

### **7–A: Pastors’ responsibility to know well those they serve**

Priests really need to be out and about, to be seen by their people. In former days, some priests in city parishes got their exercise by taking a walk, each day in a different direction, occasionally dropping in on someone to chat a few minutes. Being approachable is very important, and that means not having a lifestyle that is economically beyond people.

Father Star really wants to lead his flock effectively, not just provide pastoral services. The people cannot be expected to follow him unless they respect and trust him. The necessary presupposition of that is that they know him, not simply recognize him as “priest assigned to our parish,” but become acquainted with him as the particular person he is. So, he personalizes his homilies, because celebrating the liturgy and preaching provide the only opportunity for most people in the parish to get to know him.

At the same time, he does not try to get to know many of his people as distinct individuals. Visiting households at the rate of one a day would not get him to everyone in three years, and he wouldn’t really get to know people while doing that. Talking with people after Mass results in getting to know a few—but the same few take up a lot of time with no real payoff. People who want services come to the rectory—between one and two percent of the people in the parish in the course of the year, and he gets to know some of these—all too well.

Father Star does not realize that people cannot really come to know him without some effort on his part to know them. All they know is the persona he projects. People will only get to know him if he gets to know them, by listening to them, welcoming them, working with them. What he wants of them is the sort of knowledge of himself that people have of stars, politicians, athletes, and other celebrities. That does not measure up to: *I know mine and mine know me.*

This section should include a treatment of unjust discrimination by pastors. James 2.1: “My brethren, show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory” and the subsequent verses might be used as point of departure. As a child of God, every Christian is a member of the royal family that is more noble than any human family, and so ought to be treated as a prince or princess. Providing special treatment to the wealthy, powerful, and other important people because they are such and doing less for those with opposite characteristics or who are in some way humanly repugnant (for example, ugly, decrepit, diseased) violates the equal dignity of Christians as children of God and bears false witness: that those human qualifications are more significant than the equal dignity of Christians. Working hard to get to know the “important people” while regarding others as an undifferentiated crowd not worth getting to know is a serious form of unjust discrimination.

SC 32 forbids honoring special groups or persons in liturgical celebrations, either in the ceremonies or public display. That is not violated if special things are done for acceptable reasons such that everyone would be eligible for the same special treatment. For example, if any family wishing to schedule a baptism on a Saturday evening for the family’s convenience would be accommodated, it is okay to accommodate the rich Joneses, but if others are not granted exceptions to the Sunday afternoon schedule, neither should the rich Joneses be. Some families that contributed heavily to a parish used to be permanently assigned reserved

pews, which nobody else was ever to use; that will not do. A priest who visits the shut-in mother of a powerful person every week but other shut-ins only once a month violates equal dignity. Mentioning religiously significant events in the families of members of the parish—such as wedding anniversaries—is okay, provided everyone gets the same treatment.

*CIC*, c. 515, §1: “A parish is a certain community of the Christian faithful stably constituted in a particular church, whose pastoral care is entrusted to a pastor (parochus—parish priest) as its proper pastor under the authority of a diocesan bishop.” Note that a parish is not primarily *defined* by territory nor even by the provision of a pastor for it. Both are subordinate to a stably constituted community of the faithful (which includes clerics and people in consecrated life in the parish). So, in the spirit of Vatican II, the people of God are principal in defining the basic unit of the Church as in defining the Church itself, and this people are gathered together and unified primarily for and by the Eucharist (see SC 42).

Of course, for any community of the faithful to be stably constituted, dependence on a bishop is presupposed. *CIC*, c. 374 requires that every diocese or other particular church be divided into distinct parts or parishes. And there are other stably constituted communities of the faithful (e.g., institutes of consecrated life, confraternities, Catholic schools) that are not parishes, so having a proper pastor specifically differentiates the parochial community.

*CIC*, c. 382, deals with the pastoral office of bishops in a way that holds true also for pastors in respect to their own parishes:

§1: In exercising the function of a pastor, a diocesan bishop is to show himself concerned for all the Christian faithful entrusted to his care, of whatever age, condition, or nationality they are, whether living in the territory or staying there temporarily; he is also to extend an apostolic spirit to those who are not able to make sufficient use of ordinary pastoral care because of the condition of their life and to those who no longer practice their religion.

Age, social status, and nationality should not matter. So pre-school children and the elderly should get pastoral care. Hispanics and Blacks should get care. Migrant workers should get care. Foreigners on holiday should get care. Summer vacationers in parks and resorts should get care. Shut-ins and people in hospitals should get care. People who work odd hours should get care. The divorced and remarried need care. The completely fallen away should get care too.

§2: People of other rites should be cared for, if possible, according to their own rite.

§3: He is to act with humanity and charity toward the brothers and sisters who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church and is to foster ecumenism as it is understood by the Church.

While ecumenical action is not proselytizing, it is the appropriate way to work for the salvation of non-Catholic Christians and, rightly conducted, will lead to the conversion of many.

§4: He is to consider the non-baptized as committed to him in the Lord, so that there shines on them the charity of Christ whose witness a bishop must be before all people.

Christ's charity seeks people's salvation; it likewise seeks this-worldly benefits insofar as those contribute the apostolate.

*CIC*, c. 213: The Christian faithful have the right to receive assistance from the sacred pastors out of the spiritual goods of the Church, especially the word of God and the sacraments.

Pastoral work, therefore, undertakes a general responsibility to the faithful, one analogous to that of parents toward their children, to supply what they really need—which not always is what they happen to want and perhaps think they need. But it does mean there is a serious duty to provide, to serve real needs. Obviously, these vary with individuals and from time to time. And so pastors must know their people so as to know what they need; for this, general information or polling may be helpful, but not adequate; there is no substitute for really getting to know each and every person, or, at least, a really large and representative sample of those to be served.

The alternative is to deal with everyone as if they were simply instances of generic parishioner. But that suggests that there is no unique individual to be recognized and respected, which is a slight on dignity, which regards each person not simply as part of a whole but as having an irreducible and unique worth.

“I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as I know the Father and the Father knows me, and I lay down my life for the sheep” (Jn 10.14–15). So, pastors must know well those they serve, and that means more than having information about them (see Schnackenburg, *Gospel ... John*, 2:297). That mutual knowledge involves an interpersonal relationship of genuine intimacy, similar to the communion between Jesus and the Father. The good shepherd calls each sheep by name, and the sheep likewise recognize his distinctive voice. In the context, the good shepherd is contrasted with the hireling—the person who is simply doing a job, providing a service, but keeping some distance and reserving the right to abandon those being cared for when the price of serving them becomes too high. It is impossible to catechize people effectively without knowing them well, for one cannot communicate except by working from and with the capacities of others to receive what is to be communicated, capacities that differ in different cases.

This knowing well often is blocked by the pastor becoming leader of a clique, a group of like-thinking and cooperative insiders, an inner circle. This group is sure to form up if the pastor asks for volunteers, since the same few will volunteer regularly. Also, many important things will not be done so well. Of course, there must be closer associates in ministry, and those less involved in it. But that is simply a matter of more and less. When those close in form a definite group, they form a barrier; other members become outsiders.

LG 28: As good shepherds, priests should go after those who, though baptized as Catholics, have fallen away from the sacraments or even from the faith.

CD 16: In exercising the role they are given as father and pastor, may bishops be in the midst of their people as those who serve, good pastors who know their sheep and whose sheep know them, true fathers, having an outstanding spirit of love and solicitude toward all, to whose divinely given authority all gladly subject themselves.

May they gather and form their flock into an integral family so that all, aware of their own duties, will live and work together in a communion of charity.

The same ideal obviously holds true for pastors of parishes.

Among means for carrying this out, bishops are supposed to try to learn about the needs of their people in their actual situations; pastors should do this too. Obviously, the concern here is for needs that the clergy can and should work to satisfy—the spiritual needs to which their ministry is directed. But other needs can be embraced under the proper ratio: material needs can be a proper object of others' charity, and also of the community's constant and fervent prayer.

The obligation for pastors to know their own implies that the size of parishes and dioceses ideally should be limited. Also, since getting to know the people served involves a very substantial investment of time and effort, this duty argues very strongly against parish priests and bishops being shifted about.

A bishop obviously cannot know personally everyone in his diocese. But he does need to know personally all of his clergy and seminarians, all religious working in the diocese, diocesan employees in any way participating in pastoral work, and lay people who collaborate significantly with the work proper to the pastors.

CD 30: In fulfilling their pastoral charge, parish priests should make it their first duty to know their flock. They should encourage the growth of Christian life in each one of the faithful—personal vocation implied here—in families and associations, and in the parish as a whole. So, they should visit homes and schools. They should take a keen interest in adolescents and young people, attend the poor and the sick with fatherly love, have a special regard for working people, and get the people involved in the apostolate.

Pastors must know their people well enough to recognize their needs for the word and sacraments that people themselves do not recognize. In general, pastors need not participate in their flock's leisure activities and joyful occasions; the healthy do not need a physician, and so usually should resist spending much time at parties, watching activities in which their people are involved, vacationing with them (*pace* JP II). When time is spent on these things, focus on the needs to be met. Should be available to people who are suffering. See the grieving after the funeral. Be a good listener to trouble. Visit people, offering blessings and sacramentals, and draw them out to find what teaching they need and encourage them to appropriate sacramental practice.

In short, pastors should always be looking for trouble and encouraging people to bring it to them, not hoping no trouble will come and discretely keeping it away. Jesus came to redeem, and making his action available is pastors' mission. So, they must be specialists in confronting and dealing with suffering and evil—physicians working in a spiritual emergency room.

Of course, they should not try to meet needs with means not at their disposal, to help where they are not competent. But even in such matters, pastors need to learn where to send people, what really is available and how to help people take advantage of it. (In this, cooperation in a diocese is very important.)

PO 3: Presbyters must know their own flock as good shepherds do, while not conforming to this world.

Priests should make their presence felt at the school every day. He might, for instance, be around when children are arriving or leaving, or visit during lunch.

An important element of getting to know those they serve is that this is essential to helping each discern his/her personal vocation and encouraging to follow it. *CIC*, c. 233, §1, requires bishops and other pastors to foster vocations to Church ministry, and that can best be done by encouraging vocations generally. Pastors certainly cannot foster any individual's vocation without getting to know the individual.

*CIC*, c. 529, §1: In order to fulfill his office diligently, a pastor is to strive to know the faithful entrusted to his care. Therefore, he is to visit families, sharing especially in the cares, anxieties, and griefs of the faithful, strengthening them in the Lord, and prudently correcting them if they are failing in certain areas.

The responsibility of governance ought to be viewed much more as a matter of building up the Church of living stones than of building the institutional Church and its material goods, including church buildings. Galot, *Theology of the Priesthood*, 141:

Finally, when the function of leadership is given a pastoral import, less attention goes to administration and more to personal relationships. The shepherd is a man who knows his sheep, and who the sheep know, a man who calls them by name. To know people personally, and to relate to them as members of one's family, bespeaks an air of cordiality while visiting and conversing with them.

*Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, 36:

At the same time, this obliges the priest to be welcoming towards the community entrusted to his pastoral care in such a way that no member of the community would be made to feel anonymous or think themselves an object of indifference.

This is a responsibility which indeed falls on all the faithful, but in a special way on the priest, who is the man who brings about communion.

If he knows how to receive each one who approaches him with esteem and respect, appreciative of their value as persons, then he will generate an authentic charity which will become contagious and will gradually extend itself through the entire community.

This is a reason for needing to get to know people.

*Directory of the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops: On Knowing the Flock*

100. Acquaintance with each of the faithful (cf. Jn 10.4, 27) and his situation, even though very difficult to attain, is a desirable goal which the bishop should do his best to attain. He strives to know at least those who are more personally involved in diocesan and parochial works of piety, charity and apostolate. He makes it his concern that his priests, especially the pastors and all who have the care of souls, know as many of the faithful as possible.

It goes on in (a) to say that bishops also should know the various groups of his diocese and their problems and to look for the reasons why some Catholics are not practicing their faith.

The need to know the faithful in order to serve them well strongly argues for smaller dioceses and against very large parishes.

The Church, as mother of her children, naturally tends to devote herself primarily on caring for, nurturing, and bring up those she recognizes as her own. Those Jesus ordains to serve as his ambassadors and pastors of the Church ought as spiritual fathers to be prepared, as spiritual fathers, to lay down their lives if necessary to assure the Church's survival and freedom and her children's salvation. Yet their whole attention should not be for their own. As ambassadors of Christ they should devote themselves to communicating his message to those who have never heard it, to those who do not wish to hear it, to those who have heard it and forgotten it or wish never to be reminded of it. As pastors, they should be especially devoted to the lost sheep. So, getting to know their people ought primarily to mean getting to know those who are not parishioners or who are but seldom come to Church. (The tendency virtually to limit pastoral responsibility to caring for the faithful who come to Church reflects the lack of masculine virtú in most bishops and priests.)

Jn 10.1–21: Jesus the door of the sheepfold and the good shepherd. Ray Brown translates “good shepherd” as “model shepherd” and argues for that: AB29:386. He knows his sheep. He is genuinely interested in their welfare—to the point of being willing to die for them. The good shepherd is concerned for all the sheep, including those not “of this fold”—the outsiders, those not in my parish or diocese, those not practicing, those never evangelized. The sheep hear his voice, recognize it, and follow him because they know he takes good care of them, is interested in their welfare. Similarly, the good pastor gets trust and credibility by sincere interest in those he serves.

1 Thes 2.7–8: “But we were gentle among you, like a nurse taking care of her children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our very selves, because you had become very dear to us.”

2.11: “You know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to lead a life worthy of God, who called you into his own kingdom and glory.” That is a model; the motherly affection and fatherly teaching presuppose knowing well those served. Without acquaintance, one cannot develop affection. Pretending affection is not helpful, but counterproductive. Without affection, bishops and priests lack the emotional motivation required to act according to pastoral charity; without bad will, they simply will not think of the interests and needs of those they are to serve or will not feel their importance, and so will tend to lapse into a managerial approach.

One cannot settle for dealing only with colleagues in ministry and a small inner-circle of important lay people—with whom one also spends one's free time fraternizing. Jesus went about and got to know all sorts of people. Still, he had his inner circle of colleagues and some special friends. Pastors likewise have to work with certain people. But beyond that, they need to get into touch, in a more than token way, with a *representative* sampling of the people they serve.

1 Tm 5.1–2: “Do not rebuke an older man but exhort him as you would a father; treat younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity.” Clerics are to treat the faithful as they should members of their own families—which implies respect, affection, but no excessive familiarity. Having left their family of origin to work closely with Jesus and serve others’ salvation, clerics do not lack family, but have a far more extended family. Their own families can be included: they never stop being ministers, and should minister to all, though they must avoid the partiality common to one’s own.

The point of knowing people well is not to manipulate them but to facilitate *communio* with them. John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, 43, *L’Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 10 Jan. 2001, VIII, says it is necessary to “promote a spirituality of communion,” and then explains what that is:

A spirituality of communion indicates above all the heart’s contemplation of the mystery of the Trinity dwelling in us, and whose light we must also be able to see shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us. A spirituality of communion also means an ability to think of our brothers and sisters in faith within the profound unity of the Mystical Body, and therefore as “those who are a part of me.” This makes us able to share their joys and sufferings, to sense their desires and attend to their needs, to offer them deep and genuine friendship. A spirituality of communion implies also the ability to see what is positive in others, to welcome it and prize it as a gift from God: not only as a gift for the brother or sister who has received it directly, but also as a “gift for me.” A spirituality of communion means, finally, to know how to “make room” for our brothers and sisters, bearing “each other’s burdens” (Gal 6:2) and resisting the selfish temptations which constantly beset us and provoke competition, careerism, distrust and jealousy. Let us have no illusions: unless we follow this spiritual path, external structures of communion will serve very little purpose. They would become mechanisms without a soul, “masks” of communion rather than its means of expression and growth.

The pastors’ participation in ecclesial communion is pastoral charity. The alternative is the approach of the manager.

Congregation for the Clergy, *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community* (18 Oct. 2002), 20:

In some countries in which there are faithful who belong to diverse language groups, where no personal parish has been erected nor adequate arrangements made for them, the territorial parish priest is the proper parish priest for such members of the faithful. He is obliged to provide for their particular needs, especially in matters pertaining to their specific cultural sensibilities.

In other words, unless other provisions have been made, pastors are responsible for all the faithful within their jurisdiction. Anglo pastors therefore may not take the position that Hispanics need not be served. And pastors who have such parishioners must do their best to serve them—e.g., learn their language as best they can.

John Paul II, General Audience (7 July 1993), 6, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng.), 14 July 1993, 11:

According to the Council, the presbyter who wants to be conformed to the Good Shepherd and reproduce in himself his charity for his brothers and sisters will have to be committed to some very important tasks today, even more so than in other times: to know his own sheep (cf. PO 3), especially by contacts, visits, relations of friendship, planned or occasional meetings, etc., always for a reason and with the spirit of a good shepherd; to welcome, as Jesus did, the people who come to him, remaining ready and able to listen, wanting to understand, open and genuinely kind,  
 . . .

Pastoral charity is required, and it is love of neighbor. Love is not concerned with abstract classes but with real people. So one must know people if one is going to love them.

How can a priest prioritize? No simple answer; much will depend on peculiarities of the parish. But: no volunteers, try to involve everyone in the work of the Church, train and support those who are contributing to others' benefit; prefer greater benefits to others and accept less for the people immediately dealt with. At same time, a priest must try to stimulate people to repentance, and must take the time and effort necessary to help them extricate themselves from their sins. Priests who lack such work are not doing a good pastoral job. For priests, each person should be very important, and those who contribute less, are hard to get along with, and are uncooperative should receive especially generous and affectionate care. They do not deserve it, but neither did we deserve Jesus' sacrifice for us "when we were still sinners," and that sacrifice should be recognized by priests as the model for their work.

Here are other notes on the problem:

- 1) "God has destined the earth and all it contains for the use of all human individuals and peoples, in such a way that, under the direction of justice accompanied by charity, created goods ought to flow abundantly to everyone on a fair basis" (GS 69). This is the principle of the universal destination of goods.
- 2) Economists regard people's talents and training as forms of capital, and surely God also distributes them with the same intention as other goods. So we should regard our talents and training as capacities for service to be distributed on the same basis as material goods: first to meet our own genuine needs and those of our dependents, and then to meet others' needs.
- 3) If material goods and services are to flow abundantly to everyone on a fair basis, *whenever morally possible* they must be directed first to those whose great unmet needs probably will not otherwise be met—that is, to the poorest.
- 4) Thus, after meeting prior responsibilities, everyone ought to operate with a "preferential option for the poor."
- 5) Poverty takes different forms, corresponding to different categories of unmet needs. Thus, people can be very poor in respect to unmet bodily needs—for example, for shelter and food—but rich in spiritual goods, and vice versa.



6) Since saving one's soul is more important than life itself, other things being equal, spiritual poverty is worse than other sorts, and the preferential option for the poor should take that into account.

John Paul II, *Vita consecrata*, 75, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 3 April 1996, XIV:

Today, among the possible works of charity, certainly the one which in a special way shows the world this love "to the end" is the fervent proclamation of Jesus Christ to those who do not yet know him, to those who have forgotten him and to the poor in a preferential way.

Though directed to people in consecrated life, this remark has general validity.

7) In exercising his ministry, a bishop, priest, or deacon ought to follow the preferential option for the poor in meeting people's spiritual needs.

8) Three classes of people live in spiritual poverty. First, those who are in mortal sin; so all those, Catholic or not, who seem to be lost sheep have the highest claim on spiritual service. Second, those who, though probably not in mortal sin, have not heard the gospel credibly preached—devout and decent Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and so on. Third, those who, though believing Christians and probably not in mortal sin, are without access to the sacraments: sincere and devout non-Catholic Christians, Catholics living in remote places or unable to make it to church, and so on. (Of course, Catholics in general normally have a right to priestly service, very much as children have a right to their parents' care, that can take priority over non-Catholics' more urgent needs.)

9) Since a bishop, priest, or deacon is called, trained, committed, and ordained to meeting others' spiritual needs, *a fortiori* he ought as a matter of strict justice to give priority to doing so over meeting people's other needs, and he ought as a matter of mercy to prefer meeting others' spiritual needs to preserving his own life.

Given the principle of the universal destination of goods, after meeting prior responsibilities, everyone ought to operate with a "preferential option for the poor." Poverty takes different forms, corresponding to different categories of unmet needs. Thus, people can be very poor in respect to unmet bodily needs—for example, for shelter and food—but rich in spiritual goods, and vice versa. Since saving one's soul is more important than life itself, other things being equal, spiritual poverty is worse than other sorts, and the preferential option for the poor should take that into account. Therefore, in exercising his ministry, a bishop, priest, or deacon ought to follow the preferential option for the poor in meeting people's spiritual needs.

Three classes of people live in spiritual poverty. First, those who are in mortal sin; so all those, Catholic or not, who seem to be lost sheep have the highest claim on spiritual service. Second, those who, though probably not in mortal sin, have not heard the gospel credibly preached—devout and decent Jews, Muslims, Hindus, and so on. Third, those who, though believing Christians and probably not in mortal sin, are without access to the sacraments: sincere and devout non-Catholic Christians, Catholics living in remote places or unable to make it to church, and so on. (Of course, Catholics in general normally have a right to priestly service, very much as children have a right to their parents' care, that can take priority even

over the more urgent needs of non-Catholics'.) Since a bishop, priest, or deacon is called, trained, committed, and ordained to meeting others' spiritual needs, *a fortiori* he ought as a matter of strict justice to give priority to doing so over meeting people's material needs, and he ought as a matter of mercy to prefer meeting others' spiritual needs to meeting lesser needs of his own—even to preserving his life.

### **7–B: Pastors’ responsibilities with respect to evangelization and catechesis**

Acts 1.8: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.”

Also: Mt 28:18–20. These passages of commissioning make it clear that the apostles, of whom bishops and all clergy are successors, are primarily sent out to be witnesses.

In Acts 1.21–22, the qualification for a Judas replacement is that the individual have been with them all during Jesus’ ministry and be able to bear witness with them to his resurrection. Their first responsibility is to preach and teach. That means that a conception of clerical service as primarily for those already converted is mistaken. Once converted, everyone should be expected to share in the mission of spreading the gospel. Of course, like an army on the move, the missionary church must see to its own needs. But doing so is for the sake of maintaining life and missionary force, not vice versa.

If one properly understands the command to love neighbors as oneself, it is not limited to loving a certain limited group. That was the idea of the lawyer who questioned Jesus: “Who is my neighbor?” The parable of the good Samaritan makes it clear that anyone in need one can help is one’s neighbor. Thus, the parish ought not to be concerned primarily with those already Catholic; rather, all its members, while helping one another, need to be concerned very much for those who are not yet members, since their need for Christ is great. If a parish is a *communio* of Christian love, parishioners need to be neighbors to outsiders; genuine love of neighbor is dynamic, and seeks to draw others into the *communio* of the new covenant. The love of Christ impels missionary activity, not just caring for those already in the fold.

All these responsibilities pertain to participation in the sacred magisterium, which is not simply to retail theology.

Jesus began teaching, “And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes” (Mk 1.22; cf. Lk 4.32). The scribes recounted others’ teachings; they were rather like theologians carrying on their scholarly conversation *about* revelation, faith, and their implications. Jesus revealed; he expanded, corrected, and completed what the Spirit had taught through the prophets. In doing that, he communicated with absolute conviction and straightforwardness, both knowing the truth of his message and being conscious of its unsurpassable importance for those he addressed, and so he was humanly motivated both by the will to save those he addressed and powerful feeling. He told people what God wished to do for them and why they should welcome it, and he proved his own credibility both by living in a way that manifested his sincerity and providing signs—doing works that served as samples and gave people glimpses of the kingdom to come.

Teaching *in persona Christi*, pastors must do everything they can to allow Jesus to continue teaching with that same authority. They must appropriate what Jesus wishes to teach so that they can communicate with absolute conviction and straightforwardness. They must love those they address, will their salvation, and feel the urgency of the message. They must prove their credibility by their lives. And they must always integrate their teaching with Jesus’ signs: the sacraments they administer and their leadership in building up the community of faith those sacraments form. If the clear unity of their teaching with the Eucharist and

ecclesial *communio* becomes obscured, or if their lives manifest their lukewarmness, credibility is undermined and thus the authority of Jesus' teaching is impeded.

Many people think that the basic gospel, in a nutshell, just is: God loves you unconditionally. That is included in the basic gospel—it's true and essential. But it's not all. For though God loves even the damned (see *LCL*, chap. 3, opening), friendship requires mutuality. Benedict J. Groeschel, C.F.R., *Stumbling Blocks or Stepping Stones: Spiritual Answers to Psychological Questions* (New York: Paulist, 1987), 114: "One could say that in a certain sense, God loved Judas Iscariot as much as he did the Blessed Virgin, because he loves us all infinitely. The difference is that the Blessed Virgin Mary opened her heart completely to God and Judas closed his heart." The notion that either God loves only those who are saved and not the damned, or loves all unconditionally and so saves all—is a false dichotomy. He loves all unconditionally but cannot save those who don't love him. Thus, both double predestination and the predestination of all to glory are mistaken.

The true and more complex gospel in a nutshell is: the kingdom is at hand; repent and believe. The kingdom includes God's unconditional love. But the gospel offers a covenant, a genuinely mutual relationship. And that requires, also as essential, one's response: believing (and acting on belief) and giving up what is incompatible with the commitment of faith.

Putting things this way does not by any means suggest that God's unconditional love should not be emphasized. It should. It's essential, and also it's effective as a motive for responding to his offer. One wants to respond to him as a person in gratitude for his love, in gratitude for the goods he offers, in gratitude for the evils from which he liberates. It would not do to drop out that unconditional love and preach fire and brimstone, which would more likely provoke anger and hatred toward God, and no real response of faith. Still, the reality of the alternative to loving God is not being his friend—and that cannot be concealed without falsifying the gospel.

The truth to be communicated in evangelization and catechesis has its own integrity. Granted, there is an appropriate order of presentation—not everything can be presented at once. And one must be pastorally sensitive in a genuine sense: putting things in ways and in an order that is most likely to elicit a genuine response of repentance and faith. But one must not tailor the message to the audience as a marketer might: cutting out elements that don't sell, and focusing only on the attractive features. That way means: original sin suppressed, hell never mentioned, God as great wimp in the sky, etc. Doing that is not efficiently conveying as much of the truth as one can, but a distorted message that will not be saving truth for anyone. Moreover, even the attractive elements that one is willing to convey are falsified: redemption without original sin becomes something else than it is; heaven with hell cannot be the object of hope, etc.

Pastors' responsibilities with respect to catechesis in the administration of sacraments and in specific preparation for them will be treated in the treatment of the various sacraments.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi* understands *evangelization* in a very broad sense, so that it includes virtually the whole of clerical ministry. For example, in 68:

What identifies our priestly service, gives a profound unity to the thousand and one tasks which claim our attention day by day and throughout our lives, and

confers a distinct character on our activities, is this aim, ever present in all our action: to proclaim the Gospel of God.(104 [Cf.1 Thess. 2:9])

A mark of our identity which no doubt ought to encroach upon and no objection eclipse is this: as pastors, we have been chosen by the mercy of the Supreme Pastor,(105 [Cf. 1 Pt 5:4]) in spite of our inadequacy, to proclaim with authority the Word of God, to assemble the scattered People of God, to feed this People with the signs of the action of Christ which are the sacraments, to set this People on the road to salvation, to maintain it in that unity of which we are, at different levels, active and living instruments, and unceasingly to keep this community gathered around Christ faithful to its deepest vocation. And when we do all these things, within our human limits and by the grace of God, it is a work of evangelization that we are carrying out. This includes ourself as Pastor of the universal Church, our brother bishops at the head of the individual Churches, priests and deacons united with their bishops and whose assistants they are, by a communion which has its source in the sacrament of Orders and in the charity of the Church.

This view shows the foundational importance of evangelization in the narrow sense: preaching the essential Gospel and promoting its acceptance. Without that, nothing else. And that not only must be done initially, but continued to maintain the foundation for everything else in pastoral work. For example, practicing Catholics need to be reminded of the basic truth of the gospel and encouraged to attend to it, for otherwise they will lack sufficient hope to receive the sacraments fruitfully and live a good life.

The focus on evangelization, while perfectly sound, must not be exclusive. The Eucharist also can be the focus for everything the priest does, and that focus was more common among Catholics from Trent to Vatican II. All the clerics' work then fitted within that one framework. Also, the focus on the kingdom, which I prefer, can be used. Each focus includes the other two; each has its advantages and limitations; none should be exclusive.

OT 19 says that seminarians are to be taught the duty of seeking out the straying sheep and unbelievers.

*CIC*, c. 528, §1: A pastor is obliged to make provision so that the word of God is proclaimed in its entirety to those living in the parish; for this reason, he is to take care that the lay members of the Christian faithful are instructed in the truths of the faith, especially by giving a homily on Sundays and holy days of obligation [so homilies need to cover all the central truths of faith, at least in the course of the three-year cycle, and must not simply repeat and emphasize some truths that the preacher finds more appealing and must not omit those that people are likely to find repugnant—e.g., those about original sin, hell, mortal sin, the need for a clear conscience to receive the Eucharist, the indissolubility of sacramental marriage] and by offering catechetical instruction. He is to foster works through which the spirit of the gospel is promoted, even in what pertains to social justice. [Those works might well include helping one another bear the burdens of Christian life.] He is to have particular care for the Catholic education of children and youth.

[So, he is not to take lightly the task of catechizing kids not in Catholic schools.] He is to make every effort, even with the collaboration of the Christian faithful, so that the message of the gospel comes also to those who have ceased the practice of their religion or do not profess the true faith. [This mandates a serious apostolate to nonmembers of the parish under the direction and instigation of the pastor, but mainly carried out by the laity.]

*CIC*, c. 771, §1: Pastors of souls, especially bishops and pastors, are to be concerned that the word of God is also proclaimed to those of the faithful who because of the condition of their life do not have sufficient common and ordinary pastoral care or lack it completely.

This is based on CD 18. This concerns those who miss out on the ordinary preaching in the parish—people who don't get to Mass (which includes those who have fallen away, but also shut-ins) and to special affairs where there is preaching, or who would not understand that due to language problems. Here one must think broadly about possible means, which include all sorts of media and certainly can take advantage of the help of lay people.

*Pastores dabo vobis*, 1, sets out as primary duty of clergy: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Mt 28.19) and offering Eucharist.

Bishops and priests are supposed to preach the gospel. Many preach only to Catholics. That is acting as if the Church were a voluntary association, like a hobby club, that exists only to serve a common-interest group. Instead, they should make a real effort to reach the people in their dioceses and parishes who are utter nonbelievers, or are non-Christians, or are separated Christians—each group in an appropriate way (see *CIC*, c. 771, §2, which says that the care of souls extends also to nonbelievers). All sorts of techniques can be used: door to door census, having Vespers and devotions to which we can invite non-Catholics and welcome them to participate as fully as they wish, public lectures to which everyone is invited, getting invited to their platforms, bringing the faith to bear on public issues (alcohol and drug addiction largely results from lack of hope; if people look forward to heaven and rely on God, these problems can be overcome). Think of and try every means of communication that might render people receptive and get the message across. Bishops and priests cannot do all this by themselves, but they need to choose, train, and support lay people in doing it. And don't ask for volunteers.

Objection: Bishops and priests already have too much to do taking care of Catholics' needs, and these cannot be simply ignored, because the faithful have a right to pastoral services.

Reply: If bishops and pastors lead their people to become evangelical and missionary, that will both take care of their needs and do the job for nonbelievers, non-Christians, and separated Christians. The more passive and infantile the laity, the greater the burden of meeting their essential needs. Also, the fewer the vocations to clerical and consecrated service will turn up!

Mk 1.35–39 describes Jesus' going out to pray early, then Simon and others following him and telling him people were looking for him, and Jesus saying (38): “Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also; for that is why I came out.” Then he preaches throughout

Galilee. The parallel, Lk 4.42–43, adds that “the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them; but he said to them, ‘I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the others cities also; for I was sent for this purpose.’” Possibly it would have been better for those people had he stayed there; but he had discerned his responsibility to keep moving—his mission was not to one town. So, the possible good of staying did not keep him from fulfilling his mission. The pastor must proceed likewise: his mission is to everyone, and especially to those who are poor—i.e., who have not had the gospel preached to them, who have fallen away, and so on. Jesus points out that he did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance (see Mt 9.12, Mk 2.17, Lk 5.32); for that reason he associated with tax collectors and sinners. So, clerics must not spend all their time and effort with fellow clerics, good Catholics, and so on. Those associations should be shaped toward cooperation in extending the Church and saving those in greater peril.

The parable of the lost sheep (Mt 18.12–13, Lk 15.3–5)—the sheep owner leaves the ninety-nine—answers the objection that we must concentrate on providing pastoral services for the faithful, who have a right to them; bringing the lost back is cause for greater joy, i.e., better. And that is all the more so inasmuch as the lost sheep are not one percent of the total population but the greater part of it.

LG 30 (on the laity) says pastors know they are not alone called by Jesus to carry out the Church’s saving mission. “On the contrary, they understand that it is their noble duty so to shepherd the faithful and recognize their services and charismatic gifts that all according to their proper roles may cooperate in this common undertaking with one heart. For we must all ‘practice the truth in love . . .’” See PO 9; *CIC*, c. 275, §2: “Clerics are to acknowledge and promote the mission which the laity, each for his or her part, exercise in the Church and in the world.” These passages make it clear that pastors are not to engage only in governance of the Church, but in catechizing about personal vocation and helping people find and accept their vocations, so as to build up the one body. Pastors also are to call the laity to help in fulfilling the responsibilities of clerics to evangelize and catechize, especially to reach those that clerics themselves cannot directly reach.

*CIC*, c. 836, says that the priesthood of the faithful is exercised in Christian worship, and that such worship proceeds from and rests on faith; from this it draws a norm: “sacred ministers are to take care to arouse and enlighten this faith diligently, especially through the ministry of the word, which gives birth to and nourishes the faith.”

SC 9 says: “Before people can come to the liturgy they must be called to faith and to conversion.”

SC 9 points out the importance of evangelization and catechesis, though they are subordinate to liturgy. People need sound faith to understand the point of the liturgy and be eager and able to participate in it properly; they need catechizing to make the liturgy bring their lives as a whole into unity with their faith. SC 10 insists on the importance of the liturgy: all the other activities of the Church lead to the Eucharist in which, chiefly, the payoff comes: the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God. SC 11 calls specifically for catechesis to ensure that people participate knowingly, actively, and fruitfully—that is, fully aware of what they are doing, engaged in the rite as active participants rather than as mere spectators, and disposed to receive and benefit from its effects.

SC 19: With zeal and patience, pastors must promote the liturgical instruction of their people, and their active internal and external participation. (Much of this could be done with homilies on various aspects of the liturgy itself, which almost never are taken as subject for preaching. Trent at DS 1749/946 directed priests to explain or have explained what is going on at Mass, especially the mystery of the most holy sacrifice, and Vatican II does not repeal or otherwise exclude that.)

IM 10 teaches that the faithful and especially the young need to learn to use the media with moderation and self-control, and that parents ought to be mindful of their duty to guard against shows, publications, and the like that would jeopardize faith or good morals. Pastors need to catechize about these matters: the media absorb much of people's time and have a tremendous effect, much of which is pernicious with respect to spiritual and moral values.

CD 30: A missionary spirit should be a vital element of the care of souls and should extend in due measure to everyone living in the parish. If the priests cannot get to everyone, let them call in others, including lay people, to assist them. Here we have the mandate to call the laity to evangelical service in the parish!

CD 30: Parish priests should preach and teach to all the Christian people, so that they will mature and bear witness as Jesus wishes. Catechize all according to their age and needs. Train laity to help.

When evangelizing nonbelievers, it is not necessary to catechize regarding all the truths of faith, but only so much as is required to enable those hearing reasonably to make the act of faith and accept baptism. Obviously, fairness requires that truths of faith with which potential converts are likely to have trouble must be mentioned.

When catechizing, one is bound by Jesus' command: "teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." So, no teaching that the Church regards as essential may be omitted.

There is a right time and prudence is in order about the occasion. Six-year olds need not be instructed about sexual sins. Catechesis in preparation for each sacrament should focus on what is relevant to that sacrament.

The hierarchy of truths also should be respected. Catechesis on the last things should focus on heaven, and the treatments of judgment, purgatory, and hell should be subordinate. Catechesis in preparation for marriage should focus on the complex good of marriage: marital communion, its sacramentality, faithful marital love, the blessing of children; the treatment of temptations to infidelity, contraception, and spouse mistreatment should be subordinate.

Unacceptable is "prudent" silence about—or, worse, "softening" of—some of the Church's teachings on the ground that teaching them will drive people away, lead to schism, make life too hard, and so forth. This violates Jesus' commission, and treats the truth to be handed on as if it were negotiable or, even more arrogantly, as if it were the pastor's possession to distribute as he pleases. It deprives people of some part of what Jesus means them to receive. It underestimates people's capacity to accept and benefit from truth. It ignores the role of the Spirit: I preach, but the Spirit makes the preaching fruitful.



It reduces the pastor's role to that of a salesman who must move the product, not someone who serves both Jesus and the people.

OT 2: Everyone in pastoral ministry must understand the vocational perspective and live his own life by it. He also needs to instruct and encourage couples preparing for marriage and parents to do the same. He also needs to see to it that catechetical programs focus for children after first Communion through grade school focus on personal vocation.

On appropriate occasions, he should mention personal vocation in his homilies.

PO 11 teaches that clerics have a responsibility to see to their own replacements, and should teach the laity to cooperate. This responsibility is part of the general responsibility to catechize about vocation and help the faithful to discern their personal vocations.

Priests need to demonstrate to the faithful—by the testimony of a life radiant with the spirit of service and paschal joy—the excellence and necessity of priesthood. Priests also are to help suitable young men and adults to prepare properly, especially by careful and prudent spiritual direction.

Priests have the same obligation to provide direction with respect to people who seem to have the gifts for religious life and also for any other ministry or lay apostolate of special importance for the Church's common good.

One important point made in PO 11. The Council quotes Is 6.8—Here I am, send me!—and then adds: “Still, the voice of the Lord calling like that is never to be expected, as if it would in some extraordinary way arrive in the ears of the future priest. Rather, it is to be understood and discerned in the usual signs by which the will of God is manifest to prudent Christians, and those signs are to be carefully watched for by priests.” The same, of course, is true of all personal vocations.

DV 7–8 makes it clear that the point of preaching is to safeguard, expound, and disseminate *the word of God*—the word that apostolic tradition hands on to the apostles' successors.

DV 25 urges all the clergy—especially priests and deacons—and catechists who are active in the ministry of the word, to diligently read and carefully study Scripture. That meditative reading and study must be the basis for *all* evangelization and catechesis, not only, though not least, for liturgical preaching.

AA 2–8: all laity are to participate in apostolate in and through their whole Christian lives, including their involvement with nonreligious goods. While this includes collaborating in the effort to save souls (6 and 10), it also embraces the renewal of the temporal order: “It is necessary that the laity take up the renewal of the temporal order as their proper *munus*” (7). This comprehensive conception of lay apostolate must be taught and its practice encouraged. It applies to *all* laity, whereas involvement in clerical apostolate applies only to some, and to different ones in different ways.

AA 28–31 also make it clear that pastors ought to see to it that catechesis is provided for forming laity in their proper apostolate and also in helping clerics with the primary apostolate of the Church.

AG 37 calls on dioceses and parishes to devote to those far off concern similar to that which they have for their own members. If this were taken seriously, it would revolutionize the use of resources in the Church, including clerical personnel. The effort of evangelization certainly must not be limited to parish members, but extend strongly to nonbelievers, even to those living outside the boundaries.

AG 39 calls on priests to realize the need for building up the body: they should organize their pastoral activity in such a way that it will spread the faith among non-Christians.

PO 4 deals with the duty of presbyters to share the truth of the gospel with everyone, since it is essential for faith and salvation. It is necessary for conversion, but the faithful also require instruction, not least in connection with the sacraments, for they are sacraments of faith. If preaching is to be effective in moving the minds of hearers, the priest must expound the word of God, not just in a general and abstract way, but by applying the gospel's perennial truth to the concrete circumstances of life. That certainly means raising consciousness about the *need* for what God is offering, the evidences that provide ground for hope in Christ, and the concrete moral requirements that must be met to remain in God's love and be perfected in it.

GS 30 calls for an ethic transcending individualism. Catechesis about this matter does not occur by vague and general talk about social injustices and the need to be charitable. Rather, people must be encouraged to seek their personal vocation rather than an individualistic agenda. For in finding God's plan for one's life, one learns how one should serve others, and in that way promote their good and contribute material for the heavenly kingdom.

GS 43 points out that the split between faith and daily life is one of the more serious errors of our time. Later, it calls on bishops and priests to preach the Gospel in such a way that all earthly activities of the faithful are illuminated by it: that absolutely demands the preaching and teaching of personal vocation.

To evangelize and catechize, priest needs to keep studying. He cannot simply go on what he learned in the seminary. The temptation—as with people in law, medicine, and even many academics—is to quit studying. That is to fail to serve as one should.

Catechesis requires vigorous adult education besides what is attached to particular sacraments and so on.

Enlist youth to teach children, mature couples to teach young couples, and people to contact regularly every nonregistered home in the parish. In general, do not ask for volunteers, but learn people's gifts and call them to use them to build up the one body.

*CIC*, c. 757, stresses the responsibility of parish priests to proclaim the gospel of God to the people entrusted to them; and for deacons to help in this. According to PO 4, the role of those working directly with people is to get down to brass tacks—to apply the word in the concrete circumstances of life.

*CIC*, c. 760: “The mystery of Christ is to be set forth completely and faithfully in the ministry of the word . . .” and it goes on to specify sources (from CD 14, on the bishops’ duty to catechize): Scripture, tradition, the liturgy, the magisterium, and the life of the Church.

The reference to the mystery of Christ indicates what is central in the Gospel and the teaching of faith, and is not to be understood narrowly, since all the truths of faith pertain to it in due order. Setting it forth completely means not omitting relevant matters, such as the teaching on original sin or hell. Setting it forth faithfully means balance.

Bishops and parish priests often fail in balance and fullness; they emphasize too much one or another thing and neglect others. For example, in some times past they emphasized human weakness, sin, the possibility of hell, and the need for repentance too much. Now they so deemphasize these things and focus on God’s goodness and unconditional love that heaven seems a sure thing and has largely dropped out of Catholics’ thinking.

*CIC*, c. 762 is not well translated by the CLSA translation. It should be more like: “Since the People of God primarily are gathered together by the word of the living God, which it is entirely right for them to expect from the mouth of priests, sacred ministers [clerics], among whose chief duties it is to announce the Gospel of God to everyone, should hold as great the role [*munus*] of preaching.”

The thrust of the canon is to insist on an importance for preaching that would put it far higher on the clerical agenda than it usually is. It is based heavily on PO 4.

*CIC*, c. 764 says that the faculty of preaching by presbyters and deacons “is to be exercised with at least the presumed consent of the rector of the church.” That means that they cannot preach without that consent. So, the person in charge of a church ought not to consent to preaching but forbid it if he knows from experience it will be unsound—whether by his assistant, a priest who comes to help out, a member of a community of priests associated with that church, or whatever.

CD 14, speaking of the duty of bishops with respect to catechetical instruction, says that its point is that faith, illuminated by doctrine, may be alive and articulated and put into practice (*quae eo tendit ut in hominibus fides, per doctrinam illustrata, viva fiat atque explicita et operosa*). *CIC*, c. 773 takes this up: “It is a proper and grave duty especially of pastors of souls to take care of the catechesis of the Christian people so that the living [nothing in the Latin corresponds to *living*] faith of the faithful becomes manifest and active through doctrinal instruction and the experience of Christian life.”

The idea is that catechesis nurtures faith and so helps its development—helps those who have received the gift to appropriate it and make the most of it. So, the faith needs to become *manifest* to the believer, primarily, and needs to shape life.

What does “experience of Christian life” in the canon mean? What does that add to instruction in doctrine? I think the point is that catechesis, as an interpersonal communication of divine revelation, must involve deeds as well as words. Catechizing must be done by a Christian community for its members, and they must be treated as members and experience what they are undergoing as the care and help of the community. The catechetical process cannot be

separated from but needs to be integrated with what the community, including both those catechizing and those being catechized, does together—hear the word and celebrate the Eucharist, which those being catechized take part in according to their appropriate initiation and capacity.

*CIC*, c. 774, §1, says that all in the Church under the direction of ecclesiastical authority are responsible according to their proper role for catechesis. §2: “Parents above others are obliged to form their children by word and example in faith and in the practice of Christian life . . .” That implies that clerical focus so far as children are concerned should be on catechizing parents about what *they* should do and then supporting them in doing it. Here the “experience of Christian life” becomes very important; trying to catechize children directly without getting to their parents makes the whole exercise ineffective by separating the words from relevant deeds. Thus, *CIC*, c. 776, among other things, says: “The pastor is to promote and foster the function of parents in the family catechesis mentioned in can. 774, §2”

*CIC*, c. 776: the pastor is responsible for everyone’s catechetical formation and is to employ everyone’s help—other clerics, those belonging to institutes (in accord with their charism), and lay people, especially trained catechists.

*CIC*, c. 777: pastor is to abide by bishop’s norms and to take special steps to see to §1 catechesis for the celebration of the sacraments (also see *CIC*, c. 843, §2), §2 proper catechetical formation of children for first reception of penance and Communion (see also *CIC*, c. 913), §3 further catechetical formation after that (which should include personal vocation), §4 catechetical instruction for those physically and/or mentally impeded insofar as their condition permits, §5 catechesis to develop and strengthen the faith of youths and adults. The idea is to include everything, it seems. Plainly, marriage preparation is included without being explicitly mentioned under §§ 1 and 5.

*CIC*, c. 794, §2: “Pastors of souls have the duty of arranging everything so that all the faithful have a Catholic education.” The heart of this is not simply to try to get as many children as possible into Catholic schools, but to try to see to it that every Catholic child receives as good a basic Catholic education as possible. That ought to mean putting a very high priority on pressing for fairness in the use of public educational resources. But most importantly, it must mean not shortchanging the children who are *not* in Catholic schools by making only a token gesture toward their Christian education.

*CIC*, c. 827, §2, says that books regarding “sacred scripture, theology, canon law, ecclesiastical history, and religious or moral disciplines cannot be used as texts on which instruction is based in elementary, middle, or higher schools unless they have been published with the approval or competent ecclesiastical authority or have been approved by it subsequently.”

Bishops and pastors ought to try to enforce this where they can—at least in catechetical programs and in schools, including seminaries, over which they have direct control. Of course, many bad things would meet the test.

*CIC*, c. 827, §4: “Books or other writings cannot be exhibited, sold, or distributed in churches or oratories unless they have been published with the permission of competent ecclesiastical authority or approved by it subsequently.” This ought to be enforced with respect to material on pamphlet racks and in back of churches, including newspapers. Also, it is not by itself sufficient, since some approved material is unsound or inappropriate.

*Pastores dabo vobis*, 18, says that priests are ordained for the universal mission of carrying on Jesus’ work in the world, so that their concern must not be limited to a certain group of people—this parish, diocese, etc. The mission extends not only to Catholics or Christians, but to everybody. The document goes on:

Today, in particular, the pressing pastoral task of the new evangelization calls for the involvement of the entire People of God, and requires a new fervor, new methods and a new expression for the announcing and witnessing of the Gospel. This task demands priests who are deeply and fully immersed in the mystery of Christ and capable of embodying a new style of pastoral life, marked by a profound communion with the pope, the bishops and other priests, and a fruitful cooperation with the lay faithful, always respecting and fostering the different roles, charisms and ministries present within the ecclesial community.

PO 6, quoted by *Pastores dabo vobis*, 41, makes the point: “It is the priests’ part as instructors of the people in the faith to see to it that each member of the faithful shall be led in the Holy Spirit to the full development of his own vocation.” (The quote does not correspond exactly to PO 6, because PDV has cut out phrases and the English translation does not show the cuts.)

*Pastores dabo vobis*, 32, recalls (from PO 10) that “every priestly ministry shares in the universality of the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles.” He then teaches:

In the exercise of their ministry and the witness of their lives, priests have the duty to form the community entrusted to them as a truly missionary community. As I wrote in the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* [67, AAS 83 (1991) 315–16, “all priests must have the mind and heart of missionaries open to the needs of the Church and the world, with concern for those farthest away and especially for the non-Christian groups in their own area. They should have at heart, in their prayers and particularly at the eucharistic sacrifice, the concern of the whole Church for all of humanity.”

*Pastores dabo vobis*, 38, deals with prayer and vocations, especially to the priesthood; it indicates several things that ought to be included in catechesis. While vocations come about from God’s grace and the individual’s freedom, God often works through secondary causes; so, people can help others find and accept their vocations. The young need to be educated to pray regularly, meditating on God’s word and listening for his personal message for them. People should be taught to pray for vocations, especially to the priesthood. People should be encouraged to offer their sufferings for this.

*Pastores dabo vobis*, 39: Preaching and catechesis must always show their intrinsic vocational dimension: “The word of God enlightens believers to appreciate life as a response to God’s call and leads them to embrace in faith the gift of a personal vocation.” There also must be

explicit catechesis about what priestly ministry is and about the need for priests; the possibility should be suggested to suitable young people.

*Pastores dabo vobis*, 40, teaches that education about vocation must be addressed not only to the Church at large but aimed at individuals. The Spirit “gives himself to each Christian with different charisms and special signs. Each one, therefore, must be helped to embrace the gift entrusted to him as a completely unique person, and to hear the words which the Spirit of God personally addresses to him.” It then goes on to talk about spiritual direction and its importance in promoting vocations to the priesthood—but the same is true for Christian vocations in general.

*Pastores dabo vobis*, 41, says that schools should teach personal vocation to all, and “infuse in the hearts of boys and young men [the Latin is open to “children and youths”] a desire to do God’s will in that state in life which is most suitable to each person, and never excluding the vocation to the priestly ministry.”

The same thing is true for all catechesis for children and youth, obviously, whether done in schools or in CCD programs. This catechesis regarding personal vocation is closely related to necessary catechesis about the various states of life, which will be important elements in most Christians’ vocations. So, in learning about personal vocation, children should learn to consider marriage and single life as a layperson can be authentic vocations for those whose gifts so indicate, just as clerical and consecrated life are for others. The early or remote formation for marriage must begin by learning to think about marriage *as* a possible vocation rather than as a mere natural outcome of maturing sexual capacity or element in one’s subjective wish list.

*Pastores dabo vobis*, 41, goes on to say that the lay faithful who participate in catechesis “have great importance in the pastoral work of promoting priestly vocations: The more they inculcate a deep appreciation of young people’s vocation and mission in the Church, the more they will be able to recognize the unique value of the priestly vocation and mission.”

The point being made here is the one I make constantly: young people will catch onto the idea of vocations to the clerical and religious life and service if they get onto the idea of personal vocation as such—as a role in the Church, yet inclusive of the whole of one’s Christian life.

*Pastores dabo vobis*, 64, suggests that where there are no minor seminaries, other “institutions” need to be provided. In my view, and whether or not there is a minor seminary, that ought to mean that in the catechesis of all children about vocation and in the following up on that catechesis among young people, there ought to be support groups for those who have begun to discern or are thinking seriously about *various* vocations, including priesthood and religious life, but also other vocational options. What the pope says of adolescents and young men who think they may be called to the priesthood is equally true of all serious-minded children and young people: “They need a particular group or community to refer to and where they can find support to follow through the specific vocational journey which the gift of the Holy Spirit has initiated in them.”

*Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, 46: “In order to be effective and credible, the priest, within the perspective of the faith and his ministry, and with a constructively critical

outlook, must be familiar with the ideology, language, cultural intricacies and the typologies diffused in the mass media and which, to a large part, conditions the attitudes of society.”

The idea is right. The meaning of *typologies* is unclear; it may mean current ideas, as the French suggests, or it may mean the schemes of classification that people are using, which often prejudice their judgments.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 2, says that the Gospel is proclaimed through two fundamental commands: “the Good News proclaimed through two fundamental commands: ‘Put on the new self’ (4) and ‘Be reconciled to God.’ (5)” 4. Cf. Eph 4:24, 2:15; Col 3:10; Gal 3:27; Rom 13:14; 2 Cor 5:17. 5. 2 Cor 5:20.

This suggests that the central message of the gospel is the call to repentance; note that Jesus began by calling for repentance and announcing the proximity of the kingdom. So, no evangelization can occur without beginning with an emphasis on the need for conversion.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 5:

Such an exhortation seems to us to be of capital importance, for the presentation of the Gospel message is not an optional contribution for the Church. It is the duty incumbent on her by the command of the Lord Jesus, so that people can believe and be saved. This message is indeed necessary. It is unique. It cannot be replaced. It does not permit either indifference, syncretism or accommodation. It is a question of people’s salvation. It is the beauty of the Revelation that it represents. It brings with it a wisdom that is not of this world. It is able to stir up by itself faith—faith that rests on the power of God.(11 [Cf. 1 Cor 2:5]) It is truth. It merits having the apostle consecrate to it all his time and all his energies, and to sacrifice for it, if necessary, his own life.

