 February 2004), n. 217: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 22 (2003-2004), 2110.

51 Cf. C.I.C., can. 374, §1.

account, one is better situated to delineate various kinds of Parish groupings<sup>52</sup>.

The communal dimension of the Church lives and works at the heart of these groupings, with particular attention given to specific territories, the establishment of which must take into consideration the homogeneity and customs of the inhabitants, together with the common traits of the area, in order to foster a close relationship between Parish Priests and other pastoral workers<sup>53</sup>.

#### *VII. a. How to proceed with the establishment of Parish groupings*

46. Prior to establishing Parish groupings, the Bishop must first consult with the Presbyteral Council<sup>54</sup>, in accord with canonical norms and in the name of ecclesial co-responsibility, shared between the Bishop and the members of said Council.

47. Firstly, the grouping together of various Parishes can take a simple *federated* form, whereby assembled Parishes would retain their own identity.

In accordance with canonical regulations, when one is grouping together neighbouring Parishes, naturally, the essential elements established by the universal law regarding the Parish as a juridic person must be observed and from which the Bishop cannot dispense<sup>55</sup>. For every Parish that the Bishop plans to suppress, he must issue a specific decree to this effect, carefully outlining

52 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 374, §2.

53 Cf. *Apostolorum Successores*, n. 218: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 22 (2003-2004), 2114.

54 Cf. C.I.C., can. 515, §2.

55 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 86.

therein the motivating factors<sup>56</sup>.

48. In light of the above, the grouping of Parishes, including their erection or suppression, is enacted by the diocesan Bishop, as envisioned by the norms of Canon Law, namely through extinctive union, where one Parish merges into another, being absorbed into it and losing its former individuality and juridic personality; alternatively, this can be effected through a true and proper fusion, that gives life to a new and unique Parish, resulting in the suppression of the existing Parishes and their juridic personality; or, finally, by division of a Parish community into several autonomous Parishes that are created *ex novo*<sup>57</sup>.

Moreover, the suppression of Parishes by *extinctive union* is legitimate for causes directly related to a specific Parish. Some causes are not sufficient, such as, for example, the scarcity of diocesan clergy, the general financial situation of a Diocese, or other conditions within the community that are presumably reversible and of brief duration (e.g., numerical consistency, lack of financial self-sufficiency, the urban planning of the territory). As a condition for the legitimacy of this type of provision, the requisite motivations must be directly and organically connected to the interested Parish community, and not on general considerations or theories, or based solely ‘on principle’.

49. Apropos to the erection or suppression of Parishes, it must be borne in mind that every decision must be adopted by means of a formal decree, given in writing<sup>58</sup>. Consequently, it is considered

56 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 120, §1.

57 Cf. *ibid.*, cann. 121-122; cf. also *Apostolorum Successores*, n. 214: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 22 (2003-2004), 2099.

58 Cf. C.I.C., can. 51.

contrary to canonical norms to issue a single provision aimed at producing a reorganisation of a general character, either of the entire Diocese, a part of it, or of a group of Parishes, by means of a singular administrative act, general decree or particular law.

50. With respect to the suppression of Parishes, the decree must clearly state the reasons that led the Bishop to make this decision. The just cause therefore, must be specifically indicated, it being insufficient simply to refer to the “good of souls”.

The act by which a Parish is suppressed must also make provision for the disposition of temporal goods in accord with the law<sup>59</sup>; it is necessary to ensure that the Church of the suppressed Parish remains open to the faithful unless there are grave reasons to the contrary, after having heard the Presbyteral Council<sup>60</sup>.

51. Related to the topic of Parish groupings and their possible suppression, is the necessity that sometimes occurs, of the reduction of Churches to profane but not sordid use<sup>61</sup>, which belongs to the diocesan Bishop, after having first heard from the Presbyteral Council, whom he is obliged to consult<sup>62</sup>.

Ordinarily, also in this case, the legitimate causes for decreeing such a reduction do not include reasons like the lack of clergy, demographic decline or the grave financial state of the Diocese. However, if the building is in such a state as to be unable to be

59 Cf. *ibid.*, cann. 120-123.

60 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 500, §2 and 1222, §2.

61 Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CULTURE, *Decommissioning and Ecclesial Reuse of Churches. Guidelines* (17 December 2018): <http://www.cultura.va/content/cultura/it/pub/documenti/decommissioning.html>

62 Cf. C.I.C., can. 1222, §2.

used for divine worship in any way, and there is no possibility of repairing it, then the Bishop can proceed, according to the norm of law, to reduce it to profane but not sordid use.

### VII. b. Vicariate Forane

52. It is necessary to recall here that “to foster pastoral care by means of common action, several neighbouring parishes can be joined together in special groups, such as vicariates forane”<sup>63</sup>; these are identified under various headings such as “deaneries”, “pastoral zones” or “prefectures”<sup>64</sup>.

53. The Vicar Forane does not necessarily have to be a Parish Priest of a specific Parish<sup>65</sup>. Furthermore, in order to achieve the purpose for which the vicariate is established, his primary responsibility is “to promote and coordinate common pastoral action in the vicariate”<sup>66</sup>, so that it does not remain a purely formal institution. In addition, the Vicar Forane “is obliged to visit the Parishes of his district in accordance with the arrangement made by the diocesan Bishop”<sup>67</sup>. In order that he may better fulfil his function and promote common activity among Parishes, the diocesan Bishop may confer upon the Vicar Forane other faculties considered appropriate according to the specific circumstances.

63 *Ibid.*, can. 374, §2.

64 Cf. *Apostolorum Successores*, n. 217: *Enchiridion Vaticanum 22* (2003-2004), 2110.

65 Cf. C.I.C., can. 554, §1.

66 *Ibid.*, can. 555, §1, 1°.

67 *Ibid.*, can. 555, §4.

### VII. c. Pastoral Units

54. Likewise, when circumstances require it, because of the expansive territory of the vicariate forane, or an increase in the number of the faithful, the Bishop, after hearing the Presbyteral Council<sup>68</sup>, can decree a more stable and institutional grouping of various Parishes within the vicariate forane<sup>69</sup> in order to foster greater collaboration among them, bearing in mind the requisite criteria.

55. It is favourable that groupings (known as “pastoral units”<sup>70</sup>) are marked out in the best homogenous way possible, even from a sociological point of view, in order to favour a more unified and cohesive<sup>71</sup> pastoral action that is missionary in nature.

56. Moreover, each Parish within such a grouping must be entrusted to a Parish Priest or to a group of priests *in solidum*, who would take care of the whole Parish community<sup>72</sup>. Alternatively, when deemed opportune by the Bishop, the grouping could be composed of several Parishes, each having the same Parish Priest<sup>73</sup>.

57. In any case, due consideration must be given to priests who have exercised their ministry with merit and the esteem of their

68 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 500, §2.