Evangelization is necessary for people’s salvation. It has its own power—the power of God, of the Holy Spirit, who makes preaching fruitful. It deserves the complete self-sacrifice of those called to preach.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 8: Jesus, the first evangelizer, focuses everything he is doing on the kingdom:

8. As an evangelizer, Christ first of all proclaims a kingdom, the kingdom of God; and this is so important that, by comparison, everything else becomes “the rest,” which is “given in addition.”(16) Only the kingdom therefore is absolute, and it makes everything else relative. The Lord will delight in describing in many ways the happiness of belonging to this kingdom (a paradoxical happiness which is made up of things that the world rejects),(17) the demands of the kingdom and its Magna Charta,(18) the heralds of the kingdom,(19) its mysteries,(20) its children,(21) the vigilance and fidelity demanded of whoever awaits its definitive coming.(22)

16. Cf. Mt 6:33. 17. Cf. Mt 5:3–12. 18. Cf. Mt 5:7. 19. Cf. Mt 10.

20. Cf. Mt 13. 21. Mt 18. 22. Cf. Mt 24–25.

So, the focus of all teaching and preaching ought to be on the kingdom. Evangelizers and catechists ought to try to motivate people to want to go there by making clear the happiness to be hoped for, be watchful and faithful so as to make it. The kingdom alone makes sense of the requirements of Christian life.

In 1 Cor 9.19–22 Paul says he has made himself a slave to all, and so has done what he could to accommodate all sorts of people. 22: “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” He is making it clear that adaptation to make one’s service more effective is essential to the life a cleric undertakes. Paul also states his reason for so much self-sacrifice, namely, that it is in his ultimate self-interest: “I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings” (23).

Paul then goes on, 1 Cor 9.24–27, to exhort the Corinthians to be similarly, rightly self-interested. As he is eager to share in the blessings of the gospel, and so is willing to give up even many things to which he is entitled (including a wife and financial support from the community—see vv. 4–18), so should they be (24–25): “Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.” Thus Paul offers his own motivation as an example of sound Christian self-interest for his people to follow.

The laity must be evangelized and catechized to the point that they understand and, if they will, accept their responsibility to apostolate:

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 13: “The command to the Twelve to go out and proclaim the Good News is also valid for all Christians, though in a different way. . . . Those who have received the Good News and who have been gathered by it into the community of salvation can and must communicate and spread it.”

14: Declaration of the Synod Fathers (reference is in note 36), says: “We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church.”

So pastors must call the faithful to evangelize, and motivate them to help do the work in many ways—primarily by finding and carrying out their personal vocations as vocations. But also, by the part of their vocation—in many cases—of helping in an organized parochial effort to evangelize everyone around, including non-Catholics of all sorts, but also including those who already are active parish members, with a view to their more complete conversion to Christ and more whole-hearted pursuit of the kingdom. Everyone a Catholic and every Catholic a saint—the required purpose of the parish, inasmuch as it is sent to evangelize.

John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, 31, *L’Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 10 Jan. 2001, VI, recalls (in 30) that all are called to holiness and then goes on:

31. At first glance, it might seem almost impractical to recall this elementary truth as the foundation of the pastoral planning in which we are involved at the start of the new millennium. Can holiness ever be “planned”? What might the word “holiness” mean in the context of a pastoral plan?



In fact, to place pastoral planning under the heading of holiness is a choice filled with consequences. It implies the conviction that, since Baptism is a true entry into the holiness of God through incorporation into Christ and the indwelling of his Spirit, it would be a contradiction to settle for a life of mediocrity, marked by a minimalist ethic and a shallow religiosity.

So, it is clear that nothing less must be the pastor's objective for everyone.

John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, 40, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 10 Jan. 2001, VIII:

We must revive in ourselves the burning conviction of Paul, who cried out: "Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel" (1 Cor 9:16).

This passion will not fail to stir in the Church a new sense of mission, which cannot be left to a group of "specialists" but must involve the responsibility of all the members of the People of God. Those who have come into genuine contact with Christ cannot keep him for themselves, they must proclaim him. A new apostolic outreach is needed, which will be lived *as the everyday commitment of Christian communities and groups*. This should be done however with the respect due to the different paths of different people and with sensitivity to the diversity of cultures in which the Christian message must be planted, in such a way that the particular values of each people will not be rejected but purified and brought to their fullness.

Evangelization and catechesis are works that the clergy must not so much try to carry out as to try to lead the whole community in carrying out.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 18, provides a quasi-definition of evangelization: "The purpose of evangelization is therefore precisely this interior change, and if it had to be expressed in one sentence the best way of stating it would be to say that the Church evangelizes when she seeks to convert,(49 [49. Cf. Rom 1:16; 1 Cor 1:18, 2:4.]) solely through the divine power of the message she proclaims, both the personal and collective consciences of people, the activities in which they engage, and the lives and concrete milieu which are theirs."

Thus, the notion of evangelization includes not only preaching the gospel but seeking conversions, and not merely getting people to repent but to change both their lives and their situations—"concrete milieu" leads in 19 to talk about "upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation."; and that leads in 20 to talk about "a full evangelization of culture, or more correctly of cultures."

So, pastors need not only to preach the gospel and try to make sure people hear the message and catch on to it, but to get them to change. Since conversion is ongoing, so must evangelization be. And, the pastor must aim at change not only in respect to certain obvious and personal matters, but of life as a whole; thus he must call into question aspects of the "milieu" that the faithful might otherwise take for granted or assume are compatible with their faith. Evangelization thus requires a constant critique. Yet that does not mean a merely

negative attitude. Some things in the milieu are compatible with and some are positively helpful for the growth of Christian life, including its function of evangelizing.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 21–22, talks about witness of life and explicit proclamation. In carrying out their responsibility to evangelize, pastors act largely through the lay faithful. They need to get them to find, accept, and fulfill their personal vocations, for there is no other way for them to provide the witness of life—they do that only to the extent that they are holy, and fail to do it insofar as they are not, and they become holy only through their vocations. Moreover, if people accept the notion of vocation, they will be prepared to find and accept the role to which God is calling them in the parish's and diocese's organized efforts at evangelization—i.e., to help the clerics carry out their proper responsibility for evangelizing, by contributing to that ministry.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 40: “This question of ‘how to evangelize’ is permanently relevant, because the methods of evangelizing vary according to the different circumstances of time, place and culture, and because they thereby present a certain challenge to our capacity for discovery and adaptation.” The methods of doing the job are the place for creativity. The message is given, must be received, and communicated. But how to help people receive and profit from it is open to endless variations. Not only do audiences differ, those evangelizing and catechizing have different gifts, and must make the most of the gifts they have, not try to follow a pattern that succeeds well for those who have different gifts. Of course, one can get ideas from others, but one must make sure that the methods others use match up with one's own gifts.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 47: “The role of evangelization [in respect to the sacraments] is precisely to educate people in the faith in such a way as to lead each individual Christian to live the sacraments as true sacraments of faith—and not to receive them passively or reluctantly [the idea is not *reluctantly*; it is: nor merely to undergo them].”

Thus, all evangelization (here meaning catechesis) bearing on the sacraments and preparing for them has a single primary aim: conscious and active participation by the recipient, including in that the understandings and intentions that will make the reception fruitful. E.g., catechesis for the sacrament of penance is not just instruction in how to do the sacrament— how to examine conscience, how to confess, and so on—but an understanding of what one really is doing, the desire to be reconciled, firm purpose of amendment, and readiness to avoid occasions, make restitution, and so forth.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 49–56, stresses that the Church's mission is to evangelize—make the Gospel's rich gifts available to—absolutely everyone: those who have never heard it, those who reject it, those committed to non-Christian religions, believing and practicing Christians, and the non-practicing. Then 57 makes a very important and often overlooked point: “The Church is deeply aware of her duty to preach salvation to all. Knowing that the Gospel message is not reserved to a small group of the initiated, the privileged or the elect, but is destined for everyone, she shares Christ's anguish at the sight of the wandering and exhausted crowds. . . . But the Church is also conscious of the fact that, if the preaching of the Gospel is to be effective, she must address her message to the heart of the multitudes, to communities of the faithful whose action can and must reach others.”

In other words, the only way to do the immense job of evangelizing that must be done is to evangelize the faithful who will accept it in a special way and to call all of them to do their part in evangelizing others. That means leading as many as possible to find, accept, and fulfill their personal vocations—and thus live truly evangelical lives. It also means calling as many as are willing to participate according to their gifts and in harmony with their other responsibilities in always ongoing diocesan and parish plans and efforts of evangelizing everyone else—including utter nonbelievers, fallen-away Catholics, Jews, and Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church.

Jews? In speaking of evangelization of those who practice non-Christian religions, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 53, teaches:

We wish to point out, above all today, that neither respect and esteem for these religions nor the complexity of the questions raised is an invitation to the Church to withhold from these non-Christians the proclamation of Jesus Christ. On the contrary the Church holds that these multitudes have the right to know the riches of the mystery of Christ(76 [Cf. Eph 3:8])—riches in which we believe that the whole of humanity can find, in unsuspected fullness, everything that it is gropingly searching for concerning God, man and his destiny, life and death, and truth.

They have a *right to know*. Moreover, loving one's Jewish brothers requires us to do our best to offer them the opportunity to share in the immeasurable riches of the fullness of Christian life. And the same is true for loving our separated brethren, as 54 makes clear: "The Church also has a lively solicitude for the Christians who are not in full communion with her. While preparing with them the unity willed by Christ, and precisely in order to realize unity in truth, she has the consciousness that she would be gravely lacking in her duty if she did not give witness before them of the fullness of the revelation whose deposit she guards."

Evangelizing is not proselytizing. It is seriously trying to make available. We need to try to get others to understand what motivates us—a sense of duty and genuine love for them—and ask them to respect our effort. At the same time, we must recognize what motivates them to resist those efforts and to press us to accept at least essential parts of their view of things (even if not, as in the case of most Jews who don't try to make converts, their entire religion). At that point, evangelization becomes ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue. But that dialogue still must be a real evangelization—the most suitable and thus appropriate form evangelization must take.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 56, deals with evangelizing the non-practicing. Every diocese and parish ought to work at that. General programs of "Come home for Christmas" and the like can be helpful if the invitation is sound—e.g., to individual confession rather than to general absolution. But even if such programs are sound, they are not adequate. Face-to-face contact with everyone within the parish boundaries at regular intervals is needed—the parish census. The point is not merely to gather information, though getting an accurate and complete list of parish members is useful. More important is to have the census takers trained to evangelize insofar as possible various types of people—especially those who are nonbelievers and people who have but do not practice a religion, not least non-practicing Catholics. The door-to-door workers should be able to offer various next steps—e.g., make an appointment for a non-

practicing Catholic with the pastor, or invite people to meet a deacon, or in some other way connect with the parish, or arrange for someone to see a diocesan official.

*Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops:*

58. The fundamental way in which the bishop fulfills his office of teaching is the evangelization of those who do not yet believe in Christ or who have deserted the Christian faith either in theory or in practice. He tries to keep all his efforts and that of his co-workers as well as of the entire community acutely aware of this duty.

This applies to all clerics—clearly so, because the bishop is told to see to it that his co-workers do the same. It also applies to the whole community, who need to be called to participate. The focus is too limited, since it omits non-Catholic Christians and might be thought to omit Catholics who've become Protestants. But it significantly includes those who keep the faith but have quit practicing it, and that includes those who've gone secularist, so that they practice the faith sacramentally but not in daily life. Those people are likely to be in deep trouble, because they are likely to think themselves in grace while not being so. They are in many cases the fruits of dissent and the conscience box.

Bishops and other clerics ought not to assume that their responsibility for evangelization and catechesis can be fulfilled by the usual and customary methods alone—pastorals, homilies, catechetical programs, etc. They ought to think in terms of taking every appropriate opportunity to communicate the Gospel, to *any* group and using *any* means whatever. So, if invited to address a public meeting on social problems, they might well accept and get to the heart of the matter by presenting the essential Gospel message (Paul VI at UN). In a broken down elevator, a bishop has a chance with a small audience. And so forth.

Many people treat “experience” as if it were another source of revelation. Our critique is that, while the Spirit may be behind various experiences and events (the signs of times and so forth), this fact does not imply that these things are to be put on a par with revelation. They can manifest God’s plan and will to us only insofar as we interpret them entirely in the light of faith. So, while they can ground reasons to change the judgments we previously made on the basis of similar events and experiences, they cannot provide any reason to change any proposition previously held by faith.

In reading the Bible, we relativize each of its parts to the whole, but we must not relativize the Church’s faith in that way to anything else. The Church’s faith is a principle for interpreting and evaluating experience, and it may not be adapted in view of experience. Of course, experience does provide new questions to be answered by faith, and answering them can lead to legitimate development of doctrine. Theology does not proceed from tradition and current experience as two coequal sources; it deals with the questions current experience puts to faith by thinking about them in the light of truths of faith already clear, working from the better known to what is obscure.

Mt 6.22–23: “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is not sound, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!” The point is that one must receive Jesus and his teaching, and allow that to permeate all one’s self and one’s thought.

One's every other thought and experience is subordinate and must be judged by the gospel and integrated into the perspective of faith. Thus, if one has accepted some secular "expertise" or "wisdom" (psychology, feminism, liberationism, etc.) and then has experiences that are in conflict with the Church's teaching, one ought not to be surprised. Experiences have presuppositions, and those must be called into question by the gospel.

Priests and religious appeal to experience against Church teaching with a measure of self-deception (duplicity), for they think they are totally committed to the gospel, and must avoid facing up to the extra-evangelical presuppositions they have taken on board. Even without self-deception, the laity almost inevitably make the same sort of mistake because they have compartmentalized lives. In the compartments that are not part of their vocation as they understand it, other principles shape evaluations and behavior, independently of faith. And so, naturally enough, they have experiences that call into question Church teachings. The pastor's role is to understand what is going on, and to try to provide the perspective of faith on the matters that give rise to those experiences. It is not simply a matter of showing the opinions mistaken, but of providing positive insight into the good at stake in the light of faith, and helping people see where their true self-interests are.

Mt 12.38–42, Lk 11.19–32: there is a demand that Jesus provide a sign, and he says this evil generation will get none but the sign of Jonah. He already has provided miracles, exorcisms, and so on; they want something more, a spectacular sign from heaven. The sign they are given is like Jonah: a heaven-sent prophet with God's message, a call to repentance and a message of hope. They have enough ground to accept, but want more, not that it would lead them to respond rightly, but to shape the relationship on their own terms.

People often refuse to accept Church teaching and demand more support for it: show me it's really true, essential to faith, part of the core of the gospel. The temptation is for pastors to try to meet such unreasonable demands. That is a mistake. One must recognize that nothing one says or does will satisfy the demand, because it really expresses unwillingness to accept the teaching. The pastor's move is to challenge the demand itself, to point out its unreasonableness, and to suggest, gently, that it seems to express hardness of heart. So, the need is for a more profound and provocative call to repentance.

Why, gently? Jesus seems none too gentle in the passages in question. For sure, he, as man but as sinless man, sees with an absolute clarity and can be completely self-confident; we, as sinful men, see more or less clearly and must never be overly self-confident, so must speak to fellow sinners as one of them. Again, even if we maintain, as we should, the distinction between Jesus' human and divine knowledge, he humanly had access to truths (as even the prophets did) that are not accessible to us. Then too, Jesus' mission transcends those to whom he is preaching there and then; he may rightly accept bad side effects with a view to the wider and longer range audience he is indirectly addressing.

The pastor should not be overly discouraged or begin to doubt because of nonresponse or ill response to his preaching and teaching. Of course, he should reflect and try to make sure he is not doing what he should not, that his manner and style are not off-putting, and so on. But if he is doing all he ought as he ought and being completely faithful, the bad feedback can be attributed to factors beyond his control, including possibly ill will and hardness of heart.

It is not up to him to judge about these matters with respect to particular persons and he should never give up on any individual, always presuming grounds for hope and striving for everyone's conversion and salvation. But in general, the pastor must recognize the possibility of resistance, and not suppose that nonreception means there is a defect in the message itself, a need to compromise or tone it down.

Similarly, pastors ought not to take great comfort in success. The question is: why are people coming from all round? And will they still be coming for long? Or will they be staying home? One can experience success when—and precisely because—one is not doing what one ought to be doing. On the other hand, if one is successful in doing the Lord's work, one should not claim credit for that. One merely did what one should; the success is the work of the Holy Spirit and the cooperation of the faithful with his grace.

Mk 8.22–26 is the unique miracle in which Jesus cures a person in stages of blindness. In the passage immediately before (14–21) the apostles have been obtuse about the implications of Jesus' previous teaching and miracles; in the passage immediately after (27–30) Jesus elicits Peter's profession of faith in him as Messiah: Peter recognizes who Jesus is.

So, this miracle, while a real cure, also is a symbol of the grace of faith given in stages, that those who receive the gift and believe nevertheless need additional help so that their faith will become complete, like the blind man who finally "saw everything clearly" (Mk 8.25).

Pastors must take that into account in situations that require catechesis—for example, premarriage instructions, preparation of penitents who have been away from the sacrament for a long time. In all these cases, the specific matters about which catechesis is required are somewhat removed from the fundamental truths of the faith. But catechizing about those specifics without re-evangelization with respect to the basic truths of the faith will not be fruitful. For example, young couples (perhaps living together and dissenting from the Church's teaching) are hardly likely to appropriate and benefit from teaching about the vocation of marriage and its implications unless they first become enthusiastic about heaven and suitably anxious about avoiding hell. Like the blind man, such young couples have some faith, but not enough to see clearly; they need help to grow in faith in order to see clearly enough to receive well and benefit from catechesis about specifics of marriage.

Acts 4.23–31: after having been threatened by the rulers and elders not to continue proclaiming the gospel, Peter and John return to their friends and report, then the community prays. They recall what God has done, that he is creator and no evil happens except by his permission; they pray that God look upon the threats and—surprisingly, not protect the apostles but—(29) "grant to thy servants to the speak thy word with all boldness, (30) while thou stretchest out thy hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of thy holy servant Jesus. (31) And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness."

This provides a model for evangelizing against pressures to shut up. Those pressures need not be threats of violent persecution by public authorities. They can be bad press, complaints by various other religious groups, threats of legal action. The way to respond is not to worry

about self-protection. That concern tempts to hedging, compromise, softening—all of which betray the apostolic office and falsify the saving word. Instead, remember who's in charge—God, who allows nothing to happen that would undo his holy will—ask him to cause one and the other evangelizers to speak the word with all boldness and to make that preaching fruitful, and continue doing the job: damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead.

Acts 17.16–34 tells of Paul's visit to Athens and preaching in the Areopagus. Paul cannot begin from the OT, because he is talking to those who do not believe in monotheism. He begins (22–23) with the observation that they have one altar, among others, to an “unknown God,” and lays out briefly but clearly a philosophical theology of God as creator and provident Lord of the universe, making it clear that human beings are God's “offspring.” Paul then criticizes pagan misconceptions of God and says (30–31): “The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all men everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead.”

Though the Gospel Paul began to preach turned off some of the audience, since they rejected bodily resurrection, but a few believed. Paul's effort provides a model for evangelization. One must begin with what people can understand and do accept. But one must not remain with that. The starting point must be used to lead to the proposal of the full truth of the Gospel, whether or not people seem likely to accept it.

Fitzmyer, *Acts*, AB31:602–3, summarizes opinions of other commentators who assume that the speech cannot be Paul's and must have been invented, because of its difference from other teachings of Paul. But Fitzmyer points out echoes of Pauline teaching in it and OT phraseology. He remarks (602): “In effect, Luke makes Paul sound like a Jewish preacher addressing a pagan audience about the true God (save for the indirect reference to Christ at the end).” That, of course, fits perfectly what is going on! See also Johannes Munck, *Acts*, AB31:172–74, who concludes (173): “Paul might well have delivered such a missionary sermon.”

In Acts 20, Paul addresses the elders from Ephesus:

26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all of you,  
 27 for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel [plan] of God.  
 28 Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians [episkopous], to feed the church of the Lord which he obtained with his own blood. 29 I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.  
 31 Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.

This directive to pastors provides guidance with respect to catechesis of the faithful. The pastor who fails to declare God's whole plan is responsible for the “blood”—the spiritual death—of the faithful who go to hell as a result. Cf. Ez 33.8–9: “If I say to the wicked, O wicked man, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to

turn from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way; he shall die in his iniquity, but you will have saved your life.” Pastors also are to watch out for the “wolves” who are bound to show up; some will come from within the community, dissenting and drawing people away.

1 Cor 1.17: “For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.”

St. Thomas points out that Paul and the other apostles were not sent to baptize because theirs was the greater office of evangelizing; lesser ministers could then follow through with baptizing, since that does not require special effort and virtue. (It does not require special gifts; any deacon can do it.)

The point about eloquent wisdom possibly emptying the cross of its power is puzzling. The idea seems to be that people really need to see the reasonableness of accepting the faith, not least the elements of it that are repugnant to a nonbeliever’s feelings (and for that matter to many believers’ sensibilities). Of course, one who sees the reasonableness of believing also needs appropriate emotional motives, and there is nothing wrong with promoting them. But emotional motives that are extrinsic—not properly connected to the reasons—must not be aroused to promote assent. What Paul calls “eloquent wisdom” did that much as our advertising does; it plays on extrinsic emotions and evacuates the reasons for buying a product or getting a service.

That is important in evangelization and catechesis. Extrinsic emotional motives compatible with faith (for example, a person’s love for a potential Catholic spouse) can motivate them to listen to evangelization. Fine. But the evangelizer must not play on those motives. Rather, he must try to understand where the person to be evangelized is coming from, and explain the relevance of the faith to profound and real needs, so that it will be clear that he ought to believe it. And the emotional motives that are proper to those reasons need to be aroused.

The same thing is true in catechizing people who already believe. The emotional motives to be promoted are those tied to the kingdom and to prospective human fulfillment in it. One must not seek to rev up people’s faith by extrinsic motives, even if compatible with the faith, such as the satisfaction of participating in the community (which may not last) or the incidental benefits of belonging (we’re a great place to meet other young people).

1 Cor 15.3: “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received”—evangelization and catechesis in general ought to follow the model: having received the truth of the faith, that is to be delivered intact. And the content has a certain order of priority that needs to be respected. vv. 3–6 summarize central truths of the faith: Jesus died for our sins, was buried, was raised, and was seen by many witnesses.

In Eph 3, Paul talks a good deal about himself, explaining his calling to be a minister of the gospel, so as to prepare his readers to understand his instruction regarding their own vocations, not only as to what is common to Christian life in general, but to apply it to their distinct personal vocations. Speaking from his personal experience and working with the



interpersonal relationship he is in with his readers, Paul also tries to engage them, by making clear his concern for them and praying earnestly for them.

In doing this, Paul makes very clear his sense of the unique importance of the gospel; its tremendous value as the greatest possible gift anyone can receive, and his own awe in being called to serve it by delivering God's message to people.

Clerics in evangelizing and catechizing need to recover and enliven their own sense of the unique importance of what they have been called to communicate, and they need to have the same sense of their own role and their relationship with those to whom they preach and teach. Without that, their efforts are likely to bear little fruit. Merely pretending enthusiasm, as a pitchman does, will be detected and is disastrous. One must meditate on heaven and hell, and bear in mind the stakes: souls can be saved by my words (see what Paul says in Eph 5.5). One must recall the experience of the discovery and unfolding of his own vocation, yet realize that grace was given, not for himself, but as a gift for serving just these people. One must meditate sufficiently on the material to grasp how it relates to the very center of divine revelation—an exercise that also will help one discern what is to be communicated and how to make the message clear.

Rv 10.9–10: “So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll; and he said to me, ‘Take it and eat; it will be bitter to your stomach, but sweet as honey in your mouth.’ And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it; it was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter.” The scroll is sweet insofar as it is the word of God, who promises protection and eventual resurrection for his faithful people as he carries out his just and saving plan. But it also will be bitter insofar as it warns that their share in carrying out that plan by witnessing to God's truth will involve their suffering and lead to ignominious death.

The Gospel is good news, but wrapped up in the good news is short-term bad news—hard sayings, beginning with, “Take up your cross and follow me.” The temptation of preachers is to focus on the good news and deny the bad or at best remain silent about the bad. But evangelization and catechesis must be integral; a bowdlerized gospel is no gospel at all. Good news without bad news is not God's word, but the happy talk of men. The bad news is not easy to take, but it *is* short term—for those who accept the gospel and put it into practice. Preachers of course must always deliver it within the context of the long-term promises of glory to come. No gain without pain but no pain without fair hope of gain.

If Christians do not provoke persecution, they are not bearing effective witness. If preachers are not provoking negative reactions, they are not doing the job. But they should provoke negative reactions for preaching the integral gospel well, rather than for preaching badly.

All preaching ought to be something like the final two chapters of the Bible, Rv 21–22. They focus on the object of hope, the realized kingdom. There will be a new heavens and new earth; God will dwell with his peoples; those who share in the victory will be his children; still: “[21.8] But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the polluted, as for murderers, fornicators, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their lot shall be in the lake that burns with fire and sulphur, which is the second death.”

The new Jerusalem will come down out of heaven from God, the Bride of the Lamb; extremely beautiful, fantastically vast; lit up with the glory of God; always open and gathering in all earthly glory; still: “[21.27] But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s book of life.” The heavenly Jerusalem will be all good and no bad; those dwelling in it will be in intimacy with God and shall see his face; and the time for the realization of all this is near; so: “[22.11] Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy. [12] Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense, to repay every one for what he has done.”

Currently: [22.14] “Blessed are those who wash their robes, [those who believe and are baptized] that they may have the right to the tree of life [the right to the Eucharist, which gives life] and that they may enter the city by the gates [get into heaven].” But: “[22.15] Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and every one who loves and practices falsehood.” The promises and the warning sum up the Gospel: “[22.16] “I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches.”

Readers (hearers) are invited repeatedly to accept the proffered gift: “[17] The Spirit and the Bride say, ‘Come.’ And let him who hears [the hearer/reader] say, ‘Come.’ [i.e., pass on the gospel to others] And let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price.” Jesus promises: “[20] He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming soon.’ [And the appropriate response is:] Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!”

Pius XI, *Ad catholici sacerdotii* [AAS and Carlen 216]:

52. The Good Shepherd said: “And other sheep I have that are not of this fold; them also I must bring” (Jn 10.16); and again, “See the countries for they are white already to the harvest” (Jn 4.35). How can a priest meditate upon these words and not feel his heart enkindled with yearning to lead souls to the heart of the Good Shepherd? How can he fail to offer himself to the Lord of the harvest for unremitting toil? Our Lord saw the multitudes “lying like sheep that have no shepherd” (Mt 9.36). Such multitudes are to be seen today not only in the far distant lands of the missions, but also, alas! in countries which have been Christian for centuries. How can a priest see such multitudes and not feel deeply within himself an echo of that divine pity which so often moved the heart of the Son of God? (cf. Mt 9.36, 14.14, 15.32; Mk 6.34, 8.2, etc.) A priest, we say, who is conscious of possessing the words of life and of having in his hands the God-given means of regeneration and salvation?

Evangelization must not be limited to those who come to church. It must be extended to the fallen away and the unchurched. Failing to go out after those multitudes suggests either insensitivity to their need or lack of faith in what the priest has to give, or both.

USCCB, *Go and Make Disciples*, 10th anniversary ed. (Washington, D.C.: USCCB, 2002), 21 (# 37), makes the sound point that evangelization involves two elements: “*witness*, which is the simple living of the faith; and *sharing*, which is spreading the Good News of Jesus in an explicit way.” It then goes on:

37. Certainly, our families, parishes, associations, schools, hospitals, charitable works, and institutions give a powerful witness to the faith. But do they share it? Does their living faith lead to the conversion of minds and hearts to Jesus Christ? Does the fire of the Holy Spirit blaze in them? This plan and strategy aims to make Catholics in the United States, individually and as a Church, better sharers of God's good news.

Unfortunately, that is, as it were, to beg the witness. For the weakness in evangelization by us Catholics is not solely in our sharing; it also and primarily is in the more important element of evangelization: our witness. To a great extent, our individual, familial, collective, and institutional lives differ little if at all from those of other Americans, including those who do not believe at all in divine revelation and hope for nothing beyond this life.

But the document does not face that fact. While it presents and explains its first goal as bearing on Catholics themselves (p. 49):

*89. Goal I: To bring about in all Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others*

This goal calls Catholics to continue to hear the Good News at ever deeper levels. The call to holiness, given to every Catholic through baptism, consecrates each one to God and to the service of the kingdom [note to LG 40]. This deepening of faith, in holiness, fosters a desire to involve others in that faith, until God will be "all in all" in a transformed world [note to 1 Cor 15.28].

90. The strategy of this goal is to so deepen the sense of Scripture and sacrament that Catholics will pray more fully and, with a greater understanding of Christ's call, live as disciples at home, at work, and in today's many cultural settings. This goal also seeks a greater openness to physical, mental, and cultural diversity among Catholics.

This goal entails the following objectives:

*91. To foster an experience of conversion and renewal in the heart of every believer, leading to a more active living of Catholic life*

Possible Strategies: retreats; parish renewals; RENEW; Cursillo; involvement in the Charismatic movement; youth encounter on weekends; marriage encounter; and other programs of renewal and conversion.

*92. To foster an experience of conversion and renewal in every parish*

Possible Strategies: expanded implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA); wider invitation for Catholics to serve as RCIA sponsors; and parish involvement in ministries of reconciliation.

The document does not deal with personal vocation, the need to form conscience by the moral truth that the Church has taught firmly and constantly, and the urgency for everyone to examine his or her conscience regularly and repent as necessary.

Nevertheless, the document does contain many ideas that would help pastors and parishioners who are ready to begin or intensify their efforts to evangelize everyone within their parish.

Congregation for the Clergy, *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community* (18 Oct. 2002), 20:

With regard to the parish priest's duty to proclaim the word of God and to preach authentic Catholic doctrine, canon 528 explicitly mentions the homily and catechetical instruction; initiatives to promote the spirit of the Gospel in every ambit of life; the Catholic education of children and young people; as well as efforts involving the correct collaboration of the laity to ensure that the Gospel message reaches those who have abandoned the practice of the faith and those who do not profess the true faith, so that they might come to conversion through the grace of God. Clearly, the parish priest is not obliged personally to fulfill all of these duties. Rather, he is obliged to ensure that they are discharged in his parish in an opportune manner and in conformity with the doctrine and discipline of the Church. Such are realized as circumstances permit and subject to his personal responsibility.

Here is an explicit statement that the parish priest is to see to it that the fallen away and nonbelievers are evangelized. The passage also makes it clear that pastors fulfill this responsibility do much by their personal activity as by that of the laity whom they call and train for the work.

Congregation for the Clergy, *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community* (18 Oct. 2002), 28:

28. The rediscovery in our communities of the universal call to holiness should be the basis for all pastoral planning and orient that same planning. The soul of every apostolate depends on divine intimacy, on placing nothing before the love of Christ, in seeking the greater glory of God in all things . . .

Teaching all, and recalling indefatigably, that holiness is the goal of Christian life is essential to the pedagogy of holiness. . . .

Proclamation of the universality of the call to holiness requires that the Christian life is understood as a *following of Christ*, or of being conformed to Christ. This conformation to Christ is the very substance of sanctification and is the specific goal of all Christian life. In order to accomplish this objective, all Christians need the Church's assistance, since she is both *mater et magistra*. The *pedagogy of holiness* is a goal which is as attractive as it is challenging for all those in the Church who hold responsibilities of government and formation.

What is said is sound and important so far as it goes. What the document fails to mention here is personal vocation. Since one cannot become holy except by *doing* the word according to God's plan and will, there can be no effective call to holiness without teaching people to discern, accept, and be faithful to their personal vocations, whatever they are.

John Paul II, Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday 2001, 15, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng.), 4 April 2001, 2, teaches that, besides other responsibilities with respect to the sacrament of Penance, priests ought to catechize the faithful about the moral responsibilities of Christian life:

15. Then there is also the fundamental problem of *catechetical teaching about the moral conscience and about sin*, so that people can have a clearer idea of the radical demands of the Gospel. Unfortunately, there exists a minimalist tendency which prevents the Sacrament from producing all the benefits that we might hope for. Many of the faithful have an idea of sin that *is not based on the Gospel but on common convention*, on what is socially “acceptable”. This makes them feel not particularly responsible for things that “everybody does”, and all the more so if these things are permitted by civil law.

Evangelization in the third millennium must come to grips with the urgent need for a presentation of the Gospel message which is dynamic, complete and demanding. The Christian life to be aimed at cannot be reduced to a mediocre commitment to “goodness” as society defines it; it must be a true quest for holiness. We need to re-read with fresh enthusiasm the fifth chapter of *Lumen Gentium*, which deals with the universal call to holiness. Being a Christian means to receive a “gift” of sanctifying grace which cannot fail to become a “commitment” to respond personally to that gift in everyday life. It is precisely for this reason that I have sought over the years to foster a wider recognition of holiness, in all the contexts where it has appeared, so that Christians can have many different models of holiness, and all can be reminded that they are personally called to this goal.

Clerics do need to teach the faithful what Christian life really demands rather than to allow them to suppose that satisfying social conventions is sufficient. Though the pope does not mention dissent, he obviously means that the moral truths from which there is widespread dissent also must be taught. The universal call to holiness actually also is a call to find, accept, and faithfully fulfill one’s personal vocation.

John Paul II, General Audience (21 April 1993), 8, *L’Osservatore Romano* (Eng.), 28 April 1993, 11:

8. According to the Council’s directives, the divine word should be proclaimed in all areas and at all levels of society, also taking non-believers into account—this means true atheists or, as is more often the case, agnostics, the indifferent or the heedless. In order to interest them it will be necessary to devise more appropriate measures. Here once again one need only point out the problem, which is serious and must be addressed with intelligent zeal and a calm attitude. . . . The ever necessary calling upon the Lord’s grace and on the Holy Spirit, its divine steward, will be felt even more intensely in all those cases of (at least practical) atheism, agnosticism, ignorance and religious indifference, sometimes hostile prejudice and even animosity, which show the priest how inadequate are all human means for opening souls to God. Then, more than ever, he will experience the “mystery of empty hands,” as it has been called. But for this very reason he will remember that St. Paul, almost crucified by similar experiences, always found new courage in the “power of God and the wisdom of God” present in Christ (cf. 1 Cor 1:18–29), and he reminded the Corinthians: “When I came among you it was in weakness and fear, and with much trepidation. My message and my preaching had none of the

persuasive force of ‘wise’ argumentation, but the convincing power of the Spirit. As a consequence, your faith rests not on the wisdom of men but on the power of God” (1 Cor 2:3–5). Perhaps this is the important viaticum for today’s preacher.

Here the Pope points out the obligation to evangelize those who do not believe and/or are utterly alienated. He takes up the likely objection—”That’s so unlikely to pay off that it’s a complete waste of time and energy”—but urges them to look to divine action and uses the example of St. Paul to shape their attitudes.

PO 9 indicates that priests’ responsibilities for evangelization and catechesis are not limited to the usual programs for members of the parish:

Finally, priests have been placed in the midst of the laity to lead them to the unity of charity, “loving one another with fraternal love, eager to give one another precedence” (Rm 12:10). It is their task, therefore, to reconcile differences of mentality in such a way that no one need feel himself a stranger in the community of the faithful. They are defenders of the common good, with which they are charged in the name of the bishop. At the same time, they are strenuous assertors of the truth, lest the faithful be carried about by every wind of doctrine (cf. Eph 4:14). They are united by a special solicitude with those who have fallen away from the use of the sacraments, or perhaps even from the faith. Indeed, as good shepherds, they should not cease from going out to them.

Mindful of the precepts on ecumenism,<sup>(35)</sup> let them not forget their brothers who do not enjoy full ecclesiastical communion with us.

Finally, they have entrusted to them all those who do not recognize Christ as their Savior.

35. Cf. Vatican II, *Unitatis redintegratio* (Nov. 21, 1964): AAS 57 (1965), 90ff.

The pastor is to strive to build up the *communio* of love among those with diverse minds, but is to do this for the sake of the common good, which requires that he assert the truth of faith without compromise. The Council then mentions three groups who are to be included in his pastoral care—and the responsibility for all three would be mainly with respect to evangelization or re-evangelization and/or catechesis: those fallen away from the use of the sacraments, separated brethren, and those who have not accepted Christian faith. The last group would include believing Jews and Muslims, who certainly are to be evangelized and called to baptism, though, of course, without manipulation or dishonesty, and with real appreciation for the truths contained in their existing faith and respect for all that is good in their practices.

It’s not enough for people to believe that God loves them. They need to be convinced by experience. That means that they must be helped and encouraged to pay attention to the good things God already has done for them. Don’t tell people: Count your blessings. But try to get them to do that habitually. Experiencing God’s love and goodness to oneself elicits gratitude; gratitude causes trust; and trust disposes to a firm commitment of faith and fidelity to that commitment when one is tempted-e.g., by suffering to rebel. Think of children of

good parents. Ignatius, near the end of the *Spiritual Exercises*, Contemplation to Arouse us in Authentic Love of God, 230–237.

It is not easy to have constantly a strong sense of the reality of the kingdom. One can believe in it sincerely, yet at the sensory level not have a sense of its reality, and the comparative fleetingness of this world. But that sense of the kingdom's reality is essential for clerical and religious life, and also one of the most important things that is to be communicated by preaching and apostolic witness. How do we boost up and sustain this sense of the kingdom's reality?

In the OT, there was some sense of there being more to reality than life in this world, and hope was not exclusively confined to this world—though almost. The object of hope was rather vague, even for the apostles when they were called. They constantly raised questions that showed how completely their hopes were tied to some sort of immanent transformation of this world, a fulfillment within history. Jesus made it clear that this conception was mistaken, but the apostles could not understand what he was talking about, especially when he began telling them about death and resurrection. When he died, they had a very hard time actually accepting the resurrection as real. But once they did catch on to his reality and realized that he would live on but not within this world and history, they developed a very clear and intense sense of the reality of the kingdom to come. Paul encountered the risen Jesus, became enamored with him, and thought of the kingdom as being with Christ. That sense of the kingdom provided emotional motivation complementary to the hope that flows from faith. And that complex was the lively hope that kept the apostles going and motivated Christians to accept martyrdom.

Today we have something of the same problem. Little children brought up in the faith easily have a strong sense of the kingdom's reality. But in adolescence, many lose that sense, and feel that this world is far more real and the kingdom a sort of fairyland, not something solid—and much solidier than this world. Partly that is due to involvement in this-worldly things and lack of prayer. Partly due to a mistaken view that virtually everyone will go to heaven so that one need not worry about it—a mistake to be dealt with in the next section. Partly due to fear of death, and unwillingness to think of it so as to think beyond it, along with the ability—these days—to think of death as something not likely to affect me any time soon! But partly the trouble is due to a misconception of the kingdom, which spiritualizes it and thins it out. With this mistake we deal here.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 80, takes up the objection: “why proclaim the Gospel when the whole world is saved by uprightness of heart?” Even when one avoids the error of universalism, this question remains. The question arises partly from Vatican II's teaching in AG 7, LG 16, and GS 22, which clarifies “Outside the Church, no salvation” by allowing that even people who have not heard the Gospel *can* by God's grace do what in them lies and be saved. Pope Paul answers the objection:

God can accomplish this salvation in whomsoever He wishes by ways which He alone knows.(133 [The note refers to AG 7]) And yet, if His Son came, it was precisely in order to reveal to us, by His word and by His life, the ordinary paths of salvation. And He has commanded us to transmit this revelation to others with

His own authority. It would be useful if every Christian and every evangelizer were to pray about the following thought: men can gain salvation also in other ways, by God's mercy, even though we do not preach the Gospel to them; but as for us, can we gain salvation if through negligence or fear or shame—what St. Paul called “blushing for the Gospel”(134 [The note is: Cf. Rom 1:16])—or as a result of false ideas we fail to preach it? For that would be to betray the call of God, who wishes the seed to bear fruit through the voice of the ministers of the Gospel; and it will depend on us whether this grows into trees and produces its full fruit.

One answer to this is that God is interested in the kingdom, which is a network of relationships, and so wants us to bring those about. The evangelizer does establish a relationship, a bond of charity, and that will last forever. Then too, there is the human good of the person knowing what gifts he/she has received and having the opportunity to cooperate consciously. Further, one can say that, even if others could be saved without one's service, God may will to save them through one's service and not otherwise, so that seeing and fulfilling one's duty in respect to them is in fact effective in their salvation. Finally, LG 16 makes it clear that people who have not heard the Gospel are up against bad options and that preaching the Gospel to them does in fact promote their salvation—the implication is by providing them with better options. Among those who have not heard the Gospel, there may be some of bad will, who will not repent unless offered a better option than any they have yet heard of. If better options are critical for some people, some of them would not be saved if the Gospel were not preached to them. And one must recall that the preaching of the Gospel is not only by homilies but by the whole apostolate—the witness of life and the word that every Christian ought to give and all of us fall short of giving as fully as we ought.

In considering these matters, one must set aside superficial notions about the meaning of phrases such as “those who do not believe in God” and “those who have not heard the Gospel.” Disbelievers in what God or god? Some atheists reject Calvin's God but would have no problem with the Council of Trent's. And some who've been hearing readings from the Bible since childhood never have heard the Gospel proposed in such a way that a reasonable person should take it seriously.

Imagine a marked minefield that people must make a long detour to go round. Likely, many will chance going through and some get blown up. If one knows the safe path through, one ought to help others trek it safely. So, though others could be saved even if we did not evangelize them, they are more likely to choose rightly if we do. That is not contrary to freedom. We know that in our own lives we must make the options we should choose as attractive for ourselves as possible, and the ones we shouldn't as impeded as possible: that's just common sense. Still, even if we don't do that, we *cannot* choose wrongly. Same with bringing up kids.

*Pastores dabo vobis*, 40, after pointing out that the Church's principle of operation is the freedom and love that is the gift of the Holy Spirit, sets out the striking point: “Therefore, the Church fulfills her mission when she guides every member of the faithful to discover and live his or her own vocation in freedom and to bring it to fulfillment in charity.” In other words,



the Church does what she exists to do when everyone becomes a saint by finding and fulfilling his or her personal vocation.

Later in the same section: “The aim of education for a Christian is to attain the ‘stature of the fullness of Christ’ (Eph 4.13) under the influence of the Spirit. This happens when, imitating and sharing Christ’s charity, a person turns his entire life into an act of loving service (cf. Jn 13.14–15), offering to God a spiritual worship acceptable to him (cf. Rom 12.1) and giving himself to his brothers and sisters. The service of love is the fundamental meaning of every vocation, and it finds a specific expression in the priestly vocation.” In other words, Christian education is to make people saints, and it does this by helping people find, accept, and fulfill their personal vocations.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi* deals with the evangelization of cultures:

20. All this could be expressed in the following words: what matters is to evangelize man’s culture and cultures (not in a purely decorative way, as it were, by applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to their very roots), in the wide and rich sense which these terms have in *Gaudium et spes*, (50) [footnote 50 refers to GS 53] always taking the person as one’s starting point and always coming back to the relationships of people among themselves and with God.

The Gospel, and therefore evangelization, are certainly not identical with culture, and they are independent in regard to all cultures. Nevertheless, the kingdom which the Gospel proclaims is lived by men who are profoundly linked to a culture, and the building up of the kingdom cannot avoid borrowing the elements of human culture or cultures. Though independent of cultures, the Gospel and evangelization are not necessarily incompatible with them; rather they are capable of permeating them all without becoming subject to any one of them.

The split between the Gospel and culture is without a doubt the drama of our time, just as it was of other times. Therefore every effort must be made to ensure a full evangelization of culture, or more correctly of cultures. They have to be regenerated by an encounter with the Gospel. But this encounter will not take place if the Gospel is not proclaimed.

The word *culture* must be understood. It has many meanings. In the broadest sense, it refers to everything resulting from specifically human functioning—that is, everything whose existence depends upon human thinking, choosing, and using. What we call “cultures” are subsets of such realities characteristic of a certain group of people who have been picked out from a specific point of view. Cultures overlap considerably. For instance, in some respects, people living in the U.S. share the same culture; in others, the U.S. is multicultural. For example, the contemporary culture of the American people considered as the framework that enables them to live together in peace and cooperate to the extent they do includes certain beliefs, commitments, institutions, practices, symbols, and artifacts; but it does not include the Catholic faith, Greek poetry, the virtue of chastity, or Chinese cuisine. Thus, cultures are not monads. In interesting ways, even small groups, such as married couples or pairs of friends, enjoy a culture that they share with no one else.

Absolutely everybody has a culture. Jesus belonged to an existing culture, and in revealing he makes use of that culture. But in revealing, he generates a *new* set of human realities: propositions, human actions, relationships, institutions, and practices such as the sacraments. (Revelation, considered as something human persons can accept, is a created set of realities, accessible to us—words, deeds, practices. etc.) Of course, these are a divine gift, and as such are not dependent on the culture from which Jesus came (except insofar as elements of that culture already were a divine gift) or any other culture. Rather, received by Jesus' disciples, these become their peculiar culture—the culture of the Christian community, of the Catholic Church, which she develops and hands on.

Holiness is a matter of integrating everything else in a person with the gift of charity. Thus, all one's thoughts must conform to the truth of faith, all one's choices must be shaped by hope for the kingdom, and all one's performances must carry out those choices, which means all one's uses will also be integrated with charity. So, if a person becomes holy, that affects culture; and if a group of people become holy, they will share a distinctive culture. That by no means implies that they will be isolated from everyone else, because all human beings, in more or fewer respects, share the same culture, and any groups in contact with one another always have a good deal of cultural community. If that were not the case, they could not relate to one another at all—even as enemies.

Thus, to become Christian and to become holy is to adopt a culture in significant respects different from what one had, and to promote the faith and holiness in others is to promote significant cultural transformation. For that reason, Paul VI (in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 20) rightly insists that man's culture and cultures must be *profoundly* evangelized. The alternative is to get people to accept only the story of the gospel and some of its consoling implications without real conversion and without (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 19) “upsetting, through the power of the Gospel, mankind's criteria of judgment, determining values, points of interest, lines of thought, sources of inspiration and models of life, which are in contrast with the Word of God and the plan of salvation.” Some people object to missionary activity that seriously impacts on existing cultures. But relating to people in any way will affect their culture. Sell people a product that will be helpful to them or offer them health care—the people will get new ideas, change their practices in important ways, and so on.

Unfortunately, Paul VI, in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 20, assumes a mistaken and unclear notion of culture, partly because of the vagueness and lack of precision in GS 53. He thinks the Gospel and evangelization are independent of all cultures; they are not. In fact, though the Gospel is addressed to peoples of all cultures, it is incarnated in the human community of the Church, and the elements of revelation as she received them are the unalterable core of her proper culture. That culture is the divine gift that she must share with other people. In receiving that, their cultures inevitably will be transformed. But that does not mean they will be utterly destroyed. Since cultures are not encapsulated as species are, when one culture affects and transforms another, they always share a great deal in common to begin with and continue to differ culturally in many ways afterwards. So, when a concrete Christian community evangelizes another group, the evangelizers need not and should not try to change

anything more than necessary to hand on the culture essential to the Gospel. (Thus inculturation of the Gospel is necessary.)

To suppose that the Gospel and evangelization are independent of all cultures in the sense of not themselves being cultural realities proper to the Christian community is a sort of Docetism—not with respect to Jesus’ humanity, but with respect to what he brought about in the world: his teachings, his practices, his Church.

Of course, all cultural transformation also has bad side effects. So, one cannot evangelize without doing some collateral damage, some of which one may pretty clearly foresee—“I did not come to bring peace.” But the evangelizer should intend not only to save people’s souls but to enrich their human lives in all the ways that their receiving revelation can enrich them, and so none of the good effects of transforming culture will be a side effect.

One of the payoffs of clarifying *culture* is that it will help us avoid the cultural relativism that treats Christian essentials as part of a *passé* culture. Clerical and consecrated life and service are missing from many contemporary groups’ cultures, as they were from the cultures of many past groups. Yet they are essentials of Christian culture, and part of the divine gift to be shared with all people.

Did St. Paul evangelize pagan culture? Yes. How? By thoroughly evangelizing people. To do that, he had to inculturate: he learned what that culture was, asked nothing of people that the Lord himself did not require, translated the content of revelation into their language, and did his best to help people grasp its value and thus accept it. When people believed and were baptized, he urged them to put their faith into practice and not to retain or go back to anything in their pre-Christian way of life incompatible with anything essential to the Gospel. Greco-Roman culture did not change all at once. But eventually it did change. Today we can do no better than Paul did.

The baptismal profession of faith does not explicitly include following Christ in everything, finding and carrying out one’s personal vocation as a set of charisms for serving and building up the body. What is explicit in baptism is the rejection of evil and faith in Christ and a general undertaking to live a Christian life. The responsibility to find, accept, and fulfill one’s personal vocation is a specific one, which should be made explicit in catechesis in due time—when the individual is mature enough to understand it, and in general before confirmation, when that is administered at or after puberty.

John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, 56, *L’Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 10 Jan. 2001, XI, deals with inter-religious dialogue:

Interreligious dialogue “cannot simply replace proclamation, but remains oriented towards proclamation”[40. Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples and Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, Instruction on the Proclamation of the Gospel and Interreligious Dialogue, *Dialogue and Proclamation: Reflections and Orientations* (19 May 1991), 82: AAS 84 (1992), 444.] This missionary duty, moreover, does not prevent us from approaching dialogue *with an attitude of profound willingness to listen*. We know in fact that, in the presence of the mystery of grace, infinitely full of possibilities and implications for human life and history,

the Church herself will never cease putting questions, trusting in the help of the Paraclete, the Spirit of truth (cf. Jn 14:17), whose task it is to guide her “into all the truth” (Jn 16:13).

This is a fundamental principle not only for the endless theological investigation of Christian truth, but also for Christian dialogue with other philosophies, cultures and religions. In the common experience of humanity, for all its contradictions, the Spirit of God, who “blows where he wills” (Jn 3:8), not infrequently reveals signs of his presence which help Christ’s followers to understand more deeply the message which they bear. Was it not with this humble and trust-filled openness that the Second Vatican Council sought to read “the signs of the times”?[GS 4] Even as she engages in an active and watchful discernment aimed at understanding the “genuine signs of the presence or the purpose of God”,[GS 11] the Church acknowledges that she has not only given, but has also “received from the history and from the development of the human race.”[GS 44] This attitude of openness, combined with careful discernment, was adopted by the Council also in relation to other religions. It is our task to follow with great fidelity the Council’s teaching and the path which it has traced.

On the one hand, JPII is arguing here for evangelization along with interreligious dialogue, and against either/or. On the other hand, he is affirming the work of the Spirit in preparing people to receive the Gospel, and admitting that those also are factors “which help Christ’s followers to understand more deeply the message which they bear” (Latin: *quae ipsos Christi discipulos movent ad nuntium penitus percipiendum, cuius sunt praecones* = which move Christ’s disciples themselves to perceive more profoundly the message they proclaim).

1971 Synod of Bishops, I, 6 (Flannery 2:680): “Even if he exercises his ministry in a determined community the priest nevertheless cannot be exclusively devoted to a particular group of the faithful. His ministry always tends towards the unity of the whole Church and to the gathering together of all men. Each individual community of faithful needs fellowship with the bishop and the universal Church.”

This has several implications for a pastor’s work of evangelization and catechesis. He must take into account the impact of everything he does on people outside his diocese or parish. He must not settle for caring for the existing flock, but must go after everyone he can, especially within his territory or reach.

#### JP II, *Pastores gregis*

Christ at the heart of the Gospel and of humanity

27. The proclamation of the Gospel emerged as a prominent theme in the interventions of the Synod Fathers, who on several occasions and in a wide variety of ways stated that the living center of the preaching of the Gospel is Christ, crucified and risen for the salvation of all peoples.<sup>102</sup>

Christ is in fact the heart of evangelization and, as I myself have often insisted, is the very program of the new evangelization, which “ultimately has its center in Christ himself, who is to be known, loved and imitated, so that in him we may live

the life of the Trinity, and with him transform history until its fulfillment in the heavenly Jerusalem. This is a program which does not change with shifts of times and cultures, even though it takes account of time and culture for the sake of true dialogue and effective communication. This program for all times is our program for the Third Millennium.”<sup>103</sup>

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

By virtue of his apostolic mission the Bishop is enabled to lead his people to the heart of the mystery of faith, where they will be able to encounter the living person of Jesus Christ. In this way they will come to understand that all Christian experience has its source and its unfailing point of reference in the Paschal mystery of Jesus, the victor over sin and death.<sup>105</sup>

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

102. Cf. *Propositio* 14.

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

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

105. Cf. *Propositio* 15.

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

Evangelization and catechesis should be Christocentric.

Much of what people in the “neocatechumenal way” are proposing is relevant to any parish that is really into catechizing as it should be. The current *General Catechetical Directory* also must be considered.

In evangelization and catechesis, pastors must use ordinary language that people can understand, not jargon. Special words and technical language may be necessary, but they must be explained. Of course, there will always be some people too immature or too dim to understand much if anything. But good ministry must be accessible to most of a group. People are used to putting up with unintelligible expressions, that go in one ear and out the other, but that sort of thing wastes opportunities for real communication. Two minutes of accessible language are worth more than a lifetime of in one ear and out the other stuff.

Fr. John T. McGinn, C.S.P., offers some sound advice about evangelizing non-Catholic Christians. “If a priest’s primary assumptions regarding non-Catholics are awry, he will vitiate much of the good he hopes to accomplish even when he does not abandon the work as

hopeless.” “The phrase *separated brethren* goes a long way toward indicating the manner in which we should regard the non-Catholics of our parishes.” “Regarding non-Catholics as our ‘separated brethren’” cannot but stir us to sympathy and to a vigorous apostolate among them. It will prepare us to encourage any slight tendency on their part to look to their Father’s house and to be alert for any small opportunity to facilitate their return. And it will purify the spirit in which we exercise our zeal.” “The wise convert maker will spare himself many unnecessary disappointments if he enlists a crusade of prayer that will precede, accompany, and fructify his own efforts.” “Much of the effort of a priest in reaching for converts must be devoted to the essential, preliminary task of making himself accessible to the non-Catholics of his locality and winning their esteem and goodwill.” “Each day a priest meets a number of non-Catholics. He should regard every one of them as a potential friend, an influential ally, and a possible convert.” Mixed marriages “are often disastrous, but they can be the occasion of conversion.” “Priests are notoriously poor at letter writing. Yet there are times when people are especially susceptible to the thoughtfulness of those who drop them only a few lines.”