69 Cf. PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS AND ITINERANT PEOPLE, *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi* (3 May 2004), n. 95; *Enchiridion Vaticanum 22* (2003-2004), 2548.

70 Cf. *Apostolorum Successores*, n. 215: *Enchiridion Vaticanum 22* (2003-2004), 2104.

71 Cf. *ibid.*

72 Cf. C.I.C., can. 517, §1.

73 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 526, §1.

communities, also for the good of the faithful, bound as they are to their Pastors by ties of affection and gratitude. The diocesan Bishop, when establishing a particular grouping, must not establish in the same decree that, since several Parishes are being entrusted to a sole Parish Priest<sup>74</sup>, that other Parish Priests, who may present and still in office<sup>75</sup>, are automatically transferred to the office of Parochial Vicar, or are removed *de facto* from their assignment.

58. In these cases, unless it concerns appointment *in solidum*, it belongs to the diocesan Bishop to define, on a case-by-case basis, the functions of the priest who is the leader of such parish groupings, as well as his collaboration with the Vicar Forane<sup>76</sup>, thereby establishing the pastoral unit.

59. Once the grouping of Parishes has been established according to the norm of law – as either a vicariate forane or a “pastoral unit” – the Bishop will determine, as appropriate, whether each Parish should have its own Parish Pastoral Council<sup>77</sup>, or whether it is better that this task be entrusted to a single Pastoral Council for all of them. In any case, the individual Parishes within the grouping, since they retain juridic personality and capacity, must maintain their own Finance Councils<sup>78</sup>.

60. In order to prioritise evangelisation and a more effective pastoral care, it is appropriate that common pastoral services be established in certain areas (for example, catechesis, charity, youth or family pastoral care) for those Parishes within the grouping;

74 Cf. *Ibid.*

75 Cf. *Ibid.*, can. 522.

76 Cf. *ibid.*, cann. 553-555.

77 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 536.

78 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 537.

with the participation of all the components of the People of God, namely clergy, consecrated men and women and the lay faithful.

#### *VII. d. Pastoral Regions*

61. If several “pastoral units” can constitute a vicariate forane, then similarly, especially in Dioceses with a more extensive territory, the Bishop, after hearing the Presbyteral Council<sup>79</sup>, could unite several vicariates forane into “districts” or “pastoral regions”<sup>80</sup>. An Episcopal Vicar<sup>81</sup> would lead each region, invested with ordinary executive power for pastoral administration in the Bishop’s name, under his authority and in communion with him, and with any special faculties that the Bishop may wish to attribute to him.

### **VIII. ORDINARY AND EXTRAORDINARY WAYS OF ASSIGNING THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE PARISH COMMUNITY**

62. In the first place, the Parish Priest and the other priests, in communion with the Bishop, are a fundamental reference point for the Parish community, for the role of shepherds that corresponds to them<sup>82</sup>. The Parish Priest and the presbyterate, who together foster

79 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 500, §2.

80 Cf. *Apostolorum Successores*, n. 219: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 22 (2003-2004), 2117; it is convenient to reserve the title of “pastoral region” for this kind of grouping alone, thus avoiding unnecessary confusion.

81 Cf. C.I.C., cann. 134, §1 and 476.

82 It should be noted that: a) what is said in reference to the “diocesan Bishop” is valid also for all those equal to him in law; b) what is said about the Parish or the Parish Priest is also valid for quasi-Parishes and quasi-Parish Priests; c) what concerns the lay faithful applies also to members of non-clerical institutes of consecrated life or societies of

a common life and priestly fraternity, celebrate the sacramental life for and with the community, and are called to organise the Parish in such a way as to be an effective sign of communion<sup>83</sup>.

63. Regarding the presence and mission of priests in the Parish community, the common life deserves special mention<sup>84</sup>; it is recommended by can. 280, even if this is not an obligation for the secular clergy. In this respect, it is worth recalling the fundamental value of the spirit of communion, prayer and common pastoral activity on the part of clerics<sup>85</sup>, with a view to an effective witness of sacramental brotherhood<sup>86</sup> and a more effective evangelising action.

64. When the presbyterate experiences community life, priestly identity is strengthened, material concerns diminish, and the temptation of individualism gives way to profoundly personal relationships. Common prayer, shared reflection and study, which must never be lacking in priestly life, can be of great support in the formation of an incarnate priestly spirituality in daily living.

In any case, it will be fitting that, according to his discernment and as far as possible, the Bishop take into account the human

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apostolic life, unless specific reference is being made to the secular; d) the term “Moderator” has different meanings based on the context in which it is used in this present *Instruction*, in accord with the norms of the code.

83 Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 26: *AAS* 57 (1965), 31-32.

84 Cf. *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, ns. 83; 88.e, pp. 37; 39.

85 Cf. C.I.C., can. 275, §1.

86 Cf. SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL Decree on the ministry and life of priests *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (7 December 1965), n. 8: *AAS* 58 (1966), 1003.

and spiritual affinity between priests to whom he intends to entrust a Parish or a grouping of Parishes, inviting them to a generous availability for their new pastoral mission in a common brotherhood<sup>87</sup>.

65. In some cases, especially where the tradition or the custom of a presbytery is lacking, or when for some reason such a dwelling is unavailable, it may happen that a priest returns to live with his family of origin, that first place of human formation and vocational discovery<sup>88</sup>.

On the one hand, this arrangement can have a positive effect on the priest's daily life, in that he is assured of a serene and stable home environment, especially when his parents are still living. On the other hand, the priest must ensure that he does not become dependent on these familial relationships, which could negatively affect his availability for full-time mission, his relationship with the presbyteral family and the community of the lay faithful.

#### VIII. a. Parish Priest

66. The office of Parish Priest, sometimes referred to as Pastor, involves the full care of souls<sup>89</sup>. In order, therefore, for a member of the faithful to be validly appointed Parish Priest (*parochus*), he must have received the Order of Presbyter<sup>90</sup>, thus excluding the possibility of conferring this office on one who lacks this Order and

87 Cf. *Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, n. 88, pp. 39-40.

88 Cf. FRANCIS, *Address to participants in the Convention sponsored by the Congregation for the Clergy on the 50th anniversary of the Conciliar Decrees “Optatam Totius” and “Presbyterorum Ordinis”* (20 November 2015): *AAS* 107 (2015), 1295.

89 Cf. C.I.C., can. 150.

90 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 521, §1.

its related functions, even where priests are scarce.

Precisely because of the relationship of familiarity and closeness that is required between a pastor and the community, the office of Parish Priest cannot be entrusted to a juridic person<sup>91</sup>. Apart from what is envisioned by can. 517, §§1-2, the particular office of Parish Priest may not be entrusted to a group composed of clerics and lay people. Consequently, appellations such as “team leader”, “équipe leader”, or the like, which convey a sense of collegial government of the Parish, are to be avoided.

67. As a consequence of his being the “*pastor of the Parish entrusted to him*”<sup>92</sup>, the Parish Priest is *ipso iure* the legal representative of the Parish<sup>93</sup>. He is the administrator responsible for the parish goods, which are “ecclesiastical goods”, therefore subject to the relevant canonical norms<sup>94</sup>.

68. As the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council affirmed, “*Pastors should enjoy in their respective parishes that stability of office which the good of souls demands*”<sup>95</sup>. As a general principle, the Parish Priest ought to be “*appointed for an indeterminate period of time*”<sup>96</sup>.

The diocesan Bishop, however, can appoint Parish Priests for a determined period, if this has been established by decree of the Episcopal Conference. Because of the need for the Parish Priest to be able to establish an effective bond with the community entrusted

91 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 520, §1.

92 *Ibid.*, can. 519.

93 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 532.

94 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 1257, §1.

95 *Christus Dominus*, n. 31: AAS 58 (1965), 689.

96 C.I.C., can. 522.

to him, it is fitting that Episcopal Conferences not establish too short a period, preferably no less than 5 years for a fixed-term appointment.

69. In any case, Parish Priests, even if appointed indefinitely, or before the expiry of his fixed term, must be available for a possible transfer to another Parish or office, if “*the good of souls or the necessity or advantage of the Church demands*”<sup>97</sup>. It should be recalled that the Parish Priest is at the service of the Parish, and not the other way around.

70. Ordinarily, it is good that the Parish Priest, where possible, have the pastoral care of only one Parish, “*however, because of a shortage of priests or other circumstances, the care of a number of neighbouring Parishes can be entrusted to a single Parish Priest*”<sup>98</sup>. For example, “other circumstances” may include the small size of the territory or population, as well as proximity to neighbouring Parishes. The diocesan Bishop should carefully evaluate whether the Parish Priest who is entrusted with the care of several Parishes can fully and truly exercise the office of Parish Priest for each and for all of them<sup>99</sup>.

71. Once appointed, the Parish Priest remains in the full exercise of the functions entrusted to him, with all the rights and responsibilities thereof, until he has legitimately ceased his pastoral office<sup>100</sup>. For his removal, or transfer, before the expiry of his mandate, the relevant canonical procedures must be observed, which serve the Church as a discernment of what is appropriate in

97 *Ibid.*, can. 1748.

98 *Ibid.*, can. 526, §1.

99 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 152.

100 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 538, §§1-2.

specific cases<sup>101</sup>.

72. When the good of the faithful requires it, even if there are no other causes for cessation, the Parish Priest who has reached 75 years of age, should accept the invitation from the diocesan Bishop to resign from the Parish<sup>102</sup>. The presentation of the renunciation, upon having reached 75 years of age<sup>103</sup>, is to be considered a moral duty, if not canonical, although it does not mean the Parish Priest ceases from his office automatically. The cessation of office occurs only when the diocesan Bishop has informed the said Parish Priest, in writing, of the acceptance of his resignation<sup>104</sup>. For his part, the Bishop should kindly consider the resignation presented by a Parish Priest, if for no other reason than he has reached 75 years of age.

73. In order then, to avoid a conception of ministry that is purely functional, the diocesan Bishop, prior to accepting the renunciation, will prudently weigh up all the circumstances of person and place, like those of health or disciplinary reasons, the shortage of priests, the good of the Parish community and other such elements, subsequently accepting the resignation for a just and proportionate cause<sup>105</sup>.

74. If the personal condition of the priest permits and if it is pastorally feasible, the Bishop could consider the possibility of leaving him in the office of Parish Priest, perhaps with some assistance that would eventually pave the way for his succession.

101 Cf. *ibid.*, cann. 1740-1752, keeping in mind cann. 190-195.

102 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 538, §3.

103 *Ibid.*

104 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 189.

105 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 189, §2 and *Apostolorum Successores*, n. 212: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 22 (2003-2004), 2095.

Furthermore, “depending on the circumstances, the Bishop may entrust a smaller and less demanding parish to a pastor who has resigned”<sup>106</sup>, or in any case assign him another pastoral task appropriate to his circumstances, helping him, if need be, to understand that in no way should he feel “demoted” or “punished” for a transfer of this kind.

#### VIII. b. Parish Administrator

75. If it is not possible to proceed immediately with the appointment of the Parish Priest, the appointment of Parish Administrators<sup>107</sup> must be done only in conformity with what is established in the canonical norms<sup>108</sup>.

In effect, the office is essentially transitory and is exercised while awaiting the appointment of the new Parish Priest. For this reason, it is illegitimate for the diocesan Bishop to appoint a Parish Administrator and to leave him in that position for an extended period of time, more than a year, or even permanently, in order to avoid the appointment of a Parish Priest.

As experience shows, this solution is often adopted in order to circumvent the requirements of the law regarding the principle of stability for the Parish Priest, which constitutes a violation, with harm to both the mission of the priest and that of the community itself. Because of the uncertainty about the presence of a pastor, the Parish is not able to program far-reaching evangelisation plans and must limit its pastoral care to mere preservation.

106 *Apostolorum Successores*, n. 212: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 22 (2003-2004), 2095.

107 Cf. C.I.C., cann. 539-540.

108 Cf. in particular *ibid.*, cann. 539, 549, 1747, §3.

### VIII. c. Priests in solidum

76. As a further possibility, “*where circumstances so require, the pastoral care of a parish, or of a number of parishes together, can be entrusted to several priests jointly*”<sup>109</sup>. Such a solution can be adopted when, at the Bishop's discretion, concrete circumstances require it so, particularly for the good of the communities concerned, through shared and more effective pastoral action, and to promote a spirituality of communion among priests<sup>110</sup>.

In such cases, the group of priests, in communion with the other members of the Parish community, act in common deliberation, the Moderator being a *primus inter pares* among the other priests, all of whom are, to all intents and purposes, Parish Priests.

77. It is strongly recommended that each community of priests, to whom the pastoral care of one or more Parishes is entrusted in solidum, should draw up internal rules so that each priest can better carry out the tasks and functions to which he is assigned<sup>111</sup>.

The Moderator is responsible for coordinating the joint work of the Parish or Parishes entrusted to the group. Moreover, as their juridical representative<sup>112</sup>, he is to coordinate the exercise of the faculty to assist at marriages, grant dispensations, as would Parish Priests<sup>113</sup>, and give a report to the Bishop on all the activities of the group<sup>114</sup>.

109 *Ibid.*, can. 517, §1; cf. also cann. 542-544.

110 Cf. *ibid.*, cann. 517, §1 and 526, §1.

111 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 543, §1.

112 Cf., *ibid.*, can. 543, §2, 3°; In countries where the Parish is recognised by the State as a juridic entity, he would also assume the role of the civil juridical representative.

113 Cf., *ibid.*, can. 543, §1.

114 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 517, §1.