“Numerous capable convert makers take a page from the book of public relations experts. They work on the principle that one of the shortcuts to friendly contact with any community is through the organizations that are the rendezvous for large sections of the population. These include the Red Cross, luncheon and professional men’s clubs, and associations that represent labor, veterans, farmers, cooperatives, and the like.”

“At funerals, weddings, parish anniversaries, and at Easter and Christmas, there are usually non-Catholics present at Catholic services. If a warm greeting is extended and an invitation to return, and if the sermon is one that gives immediate spiritual help and solid instruction, an immense amount of good can be accomplished.”

“However energetic and resourceful a priest may be, there will be many non-Catholics who remain inaccessible to his immediate influence. But his Catholic parishioners are in daily contact with most of these souls. . . . Much depends on the manner in which the laity conduct themselves in these discussions. If they are well-informed religiously, tactful, and zealous, they may remove prejudice, create interest in the Catholic outlook, and pave the way for formal instruction by a priest. On such occasions they should invite the non-Catholic to attend Catholic services or an inquiry class. Catholics engaged or married to non-Catholics, and Catholic relatives, friends, and neighbors of well-disposed non-Catholics, have exceptional opportunities to win candidates for instruction.”

“It is a mistake to rely exclusively on a few faithful “stand-bys” among the laity. The full momentum of the entire parish is required if best results are to be achieved. Even the lukewarm Catholic may be acquainted with non-Catholics who are ripe for conversion.”

To: Grisez, Germain

Subject: Critiques and heresies

I do a lot of school inspections, almost 100 this year alone. I was in a Catholic pre-school recently talking to 3 yr old children. Their teacher had just ‘done’ the Eucharist with them and the children all faithfully told me that ‘Jesus was in the bread’. I could see what they were getting at, but strictly speaking such a

formulation is an instance of the Lutheran consubstantiation condemned at Trent. I didn't want to challenge the teacher because it is very difficult teaching doctrine to 3-year olds without significant simplification and if I come along and am too critical I may frighten the teacher into giving up trying to teach the real presence at all. All in all she was actually doing a good job in conveying Church teaching in a way that was accessible to very young children.

I've found similar issues in other schools with 'parts' of the Trinity (contrary to the 4th Lateran council) and Jesus as 'a man' (contra Chalcedon) etc., etc.. I've been approaching all these instances in a bit of a casual way, just checking that the teacher knows the authentic doctrine, but not criticizing the heterodox formulations themselves unless it is clear there is a better way of conveying the doctrine to the children without using such formulations. Strictly speaking, however, I could be accused of condoning heresy, so I'm just beginning to wonder if there isn't a better approach which I should be following.

Any thoughts?

XX

Dear XX:

It seems to me that one must know the range of orthodox formulations, which sometimes is rather wider than common, recent usage. And even in catechizing three-year olds, one must avoid formulae that are not orthodox. With small children, the words stick, often with little immediate insight into what they mean. But children hang on to the verbal formulae they hear and eventually come to understand, more or less, what they mean. I'm quite sure that when my mother taught me about the Eucharist—which was well before I was five, she said things like: "It's not what it looks like. It still looks like a little round cracker, but it's really Jesus now." When I was being catechized for my First Communion, the Sister was more explicit, and said that Jesus was hiding inside the wafer. That led me to ask: "How can he fit in there; it's too little." And she was going to bar me from making my First Communion! However, the sensible pastor said to me: "I don't know how he fits in there either. But I believe he's really there. Now, don't you?" And I said: "I know it's not a cracker, it's really Jesus." That was fine with him, and I made my First Communion with the class.

So, I would not countenance "in the bread" which definitely implies there is still bread there to be in. As for Jesus is a man—that seems to me entirely consistent with Chalcedon. He's true God and true man, and not man in general but a particular individual—this man. Aquinas has a section in *S.t.* 3 on what we can and cannot say about Jesus.

Germain

Dear Prof Grisez,

Thanks for your thoughts on heterodox formulations used in catechizing small children. Maybe it is irrelevant, but there is a general expectancy in other subjects, particularly the sciences that one does simplify to the point of strict inaccuracy with the younger children. Some exam syllabuses even require it, in this country. So, teachers feel they are justified in doing the same in religious education and catechesis.

I think I'm turning over two distinct questions. Firstly the pedagogical one of the appropriateness of permitting inaccurate teaching which will need supplementing later, but secondly and what I think is the more important question—the moral one of whether it can ever be morally acceptable as a teacher to permit children to learn loose (heterodox) formulations, even if doing so is supposed to be part of a planned teaching strategy that will supposedly lead to their ultimately learning the correct doctrinal points? I'm wondering whether that wouldn't be an instance of 'doing wrong that good may come of it?'

XX

Dear XX:

Diverse things need to be distinguished.

1) One cannot communicate what an audience cannot grasp. So, one often cannot communicate everything one knows, and adults generally cannot communicate to small children all that most adults understand. For that reason, almost all communication to children is inadequate and requires gradual supplementation as they mature. Sometimes, one realizes that the inadequacy inevitably will generate misunderstanding. One often rightly accepts that bad side effect. Doing so is not dishonest, because one does not intend the misunderstanding, but rather the partial understanding as a step toward fuller understanding.

Moreover, before long, children catch on—more or less quickly and clearly depending on their intelligence and adults' efforts to get them to catch on—to the fact that learning often begins with misunderstandings that are gradually corrected and clarified. As they catch on to this, they do not at once assent to every proposition they grasp when something is explained to them. Rather, they regard the propositions they grasp initially as tentative and approximate—though they lack the language to say that. (I am quite confident about children's catching on to the inadequacy of initial explanations, because I recall catching on to that myself very early on.) From then on, the initial inadequacy of explanations does not even unintentionally deceive.

2) Sometimes an audience lacks the concepts and/or experience to grasp a real explanation of some matter. Still, some notion of it can be conveyed by analogies or other linguistic devices. A good teacher need not and does not mislead. Rather, he or she signals the epistemic status of the communication: "Roughly, it's like this . . ."; "I can't answer that exactly, but imagine that such and such were the case";



and so forth. Sometimes, an explicit signal is unnecessary, because the teacher can reasonably assume that the content of the communication and the context make clear enough what he or she is doing. In either case: no deception, no dishonesty, no problem.

3) In revealing himself and his plan for us, God, who created us with limited capacities, must operate within those capacities, as explained in (1) and (2) above. That in no way tells against his absolute truthfulness. Those who try to hand on God's revelation to others must imitate the methodology of revelation itself. Still, the grasp of revealed truth (and thus doctrine) constantly develops, both in believing individuals and in the Church as a whole. Many of those developments are inaccessible to children. So, sometimes one cannot do better than use formulae now preferred by the heterodox—formulae that formerly were used by orthodox believers but now generally are avoided by the orthodox precisely so as to forestall misunderstandings to which those formulae are likely—or even sure—to lead. Doing that is not using heterodox formulations.

4) Many people maintain that revelation contains no true propositions and that, consequently, its handing on is not a matter of communicating truths. They think revelation essentially is a nonconceptual experience or contact or something of the sort. Such people suppose that doctrinal formulae are nothing but devices to evoke something other than propositions. Hence, while such formulae may be more or less useful and effective, those qualities—unlike the truth and falsity of propositions—are relative to the diverse conditions of diverse audiences. “Orthodox” formulae work best in some cases; “heterodox” formulae in others. The wise teacher chooses accordingly, just as the wise physician prescribes diverse medications to treat similar maladies suffered by diverse patients. Someone who accepts this view might well suppose that heterodox formulae are to be used in teaching children. That supposition would be false precisely because the entire account of revelation that underlies it is false.

5) Some people take a condescending attitude toward those, including children, whom they regard as less sophisticated than themselves. Such people sometimes assume that they are justified in lying to the less sophisticated for their own good. On this basis, many parents lie to their children about all sorts of things. Such lying is an evil means to what may or may not be a good end. So, it is always wrong and often gravely injurious. Nevertheless, some condescending school administrators might insist that teachers lie to students. The teachers should not do it, and probably ought to make considerable sacrifices to fight such wickedness for the good of the children whom they have undertaken to serve.

I hope this clarifies the matter for you.

All best, in Jesus, Germain

### **7–C: Priests’ (i.e., bishops’ and presbyters’) responsibilities with respect to the Eucharist**

The Eucharist is to baptism as marital intercourse is to the wedding. In baptism and the wedding, one freely enters a covenantal relationship; in the Eucharist and marital intercourse, the parties become bodily united. Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000), 142: “In the Eucharist a communion takes place that corresponds to the union of man and woman in marriage. Just as they become ‘one flesh’, so in Communion we all become ‘one spirit’, one person, with Christ. The spousal mystery, announced in the Old Testament, of the intimate union of God and man takes place in the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, precisely through his Passion and in a very real way (cf. Eph 5:29–32; 1 Cor 6:17; Gal 3:28).”

In dealing with the idea of *active* participation, one point to emphasize is that every one of the faithful present is expected to participate actively. So, the essential participation plainly *cannot* involve exercising some special *munus*, such as ushering, singing in a choir, lecturing, or distributing communion. Those activities are part of the active participation of those who are called to engage in them. But everything essential to full, conscious, and active participation is possible for individuals who are not called upon to do anything special at all.

Pastors should instruct their people about the primacy of Jesus’ action in the liturgy, and make it clear that particular celebrations participate in the heavenly celebration, which involves all the angels and saints, so that people will realize that what they are doing is not something for this small group here and now but an entering into the great, always ongoing liturgy. They should be taught that active participation primarily means joining wholeheartedly with Jesus in his self-offering to the Father, offering themselves with Jesus, gratefully receiving from him the gift of his gloriously risen self, and willingly giving themselves entirely to him.

Pastors should instruct and encourage everyone to do, insofar as they are able, those things that the whole congregation is to do, including: dress in keeping with the importance and seriousness of the liturgy, adopt appropriate posture, utter certain responses, do their part in the singing or chant, pay attention to the readings, make an appropriate contribution in the offertory collection, think and will with the Eucharistic prayer, prepare and dispose themselves to receive Communion worthily.

Pastors should not ask for volunteers but should choose and call—on the basis of their gifts, character, and attitudes—those who are to play any special role in planning and carrying out the liturgy: members of liturgy committees, lectors, acolytes, cantors and choir members, and so on. (Others can be chosen and called for other services to the parish; everyone should be asked to contribute, but not everyone is suited for everything.) Such people should be catechized about the liturgy so that they understand it well and are familiar with relevant norms. They should play their part for a term (say, of one year) subject to reappointment, but should be replaced if other suitable members of the congregation are available to replace them. They should promise to live exemplary Christian lives and to do their special part carefully and as they are trained to do it, and to abide by relevant norms. They should be dismissed if they break that promise.

Before each Sunday or other special celebration, every celebrant (or chief celebrant in a concelebrated Mass) should make sure that the plan for the liturgy abides by every relevant norm. Celebrants should not choose options merely in order to simplify the liturgy or save time; options should be chosen to help people appreciate the significance of the liturgy and participate actively in the true and profound sense.

Priests sometimes have problems as to whether they may concelebrate, and if so, whether they may cooperate despite more or less serious liturgical abuses by the principal celebrant or by other concelebrants. In extreme cases, they may wonder if they should exit. Such issues need some discussion.

To mark the sacred character of the liturgy and avoid the distraction of attractive or less pleasing personal dress, everybody in the sanctuary should appear in liturgical garb. That can be an alb with cincture, a black cassock for male participants, or plain, ankle-length robes for a lector or cantor.

Celebrants sometimes encounter misbehavior and/or unsuitable dress by members of the congregation. How to handle such matters must be discussed. Also, what to do when other things that don't involve wrongdoing occur—for example, children scream, people fall over, and so on.

Celebrants themselves should speak deliberately rather than hurriedly, pronouncing every syllable carefully and clearly, without dramatizing, loud enough to be heard clearly but not louder for effect, and with intonation and emphasis most likely to help people grasp the sense of each sentence. Lectors should be trained to speak in the same way. In reading the Eucharistic prayer, celebrants should speak reverently: slightly more slowly, more softly, and in a lower tone; they should not make eye-contact with the congregation but, when not looking at the sacramentary, at the elements on the altar or in their hands, up toward heaven, or, if convenient, at the crucifix (so as to direct others' gaze).

When a more elaborate celebration is appropriate, that should not mean overlaying the liturgy with more hymns, which are not themselves liturgical. Rather, more of the liturgy itself may be chanted. Incense may be used and bells rung. Other options, such as blessing with holy water as a penitential rite, can be chosen as appropriate. Where authorized, Communion may be distributed under both kinds.

Bishops and priests should not allow, much less invite, non-Catholics to receive the Eucharist. Doing so misses an opportunity to evangelize and is catechetically bad. But above all it shows that one either does not hold the faith of the Catholic Church about the Eucharist or is willing to urge non-Catholics to act in a way that is not in accord with what they believe as non-Catholics. Non-Catholics generally should be encouraged to do religious acts in accord with their own beliefs, and never should be encouraged to act contrary to them.

LG 48: by nourishing people with his own body and blood, Jesus makes them partakers of his glorious life. LG 49: all of us (on earth, in purgatory, and in heaven) in varying degrees and different ways share in the same charity toward God and neighbors, and we all sing the one hymn of glory to God." Those in heaven "add to the nobility of the worship that the Church offers to God here on earth." LG 50: Devotion to the saints, and important part of the

eucharistic liturgy, per se strengthens the communion of the Church. LG 50 (final paragraph): A very rich and explicit account of the unity of the Church in worship: our celebration of the Eucharist shares in the worship of the Church in heaven. The Council refers back here to SC 104; but a more relevant reference for my purposes is to SC 8, where the same point is made about the unity of the liturgy and heavenly worship.

The following is true for all the sacraments and, indeed, for other elements of the liturgy:

No unauthorized changes whatsoever (SC 22).

One cannot reasonably regard authorized variations as a qualification of the norm. They are part of what is given. However, in some cases, one can only fulfill the norms and carry out the liturgy up to a point, and, provided valid sacraments are realized, it is better to provide the sacraments than to deprive people of them. These do qualify the norm, but are legitimate only on the basis of authentic epikia.

*CIC*, c. 846, §1: “In celebrating the sacraments, the liturgical books approved by competent authority are to be observed faithfully; accordingly, no one is to add, omit, or alter anything in them on one’s own authority.”

§2 excludes commingling rites: “The minister is to celebrate the sacraments according to the minister’s own rite.” An individual can obtain a faculty to celebrate for faithful of a different rite according to their rite.

“Happy are we who are called to this supper”—makes the beatitude into self-congratulation, limits to *us* as against *them*, loses the reference to the wedding feast of the lamb. Happy are those who are called to his Last Supper—does not falsify, since the Eucharist is indeed the ongoing Last Supper, and is not self-congratulatory. But it still loses the forward reference—the fact that we are participating in the heavenly wedding feast that already has begun.

SC 48 restates the goal of active participation and applies it to the Eucharist: The faithful should not be there as outsiders or silent onlookers; rather, with a good *understanding* of the mystery, they should through the prayers and rites participate in the sacred action consciously, piously, and actively. Here, the essential catechesis is summarized: They should offer the immaculate victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, and learn to offer themselves; day by day through Christ their mediator they should be drawn into closer union with God and one another, so that God will be all in all.

The Council’s brief formula, “They should offer the immaculate victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, and learn to offer themselves” (SC 48) summarizes a longer and rich teaching of Pius XII that clarifies how the faithful do participate—primarily by interior acts of mind and will—and what the faithful need to be catechized about; see *Mediator Dei*, 39 AAA (1947) around 555; Carlen, 233.75–111; the groundwork for this passage is laid early in the encyclical, 23–36, where Pius XII deals with the liturgy as both exterior and interior worship, and insists on the primacy of the latter, and consequently on the need for personal prayer, meditation, and an upright life for effective participation in the liturgy.

The question is: How can we offer Jesus' sacrifice? The answer is: His sacrifice is his perfect human love of the Father and perfect obedience to him; that goes on forever in heaven; as a genuinely human love and obedience, it is both spiritual and bodily; Jesus makes himself fully present in the Eucharist, not simply as an object but in his self-offering to the Father; the people have been made members of Jesus by baptism, so that they truly body him out; so, the people can join him in offering himself and they do that by their response to the *Orate Fratres*, which asks the Father to accept the sacrifice of Jesus, who has joined them with himself—the sacrifice he offers now through the priest's hands for the praise and glory of the Father's name and for their benefit and the benefit of the whole Church. The faithful also offer Jesus' sacrifice with him by mentally joining in all the parts of the Eucharistic prayer that are in the plural number (as Pius XII points out).

Wasn't Jesus' sacrifice long ago accepted by the Father? What's the point of our asking the Father to accept it now? Jesus' sacrifice was made for sinful human beings, including us. The Father has accepted it, indeed, and we are thanking him for that in the Eucharist. But we also are asking him to accept the sacrifice precisely insofar as it is made for our good and the good of all his holy Church—for those we most care about and pray for, those whose salvation still is being worked out. Of course, the Father is predisposed to accept the sacrifice on our behalf and to respond to it with saving grace. But the grace remains grace; it is a free gift, and cannot be taken for granted. So, we must thank him for what he already has done for us in and through Jesus, and ask him to accept Jesus' sacrifice and give us its benefits. Moreover, we must offer with Jesus our own loving obedience, thereby disposing ourselves to receive the benefits of Jesus' sacrifice that God wishes to give us.

JP II, Address to the 11th group of U.S. Bishops at their *ad limina Apostolorum* visit (9 October 1998), 3, *OR* (Eng.), 14 Oct. 1998, deals with full, active, and conscious participation in the liturgy. Excerpts:

*Full participation* certainly means that every member of the community has a part to play in the liturgy; and in this respect a great deal has been achieved in parishes and communities across your land. But full participation does not mean that everyone does everything, since this would lead to a *clericalizing* of the laity and a *laicizing* of the priesthood, and this was not what the Council had in mind. The liturgy, like the Church, is intended to be hierarchical and polyphonic, respecting *the different* roles assigned by Christ and allowing all the different voices to blend in one great hymn of praise.

*Active participation* certainly means that, in gesture, word, song and service, all the members of the community take part in an act of worship, which is anything but inert and passive. Yet active participation does not preclude the active passivity of *silence, stillness and listening*; indeed, it demands it. . . .

*Conscious participation* calls for the entire community to be properly instructed in the mysteries of the liturgy, lest the experience of worship degenerate into a form of ritualism. But *it does not mean a constant attempt within the liturgy itself to make the implicit explicit*, since this often leads to a verbosity and informality which are alien to the Roman rite and end by trivializing the act of worship. Nor

does it mean the suppression of all subconscious experience, which is vital in a liturgy which thrives on symbols which speak to the subconscious just as they speak to the conscious. The use of the vernacular has certainly opened up the treasures of the liturgy to all who take part, but this does not mean that the Latin language, and especially the chants which are so superbly adapted to the genius of the Roman rite, should be wholly abandoned. If subconscious experience is ignored in worship, an affective and devotional vacuum is created and the liturgy can become not only too verbal but too cerebral.

Not only did the Council not have in mind the clericalizing of the laity and vice versa, it is destructive of both roles and of *communio*.

In respect to the need for listening and silence, the liturgy is like any serious interpersonal relationship. People must take turns conversing, and sometimes everyone must stop and think for a while before going on.

The point about conscious participation is that making everything easily accessible, precisely as the ICEL translations try to do, really limits the part of the person consciously involved.

On the *Orate Fratres* as an expression of the faithful's active participation. see *Mediator Dei*, Carlen, 233.87. The prayer could put it more clearly, to be sure. But it provides a good point of departure for a homily or other catechesis that would encourage real participation.

On active participation as cooperation with God's action by being united with what Jesus is doing by means of the priest, see Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000), 171–77. On p. 174, he says: "The point is that, ultimately, the difference between the *actio Christi* and our own action is done away with. There is only *one* action, which is at the same time his and ours—ours because we have become 'one body and one spirit' with him. The uniqueness of the Eucharistic liturgy lies precisely in the fact that God himself is acting and that we are drawn into that action of God. Everything else is secondary." He goes on to explain that every Christian ought to be bodily involved in the liturgy, not by doing something or other during the rite, but by integrating daily life with the Eucharist (176): "Much more is required of the body than carrying objects around and other such activities. A demand is made on the body in all its involvement in the circumstances of everyday life."

SC 106 deals with Sunday worship. Pastors ought to explain the reason for it and the reasons for participating regularly; see *Dies Dominae*, which does so at great length. They should encourage people to attend regularly.

Priests should make a reasonable effort to try to see to it that people generally receive hosts consecrated at that Mass.

Priests should manifest reverence for the Blessed Sacrament—e.g., no loud talk and laughing in the sacristy, care in handling consecrated Hosts and dealing with accidents, genuflections when appropriate, Thanksgiving after Mass, and so forth. Priests should be conscientious about observing the Eucharistic fast and admonish the faithful to do so,

though without scrupulosity. Reverence not only is *due* to Jesus but supports faith, whereas irreverence erodes it.

Intercommunion with non-Catholic Christians is generally excluded. It is excluded absolutely if either (1) unity of faith with respect to the common action is lacking, or (2) one is not confident that the Eucharist is valid. Unity of faith is necessary, because without it one or the other participant or group of participants, if not both, act inconsistently with their faith. However, when these conditions are satisfied, intercommunion might be justified for the grace available to participants. But that is by way of exception; witness to the unity of the Church generally precludes intercommunion (see UR 8). Analogy of the separated spouses for whom marital intercourse is inappropriate; they first should resolve their conflicts so that they can live together in harmony.

CD 30: Should make the Eucharist central to the parish; labor to see that the faithful are nourished with spiritual food through the devout and frequent reception of the sacraments and through intelligent and active participation in the liturgy.

JP II, *Address to Conference on the Implementation of Vatican II* (27 February 2000), OR (Eng.) 8 March 2000, 4:

The liturgy, in fact, is an anticipation on earth of the praise that the hosts of the blessed give God in heaven. At every liturgical celebration, therefore, the participants should be given the possibility of a foretaste, albeit under the veil of faith, of some of the sweetness that will flow from contemplating God in paradise. For this reason, every minister, conscious of the responsibility he has to all the people entrusted to him, must faithfully maintain respect for the sacredness of the rite and grow in his understanding of what he celebrates.

PO 5 makes clear the centrality of the Eucharist, which is the beginning and end of all preaching, which contains the Church's whole spiritual wealth (Jesus himself), in which the faithful are to offer Jesus and themselves with him. Presbyters also are to teach the faithful to participate in liturgical celebrations in such a way that they attain genuine prayer in them—real communication with God.

Toward the end, PO 5 mentions adoration of the Blessed Sacrament outside Mass as appropriate and something presbyters should facilitate. That is closely connected with an exhortation to see to it that the church is suitable, well equipped, and clean, and that presbyters have appropriate knowledge and facility with the liturgy.

PO 6 says: "Little is gained from ceremonies, even if beautiful, and associations, even if flourishing, unless these are ordered to forming people to attain Christian maturity." Later it says of the Eucharist: "For this celebration to be sincere and full, it must lead to various works of charity and mutual help as well as to missionary action and other forms of Christian witness." In other words, the test of liturgies is not that people find them satisfying—good experiences—and that they draw crowds (though, obviously, it is fine if that happens) but that they exercise and strengthen faith, and are fruitful, by disposing people going forth to greater love and better service.

There are passages in the OT and in the Psalms that make it clear that the outward religiosity of sacrifice is worthless unless it expresses real, interior worship of God and that such sincere worship must flower into practical performances. Christian maturity is holiness and a key to holiness is discerning, accepting, and fulfilling one's personal vocation. Thus, the failure of pastors to promote that tends to empty the liturgy of its real meaning and value.

In celebrating the Eucharist, the good priest sticks to the rubrics—e.g., does not look at and address the congregation while consecrating, trying to reenact the Last Supper. He realizes that acting *in persona Christi* is something far more profound than that, and so bows and gazes upon the species—see Peter Elliot, p. 301.

Indeed, throughout the Mass, the celebrant seeks eye contact only when he is addressing the people—e.g., the greeting and blessing, the dialogues including the one before the preface, readings. The rest of the time he either looks down at the book, at the altar, or, when appropriate, up toward heaven.

If it seems appropriate to introduce the celebrant(s) and perhaps others, to explain special features of the day's liturgy, or to make other announcements, that should be done *before* Mass rather than by the celebrant after the greeting. It preferably is done by the lector. If there is no lector, the celebrant may do it, preferably without chasuble, then return to the sacristy and enter to begin the celebration.

If the celebrant adds conventional greetings at the opening of Mass, a “good luck and have a nice day” to the blessing, and so on, he devalues the excellence of the liturgical elements, properly understood and participated in. He should rather instruct people so that they appreciate the liturgy and do it in such a way that it is interpersonally effective. The liturgical greeting and blessing convey so much more than conventional greetings and farewells that adding to them is like offering someone who's having a gourmet dinner a McDonald's hamburger and fries.

Every part of the proper and the ordinary—prayers, Eucharistic prayer, readings, homily—should be uttered sufficiently loudly, unhurried, with each word distinctly enunciated, and the phrases intoned so that their sense will be as clear as possible. The point should be effective communication: to help and encourage people to listen, understand, and think about what is being said rather than have it go in one ear and out the other as their minds wander aimlessly.

Some take a negative view toward the “offertory” and pass over it as quickly and unobtrusively as possible. They assert there is only one offering in the Mass, and that is in the Eucharistic prayer, and claim that the revision of the Mass eliminated the old offertory so that now there is only preparation of the gifts. But the prayers, “Blessed are you, Lord God . . .” in fact say we offer bread and wine; and see the CCC 1333, 1350, which takes a dynamic view—the bread and wine are brought forth as gifts of God and offered to him as such, and do not lose their character as gifts when taken up by Christ and transformed into his self-offering to the Father. The Offertory was salvaged by Paul VI, see Bugnini, pp. 367, 369, 371 (see esp. note 37: “This meaning [we offer you] is clearly different from the meaning of the sacrifice of Christ's body and blood.”)



*CIC*, c. 230, §1: Lay men can be admitted by a liturgical rite to the ministries of lector and acolyte. Here we are concerned, not with lay participation in the clerical apostolate, but appropriate lay participation in the liturgy. These ministries should be opened to women, but meanwhile bishops should not frustrate the law by refusing to install men, since not having properly installed people detracts from the liturgy itself. Not everyone interested should be accepted; the service is more important than the desires of people to participate, and subordinating personal interest to service manifests the nobility of the liturgical action. Carefully chosen individuals should be trained well. While §2 provides for either men or women fulfilling the functions of lector by temporary designation and §3 on occasion as needed, but those provisions ought to be emergency stopgaps, not the standard procedure. The ongoing situation manifests defect in collegial unity and contempt for the liturgical functions, which are the victim of this stupid quarrel.

Recently, some celebrants have taken to thanking various participants in the Mass before blessing and dismissing the congregation. Most common is to thank musicians, who, then, sometimes are given a round of applause (the congregation also sometimes breaks out into spontaneous applause as the performance ends). That has been dealt with in 6–B, above. But sometimes celebrants thank the lector, the Eucharistic ministers, the servers, and even the congregation for coming and participating so nicely. What is one to think of this?

I know of no liturgical norm forbidding it. But, equally, none suggests doing it. And such public thanking never occurred in the old days. A priest might privately thank the servers or ushers or the organist *after* Mass, or on some occasion separate from the liturgy. No celebrant ever thanked the congregation in general for coming. On occasion, however, parishioners did thank priests for their services.

If one patronizes a business, one expects to be thanked: “Thank you for coming, thank you for dining with us, thanks for flying with us, thanks for your business.” In such cases, one supposes the thanks is on behalf of the owner(s) and participants in the business who stand to benefit from its success, to profit or keep their jobs, and so are grateful for one’s patronage. So, if the congregation at large were patrons and the celebrant and hierarchy in general were the operators of the Church as a sort of service enterprise, thanking people for coming would be appropriate. But thanking lectors and servers and so on only makes sense if their actions are thought of a quasi-clerical service, rather than their part of a common celebration.

Thus, such thanking suggests that the liturgy is a clerical service for which the congregation as such are customers, and that those who make any special contribution are helping the clerics do their thing. But that is a long way from SC’s conception of the liturgy. So, such thanking should be cut out.

The liturgy of the Eucharist neither exists to communicate information or to catechize people nor to build up the community. It does both of these things, the first especially but not only by the readings and homily, and the second by gathering people together into unity with Jesus, which unites them with one another. But the point of the liturgy is to offer sacrifice to God—to join with Jesus’ self-offering to the Father, which led to the cross, and to offer oneself with Jesus—and then to receive from God his own gift of himself in Jesus, and thereby to be drawn into intimacy with him. So, when there is a question of what pastoral options to choose or

which music to use, the solution should not be on false grounds: everybody will join in on this one, or that's too long, or this prayer is simpler and easier to understand, or this will end it on a very upbeat note. See Ratzinger, "Eucharist and Mission," *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 65 (2000): pp. 246–47.

*CIC*, cc. 388 and 534 require that bishops and pastors of parishes apply a Mass for the people entrusted to them on each Sunday and holy day; if they cannot, they can get someone else to do it on the day or they can do it on another day. It is appropriate that these Masses be one of the main and particularly solemn celebrations at the cathedral or parish Church, and that they be promoted as central celebrations to which various groups of the faithful and special occasions (confirmations, first communions, etc.) be urged to participate on different Sundays.

Bishops, pastors, and chaplains should see to it that faithful unable to come to Mass and receive Communion are not deprived for long of the sacrament. Nonordained ministers in many cases are reasonably used to provide this service. They ought to be trained to carry out the rite with care and devotion, not to hurry through it in a perfunctory manner. To provide an opportunity for confession, they always should ask whether the person wishes first to see a priest.

Chaplains in schools, houses of nonordained religious, and so on ought to maintain liturgical discipline, and never cooperate in liturgical abuses. In these situations, committees and planners sometimes wish to impose their own ideas and regard the chaplain as a performer subject to their direction. Of course, he may and generally should comply with requests for legitimate options.

The filling-station model of the Church obviously is mistaken, not least in its suggestion of a commercial transaction. Yet there is something true about the filling-station model: coming to Church, we are eager to receive God's gifts: his saving word, the body and blood of the Lord, and the specific benefits of the other liturgical rites.

Also, there is a sense in which our personal reception of God's gifts (in baptism) is prior to our cooperation as Church members in the liturgy.

As praise and worship of the Father, the liturgy is primarily Jesus' act, not ours. But he does his saving work for our benefit, and makes his action available in the liturgy precisely so that we can cooperate with it. Therefore, we come to Mass to cooperate with Jesus and, in doing so, to share already in the heavenly liturgy that will continue forever.

In becoming joined to Jesus we become members of his body. That is how we become united with one another and are members of one another. In cooperating with Jesus, we receive different responsibilities, complementary missions/vocations—personal shares in the Church's single apostolate, which, as a whole, carries on Jesus' saving mission until he comes again. That, I think, was what St. Paul was focusing on in the passage about the one body and the many members with different gifts.

Since the Eucharist is Jesus' action and belongs to the Church as such, one should neither deviate from liturgical norms nor resist cooperating with those who wish to use options they

allow. The taste of the celebrant ought to be the last consideration; that of his congregation should take precedence, and it is reasonable to try to satisfy a variety of tastes within the bounds of legitimate options.

How priests do a weekday Mass is revealing. Some are late at times rather than punctual. Some are slovenly. Some cancel weekday Masses without notice—something rarely unavoidable. Some do not try to schedule weekday Masses to maximize the participation of the faithful. Few promote daily Mass attendance by general exhortations or by scheduling special weekday Masses for various groups in the parish or by encouraging families to participate in weekday Masses to celebrate special occasions and anniversaries of weddings, deaths, and so forth.

While pastoral considerations sometimes do dictate omitting nonrequired things (the homily) and choosing less time-consuming options, nothing but an extreme emergency could justify cutting out anything prescribed in the liturgical books—e.g., the responsorial psalm or the offertory. Nor does anything justify saying the Mass in a hurried, rattle-on fashion—as so many priests used to do when it was all in Latin.

Homilies of only a few sentences, taking only a minute or, at most, two, can be very helpful if they offer a thoughtful reflection that is really relevant to those participating. Saying all the words of the second or even the third Eucharistic prayer reverently and clearly takes only a couple of minutes longer than rattling through them.

The priest should be concerned about this for the Lord, first of all—that he render what is due with respect and good will—and even for himself, that he edify himself and enjoy the fruits of the Mass more fully. And he should value the little flock who come to daily Mass regularly or even occasionally, and should build them up and regard them as what they really are: an important gift and organ of the parish. For they are to their parish somewhat like what a Carmelite convent is to the Church at large, a spiritual hot spot, a channel of blessing to the whole parish.

Some presiders have taken to thanking people for coming, for listening, for singing so loudly, and so forth. That is inappropriate. The faithful are not patrons of the parish establishment whose business must be appreciated. They are recipients of God's gifts and dutiful participants in the liturgy, who, more appropriately, should (outside) thank the clergy for their service, providing it is good. What about thanking musicians, those who decorated the Church, and so on? That may be appropriate, but it ought not to be done during the liturgy, but in private. In general, lay ministers help the ordained fulfill their responsibilities, and so should be compensated or thanked by them (even if with parish funds) as a matter of administration, which should not obtrude into the sacred liturgy.

*CIC*, c. 1248, §2: "If participation in the eucharistic celebration becomes impossible because of the absence of a sacred minister or for another grave cause, it is strongly recommended that the faithful take part in a liturgy of the word if such a liturgy is celebrated in a parish church or other sacred place according to the precepts of the diocesan bishop or that they devote themselves to prayer for a suitable time alone, as a family, or, as the occasion permits, in groups of families." On this canon, see *DMQ* 42–47.

Pastors must not tell that faithful that they must take the alternative or that doing so “fulfills the Sunday obligation.” Both are misleading.

Sunday celebration in the absence of a priest is more appropriate than TV Mass when participation in Mass is impossible. For Jesus has given us the Eucharist to make his sacrificial act present for us to join in with him and to allow us to commune personally with him. Apart from Mass itself, the former is impossible, and watching a TV Mass is better than doing nothing. But watching TV is passive, and one really cannot commune with Jesus except in the way one can by personal prayer. By contrast, in a celebration that includes receiving Communion, the participants can gather with Jesus bodily in their midst, and actively relate to him as best they can short of having his saving act itself performed in their presence.

That being so, pastors (both bishops and parish priests) ought to arrange for appropriate use of the Sunday celebration in the absence alternative. That use ought to be extended to groups of Catholics who are not, strictly speaking, small parishes, but are isolated communities—temporarily or permanently. For example, in a non-Catholic assisted care facility or nursing home, there may be 15–20 Catholics; perhaps a priest says Mass for them at times on a weekday, but they are too few to provide Saturday-Sunday Mass, and there is no chapel at the facility. In such a case, an arrangement might be made to train a pious high school student living nearby to provide the service—pick up the consecrated Hosts, set up the space, provide booklets, preside at the assembly and, if the participants are unable or unwilling, read the readings, read a homily prepared by a cleric, distribute Communion, and so on. An alternative in such a situation, too, if the residents are able to carry out the celebration themselves, would be to arrange for the installation of a very small lockable chapel, where the Eucharist could be reserved between priests’ weekday visits to say Mass and provide other sacraments and pastoral services as needed.

If Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest are carried on in parishes by persons who are not deacons, better that the presider not be a religious, which is confusing. Best that a large group of able and well-trained adult members of the group that assembles take turns leading the celebration, since that practice will make it clear that no Mass is going on and that the leader of the celebration in no way possesses a “ministry” or stable office of conducting it.

*Pastores dabo vobis*, 38, says: “The liturgy is a living experience of God’s gift and a great school for learning how to respond to his call.” The way the liturgy is done has an effect on that. If abuses, then wrong implication. It should be clear that Jesus is responding to his Father’s call, and that those participating are joining him in doing that, also with respect to themselves.

*CIC*, c. 834, §1: The Church fulfills its sanctifying function in a particular way through the sacred liturgy, which is an exercise of the priestly function of Jesus Christ. In the sacred liturgy the sanctification of humanity is signified through sensible signs and effected in a manner proper to each sign. In the sacred liturgy, the whole public worship of God is carried out by the Head and members of the mystical Body of Jesus Christ.

§2: Such worship [i.e., the liturgy] takes place when it is carried out in the name of the Church by persons legitimately designated and through acts approved by the authority of the Church.

Deviations from the authorized texts and their rubrics are not approved by the authority of the Church, and so do not fulfill one of the necessary conditions for counting as liturgy.

*Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, 49:

In a society ever more sensitive to communication through signs and images, the priest must pay adequate attention to all of that which can enhance the decorum and sacredness of the Eucharistic celebration. It is important that, in such ceremonies, proper attention is given to the appropriateness and cleanliness of the place, the structure of the altar and tabernacle,(151) the dignity of the sacred vessels, the vestments,(152) the hymns,1153 the music,(154) the necessary silence,(155) etc. These are all elements which can contribute to a better participation in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. In fact, a lack of attention to the symbolic aspects of the liturgy and, even more, carelessness and coldness, superficiality and disorder, empty the meaning and weaken the process of strengthening the faith.(156) Those who improperly celebrate the Mass reveal a weakness in their faith and fail to educate the others in the faith. Celebrating the Eucharist well, however, constitutes a highly important catechesis on the Sacrifice.

The following note numbers are off by one—151 in the text matches 152, etc.

(152) Cf Ecumenical Council Vatican II, *Const. Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 128.

(153) Cf *ibid.*, 122–124.

(154) Cf *ibid.*, 112, 114, 116.

(155) Cf *ibid.*, 120; *C.I.C.*, can. 932.

(156) Cf *ibid.*, 30.

(157) Cf *C.I.C.*, can. 899 § 3.

That passage puts pretty well reasons for carefulness and decorum.

*Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, 64: The faithful “have a true right to participate in the liturgical celebrations as the Church wills and not according to the personal likes of a particular minister, nor according to unapproved and unusual rites, expressions of specific groups which tend to cut themselves off from the universality of the People of God.”

Something needs to be said about the issues involved in remodeling cathedrals and parish churches. In principle, many arrangements are acceptable—the Eastern iconostasis at one end and the gathering around the altar in a space with no breaks at all on the other. Each has its advantages and disadvantages, both in symbolism and in functionality. Symbolically, the iconostasis makes it clear that the central liturgy is the heavenly one, and functionally it invites the faithful to actively participate by joining the heavenly liturgy. The gathering-around-the-altar plan makes it clear that the liturgy taking place here and now is an act of the whole gathering, of God’s holy church, and that it must not be a matter of the priest saying Mass and the faithful hearing it passively. The common arrangement with a nave and sanctuary divided by a Communion rail is a compromise; and putting the tabernacle on the main altar is not really a good idea. One-sided ideologies pressing the symbolic or functional advantages of one plan or the other are uncharitable. Nor is the real issue whether God is transcendent or immanent; he is both. The relationship with God is interpersonal, but

divine personality is of a unique sort, and human relations with the three divine persons must respect that.

Still, it is one thing to build a new church and another to remodel an existing one. Theater-in-the-round needs a round or square space to work well. Churches structured with a sanctuary and nave do not convert well. No matter what changes are made, attention is directed by the structure itself to the former sanctuary. If that is used as a platform for the musicians, there is a strong tendency to feel that one is there to enjoy a sort of two-ring performance, and perhaps with the music as the main ring. Also, circulation, especially at Communion, tends to be poor. If permanent benches are removed and no seating is provided, many people—especially children, the elderly, and the ill—are likely to be wandering about or uncomfortable. If movable chairs are provided, a good deal of money will be spent putting them up and taking them down, rearranging them, straightening them out. And they will be unsatisfactory to people who need something solid to hold on to.

Pastors should try to clarify the close relationship between the Eucharist and charity. They should try to get the faithful to see that all Catholics should live such that when they participate in the Eucharist they can offer their whole life with Jesus' self-sacrifice (cf. Rom 12.1). To do that, one's whole life must be holy—that is, formed by the love of God poured forth by the Spirit in one's heart. Also, try to get the faithful to see that all should live out the intimate communion with Jesus' that they enjoy in the Eucharist in their good works—that is, works expressing love of God and neighbor. Those works are the fruit of their union with him, the vine: Without me, nothing; with me, much fruit. Only their union with him and sharing in his divine life, his human covenantal commitment, and his glorious bodily life make a life of genuine charity possible. Without me, nothing; with me, much fruit.

*CIC*, c. 837, §2: "Inasmuch as liturgical actions by their nature entail a common celebration, they are to be celebrated with the presence and active participation of the faithful where possible."

*CIC*, c. 906: "Except for a just and reasonable cause, a priest is not to celebrate the eucharistic sacrifice without the participation of at least some member of the faithful."

Pastors should see to it that the right of the faithful to the sacraments is met and that they are not unduly hassled on ideological grounds.

*CIC*, c. 843, §1: "Sacred ministers cannot deny the sacraments to those who seek them at appropriate times, are properly disposed, and are not prohibited by law from receiving them." Since the faithful have a right to the sacraments, the presumption is that the conditions are met, and the sacraments must not be refused unless it is clear that the conditions are *not* met.

§2 of the same canon provides that "Pastors of souls . . . have the duty to take care that those who seek the sacraments are prepared to receive them by proper evangelization and catechetical instruction." However, that does not justify coercion to go through a program provided by the parish if parents prefer other ways of preparing children to receive the sacraments.

Pastors need to see to it that the limits on sharing the Eucharist between Catholics and non-Catholic Christians are well known and should try to prevent violations. The basic norms were set down by Vatican II in UR 8 and OE 27, which in general exclude sharing in sacred things but allow exceptions, especially in the case of the Eastern Churches, insofar as such sharing can be a source of grace for individuals. This teaching was developed by the Secretariat for Promoting the Unity of Christians, *Directory Concerning Ecumenical Matters: Part One (Ad totam ecclesiam)*, 14 May 1967 (Flannery I, 483–501 at ##38–63, pp. 495–501).

*CIC*, c. 844, deals with such sharing. §1 sets down the limits that Catholic ministers administer the sacraments only to Catholics, who receive them only from Catholics, except in cases mentioned in the subsequent sections and *CIC*, c. 861, §2, which concerns baptism.

§2 allows Catholics to receive Eucharist, penance, and anointing from non-Catholic ministers provided several conditions are met: (1) doing so is necessary or genuinely advantageous spiritually; (2) danger of error or indifferentism is avoided; (3) it is physically or morally impossible to approach a Catholic minister; and (4) *the non-Catholic minister is one in whose church those sacraments are valid* (NB: it is not enough that the minister be validly ordained, except in danger of death). That excludes receiving the three sacraments except from the clerics of Eastern Churches and a few small schismatic churches.

§3 provides that Catholic ministers may provide the three sacraments to members of the Eastern churches and others that are judged by the Apostolic See to be in the same condition provided those non-Catholics ask on their own and are properly disposed. Note that the condition is looser than for Catholics to receive the sacraments from an Orthodox minister.

§4 provides that Catholic ministers may provide the three sacraments to other non-Catholic Christians only if five conditions are met: (1) a pressing need—either danger of death or a need judged pressing by the diocesan bishop or conference of bishops—thus not a need judged merely by the minister on the spot; (2) inability to approach their own minister; (3) spontaneous request by the one to receive; (4) manifestation of *Catholic faith in respect to these sacraments*; (5) and proper dispositions.

In general, there are many abuses that involve Eucharistic sharing by Catholics in churches that do not have a valid Eucharist and by non-Catholics who do not share Catholic faith in regard to the Eucharist. Such abusive sharing “would purport to be a sign of something which does not in fact exist” (British commentary, p. 464) and is conducive to religious indifference.

In general, a non-Catholic marrying a Catholic will *not* share the Catholic Church’s faith in the Eucharist. If the non-Catholic bride or groom does share Catholic faith in the Eucharist and the other conditions are met, the Eucharist should not be distributed to other participants whose churches do not have valid sacraments, because their need is not urgent and their faith cannot be ascertained. Inviting everyone to share always is bad.

NB: except if there also is danger of death, the celebrant of a wedding cannot decide on his own that there is a pressing need; that judgment belongs to the episcopal conference or bishop of the place. Should priests preparing couples for marriage seek permission from the bishop? Certainly not unless the other conditions are met, which seldom will be the case. And even if they are met, I think doing so is not good, because allowing some non-Catholic bride or

groom to receive Communion is likely to be noted and used as a precedent for allowing others who do not manifest Catholic faith in the Eucharist.

Pastors can make it clear that they limit the distribution of Communion, not out of contempt, but because they cannot grant that the Eucharist is anything less than the Catholic Church believes it to be and cannot ask non-Catholics to act as if they had Catholic faith that they do not have.

The seriousness of this matter is indicated by the fact that abuses are one of the few delicts that canon law still specifies: *CIC*, c. 1365: “A person guilty of prohibited participation in sacred rites is to be punished with a just penalty.” (The Latin of the canon more clearly indicates that what is to be punished is anyone’s wrongful *communicatio in sacris*, which certainly extends beyond thing such as concelebration with non-Catholic ministers to administering the sacraments to non-Catholics beyond the narrow conditions in which that is permissible.)

Committee on the Liturgy, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, has the following on the www regarding this matter:

#### Non-Catholics and Holy Communion

Can Non-Catholic Christians be admitted to sacramental communion in the Roman Catholic Church?

As Catholics, we believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sign of our oneness in faith, life and worship. Members of churches with whom we are not yet fully united are therefore not ordinarily invited to participate in Holy Communion. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* reflects on this teaching.

Ecclesial communities derived from the Reformation and separated from the Catholic Church, “have not preserved the proper reality of the Eucharistic mystery in its fullness, especially because of the absence of the sacrament of Holy Orders.” It is for this reason that Eucharistic intercommunion with these communities is not possible for the Catholic Church. However these ecclesial communities, “when they commemorate the Lord’s death and resurrection in the Holy Supper ... profess that it signifies life in communion with Christ and await his coming in glory.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, number 1400)

Members of the Orthodox churches and the Polish National Catholic Churches share a more intimate bond with us, however. They may receive the Eucharist when they ask for it and they are properly disposed (cf. Canon 844). Again, I would refer to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

The Eastern churches that are not in full communion with the Catholic Church celebrate the Eucharist with great love. “These Churches, although separated from us, yet possess true sacraments, above all—by apostolic succession—the priesthood and the Eucharist, whereby they are still joined to us in closest intimacy.” A certain communion *in sacris*...is not merely possible but is encouraged.” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, number 1399)



When other Christians who believe what the Catholic church teaches concerning the Holy Eucharist are deprived of access to a church of their own denomination for a significant period of time, they too may be admitted to Communion in the Catholic Church in exceptional circumstances (cf. Canon 844 §4). These exceptional circumstances are also described by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

When, in the Ordinary's judgment, a grave necessity arises, Catholic ministers may give the sacraments of Eucharist, Penance, and Anointing of the Sick to other Christians not in full communion with the Catholic Church, who ask for them of their own will, provided they give evidence of holding the Catholic faith regarding these sacraments and possess the required dispositions. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, number 1401)

On November 14, 1996, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops approved the following guidelines on the reception of communion. These guidelines replace the guidelines approved by the Administrative Committee of the NCCB in November 1986. The guidelines, which are to be included in missalettes and other participation aids published in the United States, seek to remind all those who may attend Catholic liturgies of the present discipline of the Church with regard to the sharing of eucharistic communion.

#### For Catholics

As Catholics, we fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist when we receive Holy Communion. We are encouraged to receive Communion devoutly and frequently. In order to be properly disposed to receive Communion, participants should not be conscious of grave sin and normally should have fasted for one hour. A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord without prior sacramental confession except for a grave reason where there is no opportunity for confession. In this case, the person is to be mindful of the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition, including the intention of confessing as soon as possible (canon 916). A frequent reception of the Sacrament of Penance is encouraged for all.

#### For our fellow Christians

We welcome our fellow Christians to this celebration of the Eucharist as our brothers and sisters. We pray that our common baptism and the action of the Holy Spirit in this Eucharist will draw us closer to one another and begin to dispel the sad divisions which separate us. We pray that these will lessen and finally disappear, in keeping with Christ's prayer for us "that they may all be one" (Jn 17:21).

Because Catholics believe that the celebration of the Eucharist is a sign of the reality of the oneness of faith, life, and worship, members of those churches with whom we are not yet fully united are ordinarily not admitted to Holy Communion. Eucharistic sharing in exceptional circumstances by other Christians requires permission according to the directives of the diocesan bishop and the provisions of canon law (canon 844 § 4). Members of the Orthodox Churches, the Assyrian Church of the East, and the Polish National Catholic Church are urged to respect the discipline of

their own Churches. According to Roman Catholic discipline, the Code of Canon Law does not object to the reception of communion by Christians of these Churches (canon 844 § 3).

For those not receiving Holy Communion

All who are not receiving Holy Communion are encouraged to express in their hearts a prayerful desire for unity with the Lord Jesus and with one another.

For non-Christians

We also welcome to this celebration those who do not share our faith in Jesus Christ. While we cannot admit them to Holy Communion, we ask them to offer their prayers for the peace and the unity of the human family.

*CIC*, c. 898: “The Christian faithful are to hold the Most Holy Eucharist in the highest honor, taking an active part in the celebration of the august sacrifice, receiving this sacrament most devoutly and frequently, and worshipping it with the highest adoration. In explaining the doctrine about this sacrament, pastors of souls are to teach the faithful diligently about this obligation.”

Thus, pastors are to inculcate the obligation to participate actively, to receive Communion, and to worship the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament—also apart from Mass. Note that this canon focuses on the Eucharist as a sign and *object*—*what* is received and worshipped. The sacrifice is celebrated, but the sacrament seems to be distinct from that.

*CIC*, c. 899:

§1: The eucharistic celebration is the action of Christ himself and the Church. In it, Christ the Lord, through the ministry of the priest, offers himself, substantially present under the species of bread and wine, to God the Father and gives himself as spiritual food to the faithful united with his offering.

§2: In the eucharistic gathering the people of God are called together with the bishop or, under his authority, a presbyter presiding and acting in the person of Christ. All the faithful who are present, whether clerics or laity, unite together by participating in their own way according to the diversity of orders and liturgical functions.

§3: The eucharistic celebration is to be organized in such a way that all those participating receive from it the many fruits for which Christ the Lord instituted the eucharistic sacrifice.

This canon focuses on the Eucharist as celebration—i.e., as cooperative act. The Christ-Church cooperation is in *SC* 7: “Christ indeed always associates the Church with himself in this great work of giving perfect praise to God and making men holy.” He performs again his once-for-all covenant-forming sacrificial act *so that* the faithful can cooperate with him in it, thereby actualize their union in him with the Father, and share in the resurrection life that is the Father’s response to that union.

Everybody is to participate but each in his own way, not all doing the same thing. The bishop or presbyter presides and acts in the person of Christ. *SC* 33: “Moreover, the prayers

addressed to God by the priest who presides over the assembly in the person of Christ are said in the name of the entire holy people as well as of all present.”

Thus, the priest acts in the person of the Church because he acts in the person of Christ, who, in this social act, speaks not just for himself, but for his *whole* body—not just those present here and now at each particular assembly. Thus, attempts by celebrants to actualize and personalize the liturgy—we, here, now—are ill conceived, and actually violate his responsibility to act in the person of Christ!

§3 provides the basic norm for liturgy planners (see the parallel canon: *CCEO*, 700, §1). The end toward which they are to direct their attention is the fruitfulness for *all* participants in respect to *all* the benefits Jesus wants them to have in and through this sacrament. This is a paradigm case of the general obligation of clerics: insofar as they act in their own person, they are to do whatever they can to promote the fruitfulness of Jesus’ acts and to avoid creating obstacles to that fruitfulness.

*CIC*, c. 901: “A priest is free to apply the Mass for anyone, living or dead.” Priests should let the faithful know that they are welcome to ask that Masses be said for non-Catholic relatives and friends. But they also should make it clear that, in accord with the 25 March 1993 *Ecumenical Directory* of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the Unity of Christians, 121, the names of non-Catholic individuals or entities may not be mentioned in the Eucharist prayer, because, according to long tradition, only the names of those in full communion with the Catholic Church may be mentioned in her Eucharistic prayer.

*CIC*, c. 902: “Unless the welfare of the Christian faithful requires or suggests otherwise, priests can concelebrate the Eucharist.” Thus, priests should not concelebrate when not all the faithful will be able to participate in the concelebrated liturgy who could participate in separate celebrations that they could reasonably make available if they did not concelebrate.

*CIC*, c. 903: says that a priest unknown to the rector of a Church is to be permitted to celebrate, even without a *celebrant*, if “it can be judged prudently that he is not impeded from celebrating.” The mere fact that someone says he is a priest and wishes to celebrate is not enough for prudent judgment. Impostors often have been permitted access.

*CIC*, c. 906: “Except for a just and reasonable cause, a priest is not to celebrate the eucharistic sacrifice without the participation of at least some member of the faithful.” The point is that the Mass is the celebration of the Church as a whole, and someone must be there to represent the faithful. Priests in parishes where Mass participation is slight should ask the faithful to fulfill this responsibility—to participate by turns and join in praying on behalf of the community as a whole. This is part of the idea that the Eucharist is a communal responsibility which individual members help to fulfill, as well as an individual responsibility to be fulfilled on one’s own behalf.