### VIII. d. Parochial Vicar

78. Additionally, a priest may be appointed as a Parochial Vicar (also called an Assistant Priest, a Curate, an Associate Pastor, etc.) with responsibility for a sector of pastoral care (the youth, the elderly, the sick, associations, confraternities, formation, catechesis, etc.) across different parishes, or to assist with the entire ministry, or only part of it, in one parish;<sup>115</sup>.

With regard to a Parochial Vicar being assigned to several Parishes, which have different Parish Priests, it will be necessary to explain and describe, in the decree of appointment, the tasks entrusted to him in relation to each Parish community, as well as the type of collaboration to be had with each Parish Priest in terms of his residence, sustenance and the celebration of Holy Mass.

### VIII. e. Deacons

79. Deacons are ordained ministers, incardinated in a Diocese, or in some other ecclesial reality that has the faculty to do so<sup>116</sup>. They are collaborators of the Bishop and the priests in a singular mission of evangelisation and with the specific task, by virtue of the Sacrament received, to “*serve the People of God in the ministries of the liturgy, the word and charity*”<sup>117</sup>.

80. In order to safeguard the identity of deacons, with a view to promoting their ministry, Pope Francis highlighted several risks

115 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 545, §2; one can think here of a priest who is experienced in the field of spirituality, who, due to poor health, could be appointed as an ordinary Confessor to five adjoining territorial Parishes.

116 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 265.

117 *Ibid.*, can. 1009, §3.



related to how the nature of the diaconate is understood: “*But we must be careful not to see deacons as half-priests, half-laymen. [...] Likewise, the image of the deacon as a sort of intermediary between the faithful and pastors is inappropriate. Neither halfway between priests and laypeople, nor halfway between pastors and faithful. There is the danger of clericalism: the deacon who is too clerical [...] And another temptation is functionalism: it is a help that the priest has for this or that*”<sup>118</sup>.

In that same address, the Holy Father offered some clarifications regarding the specific role of deacons within the ecclesial community: “*The diaconate is a specific vocation, a family vocation that requires service [...] This word is the key to understanding your charism. Service as one of the characteristic gifts of the people of God. The deacon is, so to say, the custodian of service in the Church. Every word must be carefully measured. You are the guardians of service in the Church: service to the Word, service to the Altar, service to the poor*”<sup>119</sup>.

81. Teaching on the diaconate has evolved significantly over the centuries. Its resumption at the Second Vatican Council coincided with a doctrinal clarification and expansion, which no longer “limited” the diaconate to charitable service alone or defined it, as did the Council of Trent, as transitional and almost exclusively identified with liturgical service. The Second Vatican Council specified that it is a degree of the Sacrament of Holy Orders and that, consequently, deacons “*strengthened by sacramental grace, in communion with the bishop and his group of priests [...], serve in the diaconate of the liturgy, of the word, and of charity to the*

118 FRANCIS, *Encounter with priests and consecrated persons*, Milan (25 March 2017): *AAS* 109 (2017), 376.

119 *Ibid.*, 376-377.

*people of God*”<sup>120</sup>.

The post-conciliar reception takes up what was established by *Lumen Gentium*, further elucidating how the office of deacons is a participation in the Sacrament of Holy Orders, albeit to a different degree. In an audience with participants at the International Congress on the Diaconate, Paul VI reaffirmed that the deacon serves Christian communities “*in proclaiming the Word of God, in sacramental ministry and in the exercise of charity*”<sup>121</sup>. In turning to the Acts of the Apostles (6:1-6), it would appear that the seven chosen men are destined only for table service, in reality, the same biblical Book recounts how Stephen and Philip carried out the “*diaconia* of the Word” in their own right. Therefore, as collaborators of the Twelve and of Paul, they exercised their ministry in two areas: evangelisation and charity.

There are many ecclesial tasks, therefore, that can be entrusted to a deacon, namely, all those that do not involve the full care of souls<sup>122</sup>. The Code of Canon Law, however, determines which offices are reserved to the priest and those that can also be entrusted to the lay faithful, while there is no indication of any particular office in which the deacon's ministry can find specific expression.

82. In any case, the history of the diaconate recalls that it was established within the framework of a ministerial vision of the Church, as an ordained ministry at the service of the Word and of charity; this latter context includes the administration of goods.

120 *Lumen Gentium*, n. 29: *AAS* 57 (1965), 36.

121 PAUL VI, *Address to the participants of the International Congress on the Diaconate*, 25 October 1965: *Enchiridion on the Diaconate* (2009), 147-148.

122 Cf. C.I.C., can. 150.

The twofold mission of the deacon is expressed in the liturgical sphere, where he is called to proclaim the Gospel and to serve at the Eucharistic table. These references can help identify the specific tasks of a deacon, adding value to that which is proper to the diaconate, with a view to promoting the diaconal ministry.

### VIII. f. Consecrated men and women

83. Oftentimes, within the Parish community, there are persons belonging to the consecrated life. *“This is not a reality external to or independent of the life of the local Church; rather it constitutes a particular way of being in the midst of the local Church, which is marked by the radicalness of the Gospel and which possesses its own specific gifts”*<sup>123</sup>. Moreover, integrated into the community with clerics and laity, consecrated life *“is located within the charismatic dimension of the Church [...] The spirituality of the Institutes of Consecrated Life can become for both the lay faithful and the priest a significant resource enabling them to live their own proper vocation”*<sup>124</sup>.

84. The contribution that consecrated men and women can bring to the evangelising mission of the Parish community is derived firstly, from their “being”, that is, from the witness of a radical following of Christ through the profession of the evangelical counsels<sup>125</sup>, and only secondly from their “doing”, that is, from the works carried out in accordance with the charism of each Institute (for example,

123 CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH, Letter *Iuvenescit Ecclesia* to the Bishops of the Catholic Church regarding the relationship between hierarchical and charismatic gifts in the life and the mission of the Church (15 May 2016), n. 21: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 32 (2016), 734.

124 *Ibid.*, n. 22: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 32 (2016), 738.

125 Cf. C.I.C., can. 573, §1.

catechesis, charity, formation, youth ministry, care of the sick)<sup>126</sup>.

### VIII. g. The Laity

85. The Parish community is composed in a particular way of the lay faithful<sup>127</sup>, who, by virtue of their Baptism and the other Sacraments of Christian initiation, and in many cases by matrimony<sup>128</sup>, participate in the evangelising action of the Church, since *“the essential vocation and mission of the lay faithful is to strive that earthly realities and all human activity may be transformed by the Gospel”*<sup>129</sup>.

In a particular way, the lay faithful, who have a specific secular character, *“seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God”*<sup>130</sup>. They *“can also feel themselves called, or be called, to work with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community for its growth and life, by exercising a great variety of ministries according to the grace and charisms which the Lord is pleased to give them”*<sup>131</sup>.

86. The lay faithful are called upon in our present age to

126 Cf. CONGREGATION FOR INSTITUTES OF CONSECRATED LIFE AND SOCIETIES OF APOSTOLIC LIFE – CONGREGATION FOR BISHOPS, *Mutuae Relationes. Directives for the mutual relations between Bishops and Religious in the Church* (14 May 1978), ns. 10; 14, a): *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 6 (1977-1979), 604-605; 617-620; cf. also *Apostolorum Successores*, n. 98: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 22 (2003-2004), 1803-1804.

127 Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 102: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1062-1063.

128 Cf. *Christifideles Laici*, n. 23: *AAS* 81 (1989), 429.

129 *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 201: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1104.

130 *Lumen Gentium*, n. 31: *AAS* 57 (1965), 37.

131 PAUL VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (8 dicembre 1975), n. 73: *AAS* 68 (1976), 61.

make a generous commitment to the service of the mission of evangelisation, first of all through the general witness of their daily lives, lived in conformity with the Gospel, in whatever environment they are in and at every level of responsibility; in a particular way, they are called to place themselves at the service of the Parish community<sup>132</sup>.

#### VIII. h. Other forms of assigning pastoral care

87. There is a further way for the Bishop to provide for the pastoral care of a community, as can be seen from can. 517 §, 2, when it is not possible to appoint a full-time Parish Priest or a Parish Administrator, due to a shortage of priests. In such pastorally problematic circumstances, in order to sustain Christian life and to continue the evangelising mission of the community, the diocesan Bishop may entrust the pastoral care of a Parish to a deacon, to a consecrated religious or layperson, or even to a group of persons (e.g., Religious Institute, Association)<sup>133</sup>.

88. Those entrusted with participation in the exercise of the pastoral care of the community will be directed by a priest with legitimate faculties, who will act as a “Moderator of Pastoral Care”, with the powers and functions of a Parish Priest, albeit without an office with its duties and rights.

It should be remembered that we are dealing here with an extraordinary form of entrusting pastoral care, due to the impossibility of appointing a Parish Priest or a Parish Administrator, which is not to be confused with the ordinary active cooperation of the lay faithful in assuming their responsibilities.

132 Cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 81: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1053-1054.

133 Cf. C.I.C., can. 517, §2.

89. In view of this extraordinary remedy, the People of God should be adequately prepared in this regard, cognisant that it is a temporary and not a permanent measure<sup>134</sup>. The correct understanding and application of this canon requires that this exceptional provision “*be used only with strict adherence to conditions contained in it. These are: a) ob sacerdotum penuriam and not for reasons of convenience or ambiguous “advancement of the laity” [...]; b) this is participatio in exercitio curae pastoralis and not directing, coordinating, moderating or governing the Parish; these competencies, according to the canon, are the competencies of a priest alone*”<sup>135</sup>.

90. In order to ensure a successful outcome in the assignment of pastoral care according to canon 517, §2<sup>136</sup>, certain criteria must be observed. Since this is an extraordinary and temporary pastoral solution<sup>137</sup>, the only canonical cause that makes recourse

134 Cf. *Apostolorum Successores*, n. 215, c): *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 22 (2003-2004), 2105.

135 CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, Instruction [Interdicasterial] on certain questions regarding the collaboration of the non-ordained faithful in the sacred ministry of priest *Ecclesiae de Mysterio* (15 August 1997), art. 4, §1, a-b): *AAS* 89 (1997), 866-867; cf. also *Apostolorum Successores*, n. 215, c): *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 22 (2003-2004), 2105. The priest will also have the legal representation of the Parish, both canonically and civilly, when foreseen by the Law of the State.

136 Before resorting to the provision of can. 517, §2, the diocesan Bishop should prudently consider other alternative possibilities, like availing of senior priests who are still valid for ministry, or entrusting several Parishes to a single Parish Priest or several Parishes to a group of priests *in solidum*.

137 Cf. *Ecclesiae de Mysterio*, art. 4, § 1, b): *AAS* 89 (1997), 866-867, and CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, Instruction *The priest, pastor and leader of the Parish community* (4 August 2002), ns. 23 and

to it legitimate, is a lack of priests to provide pastoral care for the Parish community in the appointment of a Parish Priest or Parish Administrator. Furthermore, it would be preferable to appoint one or more deacons over consecrated men and women or laypersons for directing this kind of pastoral care<sup>138</sup>.

91. At any rate, the coordination of pastoral activity organised in this way falls to the priest who is appointed as the Moderator by the diocesan Bishop; this priest alone has the powers and faculties proper to the Parish Priest; the other members of the faithful, on the other hand, have “*a share in the exercise of the pastoral care of a Parish*”<sup>139</sup>.

92. The deacon, together with those who have not received Holy Orders and who participate in the exercise of pastoral care, are to perform only those functions which correspond to their respective status as deacons or lay faithful, ensuring that “*the original properties of diversity and complementarity of the charisms and functions of ordained ministers and the lay faithful must be carefully observed and respected since these are proper to the Church and are willed by God for its organisation*”<sup>140</sup>.

93. Finally, in the decree by which he appoints the Moderator Priest, it is strongly recommended that the Bishop would set out, at least briefly, the reasons why it has become necessary to apply

25, regarding “collaboration *ad tempus* in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish”, cf. n. 23: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 21 (2002), 834-836.

138 Cf. The priest, pastor and leader of the Parish community, n. 25: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 21 (2002), 836.

139 C.I.C., can. 517, §2.

140 *The priest, pastor and leader of the Parish community*, n. 23: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 21 (2002), 834.

this extraordinary form to the assignment of pastoral care to one or more Parish communities, together with the kinds of ministry that the priest in charge will exercise.

## IX. APPOINTMENTS AND PASTORAL MINISTRY

94. Besides the occasional collaboration that every person of good will—even the unbaptised—may offer in the daily activities of the Parish, there exist also stable appointments, on the basis of which the faithful accept responsibility for service within the Parish community for a determined time. For example, one thinks of catechists, of altar servers, of educators that work in groups and associations, of those who fulfil the works of charity and those who dedicate themselves to different types of counselling or to listening centres, and of those who visit the sick.

95. In any case, in designating the tasks entrusted to deacons, consecrated men and women and the lay faithful that receive a participation in the exercise of pastoral care, it is necessary to use terminology that corresponds in a correct way to the functions that they can fulfil in conformity with their state of life. In this way, the essential difference that exists between the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood is clearly maintained, and the identity of the appointment received by each person should be evident.

96. In that vein, it is the responsibility, first of all, of the diocesan Bishop and, as far as it pertains to him, the Parish Priest, to see that the appointments of deacons, religious and laity that have roles of responsibility in the Parish, are not designated as “pastor”, “co-pastor”, “chaplain”, “moderator”, “coordinator”, “Parish manager”,

or other similar terms<sup>141</sup> reserved by law to priests,<sup>142</sup> inasmuch as they have a direct correlation to the ministerial profile of priests.