*CIC*, c. 907: “In the eucharistic celebration deacons and lay persons are not permitted to offer prayers, especially the eucharistic prayer, or to perform actions which are proper to the celebrating priest.” The people have their proper part to play, and they do it in the dialogue of the Preface, the Sanctus, the acclamation after the Consecration, and, especially, the Amen at the end of the eucharistic prayer. Pastors should not allow them to join in otherwise,

for example, by reciting aloud with the celebrant or concelebrants the doxology at the end of the Eucharistic prayer—as many of the faithful are inclined to do, inasmuch as concelebrants say it aloud together. Similarly, ministers should not be given Hosts so that they communicate simultaneously with the celebrant, as concelebrants properly do. All these things violate due order, and manifest a sort of reverse clericalism, as if doing what is proper to a priest were necessary for one's fuller participation or appropriate honor for one's equal dignity.

*CIC*, c. 908 (cf. *CCEO*, 702), excludes concelebration with priests or ministers of Churches or ecclesial communities that are not in full communion with the Catholic Church—*Directory* of 25 March 1993 by PCPUC, 104

“e) Since Eucharistic concelebration is a visible manifestation of full communion in faith, worship and community life of the Catholic Church, expressed by ministers of that Church, it is not permitted to concelebrate the Eucharist with ministers of other Churches or ecclesial Communities. [note omitted referring to the canons]”

This raises the question: how can a bishop or a priest concelebrate with Catholic clerics who are not impeded by canon law but with whom he personally cannot affirm agreement in faith? How can he concelebrate with those whom he expects will violate liturgical norms, thus impeding communion in worship?

*CIC*, c. 909: “A priest is not to neglect to prepare himself properly through prayer for the celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice and to offer thanks to God at its completion.”

Priests give good example if they are plainly recollected before and after Mass. Loud talk and laughter in the sacristy before and after Mass promotes irreverence, and so is scandalous. Joining with the other ministers in a brief prayer immediately before and after Mass would be appropriate, greeting people as they arrive and inviting those who wish to stay around for a few minutes so that they can talk afterwards.

*CIC*, c. 910, says that the ordinary minister of communion is a cleric; the extraordinary minister is an acolyte or other lay person designated according to the norm of canon 230, §3.

If extraordinary ministers are needed on a regular basis, the task ought to be considered a service, not an honor, and so should not be passed around among all who volunteer. Rather, suitable people ought to be chosen carefully: they should be exemplary Catholics who can do the job efficiently and reverently. In keeping with canon 231, §1, they should be given appropriate *formation*; that ought to include their understanding that they are not to distribute communion when a cleric is present and not impeded. They ought to be authorized by the bishop.

Since clerics are the ordinary ministers, they ought not to leave it *always* to lay ministers to visit the sick, but should train such ministers to use the rite properly if they do have them do this.

*CIC*, c. 911, §1, says that the pastor, assistants, chaplains, and (for those in their communities) superiors of clerical institutes have the right and duty of providing viaticum; in case of necessity and with at least presumed permission, any priest or other minister must do this, and should report doing so to the priest whose permission was presumed. Obviously,

ministers should be instructed about this obligation. But in such cases, priests should do the job if possible so as to offer penance and anointing if desired.

*CIC*, c. 912: “Any baptized person not prohibited by law can and must be admitted to holy communion.” Pastors must keep this in mind, and should make it clear to the faithful so that the latter will not be upset if they see someone going to communion whom they suppose ought not to be allowed to.

Pastors themselves should be disposed to give communion to anyone who asks but also to keep in mind the exclusions mandated by law—e.g., with respect to those not fully in communion with the Catholic Church.

*CIC*, c. 913, §1: administering holy communion to children “requires that they have sufficient knowledge and careful preparation so that they understand the mystery of Christ according to their capacity and are able to receive the body of Christ with faith and devotion.”

*CIC*, c. 914: “It is primarily the duty of parents and those who take the place of parents, as well as the duty of pastors, to take care that children who have reached the use of reason are prepared properly and, after they have made sacramental confession, are refreshed with this divine food as soon as possible. It is for the pastor to exercise diligence so that children who have not attained the use of reason or whom he judges are not sufficiently disposed do not approach holy communion.”

Ideally, parents will prepare their children for first confession and communion. Pastors should instruct parents about their obligation in the matter, and suggest suitable materials to use. If parents do the job and present children who wish to receive the sacraments and whom pastors find to be suitable prepared, they should not delay administering the sacraments, even if a child is younger than seven, because many bright children with devout parents are ready by six or even five, and should not be deprived of their right.

Some parents will not attempt to prepare their children or will fail to prepare them adequately. The parish should offer instructions for such children, and should try to involve the parents as much as possible. However, instruction should not be denied children of uncooperative parents, and a child who wishes to receive the sacraments and seems adequately prepared to do so must not be denied.

In any case, pastors would do well to interview each child before first confession, to make sure the child is adequately prepared and personally wishes to receive the sacraments. Children who seem inadequately prepared should be delayed briefly. The system of having a class receive the sacraments together is not sound. Better for each child to proceed when ready.

The superficial aspects of the occasion—special clothing, photography, and so on—should be suppressed or downplayed as much as pastorally feasible.

*CIC*, c. 913, §2: “The Most Holy Eucharist, however, can be administered to children in danger of death if they can distinguish the body of Christ from ordinary food and receive communion reverently.”

This lower standard for preparation calls into question the legitimacy of delaying children for a fuller catechesis, as the first section of the same canon does. The question is made more

acute by the application to people who are mentally retarded and not in danger of death of the same criterion—see new CLSA commentary, p. 1109.

*CIC*, c. 915: “Those who have been excommunicated or interdicted after the imposition or declaration of the penalty and others obstinately persevering in manifest grave sin are not to be admitted to holy communion.”

The latter category includes those who openly live in immoral relationships and refuse to withdraw from them; pastors should admonish such persons, and if they refuse to change, instruct them not to go to communion, and refuse them if they attempt to do so. Tolerating their obstinacy sends the message that their lifestyle is acceptable for faithful Christians.

*CIC*, c. 916: “A person who is in grave sin is not to celebrate Mass or receive the body of the Lord without previous sacramental confession unless there is a grave reason and there is no opportunity to confess; in this case the person is to remember the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition which includes the resolution of confessing as soon as possible.”

Clerics obviously should take this norm to heart for themselves, but also teach it to the faithful.

*CIC*, c. 918: “It is highly recommended that the faithful receive holy communion during the eucharistic celebration itself. It is to be administered outside the Mass, however, to those who request it for a just cause, with the liturgical rites being observed.”

The faithful who wish to receive communion on a weekday but cannot stay through or come to Mass—for example, because they must go to work—ought to be given Holy Communion beforehand or at another time of day. Parishes that cannot have daily Mass do well to offer a communion service on days when there is no Mass, perhaps with Morning or Evening Prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours—all of which can be led by a eucharistic minister, who need not be a religious.

*CIC*, c. 919, §1, sets down the general obligation of the eucharistic fast—*at least one hour before* the time of receiving—except for water and medicine. The latter is not limited to prescription drugs.

§2: the priest who binates or trinates can eat and drink between Masses.

§3: “The elderly, the infirm, and those who care for them can receive the Most Holy Eucharist even if they have eaten something within the previous hour.”

Pastors should instruct people about the eucharistic fast and take it seriously themselves, also so as to provide good example. The exception for the elderly and infirm obviously ought to be used only if fasting becomes difficult or inconvenient. Those who care for them include family and friends, and even visitors who happen to be present, but such persons should take advantage of the exception only if fasting is difficult or inconvenient in virtue of their role, or their role leads to an unexpected opportunity to receive communion too soon after they have eaten.

*CIC*, cc. 921–22, concern Viaticum. Obviously, pastors should catechize people about their responsibility in the matter and should themselves make considerable sacrifices to prepare the dying for Viaticum and administer it.

*CIC*, c. 923: “The Christian faithful can participate in the eucharistic sacrifice and receive holy communion in any Catholic rite, without prejudice to the prescript of can. 844.” The latter canon excludes receiving the sacraments in non-Catholic rites, with few exceptions. When the faithful are taught about that, they also should be taught about the multiplicity of Catholic rites and encouraged to join celebrations in other rites when appropriate.

*CIC*, c. 924: The bread must be only wheat, and the wine must be natural grape wine. *CIC*, c. 926: “According to the ancient tradition of the Latin Church, the priest is to use unleavened bread in the eucharistic celebration whenever he offers it.” *SCDW*, Third Instruction (5 Sept. 1970), *DOL* 52 (marginal 523), says: “Its authenticity as sign requires that the bread have the appearance of genuine food to be broken and shared together.” Still, it always is to be made in the traditional (round) shape, and: “The need for greater authenticity relates to color, taste, and thickness rather than to shape.” That seems to call for hosts made like round, Kosher, whole wheat matzos, segmented so that they would break easily into bite-sized pieces.

Efforts to provide matter more like “real bread” that involve ingredients other than wheat flour and water, or involve leavening in Latin-rite liturgies, violate more important requirements, sometimes so much as to invalidate the Eucharist.

*CIC*, c. 925: “Holy Communion is to be given under the form of bread alone, or under both species according to the norm of liturgical laws, or even under the form of wine alone in case of necessity.” The necessity may be allergy to gluten, or the inability of someone to swallow. Communion can be given under the form of wine alone by feeding tube if necessary, and doing so for the dying is an urgent and serious pastoral responsibility. Reserving in a sealed container a small amount of the Precious Blood (renewing weekly) to provide for such cases would be prudent.

*CIC*, c. 928: “The eucharistic celebration is to be carried out in the Latin language or in another language provided the liturgical texts have been legitimately approved.” The liturgical documents suggest having a Mass in Latin, especially where there are people using different languages. Pastors also should accommodate the desires of those for whom they celebrate weddings, funerals, and other Masses for special occasions.

*CIC*, c. 929: “In celebrating and administering the Eucharist, priests and deacons are to wear the sacred vestments prescribed by the rubrics.” The point of vestments is to manifest outwardly the different *munera* of participants in the liturgy. So, they are not to be omitted.

*CIC*, c. 1247: “On Sundays and other holy days of obligation, the faithful are obliged to participate in the Mass. Moreover, they are to abstain from those works and affairs which hinder the worship to be rendered to God, the joy proper to the Lord’s day, or the suitable relaxation of mind and body.”

The sorts of work and business to be avoided are defined in terms of three things: they are not to interfere with Sunday worship; they are not to be the sorts of thing that are burdensome and tension raising, which are incompatible with joy; they are not to be at odds with relaxing.

*CIC*, cc. 931 and 1248, §1, indicate that Mass can be said anytime not excluded by liturgical norms and that the faithful satisfy their Mass obligation by participating in a Mass in any rite

either on the Sunday or holyday or the evening before. New CLSA commentary (p. 1445) says that evening begins at 4:00 p.m. Pastors should avoid earlier times, and should instruct the faithful that participating in any Catholic Mass (even if a Saturday or Sunday evening wedding) will fulfill their obligation.

*CIC*, c. 932, §1: “The eucharistic celebration is to be carried out in a sacred place unless in a particular case necessity requires otherwise; in such a case the celebration must be done in a decent place.” While *necessity* can be understood broadly here, it must not be emptied of meaning. Certainly it is better to celebrate in another decent place when the only alternative is not celebrating at all. But reverence requires going to at least some trouble to plan and arrange to celebrate in a sacred place. And it is an abuse—even if clever and effective—to initiate celebration of the liturgy for a group of people designated as a new parish in a secular place precisely in order to motivate them to contribute to the building of a parish church. Better to engage the people concerned ahead of time in planning and preparing the new parish, so that they can gather in their church from the beginning.

*CIC*, c. 933, provides for priests with the local ordinary’s express permission, to celebrate in the place of worship of a Christian group not in full communion with the Catholic Church “so long as there is no scandal”. And the Directory on Ecumenism (25 March 1993) #137 suggests that bishops may allow them the use of Catholic churches and cemeteries if they need and want that. The important point is, “so long as there is no scandal”: in such cases catechesis needs to be provided that what is going on is sharing space so that others may follow their sincere convictions, but does not imply that their rites are “just as good as ours.”

*CIC*, c. 937: “Unless there is a grave reason to the contrary, the church in which the Most Holy Eucharist is reserved is to be open to the faithful for at least some hours every day so that they can pray before the Most Blessed Sacrament.” Of course, in many places, guarding the church is possible only during very limited times and the risk of vandalism or theft is too great to leave the church unlocked and untended. In such places, there can at times be a grave reason to the contrary. But pastors should encourage the faithful to cooperate in keeping churches open and keeping vigil with Lord during at least some hours each day. That is particularly appropriate at times when tourists and others are likely to wish to visit the Church. An alternative is to arrange for someone to be on call, at least during certain stretches, by means of some kind of intercom device placed near one of the church’s entrances.

*CIC*, c. 942 recommends annual, prolonged (but not necessarily continuous—and in any case not while Mass is being celebrated) exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in churches and oratories—the former “forty hours” devotion; *CIC*, c. 944 suggests public procession with the Blessed Sacrament, especially on Corpus Christi, subject to the diocesan bishop’s approval and regulations.

Pastors should consider these possibilities and promote these devotions if a reasonable number of the faithful are willing to participate in them.

*CIC*, c. 945, §1: “In accord with the approved practice of the Church, any priest celebrating or concelebrating is permitted to receive an offering to apply the Mass for a specific intention.”



§2: “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.”

Priests should catechize the faithful about the possibility of applying a Mass for their intentions and the appropriate offering for doing so. This is a pious practice of the faithful that should be encouraged. Priests who do not accept offerings and assume the obligation to apply the Mass for particular intentions impede people from participating actively in this way in the celebration of the Eucharist. They ought to accept a very small offering from the poor. Priests who can afford it might well undertake to offer Mass for specific intentions while asking that the appropriate offering be donated to the poor.

Paul VI, *Firma in traditione* (13 June 1974), (DOL #287), issued new norms for Mass stipends, which underlie the 1983 canons. He puts the matter in the context of action by the faithful to participate more intensely in the sacrifice and so benefit more from it:

In the established tradition of the Church, the faithful, moved by an ecclesial and religious sense, join to the eucharistic sacrifice a kind of sacrifice of their own, as a way of taking part more intensely. . . . By this practice the faithful associate themselves more closely with Christ’s act of offering himself as victim and in so doing experience its effects more fully. The Church has not only approved this practice but encouraged it, regarding it as a sign of the union of the baptized with Christ and of the people with the priest, who carries out his ministry for their benefit.

That certainly does not suggest that the priest in “applying” the Mass has a mediating role other than that of any lay person who prays for one. Of course, however, there is one huge difference: the prayer the priest is saying is the offering of the Eucharist. Explicitly in it, many intentions are mentioned: we offer it for our pope, bishop, and so forth; for those here present, for the faithful departed; we mean to honor particular saints, and so on. The faithful who participate in the offering can pray and thereby intend their doing so to benefit themselves and any particular persons they wish. So can the priest! Does that have any special effectiveness? Perhaps. It does if he is holy. On that basis, if he is not, one would be better off devoutly participating in the Mass with one’s intention and getting a holy person to do so.

But at the same time, Jesus has ordained the priest not only to act in his person but to mediate between himself as man and the people the priest serves. Having done so, the priest’s intention is different: he is asking Jesus as his principal to attend in a special way to this matter. No doubt, that makes a difference.

*CIC*, c. 948: “Separate Masses are to be applied for the intentions of those for whom a single offering, although small, has been given and accepted.” However, the Congregation for the Clergy (see *L’OR* (Eng) 25 March 1991, p. 2; new CLSA commentary, p. 1132) in 1991 decreed that as often as twice a week priests may accept the combined offerings of multiple informed and consenting donors for a single Mass to be said at an announced place and time, though in such cases the priest may keep only the usual amount of a single Mass offering and consign the rest to the purposes prescribed by his ordinary.

This suggests a possible practice of inviting people to submit their intentions with a minimal donation (say one cent) for Masses to be said on two weekdays each week, encouraging those people to participate in their special Masses.

*CIC*, c. 1385: “A person who illegitimately makes a profit from a Mass offering is to be punished with a censure or another just penalty.”

That could be some who violates c. 948. Or a priest who takes more than one offering each day against c. 951, or who requires an offering higher than the one established in accord with c. 952, or who keeps part or all of the offering (for saying the Mass, as distinct from any clearly personal gift along with the offering) when transferring the obligation in accord with c. 955, §1, and c. 956. The offense can be committed by people who receive Mass offerings in a campaign to obtain donations, and get a percentage of the money they raise, or who charge a fee for arranging to have priests say Masses for people who visit some church or shrine.

*CIC*, c. 1187: “It is permitted to reverence through public veneration only those servants of God whom the authority of the Church has recorded in the list of saints or the blessed.” What this means is that one may not celebrate a red Mass on the anniversary of the death of Stanley Rother, or a white Mass honoring someone soon-to-be-beatified as a virgin and foundress.

*CIC*, c. 1239, §1: “An altar, whether fixed or movable, must be reserved for divine worship alone, to the absolute exclusion of any profane use.” When space is used at times for other purposes, the altar may be abused, especially if it is a movable one. Reverence requires its sacredness be safeguarded; it’s a symbol of Christ, and closely associated with his body and blood.

The spirit of the thing requires avoidance of using the altar for nonliturgical devotional materials and practices—e.g., the use of the altar cloth to write names and petitions on is a bad idea.

*CIC*, c. 1245: For a just cause and in harmony with the diocesan bishop’s norms, pastors can grant in individual cases dispensation or commutation to other pious works of the obligations of feast days and days of penance. A clerical superior of an institute of pontifical rite can do the same for his subjects and those living in the house day and night. “Individual cases” does not mean on each separate occasion, but for individuals with problems or on a particular occasion for a group of people with a problem. So, for instance, a pastor might commute Sunday Mass to a weekday Mass for those who never have a day off on Sunday but do on various weekdays. And he might commute Sunday Mass for everyone who cannot easily walk to Church during a winter storm to at least fifteen minutes of reading the readings and reflecting on them or some other prayer. Pastors may exercise this power for their people even with respect to occasions when they will be outside the parish—for example, on vacation.

In catechesis about the relevant obligations, people should be told about this possibility, and it ought to be used reasonably. It allows people to get out from under when they have some real reason but not one serious enough for conscientious people to regard their obligation as void. The practice of dispensing/commuting should go with the consideration that the worshipping community as such has the obligation, and that individuals are obliged to do their part in satisfying it. Thus, if some are dispensed now and then for good reasons, no harm’s done.

In general, commutations are more reasonable: a weekday Mass or doing the Liturgy of the Hours for a Sunday Mass, alms for fasting.

With post-Vatican II changes in the liturgy, various lay people have access to and sometimes handle the sacred species. The laity in general should be catechized regarding the preciousness of the Eucharist and the importance of great reverence and care. Those allowed access and who handle the species are especially to be instructed by bishops and other pastors, who ought also to take care to provide good example. Part of the catechesis of select laity surely should include calling to their attention *CIC*, c. 1367: “A person who throws away the consecrated species or takes or retains them for a sacrilegious purpose incurs a *latae sententiae* excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See; moreover, a cleric can be punished with another penalty, not excluding dismissal from the clerical state.” The point is not to threaten people with the penalty, but to use it to make clear how serious the matter is, how careful they should be in handling and distributing the Eucharist.

It’s not a good idea to add explanations and commentary to the liturgy; doing so assumes that people are uncomprehending spectators who need to be filled in, not conscious and active participants who know quite well what they are doing. Of course, people need to come to know, and that’s the role of catechesis to prepare people for the sacraments. If some special explanation is needed for occasions on which the liturgy is different in ways some participants might not understand, that should be given *before* beginning the liturgy itself. If other announcements are essential, they ought to be delayed until *after* the liturgy ends; tucking them in before the final blessing as a way of holding people is inappropriate. People ought to be invited to stay for business after the liturgy yet left free to go, not manipulated.

When there are large numbers to receive Communion, general distribution under both kinds is to be avoided so as not to prolong this part of the liturgy disproportionately. Also, available presbyters and deacons should assist, so that the distribution is not overly prolonged. If not enough of them are available, acolytes should be installed to assist or, if necessary, extraordinary ministers—these should, however, be chosen, not volunteers, and well trained; they should be neatly dressed and clean. If matters can be arranged so that the distribution is completed promptly, a suitable quiet period—at least two to three minutes—after Communion will be possible. People should be catechized outside Mass about how to use this time to converse with the Lord they have received. During this quiet time, no hymn should be sung whether by the congregation as a whole or by a choir or soloist, since the words distract from personal prayer.

Sometimes a homily ought to be preached on matters other than the readings. A good example would be, on the words, “Body of Christ,” said when Communion is distributed. This seems to be an abbreviation of the old formula; in any case, the faithful are free to understand it as such. Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000), 218–19: “I am very fond of the old formula for the distribution of Holy Communion: ‘The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul unto everlasting life.’ These words turn the teaching of 2 Corinthians 5:1–10 into prayer. The soul on its own would be a sad fragment. But even before the general resurrection, it enters into the Body of Christ, which in a sense becomes our body, just as we are supposed to become his Body. The Body (of Christ)

saves our soul for eternal life—for Greek thought a nonsensical paradox, but because of the risen Christ, living hope.”

Louis Bouyer, *Liturgy and Architecture* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), 88–92, articulates the implications of Vatican II’s teaching that the faithful are to be intelligent, active, and fruitful participants in the celebration of the liturgy in general, and especially of the Eucharist. Listening to God’s word, affirming their faith together, and praying in response, they are drawn toward the altar, and beyond it to the parousia and heavenly fulfillment. The priestly people worship together; nor merely watch and hear worship by the clergy; the clergy are not separated from the people but active in their midst. The quiet prayer of each is essential to the liturgy, the material on which the ministers work—the material which Jesus himself consecrates by means of them.

[91] In the first part of the celebration, therefore, the clergy are to gather around themselves the faithful by the meditation of the word, helping them to receive the word in the fully active response of a common faith expressed in a common prayer.

In the second part, they are, on the basis of the common response of faith, to lead them toward the holy table where they are all in Christ to be both offerers and partakers. Having received in time the realities of the eter-[92]nal world under the sacramental veil, the people of God are to be sent back to this world of here and now, but in such a way and with such a presence in themselves that they may go through it together toward the final encounter with Christ. They will do that by consecrating to Him in their daily life everything in this transitory world in view of the eternal kingdom.

In other words, the Eucharist sends people out to prepare material for the kingdom, to bring back, etc.

While the Church requires celebrating the Eucharist every Sunday, she requires receiving Communion only once each year. That fact makes it clear that the obligation to worship created by Jesus’ command, “Do this in memory of me,” bears on participating in his self-offering and cooperating with it by offering oneself. Participating in its fruit by receiving Communion obviously is important; but the primary obligation is to keep the faithful’s participation in the *sacrifice* alive. So, the celebrant should help the faithful to understand how to participate rightly.

This understood, the inadequacy and radical unsatisfactoriness of Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest is clear. Moreover, it is clear that pastoral catechesis regarding such celebrations—as well as regarding the reception of Communion outside Mass by shut-ins, people in nursing homes, and so on—ought to stress the importance of recalling Jesus’ obedient self-sacrifice, and spiritually offering oneself with him.

It must be admitted that in this respect watching a Mass on TV can be better than participating in a celebration that entirely omits the sacrificial dimension of worship but offers the benefit of Communion. Moreover, families or groups of families might well design and carry out their own Sunday celebration involving: (1) a penitential service, (2) readings of the day and reflection together on them, (3) reciting the Creed, (4) prayers, (5) offering bread and wine,

(6) a prayer expressing the desire to offer ourselves entirely to God (that is, with the Holy Spirit's help to know his will in all things and do it) with and in Christ (realizing that in our fallen condition, we cannot do anything salvific apart from him) and looking forward to doing this as the Father wishes and Jesus commanded when that becomes possible, (7) sharing the bread and wine as a token of fellowship with Christ and one another, with a prayer looking forward to receiving the Lord's body and blood when possible.

Such a celebration would very clearly differentiate itself from Mass, and would strive so far as possible to fulfill Jesus' command, "Do this!" and so, though not a sacrament, could be a real means of grace much as the communion services of separated brethren who lack valid orders.

Clerics must instruct people so that they understand the Eucharist aright. Many people think that the climax of it is receiving Communion. In a sense, that is true: receiving Communion is to Christian life as intercourse is to marriage. But just as there is much more to marriage than intercourse, so there is much more to Christian life—and to the Mass—than receiving Communion. First, there is the two-way communication of hearing God's word and responding to it. Very important, just as communication is in marriage, and to every interpersonal relationship. Then there is cooperation with Jesus in offering his sacrifice, a sacrifice of praise, of Thanksgiving for what God already has done to save us through Christ, and at the same time a sacrifice of petition for the return of Jesus and fulfillment in the kingdom, and of contrition for sins. Then Communion to realize and experience the bodily oneness with Jesus already and to anticipate the heavenly wedding feast. If the common idea were right, a Sunday celebration without a priest would be almost as good as Mass; but, in fact, that is no Eucharist at all.

Mt 5.23–24: "So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." The point is that charity is a presupposition of the cooperation involved in worship. People can be divided about various things and still love one another; so, where divisions exist, the problem is to maintain charity, find the areas of agreement, and cooperate within that framework, as in ecumenism.

But what about cases in which the division concerns precisely the act of worship itself or its essential presuppositions? In that case, people can still love one another, but obviously cannot worship together, at least not by *that* act.

Jn 6.5–14 (cf. Mt 14.13–21, Mk 6.30–44, Lk 9.10–17) tells of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. Jesus feeds five thousand men plus women and children, not minimally but amply, with hardly enough food for a couple of people. In doing that, he makes clear his ability to do what he wishes with bread for the benefit of people who have come to him. Jn 6.16–21 (cf. Mt 14.24–33, Mk 6.47–52) the disciples are having a hard time boating at night; Jesus walks on the water, and they reach shore safely. In saving them in this way, Jesus makes clear his ability to do what he wishes with his body and the sea to save people who are close to him.

In Jn 6.25–65 Jesus teaches people who had seen the miracle of the loaves in the synagogue at Capernaum about something greater still: the Eucharist. He begins by telling them that he will

give them a better kind of food, one that lasts for eternal life. The people demand an ongoing supply of ordinary food, like the manna in the desert. Jesus teaches them that an endless supply of miraculous bread is not what they need, but himself: “I am the bread of life” (35) come down from heaven (38). He explains (40): “For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” The people are skeptical of Jesus’ claim to have come down from heaven; they recognize him as Joseph’s son, and know his family. Rather than answer that objection directly, Jesus tells them that in rejecting him they have not been receptive to God’s revelation: “Every one who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me” (45). He then asserts the point of the Eucharist (51): “I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.” The people question how Jesus can give others his flesh to eat. Rather than explaining how he will do that—telling them how the Eucharist will be instituted and our Mass carried out—Jesus insists on and further develops what he has already said:

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me. (53–57)

“After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him” (66).

(67–68) “Jesus said to the twelve, ‘Will you also go away?’ Simon Peter answered him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.’”

This passage in Jn is an exemplar of, and ought to be used as a source for, catechesis about several aspects of the Eucharist. Catechesis too often focuses on what the Eucharist is in itself, a theology of the Eucharist as the wonderful reality that is in the tabernacle. That has its place. But the primary focus needs to be, as it is in Jn 6, on what the Eucharist is for, how it benefits those who receive it worthily. Jesus is the bread of life—i.e., the bread that *gives* life. He has divine life in himself, received from the Father, and wishes to join himself to us intimately so as to share that divine life with us. He joins himself to us, truly joins us to himself, by giving himself to us to eat.

Eating and drinking in the Eucharist would not really unite us with Jesus if what we received were not really his flesh and blood. So, the apparent bread and wine cannot really be what they seem to be; nor can they be mere symbols of Jesus’ flesh and blood. Communion makes us one flesh with Jesus and one another in him.

The reality of Jesus’ flesh and blood in the Eucharist is as essential for unity with him as the reality of the spouses’ bodies in intercourse is for their one-flesh marital union. (Intercourse might be shocking to a well-brought-up child when first hearing of it; likewise, the realism of the Eucharist. But when the point of these bodily unions is grasped and the full human meaning in them appreciated, one finds them appropriate, though mysterious.) In both cases,

because the persons really are bodily—the Word became flesh—personal union involves bodily union.

But intimate union of persons never is *only* bodily. Jesus says (Jn 6.63): “It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.” Intimacy requires oneness of minds and hearts, and without that the bodily union of intercourse and that of eating and drinking the body and blood of Jesus are abuses rather than true acts of love.

The miracle of the loaves and fishes, and that of walking on the water together should have provided adequate ground for reasonable people to suppose that Jesus could somehow both truly and decently make his body available for eating and his blood for drinking. People should not have assumed that the how would be as simple and straightforward as they imagined: after all, the multiplication of loaves and fish hardly was a simple and straightforward way of feeding thousands of people—it was not the buying of bread that the twelve had begun by thinking about. Without knowing how he did it, they ate well; they ought to have been prepared to accept the Eucharist on the same basis.

In general, people had ideas that were incompatible with what Jesus was trying to reveal to them. Wedded to their ideas, they rejected his revelation. Peter, on behalf of the other apostles, showed the right attitude. They did not understand how Jesus would do what he said he would, but trusted him: you have the words of eternal life. That ought to be our attitude whenever we encounter difficulties with respect to our faith in the Eucharist or anything else.

In both the multiplication of the loaves and fish, and the Eucharist, Jesus is prodigal. He makes so much bread that everyone has as much as he wants to eat (and in those days a lot of the people probably were hungry and ate enough of the free bread and fish to keep them going for a few more days!), yet there were lots of left overs. In the Eucharist, he makes available an endless supply of his flesh and blood, of his very self. This generosity or prodigality points forward to heaven, where there are no shortages. Jesus’ self-giving in the Eucharist is open ended and in heaven that is both complete and endless.

Rv 19.6–9:

[6] Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunderpeals, crying, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

[7] Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;

[8] it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure” — for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

[9] And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are true words of God.”

The beatitude here is repeated in the Mass. The point of stating it in the Mass is that the Eucharist brings the assembly of God’s people into communio with those called to the wedding feast of the Lamb. They really participate in that heavenly liturgy: Jesus willed that the Eucharist “be a pledge [*pignus* = pledge, what is used as security for a loan or future

payment, so downpayment] of our future glory and our everlasting happiness” (DS 1638/875). So, it is not a question of “Blessed are we who are called to this supper.”

Scott Hahn, *The Lamb’s Supper: The Mass as Heaven on Earth* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), stresses the unity of the Mass with the heavenly liturgy throughout his book. He maintains (4) that “the key to understanding the Mass is the biblical Book of Revelation” and articulates many helpful insights into the relationship between the Mass and that book. He develops the point (125–26) that the *communio* of the Mass is the heavenly wedding.

Pius XI, *Ad catholici sacerdotii* [AAS and Carlen 216.39]:

Without piety the holiest practices, the most solemn rites of the sacred ministry, will be performed mechanically and out of habit; they will be devoid of spirit, unction and life. But remark, Venerable Brethren, the piety of which We speak is not that shallow and superficial piety which attracts but does not nourish, is busy but does not sanctify. We mean that solid piety which is not dependent upon changing mood or feeling. It is based upon principles of sound doctrine; it is ruled by staunch convictions; and so it resists the assaults and the illusions of temptation. This piety should primarily be directed towards God our Father in Heaven; yet it should be extended also to the Mother of God.

A liturgy that is done without real reverence is distracting and not conducive to the right attitude by those participating. Cheerful greetings at the beginning, jokes, and so on are not in place. (Those things may be appropriate when greeting the faithful as they arrive or talking with them after Mass.)

John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Oriente Lumen* (2 May 1995), 10:

In the Eucharist, the Church’s inner nature is revealed, a community of those summoned to the synaxis to celebrate the gift of the One who is offering and offered: participating in the Holy Mysteries, they become “kinsmen”(28) of Christ, anticipating the experience of divinization in the now inseparable bond linking divinity and humanity in Christ.

But the Eucharist is also what anticipates the relationship of men and things to the heavenly Jerusalem. In this way it reveals its eschatological nature completely: as a living sign of this expectation, the monk continues and brings to fulfillment in the liturgy the invocation of the Church, the Bride who implores the Bridegroom’s return in a maranatha constantly repeated, not only in words, but with the whole of his life.

A liturgy for the whole man and for the whole cosmos

11. In the liturgical experience, Christ the Lord is the light which illumines the way and reveals the transparency of the cosmos, precisely as in Scripture. The events of the past find in Christ their meaning and fullness, and creation is revealed for what it is: a complex whole which finds its perfection, its purpose in the liturgy alone. This is why the liturgy is heaven on earth, and in it the Word who became flesh imbues matter with a saving potential which is fully manifest in the sacraments: there, creation communicates to each individual the power conferred on it by Christ.



Thus the Lord, immersed in the Jordan, transmits to the waters a power which enables them to become the bath of baptismal rebirth.(29)

Within this framework, liturgical prayer in the East shows a great aptitude for involving the human person in his or her totality: the mystery is sung in the loftiness of its content, but also in the warmth of the sentiments it awakens in the heart of redeemed humanity. In the sacred act, even bodiliness is summoned to praise, and beauty, which in the East is one of the best loved names expressing the divine harmony and the model of humanity transfigured,(30) appears everywhere: in the shape of the church, in the sounds, in the colors, in the lights, in the scents. The lengthy duration of the celebrations, the repeated invocations, everything expresses gradual identification with the mystery celebrated with one's whole person. Thus the prayer of the Church already becomes participation in the heavenly liturgy, an anticipation of the final beatitude.

This total involvement of the person in his rational and emotional aspects, in "ecstasy" and in immanence, is of great interest and a wonderful way to understand the meaning of created realities: these are neither an absolute nor a den of sin and iniquity. In the liturgy, things reveal their own nature as a gift offered by the Creator to humanity: "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). Though all this is marked by the tragedy of sin, which weighs down matter and obscures its clarity, the latter is redeemed in the Incarnation and becomes fully "theophoric," that is, capable of putting us in touch with the Father. This property is most apparent in the holy mysteries, the sacraments of the Church.

Christianity does not reject matter. Rather, bodiliness is considered in all its value in the liturgical act, whereby the human body is disclosed in its inner nature as a temple of the Spirit and is united with the Lord Jesus, who himself took a body for the world's salvation. This does not mean, however, an absolute exaltation of all that is physical, for we know well the chaos which sin introduced into the harmony of the human being. The liturgy reveals that the body, through the mystery of the Cross, is in the process of transfiguration, pneumatization: on Mount Tabor Christ showed his body radiant, as the Father wants it to be again.

Cosmic reality also is summoned to give thanks because the whole universe is called to recapitulation in Christ the Lord. This concept expresses a balanced and marvelous teaching on the dignity, respect and purpose of creation and of the human body in particular. With the rejection of all dualism and every cult of pleasure as an end in itself, the body becomes a place made luminous by grace and thus fully human.

To those who seek a truly meaningful relationship with themselves and with the cosmos, so often disfigured by selfishness and greed, the liturgy reveals the way to the harmony of the new man, and invites him to respect the Eucharistic potential of the created world. That world is destined to be assumed in the Eucharist of the Lord, in his Passover, present in the sacrifice of the altar.

28. Cf. Nicholas Cabasilas, *Life in Christ*, IV: PG 150, 584–85; Cyril of Alexandria, *Treatise on John*, 11: PG 74, 561; *ibid.*, 12, l.c., 564; Saint John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, Homily LXXXII, 5: PG 58, 743–44.

29. Cf. Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, Discourse XXXIX: PG 36, 335 – 360.

30. Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *The Pedagogue*, III, 1, 1: SCh 158, 12.

This passage brings out various aspects of the significance of the Eucharist which generally are ignored, and which many abuses tend to conceal. The Eucharist anticipates the relationship of human beings and of the material world to heaven. The liturgy is heaven on earth. In it Christ illuminates the meaning of the whole of creation, which is to be recapitulated in him. The liturgy manifests the Eucharistic potential of the created world, and thus points to a genuinely Christian attitude—a Eucharistic ecology—toward both the human body and the whole material world.

The English is: “This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Happy are those who are called to his supper.” The Latin is clearer and more explicit: “Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi. Beati qui ad cenam Agni vocati sunt.” If the celebrant says: “This is the Lamb of God who laid down his life for us. Fortunate are we who are invited to receive him at this sacred table,” he loses the meaning and introduces some errors. In the first place, he entirely loses the allusion to the wedding feast of the Lamb, which goes on in heaven and in which the Mass is a participation. Second, he loses the universality of the beatitude, claiming it for the particular congregation. Third, he introduces the idea of fortune—luck or chance—and displaces God’s gracious blessing. Fourth, he forgets that the sacrifice has been taken by the angel to the altar in heaven, so that it is from that altar that the Eucharist is distributed here as well as elsewhere in the world.

John Paul II, *Dominicae cenae*, 9, *L’Osservatore Romano* (Eng.), 24 March 1980, 8, deals with the way priests should say the Eucharistic prayer:

Eucharistic worship matures and grows when the words of the Eucharistic prayer, especially the words of consecration, are spoken with great humility and simplicity, in a worthy and fitting way, which is understandable and in keeping with their holiness; when this essential act of the Eucharistic liturgy is performed unhurriedly; and when it brings about in us such recollection and devotion that the participants become aware of the greatness of the mystery being accomplished and show it by their attitude.

Said right, the prayer brings about in the congregation recollection and devotion—helps them to participate actively in an authentic sense, rather than distracts them by calling attention to itself by either theatrical dramatization or sloppiness.

John Paul II, *Dominicae cenae*, 12, *L’Osservatore Romano* (Eng.), 24 March 1980, 9, teaches that with legitimate pluralism in respect to liturgy, it also is necessary to make sure that the unity of which the Eucharist is the sign and cause is manifested. He then adds:

This task, over which in the nature of things the Apostolic See must keep careful watch, should be assumed not only by each *Episcopal Conference* but by

every minister of the Eucharist, without exception. Each one should also remember that he is responsible for the common good of the whole Church. The *priest as minister*, as celebrant, as the one who presides over the eucharistic assembly of the faithful, should have a special *sense of the common good of the Church*, which he represents through his ministry, but to which he must also be subordinate, according to a correct discipline of faith. He cannot consider himself a “proprietor” who can make free use of the liturgical text and of the sacred rite as if it were his own property, in such a way as to stamp it with his own arbitrary personal style. At times this latter might seem more effective, and it may better correspond to subjective piety; nevertheless, objectively it is always a betrayal of that union which should find its proper expression in the sacrament of unity.

Every priest who offers the holy Sacrifice should recall that during this Sacrifice it is not *only* he with his community that is praying but the whole Church, which is thus expressing in this sacrament her spiritual unity, among other ways by the *use of the approved liturgical text*. To call this position “mere insistence on uniformity” would only show ignorance of the objective requirements of authentic unity, and [p. 10] would be a symptom of harmful individualism.

This subordination of the minister, of the celebrant, to the *Mysterium* which has been entrusted to him by the Church for the good of the whole People of God, should also find expression in the observance of the liturgical requirements concerning the celebration of the holy Sacrifice. These refer, for example, to dress, in particular to the vestments worn by the celebrant. Circumstances have of course existed and continue to exist in which the prescriptions do not oblige. We have been greatly moved when reading books written by priests who had been prisoners in extermination camps, with descriptions of Eucharistic Celebrations without the above-mentioned rules, that is to say, without an altar and without vestments. But although in those conditions this was a proof of heroism and deserved profound admiration, nevertheless in *normal conditions* to ignore the liturgical directives can be interpreted as a lack of respect towards the Eucharist, dictated perhaps by individualism or by an absence of a critical sense concerning current opinions, or by a certain *lack of a spirit of faith*.

This can serve as a central argument against liturgical abuses. It gets out the idea that the liturgy belongs to the Church as a whole, not to the clergy, and that the clergy are bound to respect and protect the Church’s common good. It also includes the legitimate but very limited exception from liturgical norms that are not essential.

Liturgical abuses ought to be treated in this chapter. But there ought to be a note that what is said applies to liturgy in general, including the baptismal rite, prayers for the dying and dead, Liturgy of the Hours, and so on.

Within the Liturgy, there is no place for conventional greetings and farewells, such as “Good morning” and “Have a nice day!” The liturgy includes its own greetings and farewells. Adding the conventional ones implies either that one is taking a break from the liturgy or that the liturgical ones are inadequate. Both are false. Moreover, celebrants who do this scandalize

the congregation by leading them to think of the liturgy as a conventional encounter—with them! Celebrants who insist on cooperation: “I said “Good morning!”” add insult to injury, because the insistence is a reproof for supposed impoliteness, and people don’t need that from a cleric who is reducing the liturgy to conventional encounter.

Of course, there are occasions when some nonliturgical preparation for or introduction to the liturgy, or some comment after it, is appropriate—for example, at a funeral or a wedding attended by people who are not practicing Catholics. In such cases, the preparation or introduction can include appropriate conventional greetings. But all that ought to be done before the liturgy itself begins or after it is finished.

Wal Maggs, “Preaching and reading in the liturgy,” *Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, 103 (Nov. 2002), 28–31, 44–47. Maggs taught speech in the Sydney (Australia) seminary.

- 1) Readers need to be trained and need to practice. Clerics themselves may need additional training.
- 2) One needs to be sure that everyone can hear easily. A good sound system will help in a noisy and large space. But it is no substitute for accurate and careful pronunciation, fully sounding final consonants (not ‘seein’ but ‘seeing’), maintaining volume to the end of each sentence, and appropriate emphasis. (One knows how news anchors read, and can try to imitate them in the indicated respects though not in their rapidity of reading.)
- 3) Not everyone reads well. Lectors ought to be chosen carefully.
- 4) Anyone who reads must prepare. Preparation involves prayerful pre-reading and trying to understand what is to be read. One must understand passages to read them well and to convey their meaning to hearers—and conveying the meaning is the point of liturgical reading (page 31): “*If the reader doesn’t understand a passage fully neither will the listener.*”
- 5) Dramatic reading is neither necessary nor appropriate. But reading that does not pick out and emphasize what deserves emphasis is seriously inadequate (page 30): “It is not possible to play ‘safe,’ as many readers try to do, by downsizing one’s emphases to some bland nondescript flow of sound and still hope to be successful readers. The unintended subliminal message then received by the congregation is that the passage being transmitted is unimportant and uninteresting. . . . ‘Dull’ emphasizing isn’t a suitable or appropriate liturgical reading technique. It is a failure to reveal the full truth of a passage.”
- 6) Words and phrases can be emphasized in different ways: by increasing volume, of course, but also by lowering pitch, slowing down, and/or pausing after.
- 7) Readings often are done too fast. The speed of the news anchor requires great skill. Most readers need to take a little more time than they do. The understanding of people with poor hearing and children often will improve with more deliberate reading.

8) The celebrant's careful and devout reading of the Eucharistic prayer with appropriate emphases is very important.

Music in the liturgy is a great problem. Strictly speaking, there ought not to be anything within the liturgy that is not prescribed in the liturgical books; only the liturgy itself ought to be chanted or sung, and when that is done, the words ought to be kept intact and the melody should be easily chanted or sung. The reason is that everyone must participate in the liturgy together, and the nonliturgical music is devotional. Inevitably, it imposes some people's devotion on others, and so leads to dissatisfaction and conflict. It opens up a gap in the liturgy.

Those doing music should recognize their subordination to the liturgy itself and to the action of the congregation as a whole. If they do not do this, their performances war against active participation, tending to reduce the congregation to a passive audience—exactly what Vatican II wanted to overcome.

Processional and recessional hymns ought to be very carefully chosen; they must be entirely sound in their theology. There ought to be an approved hymnal. If the bishops wish to have hymns for the offertory and communion, they should set up a hymnal with appropriate norms for its use and limit hymns to those in that volume, and that ought to be a liturgical book—which, of course, might be expanded from time to time.

SC 48, in promoting knowing, devout, and active participation, say that the faithful at Mass “should give thanks to God; by offering the immaculate victim, not only through the hands of the priest but also with him, they should learn to offer themselves too.”

The pastor should see to it that there are no liturgical abuses, whether in the Eucharist or in any other sacrament.

For a definition of liturgy, see SC 7: it is an exercise of Jesus' priestly office. It makes present and carries on the work of saving human beings. In it, full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members. The essential and unchanging elements of the liturgy are central; the changeable aspects are subordinate—particular ways of realizing the essentials. Nevertheless, liturgical acts include both the essential and the changeable—what Jesus wants realized and the way his Church undertakes to realize it.

Liturgical acts as unified wholes always are *ecclesial*. Unauthorized changes are not ecclesial but individual. So, each unauthorized change, whether an omission, a substitution, or an addition creates a gap in the flow of the liturgical action. So, when unauthorized changes are made, the fabric of the liturgy is mutilated, like a tapestry with various holes, breaks, extraneous bits of fabric stitched in, seams where there had been none.

Since the liturgy is sacred and unauthorized changes mutilate it, making such changes is a sacrilege. Since making such changes is forbidden by Church law, it is disobedience. Since the faithful are entitled to participate in genuine liturgy and clerics have been ordained to provide it for them, making such changes is a disservice, a betrayal of responsibility, a sort of fraud. Since clerics serve as models for the people they are called to serve, making such

changes is scandalous: it tends to encourage the faithful in irreverence, disobedience to Church law, and irresponsible action toward fellow Church members, not least toward the clergy. Since clerics tend to imitate one another and to regard what most other clerics do as acceptable, making such changes, even very small ones, is scandalous also by leading other clerics to make them—and sometimes to make more serious ones.

The nonessentials that express and realize the essentials ought not to be the focus of attention. They should be unobtrusive. In making unauthorized changes, clerics and other ministers call attention to themselves. That distracts people from the essentials. It distracts them from focusing on Jesus and on their own cooperation with him.

Moreover, imagine one owned or administered a parish or other community that owned a very valuable painting. And imagine that someone mutilated that painting by cutting some small holes in it. Even if the person who did that was trained in fine art and was sincerely convinced that the changes made the painting more interesting and esthetically pleasing, one would find the mutilation deeply distressing. Probably one would be very angry at the person who had taken it on himself “to improve it.” Particular liturgical acts—for example, this celebration of the Eucharist—are far more valuable than the most valuable painting in the world. Of course, nonbelievers would not agree, and even Catholics who are not clearheaded might disagree. But any well-instructed and devout person, even without theological training, sees the point very clearly. Small wonder, then, that even small unauthorized changes in the liturgy cause deep distress in such people and make them very angry.

Someone might object: the Church herself has made many changes in the liturgy, and accepts a variety of rites. Indeed, she even accepts as valid an ancient eucharistic prayer that omits the formula of institution. (See OR [Eng.], 14 Nov. 2001, pp. 6–7. So, small changes cannot be all that important. Reply: the objection misses the point. It’s not that small changes invalidate the sacraments. Most do not. It’s that only what is authorized for a particular church or group of churches by its proper pastors provides the formula for action by that church as such. What is unauthorized simply isn’t liturgical, but personal. When those ordained to lead or appointed to minister make unauthorized changes, they drop out bits of the liturgy, and if they replace them, those items are acts of those individuals who participate in them, but not of the church as such, even if all present join in.

The essentials of the liturgy are given to the Church: they are part of revelation. The faithful need to realize that. Insofar as nonessential features—those that the Church can change—are concerned, they ought to be determined by the pastors of the Church, acting *in persona Christi* after they do their best to discern what is consonant with revelation and likely to promote authentic worship by the faithful. So, any sort of self-initiated worship is nonliturgical; even what would be legitimate as personal devotion, if introduced into the liturgy, detracts from the liturgy by making it into our own thing, our own party and entertainment. (On this see, Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000), 22–23: he illustrates the proposition that liturgy is not “what you please” with the worship of the golden calf, which tries to bring God down into the people’s own world and to worship him on their own terms: “Worship becomes a feast that the community gives itself, a festival of self-affirmation. Instead of being worship of God, it

becomes a circle closed in on itself; eating, drinking, and making merry.” That could be said of all so-called creative liturgies! Later (49) Ratzinger makes the point that the centrality of Jesus’ lasting worship determines our liturgy:

This means that universality is an essential feature of Christian worship. It is the worship of an open heaven. It is never just an event in the life of a community that finds itself in a particular place. No, to celebrate the Eucharist means to enter into the openness of a glorification of God that embraces both heaven and earth, an openness effected by the Cross and Resurrection. Christian liturgy is never just an event organized by a particular group or set of people or even by a particular local Church. Mankind’s movement toward Christ meets Christ’s movement toward men. He want to unite mankind and bring about the one Church, the one divine assembly, of all men.

Still later again (166–67), in discussing rite, he says:

Rite makes concrete the liturgy’s bond with that living subject which is the Church, who for her part is characterized by adherence to the form of faith that has developed in the apostolic Tradition. This bond with the subject that is the Church allows for different patterns of liturgy and includes living development, but it equally excludes spontaneous improvisation. This applies to the individual and to the community, the hierarchy and the laity. Because of the historical character of God’s action, the “Divine Liturgy” (as they call it in the East) has been fashioned, in a way similar to Scripture, by human beings and their capacities. But it contains an essential exposition of the biblical legacy that goes beyond the limits of the individual rites, and thus it shares in the authority of the Church’s faith in its fundamental form. The authority of liturgy can certainly be compared to that of the great confessions of faith of the early Church. Like these, it developed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (cf. Jn 16:13).

So, making unauthorized changes, and particularly all the ways in which those involved in liturgy make unauthorized changes so as to adapt and appropriate it—tie it in better with the here and now, make it more like a real communal meal, satisfy this assembly—detaches what is going on from the one, heavenly liturgy, in which all authentic Christian liturgy is a participation. Doing it *our* own way just is not doing it Jesus’ way, and doing it *his* way is the only authentic liturgy there is. Moreover, making unauthorized changes is very dangerous, for it is as likely to lead to unorthodox expression as do attempts to rework and improve on the Creed.

By being present and participating in the liturgy at a certain time, one really is united with Jesus’ act and with all those who join in with it: thus one is present at the Last Supper and in the unending heavenly wedding feast and at all the Masses between. Thus, trying to focus on us here and now in *this* place diminishes the reality, which takes us into a much greater here and now and we.

This section might well come *before* I deal with abuses. That will point up their seriousness, and at the same time not suggest excessive strictness.

Avoiding liturgical abuses does not exclude using legitimate options and rightly applying epikeia in liturgical matters. For example, the priest who travels to a distant site in a national park, where he expected to find a chapel with suitable supplies, but finds an interdenominational chapel without Catholic liturgical books, vestments, sacred vessels, unleavened bread, but has a crowd wanting to participate in Sunday Mass. People there have some rolls made entirely with wheat but sourdough leavened, someone has a box of wine; the priest has memorized one of the Eucharist prayers and knows the rest of the Mass pretty well by heart; he has prepared a homily, and so can summarize the readings. Better to say Mass, without vestments, using valid but illicit matter, ad libbing some of the prayers, etc., than to deprive the people of Mass. Before beginning, the priest ought to tell the people why he's doing what he's doing and assure them it is okay.

But epikeia must not be used as an excuse for abuses. Doing that adds to the abuse dishonesty and scandalous bad example of legalistic evasion.

One is bound to make mistakes now and then. There is no reason for scrupulosity. The liturgy and its options are now complicated. One has many other responsibilities. So, one can spend only so much time trying to get everything right, and, when tired, ill, growing old, and so on will find oneself inadvertently making mistakes. One need only do the best one reasonably can. If one makes a major blunder, one does well to let people know in due course that one made a mistake—that it was not intentional. Doing that reassures the more faithful and prevents scandal being taken by the less faithful.

The options are there to be used. Refusing to use them when doing so is appropriate is, as it were, a spirit of abuse. Rigidity about personal preferences and convenience in using the short route are not good reasons for opting. Judgments must be informed with respect to the facts, shaped by pastoral love's determination to make Jesus' acts not just present but available (rather, than, say, by the celebrant's personal taste or convenience), and, other things being equal, more pleasing to the people served. The last usually is followed, sometimes too exclusively, in planning weddings. But in a proper way, it should be followed more often. Rather than having some "expert" or liturgy committee participate always in planning, a good pastor would involve different families each week, thus educating more people about the liturgy and getting them to participate more actively.

JP II, Address to the 11th group of U.S. Bishops at their *ad limina Apostolorum* visit (9 October 1998), *OR* (Eng.), 14 Oct. 1998, 3, deals with liturgical renewal. He makes (2) an argument against liturgical abuses:

[The liturgy] is subjective in that it depends radically on what the worshipers bring to it; but it is objective in that it transcends them as *the priestly act of Christ himself*, to which he associates us but which ultimately does not depend on us (*Sacrosanctum concilium*, 7). This is why it is so important that liturgical law be respected. The priest, who is the servant of the liturgy, not its inventor or producer, has a particular responsibility in this regard, lest he empty liturgy of its true meaning or obscure its sacred character. The core of the mystery of Christian worship is *the sacrifice of Christ himself offered to the Father and the work of the risen Christ who sanctifies his people through the liturgical signs*. It is therefore essential that in seeking to enter



more deeply into the contemplative depths of worship *the inexhaustible mystery of the priesthood of Jesus Christ* be fully acknowledged and respected. While all the baptized share in that one priesthood of Christ, not all share in it in the same manner. The ministerial priesthood, rooted in apostolic succession, confers on the ordained priest faculties and responsibilities which are different from those of the laity but which are at the service of the common priesthood and are directed to the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1547). The priest therefore is not just one who presides, but *one who acts in the person of Christ*.

That certainly is a decisive argument against any liturgical changes that even run a slight risk of affecting anything essential. But it basically puts the clerical celebrants in their place: they are servants of the liturgy, and are out of line when they act as if it were their own thing.

Pastors should not ask for or accept volunteers to lector. Rather, they should identify people with suitable gifts, train and form them, and continue to work with them. It is well to have a sufficient number of well-trained lectors so that no individual exercise the office more than once each month.