In referring to the aforementioned faithful and deacons, it is likewise illegitimate, and not in conformity with their vocational identity, to use expressions such as “*entrust the pastoral care of a parish*”, “*preside over the parish community*”, and other similar phrases, that pertain to the distinct sacerdotal ministry of a Parish Priest.

For example, the terms “Deacon Cooperator” or “Coordinator of (a particular sector of pastoral care)”, “Pastoral Cooperator” or “Pastoral Associate or Assistant” seem to be more appropriate.

97. Lay men, by the norms of law, may be instituted Lectors or Acolytes on a stable basis, by means of the relevant rite, according to canon 230 §1. The non-ordained faithful may use the term “extraordinary minister”, only if called by the competent Authority<sup>143</sup> to fulfil the supplementary functions referred to in canons 230 §3 and 943. The temporary deputation in liturgical celebrations, which canon 230 §2 mentions, even if protracted for some time, does not confer any special designation on the non-ordained faithful<sup>144</sup>.

141 Cf. *Ecclesia de Mysterio*, art. 1 §3: AAS 89 (1997), 863.

142 Cf. *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community*, n. 23: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 21 (2002), 835.

143 Cf. *Apostolorum Successores*, n. 112: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 22 (2003-2004), 1843.

144 It is worth remembering that, in addition to the ministry of Lector for men, among the liturgical functions which the diocesan Bishop, after consulting the Episcopal Conference, can temporarily entrust to the lay faithful (men and women), there is also the service at the Altar, in accordance with the relevant canonical norm; cf. PONTIFICAL

These laypersons must be in full communion with the Catholic Church<sup>145</sup>, receive a formation adequate to the function that they are called to perform, and maintain a personal and pastoral conduct that is exemplary, making them convincing in carrying out their service.

98. In addition to what pertains to stably instituted Lectors and Acolytes<sup>146</sup>, the Bishop, according to his prudent judgment, may officially entrust to deacons, consecrated men and women and layfaithful, under the direction and responsibility of the Parish Priest, other duties<sup>147</sup> such as:

- 1°. The celebration of the Liturgy of the Word on Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation, when “*participation in the Eucharistic celebration becomes impossible because of the absence of a sacred minister or for another grave cause*”<sup>148</sup>. This is considered an exceptional eventuality, recourse to which is made only in circumstances of true impossibility and always taking care to entrust these liturgies to deacons, if they are present;
- 2°. The administration of Baptism, with due consideration for the fact that, “*the ordinary minister of baptism is a bishop,*

COUNCIL FOR LEGISLATIVE TEXTS, Response (11 July 1992): AAS 86 (1994), 541; CONGREGATION FOR DIVINE WORSHIP AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, Circular Letter (15 March 1994): AAS 86 (1994), 541-542.

145 Cf. C.I.C. can. 205.

146 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 230 §1.

147 In the act by which the Bishop entrusts the tasks mentioned above to deacons or lay faithful, he is to determine clearly the functions they are enabled to fulfil and for how long.

148 C.I.C. can. 1248 §2.

*priest or deacon*<sup>149</sup> and that what is provided in canon 861 §2 constitutes an exception, to be evaluated at the discretion of the local Ordinary;

3°. The celebration of funeral rites, as provided in n.19 of the *Praenotanda* of the *Order of Christian Funerals*.

99. The lay faithful may preach in a Church or oratory, if circumstances, necessity or a particular case calls for it, “according to the precepts of the Episcopal Conference”<sup>150</sup> and “when expressly permitted by law or liturgical norms, as long as conditions contained in them are observed”<sup>151</sup>. However, these individuals may not in any case give the homily during the celebration of the Eucharist<sup>152</sup>.

100. Moreover, “where there is a lack of priests and deacons, the diocesan Bishop can delegate lay persons to assist at marriages, with the previous favourable vote of the episcopal conference and after obtaining the permission of the Holy See”<sup>153</sup>.

149 *Ibid.*, can. 861 §1.

150 *Ibid.*, can. 766.

151 *Ecclesia de Mysterio*, art. 3 §4: AAS 89 (1997), 865.

152 Cf. C.I.C. can. 767 §1; cf. also *Ecclesia de Mysterio*, art. 3 §1: AAS 89 (1997), 864.

153 C.I.C. can. 1112 §1; cf. JOHN PAUL II, Apostolic Constitution *Pastor Bonus* (28 June 1998), art. 63: AAS 80 (1988), 876, regarding the competence of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

## X. BODIES OF ECCLESIAL CO-RESPONSIBILITY

### X. a. *The Parish Finance Council*

101. The administration of goods which every Parish has to some extent is an important area of evangelisation and evangelical witness, both in the Church and in civil society, since “*all the goods that we have, the Lord gives them to go to the world, to go to humanity, to help others*”<sup>154</sup>. The Parish Priest, therefore, cannot and must not remain only at this task<sup>155</sup>, so it is necessary that he be assisted by collaborators to administrate the goods of the Church above all with evangelising zeal and a missionary spirit.<sup>156</sup>

102. For this reason, in every Parish a Finance Council must be constituted as a consultative body, presided over by the Parish Priest and formed of at least three other faithful<sup>157</sup>; the minimum number of three is necessary so that this Council may be considered “collegial”. It bears recalling that the Parish Priest is not counted among the members of the Finance Council, but he presides over it.

103. Absent specific norms issued by the diocesan Bishop, it will be for the Parish Priest to determine the number of members of this Council, relative to the size of the Parish, and whether these should be appointed by him, or elected somehow by the Parish community.

154 FRANCIS, *Daily Meditation at the Casa Santa Marta* (21 October 2013): *L'Osservatore Romano* 242 (21-22 October 2013), 8.

155 Cf. C.I.C. cann. 537 and 1280.

156 Inconformity with C.I.C. canon 532, the Parish Priest is responsible for the goods of the Parish, even if in administering them, he must avail himself of the collaboration of lay experts.

157 Cf. C.I.C. can. 115 §2 and, by analogy, can. 492 §1.

The members of this Council, not necessarily belonging to the Parish itself, must be of proven good reputation, and expert in financial and legal questions<sup>158</sup>, so as to render an effective and competent service, in such a way that the Council is not established as a mere formality.

104. Unless the diocesan Bishop has decided otherwise, observing the necessary prudence and any pertinent norms of civil law, nothing prevents the same person from being a member of the Finance Council of multiple Parishes, whenever circumstances require.

105. Any eventual norms issued by the diocesan Bishop in these matters must take account of the specific situations of Parishes, such as, for example, those of particularly modest means, or those forming part of a pastoral unit<sup>159</sup>.

106. The Finance Council fulfils a role of particular importance in the growth, at the level of the Parish community, of a culture of co-responsibility, of administrative transparency, and of service to the needs of the Church. In a particular way, transparency should not be understood as a mere formal presentation of statistics, but more as information that is the community's due, and an advantageous opportunity for its formative involvement. Transparency refers to a *modus agendi*, indispensable for the credibility of the Church, especially where there are significant goods to administer.

107. Ordinarily, the goal of transparency may be attained by publishing the annual financial report that must first be presented

158 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 537 and *Apostolorum Successors*, n. 210: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 22 (2003-2004), 2087.

159 Cf. C.I.C. cann. 517 and 526.

to the local Ordinary<sup>160</sup>, with detailed indications of income and expenditure. From the annual report, the community as a whole may be aware that these goods belong to the Parish, not the Parish Priest; that he is the steward of them; how they are administered; what the financial situation of the Parish is and what resources are effectively at its disposal.

#### *X. b. The Parish Pastoral Council*

108. The current canonical norms<sup>161</sup> leave it to the diocesan Bishop to decide on the establishment of a Pastoral Council in Parishes, but in any case, they may ordinarily be considered as highly recommended, as Pope Francis recalled, “*How necessary pastoral councils are! A Bishop cannot guide a Diocese without pastoral councils. A Parish Priest cannot guide without pastoral councils*”<sup>162</sup>.

The flexibility of the norm permits the adaptation considered apt for the concrete circumstances, as for example, in the case of multiple Parishes entrusted to a single Parish Priest, or those within pastoral units: it is possible in these cases to establish a single Pastoral Council for several Parishes.

109. The theological significance of the Pastoral Council is inscribed in the constitutive reality of the Church, that is, in her being “the Body of Christ”, that generates a “spirituality of communion”. In the Christian community, in fact, the diversity of

160 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 1287 §1.

161 Cf. *ibid.*, can. 536 §1.

162 FRANCIS, *Discourse during the meeting with clergy, consecrated persons and members of pastoral councils, Assisi* (4 October 2013): *Insegnamenti* V/2 (2013), 328.

charisms and ministries that derive from incorporation into Christ and from the gift of the Holy Spirit may never be homogenised until they become “*uniformity, the obligation of doing everything together and all as equals, of always thinking the same thing in the same way*”<sup>163</sup>. On the contrary, in virtue of the baptismal priesthood<sup>164</sup>, every member of the faithful is created for the building up of the whole Body and, at the same time, the whole People of God, in the reciprocal co-responsibility of its members, participates in the mission of the Church, that is, discerning in history the signs of the presence of God and becoming witnesses of His Kingdom<sup>165</sup>.

110. Far from being simply a bureaucratic organ, the Pastoral Council highlights and realizes the centrality of the People of God as the subject and active protagonist of the evangelising mission, in virtue of the fact that every member of the faithful has received the gifts of the Spirit through Baptism and Confirmation: “*Rebirth to the divine life of baptism is the first step; next comes conducting ourselves as children of God, namely, by conforming ourselves to Christ who works in Holy Church, letting ourselves be involved in her mission in the world. To that end, the anointing of the Spirit is provided: ‘without your strength, we have none’ (cf. Pentecost Sequence). [...] As Jesus was animated by the Spirit for his whole life, so also the life of the Church and of each of her members is*

163 ID., *Homily at the Mass of the Solemnity of Pentecost*, 4 June 2017: *AAS* 109 (2017), 711.

164 Cf. *Lumen Gentium*, n. 10: *AAS* 57 (1965), 14.

165 Cf. CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, Circular Letter *Omnes Christifideles* (25 January 1973), ns. 4 and 9: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 4 (1971-1973), 1199-1201 and 1207-1209; cf. also *Christifideles Laici*, n. 27: *AAS* 81 (1989), 440-441.

*under the guidance of the same Spirit*”<sup>166</sup>.

In light of this fundamental vision, the words of St Paul VI come to mind, “*It is the function of the pastoral council to investigate everything pertaining to pastoral activities, to weigh them carefully and to set forth practical conclusions concerning them so as to promote conformity of the life and actions of the People of God with the Gospel*”<sup>167</sup>, in the awareness that, as Pope Francis recalled, the purpose of such a Council “*should not be ecclesiastical organization but rather the missionary aspiration of reaching everyone*”<sup>168</sup>.

111. The Pastoral Council is a consultative body, governed by the norms established by the diocesan Bishop, to define the criteria of its composition, the methods of election of its members, its objectives and manner of functioning<sup>169</sup>. In any case, in order not to distort the nature of this Council, it is best to avoid defining it as a “team” or “équipe”, that is to say in terms that are not suitable to express concretely the ecclesial and canonical relationship between the Parish Priest and the rest of the faithful.

112. With regard to the relative diocesan norms, it is necessary that the Pastoral Council effectively represent the community of which it is an expression in its membership (priests, deacons, religious and laity). This constitutes a specific setting in which the faithful are able to exercise their right and duty to express their own thought

166 FRANCIS, *General Audience* (23 May 2018).

167 PAUL VI, Apostolic Letter *Motu Proprio, Ecclesiae Sanctae* (6 August 1966), I, 16 §1: *AAS* 58 (1966), 766; cf. aslo C.I.C. can. 511.

168 *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 31: *AAS* 105 (2013), 1033.

169 Cf. C.I.C. can. 536 §2.



concerning the good of the Parish community to the pastors,<sup>170</sup> and to communicate it to other members of the faithful.

113. The Parish Pastoral Council “*possesses a consultative vote only*”<sup>171</sup>, in the sense that its proposals must be accepted favourably by the Parish Priest to become operative. The Parish Priest is then bound to consider the indications of the Pastoral Council attentively, especially if they express themselves unanimously, in a process of common discernment.

So that the service of the Pastoral Council might be efficacious and fruitful, it is necessary to avoid two extremes: on one hand, that of the Parish Priest presenting to the Pastoral Council decisions already made, or without the required information beforehand, or convoking it seldom only *pro forma*. on the other hand, that of the Council in which the Parish Priest is only one of the members, deprived de facto of his role as Pastor and Leader of the community<sup>172</sup>.

114. Finally, it is considered fitting that, as far as possible, the Pastoral Council should consist for the most part of those who have effective responsibility in the pastoral life of the Parish, or who are concretely engaged in it, in order to avoid the meetings becoming an exchange of abstract ideas that do not take into account the real life of the community, with its resources and problems.

170 Cf. *Ibid.*, can. 212 §3.

171 *Ibid.*, can. 536 §2.

172 Cf. *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community*, n. 26: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 21 (2002), 843.

### *X. c. Other forms of co-responsibility in pastoral care*

115. When a community of the faithful is not able to be erected as a Parish or quasi-Parish<sup>173</sup>, the diocesan Bishop, after having heard the Presbyteral Council<sup>174</sup>, is to provide for their pastoral care in another way<sup>175</sup>, weighing, for example, the possibility of establishing pastoral centres, dependent on the local Parish, as “mission stations” to promote evangelisation and charity. In these cases, it is necessary to furnish these pastoral centres with a suitable Church or oratory<sup>176</sup> and to create diocesan norms in reference to their activities, in such a way that they may be coordinated and complementary with respect to those of the Parish.