An able lector provides an important service for the worshipping community, which includes sharing his/her faith with the other members. Serving well as a lector requires not only appropriate gifts but preparation and effort. A good lector speaks for Jesus to the community without calling undue attention to himself/herself. He/she strives to convey the Spirit's message in the readings to his/her brothers and sisters.

The lector should be told what the readings will be at least one week in advance, and he/she should read them carefully and meditate upon them. In preparing, he/she reads the readings aloud at least once (even if only to himself/herself). He/she finds out how to pronounce any unfamiliar words. In mediating, he/she tries to identify the central message that the Lord wishes to convey through the readings to this congregation on this occasion, and identifies the phrases—and especially the verbs—that seem most important in conveying that message.

He/she does not rush to the lectern before the celebrant is seated, but then moves to it with smooth dignity. He/she is neatly dressed and well-groomed, and stands straight, but not stiffly, behind the lectern, without slouching or leaning and with feet planted where they will remain. A free hand may grasp the edge of the lectern, but not in a way that suggests unease.

He/she should not be in too much of a hurry to start reading, but should first make sure everyone is sitting and listening. He/she tries to establish eye contact before beginning to read, and to maintain it, especially when reading the most important phrases. One can maintain eye contact without losing one's place if one has prepared well in advance; it may help to put one's fingertip on the page before the beginning of each line as one reads.

A good lector speaks up and clearly pronounces each word, so that those farthest away or hard of hearing will hear well. He/she reads key phrases more slowly, and emphasizes the key words by changing the pitch and loudness of his/her voice in appropriate ways. "The Word of the Lord" is not rushed; the lector looks up from the book, glances around at the congregation,

and says the phrase firmly, expressing his/her own faith and telling everyone: You better believe it!

Good lectors who will read the responsorial psalm pause for fifteen seconds after the first reading and read the response slowly and clearly, in order that everyone listening will be able to memorize the words and repeat them. In reading each section of the psalm, they will drop their voices when coming to the end of each section, signaling the congregation that a pause is coming, and in that way eliciting the response without waving for it.

Two works on the Mass that might be useful are Scott Hahn's *Lamb's Supper* and Jeremy Driscoll's *What Happens at Mass*.

Some people arrive later to Mass on Sundays and Holydays. Occasional lateness can result from conditions beyond people's control—some unexpected problem at home or an unforeseeable delay on the way. In such cases, conscientious people should be encouraged to do the best they can and not feel guilty if they cannot participate in a complete Mass.

Some people arrive later due to carelessness. Pastors should not scold them publicly, but neither should ignore a practice of late arrival. They should instruct the faithful, perhaps in the Sunday bulletin or briefly at the end of Mass, that arriving on time is required by love of and decent respect for our Lord, who asks us to celebrate with him so as to receive his gifts.

Here is a good treatment of the problem of altar girls

From the point of view of liturgical law, an official interpretation of Canon 230, Paragraph 2, of the Code of Canon law on the possibility of delegating certain liturgical offices led to a 1994 letter from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments clarifying that girls may serve at the altar. But bishops are not bound to permit them to do so, nor could the episcopal conference limit the bishop's faculty to decide for himself. A further clarifying letter published in 2001 said priests are not compelled to have girls serve at the altar, even when their bishops grant permission.

The 1994 letter states: "It will always be very appropriate to follow the noble tradition of having boys serve at the altar. As is well known, this has led to a reassuring development of priestly vocations. Thus the obligation to support such groups of altar boys will always continue." The letter also recommends to bishops to consider "among other things the sensibilities of the faithful, the reasons which would motivate such permission and the different liturgical settings and congregations which gather for the Holy Mass."

It is important not to focus this debate using political categories such as rights, equality, discrimination, etc., which only serves to fog the issue. We are dealing with the privilege of serving in an act of worship to which nobody has any inherent rights. The question should be framed as to what is best for the good of souls in each diocese and parish. It is thus an eminently pastoral and not an administrative decision, and this is why it should be determined at the local level.

Among the pastoral factors to be weighed is the obvious yet often forgotten fact that boys and girls are different and require different motivational and formative

methods. This difference means that both boys and girls usually go through a stage when they tend to avoid common activities. Preteen boys in particular are very attracted to activities that cater especially for them, and they tend to reject sharing activities with girls. They also tend to have a greater need for such structured activities than girls who are usually more mature and responsible at this stage of life. As a result, some parishes have found that the introduction of girl servers has led to a sharp drop-off of boys offering to serve. Once the boys have left and enter the years of puberty, it is difficult to bring them back. Some pastors say this phenomenon is less marked where serving at Mass forms part of a wider Catholic structure, such as a school, or when siblings serve together.

It is also true that groups of boy servers have fostered vocations to the priesthood. But to be fair, this usually happens within a broader culture of openness to a vocation in which other elements come into play, such as the example and spiritual guidance given by good priests, and family support. If, for example, a long-established program of boy servers has proved successful in promoting vocations or has been useful in helping boys avoid bad company and maintain the state of grace, then the good of souls obliges pastors to weigh heavily the spiritual risks involved in abandoning it.

When girls do serve, it is probably best to aim for a mixture of boys and girls — if only to avoid giving the impression to the congregation that Catholicism is above all a female activity. On some occasions, however, it might be best to separate boys and girls into different groups.

Pastors ought to see to it that as often as possible hosts consecrated at the Mass are distributed to the faithful who receive Communion. Only the celebrant or another priest or deacon may take hosts from and put them in the tabernacle. It is good to shut the tabernacle door or leave it just ajar.

Posture in US after Agnus Dei is generally kneeling, although a bishop may determine it to be standing. But after the faithful receive Communion, it is up to them whether to kneel or sit.

The GIRM, No. 43, affirms that the faithful “may sit or kneel while the period of sacred silence after Communion is observed.” Some liturgists, and even some bishops, interpreted this text to mean that nobody should kneel or sit until everybody had received Communion. The resulting debate led Cardinal Francis George, president of the U.S. bishops’ Liturgy Committee (BCL), to request an authentic interpretation from the Holy See on May 26, 2003. Cardinal Francis Arinze, prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments, responded to the question on June 5, 2003 (Prot. N. 855/03/L):

“Responsum: ‘Negative, et ad mensum’ [No, for this reason]. The mens [reasoning] is that the prescription of the *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, no. 43, is intended, on the one hand, to ensure within broad limits a certain uniformity of posture within the congregation for the various parts of the celebration of Holy Mass, and on the other, to not regulate posture rigidly in such a way that those who wish to kneel or sit would no longer be free.”

Having received this response, the BCL Newsletter commented: “In the implementation of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, therefore, posture should not be regulated so rigidly as to forbid individual communicants from kneeling or sitting when returning from having received Holy Communion” (p. 26).

The use of proper vestments enhances the dignity and beauty of the celebration and helps the priest overcome the danger of falling into a certain sloppiness and carelessness in his liturgical gestures, a problem which is particularly acute in large or frequent concelebrations. So, pastors should see to it that the proper vestments are available and should use them.

Why has the Eucharistic prayer always been reserved to the celebrant/concelebrants? It is worded in first person plural, and so it might seem appropriate for everyone to join in, as in the Credo.

First, I think the documents indicate that the celebrant, in saying the Eucharistic prayer, is acting in the person of the Church, not just the present assembly, but the entire Church. So, all of us are engaged in every Mass said anywhere. If the particular assembly, whose lay members cannot (in this context) act in the person of the Church (since the priest in this case is acting in the person of the Church because he is acting in the person of Christ), join in the prayer, the common recitation of it reduces the Eucharist to an act of those present—but that falsifies the reality.

Second, I think the documents also make it clear that the priest presides in the person of Christ. And it is precisely insofar as the celebrant presides that he says the Eucharistic prayer—in fact, nothing else he does as presiding is as important as that. It seems to follow that the celebrant/concelebrants act in the person of Christ who himself acts in the person of the Church in saying the Eucharistic prayer. In other words, Christ himself, as head of his body, the Church, says the Eucharistic prayer, and says it in first person plural because while, on the one hand, only he can offer the Eucharist, he associates his whole body—all the faithful—with him in doing so. If the lay members present at a particular assembly join saying the prayer (rather than join their minds and hearts with Christ, cooperating with his offering), the fact that Jesus is bringing us into his act would be obscured. In fact, that would suggest falsely that the cooperation is on the same basis on both sides—like the cooperation of two people who play a game with each other and unlike, say, the cooperation of parents and children when the parents get the children to help just so as to teach them how to do something.

The question of linking rites is important and worth mentioning. Awards and honors are not appropriately linked. Vocational commitments are.

No. 41 of the new General Instruction on the Roman Missal, published in 2002, specifically states:

All other things being equal, Gregorian chant holds pride of place because it is proper to the Roman Liturgy. Other types of sacred music, in particular polyphony, are in no way excluded, provided that they correspond to the spirit of the liturgical action and that they foster the participation of all the faithful. Since faithful from different countries come together ever more frequently, it is fitting that they know

how to sing together at least some parts of the Ordinary of the Mass in Latin, especially the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, set to the simpler melodies.

Note well the requirement "that they foster the participation of all the faithful." That rules out the performance of special pieces, in which the congregation as a whole is plainly not expected to join, by a group of singers or as solos—the sort of thing that replaces liturgy with a concert, and musical service to the singing Church with showing off and drawing applause.

On March 5, 1967, the Sacred Congregation of Rites issued the instruction "*Musicam Sacram*" (AAS 59 [1967] 300–320) with the approval and confirmation of Paul VI, indicating its provisions should go into force on Pentecost Sunday, May 14, 1967. This document's provisions never have been followed in the U.S. But also the document's provisions never have been replaced or abrogated.

Some details of the document have been rendered obsolete by the publication of the Missal at a later date — such as the formal distinction between solemn, sung and read Mass — but on the whole it is still valid. The new Roman Missal in Latin prints the musical notations for the ordinary of the Mass and for all of the major Prefaces. It even goes further in providing chant tones for the readings and for all four Eucharistic Prayers.

In some cases the document specified tasks for the episcopal conferences or the bishop to regulate sacred music. Unfortunately, with so much on their hands after the Second Vatican Council, many episcopal conferences did not consider liturgical music a priority. Thus in many cases the document was left without any regulatory organs on the local or national level to implement its dispositions. The choice of music was thus often left to each parish with relatively little official guidance and supervision — at the same time other sources, sometimes motivated by commercial concerns, offered parishes a wide range of music of disparate quality.

In part this situation has been redressed by the U.S. episcopal conference, which has inserted into the new General Instruction a requirement that all musical settings of the texts for the people's responses and acclamations in the Order of Mass and for special rites that occur in the course of the liturgical year must be submitted to the bishops' Secretariat for the Liturgy, for review and approval prior to publication (No. 393).

— Extract from the General Instruction —

#### The Importance of Singing

39. The Christian faithful who gather together as one to await the Lord's coming are instructed by the Apostle Paul to sing together psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (cf. Col 3:16). Singing is the sign of the heart's joy (cf. Acts 2:46). Thus Saint Augustine says rightly, "Singing is for one who loves."<sup>1</sup> There is also the ancient proverb: "One who sings well prays twice."

40. Great importance should therefore be attached to the use of singing in the celebration of the Mass, with due consideration for the culture of the people and abilities of each liturgical assembly. Although it is not always necessary (e.g., in weekday Masses) to sing all the texts that are of themselves meant to be sung, every

care should be taken that singing by the ministers and the people is not absent in celebrations that occur on Sundays and on holy days of obligation.

In the choosing of the parts actually to be sung, however, preference should be given to those that are of greater importance and especially to those to be sung by the priest or the deacon or the lector, with the people responding, or by the priest and people together.<sup>2</sup>

41. All other things being equal, Gregorian chant holds pride of place because it is proper to the Roman Liturgy. Other types of sacred music, in particular polyphony, are in no way excluded, provided that they correspond to the spirit of the liturgical action and that they foster the participation of all the faithful.<sup>3</sup>

Since faithful from different countries come together ever more frequently, it is fitting that they know how to sing together at least some parts of the Ordinary of the Mass in Latin, especially the Creed and the Lord's Prayer, set to the simpler melodies.<sup>4</sup>

1 Cf. Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Musicam sacram*, On music in the Liturgy, 5 March 1967, nos. 7, 16: AAS 59 (1967), pp. 302, 305.

2 Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 116; cf. also Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Musicam sacram*, On music in the Liturgy, 5 March 1967, no. 30.

3 Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 54; Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Inter Oecumenici*, on the orderly carrying out of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 26 September 1964, no. 59: AAS 56 (1964), p. 891; Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Musicam sacram*, On music in the Liturgy, 5 March 1967, no. 47: AAS 59 (1967), p. 314.

4 Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 30, 34; cf. also Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Musicam sacram*, On music in the Liturgy, 5 March 1967, no. 21.

A 1958 instruction "De Musica Sacra" issued by the Congregation of Rites, states: "Finally, only those musical instruments which are played by the personal action of the artist may be admitted to the sacred liturgy, and not those which are operated automatically or mechanically." This document followed Pope Pius XII's 1955 encyclical, "Musicae Sacrae," in which he insisted that liturgical music be "true art," if it is to be a genuine act of worship and praise of God.

On June 15, 2001, the Latin-rite members of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops approved "Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America." They were confirmed by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments on March 22, 2002 (Prot. 1383/01/L), and subsequently published as particular law for all Latin celebrations of the Sacred Liturgy in the dioceses of the United States, effective April 7, 2002.

5. While the heart of the celebration of the Eucharist is the Eucharistic Prayer, the consummation of the Mass is found in Holy Communion, whereby the people purchased for the Father by his beloved Son eat and drink the Body and Blood of Christ. They are thereby joined together as members of Christ's mystical Body, sharing the one life of the Spirit. In the great sacrament of the altar, they are joined to Christ Jesus and to one another.

It was also Christ's will that this sacrament be received as the soul's spiritual food to sustain and build up those who live with his life, as he said, "He who eats me, he also shall live because of me" (Jn 6:57). This sacrament is also to be a remedy to free us from our daily defects and to keep us from mortal sin. It was Christ's will, moreover, that this sacrament be a pledge of our future glory and our everlasting happiness and, likewise, a symbol of that one body of which he is the head (cf. Lk 22:19 and 1 Cor 11:3). He willed that we, as members of this body should be united to it by firm bonds of faith, hope and love, so that we might all say the same thing, and that there might be no dissensions among us (cf. 1 Cor 1:10). (13)

As Catholics, we fully participate in the celebration of the Eucharist when we receive Holy Communion. We are encouraged to receive Communion devoutly and frequently. In order to be properly disposed to receive Communion, participants should not be conscious of grave sin and normally should have fasted for one hour. A person who is conscious of grave sin is not to receive the Body and Blood of the Lord without prior sacramental confession except for a grave reason where there is no opportunity for confession. In this case, the person is to be mindful of the obligation to make an act of perfect contrition, including the intention of confessing as soon as possible (canon 916). A frequent reception of the Sacrament of Penance is encouraged for all. (14)

14. The act of Communion, therefore, is also an act of faith. For when the minister says, "The Body of Christ" or "The Blood of Christ," the communicant's "Amen" is a profession in the presence of the saving Christ, body and blood, soul and divinity, who now gives life to the believer.

15. The communicant makes this act of faith in the total presence of the Lord Jesus Christ whether in Communion under one form or in Communion under both kinds. It should never be construed, therefore, that Communion under the form of bread alone or Communion under the form of wine alone is somehow an incomplete act or that Christ is not fully present to the communicant. The Church's unchanging teaching from the time of the Fathers through the ages—notably in the ecumenical councils of Lateran IV, Constance, Florence, Trent, and Vatican II—has witnessed to a constant unity of faith in the presence of Christ in both elements. (25) Clearly there are some pastoral circumstances that require eucharistic sharing in one species only, such as when Communion is brought to the sick or when one is unable to receive either the Body of the Lord or the Precious Blood due to an illness. Even in the earliest days of the Church's life, when Communion under both species was the norm, there were always instances when the Eucharist was received under only the form of bread or

wine. Those who received Holy Communion at home or who were sick would usually receive under only one species, as would the whole Church during the Good Friday Liturgy. (26) Thus, the Church has always taught the doctrine of concomitance, by which we know that under each species alone, the whole Christ is sacramentally present and we “receive all the fruit of Eucharistic grace.” (27)

#### Holy Communion Under Both Kinds

17. From the first days of the Church’s celebration of the Eucharist, Holy Communion consisted of the reception of both species in fulfillment of the Lord’s command to “take and eat . . . take and drink.” The distribution of Holy Communion to the faithful under both kinds was thus the norm for more than a millennium of Catholic liturgical practice.

#### PART II Norms for the Distribution of Holy Communion Under Both Kinds

24. The General Instruction then indicates that “In practice, the need to avoid obscuring the role of the priest and the deacon as the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion by an excessive use of extraordinary minister might in some circumstances constitute a reason either for limiting the distribution of Holy Communion under both species or for using intinction instead of distributing the Precious Blood from the chalice.”

Norms established by the diocesan bishop must be observed wherever the Eucharist is celebrated in the diocese, “even in the churches of religious orders and in celebrations with small groups.” (37)

26. By virtue of his sacred ordination, the bishop or priest offers the sacrifice in the person of Christ, the Head of the Church. He receives gifts of bread and wine from the faithful, offers the sacrifice to God, and returns to them the very Body and Blood of Christ, as from the hands of Christ himself. (39) Thus bishops and priests are considered the ordinary ministers of Holy Communion. In addition the deacon who assists the bishop or priest in distributing Communion is an ordinary minister of Holy Communion. When the Eucharist is distributed under both forms, “the deacon ministers the chalice.” (40)

28. When the size of the congregation or the incapacity of the bishop, priest, or deacon requires it, the celebrant may be assisted by other bishops, priests, or deacons. (42) If such ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are not present, “the priest may call upon extraordinary ministers to assist him, i.e., formally instituted acolytes or even some of the faithful who have been commissioned according to the prescribed rite. In case of necessity, the priest may also commission suitable members of the faithful for the occasion.” (43) Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion should receive sufficient spiritual, theological, and practical preparation to fulfill their role with knowledge and reverence. When recourse is had to Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, especially in the distribution of Holy Communion under both kinds, their number should not be increased beyond what is required for the orderly and reverent distribution of the Body and Blood of the Lord.



In all matters such Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion should follow the guidance of the diocesan bishop.

29. All ministers of Holy Communion should show the greatest reverence for the Most Holy Eucharist by their demeanor, their attire, and the manner in which they handle the consecrated bread or wine. Should there be any mishap—as when, for example, the consecrated wine is spilled from the chalice—then the affected “area . . . should be washed and the water poured into the sacrarium.” (44)

38. If extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are required by pastoral need, they approach the altar as the priest receives Communion. After the priest has concluded his own Communion, he distributes Communion to the extraordinary ministers, assisted by the deacon, and then hands the sacred vessels to them for distribution of Holy Communion to the people.

39. All receive Holy Communion in the manner described by the General Instruction to the Roman Missal, whether priest concelebrants (cf. GIRM, nos. 159, 242, 243, 246), deacons (cf. GIRM, nos. 182, 244, 246), or extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion (cf. GIRM, no. 284). Neither deacons nor lay ministers may ever receive Holy Communion in the manner of a concelebrating priest. The practice of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion waiting to receive Holy Communion until after the distribution of Holy Communion is not in accord with liturgical law.

40. After all eucharistic ministers have received Communion, the bishop or priest celebrant reverently hands vessels containing the Body or the Blood of the Lord to the deacons or extraordinary ministers who will assist with the distribution of Holy Communion. The deacon may assist the priest in handing the vessels containing the Body and Blood of the Lord to the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

41. Holy Communion under the form of bread is offered to the communicant with the words “The Body of Christ.” The communicant may choose whether to receive the Body of Christ in the hand or on the tongue. When receiving in the hand, the communicant should be guided by the words of St. Cyril of Jerusalem: “When you approach, take care not to do so with your hand stretched out and your fingers open or apart, but rather place your left hand as a throne beneath your right, as befits one who is about to receive the King. Then receive him, taking care that nothing is lost.” (51)

44. The chalice may never be left on the altar or another place to be picked up by the communicant for self-communication (except in the case of concelebrating bishops or priests), nor may the chalice be passed from one communicant to another. There shall always be a minister of the chalice.

46. It is the choice of the communicant, not the minister, to receive from the chalice.

50. The communicant, including the extraordinary minister, is never allowed to self-communicate, even by means of intinction. Communion under either form,

bread or wine, must always be given by an ordinary or extraordinary minister of Holy Communion.

52. When more of the Precious Blood remains than was necessary for Communion, and if not consumed by the bishop or priest celebrant, “the deacon immediately and reverently consumes at the altar all of the Blood of Christ which remains; he may be assisted, if needs dictate, by other deacons and priests.” (54) When there are extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, they may consume what remains of the Precious Blood from their chalice of distribution with permission of the diocesan bishop.

55. The reverence due to the Precious Blood of the Lord demands that it be fully consumed after Communion is completed and never be poured into the ground or the sacrarium.

13. Council of Trent, Session xiii (October 11, 1551), *De ratione institutionis ss. huius sacramenti*. (Latin text in Henricus Denzinger and Adolfus Schönmetzer, eds., *Enchiridion Symbolorum: Definitionum et Declarationum de Rebus Fidei et Morum* [DS] [Barcinone: Herder, 1976], 1638. English text in John F. Clarkson et al., *The Church Teaches* [TCT] [St. Louis, Mo.: B. Herder, 1955], 720.)

14. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Guidelines for the Reception of Communion* (Washington, D.C., 1996).

25. Cf. GIRM, no. 281.

26. Cf. St. Cyprian, *De Lapsis*, 25, on Communion of infants and children; on Communion of the sick and dying, cf. *Statuta ecclesiae antiqua*, can. 76.

27. CCC, no. 1390.

37. GIRM, no. 283.

39. Cf. Congregation of Rites, *Eucharisticum Mysterium: On Worship of the Eucharist* [EM] (May 25, 1967), part I, “General Principles to Be Given Prominence in Catechizing the People on the Eucharistic Mystery” (DOL 179, nos. 1234–1244).

40. Cf. GIRM, no. 93.

42. Cf. GIRM, no. 108.

43. Cf. GIRM, no. 162.

44. GIRM, no. 162. Cf. also Sacred Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Immensae Caritatis: Instruction on Facilitating Reception of Communion in Certain Circumstances*, section 1.I.c (DOL 264, no. 2075).

51. Cf. GIRM, no. 73.

54. GIRM, no. 287.

### **7–D: Clerics’ responsibilities with respect to preaching**

Reading homilies is okay. But when doing so, one should try to read much as one would speak if one were not reading. When not reading, people normally change speed, loudness, pitch, and often make gestures. Homily readers should do that too. They should not try to be dramatic and should not try to imitate others’ pulpit styles—which sometimes are not really good and in any case will not fit them. They should not speak as they do in casual conversation, with slang and so on. But they should try to speak as they themselves would in an earnest conversation with someone they greatly respect about a similarly serious matter.

The reason is not just to make it seem they are speaking spontaneously, though seemingly spontaneous speech sometimes is more effective than what is obviously prepared and more likely to be accepted as credible. But there is another reason: in oral communication, the patterns of spontaneous speech have developed because they are more effective in communicating what one is trying to communicate, including intelligible content. So, a good homily read without proper phrasing, changes of pace, and so on is less effective. Needless to say, the same goes for reading the readings and Gospels, though there are conventions for doing that, and one should not depart from them in ways that will call attention to oneself. For to do that is to distract people—always a no no.

Preachers pointing out the moral implication or proper application of something in Scripture often stress that point and repeat it. Rhetorically, doing that can be counterproductive. When one points out the principle clearly enough and something is on people’s minds, if they make the application themselves, they are far more likely to accept it (as when counseling, one tries to lead people to see something they need to see for themselves, rather than simply telling them). If one stresses the moral, that automatically provokes a certain hesitation and resistance: “Is this something I need to accept and go with?” Example: A crime in the neighborhood has provoked many people’s anger and hatred toward the criminal and the ethnic group from which the criminal comes. The gospel calls for love of enemies and warns against passing judgment. The preacher need not mention the crime and people’s wrong reaction. Instead, he can work to get people to understand and accept the truth of the principle and, with the power of the Spirit, its practicability—indeed, its necessity within the context of a community that exists only due to God’s mercy in Jesus, who loved to the end and overcame the evil of all our sins precisely in that way.

*CIC*, c. 769: “Christian doctrine is to be set forth in a way accommodated to the condition of the listeners and in a manner adapted to the needs of the times.” The point is: communicate what people most need to hear here and now, what really will help them, and really communicate it, by putting what is to be communicated into language and supporting it with rhetoric that will effectively help people attend, hear, appropriate, and benefit from the message.

That need not always mean talking about current events or the content of popular media, though sometimes doing so is appropriate or helpful. Jesus’ preaching certainly met the criterion, yet the synoptic gospels do not portray him as talking about current events very often or very much. Yet he did not offer a merely abstract message, but spoke to the people what they needed to hear then and there.

DV 11 makes it clear that all that the human authors of books of Scripture assert is asserted by the Holy Spirit, and *therefore* Scripture must be held to teach firmly, faithfully, and without error the truth God wanted put there for the sake of our salvation. That being so, preachers should neither accept nor convey opinions—even of exegetes or systematic theologians—that contradict propositions proposed in Scripture, except insofar as those opinions suggest that a proposition is not affirmed by the human author and it seems opportune to convey that suggestion in order to resolve apparent inconsistencies with other Scripture passages or Church teachings.

At the same time, preachers should not propose from Scripture any proposition for belief by the faithful unless confident that the proposition was asserted by the book's author. That requires thoughtful and cautious use of scholarly commentaries, to eliminate gross misreadings and accommodation, which is very common in homilies.

DV 19 reaffirms the historicity of the gospels. The Council does affirm that the apostles handed on their account with the fuller insight they gained from “the glorious events of Christ”; and that the sacred writers composed the gospel accounts by various processes, that involved selecting, synthesizing, and explaining in view of the churches' needs. But at the same time the Council emphasizes that from the gospels we know the truth about Jesus. Some of the works of Ben Meyer and N. T. Wright might well be cited here with cautious commendation as competent works that undermine much supposedly scientific deconstruction of the historicity of the gospels.

DV 20 makes clear the value of the other books of the NT. The Lord remained with the Church and sent the Spirit; these other books also are composed under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These books “confirm what [the Gospels tell] about Christ the Lord, increasingly clarify his real teaching, preach the salvific power of Christ's divine work, tell the story of the Church's beginning and wonderful expansion, and foretell her glorious consummation.”

DV 21 says several things about Scripture that make clear how important preaching is—that it should not be treated as less significant than the administration of the sacraments. To begin with, it says the Church “never ceases to take the bread of life from the one table of God's word and Christ's body.” Scripture with tradition is the supreme *rule* of faith, because the Bible is inspired by God and unalterable. God speaks to his children in Scripture. So it has force and power; it strengthens the Church herself, her children's faith, providing food for the soul and a font of spiritual life. It builds up toward eternal life.

Thinking of Christian religion in terms of an interpersonal relationship with God, Scripture provides his end of the verbal communication in a unified and comprehensive form. The sacraments supply his end of the cooperative *actions* that believers are to participate in; the rite for each involves some parts of Scripture, but the whole also needs to be available to shape the relationship overall.

OT 4 points out the essential connection between the liturgy of the word, in which the faithful hear and respond to the annunciation of the Lord's death and resurrection, and the offering by which Christ confirms the new covenant in his blood, in which the faithful share by their interior acts and receiving communion. Everything in Scripture leads to Jesus' resurrection,

and liturgical preaching should show the connection of all salvation history to it; at the same time, that preaching should promote the interior acts that are necessary for active participation in the richest and truest sense.

When preaching, the point is to focus upon and assist the appropriation of some element of God's revelation. Not only propositions are revealed. Revelation is a shaping, personal communication. Scripture shapes feelings and attitudes rather directly at times.

For the homily to be successful, hearers must be receptive to what they are to appropriate. Their receptivity can be stimulated by somehow raising their consciousness of need for precisely what is to be focused upon. That may be done in different ways—e.g., by describing experiences, perhaps by means of a story, or by asking questions and suggesting how they might be answered, or by reporting something from a human science such as psychology or sociology. None of these is appropriate as something to be done for its own sake, but can be used if likely to be effective as a *means* of raising consciousness and enhancing receptivity.

Preachers should have one definite point. To try to convey more than one point confuses people and distracts them from the one thing. An emotional impact is necessary, so that people will pay attention. But one must convince people of the truth, or the emotional impact—as in revivals—will not have any lasting benefit.

To preach, one needs to study and keep on studying. This is more than meditation on Scripture. Theology, even bad theology, can be helpful, insofar as it forces one to think through what one believes, and proposes errors and confusions to be clarified and dealt with.

One needs to take time to reflect on the readings. One needs to commit oneself to some definite schedule of preparation, and stick to it, for otherwise one tends to leave things slide and ends up unprepared.

Possibility of discussing with a family worth considering.

Preach about heaven all the time—with enough mention of hell that it isn't off the screen.

The standard of holiness should not be lowered for the laity. At the same time, they need to be encouraged that it can be done. How? It is a matter of grace, not of your capacity to perform. Ask, with faith, and the Spirit can do in you what you cannot. The basic thrust is to perfect fulfillment of personal vocation. One needs to do only what God calls one to do, and God does not call anyone to do anything without providing the means to do it. The example of all sorts of saints—and stories about holy people who aren't canonized saints, who may still be alive, and whose names are better unmentioned—will help.

In considering the potential material for a homily—the readings, the other elements of the liturgical texts, the sacrament or feast—the homilist should ask himself: What *one* essential, revealed thing in all this does Jesus want to convey to *this* congregation on *this* occasion? Discerning what that is, he then should figure out how to dispose those gathered to attend to, understand, receive, embrace, and appropriately respond to that, so that the Lord's message will bear salvific fruit.

The good homilist will consider all the possibilities the material offers. Some texts will be hard for him to understand, or to know what to do with. Some will be “hard sayings” that

some people don't like. The good homilist will not automatically latch on to such texts, but neither will he discriminate against them, for he will realize that fairly often in them he will find what the people need to hear and the Lord wishes to convey.

The good homilist will not suppose he is free to preach on anything he likes, or finds easy. He will not treat the task of preaching as if it were an academic assignment to be fulfilled as easily as possible in some way that will make him look reasonably bright and hardworking. He will be prepared, when necessary, to do some research and to seek advice from more expert homilists. Early on in his preparation, he might well meet with some who will be members of the congregation and ask them which of several possible topics seems to them right, and why, or how to make Jesus' essential message fruitful for themselves and others.

The good homilist will regard himself as Jesus' messenger, who has no authority over the content of the message, but only a responsibility to deliver it—yet, given its tremendous importance, to do what messengers seldom do, to make sure it gets through and is effective. Still, one can imagine a messenger sent to deliver a tremendously valuable gift whose assigned task included making sure the recipients realized it was for real a tremendously valuable gift, that they did not ruin it in opening it, and perhaps even that they understood the conditions for its care and use.

In preaching, formulas are not to be followed mindlessly. For instance, while it can be useful to begin with an attention-grabbing story, reference to current events, or even joke, such things often are unnecessary and just block getting down to business. The opener serves well only if it is simple, short, and really tied in significantly to what follows. And while it is appropriate to tie in the end of the homily with the coming Eucharist, doing that directly in every homily is artificial and unnecessary.

In preaching, talking about oneself and one's experiences requires great care. If in doubt, don't do it. Never brag; never talk on at length, warming to the subject. Talking about one's experiences in Rome or on other travels, and mentioning one's contacts with famous people often is bragging and almost always is distracting or otherwise unhelpful. (The counter that St. Paul and the prophets often talk about themselves is beside the point; the writings in which they do so are not homilies.) Don't present your own faith experience as a kind of standard that others are to meet. Never use one's parents, past parishioners, or other intimates as bad examples. Don't degrade yourself by speaking in detail of past wrongdoing. Be very careful not to seem to violate the seal of confession or pastoral confidentiality by the way of using experiences from such sources. Anything one says about oneself should be humble and directly helpful to others. In some cases, one might be able to use real cases by presenting them as fiction, or attribute one's own experience to "a priest whom I know."

At the same time, the homily will be effective unless the homilist bears personal witness to the truth of what he preaches. But the way for him to do that is by his action, not by talking about himself. By practicing what he preaches, he bears witness to the gospel's truth without needing to talk about himself.

Specific moral issues generally are not good subject matter for homilies. Few of them concern one's whole congregation. Some cannot be addressed well when children are present.

But general moral topics—personal vocation, conscience formation, and so on—are appropriately addressed in homilies. More important, the matters that specify and support firm commitment of faith, lively hope, and loving service are important. If faithful have the right dispositions, they will be anxious to know what Christian morality requires and to do it. Without those dispositions, no amount of moral instruction is helpful.

Stephen Vincent DeLeers, “The Place of Preaching in the Ministry and Life of Priests,” in Donald J. Goergen, O.P. and Ann Garrido, eds., *The Theology of Priesthood* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2000), 87–103, deals with preaching largely on the basis of Vatican II documents.

The requirements of good public speaking must be met: (1) plan carefully what is to be said, whether outlining or writing out, and avoid repetition except to briefly indicate what is to be said and/or briefly summarizes what has been said; (2) without resorting to slang or vulgar language, find simple, straightforward expressions that will be understandable at once to most of those present, yet do not speak to adults as if they were children; (3) practice and make certain that what one plans to say will fit within the time allowed; (4) speak clearly without mumbling, never too fast but varying speed so that simple points are made quickly and more difficult ones more slowly, never too soft to be heard but varying volume for emphasis on what is most important (while loudness emphasizes, softness conveys reverence for what is most sacred and personally significant); (5) look at those listening, glancing from one to another; (6) include yourself with those you address whenever possible, and avoid as much as possible saying anything likely to injure or provoke anger.

*The General Introduction to the Lectionary*, 2nd edition (21 January 1981), 24:

Through the course of the liturgical year the homily sets forth the mysteries of faith and the standards of the Christian life on the basis of the sacred text. . . . The purpose of the homily at Mass is that the spoken word of God and the liturgy of the Eucharist may together become “a proclamation of God’s wonderful works in the history of salvation, the mystery of Christ.”[SC 35] Through the readings and homily Christ’s paschal mystery is proclaimed; through the sacrifice of the Mass it becomes present.[Note SC 6 and 47] Moreover Christ himself is always present and active in the preaching of his Church.[Several references, first to *Mysterium fidei*]

Whether the homily explains the text of the Sacred Scriptures proclaimed in the readings or some other text of the Liturgy,[SC 35, and instruction on the Missal] it must always lead the community of the faithful to celebrate the Eucharist actively, “so that they may hold fast in their lives to what they have grasped by faith.”[SC 10] From this living explanation, the word of God proclaimed in the readings and the Church’s celebration of the day’s Liturgy will have greater impact.

41: The one presiding exercises his proper office and the ministry of the word of God also as he preaches the homily.[two references] In this way he leads his brothers and sisters to an affective knowledge [the expression is *sapidam intelligentiam*, which means “an appreciative—or a relishing—understanding”] of Scripture. He opens their minds to thanksgiving for the wonderful works of God. He strengthens [*alit*:

nourishes] the faith of those present in [*circa*: with] the word that in the celebration becomes sacrament through the Holy Spirit. Finally, he prepares them for a fruitful reception of Communion and invites them to take upon themselves the demands of the Christian life.[The sentences are not separate in Latin or Italian, making it clearer that these good effects are all desired *together*.]

What a good homily should do is prevent the readings and the words of the liturgical common and proper from going in one ear and out the other. It cannot do this very extensively on a single occasion. But it can do something on each occasion, with a cumulative deepening of understanding, and lead to better *listening* and hearing—thus, more active participation. The point focused on should be a truth of faith, because all of them are related to Christ's paschal mystery. And appreciating the truth of faith *always* has implications for the life of faith—though not necessarily of a narrowly legalistic sort.

Like conversation before marital intercourse, the homily prepares for the intimacy of the eucharistic sacrifice and sacrament. The conversation need not have *content* that makes it clear that the spouses love each other; it can be about anything that deeply concerns them. But the friendliness of the conversation reawakens *feelings* of friendship and so paves the way for affectionate intercourse. The committee's document is too rationalistic. It assumes that the point of the homily must be that God is loving toward them, so they will be able to thank and praise him.

Some prepared homilies, whether in books or otherwise, and homily preparation helps could be used properly, but often are abused. Giving a canned homily fails to attend to the needs of congregation, and hardly will have the character of *personal* communication. Looking at prepared materials as a starting point is more likely to block out other thoughts than to provoke them. If homily helps and exegetical works are to be looked at, that should be only after one has done one's best. Looking at various translations of the reading and, in the case of synoptics, comparing parallels and also different commentaries can be helpful. But much exegesis is questionable and most of it is unhelpful, because it is too technical and almost entirely irrelevant to hearers' real needs and concerns; it is most useful insofar as it prevents one from asserting things that are false or indefensible. In other words, exegetes often can tell the homilist what not to say but seldom can suggest anything to say.

For almost everyone, almost all the time, writing out and revising a Sunday homily is the way to go—but that does not mean one must read the final written version. Talking from notes often is more lively and effective.

Waznak, *An Introduction to the Homily*, 3, has a quote from Justin Martyr that indicates the homily was a moral exhortation—"to imitate such examples of virtue."

Obviously, preaching is useless if it tries to lay down the law, to give orders. One must help people see the goodness of being good and desire to be good. Sin is bad for sinners and for other people, because moral goodness is fulfilling with respect to human goods. Sinful habits enslave; repentance liberates—e.g., AA helps alcoholics get out from under. One must not take an adversarial approach; we are in this together, and all of us need insight and



motivation to be holy. Living the life of good deeds God prepared in advance is how one becomes all one can be—the person God meant one to be forever. Heaven is in store.

A homily should speak to *this* congregation, not merely to some generic congregation. But likewise not to a segment of *this* congregations, ignoring the rest—e.g., not to married couples, when there are single people and children present. So, the present natural, cultural, social, and economic circumstances that are common to all become the main positive source of the particularity called for in a homily, and the common limitations of the congregation are the negative source of its particularity.

At times, two of the readings or even all three bear upon one important point that needs to be conveyed. But in many cases they do not, especially during ordinary time, when the second reading was not chosen to correspond to the first reading and the Gospel. Homilists should study and pray over all the readings, but should not try to “work in” all the readings or even to “touch base” on all of them. Indeed, when the responsorial psalm or some other element of the liturgy, whether of the common or proper, is the source of the point to be conveyed, the homilist need not even mention the readings of the day.

The determination of what is to be conveyed must take into account the people’s needs and situation. But that does not mean that the determination should be ad hoc each week. On the contrary, a plan for the three-year cycle should be developed, so that a range of points that the people need to hear will be presented in ways relevant and intelligible to them. The failure to plan virtually guarantees that a homilist will repeat fairly often a fairly small number of points that are particularly important to him—e.g., the homilist who repeatedly reassures people that God loves them unconditionally and calls on them to appreciate his mercy and thank him for it. That is an important and good point that most people need to hear sometimes, but it should not be repeated over and over, and does need to be complemented with the point that intimacy with God requires reciprocation of his unconditional love.

In a parish with more than one homilist, preparation should, if possible, be collaborative, which is likely to make for stronger homilies and a cycle that is richer in important content. If that is done, it will be important not to repeat the same cycle the next time. Rather, in successive cycles, consideration should be given to readings or elements of the liturgy not dealt with in that parish in earlier ones.

Waznak, *An Introduction to the Homily*, 86, urges: “Until a revision of the Lectionary, homilists must find creative ways to include the great themes, stories, and heroines that have been excluded.” But as, in general, the readings and liturgy should not be used as an occasion or excuse for making points one wants to make, it is an abuse to ignore the actual chosen readings and bring in other scriptural material—as he urges doing especially with the OT readings—so as to make points about social justice, the role of women, and so forth. Such catechesis needs to be conveyed outside the liturgy at some other suitable time. It might be included as an insert in the parish bulletin.

Canned up homilies: can you imagine using canned up stuff to communicate with a family member about something really important? Canned up homilies are like greeting cards purchased for birthdays and other special occasions. If one really cares enough to send the

very best, one might purchase a beautiful note card or piece of note paper, but one will write in one's own way and words what is really in one's heart and most suitable for that person and that occasion. And one will not just dash it off, but think about it, perhaps draft it carefully on scrap paper, correct it, and copy it so that it will be just right—and legible. The homilist should do as much—he ought to think the thing through and care enough to deliver the very best that is in him.

Don't use irrelevant stories, jokes, or other contrivances as warm ups to get into the homily. Avoid writing an introduction until the rest of the homily has been drafted, or else throw away the introductory material until you get to what you really want to convey. Don't begin with excuses or apologies; that lowers people's already low expectations. And don't say what you want to say or ask permission to say it. Getting rid of such pointless stuff allows one to speak more slowly, to pause so that the people can take in what one is saying. Also, while the homily should prepare for what follows it, one need not be explicit about that—especially inasmuch as what follows is not *only* the Eucharist but following through on it in one's daily life.

Funeral homilies are a special problem. Be brief. Don't talk about the specifics of how and why the person died, and don't throw out “consoling truths” that may not be consoling in the circumstances. Avoid eulogy, but that does not mean ignoring the occasion. Rather, speak to it from the readings, taking into account without discussing the person's life and relationship to the Church. Leave judgment to God, neither condemning nor canonizing the deceased. The main point, remember, should be a truth of faith, something Jesus certainly wants to get across to these people here and now. So, it should not concern a matter of fact.

Homilies to congregations including children should take the children into consideration, and usually should take them as the target audience. If one communicates effectively to them, one will get the message across to adults as well; but one can communicate effectively to adults while leaving the children (and perhaps less intelligent and/or less attentive adults) behind.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 43:

This preaching, inserted in a unique way into the Eucharistic celebration, from which it receives special force and vigor, certainly has a particular role in evangelization, to the extent that it expresses the profound faith of the sacred minister and is impregnated with love. The faithful assembled as a Paschal Church, celebrating the feast of the Lord present in their midst, expect much from this preaching, and will greatly benefit from it provided that it is simple, clear, direct, well-adapted, profoundly dependent on Gospel teaching and faithful to the magisterium, animated by a balanced apostolic ardor coming from its own characteristic nature, full of hope, fostering belief, and productive of peace and unity.

“Animated by a balanced apostolic ardor coming from its own characteristic nature” is hard to understand. I think it means that the preacher is stirred up and excited by the message he has to preach and by his interest in getting that message across to these people. The excitement is not coming (just) from general enthusiasm or something else outside his preparing and doing the homily itself—much less is it put on. The balance of the ardor is

that he limits his expression of enthusiasm so that it does not call attention to itself and become a distraction, but works as subliminal motivation for the congregation, and thus serves effectively the message he's conveying.

It is hardly likely that someone who delivers a canned homily is going to meet that standard. If he does, he will have had to appropriate the material and become intent on conveying it. Using canned homilies, however, usually means minimal preparation and thought, and simply reading or talking the outline presented, and doing that on the basis of practically no thought and prayer. If someone is going to do the job right, he might as well start by trying to figure out what these people need to hear—and then he'll use little or nothing of any canned homily he might look at.

Homilies cannot be “full of hope” if there is no clear reference to that for which we are to hope—the kingdom, or, at least, various aspects of it.

Homilies need to be productive of peace and unity in the same way that Jesus' work of evangelization was, not by glossing over, compromising, etc.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 43: “The homily has a place and must not be neglected in the celebration of all the sacraments.” Even Penance has a place for optional Scripture reading, and the rite of Anointing seems to require it. If a reading, it is appropriate to say a sentence or two focusing the message and helping people appropriate it. *That* is a homily. Homilies do not need to be long. Good weekday homilies often are very short.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 79:

Yet another sign of love will be the effort to transmit to Christians not doubts and uncertainties born of an erudition poorly assimilated but certainties that are solid because they are anchored in the Word of God. The faithful need these certainties for their Christian life; they have a right to them, as children of God who abandon themselves entirely into His arms and to the exigencies of love.

The content of preaching must focus on certainties of faith, not on human opinions, including even sound ones of Scripture scholars. While looking at commentaries often is helpful in preparing homilies, they ought not be mentioned (with very rare exceptions). And it helps not at all to present the faithful with historical-critical questions, doubts, etc. Least of all, if one is showing off his erudition. The faithful to whom homilies are given have not only abandoned themselves into God's arms but entrusted themselves to mother Church, and her ministers ill serve both her and her children if they provide neither the Gospel's milk nor solid food, and they betray their office entirely if they spread contaminated fare likely to sicken them.

*Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*:

57. As the bishop devotes himself to the task of preaching he is concerned not just about choosing arguments and having a good, elegant style, but he also speaks in a way that is filled with faith, redolent of the sacred scriptures, and expressive of pastoral love. His sermons are faithful to the mind of the Church and show an understanding of the many needs of modern man. He never forgets that it is his office—and the example of his own life lights the way—to proclaim the Gospel and

make known to all men the greatness and the truth and the power of the Word of God (cf. 1 Cor 2:4) rather than to make an academic expose of some thesis.

To the extent that the homilist is offering arguments, they should be sound, clean, and clear. He should not strive for rhetorical elegance for its own sake but should use whatever style is most likely to help him communicate effectively to *this* congregation. The homilist's own deep conviction ought to be clear. "Redolent" is not a very good word: the idea is that the essential message should be something revealed and scriptural phrases and allusions generally should be used to convey it. The homily should make it clear that the preacher really is anxious to help the congregation to follow Jesus and reach heaven. Nothing in a homily should call into question Church teaching. Even if there are problems (in some teaching) legitimately to be discussed, the homily is not the place for that. The homilist shows an understanding of the "many needs of modern men" by coming to grips with *some* real need of the people he is addressing—their need to pay the price their situation will demand to be faithful Christians, *their* temptations, but also the way the gospel benefits *them*. The Gospel really does meet human needs that people today do not see to be such; that also should be made clear to them—how well off they are (or will be) in accepting and living by the Gospel.

The homilist must practice what he preaches but not brag about doing so. If he does not practice what he preaches, he'll probably not preach it; if he does, his credibility will be undermined. He is to make the gospel known to all men: the homily is not to be addressed to only part of the congregation. In congregations with children and adults or simple people and sophisticated ones, try to address the children and the simple people; if done rightly, the message will be no less effective for the rest. On occasions when many people who do not usually come to church are present, make them the target audience. The homily is not to be an academic expose of some thesis. That means: don't talk about the Scripture scholars you looked up. Also, don't quote and provide reference to the things you found in doctors of the Church, papal documents etc., except on very rare occasions. And never quote theologians who have not been canonized.

*Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, 59: Homilies should be delivered "in a plain, familiar way suited to the understanding of all." Unless pastoral reasons suggest otherwise, the homilist should draw from the available texts of the day's liturgy "the principal truths of the Christian faith." The homilist "should above all understand the mentality, customs, conditions, dangers and prejudices of the individuals and groups to whom he speaks and he should constantly adapt his method of teaching to their capacity, character and needs."

This is addressed to bishops, but can be used for all. The point about target audience supports my view. Likewise the point about "principal truths"; one usually does not give homilies on specific moral issues, though these might be mentioned as examples. The adaptation to audience is essential, and makes it clear that canned homilies and old stories are not relevant.

Christian worship is not limited to Sundays or to liturgical acts; the rational worship God wants is the whole of one's life. The Eucharist enables Jesus' disciples to bring the whole of their lives and offer them in union with his total self-gift to the Father. The whole process carries out the covenantal union Jesus established at the Last Supper. And it all moves toward heavenly fulfillment; indeed, the Mass participates in the heavenly liturgy. Thus, the main

function of the homily is to point to aspects of God's word that will help people recall what the liturgy really is about and hold out before them the homeland toward which they are journeying: the homeland where God will be there God, they will be his people, and a rich and joyful life together will unfold forever.

John Paul II, General Audience (21 April 1993), 5, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng.), 28 April 1993, 11:

5. The Council recalled that proclaiming the divine word has the effect of producing and nourishing faith, and of contributing to the Church's development. It said: "Through the saving word the spark of faith is lit in the hearts of unbelievers, and fed in the hearts of the faithful. This is the way that the congregation of faithful is started and grows" (PO 4).

This principle must always be kept in mind: the goal of spreading, strengthening and increasing the faith must remain fundamental for everyone who preaches the Gospel, and thus for the priest who is especially and so often called to exercise the ministry of the word. A preaching which would be a tissue of psychological themes related to the person, or taken up with raising problems without resolving them, or causing doubts without indicating the source of Gospel light that can illumine the way for individuals and society, would not achieve the essential objective desired by the Savior. It would instead result in a source of disorientation for public opinion and of damage for believers themselves, whose right to know the true content of revelation would thus be ignored.

Abuses of preaching do not achieve the objective desired by the savior. What is to be proclaimed is the divine word—some truth or truths of faith that the preacher judges, after prayer, study, and reflection, to be those that the Lord most wishes to communicate to these folks here and now.

John Paul II, General Audience (21 April 1993), 6–7, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng.), 28 April 1993, 11:

6. . . .

These then are the ways to teach the divine word according to the Church: the witness of one's life, which makes it possible to discover the power of God's love and gives persuasive force to the preacher's word; explicitly preaching the mystery of Christ to non-believers; catechesis and the ordered, organic exposition of the Church's doctrine; application of revealed truth to judging and solving practical cases.

Under these conditions preaching shows its beauty and attracts people who want to see the glory of God today too.

7. This requirement of authentic and complete proclamation is not opposed to the principle of adapting preaching, which was especially stressed by the Council (cf. PO 4).

Clearly, the priest must above all ask himself, with a sense of responsibility and realistic evaluation, whether what he says in his preaching is understood by his listeners and whether it has an effect on the way they think and live. He should also strive to take stock of his own preaching, the various needs of his listeners and the different reasons they come together and seek his help. Clearly he should know and recognize his talents and use them to good advantage, not to show off (which would simply destroy his credibility with his listeners), but the better to bring the divine word to human minds and hearts.

More than to natural talents, however, the preacher must have recourse to those supernatural charisms that the history of the Church and of sacred eloquence presents in so many holy preachers. He will feel compelled to ask the Holy Spirit for the most appropriate effective way to speak, act and dialogue with his audience.

This passage contains the idea that the preacher's role is twofold, to present God's word and to try to help people appropriate it. The preacher must not show off but serve. He needs to pray for the grace of the Holy Spirit—something only those seriously concerned to get and do it right will do.

A good homily ought neither to present truths of faith without any practical implications nor moralize in a vacuum. Instead, the truths of faith and example of Jesus (and of saints involved in or related to the day's liturgy) should lead to implications that flow directly from them. In many cases, good preaching will be most effective if it presents the basis so clear that it is unnecessary to draw the implication explicitly, with the result that listeners draw it themselves, have it as their own insight, and so are more likely to accept rather than resist it, and therefore to take it to heart and act on it.

Not everything has to be made explicit. Suggestion may be enough. The implications need not be entirely determinate. The important point is to “stop the other ear”—to keep the word of the Lord from going in one ear and out the other. However, if the point made is so indeterminate and mysterious that many hearers (or the same few right along) will not be led to fruitful meditation, the method of “hook” is not being used well.

The homily ought not to be a lecture. It is not a matter of instruction from above, but of a conversation among brothers to grasp and be enriched by the word of the Lord.

It's not a good idea to quote what has just been read. On the other hand, the very words of Scripture or other elements of the liturgy that capture the central element of faith focused upon ought to be quoted at some point in the homily, since the faithful should and will believe these—the words provided have a credibility that the homilist's own words do not have (and should not be mistakenly thought to have).

The homily should connect up with what is not part of faith, in order to bring that into touch with faith, so that it will be illuminated and sanctified by the contact.

Deduction cannot be avoided if one is to accept and be transformed by the word, since it is given and intelligible, and only so can have meaning *for* us and our lives. Still, one also needs to provide material for what is given to bear upon and transform, and that cannot be done by

deduction. So, the right methodology is dialectic—a working back and forth between the polls to make the connections.

When saying things that are not essential but might be misunderstood with bad results, either avoid saying them or be very careful to forestall misunderstanding.

One can talk about oneself if it really contributes to beneficial insight and does not distract or generate an inappropriate set of feelings in hearers. Anything that might sound like bragging should be avoided unless it is *essential* to make a point: When I was in Rome . . . Sometimes actual experiences are better described as experiences a priest or a seminarian had without making it clear that they were one's own. One also must keep in mind one's image; if one is perceived as a lower-middle-class person, rightly or wrongly, one should keep in mind that whatever one says and one's body language will be interpreted with that perception in mind, and what others might say without seeming to be vulgarity might be wrongly taken to be vulgarity. If one is perceived as an upper-middle class and very sophisticated person, what others might say without seeming to boast and promote themselves will seem to be that.

Homilists must bear in mind that priests do not take their assignment with them. When they preach to a particular congregation, they are pastors for that congregation, just as it is. If a military chaplain home on leave fills in at an ordinary parish Sunday liturgy, he needs to serve these people, and should not burden them with his usual role. Often, that need never be mentioned; the people need never hear about it. But it might be mentioned for their spiritual benefit: for example, the homily might use something that will really help people; their charity might be broadened by being asked in the prayers of the faithful to pray for those he usually serves.

Homilists cannot always address the needs of everyone, and especially of visitors. But they should keep in mind that there are visitors, and not exclude them needlessly or impose on them. In-group jokes and other remarks that are unnecessary are out of place for this reason—nothing so much makes one conscious of being an outsider.

Don't set things up so that we, the believers and saved, are contrasted with them, the nonbelievers and lost. On the other hand, call attention to the blessings enjoyed, but see that they are recognized as blessings: the faith that was sown in our hearts at baptism seems to have taken hold and sprouted, so we have good reason to hope for the 30–60–100 yield—but: It is you who have accomplished all we have done.

Don't sideswipe Protestants or other groups in homilies. Don't say anything in a homily that one would not say if those talked about were present—say what must be said as if those who might be offended were present. There are two reasons: they might be, at least because some present have them as relatives or friends. More broadly, it's a question of charity. One wants those people to belong to the one body and be saved, and one should think and act toward them as if they were about to be present.

To use the hook rightly, one needs to really know people, to use something they will connect with (not something, for instance, from popular culture that some will not be able to connect with), and not something that will so distract that people will spend the rest of the Mass distracted by the hook rather than getting any benefit from the homily. There are so many

ways of going wrong that this technique cannot be used regularly, and cannot be used at all by many priests, who lack the imagination and creativity to develop fresh ideas. In other words, it's an artform, and only competent artists can pull it off well.

The technique of leaving the implications and applications openended, whether along with the hook or not, is more widely usable. But if the openendedness leaves many people at any time or the same small group all the time wondering what this is all about, and getting no payoff from the homily, it is an unfair withholding of service from some for the possible benefit of others.

All things considered, the classic homily form must be regarded as normative, and alternatives used only by those with sufficient skills and even then not all the time.

Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, III, B, 2: "As co-workers with the bishops, priests have as their primary duty the proclamation of the word (PO 4). They are gifted with a particular charism for the interpretation of Scripture, when, transmitting not their own ideas but the word of God, they apply the eternal truth of the Gospel to the concrete circumstances of daily life (ibid.)."

This application is the chief purpose of the homily—or rather, to help the faithful do the applying. The alternative is that the word goes in one ear and out the other, not stopping to rest on the way. The good homilist plugs the opposite ear, causes the word to rest awhile, and disposes the faithful to allow it to sink in, take root, and bear fruit.

See the article, "The Function and Task of Liturgical Preaching," by Timothy Clark, *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 45 (2001): 25–53; also the article he refers to in fn 3: Thomas Hopko, "The Liturgical Sermon," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 41:2–3 (1997), 176.

See the lecture by Levada "The Homilist: Teacher of the Faith" in *Origins*, 6 March 2008. He rightly insists on the importance of sound doctrinal content in homilies, and responds to some of the poor arguments to the contrary.

Also see the book by Charles E. Miller, *Ordained to Preach*, call number BV4211.2/M494/1992. Levada refers several times to it, not entirely negatively.



**7–E: Responsibilities of clerics in baptizing, preparing those to be baptized, and receiving into the Catholic Church those baptized in ecclesial communities not fully in communion with her.**

Bishops and pastors share responsibility for seeing to it that adults are not baptized without proper preparation and that their commitment is genuine, and the same for receiving into the Catholic Church those baptized in Christian communities not in full communion with her.

Not all the requirements of RCIA ought to be applied to baptized persons. The *Rite of Receiving Baptized Christians into the Full Communion of the Catholic Church* is an appendix to the RCIA—see DOL 301 (pp. 759–61). #5 includes the sentence: “Any treatment of the candidates as though they were catechumens is to be absolutely avoided.” If adult catechism includes them, the program as a whole ought not be called “RCIA” and should be suitably adapted. Each person’s preparation ought to be appropriate.

People who dissent from Church teachings should not participate in RCIA or be received into the Church.

There is the article by Amy Jill Strickland, *Jurist*, 61 (2001): 257–80, about receiving people. It seems on the whole quite sensible.

AG 13 points out that the catechumenate requires real development and can be difficult. It also says that a convert’s motives should be looked into and if necessary purified. Those whose commitment is less than wholehearted and whose entrance into the Church is negotiated—on the basis that this person believes as much as many Catholics—may lack the commitment required for valid baptism or reasonable admission to full communion.

In receiving baptized persons into the Church, inquiry must be made about the individual’s marital history and that of his or her putative spouse; in some cases, a separation may be necessary if the individual is to be received into the Church. This is so despite the fact that those already Catholics who enter into illicit unions are not thereby excommunicated.

In receiving baptized persons into the Church, the sacrament of penance must be explained and offered, and a general confession ought to be recommended. Pastors should help and encourage those who follow that recommendation, by making it clear that only reasonable diligence in examining conscience, confession of sins thought to be mortal (very serious) *at the time they were committed*, and an honest effort to estimate numbers of mortal sins of various sorts are necessary.

*CIC*, c. 845, §1, makes it clear that baptism, confirmation, and orders imprint a character and so cannot be repeated. §2: “If after completing a diligent inquiry a prudent doubt still exists whether the sacraments mentioned in §1 were actually or validly conferred, they are to be conferred conditionally.”

On this basis, when separated Christians are received into the Catholic Church, an effort should be made to determine whether they have been baptized validly, and they are not to be baptized conditionally unless there is some ground for doubting that they were baptized or that their baptism was valid.

*CIC*, c. 849: “Baptism . . . is validly conferred only by a washing or true water with a proper form of words.” Ministers should take care that they validly confer the sacrament. Some use so little water that none appears to flow while the words are pronounced; that can lead to reasonable doubt about validity and so is indefensible. *New CLSA commentary*, p. 1036: “Were one to refer to the Trinity by such terms as ‘creator, sustainer, and sanctifier,’ the baptism would also be invalid since these words do not refer to a Trinity of *persons*, even if it were the intention of the minister to do so.”

*CIC*, c. 851:

The celebration of baptism is to be prepared properly; consequently:

1° an adult who is to receive baptism is to be admitted to the catechumenate and is to be led insofar as possible through the various stages to sacramental initiation, according to the order of initiation adopted by the conference of bishops and the special norms issued by it;

2° the parents of an infant to be baptized and those who are to undertake the function of sponsor are to be instructed properly on the meaning of this sacrament and the obligations attached to it. The pastor personally or through others is to take care that the parents are properly instructed through both pastoral advice and common prayer, bringing several families together and, where possible visiting them.

Note that the requirement that adults go through the various stages of initiation is qualified by “insofar as possible.” The judgment of what is possible lies with the pastor, and should not unduly burden an adult seeking baptism.

Instruction of parents (and, less so, of sponsors) is important, because some may regard baptism as a custom to be observed yet have no serious intent to raise children in the faith. Here is an opportunity to evangelize such parents. The canon points to setting up classes, but much delay in baptizing should not be accepted to take that route. Moreover, well-instructed parents who clearly understand their obligations ought not to be compelled to sit through lengthy catechyses by Sr. Gladys or some DRE.

*CIC*, c. 855: “Parents, sponsors, and the pastor are to take care that a name foreign to Christian sensibility is not given.” Unless the choice plainly is offensive—which is unlikely—pastors should not insist. However, they should encourage expectant parents to avoid trendy names that are not saints’ names and to name children after some saint they admire. For this purpose, they should make available lists of saints’ names, and should point out that it is a service to children to provide them with a name that will be easily used and will not cause them difficulties.

Explanations of the Catholic Church’s teaching concerning the validity of baptism by Christians not in full communion with her may be appropriate in the catechesis preparing for baptism; if so, they certainly ought to be given then, not during the rite of baptism. Similarly, the fact that the Creed’s reference to the Catholic Church does not settle issues between separated brethren and those in union with the Holy See can be explained during prebaptismal catechesis but that hardly is appropriate during the rite.

Ministers of baptism to children should not try to merge the necessary preparation of the parents and the godparents with the rite of baptism itself, because doing that injects nonliturgical elements into the liturgy. It is best to prepare fully the parents and those they plan to choose to be godparents *before* the child is born; if this has not been done, they should be catechized as fully as possible *before* the day of the baptism. If that is impossible, the catechetical session ought to be conducted first, and the rite of baptism begun only after that preparation for it has been completed. The preparation should include an explanation of the significance of the various elements of the rite. But it should not be limited to that, for it ought also and very importantly to clarify the responsibilities of the parents and godparents for nurturing the faith and Christian life of the children being baptized.

Except insofar as the rite itself allows for alternatives at the minister's discretion or in case of an emergency that precludes fully carrying out the rite, none of its elements should be omitted—for example, to avoid mentioning sin and evil.

The rite of baptism says that it should take place on Sunday, and may be during Mass but “this should not be done too often,” and the rite for several children provides: “It should be conferred in a communal celebration for all the recently born children.” Putting these together, some parishes celebrate baptism for children less frequently during Mass, or at intervals of one month or even longer outside Mass so as to avoid baptizing one child at a time (and perhaps to save the minister's time). But *CIC*, c. 867. §1: “Parents are obliged to take care that infants are baptized in the first few weeks; as soon as possible after the birth or even before it, they are to go to the pastor to request the sacrament for their child and to be prepared properly for it.” So, pastors ought not to impose delay of more than a week or two for the sake of setting up a communal celebration during Sunday Mass or outside it, or for reasons of mere convenience for themselves.

*CIC*, c. 861, §2: “Pastors of souls, especially the pastor of a parish, are to be concerned that the Christian faithful are taught the correct way to baptize.” That catechesis of course should include instructing them on when to baptize and when not to.

*CIC*, c. 865, §1: “For an adult [which includes children who are old enough to catechize] to be baptized, the person must have manifested the intention to receive baptism, have been instructed sufficiently about the truths of faith and Christian obligations, and have been tested in the Christian life through the catechumenate. The adult is also to be urged to have sorrow for personal sins.”

This makes it clear that the point of the catechumenate is not only instruction and introduction into the *communio* of the Church but testing in the Christian life. Presumably those who do not wish to live that life are not to be baptized. And all are to be urged to have appropriate sorrow for personal sins; though even the most serious need not be confessed, genuine contrition which includes a firm purpose of amendment is necessary for the fruitfulness of baptism, if not for its validity.

*CIC*, c. 868, §1, requires that if a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic faith is altogether lacking, the parties are to be advised about the reason for delaying baptism, and it is to be delayed in accord with the prescripts of particular law. If there is none,

the pastor should adopt a firm policy not to allow baptisms if there is no prospect that the child will be brought up Catholic—e.g., if the parents want the child baptized only to placate grandparents, or to have a party and get gifts, or because having babies baptized is a surviving social convention among people who have no interest in raising their children in the faith.

Note that the canon speaks of delay rather than refusal. That is because the pastor should not accept the parents' inappropriate attitude as final, but should work to change it by making an ongoing effort to evangelize such people. Still, the delay of baptism should not be terminated if no well-founded hope that the child will be brought up Catholic develops.

Note that it is a mistake to assume that parents who are living in a bad marriage and are unwilling to try to rectify matters can offer no founded hope that they will bring up their children in the faith. For such parents sometimes participate in Mass regularly, send their children to Catholic schools, and so on—all of which found the required hope. Denying baptism to the infant to coerce the parents is unjust to the child.

*CIC*, c. 868, §2, in danger of death, infants, even of non-Catholic parents, are licitly baptized. The *licitly* allows ministers to use their judgment in such cases. However, not all that is licit (that is, in accord with law) is obligatory; and even what is in general obligatory sometimes is rightly omitted in particular cases to avoid bad side effects. Like other aspects of the care of children, their religious care is primarily their parents' responsibility, and parents are likely to resent the unwanted baptism of their child. In our society, such resentment might well lead to hatred—of those immediately responsible, of the Church, and even of the Christian religion as such—and that hatred often would have further bad effects. Therefore, it seems to me you should try to conform to parents' wishes about the baptism of their infants.

*CIC*, c. 871: "If aborted fetuses are alive, they are to be baptized insofar as possible." Pastors should instruct people about this obligation and how to perform baptism. Individuals working in hospitals where abortions are done must judge in good conscience what is morally possible for them to do in their circumstances.

Pastors also must instruct people about the following norms:

*CIC*, c. 875 says that the one who confers baptism in the absence of a godparent (as in emergency situations) is to take care that "there is at least a witness who can attest to the conferral of baptism."

*CIC*, c. 878 requires one not a pastor who administers baptism to "inform the pastor of the parish in which it was administered of the conferral of baptism, so that he records the baptism according to the norm of can. 877, §1."

*CIC*, cc. 873–74 make it clear that at least one fully initiated Catholic ("who leads a life of faith in keeping with the function to be taken on") godparent is required for baptism; a non-Catholic Christian can serve as an additional witness. Pastors should instruct parents about sort of persons to choose as godparents and should try to exclude any candidates for that role who do not seem to be faithful, practicing Catholics.

Mk 7.31–37 provides the account of Jesus' healing of a deaf-mute—putting his fingers into the man's ears and touching his tongue with spittle, and saying: *ephphatha*. In the rite of

baptism of children, shortly before the end, is a rite, now optional for the minister: “Ephphetha or prayer over ears and mouth.” It involves a prayer (*The Rites*, p. 210, #65): “The Lord Jesus made the deaf hear and the dumb speak. May he soon touch your ears to receive his word and your mouth to proclaim his faith, to the praise and glory of God the Father.” If only one child is being baptized, the celebrant touches the ears and mouth of the child at the appropriate points.

Using rather than omitting that rite is generally desirable. In general, the various gestures of the sacrament of baptism, as well as the words, should be done carefully, so that they will be observed and understood as well as possible by those present. Jesus used gestures as well as words to make clear what he was doing and that he was doing it. He provided a good example, which should be followed carefully.

Jn 3.1–21 is Jesus’ encounter with Nicodemus. The passage has been understood traditionally as teaching about baptism, the need for it and its effect. In the latter part (16–21) is a passage that is relevant for understanding the conversion that is necessary for justification—i.e., transformation from the state of original or mortal sin (which is real alienation from God) to sanctifying grace (which is *communio* with God, sharing in the divine nature). This transformation is not one the sinner can bring about. God loves the world, sends his Son, and his mission is not to condemn but “that the world might be saved through him” (17). That is a real possibility. Yet not all are saved; those who do not “believe” are condemned, and their nonbelief is explained: loving darkness rather than light, because of their evil deeds, they flee into darkness to prevent the exposure of the evil.

This teaching is relevant to evangelization of people who can be aware of their sin and can freely accept or reject the gospel, and so for the remote preparation of people for baptism. It also is relevant to preaching repentance to Catholics who may be living in mortal sin. One who is not living in grace can have either of two attitudes. One is openness to recognizing that he is in trouble and needs help, openness to receiving the grace of contrition. The other is denial, self-deception, rationalization; I’m okay, not alienated from God. Unwilling to recognize one’s need and inability to save oneself, one flees into darkness. The evangelizer therefore must try, gently, to get people who may be living in original sin and mortal sin (or, in the case of penance, just in mortal sin) to consider seriously the possibility that they may be in deep trouble and need to face up.

How to do that? How do people sometimes get alcoholics to admit that they are in trouble and need help? It is a matter of calling attention to what they are doing to themselves and, to the extent that they still care about anyone else, to those they care about. So, it seems a similar strategy would be appropriate. What is needed is not talk about hell or other more remote consequences, but focus on immediate, present evils that are involved in the state of sin itself or directly consequent upon it.

### **7–F: Responsibilities of clerics with respect to the sacrament of confirmation**

I do not undertake here to settle the argument regarding the proper time for confirmation's to be administered. Plainly the sacrament is closely related to baptism. It would make sense to universalize the practice in at least some Eastern rites—see *CCEO* 710—of confirming everyone at the same time as baptism, and completing initiation immediately with the Eucharist. Though Latin rite practice and *CIC*, c. 891, point to a later age for those baptized as infants—“at about the age of discretion”—the requirement to confirm a child who has not yet reached the age of reason (see *Rites*, p. 324) suggests that it would be appropriate to confirm all infants when they are baptized, rather than delaying confirmation until the age of discretion.

At the same time, this sacrament plainly is specifically distinct from baptism, inasmuch as it bears upon living the Christian life that baptism initiates, primarily but not exclusively so as to bear the witness that spreads the faith and, in general, builds up the body of Christ, which is the Church. So, it also makes sense to recognize that confirmation is appropriately administered right *after* a substantial catechesis about living a Christian life in general and personal vocation in particular (see *CIC*, c. 889, §2: “To receive confirmation licitly outside the danger of death requires that a person who has the use of reason be suitably instructed, properly disposed, and able to renew the baptismal promises.”) As soon as children understand personal vocation and wish to find theirs and also understand their need for the Holy Spirit's help and its availability through the sacrament of confirmation, they will desire the sacrament and reasonably ask for it. That may be as soon as eight or nine, and certainly not later than eleven or twelve. Thus, delaying the sacrament beyond twelve seems unjustifiable.

*Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, 87 (c) says bishop “will insist that those who are to be confirmed are properly prepared.”

The bishop has a different responsibility in this matter than in others, since he is likely to do the confirming. So, he has special reason to prescribe the confirmation preparation program. And it also would make sense for him to prescribe and have administered a diocesan examination to make sure that those to be confirmed have been catechized adequately.

Confirmation preparation should not involve requiring participation in various community service projects or charitable works that may or may not pertain to individuals' personal vocations. Those being prepared need to be helped to understand personal vocation, to discern their vocations, and to undertake to fulfill them. *That* is what can be required of all. And they ought to know that no specific “ministry” is essential for everyone. Different people may be called to different ministries.

The big problem is that making children do things is no more effective now than when they were all marched in to go to confession. The only way to develop virtue is to teach and present data that propose options for choice, provide sound reasons for choosing well, and stimulate emotions integrated with right choice.

Paul VI's apostolic constitution approving the new rite of confirmation explains (DOL 2501) the New Testament basis of the sacrament. In this, he emphasizes the role of the Spirit for

witnessing. He then follows and quotes Vatican II, LG 11, on the significance of confirmation: “Bound more intimately to the Church by the sacrament of confirmation, they are endowed by the Holy Spirit with special strength. Hence they are more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and by deed as true witnesses of Christ.” So, *CIC*, c. 879: “The sacrament of confirmation strengthens the baptized and obliges them more firmly to spread and defend the faith.”

Given the sacrament’s relevance to witnessing, catechesis preparing for the sacrament (or, in the case of those confirmed as infants or at an early age, catechesis following up on it) should focus on witnessing. That should not be an occasional activity, though in some circumstances it entails specific responsibilities—e.g., if challenged, one must not deny one’s faith even at the cost of one’s life. But, in general, one bears witness by living a Christian life and confessing with one’s lips when appropriate. One lives a Christian life fully—in a way that will be most effective as witness—by discerning, committing oneself to, and faithfully fulfilling all the elements of one’s personal vocation, the unique life of good deeds that God prepared for one in advance to walk in.

In the *The Rite of Confirmation* (see *The Rites*, pp. 307 and 317) a model homily is provided for the bishop to give before confirming (apart from baptism), which includes the following:

You have already been baptized into Christ and now you will receive the power of his Spirit and the sign of the cross on your forehead. You must be witnesses before all the world to his suffering, death, and resurrection; your way of life should at all times reflect the goodness of Christ. Christ gives varied gifts to his Church, and the Spirit distributes them among the members of Christ’s body to build up the holy people of God in unity and love.

Be active members of the Church, alive in Jesus Christ. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit give your lives completely in the service of all, as did Christ, who came not to be served but to serve.

Here we have the call to be witnesses. Then the mention of varied gifts which the Spirit distributes to build up the holy people: the gifts that are the principle within each person of his or her personal vocation. Then there is the calling to serve, which indicates how the gifts are to be used. Note that the rite says: “give your lives *completely* to the service of all.” Clearly, no occasional or part-time project of community service is relevant to what is being asked for here.

If confirmation is administered to those baptized as infants around the age of discretion, it is fittingly conferred *before* first Communion. In that case, it would make sense to administer confirmation during Mass and for the children to make their first Communion at the same Mass. *CIC*, c. 884, §1: “The diocesan bishop is to administer confirmation personally or is to take care that another bishop administers it. If necessity requires it, he can grant the faculty to one or more specific presbyters, who are to administer this sacrament.” So, if confirmation is to be administered around the age of discretion, it would be desirable if the bishop would confirm the children from all the parishes in his diocese each year—which might be possible if the groups from several parishes came to the cathedral at the same time to be confirmed

and make their first Communion. But if that were impossible, the bishop could grant the faculty to vicars for this purpose.

*CIC*, c. 885, §1: “The diocesan bishop is obliged to take care that the sacrament of confirmation is conferred on subjects who properly and reasonably seek it.” This sacrament confers a great benefit. Youngsters who are seriously undertaking to live a Christian life need this benefit. If they understand the sacrament and their need for it, such youngsters will desire it and rightly seek it. So, putting off the administration of the sacrament in their case until late adolescence would violate their right. Thus, in the case of children who sincerely ask to receive the sacrament before the time it is usually given, pastors ought to recognize that a grave cause exists to administer the sacrament sooner than usual (cf. *CIC*, c. 891, which allows exceptions to the canonically normative age when “in the judgment of the minister a grave cause suggests otherwise” and that will a fortiori hold true of a normative age established by a conference of bishops or diocesan policy).

At the same time, the canon’s reference to those who reasonably seek the sacrament points to something important: children should not all be run through the preparations and confirmed without a genuine, informed request for it. For in such circumstances, even if their implicit intention is sufficient for validity, the sacrament is hardly likely to be fruitful.

*CIC*, c. 885, §2: “A presbyter who possesses the faculty must use it for the sake of those in whose favor the faculty was granted.” *CIC*, c. 883, “The following possess the faculty of administering confirmation by the law itself: . . . °3: as regards those who are in danger of death, the pastor or indeed any presbyter.” Thus, whenever dealing with someone in danger of death, every presbyter should try to ascertain whether the individual has been confirmed.

William J. Levada, “Reflections on the Age of Confirmation,” *Theological Studies*, 57 (1966): 302–12, draws no firm conclusion but advances several interesting considerations. He takes infant baptism as a given, and argues against giving it up, as some propose. He rightly points out the Church’s insistence on first penance before first Communion, and presumably, then, also before confirmation (assuming it is not conferred before the age of discretion). He suggests that the development of a different model for those born into the Church was not an unfortunate departure from the norm but a work of the Spirit. He points to pastoral considerations that argue strongly for a uniform policy regarding age throughout the United States (and implicitly any other single nation). He rightly insists on the importance of good catechesis, a really well-planned and coherent program. He cogently points out (p. 309) that children around the age of discretion are more easily catechized about the Eucharist than about the Holy Spirit, because the former catechesis can take advantage of Bible stories about Jesus. But he is attracted by the model of the restored catechumenate, and points to delaying confirmation until well into adolescence (p. 310) “around the time these young people were preparing to leave their family to take their place as active Christians in the world.”

In general, I think his points are sound—especially the need for uniformity. But I think he is wrong about putting confirmation off until near adulthood. Children really can make a serious commitment at a much earlier age, and, even if not essential for salvation, confirmation’s graces are needed for as firm as possible a commitment of faith and obedience to God’s plan *before adolescence*.



To help out with confirmations, bishops sometimes get an abbot who is not a bishop but who uses a pastoral staff and a mitre, presumably because such an abbot looks like a bishop to the faithful. While the bishop can designate any priest to confirm, the choice of such an abbot is inappropriate for two reasons: (1) it is deceptive; (2) since pontificals manifest jurisdiction, nonordained abbots are not entitled to wear pontificals outside monasteries: see Paul VI, *Pontificia insignia*, DOL 4449 and 4451. Better to appoint a vicar general or suitable episcopal vicar or the pastor of the parish to provide the service.

Acts 8.4–13 narrates the evangelization of the Samaritans. 14–17 narrates that Peter and John were sent by the apostles (as emissaries of the Twelve) from Jerusalem, prayed for the new converts that they might receive the Holy Spirit, and laid hands on them, and they did. Previously, the converts had only been baptized “in the name of Jesus.” Thus, it seems here that there is a separation between baptism and confirmation; the former done by Philip (one of the deacons) and the latter by the apostles. On this see Fitzmyer, *Acts*, AB31:405–6.

### **7–G: Responsibilities of clerics with respect to the sacrament of penance, personal spiritual direction, and help in rightly forming conscience**

Rationalizations of violations of celibacy/chastity are not uncommon. They are especially likely to surface when abuses surface, and others concerned are reluctant to fulfill their responsibilities with respect to admonishing, reporting, or punishing. In this context, some are likely to use (misuse) the story (Jn 8.2–11) about Jesus and his refusal to condemn the woman taken in adultery. But that passage needs to be rightly understood (and the sound interpretation will be relevant in 7–G).

The scribes and Pharisees bring the woman, whom they are interested in punishing in accord with the prescription of the law. Jesus in many other passages makes it clear that he opposes fulfilling the law for its own sake; the important thing is its legitimate purpose. And Jesus himself is entirely focused on the kingdom, and on getting sinners to repent and enter into it. Therefore, those who bring the woman (to test Jesus and find something to charge him with) and Jesus have conflicting approaches. Asked what he says, Jesus does not answer with respect to the woman, her guilt, and the application of the law in punishment of adultery. Instead, he forces his opponents to consider their own sinfulness, thus calling them to repentance (Jn 8.7): “Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.”

Once the crowd has dispersed and Jesus has saved the woman’s life, for the first time he addresses her, who very recently was committing adultery. She certainly was grateful to Jesus, and he took advantage of that, and also avoided mentioning her sin directly but simply asked two questions that would make her think about both her gratitude and her sin: “Woman, where are they? [You chased them away.] Has no one condemned you? [No, but I was guilty.]” She said, “No one, Lord.” Having thus established a personal relationship with the woman, earned her gratitude and made her conscious of it, and led her to consider her guilt, Jesus at once both offers her forgiveness and calls on her to repent and make a firm purpose of amendment (Jn 8.11): “Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again.”

See Francis J. Maloney, S.D.B., *Gospel of John*, 262: “On the basis of the relationship that is established by this dialogue, Jesus can challenge her to sin no more. From this moment on (*apo tou nun*), the moment of her encounter with Jesus, he offers her the double possibility of a new life: “Go, and from this moment on do not sin again” (cf. note). The men (Scribes and Pharisees) in the earlier part of the story would not even allow her physical life. That has been restored to her through the intervention of Jesus. But the command to sin no more offers her the possibility of a newness of life in a right relationship with God.”

In summarizing the argument, mention 1 Cor 6.9, 15, 17–20.

Some of what I have done in vol. 2, chap. 4, qu. D, on the struggle to overcome sin and in chap. 9, qu. E, 6 (grave matter) and 8 (attaining chastity with the help of grace) can be developed here as a sort of sound *vademecum* for confessors—without using that expression.

SC 109–10 deal with Lent and with doing penance. Pastors should instruct people about the need for and benefits of penance, and should carry out liturgy in a way that calls attention to the special character of the season.

Pastors should not abuse general absolution. See bishops above.

When hearing confessions, always think about the responsibilities the sinner has to others as a consequences of his/her sins. Restitution has been overlooked, and it covers a lot more ground than one realizes—e.g., a woman who has fornicated has contributed to her partner's sin and should try to get him to repent.

Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, Carlen, 233.177, frequent confession. This often could be an occasion for catechesis and spiritual direction.

CD 30: Should labor to see to it that faithful devoutly and frequently receive the sacraments; should make themselves available for confessions, with a view to helping people develop their spiritual lives (a hint of spiritual direction?). Pastors should get in priests fluent in other languages to help, if needed.

PO 5 says that presbyters, in the spirit of Christ the shepherd, teach the faithful to submit their sins to the Church in the sacrament of penance.

Offer to hear confessions at wedding rehearsals and at wakes, and any other time people might be susceptible.

Priests need to know enough psychology to recognize psychological problems, not to try to treat them with inappropriate moral guidance, and to know to whom to refer them. That goes for scrupulosity, depression, and so forth. At the same time, many psychological problems also are tied with a moral problem, and it is necessary to deal with that. In referring people for their problems, a priest should know to whom to refer—should have a list of people who are really likely to help rather than hurt and refer to them.

What do you do for someone to whom you cannot give spiritual direction? Perhaps refer to some third order, pious association, or holy layperson who might be able to help.

*CIC*, c. 214: The faithful have the right “to follow their own form of spiritual life so long as it is consonant with the doctrine of the Church.” This means that clergy are not to press optional devotions and types of spiritual life on the faithful, and are to nurture everything legitimate, facilitating it and collaborating with it, even if it is not to their personal taste.

People suffering from scrupulosity are not merely conscientious and careful to try to avoid and free themselves from sin. Rather, they unreasonably doubt the effectiveness of the sacrament of penance and the adequacy of their confessions, acts of contrition, and so on. If Catholic, such people need the help of both a priest/spiritual director who understands the problem and a health care professional (psychologist or psychiatrist) who understands and is sympathetic to the truth about sin and repentance, as well as to sound Catholic practices for dealing with them. The latter can prescribe appropriate medication and therapy; the former can help guide the individual to sound spiritual insights and practices.

Robert T. Moriarty, “Violation of the Confessional Seal,” *Jurist*, 58 (1998): 152–70, has some helpful clarifications from a canonical standpoint of what counts as the seal and its violation. Violation of the seal (as against the secret) is possible only for the priest. He violates it only if he makes known to another what was confessed. The obligation not to use information against the interests of the penitent is distinct; even if that would not violate the seal, it should not be

done. Direct violation is deliberately informing a third party of the sin and who committed it. Indirect violation is any other communication that provides a third party with a basis for supposing or suspecting that the penitent committed a certain confessed sin.

The confessor, for the good of the sacrament, needs to go further, but obviously possible room for exceptions then begins to emerge. In general, a confessor should not mention to a penitent anything about a past confession unless penitent initiates the conversation or manifests willingness to revisit the confession. (During a confession, one might reasonably ask penitent about what he/she previously confessed.) Also, in general priests should not talk publicly—and especially not in homilies or other sermons—about hearing confessions and learning things from them, though they obviously may use their knowledge gained from hearing confessions to help others provided there is no danger of indirectly violating the seal or injuring the penitent.

*Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests, 52:* Priests need to devote time and energy to the sacrament of penance, so that it will be readily available to the faithful. “This goes even more so for churches in more frequented areas and for sanctuaries. Here a fraternal and responsible collaboration with elderly priests and religious is possible.”

The idea of enlisting elderly priests to help out is a good one. They also might be enlisted to do spiritual direction, so that it would be available to more people—e.g., children between first Communion and the end of grade school, who might be encouraged to begin thinking about their vocations, whatever those might be.

*Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests, 52:* “In each case, the priest must know how to maintain the celebration of Reconciliation on a sacramental level, overcoming the danger of reducing it to a purely psychological or simply formalistic act.”

It is reduced to a psychological act when done to make people feel better rather than to deal with sin. It is purely formalistic when it is done with a legalistic mentality, so that simply performing all the relevant outward behavior properly is assumed to do the job, even if the right intention is not there—genuine purpose of amendment. Abused general absolution often reduces the sacrament to mere psychology and formalism.

*Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests, 53:* “it is essential that the minister of the sacrament offer a personal testimony preceding the other faithful in living the experience of pardon. This constitutes the first condition for restoring the pastoral value of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In this sense, it is good for the faithful to see and know that their priests go to confession regularly.”

It is worth considering what someone who goes to confession regularly and very frequently, does not have *deliberate* venial sins to confess, can confess. The answer is: anyone who carefully examines his/her conscience at the end of each day will find nondeliberate venial sins at least in light matter—spontaneous behavior that was not quite right, omissions. Insofar as these detract from the best fulfillment of some responsibility, they really are an issue to be dealt with. One cannot have in respect to them a purpose of amendment in the usual sense. But one can recognize them, confess them, and mean to strive in any way one can to do better.

*Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, 95, speaking of elderly priests, says: “They can be involved in suitable ways in true and proper ministry especially as expert confessors and spiritual directors. In particular, they can share with others their own experiences, and encourage, welcome, listen and convey serenity to them. They can also be available whenever they are asked to “become effective teachers and mentors of other priests”.(Note referring to *PDV*, 77.)

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 10:

This kingdom and this salvation, which are the key words of Jesus Christ’s evangelization, are available to every human being as grace and mercy, and yet at the same time each individual must gain them by force—they belong to the violent, says the Lord,(24) through toil and suffering, through a life lived according to the Gospel, through abnegation and the cross, through the spirit of the beatitudes. But above all each individual gains them through a total interior renewal which the Gospel calls metanoia; it is a radical conversion, a profound change of mind and heart.(25)

24. Cf. Mt. 11:12; Lk 16:16.

25. Cf. Mt. 4:17.

Grace and mercy are the principle, okay; but real conversion is necessary, too. So, the proper use of the sacrament of penance is necessary for Christian life.

*CIC*, c. 837, §2: “Inasmuch as liturgical actions by their nature entail a common celebration, they are to be celebrated with the presence and active participation of the faithful where possible.” Cf. SC 27, on which the canon is based. This suggests that a communal rite of penance with individual confession is preferable. But that ought not to be used as an excuse for not scheduling times for hearing individuals’ confessions much less for putting off someone who asks for the sacrament.

*CIC*, c. 959: “In the sacrament of penance the faithful who confess their sins to a legitimate minister, are sorry for them, and intend to reform themselves obtain from God through the absolution imparted by the same minister forgiveness of the sins they have committed after baptism and, at the same time, are reconciled with the Church which they wounded by sinning.”

Pastors ought to catechize the faithful about what they must do to receive the sacrament validly, in particular, the need for a real purpose of amendment. They also ought to explain that every sin has a social dimension, since it wounds the Church.

*CIC*, c. 960: The faithful conscious of grave sin must confess individually and integrally unless doing so is physically or morally impossible. This requirement also must be taught to the faithful.

*CIC*, c. 961 sets out the limited conditions for the use of the third rite: danger of death or grave necessity, such that the faithful through no fault of their own would be deprived of sacramental grace and/or the Eucharist for a long while. The necessity that justifies cannot be deliberately created by advertising general absolution so as to gather so large a crowd that individuals confessions cannot be heard. It belongs to the diocesan bishop to determine

whether there is grave necessity, and he is to pay attention to criteria (if any) agreed on with other members of the bishops' conference.

*CIC*, c. 962: a condition for validity is that the faithful intend to confess within a suitable period of time every grave sin that cannot be confessed at present—and also suitable disposition; if possible, the celebrant is to instruct penitents about this obligation and exhort them to make a perfect act of contrition. *CIC*, c. 963: without prejudice to canon 983 (precept of annual confession) a person who receives general absolution is to confess as soon as possible, given the opportunity, before receiving another general absolution, unless a just cause intervenes.

The intervening just cause would be lack of opportunity, as in a place where priests seldom come and then are too busy to hear individual confessions. Certainly, general absolution has no value—indeed it causes considerable harm—if there is no purpose of amendment, for this generates an illusion of eliminating guilt, but only eases the feelings of guilt.

*CIC*, c. 964: Confessions are to be heard in a church or oratory, and not elsewhere without a just cause—that is, a genuine *reason*. As a sacred act, the sacrament of penance belongs in a sacred place. Confessors also should take into account the possibility that they might be wrongly accused of abuse or solicitation of children or vulnerable adults, and so avoid hearing confessions in privacy of a sort that would facilitate such accusations. They also should keep in mind the privacy of penitents, and so do their best to maintain a discrete tone of voice when hearing confessions in a church where other penitents may be nearby—they should be taught to keep a respectful distance from the confessional.

*CIC*, c. 965: “A priest alone is the minister of the sacrament of penance.” *CIC*, cc. 966–75 concern faculties.

*CIC*, c. 976, “Even though a priest lacks the faculty to hear confessions [e.g., has been laicized], he absolves validly and licitly any penitents whatsoever in danger of death from any censures and sins, even if an approved priest is present.” Thus, those who have been ordained as priests ought to exercise this ministry whenever someone in danger of death requests it. The danger of death need not be imminent; it suffices if someone is terminally ill. And the faithful should be catechized that in danger of death they may and should confess to and obtain absolution from anyone they choose who has been validly ordained.

*CIC*, c. 977: “The absolution of an accomplice in a sin against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue is invalid except in danger of death.”

*CIC*, c. 1378, §1: “A priest who acts against the prescript of can. 977 incurs a *latae sententiae* excommunication reserved to the Apostolic See.”

Why? Because it seems improper that someone ordained use his order to absolve someone in whose sin he himself has been involved; he needs forgiveness for that very sin. If that's the point, then it is also wrong, morally, to hear the confession of someone with whom one has cooperated in any grave sin. If a priest knows he has done something mortally sinful, he ought to avoid, unless there is real necessity, hearing the confession of anyone who formally cooperated with or was a straightforward collaborator in that sin.

Canon 978, §1: In hearing confessions, the priest is to remember that he is equally a judge and a physician and has been established by God as a minister of divine justice and mercy, so that he has regard for the divine honor and the salvation of souls.

This is put rather unfortunately, for it suggests an underlying legalistic conception, in which justice and mercy are in tension because they seem opposed. In reality, the priest can really help the penitent only by leading him or her to consider what is confessed in the light of moral truth and recognize the self-destructiveness of ongoing sin. One can say that the priest must act as judge in accepting the person's self-accusation, doing what he can to ensure that the confession is complete and that the penitent is truly contrite and means to stop sinning, and assigning an appropriate penance. He must act as a physician in trying to discover reasons why the penitent is sinning that the penitent may not be fully aware of, clarifying matters for the penitent, providing motivation for repentance, encouraging, comforting, recommending ways to overcome future temptations.

§2: In administering the sacrament, the confessor as a minister of the Church is to adhere faithfully to the doctrine of the magisterium and the norms issued by competent authority.

The confessor is not acting as a private person. If he cannot in good conscience proceed in accord with the magisterium's doctrine, he ought to tell the bishop that and not hear confessions.

Canon 979: In posing questions, the priest is to proceed with prudence and discretion, attentive to the condition and age of the penitent, and is to refrain from asking the name of an accomplice.

Questioning should be limited to what is necessary for the integrity of the confession and for guiding the penitent. Questioning often is necessary for these purposes, and the good confessor will think about how to do it. The reference to age and discretion concerns—e.g., avoiding telling children about sex sins that they may not yet have thought of!

Canon 980: If the confessor has no doubt about the disposition of the penitent, and the penitent seeks absolution, absolution is to be neither refused nor deferred.

Confessors should presume that penitents are sincere and properly disposed. If they have reason to doubt that and even if it becomes clear that a penitent is not rightly disposed, the good confessor will try to instruct the penitent and encourage him or her to adopt the proper attitude. But if that fails, confessors ought not to go through the motions of absolving when they have good reason to believe the sacrament would be invalid. Doing that only provides an illusion that supports obduracy in sin.

*CIC*, c. 981: The confessor is to impose salutary and suitable penances in accord with the quality and number of sins, taking into account the condition of the penitent. The penitent is obliged to fulfill these personally.

Priests ought to try to think out penances that really meet the description—not just a standard few prayers, though prayers may be part of it, but self-denial, service to others and works of mercy. At the same time, it would be well to suggest a penance that can be done within a

week or so to the penitent and ask if it seems doable and not too burdensome; if the penitent agrees to it, to get a firm commitment.

The penance given for satisfaction should not be confused with restitution, including the need to try to overcome the injury of leading others into sin. These things are not penance; they are due in justice to those injured. See the treatment of restitution in vol. 2.

*CIC*, c. 983, §1: The sacramental seal is inviolable; therefore it is absolutely forbidden for a confessor to betray in any way a penitent in words or in any manner or for any reason.

§2: The interpreter, if there is one, and all others who in any way have knowledge of sins from confessing are also obliged to observe secrecy.

*CIC*, c. 984, §1: A confessor is prohibited completely from using knowledge acquired in confession to the detriment of the penitent even when any danger of revelation is excluded.

§2: A person who has been placed in authority cannot use in any manner for external governance the knowledge about sins which he has received in confession at any time.

The seal is exceptionless. It covers everyone confessing, even if the confession is incomplete—e.g., if the person departs without receiving absolution. It covers every aspect of the confession—what is confessed, circumstances, questions the penitent asks, penances imposed, and so on. If a confessor finds it necessary to consult a moral theologian or other expert, he ought either to take care to ensure that it is impossible that the penitent's identity be made known, or obtain the penitent's permission; otherwise, such consultation is excluded.

*CIC*, c. 1388 deals with penalties for confessors (§1) and others (§2) who violate the seal. It distinguishes in §1 between direct and indirect violations. Both are serious wrongs, but differ in criminal culpability. In direct violations, a confessor identifies the sin and the sinner; in indirect violations, he says or does something more or less conducive to people making that connection.

The English commentary, p. 536, says: "One certain principle which emerges from Can. 983–984 is that information gained in the confessional should be regarded as not having been gained at all and, in so far as is humanly possible, should not *ever* be acted on or spoken of *in any way*."

That is right in its spirit. Priests should not bring up even in private with anyone what they recall that person had confessed to them. They should not talk about what they have learned in confession about human psychology or sinfulness in a way that identifies the source of that learning. But, of course, they should take advantage of their experience in hearing confessions to become better at it. And with other priests or scholars, they may discuss, but only in general terms that will certainly not identify anybody, problems they encounter in hearing confessions in order to develop better pastoral remedies.

*CIC*, c. 986, §1: All to whom the care of souls has been entrusted in virtue of some function are obliged to make provision so that the confessions of the faithful entrusted to them are heard when they reasonably seek to be heard and that they have



the opportunity to approach individual confession on days and at times established for their convenience.

§2: In urgent necessity, any confessor is obliged to hear the confessions of the Christian faithful, and in danger of death, any priest is so obliged.

Parish priests, chaplains, religious superiors, and seminary rectors are to see to it that confession is available—that need not mean hear confessions personally, which in the latter two cases is usually inappropriate. The reasonableness of the request for confession is to be presumed; only clear evidence of unreasonableness justifies refusal. Even if confessions are heard at odd times on request or by appointment, or the second rite is made available—e.g., during Advent or Lent—the opportunity for individual confessions at convenient times also must be given. Refusing to hear confessions on Holy Saturday or Christmas eve, as some now do, is hardly justifiable. The urgent necessity of §2 is to be presumed when people who ask say that their need for the sacrament is urgent.

*CIC*, c. 987: “To receive the salvific remedy of the sacrament of penance, a member of the Christian faithful must be disposed in such a way that, rejecting sins committed and having a purpose of amendment, the person is turned back to God.”

The act of confessing and seeking absolution implies sorrow, and confessors should presume that penitents are sincere. But that presumption should give way to contrary indications that the person seeking absolution only wants psychological benefits—mitigation of guilt feelings. Where there are indications of that state of mind, confessors should try to lead the person to genuine contrition by appropriate catechesis. Only if it is clear that the essential disposition is absent should the confessor refuse absolution. Refusal to give up an occasion of sin or to make restitution can be a sign of lack of genuine contrition. For the genuinely contrite person’s attitude is: I’m ready to do anything and give up anything to escape from the state of sin I’m in.

Pastors must catechize the faithful to make it clear that *penance* means really rejecting and giving up sins, turning around one’s life. The “penance” one receives is a token of making up for the sins one committed, and, while necessary, is not nearly so central as a real change of heart and consequent behavior. This contrition, which includes purpose of amendment, is the most central act of the penitent; without it, confessing and receiving absolution does not constitute a valid sacrament. At the same time, genuine contrition, brought about by the Holy Spirit and motivated by the desire to be God’s faithful friend, already can reconcile one with God even before one confesses and is absolved. In that case, the sacrament is necessary only to confirm that real penance, heal one’s relationship with the Church, and support one’s good intention with the sacrament’s grace and moral helps.

*CIC*, c. 988, §1: A member of the Christian faithful is obliged to confess in kind and number all grave sins committed after baptism and not yet remitted directly through the keys of the Church nor acknowledged in individual confession, of which the person has knowledge after diligent examination of conscience.

Pastors should catechize the faithful, also during the administration of the sacrament, about the need for integral confession. It includes sins forgotten during the examination

of conscience for a previous confession and now remembered, sins forgiven when someone received general absolution *provided the individual was genuinely contrite*, and other sins that it was physically or morally impossible to confess in some previous confession. Penitents who confess that they concealed some grave sin when confessing previously must be instructed to confess all their grave sins since that time.

I have a good treatment of exceptions to the requirement of integral confession in vol. 2, 211–12. I also have a treatment of psychological benefits of confessing on 212.

*CIC*, c. 988, §2: “It is recommended to the Christian faithful that they also confess venial sins.” Pastors ought to encourage people to use the sacrament. The new CLSA commentary, pp. 1170–71, has a surprisingly good rationale for confessing venial sins.

*CIC*, c. 989: “After having reached the age of discretion, each member of the faithful is obliged to confess faithfully his or her grave sins at least once a year.” The obligation to confess grave sins within one year is minimal; the faithful should be told about it but encouraged to repent and confess as soon as possible when aware they have committed any grave sin.

*CIC*, c. 991: “Every member of the Christian faithful is free to confess sins to a legitimately approved confessor of his or her choice, even to one of another rite.” Pastors should promote use of the sacrament of penance, and in doing so should instruct people about their freedom to choose someone else as their confessor—for more sure anonymity, for convenience’ sake, for spiritual direction, or for any other reason. At the same time, people should be instructed that shopping around for an indulgent confessor is self-defeating; it’s like shopping for a physician who will prescribe pain killers for cancer rather than dealing with the disease itself.

*CIC*, cc. 992–97, concern indulgences. Pastors ought to catechize the faithful about them, and, since they remit before God the temporal punishment due to sins that have already been forgiven (c. 992), that catechesis appropriately will be connected with instruction about the sacrament of confession. *CCC*, 1471–79, offer a better summary of what must be communicated than the canons do.

The carrying out of a mixed rite, with some sort of sin mentioned but without integral confession, together with general absolution, violates the liturgical norm, and has all the bad features of general absolution plus dishonesty in trying to mask what is going on. The argument that general absolution paves the way for people to return to the sacrament is unsound; no evidence is given that people give up the practice of general absolution and confess their sins as they should. The main issue is not one of discipline merely. It is that the abuse of general absolution is pastorally pernicious, because it leads people into self-deception about the state of their souls. This is part of the general failing of dissenting moral since Vatican II.

*CIC*, cc. 1249–53, deal with days of penance. In many places, these have fallen into practical disuse. Pastors ought to catechize the faithful about the importance of doing penance, not only individually for their own sins, but as a Church on the prescribed days. The provisions of the U.S. bishops do *not* eliminate these days: see *LCL* 196.

*CIC*, c. 1387: A priest who in the act, on the occasion, or under the pretext of confession solicits a penitent to sin against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue is to be punished, according to the gravity of the delict, by suspension, prohibitions, and privations; in graver cases he is to be dismissed from the clerical state.

This canon is concerned with a particularly atrocious abuse of office, exploiting the very sacramental encounter for a scandalous sinful purpose. The case envisaged by the law is, however, paradigmatic for a wider class of morally bad acts: in any way deliberately encouraging or tempting a penitent to commit any sort of sin, whether for one's own benefit or any other reason.

*CIC*, c. 1398: "A person who procures a completed abortion incurs a *latae sententiae* excommunication."

Abortion not only is the expulsion of a nonviable fetus but—by an authoritative interpretation of the canon on 23 May 1988: AAS 80 (1988) 1818—any intentional killing of the conceptus by any means and at any time from conception until birth. Note that the penalty is incurred only if the abortion succeeds, but, since the penalty is incurred automatically, attempts at abortion should be presumed for pastoral purposes to have succeeded unless there is reason to think otherwise. *CIC*, c. 1329, §2: "Accomplices who are not named in a law or precept incur a *latae sententiae* penalty attached to a delict if without their assistance the delict would not have been committed, and the penalty is of such a nature that it can affect them . . ." That means that members of the Catholic Church (who alone are subject to excommunication) who sought or performed a successful abortion, or whose morally wrongful cooperation has been a necessary condition for a successful abortion, are excommunicated.

This canon should be part of catechesis of the faithful about abortion. Horrible as is the evil of death suffered by these innocents, an even more horrible evil is the self-inflicted spiritual injury to those involved. Pastoral concern ought to focus primarily on that evil, and not only should seek to dissuade people from incurring it but call to repentance those who have incurred it. Here is a paradigmatic instance of the pastoral love that is expressed by canonical penalties: the point is not to add evil to evil, but to heighten as much as possible self-consciousness of sin, to increase the pain as it were precisely insofar as it is conducive to salutary repentance.

When people understand why fulfilling their obligations is good and their sins are bad—the human goods at stake, how sinning injures oneself and/or others—it at least does not seem to them that moral requirements are mere rules, whose violation is merely technical and able to be rectified by a merely routine performance of penitential behavior. For instance, alcoholics and drug addicts can learn from the clear cut injury that their wrongful actions do— independently of their subjective culpability—to themselves and others affected. By contrast, many sex sinners feel that what they do merely violates an arbitrary rule. And people manage not to see even the injuries they inflict by fairly serious injustices.

Confessors, then, need to understand as fully as they can why sins are bad and doing the right thing beneficial, and they need to explain that to penitents and encourage them to keep it in mind when tempted.

This is not to say that other things are less necessary: prayer, sacraments, avoiding occasions, and so on also are necessary. But when struggling against sin, everything that can help must be brought into play.

People who have done injustices must do what is possible and fair to rectify them and thereby promote harmony with injured parties. Confessors need to help people understand this obligation and to make a reasonable judgment about what is required. Those unwilling to make restitution are not really repentant, and must not be absolved.

In general, confessors may not require anything for absolution that the penitent's own moral obligations do not require. Those who have committed crimes generally are not required to turn themselves in. So, confessors generally may not require penitents to come clean in public. However, a criminal who has denied his crime and accused someone else of it would be obliged to restitution, despite the damage to himself making it would entail. Even if one knows that an innocent person is being accused for a crime one committed, one's wrongful action that brought about the situation involves an injustice to the innocent party that one must rectify—though one might be able to do that without openly admitting guilt.

Traditional moral had the idea that confessors sometimes should leave people in good faith (see Aertnys-Damen-Visser, vol. 3, p. 376; notice what he says at the top of the page about signs that ignorance is vincibile). The idea was that sometimes people are not formally sinning. But one knows that they are doing wrong, though thinking it okay. Then it is assumed that one is pretty sure that telling the people that what they are doing is gravely wrong would not lead them to quit. Instead, they would now know it gravely wrong, yet keep on doing it. And so, one's effort would have made mortal sinners out of wrongdoers who were at least not that guilty. In such cases, the better part of pastoral care was to shut up and leave people in good faith.

1) One must not judge others' ultimate stance before God, because only God really knows. So one cannot judge them in good faith any more than one can judge them in bad faith. In general, good faith is to be presumed, but the presumption is limited: when one has an obligation to teach the moral truth to people, one need not judge but neither should one presume.

2) Even the traditional moralists who taught this realized there were limits. Often people in good faith need to be told because failing to do so would be unjust to others whom they are gravely injuring. For instance, someone innocently scandalizing others needs to be told, for those others are suffering the consequence of committing sins. What the manuals overlooked is that people doing wrong also are injuring themselves: human goods always are at stake, and wrongful behavior on any matter, even if in this case inculpable, is likely to tie into other matters, setting up occasions of formal sin.

3) On some matters, where there has been much discussion and dissent, one simply cannot presume that a given person is in good faith. Some people will say that their conscience tells them x is okay; but "conscience" just refers to the box of rationalization and self-deception constructed with the help of dissent. So, leaving such people in "good" faith is sustaining the pastoral disaster wrought by dissent and loose talk about conscience.

4) Even on the best approach, one cannot know that people are in good faith. One cannot read hearts. In some cases, one will get it wrong. And leaving someone in bad faith is letting them down: one could have tried to do one's best—and prayed hard for the right reaction—to get them to repent. On the other hand, if one proceeds with genuine sensitivity, people really in good faith are not necessarily worse off. There is a real prospect that, by grace, they will repent. Predicting that they won't goes beyond reading hearts to forecasting others' future free choices—really presumptuous. It's also condescending: assuming that the people one serves don't have the capacity, even with sufficient grace (which by defined doctrine always is given) to repent and go straight.

Notes on the Pontifical Council for the Family, *Vademecum* for confessors, 12 Feb. 1997

¶2, claims that the document originated from John Paul II himself.

Last ¶ before Introduction, insinuates that the CDF and the Apostolic Penitentiary were involved and okayed the document.

Introduction, sec. 1, says the document is directed both to confessors and to married penitents. Thus it is a catechetical document. The Apostolic Constitution *Pastor bonus* says that the Clergy Congregation is in charge of matters pertaining to ministry and also to catechetics. So, that Congregation should have been involved, at least; had that Congregation issued the document, it would have had some authority.

Talks of the sacrament as the place “in which doctrinal affirmations confront concrete human situations and the spiritual paths of the individual faithful.” That way of looking at the matter presupposes legalism.

The ¶ immediately under the heading, VADEMECUM FOR THE USE OF CONFESSORS, says it “consists of a set of propositions which confessors are to keep in mind while administering the sacrament of Reconciliation.” That leaves it unclear how normative these propositions are meant to be for confessors who might disagree with them.

2.4, says that the Church always has taught the intrinsic evil of contraception and: “This teaching is to be held as definitive and irreformable.” Among other reasons why contraception is wrong, is that “it is contrary to the good of the transmission of life (the procreative aspect of matrimony.” That's as near as any recent document has come to saying that contraception is contralife. And the statement that the teaching is to be held not only as definitive but as irreformable implies that it has been defined—which is questionable.

3.1, among other things, the confessor should keep in mind “d) advice which inspire all, in a gradual way, to embrace the path of holiness.” First suggestion of gradualism.

3.2, the confessor is to take for granted penitents “good will to be reconciled.” So, good will is to be presumed.

3.7, says of confessors: “In general, it is not necessary for the confessor to investigate concerning sins committed in invincible ignorance of their evil, or due to an inculpable error of judgment.” Then goes on to say that such sins nevertheless are evil and a disorder, and adds: “It is therefore necessary to strive in the most suitable way to free the moral conscience from those errors [note 42, which refers to CCC 1793] which contradict the nature of conjugal

life as a total gift.” The passage referred to seems to concern the obligation of an individual with respect to his own conscience, while the *Vademecum* seems to be applying that to the confessor. It is hardly clear what the confessor is supposed to do. That lack of clarity is likely to provoke all sorts of responses by different confessors.