116. Centres thus defined, that in some Dioceses are called a “*diaconia*”, may be entrusted—where possible—to a Parochial Vicar, or, in a particular way, to one or more permanent deacons, who would have responsibility for them and administrate them, together with the centre’s families, under the responsibility of the Parish Priest.

117. These centres can become missionary outposts and instruments of proximity, especially in Parishes with an extensive territory, in a way that ensures moments of prayer and Eucharistic adoration, catechesis and other activities for the benefit of the faithful. In a particular way, such missions could extend those activities relative to charity to the poor and needy and the care of the sick, enlisting the collaboration of religious and laity, and all persons of good will.

173 Cf. C.I.C. can. 516 §1.

174 Cf. *Ibid.*, can. 515 §2.

175 Cf. *Ibid.*, can. 516 §2.

176 Cf. *Ibid.*, cann. 1214, 1223 and 1225.

## XI. OFFERINGS FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS

118. A topic connected to the life of Parishes and their evangelising mission, is that of offerings given for the celebration of Holy Mass, destined for the priest celebrant, and of other Sacraments, that belong instead to the Parish<sup>177</sup>. This means that an offering, by its very nature, must be a free act on the part of the one offering, left to one's conscience and sense of ecclesial responsibility, not a "price to pay" or a "fee to exact", as if dealing with a sort of "tax on the Sacraments". In fact, with the offering for Holy Mass, "*The Christian faithful [...] contribute to the good of the Church and [...] share its concern to support its ministers and works*"<sup>178</sup>.

119. As a result, the importance of sensitising the faithful is shown, so that they contribute voluntarily to the needs of the Parish, which are "their needs", for which it is good that they learn spontaneously to take responsibility, especially in those Countries where the offerings for Holy Mass remain the only source of income for priests and also the only resource for evangelisation.

120. This sensitisation will only proceed as far as the priests, for their part, offer virtuous examples in their use of money, whether it be that of a sober lifestyle, without excess on a personal level, or that of a transparent management of Parish goods. Good administration is measured not by "projects" of the Parish Priest or of a small group of persons, projects that are good but abstract, but

<sup>177</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, cann. 848 and 1264, 2° and cann. 945-958; cf. also CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, Decree *Mos Iugiter* (22 February 1991), approved *in forma specifica* by John Paul II: *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 13 (1991-1993), 6-28.

<sup>178</sup> C.I.C. can. 946.

by the real needs of the faithful, especially the poor and needy.

121. In any event, "*It is recommended earnestly to priests that they celebrate Mass for the intention of the Christian faithful, especially the needy, even if they have not received an offering*"<sup>179</sup>.

Among the recommended instruments for reaching this goal, one might think of receiving offerings in an anonymous way, so that everyone feels free to donate what they can, or what they think is just, without feeling an obligation to respond to an expectation or a price.

## CONCLUSION

122. Recalling the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council in the light of recent Magisterium, and considering the social contexts that are profoundly changed, the present *Instruction* is intended to focus the topic of renewal of the Parish in a missionary sense.

While it remains an indispensable institution to encounter Christ and to have a living relationship with Him and with our brothers and sisters in the faith, it is likewise true that the Parish must constantly face changes taking place in today's culture and in the existential reality of persons, in order to explore creatively new ways and methods that allow it to be at the height of its primary function, that is, being a force of evangelisation.

123. As a consequence, pastoral activity needs to go beyond merely the territorial limits of the Parish, to make ecclesial communion more clearly transparent by means of the synergy between ministers and diverse charisms, structuring itself as a

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, can. 945 §2.

“pastoral care for all”, at the service of the Diocese and of its mission.

This means a pastoral activity that, through an effective and vibrant collaboration between priests, deacons, religious and laity, as well as among different Parish communities of an area or region, occupies itself with identifying together the questions, difficulties and challenges germane to evangelisation, seeking to integrate ways, methods, proposals and means suitable to confront them. Such a common missionary project may be elaborated and realized in relation to social and territorial contexts, that is, in communities that are neighbouring or united by the same socio-cultural conditions, or in reference to related pastoral fields, for example, in a group for the necessary coordination of pastoral care for youth, universities and vocations, as already occurs in many Dioceses.

For this reason, beyond a responsible coordination of activities and structures capable of relating and collaborating among them, the pastoral care of all requires the contribution of all the baptised. In the words of Pope Francis, “*When we speak of “the people”, we are not speaking about the structures of society or the Church, but about all those persons who journey, not as individuals, but as a closely-bound community of all and for all*”<sup>180</sup>.

That demands that the historical Parish institution not remain a prisoner of immobility or of a worrisome pastoral repetition, but rather, it should put into action that “outgoing dynamism” that, through collaboration among different Parish communities and a reinforced communion among clergy and laity, will orient it effectively toward an evangelising mission, the task of the entire People of God, that walks through history as the “family of God”

<sup>180</sup> FRANCIS, *Christus Vivit*, n. 231.

and that, in the synergy of its diverse members, labours for the growth of the entire ecclesial body.

The present Document, therefore, besides underscoring the urgency of a this type of renewal, presents the canonical norms that establish the possibilities, the limits, the rights and the duties of pastors and the laity, so that the Parish might rediscover itself as a fundamental place of evangelical proclamation, of the celebration of the Eucharist, a place of fraternity and charity, from which Christian witness can shine for the world. The Parish, that is, “*must remain a place of creativity, of relationship, of motherhood. It is there that this inventive capacity is realised; and when a parish moves forward this way, it achieves what I call ‘the parish on the move’*”<sup>181</sup>.

124. Pope Francis invites us to invoke “*Mary, Mother of Evangelisation*”, so that, “*the Virgin Mother may help us to say our own “yes”, conscious of the urgent need to make the Good News of Jesus resound in our time. May she obtain for us renewed zeal in bringing to everyone the Good News of the life that is victorious over death. May she intercede for us so that we can acquire the holy audacity needed to discover new ways to bring the gift of salvation to every man and woman*”<sup>182</sup>.

*The Holy Father approved the present Document of the Congregation for the Clergy on 27 June 2020.*

Rome, from the Seat of the Congregation for the Clergy, 29 June

<sup>181</sup> *ID*, *Discourse in a Meeting with the Polish Bishops*, Krakow (27 July 2016): *AAS* 108 (2016), 893.

<sup>182</sup> *ID*, *Message for World Mission Sunday 2017* (4 June 2017), n. 10: *AAS* 109 (2017), 764.

2020, the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul.

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*Prefect*

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Titular Archbishop of Rota  
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