3.8, says that the “principle according to which it is preferable to let penitents remain in good faith in cases of error due to invincible ignorance, is certainly to be considered always valid.” But later in the same section: “Nonetheless, in these cases, the confessor must try to bring such penitents ever closer to accepting God’s plan in their own lives, even in these demands, by means of prayer, admonition and exhorting them to form their consciences, and by the teaching of the Church.” Putting those two together certainly would not be what used to be meant by leaving someone in good faith. The complex only makes sense if one assumes a penitent who claims to think contraception okay; it means one is to accept that stance while trying to move penitents to change their position.

3.9: “The pastoral ‘law of gradualness’ . . . consists of requiring a *decisive break* with sin together with a *progressive path* toward total union with God and with his loving demands.[note referring to *Familiaris consortio*, 34.]” The cited passage is none too clear.

3.13: “In the first place, it is necessary to distinguish cooperation in the proper sense, from violence or unjust imposition on the part of one of the spouses, which the other spouse in fact cannot resist. [note with reference to *Casti connubii* allowing cooperation].” See *LCL*, p. 646, n. 184. The paradigm was a case in which the husband withdrew, but the idea was not limited to that. The question is whether there is a *marital* act to participate in.

3.14: “Furthermore, it is necessary to carefully evaluate the question of cooperation in evil when recourse is made to means which can have an abortifacient effect.[note 48, referring to *Evangelium vitae*, 74, where it is talking about formal cooperation]” This seems confused: if the cooperation is formal, the evaluation is clear. If the cooperation is not formal, the need to evaluate arises, assuming material cooperation justifiable at all.

How should a confessor handle penitents who mention acts, such as contracepting, yet disagree with the Church’s teaching that they are wrong at all or gravely wrong?

Ask why the penitent has brought the matter up. Try to understand the penitent’s view and reasons for it. Does the penitent really think it’s a sin or not? Sometimes the penitent’s explanation of why he or she brought the matter up will make it clear that he or she thinks the action really is a sin. Sometimes the penitent’s explanation of what he or she has in mind will make it clear that he or she thinks it is not a sin, but wants reassurance because of awareness of being out of line with the Church’s teaching on the matter.

If penitents come to see that the act is a sin, they must have a purpose of amendment. If they deny it is a sin but want reassurance, the confessor should explain why the act is wrong and why, even if they don’t understand the explanation, they should trust the Church (rather, say, than dissenting opinions). Perhaps the penitent will then recognize at least the duty to obey Church teaching and agree to follow it for the future. If they recognize what they should do but are not ready to commit themselves to doing it, no absolution—not by refusing it, but by recessing.

If penitents insist that they consider the act not gravely wrong, one cannot absolve them with respect to that. So, if that's the only thing that they offer as matter, no absolution: "If you are really sincere—and it's up to you to judge that—you cannot be absolved of something of which you were not guilty. If you are not really sincere and are guilty, absolving you—when you're not admitting guilt and promising to amend—would not free you from your sin. So, I cannot absolve you." If penitents have offered something else as suitable matter for absolution, the confessor should make the situation clear. "I'm not absolving you with respect to *that* matter, since you claim you're not guilty with respect to it, but with respect to these other things. But if you're guilty in respect to *that*, you'll remain guilty with respect to everything—we're either in friendship with God or not."

If confessors cannot know for certain that people are in good faith, likewise they cannot know for certain that people are in bad faith. But one sometimes can tell that someone is being evasive or self-deceiving—without knowing ultimately the imputability of the wrongdoing. Hence, even when someone cannot be absolved, a confessor should not tell people that they are in bad faith, that the devil is their father—as Jesus told some opponents in Jn 8.38–44 (presumably Jesus was drawing on knowledge not generally humanly accessible).

John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Motu proprio* "By the Mercy of God" (*Misericordia Dei*), 7 April 2002, says that revitalization of the sacrament of reconciliation by bishops is "a requirement of charity and true pastoral justice" and cites *CIC* 213 and 843, §1, in his note 5. His point in the letter is to recall canon laws in force and clarify certain aspects of them, and says this is especially necessary because of tendency in some places to abandon individual confession and resort to general absolution.

The document is especially specific (in section 4) with regard to *grave necessity*, and also (in section 7) with respect to validity that it depends on the faithful both intending to confess individually serious sins not now confessed and having a real purpose of amendment: "penitents living in a habitual state of serious sin and who do not intend to change their situation cannot validly receive absolution."

Not all sins can be absolved. Sometimes the person is sorry and wishes not to be in sin, but has no purpose of amendment. That can take two forms. (1) I do not want to give up this sin. (2) Although right now I do not want to, I know I *will* commit this sin again. Both are inconsistent with intending not to sin again. In either case confessor must try to elicit repentance, but if that fails, must refuse absolution.

1 Cor 5: Paul tells the Corinthians that they should not tolerate a member's ongoing incestuous relationship. At least some in the community thought that their tolerant attitude was to their credit; Paul condemns their arrogance and boasting (vv. 2, 6), and makes it clear that the evil they are tolerating infects the community itself (vv. 6–8). He insists that this and other immorality is unacceptable in their Christian community (vv. 9–12). Therefore, Paul concludes: "Drive out the wicked person from among you" (5.13). Moreover, he maintains that excommunicating the wrongdoer is for his own ultimate benefit, since it promotes repentance and ultimate salvation: "You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord Jesus" (v. 5).

This provides a model for the Church at present. Tolerating and supporting members who are committed to ongoing immorality may seem to be very charitable and creditable. But in fact it corrupts the community. Sinners are enabled to find a *modus vivendi* for their sinful lifestyles; feeling themselves still decent Christians and their guilt feelings being quieted, they are unlikely to repent. Even though in violation of “Church teaching,” tolerance sends the message: you’re okay. Therefore, greater severity is necessary, not as punishment but to protect the holiness of the community and to give the wrongdoer the only sort of help that is truly charitable and potentially saving: tough love. In this respect, the Christian community is very like the Christian family: enabling members to go on sinning is not the way to go. Even if they must be forced out, doing so, while hard, is more loving, when the purpose is to make them experience the trouble they are in, face up, and repent. Then they will be able again to be real, living, and flourishing members of the community rather than deadbeats who are spreading their morbidity to the body as a whole.

The practice of general absolution beyond the very narrow limits in which it is truly warranted is pastoral malpractice: it is likely to lead some people—and probably many—to think they are free of sin, because they feel better, without truly repenting. So, it promotes bad faith. So, where that has been practiced, appropriate restitution is called for; if the guilty clerics cannot make it (they’re gone or dead) or won’t, others who can need to do what they can.

The restitution will involve catechesis about what penance really requires for its validity and fruitfulness. But that catechesis is not likely to be understood and its relevance grasped by those who need to act on it unless the wrongness of past practice is stated very clearly and precisely how bad it was and why spelled out frankly. For repentant clerics, that will be humbling. For others who are trying to remedy what erring fellow clerics have done, it will be a delicate matter, for they might seem uncharitably accusatory and judgmental. Still, it needs to be done, and getting the message through in a way that will promote hearing and acting on the message is the only thing that should control how bluntly the matter is put.

Jas 5.19–20: “My brethren, if any one among you wanders from the truth and some one brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.” The text clearly means that the sinner’s soul will be saved from eternal death. But the text is ambiguous as to whether the sins of the rescuer or of the rescued are those “covered over.”

In any case, this teaching ought to motivate priests vigorously to promote repentance and the use of the sacrament of penance. Pastoral love ought to move them most effectively when the stake most clearly is the saving of someone’s soul—here and now. And whether or not this text promises that the minister’s own sins will be “covered over,” one who faithfully fulfills the responsibilities of pastoral love can be confident of the Lord’s grace when most needed.

1 Jn 2.1: “My little children, I am writing this to you so that you may not sin; but if any one does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” What the author has been writing to his readers culminates at the end of the preceding chapter (1 Jn 1.9–10): “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” Now he is making it clear that he is not advocating confession of sins to facilitate



ongoing sinning, but so that his readers may not sin—will go and sin no more. Confession requires contrition, and that includes a genuine intention never again to commit any mortal sin. Still, the author also makes it clear that no Christian who does sin should regard his state of sin as hopeless. If anyone does sin, he can have recourse to Jesus for forgiveness, which he, being our righteous advocate (paraclete, intercessor, high priest) can obtain from the Father.

The sacrament of penance mainly deals with Christians who habitually wish to avoid sin, and whose grave sins are exceptions to their usual state of mind. Typically, those who seek forgiveness in confession have not been living obdurately in sin for a long time, but have given in to temptation with the thought—So long, Lord; I'll be back soon—as if they could take a recess from their friendship with God. That frame of mind presupposes a legalistic outlook. The practice of the sacrament should help sinners overcome that legalism. It will do so only if confessors understand legalism and its remedy, and constantly try to help sinners both understand the unsoundness of their legalism and gain the courage to strive to live in a consistently upright way: to walk in the light (1 Jn 1.7).

1 Jn 5.16–17: “If any one sees his brother committing what is not a mortal sin, he will ask, and God will give him life for those whose sin is not mortal [*pros thanaton* = unto death]. There is sin which is mortal; I do not say that one is to pray for that. All wrongdoing is sin, but there is sin which is not mortal.”

Exegetes offer many diverse and inconsistent theories about the meaning of this passage. But it is generally agreed that it does not seem likely that the expression translated “mortal” here refers to what we call mortal sins. On the one hand, if the sin were only venial (in our sense), the sinner has not lost charity (spiritual life). On the other hand, Christians appropriately pray for people who seem to be sinning mortally.

One way of understanding the passage that is consistent with the Church's teaching and sound pastoral practice is that sin unto death is any mortal sin that a person is unwilling to repent. Lacking contrition, a sinner cannot be absolved validly. Neither the priest nor others should pray that such an unrepentant sinner be forgiven. Rather, the appropriate prayer is that God move the sinner to contrition.

By contrast, no matter what sin someone has committed, if he is contrite, Christians generally and the minister of the sacrament in particular ought to pray that he be forgiven, and that prayer of the Church will certainly be answered. Such a prayer is, in our sacramental practice, included in the formula for absolution: “through the ministry of the Church, may God give you pardon and peace.”

Sinners often feel guiltier than they are. Having omitted to do something that they might have had a grave obligation to do or having done something in itself gravely wrong, they are aware of their guilt. But in many cases, invincible ignorance and/or subjective mitigating factors limited their guilt, often with the result that it is venial. In such cases, the pastor should try to help sinners not only (a) to understand their true guilt and repent of it, but (b) understand the mitigating factors and the excessiveness of their feeling of guilt, and (c) soundly evaluate and adopt a reasonable stance toward factors other than themselves, especially other people, that contributed to their sin.

Not taking modern psychology into account, classical pastoral practice in dealing with guilt, which was done almost exclusively within the sacrament of penance, focused on (a) and to some extent on (b) but paid little attention to (c). Influenced by modern psychology, current practice, often in the context of pastoral counseling, focuses on (b) and to some extent on (c) but often ignores (a). Not only sinners' psychological health but their moral integrity and growth in holiness require adequate and balanced help with (a), (b), and (c). Pastors should not try to provide psychological therapy. But they do need to take both sound ethical theory and sound psychology into account to provide adequate pastoral care, whether in the sacrament of penance or in counseling outside it.

Parents whose adult children have many problems look back, realize that they failed to fulfill their parental responsibilities in various ways, and feel guilty. Reassuring them by pointing out that the children are now responsible for their own lives is inadequate to the complex reality of the situation. Encouraging them to take responsibility for their children's current problems may be unreasonable—very burdensome for the parents and not really helpful to the children.

Helping such parents to examine their consciences is a sound starting point. Was there ever a time when you knew that you were doing something seriously wrong in respect to your children and simply kept on doing it, or knew you had a serious obligation to do something for them but simply did not do it? When you became aware that something you were trying to do for your children was not working out as you had expected or that you had overlooked some serious duty, what did you do about it? When the true guilt is recognized, confessed, and repented, and its limits also are recognized, parents' guilt feelings also are likely to resolve. At the same time, they are likely to become more able to evaluate soundly other factors that contributed to their children's problems: the cultural environment, peer influence, the shortcomings of pastors and teachers, and the children's own wrongful choices. More soundly evaluating such factors, parents will be more able to judge how to behave reasonably toward their children now.

A similar sound and balanced pastoral approach is important in dealing with victims—of scams, of physical abuse, of date rape, and so on. Modern psychology has made most people acutely aware of the many emotional motives for blaming the victim, including motives for victims to blame themselves. However, in seeking to prevent the unjust exoneration of perpetrators, many people, including psychologists and pastors, overlook or even deny the real though limited moral responsibility of victims themselves.

Perpetrators of fraud, physical abuse, rape, and other wrongs (which also often are crimes) must be held responsible. Insofar as they seduce victims into wrongfully cooperating, perpetrators' responsibility is greater, not less, because leading someone to sin, even if with only venial guilt, is a far graver injury than any economic or physical injury.

Nevertheless, victims' moral integrity requires that they recognize and repent anything they wrongly did that led to, facilitated, or added to the wrong done to them. Moreover, unless victims recognize their real guilt and repent appropriately, they cannot healthily resolve their feelings of guilt, which often are excessive and in large part unreasonable. Then too, unless victims' own responsibility is clarified, they cannot soundly evaluate the responsibility of

those who wronged them, especially insofar as that responsibility included leading them to sin. And without that sound evaluation, victims cannot adopt a reasonable stance toward wrongdoers—for example, of readiness to forgive the real evil done them and alertness to resist again being victimized in a similar way.

Some wise thoughts on forgiveness from a Protestant:

*Forgiveness may not involve complete restoration.*

Those who have confessed their wrongs are likely to ask, “Now that I’ve admitted my wrong, now that God has forgiven me, and now that the Bible requires you to forgive me, why can’t we act like this never happened?”

One answer is that forgiveness doesn’t require a return to business as usual. There may be results that are irreversible. God forgave Adam and Eve, and then removed them from the Garden. God forgave the anger of Moses, but wouldn’t let him into the Promised Land. God forgave David for adultery and murder, but would not let David have the child born of his adultery.

Forgiveness may allow for consequences. A forgiver may still wisely and lovingly ask for reasonable restitution, legal due process, a plan to avoid recurrences, and time to heal. Wise follow-through is often necessary if we are going to forgive and love well.

The point is that restitution often is necessary. Moreover, changes to avoid sin in the future also are called for.

*Forgiveness isn’t only for us.*

Because an angry, bitter spirit can be self-destructive, many believe that the ability to forgive is more for us than for the person who has hurt us. Some even resent the thought that we should feel compelled to forgive our offender for their sake.

But, if forgiving others is God’s merciful way of helping us deal with our own bitterness, why then does He add to our pain the difficult task of confronting those who have hurt us, and to forgive them only if they say, “I repent” (Luke 17:1–4).

Jesus doesn’t teach us to love our enemies and to forgive those who harm us merely to get the bitterness out of our own stomachs. Freeing ourselves of resentment is only part of what Jesus had in mind. Just as God forgives us for our sake, He asks us to join with Him in being part of the redemptive process in those who have asked for mercy. He asks us to do this not in our own strength, but by His grace working in us.

Forgiveness is for the benefit of those forgiven, to contribute to their upbuilding and salvation. It also is for the sake of the communio of love, which is the most essential material people in this world can prepare for the heavenly kingdom. So, the genuineness of forgiveness calls for the genuineness of repentance, and pastoral concern must be for the building up in love of the one body.

*Sometimes it’s necessary to lovingly withhold forgiveness.*

God lovingly withholds forgiveness from those who have not had a change of heart. Even though it saddens Him to do so, He will not forgive the guilt of those who knowingly refuse to admit their sin.

God's example is our wisdom. He teaches us to be saddened by the self-centeredness of others, to lovingly confront those who have wronged us, and to let His love teach us when it is in the best interests of others to extend forgiveness or to withhold it (Matthew 18:15–17; Luke 23:34).

If there certainly is no real repentance, “forgiving” anyway is not genuine. No communion of love is built up. Pretending to forgive is an injurious act, wholly lacking in love. For it leaves the sinner much worse off, feeling absolved when he really is not, and so hellbound. That is like a physician who gives someone pills to make him feel good while leaving his operable cancer become fatal.

It is important not to brush aside people's guilt feelings that seem excessive but are not clearly pathological. For example, parents who lose a teen-age child may feel guilty for their failings in parenting. The pastor trying to console them may brush those guilt feelings aside. He should not. Rather he should help them discern the extent and seriousness of their guilt. It may be that they have been committing mortal sins. More likely, they often sinned venially—did what they should not or failed to do what they should, sometimes even in grave matter, but without the conditions for mortal sin.

Helping people clarify their responsibility and repent what they need to repent, but recognize that their guilt was mitigated when it was, makes it possible for them to come to terms with themselves and go on. By contrast, telling them they are not guilty does not help, because it does not deal with the reality underlying their guilt feelings. If they feel guilty when they should not at all, they are suffering from psychopathology; that is not for pastors to deal with, but to recognize and refer for appropriate care.

It is important not to assume that a person who suffered some injustice was not guilty. People who seek pastoral advice and counseling often present as victims, and more or less are, but also are sinners who need to repent, confess, and make amends. The truth about this is widely denied these days—e.g., in respect to date rape. But usually everyone involved in bad situations is guilty of something, though, of course, not always equally guilty. Recognizing the guilt of victims does not make those who wronged them less guilty. And it is essential for their own good. When priests seduced young people and their victims were given psychological counseling but not encouraged to repent, that was another and still greater wrong. They were first victims of pastoral betrayal and then of pastoral malpractice by those whose first concern ought to have been their reconciliation with God and salvation. When a woman comes with marriage problems, it is likely both she and her husband are responsible. Counseling her alone is not nearly likely to be helpful as dealing with both.

The ministry of reconciliation has been limited almost entirely to sacramental penance and that has been practiced only as a one-on-one exercise. The communal second rite and even general absolution do not change the point I am making: the reconciliation of conflicting

parties, of the wronged with those who wronged them, and so forth is hardly regarded as an ecclesial concern. Even the requirement of restitution is ignored by many confessors.

Jesus tells disciples to admonish apparent sinners, then take others to help, then bring the matter to the Church. Paul also tells Christians with disputes that they should not seek adjudication from pagan tribunals, but get it from the Church. But the modern Church has no facility for receiving and dealing with anyone who tries to follow Jesus' and Paul's advice. That is a very bad sign: pastoral practice has simply abandoned a major responsibility.

Caryll Houselander, *A Rocking-Horse Catholic* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1955), tells of a vision by which she saw "Christ in all men":

I was in an underground train, a crowded train in which all sorts of people jostled together, sitting and strap-hanging—workers of every description going home at the end of the day. Quite suddenly I saw with my mind, but as vividly as a wonderful picture, Christ in them all. But I saw more than that; not only was Christ in every one of them, living in them, dying in them, rejoicing in them, sorrowing in them—but because He was in them, and because they were here, the whole world was here too, here in this underground train; not only the world as it was at that moment, not only all the people in all the countries of the world, but all those people who had lived in the past, and all those yet to come. (p. 137)

...

(138) The "vision" lasted with that intensity for several days, and each of them revealed the mystery and its implications for me a little more clearly. Although it did not prevent me from ever sinning again, it showed me what sin is, especially those sins done in the name of "love," so often held to be "harmless"—for to sin with one whom you loved was to blaspheme Christ in that person; it was to spit on Him, perhaps to crucify Him. I saw too the reverence that everyone must have for a sinner; instead of condoning his sin, which is his utmost sorrow, one must comfort Christ who is suffering in him. And this reverence must be paid even (139) to those sinners whose souls seem to be dead, because it is Christ, who is the life of the soul, who is dead in them; they are His tombs, and Christ in the tomb is potentially the risen Christ. For the same reason, no one of us who has fallen into mortal sin himself must ever lose hope.

Pastors should see Christ in everyone and have that attitude toward sin—both the horror and the hope.

Congregation for the Clergy, *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community* (18 Oct. 2002), 21:

It is notable that the Code makes specific mention of frequent reception of the Holy Eucharist and of the Sacrament of Penance. This would indicate that the parish priest, in establishing the times for Masses and confessions in his parish, would take into consideration those times which are convenient for the majority of the faithful, while bearing in mind also the need to facilitate those who have difficulty in easily

attending the celebration of the sacraments. The parish priest should devote special attention to individual confession, understood in the spirit and form established by the Church. He should be mindful that confession must precede first Holy Communion. Moreover, the individual confessions of the faithful, for pastoral reasons and for the convenience of the faithful, may also be received during the celebration of the Holy Mass.

Care should be taken to ensure respect “for the sensibilities of the penitent concerning the manner in which he wishes to confess, either face to face, or from behind a grill.” The confessor may also have pastoral reasons for preferring the use a confessional equipped with a grill.

This document makes it clear that pastors need to make going to confession as convenient as possible. The choice of anonymous or face-to-face is to be available to the penitent. Hearing confessions during Mass is not imposed, but is said to be allowable and implicitly commended whenever it would promote good use of the sacrament. No mention is made of the practice of excluding confessions during the whole Easter triduum, but that practice certainly is at odds with the spirit of the document.

John Paul II, Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday 2001, 12–14, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng.), 4 April 2001, 2:

12. The priest who fully experiences the joy of sacramental reconciliation will find it altogether normal to repeat to his brothers and sisters the words of Paul: “So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor 5:20).

The crisis of the Sacrament of Reconciliation which I mentioned earlier is due to many factors from the diminished sense of sin to an inadequate realization of the sacramental economy of God’s salvation. But perhaps we should also recognize that another factor sometimes working against the Sacrament has been *a certain dwindling of our own enthusiasm and availability* for the exercise of this delicate and demanding ministry.

Conversely, now more than ever the People of God must be helped to rediscover the Sacrament. We need to declare with firmness and conviction that the Sacrament of Penance is the ordinary means of obtaining pardon and the remission of grave sins committed after Baptism. We ought to celebrate the Sacrament in the best possible way, *according to the forms laid down by liturgical law*, so that it may lose none of its character as the celebration of God’s mercy.

13. . . .

Obviously sacramental confession is not to be confused with a support system or with psychotherapy. But neither should we underestimate the fact that the Sacrament of Reconciliation, when correctly celebrated, also has a “humanizing” effect, which is in perfect harmony with its primary purpose of reconciling the individual with God and the Church.

Here too, it is important that the minister of reconciliation should fulfill his role correctly. His ability to be welcoming, to be a good listener and to engage in dialogue, together with his ready accessibility, is essential if the ministry of reconciliation is to be seen in all its value. The faithful and uncompromising proclamation of the radical demands of God's word must always be accompanied by great understanding and sensitivity, in imitation of Jesus' own way of dealing with sinners.

14. The liturgical form of the Sacrament also needs to be given due attention. *The Sacrament forms part of the structure of communion which is the mark of the Church.* Sin itself cannot be properly understood if it is viewed in a purely "private" way, forgetting that it inevitably affects the entire community and lowers the level of holiness within it. Moreover, the offer of forgiveness expresses a mystery of supernatural solidarity, since its sacramental significance rests on the profound union between Christ the Head and the members of his Body.

It is extremely important to help people recover this "community" aspect of the Sacrament, also by means of *community penance services* which conclude with individual confession and absolution. This manner of celebration enables the faithful to appreciate better the two-fold dimension of reconciliation, and commits them more effectively to following the penitential path in all its revitalizing richness.

Here the exhortation is clarifying several responsibilities of clerics with respect to the sacrament of penance. They are to practice it themselves and to do so in a way that will make them enthusiastic about promoting it. They are to teach the faithful that they need the sacrament to receive forgiveness for their grave sins. They are to make Jesus' mercy available by the way they administer the sacrament. They are to help the faithful recover the community aspect of the sacrament yet not compromise it by violating liturgical norms, especially those grounded in Catholic faith.

The administration of the sacrament of penance according to the second form is not limited to large groups. It can appropriately be done with very small groups, even with couples. In such cases, if those in the group have cooperated in certain sins or have common problems in respect to them, it might well be suggested that they deal together with those matters. In such cases, of course, each individual also should privately confess whatever directly concerns only him or her.

John Paul II, Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday 2002, 8, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng.), 27 March 2002, 7, deals with the relationship between divine mercy and repentance, and warns against both laxity and excessive severity:

The availability and superabundance of mercy should not however obscure the fact that it is *only the premise* [obviously a bad translation; it should be something like principle] *of salvation*, which reaches fulfillment to the extent that it meets *a response in the human being*. In fact, the forgiveness granted in the Sacrament of Reconciliation is not some external action, a kind of legal "remission of the penalty", but *a real encounter of the penitent with God*, who restores the bond

of friendship shattered by sin. The “truth” of this relationship requires that we welcome God’s merciful embrace, overcoming all the resistance caused by sin.

This is what happens in the case of Zacchaeus. Aware that he is now being treated as a “son”, he begins to think and act like a son, *and this he shows in the way he rediscovers his brothers and sisters*. Beneath the loving gaze of Christ, the heart of Zacchaeus warms to love of neighbour. From a feeling of isolation, which had led him to enrich himself without caring about what others had to suffer, he moves to an attitude of sharing. This is expressed in a genuine “division” of his wealth: “half of my goods to the poor”. The injustice done to others by his fraudulent behaviour is atoned for by a fourfold restitution: “If I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold” (Lk 19:8). And it is only at this point that the love of God achieves its purpose, and salvation is accomplished: “Today salvation has come to this house” (Lk 19:9).

Dear Priests, this journey of salvation, so clearly described in the story of Zacchaeus, should guide us and help us accomplish with wise pastoral balance our difficult work in the ministry of the confessional. It is a ministry always beset by two opposite extremes: *severity and laxity*. The first fails to take account of the early part of the story of Zacchaeus: mercy comes first, encouraging conversion and valuing even the slightest progress in love, because the Father wants to do the impossible to save the son who is lost: “The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost” (Lk 19:10).

The other of the two extremes, laxity, fails to take into account the fact that the fullness of salvation, not just offered but also accepted, the salvation which truly heals and restores, involves a genuine conversion to the demands of God’s love. If Zacchaeus had welcomed the Lord into his home without coming to an attitude of openness to love and reparation for the harm done, without a firm commitment to living a new life, he would not have received in the depths of his heart the forgiveness which the Lord had offered him with such concern.

We must always be careful to maintain a proper balance in order to avoid falling into one or the other of these extremes. Severity crushes people and drives them away. Laxity is misleading and deceptive. The minister of pardon, who exemplifies for penitents the face of the Good Shepherd, must express in equal measure the mercy already present and at work and the pardon which brings healing and peace. It is on the basis of these principles that the priest is deputed, in dialogue with the penitent, to discern whether he or she is ready for sacramental absolution. Undoubtedly, the delicacy of this meeting with souls, at such a personal and sometimes difficult moment, demands the utmost discretion. Unless it appears otherwise, the priest must assume that, in confessing his or her sins, the penitent is genuinely sorry and is determined to make amends. This can be more readily assumed if there are suitable pastoral aids for sacramental Reconciliation, including a time of preparation for the sacrament, in order to help penitents come to a more mature and satisfactory sense of what it is that they are looking for. Clearly, when



there is no sorrow and amendment, the confessor is obliged to tell the penitent that he or she is not yet ready for absolution. If absolution were given to those who actually say that they have no intention of making amends, the rite would become a mere fiction; indeed, it would look almost like magic, capable perhaps of creating the semblance of peace, but certainly not that deep peace of conscience which God's embrace guarantees.

It is only when Zacchaeus repents that the purpose of mercy is achieved, and salvation comes to this house. The pope's point is that the confessor's central concern is to promote genuine repentance for whatever sins penitents are aware of. Like the Lord dealing with Zacchaeus, pastors should anticipate and motivate people's repentance by treating them kindly and *offering* forgiveness. But confessors must also promote genuine repentance, including just restitution for injustices. There must not be any pretense that all is well if individuals resist repenting; it is wrong to mislead people who may well end in hell. The good will of the penitent is to be presumed. But when the presumption is overcome by a refusal to commit to amendment—which may be implicit in a refusal to make restitution or to avoid avoidable occasions of sin—confessors must “tell the penitent that he or she is not yet ready for absolution.” NB: one never *refuses* absolution. Rather, one declines to proceed *now* and exhorts to reflection and repentance. In other words, mercy is to be held out to the individual obdurate in sin. But absolution is not to be given: that would in truth be merciless. Confessors are not to make it their prime object to send everyone away *feeling* good but truly *being* reconciled.

Later in the same letter (10, p. 8), the Pope says:

While we remain firmly anchored in the discernment of the Church's magisterium, let us also make every effort to keep our theological training truly up-to-date, especially where emerging ethical issues are concerned. It can happen that in the face of complex contemporary ethical problems the faithful leave the confessional with somewhat confused ideas, especially if *they find that confessors are not consistent in their judgments*. The truth is that those who fulfill this delicate ministry in the name of God and of the Church have a specific duty not to promote and, even more so not to express in the confessional, personal opinions that do not correspond to what the Church teaches and professes. Likewise, *a failure to speak the truth because of a misconceived sense of compassion should not be taken for love*. We do not have a right to minimize matters of our own accord, even with the best of intentions. Our task is to be God's witnesses, to be spokesmen of a mercy that saves even when it shows itself as judgment on man's sin. “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 7:21).

Here he rules out two things: applying dissenting opinions in the confessional and omitting to teach candidly to make things easy. The former he implies confuses people; they get different views from different priests, rather than hearing from all the same teaching of the Church. The second fails to bear witness to truth and leaves people falling short. Implicit in this is the assumption that the penitents concerned either are or might well be in bad faith, and perhaps

also the point that people doing what is objectively wrong often are in deep trouble even if they are sincere.

2 Cor 5.17–19:

17 Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

God is not alienated from us sinners, but we from God. He does not turn away from us but we from him. So, we need to be reconciled to God. Reconciliation is not pretending that the rift no longer exists or acting as if it never happened. Rather, it depends on a radical change in oneself, genuine conversion. Indeed, one must be recreated: “Create a clean heart in me.” Being reconciled to God therefore requires divine creativity; it is a work of grace. But we must accept the grace: allow ourselves to be changed radically.

Rom 12.2: “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may prove [*dokimazein* = discern] what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Reconciliation must be based on nonconformity to the alienated world and transformation according to the mind of Christ. Richard John Neuhaus, *Freedom for Ministry* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1991), 77: “When we are helping people cope by conforming rather than to change by transforming, when we make smooth the way of accommodation, when we relieve the tension between the actual and the real, then we have become reconcilers who have betrayed Christ’s ministry of reconciliation.”

1 Jn 3.5–10:

[5] You know that he [Christ] appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.

[6] No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him.

[7] Little children, let no one deceive you. He who does right is righteous, as he is righteous.

[8] He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

[9] No one born of God commits sin; for God’s nature [*sperma* = semen] abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God.

[10] By this it may be seen who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not do right is not of God.

Some commentators say that in this passage the author contradicts what he said earlier: that the Christian who sins can hope for forgiveness by and through Christ our advocate with the Father (1 Jn 2.1–2). But that would mean that Jn asserts contradictory propositions, which is

impossible (incompatible with inspiration by the Holy Spirit). So, the passage needs to be understood as follows.

After a long discussion of various theories about how to resolve the supposed inconsistency and some questionable comments of his own, Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, AB30:431, concludes: “One is forced, then, to understand the claims to sinlessness and impeccability in 1 John 3:6,9 in light of the statements on status in 3:1,2. We are God’s children already, and there is a freedom from sin attached to that state. . . . But in this last hour, he recognizes that we are not yet all that we shall be, and so there is a growth in God’s children. The divine seed abides and continues to transform the child of God into the image of God’s Son which is the image of God Himself, until at the final revelation we are like God Himself. The more that this divine seed transforms the Christian, the more impossible it is for the Christian to sin.” This view can be articulated in more analytic language.

Since Christ is sinless, anyone who abides in him—i.e., is united with him and remains united with him—does not sin. Insofar as one falls short of union with Christ, one does not really see or know him. And it is only insofar as one’s union with Christ does fall short that one can sin. Therefore, insofar as one does sin, one has neither seen nor known Christ. Since one’s righteousness is entirely derivative from Jesus’ and dependent on his, insofar as one does do what is right, one’s righteousness is like Jesus’. But insofar as one does commit sin, one’s evildoing is like the devil’s, and one associates oneself with the devil. Christ is totally opposed to that; his whole mission was to overcome the works of the devil, to free human beings from sin and all its consequences. No one born of God, insofar as he/she is born of God, commits sin, for God’s semen—the Holy Spirit and the revealed truth he communicates—remains present and active in that child of God, who therefore *cannot* commit sin. So, if one does sin (mortally), one no longer is a child of God, but a child of the devil.

One might suppose that the analysis of the preceding passage using *insofar as* reduces it to uninteresting truisms. But that would be a mistake. For it is important that we see this fundamental reason *why* sin is excluded from Christian life. It isn’t just that God has something against it and insists that we give it up. Rather, it’s that God cannot have anything to do with sin, and wants us to have everything to do with him.

God is perfect goodness—“light” in Jn’s language (1 Jn 1.5). The Christian is reborn of God, a child of God, who abides in Jesus. So, there really is no room for evil, for sin, in a Christian, except insofar as one falls short of being what one has been made to be, falls short of abiding completely in Christ and of being in communion with the Father. Thus, holiness is not an optional extra. We are called to holiness simply by being Christians; we are called to be fully what God is making us: his children. Holiness, therefore, is not so much a matter of avoiding sin or overcoming it as it is of being consistently God’s child and being perfectly united to Christ.

When people suffer from physical or psychological evils, they generally experience the evil in a much more profound and sharp way than anyone else can; no one else really knows what their suffering is like. But when people suffer from the moral evil they inflict upon themselves, part of the bad result of that evil is that it anesthetizes conscience and thus tends

to reduce sensitivity to itself, awareness of sin, even understanding of sin. So, suffering often is little. Good pastoral care in dealing with evil needs to aim at clarifying conscience and increasing suffering as a way of motivating repentance.

Being completely innocent of sin, enjoying penetrating insight into people's hearts, and being on the receiving end of huge injustices, Jesus no doubt suffered due to sin more than any other human being ever has.

When penitents repeatedly commit the same sort of sins, some confessors simply urge them to try harder. That exhortation is unsound for two reasons.

1) Such penitents are likely to be tempted to despair, and their hope must be aroused. To arouse it, a good confessor will remind them that God loves them and Jesus died for them, that they received many blessings before they were in a position to do anything, that the faith by which they have freely accepted and enjoy God's greatest gifts was and is itself his gift, and that he wants to give them increasing freedom from sinfulness and greater holiness. The confessor should ask such penitents to join with him in thanking God for all his blessings, not least for his repeated forgiveness of their sins. Then the confessor should assure them that, if they constantly ask for and confidently expect the Holy Spirit's help, he will enable them to do what they cannot do by themselves, and thus he will overcome their sins.

2) "Try harder" presupposes that the person addressed is using limited means to achieve his/her end, failing to achieve the end due to the inadequacy of the means, and knows further means that could be used to achieve the end. For example, a child tries to turn a doorknob exerting the force usually adequate to turn doorknobs, and the knob does not turn. "Try harder" has a clear meaning: Exert more force. If necessary, the one advising the child can show and provide directions for trying harder: position yourself like this (directly in front of the knob), grasp the knob like this (firmly with both hands), then twist like this (keeping arms and shoulders rigid while shifting body weight in the direction of the twisting).

Unfortunately, penitents told to try harder generally do not know what further means they might use or how to use them, or both, so as to prevent themselves from behaving spontaneously in ways that are seriously wrong though only venially sinful due to lack of reflection and consent, to forestall temptations to sin in grave matter, and/or to overcome such temptations when they arise.

Good confessors study and investigate ways and means of dealing with various sorts of sins. They seek the help of psychologists who are faithful and devout Catholics. They try to become competent spiritual coaches. As a result, they are familiar not only with the means long found helpful to some penitents and traditionally recommended by pastoral theologians but with means more recently discovered, such as support groups modeled on Alcoholics Anonymous, and catechesis to replace a legalistic misunderstanding of sin by a sound understanding of precisely how various sins prevent, impede, damage, or destroy relevant human goods of the sinners themselves and, usually, of others as well.

Good confessors discuss with penitents what they have been doing to overcome their sins and how they have been doing it. Then the good confessor looks for means a penitent has not used or not used in a way likely to be effective, and offers specific advice. Rather than simply

saying, “Try harder,” or, perhaps, fostering presumption by suggesting that the greatness of God’s love and mercy assures all Christians of glory despite their ongoing sins, the good confessor helps penitents cooperate with that love and mercy in overcoming their sins so that they will grow in the peace and joy of holiness.

Canon 964, §1, specifies that the proper place for hearing confessions is in a church or oratory. §2 says that bishops’ conferences should issue norms for confessionals but there always should be a confessional in an open place with a grill between priest and penitent. (There may also be provision for face-to-face confessions, but penitents must have the option of anonymity.) §3 says confessions should not be heard outside confessionals without a “just cause,” which means a real *reason*.

Some priests are refusing to schedule confessions on Christmas Eve or during the Holy Thursday Triduum. No. 13 of the Introduction to the Rite of Penance explicitly states: “Reconciliatio penitentium omni tempore ac die celebrari potest” (The reconciliation of penitents can be celebrated at all times and days).

## **7–H: Responsibilities of clerics with respect to marriage preparation and marriage counseling**

Pontifical Council for the Family, *Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage*

Some of the material from vol. 2, chap. 9, qu. H on troubled marriages can be taken over and rewritten from a pastoral point of view for this chapter. Similarly some of the material in qu. I on preparation for marriage.

GS 49 near end: “Young people are to be instructed suitably and timely, especially in the bosom of their family, about the dignity, gift and task, and outward act of conjugal love, so that, having been trained in the cultivation of chastity, they can at an appropriate age make the transition to marriage by way of an upright engagement.” That teaching hardly is taking place in many parts of the Church. Even many couples who do not live together before marriage engage in intercourse or free sex play. That failure sometimes is because the clergy and parents have cashed it in to contraception and permissiveness about unchastity; sometimes it is due to fear of alienating young people. But without the desire for chastity and at least a practical effort to realize it, young people are incapacitated for self-giving and likely to fall short of authentic commitment required for valid marriage.

Couples wishing to be married in the Church need to understand the faith and be converted to the Lord. The basic element in marriage preparation must be securing, if possible, a wholehearted response to the gospel’s central offer. Next, catechesis concerning personal vocation, and the couple’s consideration of whether marriage to each other really is their vocation. In this context, they should be encouraged to examine their gifts and opportunities for service, and it makes sense to discuss this as the basis for checking out freedom to marry. Also, unless the couple already know they are sterile, consideration of vocation leads into reflection of children, parenthood, and family planning. But most important is an understanding of the marital *communio* as sacrament and apostolate, showing forth the union of Jesus with his Church and bearing witness to *that* love by spousal love. None of this, unfortunately, has been brought out as clearly as one would like in *Familiaris consortio* or the CCC. The couple need to be encouraged, especially by the promise of grace from the sacrament, since accepting marriage and living it as a vocation is countercultural and will be very difficult, with little social support of any sort: “Notable virtue is required for fulfilling constantly the duties of this Christian vocation” (GS 49).

GS 50–51 neither sanction contraception—the famous note 14 left unspecified issues unsettled in view of the papal inquiry—nor reject the importance of having and raising children as part of the good of marriage. The Council set aside the isolation and hierarchization of diverse ends and goods for a more integrated view of marriage as good in itself, and as including parenthood as its own fulfillment. The previous hesitant view of NFP and the notion that only extraordinary causes can justify its use were excluded by the balanced treatment of responsible parenthood in 51. The couple in 50 should know “they are cooperators with the love of God the creator and, as it were, its interpreters”—they must accurately and sensitively translate God’s wishes, and only they are in a position to judge and discern here.

GS 52 favors the mother in the home caring for younger children especially, and emphasizes the need for full father involvement with children.

Pastors need to work against divorce, which almost always is very bad for children; need to support forgiveness and amendment, working out problems, and—in extreme cases, allowing each other space to live. If couple separate, must work for them to cooperate in caring for children. Resist remarriage, which involves adultery.

Need to deal with the matter of how to handle couples who are living together when they wish to be married in the Church.

*CIC*, c. 124, §2: “A juridic act placed correctly with respect to its external elements is presumed valid.” This underlies *CIC*, c. 1060, concerning the presumption of the law in favor of marriage. Pastors must act on this presumption in dealing with troubled marriages and with people who want to marry but have gone through some previous ceremony. The presumption, of course, can be set overcome, but only (in the case of Catholics) by a Church tribunal, because marriage is not merely a private affair of the couple but a social status and responsibility—in the society of the Church, the responsibility to live the sacrament, to raise offspring in the faith, and corresponding responsibilities of others, such as to abstain from tempting to adultery.

*Pastores dabo vobis*, 41, quotes the synod fathers as calling for “pastoral work on behalf of the family” inasmuch as it is “endangered nowadays,” in order that the family will be, as it were, a first seminary, “in which children can acquire from the beginning an awareness of piety and prayer and love for the Church.” The idea is right, but should not be limited by concern for priestly vocations; the family needs to prepare children for whatever their Christian vocation is, and in doing that will foster vocations to priestly and religious life.

Should cohabiting couples be denied fancy weddings? Of course, pastors should catechize couples for marriage and, especially if there is evidence or suspicions that they are fornicating, that catechesis should make it clear why premarital sex is bad. One does not catechize adequately if one does not make it clear to cohabiting couples how different marriage is from the illusory romance they have been enjoying. Good case against fancy weddings in general. But if a couple is really marrying—and serious effort should be devoted to seeking evidence that they are not—the rules for the conduct of the ceremony should not be changed due to cohabitation. To do that might be effective in changing outward behavior—for a time. But the motivation is extrinsic. It can lead to lying. It is likely to provoke resentment. It is hardly likely to promote genuine repentance—the only good outcome. One needs to do one’s best to promote genuine repentance and a real purpose of amendment. Failing that, denying the usual treatment of couples marrying is likely to be resented and to be an impediment to later communication and possible repentance.

LG 41 makes the point that married couples and parents reach holiness by fidelity to their proper vocation, which especially includes supporting each other’s life in grace and striving to promote faith and holiness in their children. *Familiaris consortio*, 56, speaks of the grace of the sacrament and responsibility of the couple to transform their entire lives into a “spiritual sacrifice.” *CIC*, c. 835, §4, in the context of indicating diverse liturgical offices and

ministries, says (but without indicating that this is liturgical): “Parents share in a particular way in this function [i.e., the Church’s sanctifying *munus*] by leading a conjugal life in a Christian spirit and by seeing to the Christian education of their children.”

Marriage preparation ought to stress that marriage should be entered into as a vocation, which will sanctify the couple, provide apostolic witness, prepare for and follow through on the Eucharist, and prepare material for the heavenly kingdom.

Canon law takes a general position on the right of the faithful to the sacraments. “Properly disposed” does not necessarily mean disposed to receive the sacrament fruitfully—which the minister cannot judge—but that the individual has faith and desires the sacrament for what it is.

*CIC*, c. 843, §1: “Sacred ministers cannot deny the sacraments to those who seek them at appropriate times, are properly disposed, and are not prohibited by law from receiving them.” Since the faithful have a right to the sacraments, the presumption is that the conditions are met, and the sacraments must not be refused unless it is clear that the conditions are *not* met.

§2 of the same canon provides that “Pastors of souls . . . have the duty to take care that those who seek the sacraments are prepared to receive them by proper evangelization and catechetical instruction.”

Lack of proper evangelization can invalidate the sacrament of marriage. The couple may not have enough faith to intend to receive the sacrament, and may even have a contrary intention. Also, lacking faith, they are likely not to intend an indissoluble union and more or less likely to have contrary intentions. Moreover, if the marriage of a couple with weak faith and little formation in it is valid, it is likely to be fragile, for they will not be motivated to live it with the commitment and regularly to seek the spiritual helps necessary for faithfulness and marital harmony in the context of a secular culture that strongly threatens both.

*CIC*, c. 844, §3, allows for members of Eastern Churches and others judged by the Holy See to be in the same situation with respect to the sacraments to receive the Eucharist, penance, and anointing from a Catholic minister provided they ask on their own and are rightly disposed. That is broad enough so that in case of mixed marriages, the Orthodox partner can be allowed to receive Communion regularly in the Catholic’s Church; however, the Catholic party (according to §2) cannot habitually receive in the Orthodox church, even if welcome there, unless it is physically or morally impossible to obtain the sacraments from a Catholic minister.

§2 absolutely precludes the Catholic party from receiving in a Church whose sacraments are not regarded by the Catholic Church as valid. And §4 absolutely excludes Catholic ministers from providing these sacraments to a non-Catholic party who does not manifest Catholic faith with respect to these sacraments. No exception ought to be made for the bride or groom on the wedding day. To do that not only violates a sound norm but wrongly supports the overvaluation of the wedding in comparison with ongoing married life, encourages religious indifferentism, and only temporarily reduces awareness of the significance the difference in faith is going to have throughout the marriage.



Pastors should not think that marriage preparation is a necessary service whereas providing pastoral guidance to already-married couples is optional, so that it is not only primarily but virtually entirely up to them to deal with marriage problems—except, perhaps, when one or both spouses seek help with something that is threatening marital unity.

*CIC*, c. 1055, §1: The matrimonial covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life and which is ordered by its nature to the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring, has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament between the baptized.

§2: For this reason a valid matrimonial contract cannot exist between the baptized without it being by that fact a sacrament.

It is false to say that *Gaudium et spes* rejected traditional teaching on the ends of marriage, and made conjugal love the primary end. The Council did abandon what had been taught about the hierarchy of ends, and replaced it with a view that did not explicitly hierarchize them, and left open room for the account I give.

Conjugal love is neither a mere means to anything else nor an end or good of marriage. Rather, it is the indispensable *cause* of the good of marriage, which consists in marital communion itself—the partnership of the whole of life—which normally includes, as its central part, parenting offspring. All human and Christian love of other human beings is complex: human love involves both willing a common good and emotional affection; Christian love adds to that abiding together in Jesus’ love—the communion of charity. In the case of conjugal love, the couple will the common good of marriage by their marital consent and choices to implement it and against temptations to be unfaithful to it, and their emotional affection includes erotic desire and its satisfaction; their charity toward one another is in their living their communion as a common life of good deeds prepared for them by God.

§2 is challenged by some theologians and canonists. On my account of the automatic sacramentality of marriage for the baptized—no minister needed—some of that challenge can be set aside. Also, if lack of faith in one or both parties who are free to marry precludes receiving the sacrament, that same lack of faith virtually always precludes commitment to marriage understood as an indissoluble covenant, with the result that the marriage, even if valid, is only (in my sense) imperfect. In any case, though, the issue for pastors is to evangelize couples—to try to awaken the faith necessary to intend to receive a sacrament. And, if convinced that this attempt fails, a pastor ought not to witness the couple’s marriage.

*CIC*, c. 1056: “The essential properties of marriage are unity and indissolubility, which in Christian marriage obtain a special firmness by reason of the sacrament.”

*CIC*, c. 1134: “From a valid marriage there arises between the spouses a bond which by its nature is perpetual and exclusive. Moreover, a special sacrament strengthens and, as it were, consecrates the spouses in a Christian marriage for the duties and dignity of their state.”

Marriage preparation ought to make it clear that the commitment must be to a union that will be exclusive and absolutely indissoluble. The nature of such a commitment can be clarified

and intention tested by proposing imaginative scenarios in which most people would commit adultery or attempt remarriage.

Also, couples ought to be instructed about resisting temptations—“I wish I’d never married you”—that are sure to arise as bad thoughts, because entertaining such thoughts is likely to be the first step toward violating marital unity and indissolubility.

Such instruction also is appropriate when people confess sins against marriage or seek counseling for marriage problems. In the former case, it is necessary for purpose of amendment to avoid avoidable occasions of sin; in the second, the secular, psychological approach to counseling that fails to deal with the underlying moral faults of the parties, even if otherwise sound (which it often is not), is pastorally inadequate.

*CIC*, c. 1057, §1: “The consent of the parties, legitimately manifested between persons qualified by law, makes marriage; no human power is able to supply this consent.”

§2: “Matrimonial consent is an act of the will by which a man and a woman mutually give and accept each other through an irrevocable covenant in order to establish marriage.”

Pastors need to help people understand what they are doing in marrying. That others are not compromising their freedom must be established. §1 can be explained to the parties as the reason for a thorough and careful inquiry, and the need to be honest—untruthfulness might result in a needlessly invalid marriage, since many problems can be resolved—e.g., by dispensing from legal impediments. Opposition by others to a marriage does not invalidate it unless that leads to a defect in the parties’ own consent or to a legal impediment—e.g., when parental refusal to consent to the marriage of an underage daughter makes her marriage unlawful, and thus invalid. But even if it poses no such problem, such opposition needs to be discussed with the couple so as to deal with its potential impact on their married life.

The giving and accepting is of the person but hardly unqualified. It is a giving and accepting in marriage and for the sake of the good of marriage. It entails an openended obligation to make the sacrifices required to maintain and build up the relationship and to have and care for children despite unforeseen problems—e.g., the other party’s unreasonableness, health problems that prevent sexual satisfaction, inability to support or provide services, interference of in-laws, and so on.

The new CLSA Commentary, p. 1253, rightly says: “Matrimonial consent must will the good of the other spouse in this fundamental sense and must, therefore, be an act of love. Indeed, ‘unless this act of the will, which is essentially self-donative—and hence an act of love—is elicited, marriage is not entered into.’” The interior quotation is footnoted: Apostolic Signatura, decision, November 29, 1975, *Canon Law Digest*, 8, 782. That perfectly fits my view that marital consent is the heart of conjugal love.

*CIC*, c. 1058: “All persons who are not prohibited by law can contract marriage.” According to c. 1075, §1, only the supreme authority of the Church can declare when divine law prohibits or nullifies attempts at marriage, and §2 only the same authority can establish other impediments for Catholics. According to c. 1077, §1, a local ordinary can prohibit a particular

marriage of his own subjects residing anywhere or of anyone residing within his territory, but only for a time, for a grave reason, and as long as the cause continues—and cannot prohibit the marriage in a way that would invalidate an attempt at marriage.

Thus, so long as there is no canonical impediment to cohabiting couples or teenagers marrying, and civil law permits it, pastors cannot refuse them marriage on those scores. (But canon 1071 lists a number of conditions, including requirements of civil law and parents' being unaware of or opposed to the marriage of someone under 18, which no one may witness except in case of necessity without the ordinary's permission, so that pastors usually must put off and the ordinary can forbid the marriage of some underage people.)

*CIC*, c. 1060: "Marriage possesses the favor of the law; therefore, in a case of doubt, the validity of a marriage must be upheld until the contrary is proven." (Cf. *CCEO*, 779.) Given that the marriage has been properly celebrated, it must be assumed valid unless and until the opposite is shown. This is not just a rule of law, but an instance of a reasonable general principle: when the outward requirements have been met for doing anything that results in responsibilities.

*CIC*, c. 1061, §1: "A valid marriage between the baptized is called *ratum tantum* if it has not been consummated; it is called *ratum et consummatum* if the spouses have performed between themselves in a human fashion a conjugal act which is suitable in itself for the procreation of offspring, to which marriage is ordered by its nature and by which the spouses become one flesh." The new CLSA commentary says that the new phrasing seems to mean that contraceptive acts do not consummate a marriage, points out the difference from the 1917 Code which canonists interpreted as allowing contraceptive acts that preserved the appearance of intercourse, and says that the Holy See has not followed the new requirement in practice and that the Code should be changed. It seems to me that if it is not being followed in practice that is an error and the practice should change. For no contracepted act really is sexual intercourse and so cannot be marital intercourse, however physically it approximates to intercourse.

The idea that the act must be in a "human mode" is incorporating the other sense of marital intercourse pointed out in *Humanae vitae*, and requiring it for consummation. So a sex act done when one partner is unwilling and the other takes advantage cannot consummate marriage.

Pastors might explain this in marriage preparation as part of explaining the moral limits on sexual activity in marriage: if these requirements are met, most common, grave moral problems will be avoided. Of course, a couple still may be gravely irresponsible if they have very serious reason not to have intercourse but do so anyway.

*CIC*, c. 1063 (cf. *CCEO*, 783) prescribes pastoral care of the faithful with respect to marriage and indicates the purposes to be sought. In general the point is that marriage and family life be genuinely Christian and that the faithful involved grow in holiness. The prescripts of the canon are under four points. 1° prescribes preaching, catechesis, and instruction through various media about the meaning of Christian marriage and the role of Christian spouses and parents. 2° prescribes personal preparation to dispose the spouses to the holiness and duties of

marriage. 3° prescribes a liturgical celebration to show that the spouses signify and share in the mystery and fruitful love between Christ and the Church. 4° prescribes pastoral help for the spouses to remain faithful, stay married, and grow in holiness and fulfillment together.

Pontifical Council for the Family, *Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage*, 48: “urges that the specific courses will not be so brief as to reduce them to a mere formality.”

*Familiaris consortio*, 66, points out the difficulties many marriages have got into in recent years, the fact that cultural supports are no longer in place, the importance of marriage for many people’s holiness—and so calls for pastoral effort to prepare people remotely, proximately, and immediately. It suggests that the preparation be similar to a catechumenate, which should not only deal with specifics—what marriage is, the equal dignity and diverse roles of the spouses, unity and indissolubility, sacramentality, conjugal sexuality and responsible parenthood, NFP, the proper raising of children as Christians—but seek to renew the couple’s faith: “Among the elements to be instilled in this journey of faith, which is similar to a catechumenate, there must also [in addition to content specific to marriage] be a deeper knowledge of Christ and the Church, of the meaning of grace and of the responsibility of Christian marriage, as well as preparation for taking an active and conscious part in the rites of the marriage liturgy.”

Marriage is a good of creation. Though not everyone need marry, for those who do, not only their human well-being and fulfillment but that of society as a whole heavily depends upon the stability and success of their marriages.

The Church will shrink unless there are stable marriages in which Catholic couples practicing their faith bring their children up in the faith. The only way to promote stable marriages in which couples are bringing children up in the faith is to promote marriage as a vocational commitment that calls for absolute fidelity. That cannot be promoted without promoting marital chastity. That is undermined by dissenting opinions. So, though softness toward dissenting opinions might seem to solve pastoral problems in the short run, it has been a route to disaster over the years. Smart pastors should see the mistake that has been made and not continue it.

Children and young people must be helped to understand all the relevant goods, and to see what is at stake if they are violated. Chastity is a condition for genuine love; one cannot truly love and communicate love if one’s expressions of “love” really serve and manifest self-interest in gratification. Moreover, genuine friendships cannot develop among young men and women if affection is swallowed up in erotic desire and satisfaction—even if it is mutual. Those of both sexes must learn not to exploit, but rather to respect, those of the opposite sex as well as of their own. Boys and young men must strive to overcome the masturbatory and pornographic approach that reduces women to sex objects to be enjoyed, harassed, and abused; girls and young women must forgo erotic teasing and manipulation of men.

On remote preparation, Pontifical Council for the Family, *Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage*, 27: “This preparation will not lose sight of the importance of helping young people acquire a critical ability with regard to their surroundings, and the Christian courage of those who know how to be in the world without belonging to it.” In other words,

premarital catechesis must help children and couples approaching marriage to set aside expectations and standards with respect to marriage and family that are at odds with the Gospel. The primary thing to set aside, in the light of Christian vocation, is going in with a subjective agenda, a wish list that must be fulfilled—or else.

Parents must be catechized and encouraged to form their children for eventually finding and accepting their personal vocations, whatever they are, and that includes understanding and appreciating the goodness of all the options, and not approaching life as a struggle for personal satisfaction, wealth, and status—the “fulfillment” so many people feel entitled to, even when that requires setting aside commitments and pursuing it without regard for the injury doing so does others.

Proximate preparation should ascertain that the couple are really free to marry and should try to ensure that their consent will be valid and their commitment wholehearted. The couple’s communication about potential problems with respect to in-laws, finances, family planning, the tensions that inevitably arise, and so on should be encouraged, and suitable help given so that the couple will begin dealing with such matters *before* they marry.

Pontifical Council for the Family, *Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage*, 43: “The pastoral workers [including married couples, physicians, psychologists, etc.] and persons in charge [clerics and professional catechetical ministers] must have a solid doctrinal preparation and unquestionable fidelity to the Magisterium of the Church, so that they will be able to transmit the truths of faith and the responsibilities connected with marriage with sufficient in-depth knowledge and life witness.” Having dissenters, couples who practice contraception, and so forth involved in marriage preparation is ludicrous and sure to vitiate the whole process.

*CIC*, c. 1065, §1, requires that those not yet confirmed be confirmed if that can be done “without grave inconvenience.” Preparation for confirmation needs to be adequate, and pastors may not delay marriage for very long to allow for that preparation.

*CIC*, c. 1065, §2 urges those marrying, for the sacrament’s fruitfulness, to approach the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist. Marriage preparation catechesis should help the couple understand the importance of fruitful reception and encourage them to desire it. Pastors may not refuse to witness a marriage just because the couple refuse to receive the sacrament of penance—and a fortiori cannot insist on personally hearing the couple’s confessions. But if a couple refuse penance, their attitude toward the sacrament of marriage itself must be investigated. If it become clear that *both parties* “show that they reject explicitly and formally what the Church intends to do when the marriage of baptized persons is celebrated” (see *Familiaris consortio*, 68), the sacrament has to be refused, and the pastor needs to make it clear that this is not punitive, but simply not cooperating with those who do not want what the Church has to give.

At the same time, many people of weak or almost no faith do not reject explicitly and formally what the Church intends to do in marriage. They may be little concerned to practice their faith. But investigation may show no impediment, so that the pastor has no canonical

basis for refusing to celebrate the sacrament. In such cases, he should do his best to arouse and enliven their faith, but must proceed with the wedding even if he fails.

When pastors decide, for grave reasons, to celebrate a couple's marriage on short notice, they still should do their best to ensure that the essential preparation is carried out well—perhaps especially so in such cases—and cut no corners with respect to ascertaining freedom to marry and trying to make sure that the consent will be a real and wholehearted commitment.

Immediate preparation for marriage not only should include reception of penance and the Eucharist, but prayer—at least a day or two of recollection. There also should be a review of the main points of proximate preparation, and reflection on the liturgy of the marriage rite and Mass, which can occur in the context of choosing among available options.

*CIC*, c. 1066: “Before a marriage is celebrated, it must be evident [constare debet] that nothing stands in the way of valid and licit celebration.” Since this canon is separate and general from the more specific requirements of subsequent canons, the pastor is required to do more than fulfill them; he also needs to do in each case whatever else he finds necessary to be sure beyond reasonable doubt (it must be established) that the parties are entirely free to marry and that both of them mean to give genuine consent (an intention by either incompatible with genuine consent would render the marriage invalid, so evidence of such an intention would stand in the way of valid celebration).

*CIC*, c. 1067, authorizes the conference of bishops to establish norms about the examination of spouses and banns or other means to carry out the prenuptial investigation. The canon then concludes: “After these norms have been diligently observed, the pastor can proceed to assist at the marriage.” (Cf. *CCEO*, 785, §1, for same requirement.) But that sentence must be read as expressing a necessary rather than a sufficient condition; other canons about preparation and the requirement of assurance in 1066 also must be fulfilled, and the conditions in 1071 that require referring a prospective marriage to the bishop also may require delay.

Where a baptismal certificate is required, pastors should ask for a recently certified copy of the record. That is because the register may contain a record of a previous marriage, ordination, or vows.

So, pastors who simply do the prenuptial investigation and minimal preparation, then, regardless of any questionable elements of the situation, schedule the wedding ceremony and carry it out are not fulfilling their responsibility.

Dioceses generally appropriately spell out the procedure for pastors and those they delegate to prepare couples for marriage and to witness marriages. All such diocesan regulations are to be followed conscientiously.

*CIC*, c. 1068 (= *CCEO*, 785, §2) allows pastors, if either of the parties is in danger of death, to proceed with a wedding *provided there are not contrary indications* on the word of the couple, sworn if he thinks that necessary, that they are baptized and free to marry. Obviously, in such a case, though the pastor may forgo documents, he must ask the necessary questions that might turn up contrary indications, not simply ask the couple the general question whether they are baptized and free to marry.

*CIC*, c. 1069: “All the faithful are obliged to reveal any impediments they know about to the pastor or local ordinary before the celebration of the marriage.” Pastors should catechize the faithful about that obligation, and not least catechize couples, the parents of young people, and everyone else they meet in connection with prospective weddings. The point to make is that impediments that are not revealed can invalidate a marriage, and that revealing them often allows remedial action or a dispensation that will make possible a valid marriage. More important: while one may deceive men, nobody deceives God. So, it’s best for the couple and most helpful for others to be entirely honest.

*CIC*, c. 1071, §1 (cf. *CCEO*, 789): “Except in case of necessity, a person is not to assist without the permission of the local ordinary at” the marriage of: 1° transients; 2° those whose marriage will not meet civil law requirements; 3° someone who has obligations arising from a previous relationship; 4° “a person who has notoriously rejected the Catholic faith”—and in this case, 1071, §2, forbids the ordinary to grant permission unless the norms of can 1125 (for mixed marriages) are met; 5° a person under censure; 6° a minor child (canonically, someone under 18) when the parents are unaware or reasonably opposed; 7° those marrying by proxy as mentioned in can. 1125.

The necessity in question must be real—e.g., danger of death. A mere fear that seeking permission will cause a delay that might upset the couple is not enough.

*CIC*, c. 1072: “Pastors of souls are to take care to dissuade youth from the celebration of marriage before the age at which a person usually enters marriage according to the accepted practices of the region.”

These provisions together make it clear that pastors should not encourage but rather discourage attempts at marriage when either party is under 18. All shot-gun weddings are to be discouraged.

The canon law with regard to impediments—conditions that either in themselves or by Church law would prevent a valid marriage—is fairly complicated. But any cleric involved in marriage preparation and/or the witnessing of marriages and/or counseling couples about possible annulment must understand this complex law. For they must know which impediments can be dispensed and which not, and who, under various conditions, has the authority to dispense those that can be dispensed. In certain emergency situations, when the local ordinary is unavailable, other clerics may be able to dispense from most impediments that can be dispensed—see cc. 1079–80.

Canon 1085, §1: “A person bound by the bond of a prior marriage, even if it was not consummated, invalidly attempts marriage.” §2 forbids contracting another marriage before it is established legitimately and certainly that a prior marriage was null or dissolved. Pastors may not cooperate with people engaging in so-called internal forum solutions by holding any sort of ceremony or offering any sort of blessing. Pastors ought to realize that they simply cannot know whether people are in good or bad faith, and should realize that their consistent noncooperation is necessary to promote repentance of those in bad faith and will not spiritually injure any in good faith

Canon 1086, §1, declares invalid (by Church law) a marriage between a Catholic and a nonbaptized person, but §2 allows for a dispensation from this impediment but requires that the precepts of canons 1125–26 be met.

*CIC*, c. 1124: “Without express permission of the competent authority, a marriage is prohibited between two baptized persons of whom one is baptized in the Catholic Church or received into it after baptism and has not defected from it by a formal act and the other of whom is enrolled in a Church or ecclesial community not in full communion with the Catholic Church”

*CIC*, c. 1125 sets the conditions for granting permission for a mixed marriage or dispensing from the impediment of mixed religion. The Catholic party must declare that he or she is prepared to remove dangers of defecting from the faith and promise to do “all in his or her power so that all the offspring are baptized and brought up in the Catholic Church.” The non-Catholic party is to be informed of these promises, so that he or she is really aware of them and of the Catholic party’s obligations. Both parties are to be instructed about the “purposes and essential properties of marriage which neither of the contracting parties is to exclude.”

*CIC*, c. 1126 leaves it to bishops’ conferences to settle *how* to carry out the previous canon.

The promises that Catholic parties are to make preclude as unacceptable certain common compromises, such as an agreement to bring up the boys in the father’s church and the girls in mother’s, or to alternate worship, perhaps have babies baptized twice(!) or not at all, and let children decide as they grow up.

Mixed marriages are bad news, but once a couple wish to marry, seldom can be legitimately stopped. They can be, perhaps, when skillful pastoral effort leads a couple to start thinking through what they are up against or reveals beliefs or refusals that would invalidate the consent. However, remote preparation, general catechesis, and the pastoral care of young people (such things as young people’s groups) should help and encourage those who discern a vocation to marry someone generally to marry fellow Catholics or, at least, committed Christians who respect the Catholic Church sufficiently to be willing and able to allow the Catholic party to carry out the required declaration and promises.

*CIC*, c. 1127 deals with canonical form for marriages involving a non-Catholic. Basically, the requirement is to be met. But when the non-Catholic party is of an Eastern rite, the marriage will be valid provided the sacred minister is present and observes other requirements of law. And dispensations from canonical form can be granted if there is some public form of celebration for validity—e.g., the requirements of civil law are met. §3 of this canon excludes having two *religious* celebrations of the same marriage and excludes religious celebrations in which “the Catholic who is assisting and a non-Catholic minister together, using their own rites, ask for the consent of the parties.”

Still, a non-Catholic minister may be allowed or invited to participate in the wedding ceremony in other ways (such as offering a prayer, reading a Scripture passage, or even preaching), and, if a dispensation from form has been given, a Catholic minister may participate in a non-Catholic or civil ceremony in such ways.



Pastors need to give a good deal of thought to drawing appropriate lines in these matters that they can adhere to consistently. Otherwise, people will feel mistreated when others get a “better deal.”

*CIC*, c. 1128 calls on bishops and other pastors to provide pastoral care for mixed marriage (a fortiori for those involving disparity of cult—see *CIC*, c. 1129) “that the Catholic spouse and the children born of a mixed marriage do not lack the spiritual help to fulfill their obligations and are to foster the unity of conjugal and family life.” Ecumenical cooperation may be appropriate in fulfilling this responsibility.

Pontifical Council for the Family, *Preparation for the Sacrament of Marriage*, 68, says that in a wedding Mass, the proclamation of the Word is to be made by suitable lectors. The bride and groom should be listening, not lecturing. For them to help pick the readings is sound—and doing that can be good catechetics, if the one preparing them discusses with them the various readings and their relevance. Good idea to have a lector that is a family member or friend practice at the rehearsal, be instructed.

69 says that the homily, which is obligatory, should focus on the “great mystery” that is being celebrated. “Superfluous personal references to the spouses should be avoided.” The homily should begin from the readings proclaimed and/or the liturgical texts, focus on the sacrament, and “the consequences for the life of the spouses and their families should be illustrated.” In other words, it should be sound catechesis.

Pastors should encourage those divorced and remarried to apply for annulments, but should not try to force them to do so—e.g., by refusing to baptize children when conditions for baptism are met. In dealing with these cases, pastors should refrain from anticipating or forecasting what the tribunal will do. They ought to follow diocesan guidelines with care. They ought to refrain from judging and condemning the “other” party and should encourage forgiveness as well as the fulfillment of all moral responsibilities—e.g., regarding visitation, support, and so on.

*CIC*, cc. 1073–94 (direment impediments to marriage) and 1095–1103 (defects in consent that can render an attempted marriage invalid) must be understood by pastors and borne in mind sufficiently so that they can watch out and try to ensure the validity of marriages. In some cases, inquiry is called for and/or advice from diocesan superiors should be sought. Catechesis or dispensations can deal with some matters. But if it is clear that a couple will not marry validly, the couple should if possible be dissuaded from trying, and no one should witness an attempt he is morally certain will be invalid.

*CIC*, cc. 1108–23 deal with the “form” of the celebration of marriage—the requirement that it be contracted in the presence of the local ordinary or parish priest, or of a priest or deacon either of them authorizes, together with two witnesses; the cleric asking for and receiving consent in the Church’s name (there are certain exceptions).

People should be catechized about the fact that when Catholics are thinking of getting married, they need to get in touch with the pastor of a parish in which they or, if both are Catholic, one of them either resides permanently, or regularly resides for stretches of three months or more, or will have been staying for at least one month before the wedding.

Pastors must see to it that those at whose marriages they assist or authorize others to assist are properly prepared, that the premarital inquiry has been carried out fully, and any problems resolved, and that proper records are kept.

Nobody should assist at any marriage unless he is certain that he has both the authority to do so, and that the premarital inquiry has been carried out fully and no problems remain unresolved; he also should fulfill carefully his responsibility with respect to recording the wedding.

Bishops should not assist at the weddings of celebrities, the wealthy, and the powerful if they are unwilling to assist at the weddings of any of their faithful who ask. But they may assist at weddings of people whom they know due to their real work, paid or not, for the Church (not just due to the money they've donated to the Church).

Pastors of parishes ought to comply with couples' wishes with respect to assisting at marriages—do it themselves if the couple wish, or authorize another priest or deacon to do it if the couple prefer that. Couples who are both Catholic should not be deprived of a wedding Mass simply for priests' convenience.

Those who assist must see to it that they alone fulfill the responsibility to ask for and receive the couple's consent; delegating or sharing part of that role with someone else (e.g., another cleric in a mixed marriage) invalidates the marriage.

Those presiding should see to it that there are at least two qualified witnesses. If one of those chosen fails to appear or seems drunk or otherwise unable to understand and witness to the marriage, the individual presiding should identify and enlist the witness of some other suitable person; and that person's name should be included in the record.

*CIC*, c. 1130: "For a grave and urgent cause, the local ordinary can permit a marriage to be celebrated secretly." That does not mean without canonical form and record keeping, but with only the ordinary, the one who assists at the marriage, the two witnesses, and the couple themselves; and all these are bound to keep the secret. Though the commentaries do not make the point clear, a secret marriage will be without a marriage license, and so in jurisdictions that require a license for a valid marriage, will not be valid so far as civil law is concerned.

The point of a secret marriage is to protect the couple from those who would react *wrongfully* to the marriage—e.g., people who would react badly to the fact that the couple, who appeared to be married, were not until just now; people who would resent the marriage and cause trouble; authorities who wrongfully try to forbid the marriage, with miscegenation or antireligious laws; or those who would wrongfully impose burdens, such as by unjustly depriving of benefits or removing financial support.

In many cases, a couple's interests might be protected adequately by conducting their marriage quietly and discretely, without resort to the special provisions of this canon.

It cannot be assumed in general that a secret marriage is appropriate simply to prevent someone from losing money in trust, alimony from a previous invalid marriage, or benefits such as social security. Legally recognized or established provisions ought to be presumed just. So, the presumption ought to be that such losses are just, and that authorizing a secret

marriage would be cooperation, wrongful even if not formal, with theft—collaborating in fraud. Also, there are limits to the liability to which the bishop ought to expose the diocese to prevent even real injustice to his faithful.

Also a problem for secret marriages is that the couple's living together despite apparently being unmarried will impede their Christian witness and offer scandal.

What about the case of Father Q? He has a parish in which there are many elderly, including those in a large assisted living facility. Quite often an elderly couple would like to marry, but will suffer greatly from a cut in the social security that the two of them receive. In some cases, too, where both have some pension income, marrying would increase their income taxes. Many of these people are not well to do; their incomes are barely adequate to meet living expenses, which generally include substantial costs for health care (prescription drugs are a big item). The people regard the impact of social security and tax law on marriage as grossly unjust and Father Q agrees.

He first came to grips with the problem when a widow and widower came to him for help; they lived at the assisted living facility, wanted to marry but could not afford to, and were unwilling to live in sin, though they were tempted to do so. He knew about the canon and asked them whether they could and would avoid giving scandal while seeming to remain unmarried. They explained how they could be discreet and promised they would. Fr. Q telephoned the chancery for permission to marry them secretly; the reply came by letter saying that the bishop could not permit it, because doing so would be too risky for the diocese, which could be held responsible for collusion in defrauding the government.

But Fr. Q judged that without a license the couple would not be legally married, so that, so far as civil law was concerned, he would only be solving their conscience problem with respect to their extramarital intercourse. Therefore, he assisted at their exchange of marital consent in the presence of two witnesses—his part-time housekeeper and janitor, themselves a retired married couple who sympathized with those who had the problem. With the requirements for canonical form met, he needed only to ignore the civil law regarding license and the canon laws about permission to ignore requirements of the civil law and recording, and these things seemed to him covered by *epikeia*.

After that, Fr. Q encountered other more or less similar couples, and ones who came to him wishing to marry and complaining about how badly they would be hurt by the prospective loss of income. He saw no reason that would justify denying them the help he had given the first couple. So, over the past four years, he has assisted at thirty-seven such marriages without licenses.

Certainly, pastors ought to encourage the laity to join with other interested parties to campaign for changes in civil laws that impose added burdens on couples who marry.

*CIC*, c. 1135: "Each spouse has an equal duty and right to those things which belong to the partnership of conjugal life."

Those preparing for marriage should be instructed about this fundamental equality of the spouses; they have the same responsibility of fidelity, of loving and caring for each other, of

sharing and self-denial, of apologizing and forgiving. Each must be prepared to go all the way, not simply to meet the other party at what seems half way, for that never is enough. The canon must not be given a radically feminist interpretation that would deny complementarity in spousal roles and responsibilities. How that is to be worked out ought to be discussed fully and openly before marriage; it is an important topic for preparation.

*CIC*, c. 1136: “Parents have the most grave duty and the primary right to take care as best they can for the physical, social, cultural, moral, and religious education of their offspring.”

In marriage preparation, this canon must be considered along with the previous one. Parents educate their children primarily by giving good example through fulfilling obligations to each other. To fulfill responsibilities to children, parents need to cooperate, and that means somehow fairly dividing responsibilities for obtaining adequate means, housekeeping, and the immediate care of children. Consigning the last to outsiders may be necessary at times but never is ideal.

*CIC*, c. 1141: “A marriage that is *ratum et consummatum* can be dissolved by no human power and by no cause, except death.” The faithful need to be catechized about this solid core of absolute indissolubility, and those entering marriage need to be catechized about it in their preparation.

*CIC*, cc. 1142–50 concern the possibility of dissolving nonconsummated marriages and marriages that are not sacramental (i.e., those involving at least one unbaptized person, whether Catholic or not). Pastors should know these canons well enough to recognize cases that might be dealt with in accord with them and should know how to prepare and refer such cases to appropriate diocesan authorities.

*CIC*, cc. 1151–55 concern separations. Pastors must counsel soundly spouses whose marital troubles lead them to consider separation or call for it. On separation, see treatment in *LCL*, 725–29.

*CIC*, cc. 1156–65 concern the convalidation of marriages—making valid a marriage that was invalid from its origin. These canons should be understood sufficiently to be applied appropriately in pastoral practice. Pastors need to make sure that both parties really do currently wish to be married—something not easily certain unless they both ask for the convalidation or it is a radical sanitation right after a wedding required by technical defects of which the couple were not even aware.

Nemeck and Coombs, *Called by God*, 129, set out as the ideal maturity of vocational consciousness during a couple’s preparation for marriage: “Both prospective spouses are so in love with each other that they experience the essence of what we have termed ‘an existential inability’ to become other than married.” This is mistaken in two ways. First, it focuses on being ‘in love’; the focus ought to be on the conviction that God has prepared us to be husband and wife to each other—that this marriage was made in heaven. Second, before entering marriage, morally and psychologically mature people are acutely aware that committing themselves will entail unforeseeable responsibilities and preclude unknown attractive alternatives for the rest of their lives; that awareness gives some

emotional appeal to the alternative of not marrying, and marital consent alone establishes the experience of an inability to become unmarried until death do us part.

*CIC*, c. 1671: “Marriage cases of the baptized belong to the ecclesiastical judge by proper right.” The faithful in general need to be catechized about this: only a Church court can decide whether a baptized person is really married. (In cases in which Catholics have attempted a civil marriage, so that there is no semblance of canonical form, an administrative determination is made as part of the marriage preparation process required by cc. 1066–67.) Marriage preparation, in stressing indissolubility, should include an explanation of what tribunals do in declaring nullity, and make the point that civil court’s divorce decrees are not really effective except with respect to civil legal matters.

*CIC*, cc. 1697–1706, deal with cases in which one or both spouses, though validly married, have not consummated their marriage and wish to be dispensed. The fact of nonconsummation must be proved (often by the parties’ testimony together with character witnesses to their credibility) and a “just cause” for dissolving the marriage shown. These cases are dealt with administratively; they are prepared by an “instructor” (who gathers the relevant information and organizes it) on behalf of the bishop of the diocese where the petitioner resides, sent to the Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, and decided by the pope. In such cases, the never-consummated marriage is dissolved.

*CIC*, c. 1707, §1: When there is no documentary proof of a spouse’s death, “the other spouse is not considered free from the bond of marriage until after the diocesan bishop has issued a declaration of presumed death.” §2 includes the sentence: “The absence of the spouse alone, even for a long time, is not sufficient.” So, when someone with a missing spouse, even if declared dead by the civil authorities, wishes to marry in the Church, pastors may not proceed without first resolving the issue of presumed death by gathering evidence and submitting it to the bishop. He needs to reach moral certitude that the spouse really is dead; in uncertain and complicated cases, he is to consult the Holy See.

Clerics dealing with people in (or about to enter) invalid marriages may be tempted not to press the issue of the marriage’s invalidity. Some abdicate their responsibility about a past marriage that ought to be presumed valid by leaving it to the individual’s “conscience”—the so-called internal forum solution. Some urge people about to enter an invalid relationship or living in one to seek an annulment, but never point out that they will be or currently are living in adultery. John the Baptist was killed precisely for insisting on the unlawfulness of Herodias’ relationship with Herod: Mt 14.3–4 (cf. Mk 6.17–18): “For Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison, for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife; because John said to him, ‘It is not lawful for you to have her.’” The whole passage: Mt 14.1–12; Mk 6.14–29.

### **7-I: Responsibilities of clerics with respect to the pastoral care of the sick and dying, the sacrament of anointing, wakes, and funerals**

SC 73 deals with the change of name to “anointing of the sick” and points out that as soon as someone is in danger of death from sickness or old age, the time to receive the sacrament has *certainly* already arrived. That suggests that the sacrament also is appropriate whenever someone is gravely ill even if the prognosis is not bad, but not anytime someone is about to undergo major surgery—since such a person often is not in danger of death from the condition that requires the surgery or anything else. Childbirth? If delivery is expected to be complicated. Any health condition likely to make a reasonable person anxious about *possibly* fatal outcome would warrant anointing.

However, the fact that someone is about to be executed or to go into battle or to have major surgery for a condition that is not a dangerous illness in itself does not warrant the sacrament of anointing. Does that mean such persons are to be refused pastoral care? Not at all. Those who have reason to fear death and who do not meet the conditions for anointing ought to be supplied with appropriate pastoral help—confession, Communion, prayers and blessings, counseling and encouragement, practical help by other members of their parish or other community.

GS 18 lays out a Christian conception of death. This conception must inform pastoral practice—realism plus hope is required, not a pretense that death is normal nor presumption that all will be well, but a faith-based hope that those who repent and trust the Lord will receive all the help they need to die in Christ and rise again with him.

Good idea to memorize some psalms that can be used with Jews, Muslims, and Christians.

Visit bereaved some time after the funeral when support is greatly needed.

Go to the wake in the evening when fallen away Catholics may be present.

Ask people to let you know when others are sick and shut in.

Bishop Raymond Burke of LaCrosse, Wisconsin, “Christian Burial of the Dead,” *Origins*, 30:32 (25 Jan. 2991): 509, 511–17, says that interment or entombment is appropriate, while scattering ashes or keeping them at home or elsewhere is not; stresses the need for prayers and Masses for the dead; urges having funeral rites at the parish (or former parish) of the deceased rather than in care facility or in another place where he or she happened to die; urges that eulogies be during a wake, that photos and other remembrances be displayed then, and favorite songs be played or sung then; excludes nonsacred music from funeral liturgy; limits words of appreciation (not to become a eulogy) or personal prayer to five minutes after the communion prayer, and specifies it be in writing and vetted by the celebrant; commends the practice of having a post-funeral luncheon at the parish for those participating in the funeral; says that cremation, though possible, is less suitable; if cremation, preferably after the funeral liturgy, but provides norms for liturgy with cremated remains present. Toward the end, he commends funeral directors—a very questionable commendation. It would be better to urge pastors to encourage faithful to practice restraint and simplicity and to show an example of this in funerals of clergy and religious.

Obviously, whenever dealing with someone in danger of death who might not ever have been baptized, one should ascertain first whether the individual has been baptized. If the individual is unable to communicate and there is reason to believe he/she has not been baptized and would have desired baptism, one should baptize conditionally.

With respect to confirmation, *CIC*, c. 885, §2: “A presbyter who possesses the faculty must use it for the sake of those in whose favor the faculty was granted.” *CIC*, c. 883, “The following possess the faculty of administering confirmation by the law itself: . . . °3: as regards those who are in danger of death, the pastor or indeed any presbyter.” Thus, whenever dealing with someone in danger of death, every presbyter should try to ascertain whether the individual has been confirmed.

*CIC*, c. 910, says that the ordinary minister of communion is a cleric; the extraordinary minister is an acolyte or other lay person designated according to the norm of canon 230, §3.

If extraordinary ministers are needed on a regular basis, the task ought to be considered a service, not an honor, and so should not be passed around among all who volunteer. Rather, suitable people ought to be chosen carefully: they should be exemplary Catholics who can do the job efficiently and reverently. In keeping with canon 231, §1, they should be given appropriate *formation*. They ought to be authorized by the bishop.

Since clerics are the ordinary ministers, they ought not to leave it always to lay ministers to visit the sick, but should train such ministers to use the rite properly if they do have them do this.

*CIC*, c. 911, §1, says that the pastor, assistants, chaplains, and (for those in their communities) superiors of clerical institutes have the right and duty of providing viaticum; in case of necessity and with at least presumed permission, any priest or other minister must do this, and should report doing so to the priest whose permission was presumed. Obviously, ministers should be instructed about this obligation. But in such cases, priests should do the job if possible so as to offer penance and anointing if those sacraments are appropriate.

*CIC*, c. 998, describes the sacrament of anointing as for those who are “dangerously ill.”

*CIC*, c. 1001: Pastors of souls and those close to the sick are to take care that the sick are consoled by this sacrament [anointing of the sick] at the appropriate time.

*CIC*, c. 1004, §1: The anointing of the sick can be administered to a member of the faithful who, having reached the use of reason, begins to be in danger due to sickness or old age.

§2: This sacrament can be repeated if the sick person, having recovered, again becomes gravely ill or if the condition becomes more grave during the same illness.

*CIC*, c. 1005: This sacrament is to be administered in a case of doubt whether the sick person has attained the use of reason, is dangerously ill, or is dead.

*CIC*, c. 1006: This sacrament is to be conferred on the sick who at least implicitly requested it when they were in control of their faculties.

The sacrament not only is to clean up the residue of sin in someone about to die but to strengthen and heal, bodily as well as spiritually, those gravely ill or in danger of death due to the debility of old age. When someone has a condition that makes him reasonably anxious about the possibility of dying from it, that person is a suitable candidate for anointing. Children too young to sin but old enough to be consoled by the sacrament may be anointed—perhaps as young as three or four—and given Viaticum as well. Dangerously ill Catholics who are unconscious or demented are to be anointed unless there is good reason to think they would not wish to be were they able to decide for themselves. When in doubt, err on the side of giving the sacrament.

But it is not to be given indiscriminately to groups of people who have more and less serious health problems, as most people sometimes do, or even to individuals for minor health problems, anxiety and depression that surely are not life-threatening, and so forth. That is as much an abuse of the sacrament as delaying it until death is imminent. Moreover, if given to a group, that group should be made up of individuals who are receiving other appropriate pastoral care, so that the anointing is not a substitute for the care that could and should be given those in danger of death—e.g., an opportunity to confess, appropriate catechesis, and so forth.

The minister is first to prepare and help those to be anointed. If appropriate, the sacrament of penance should precede anointing, not follow it. In the case of very debilitated and confused persons for whom confessing specific sins is impossible, situations in which privacy is not readily available, or cases in which time is too short, a generic confession suffices. If the person is dying, Holy Communion as Viaticum must be administered and should be before anointing; if there is not time for both, a person able to receive Viaticum should.

*CIC*, c. 1003, §3: “Any priest is permitted to carry blessed oil with him so that he is able to administer the sacrament of anointing of the sick in a case of necessity.” Good priests always carry the blessed oil or, at least, are prepared to bless oil when necessary, know the formula for anointing by heart or carry it also, and offer anointing or anoint whenever appropriate.

*CIC*, c. 1007: “The anointing of the sick is not to be conferred upon those who persevere obstinately in manifest grave sin.” The obstinacy in question must be straightforward and explicit: invited to repent, the individual refuses to do so. Such people normally do not want to receive the sacraments, and they ought not to be imposed on someone who is unwilling to receive them.

Much of the value of the liturgy flows from catechesis and the proper use of Scripture as liturgy of the word. The rite for emergencies is not to be used routinely to save time. Communion is not to be given shut-ins with minimal ceremony; a careful and complete carrying out of the ritual by a properly trained eucharistic minister is preferable to hurried and abbreviated rite by cleric.

Properly trained eucharistic ministers could conduct Sunday celebrations in the absence of a priest in institutions; better these than people watching Mass on TV.

Pastors of parishes may need to have lay ministers visit and take Communion to shut-ins and people in health care facilities. But those people and those caring for shut-ins, including the



administrators and personnel of institutions, need to be instructed to watch for signs that call for the priest's ministry—initial danger of death, a significant turn for the worse, deterioration suggesting that death is imminent. And when someone calls such signs to the pastor's attention, he ought to see the person as soon as he can so that he will be able to provide appropriate care—confession, anointing, Viaticum.

Horrid example: A very elderly woman was transferred from a hospital, where she had been treated for a mild stroke, to the rehabilitation unit of a for-profit nursing facility located within one-quarter mile of a parish. The parish priest said Mass once a month, on the third Monday, in that facility; eucharistic ministers took Communion there on other Mondays. The children managing their mother's admission were not practicing Catholics, but she was a Catholic and was registered as such by the facility when she was admitted. A eucharistic minister offered her Communion the first Monday after that. But she was refusing food and said she could not receive Communion. That was not reported to the pastor. Receiving phone calls during the week that the woman was refusing food and declining, a daughter who was a devout Catholic but lived far away called the pastor on Saturday, told him that the woman was refusing food and declining, and asked him to visit her mother and do all that he could for her. He said he would, and sought the woman out on Monday morning, when he visited the facility to say Mass. Unfortunately, she had died on Sunday, almost exactly twenty-four hours after the daughter had called. The pastor's excuse was that the daughter had not made it clear that the woman's death was imminent. But the daughter was in no position to do that, for she had not been able to visit the facility and see for herself, but had provided enough alarming information that the pastor could not reasonably assume he could put off the visit for two days.

*CIC*, c. 1176, §1: "Deceased members of the Christian faithful must be given ecclesiastical funerals according to the norm of law." This provision establishes a right which is limited only by *CIC*, c. 1184, which says that certain individuals, unless they give some sign of repentance before death, "must be deprived" of ecclesiastical funerals—notorious apostates, heretics, and schismatics; other manifest sinners where the funeral would constitute public scandal of the faithful (i.e., lead them to think they could live similarly and still be sent off with great hope to their heavenly reward); and those who "chose cremation for reasons contrary to Christian faith." The canon leaves judgment in case of doubt to the ordinary. *CIC*, c. 1185 adds: "Any funeral Mass must also be denied a person who is excluded from ecclesiastical funerals." So, if a funeral is denied, a Mass for the deceased without other funeral rites is not allowed either.

Since there is a right to a Catholic funeral, the faithful should be catechized about their obligation to try to provide for it. But the clergy should be conscientious in arranging funerals, facilitate them, and encourage survivors who might skip the rite not to do so.

The exclusions are to be taken seriously, but only when they clearly apply and the condition—no sign of repentance—clearly is met. The stress on hope for heaven in the current rite makes it important not to carry out a funeral rite in cases in which affirming that hope would encourage others' presumption.

*CIC*, c. 1177 makes it clear that pastors of parishes cannot refuse to provide funeral rites for Catholics (except for canon 1184, and possibly for particular law) who either have been living within the parish or who happened to die within the parish and were not taken elsewhere, whether or not they were registered or contributed to that parish.

*CIC*, c. 1181, says that the offering for funerals (as other stipends) are to be in accord with canon 1264 (which leaves the maximum to be determined by the bishops of a province, unless the law has provided otherwise). But canon 1181 makes two other important points. The poor are not to be deprived of fitting funerals and there is to be no favoritism towards persons in funerals. Thus, everybody should be treated the same, whether they are big contributors or dead beats, whether they are prominent people or not, whether they are long resident or just came to the parish, whether they are very good Catholics or not practicing. If the pastor goes to some wakes, he should never leave that to a deacon or a lay minister on the basis of such differences. But it would be okay for him to go as a rule but not go when he has other pastoral duties regardless of whose funeral it is.

*CIC*, c. 1183 allows funeral rites for some people who are not, strictly speaking, Catholics. §1: catechumens are to be counted among Christian faithful—so they have a right to a funeral. §2 the local ordinary can permit a funeral for unbaptized children whose parents intended to baptize. §3: the local ordinary can grant funerals for baptized non-Catholics if two conditions are met: their own minister is not available, and they did not evidently intend otherwise.

Bishop Garland of Marquette, Michigan, has a sensible pastoral on funerals in *Origins*, 13 December 2001.

Mt 9.18–26, Mk 5.21–43, Lk 8.40–56: the two miracles of the raising of the official's/Jairus' (12-year-old) daughter and the healing of the woman with the (12-year) hemorrhage. In both cases, there is physical contact: the woman touches Jesus, and Jesus takes the little girl by her hand. In both cases, contact would have made Jesus ritually unclean. But he was not concerned about that. In the case of the woman, she was very nervous about his reaction; he wanted to identify her not to scold her but to tell her that her faith was the key. He wanted to establish a personal relationship with her, not allow her to go away feeling she had swiped a miracle that occurred as if by magic. In the case of the little girl, the father has faith; in Mk and Lk Jesus encourages him to keep believing even when the girl is reported dead. Jesus takes the girl by the hand and raises her up. In the case of the woman, those about think it ridiculous that Jesus wants to identify the woman; he has his reasons for doing so, and ignores their view. In the case of the little girl, the people around laugh at him; he ignores their ridicule and goes about his saving work. Also, the woman was poor and, given her uncleanness, without social status; Jairus was well off and had social status. Jesus dealt with both with the same pastoral charity.

Pastors need to deal with everyone with the same pastoral charity. None deny this, but many discriminate in practice.

In dealing with the sick and the dead, one sometimes must touch them, and sometimes doing so is repugnant. But that should not discourage the full performance of pastoral responsibilities, and one should develop sufficient focus on the good one is doing to behave

without intense repugnance and evident squeamishness. In doing the touching, one must not behave as if the contact were magical or a mere ritual action (e.g., doing it so quickly that it seems to the recipient or onlookers a meaningless gesture); the touch should be a personal and meaningful contact.

The gesture also ought to correspond to the language of faith: what is important is to express faith and elicit it from those participating. For faith is the key to the efficacy of the sacraments just as to the healings Jesus did.

Like Jesus, too, one should not be dissuaded by others' negative attitudes or lack of appreciation to prevent one from providing full pastoral ministry. Like Jesus, again, one should not be perfunctory. He took the time needed to complete the job with the woman, despite the press of the other case. And he cleared the others out and took time to deal with the little girl, even directing after he raised her that she be given something to eat.

Rom 12.15: "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep." That is good advice for pastors to keep in mind when they attend wakes and deal with people recently bereaved. It is inappropriate at such times to be cheerful; that shows lack of sympathy, and is obnoxious to people who are grieving. Even expressions of hope that are in themselves sound can be irritating. So best to stick to the words given by the Church—the liturgy itself, which are hopeful enough. It is in no way indicative of weakness of faith in the resurrection to grieve and to speak sadly, even bitterly, about a loved one's death. Death is a real evil. The prospect of resurrection makes it no less evil. Rather, the prospect is that this real evil will be overcome in a way that transcends natural reality by divine re-creation. That will be consoling, but first the present reality must be accepted fully and felt before it can be mitigated by hope and the joy hope gives.

In the account of the raising of Lazarus from the dead, Jesus knows even before he arrives at the house that he will raise him. Yet when he speaks with Mary, who is weeping, Jesus himself weeps (Jn 11.32–36): "Then Mary, when she came where Jesus was and saw him, fell at his feet, saying to him, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled; and he said, 'Where have you laid him?' They said to him, 'Lord, come and see.' Jesus wept. So the Jews said, 'See how he loved him!'" That is the model for the pastor.

2 Cor 5.1–5: Paul is explaining why Christians should face death with courage: we have the prospect of resurrection. This passage can be misread as suggesting that death is a good thing in itself, and that getting rid of the body is a benefit to the supposedly spiritual person. The misreading is likely especially because Paul goes on (5.6–8) to express a preference for being "away from the body and at home with the Lord" (8). However, see DMQ 212; the real aspiration is not to be bodiless but to be better embodied; the house that is not made with hands is the body of the risen Christ (cf. Mk 14.58) in whom we hope to be incorporated. See Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *Paul's Second Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1962), 164.

Pastors need to help people understand fully and accept clearheadedly the inherent *evil* of death, so that they can deal with it realistically. Unless one understands death as evil, one is likely to be taken in by arguments for euthanasia and may wrongly intend death and act precisely to hasten it. Also, covering over the evil of death actually undermines hope; the resurrection is a dubious benefit if being disembodied is a good thing. And overcoming death by resurrection is no great accomplishment if death, rather than being the person's utter destruction, is at least half-way toward happiness.

1 Thes 4.13: "But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep." Paul wishes to console the faithful and mitigate the grief they will experience due to death. To accomplish that, he stimulates their hope in advance, not waiting for the occasion. That model is normative.

If one does not regularly preach about heaven and hell, and stimulate people's hope for the kingdom, their faith and hope will be shallow and weak, with the result that preaching about the kingdom on the occasion of sufferings and funerals will be unconvincing. It will be experienced as the application of a spiritual bandaid to a serious wound. And it may well provoke resentment rather than console. Paul's is the truly pastoral approach.

Jas 5.14–15:

Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

This is the classic text for the sacrament of anointing. "To raise up" (*egeirein*) is ambiguous: it can mean to raise the sick person from his recumbent position to stand erect and healthy, but also is the word for raising from the dead. See Luke Timothy Johnson, *James*, AB37A:333. See Trent, DS 1716/926, in which the Council defines that the sacrament was instituted by Christ and refers for that to Mk 6.13: "And they cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them."

Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests (15 Aug. 1997), art. 12 *L'Osservatore Romano*, 19 Nov. 1997, VI:

#### Article 12

##### Leading the Celebration at Funerals

In the present circumstances of growing dechristianization and of abandonment of religious practice, death and the time of obsequies can be one of the most opportune pastoral moments in which the ordained minister can meet with the non-practising members of the faithful.

It is thus desirable that Priests and Deacons, even at some sacrifice to themselves, should preside personally at funeral rites in accordance with local custom, so as to

pray for the dead and be close to their families, thus availing of an opportunity for appropriate evangelization.

The non-ordained faithful may lead the ecclesiastical obsequies provided that there is a true absence of sacred ministers and that they adhere to the prescribed liturgical norms.(111 [cf. *Ordo exsequiarum*, praenotanda, n. 19]) Those so deputed should be well prepared both doctrinally and liturgically.

Many pastors are leaving at least part of the rites to lay people—e.g., prayers for the dead said at a funeral home by a lay (often female religious) who works in the parish or by an undertaker. When this practice is merely to cut down on the work of the clerics who could be there but prefer not to, they are being lazy and failing to provide service when it is greatly needed.

If one is presuming rather than genuinely hoping—for example, thinking that God somehow will save absolutely everyone or all but a few people who are worse than the typical unrepentant mortal sinner and certainly far worse than on-the-whole good people such as oneself—one plainly will not seek the kingdom. For, if that were so, nothing one can do will in the end make any difference. Thus, presumption means hopelessness. But if I am presumptuous, my hopelessness is hidden by my joyful anticipation of entry into the kingdom, an anticipation that I recall for consolation when people die: “Of course, she’s in heaven; so, cheer up,” as air-headed funeral homilists say. The point is that funeral homilies must be sound on this matter lest they nurture presumption.

Pastors need to instruct people to inform them of certain events (whether affecting themselves, family members, friends, relatives, neighbors) so that proper and timely pastoral help can be provided to the sick and dying.

For instance, when someone learns that his/her illness will be fatal, the pastor should be told that. Cancer is diagnosed, and the patient is told that all possible treatment will only hold it off briefly; that person is dying. Faith and hope must be encouraged; not only a proper celebration of the sacrament of anointing, but counseling is appropriate. Failure to deal rightly with people at this point can lead to despair, loss of faith, and death in bitterness.

When someone is about to be martyred, he/she has a unique chance to become perfectly holy. Why? Because it’s now possible to do all that God wills and accept everything from his hand with just one act, and the situation provides the emotional motivation to hang in. Now, something very like this is true whenever someone knows he/she is going to die soon. There are certain things to be done, and one must deal with what is happening in the right way. But it’s not very complicated.

So, the dying are to be catechized about the great opportunity they have to become really great saints. What they have been in the past is no bar to this.

### **7–J: Responsibilities of clerics with respect to liturgy of the hours, sacramentals, and blessings**

SC 100: Pastors are to see to it that the chief hours, especially vespers, are celebrated in Church in common on Sundays and the more solemn feasts. And the laity are encouraged to recite the divine office with the priests, among themselves, or even individually. Is the priest's time off after Sunday Masses more important than this service?

*Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests*, 50: “A special time of Eucharistic adoration could be during the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours, which constitutes a true prolongation, during the day, of the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving which has the Holy Mass as its sacramental centre and source.”

Parishes might well provide for liturgy of the hours with Eucharistic adoration, and perhaps also with Communion—especially appropriate when daily Mass is unavailable—and it can be conducted by an authorized layperson.

*Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, 86 (b), suggests that bishops try to get pastors to invite the faithful to participate in the liturgy of the hours in parishes, along with clerics and religious.

SC 60 says that the Church has instituted sacramentals. “These are sacred signs which bear a resemblance to the sacraments. They signify effects, particularly of a spiritual nature, which are obtained through the Church's intercession. By them men are disposed to receive the chief effect of the sacraments, and various occasions in life are rendered holy.”

SC 61: “Thus, for well-disposed members of the faithful the liturgy of the sacraments and sacramentals sanctifies almost every event of their lives with the divine grace which flows from the paschal mystery . . . There is scarcely any proper use of material things which cannot thus be directed toward the sanctification of men and the praise of God.”

Pastors ought to be familiar with the sacramentals and blessings, and ought to catechize the faithful about them, not least about those that the laity themselves can use and administer. Positive and regular promotion of these things is warranted because they are liturgy—part of the *Church's* official worship—which is designed for everyone. Of course, these things should not be proposed as if everyone had an obligation to use them, but they should be promoted for the benefit they have: disposing people to receive the chief effect of the sacraments, God's saving grace. Thus, promoting the sacramentals and blessings comports well with clerics' secondary responsibility to dispose people to benefit from what they do acting *in persona Christi*.

*CIC*, c. 1167, §1: The Apostolic See alone can establish new sacramentals, authentically interpret those already received, or abolish or change any of them.

§2: In confecting or administering sacramentals, the rites and formulas approved by the authority of the Church are to be observed carefully.

This canon points up the important difference between, on the one hand, sacramentals and liturgical blessings, which pertain to the Church's official worship and must be respected as such, and, on the other, sacramental-like pious customs and novelties introduced by liturgical

planners. Injecting such things into the liturgy, especially but not only if they displace something authorized, is objectionable; it imposes devotion on the faithful, who have a right to freedom in regard to what is not liturgical. Promoting them even apart from the liturgy and even if they are entirely acceptable is not appropriate, for it favors one optional piety against other possibilities. At the same time, if groups of faithful find various received and approved devotional practices helpful, nonexclusively encouraging and facilitating their carrying on those practices is appropriate.

Consider the rosary. It should not be mixed in with the liturgy. If said before or after Mass, faithful who do not have the time or do not wish to participate should not be inconvenienced or embarrassed. Pastors (pace the popes who wrote encyclicals encouraging it) should not promote it—certainly not in homilies or general catechesis. At the same time, they should encourage and facilitate the promotion of this and other approved devotions by faithful who find them helpful. And they should be open to unfamiliar devotional practices that are harmonious with the Church's teaching and liturgy. They should discourage, prudently and gently, those customs and novelties that are in any way unsound.

John Paul II, *Novo millennio ineunte*, 34, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng. ed.), 10 Jan. 2001, VII:

How helpful it would be if not only in religious communities but also in parishes more were done to ensure an all-pervading climate of prayer. With proper discernment, this would require that popular piety be given its proper place, and that people be educated especially in liturgical prayer. Perhaps it is more thinkable than we usually presume for the average day of a Christian community to combine the many forms of pastoral life and witness in the world with the celebration of the Eucharist and even the recitation of Lauds and Vespers. The experience of many committed Christian groups, also those made up largely of lay people, is proof of this.

That urges a serious effort to promote prayer in general in parishes, and the liturgy of the hours in particular.

SC 61 says that by sacraments and sacramentals, virtually everything in life can be “sanctified with the grace that flows from the paschal mystery of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection, from which all the sacraments and sacramentals derive their power.” That supports the view that the whole liturgy cooperates with and brings to bear the redemptive act of Christ.

JP II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*:

34. It is therefore essential that education in prayer should become in some way a key-point of all pastoral planning. I myself have decided to dedicate the forthcoming Wednesday catecheses to reflection upon the Psalms, beginning with the Psalms of Morning Prayer with which the public prayer of the Church invites us to consecrate and direct our day. How helpful it would be if not only in religious communities but also in parishes more were done to ensure an all-pervading climate of prayer. With proper discernment, this would require that popular piety be given its proper place, and that people be educated especially in liturgical prayer. Perhaps

it is more thinkable than we usually presume for the average day of a Christian community to combine the many forms of pastoral life and witness in the world with the celebration of the Eucharist and even the recitation of Lauds and Vespers. The experience of many committed Christian groups, also those made up largely of lay people, is proof of this.

This passage is interesting, because it points to the regular celebration of the L of H in parishes.



**7–K: Pastoral responsibilities of clerics with respect to nonliturgical individual and group prayer, bible studies, devotional exercises, parish missions, confraternities, and so on.**

LG 51 contains a practical guide to veneration of the saints and how the faithful need to be instructed, and pastors should follow this guide in supporting, regulating, and encouraging devotion to them. The good pastor never condemns or discourages devotion to saints, but works against superstition and strives to put veneration of saints in its proper Christological and ecclesial context. LG 66–67 extends this to Mary, prescribing a happy medium between exaggeration and too narrow a view. Pastors can achieve that by teaching what the Church does about Mary and taking care in celebrating the elements of the liturgy that call attention to her and honor her, encouraging all sound devotion to Mary, but avoiding any suggestion that nonliturgical Marian devotions are necessary, and always making clear the primacy and uniqueness of Jesus.

SC 12–13 touches on devotions and puts them into relationship with the liturgy.

Pius XII, *Mediator Dei*, Carlen, 233.173–76, 178–85, commends devotions and pious exercises, and says to keep churches open so people can visit, pray, etc.

Priests ought to support and encourage any devotion that the Church approves of and people are interested in, whether they personally find it appealing or not. It isn't necessary that the priest participate in every devotional exercise that is conducted in the parish church, but only that he see to it that a responsible person does everything as appropriate fittingly.

PO 5 says presbyters lead the faithful to deepen the spirit of prayer throughout their lives, encourage all to fulfill their duties in life and the more advanced to follow the evangelical counsels.

PO 6 (which deals with governance) treats helping the faithful find and develop their personal vocation, which involves using gifts in service with a generous and active love of neighbor, and so reach the freedom of the children of God—freedom from sin and for justice. So, presbyters should help people see what God wants in the great and small events of life—teach discernment of God's will—and teach them not to live selfishly but according to the new law of charity: to build up the one body.

*CIC*, c. 214: The faithful have the right “to follow their own form of spiritual life so long as it is consonant with the doctrine of the Church.” This means that clergy are not to press optional devotions and types of spiritual life on the faithful, and are to nurture everything legitimate, facilitating it and collaborating with it, even if it is not to their personal taste.

*CIC*, c. 528, §2: Pastor of parish is to endeavor that faithful are led to practice prayer, also as families.

Some priests are suspicious of any prayer or study group and any spiritual movement or social activist group that the parish does not originate or at least that does not seek official approval. They are likely to refuse cooperation with such things, advise people not to participate, and so on. That approach risks smothering the Spirit, and is not in line with various things Jesus says.

*Pastores dabo vobis*, 68, ends with a passage indicating the importance of letting a thousand flowers bloom:

The fact that seminarians and diocesan priests take part in particular spiritualities or ecclesial groupings is indeed, in itself, a factor which helps growth and priestly fraternity. Such participation, however, should not be an obstacle, but rather a help to the ministry and spiritual life which are proper to the diocesan priest, who “will always remain the shepherd of all. Not only is he a ‘permanent’ shepherd, available to all, but he presides over the gathering of all so that all may find the welcome which they have a right to expect in the community and in the Eucharist that unites them, whatever be their religious sensibility or pastoral commitment.” (213 [from a papal address to members of the Swiss clergy in 1984])

*CIC*, c. 529, §2: “A pastor is to recognize and promote the proper part which the lay members of the Christian faithful have in the mission of the Church, by fostering their associations for the purposes of religion.” The canon goes on to say that the pastor should guide the faithful in this matter to be in communion with the wider Church—an obvious concern that these associations do not take on a life of their own at odds with ecclesial *communio*.

The point is encourage these things, not stifle them, but coordinate them with other good things in the Church. Lay associations for the purposes of religion covers a lot of ground—prayer groups, bible study groups, new movements of catechesis, charitable groups, social concern groups, and so forth.

The underlying principle of “let a thousand flowers bloom” is that individuals have a right and duty to engage in personal religious activities of many sorts beyond their common ecclesial responsibilities. So, they will engage in personal prayer, do personal charitable works, and so forth. And, provided what they do is okay, pastors should encourage and support it. What individuals rightly do, they may join together, when they think it appropriate, and do together. So, pastors likewise must encourage and support associations and groups. To refuse to do that, to want to initiate and control everything, is to stifle the Spirit.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 58, deals with small ecclesial groups (*communautés de base*) and sets out conditions for their soundness:

- These latter communities will be a place of evangelization, for the benefit of the bigger communities, especially the individual Churches. And, as we said at the end of the last Synod, they will be a hope for the universal Church to the extent:
- that they seek their nourishment in the Word of God and do not allow themselves to be ensnared by political polarization or fashionable ideologies, which are ready to exploit their immense human potential;
  - that they avoid the ever present temptation of systematic protest and a hypercritical attitude, under the pretext of authenticity and a spirit of collaboration;
  - that they remain firmly attached to the local Church in which they are inserted, and to the universal Church, thus avoiding the very real danger of becoming isolated within themselves, then of believing themselves to be the only authentic Church of Christ, and hence of condemning the other ecclesial communities;

- that they maintain a sincere communion with the pastors whom the Lord gives to His Church, and with the magisterium which the Spirit of Christ has entrusted to these pastors;
- that they never look on themselves as the sole beneficiaries or sole agents of evangelization—or even the only depositaries of the Gospel—but, being aware that the Church is much more vast and diversified, accept the fact that this Church becomes incarnate in other ways than through themselves;
- that they constantly grow in missionary consciousness, fervor, commitment and zeal;
- that they show themselves to be universal in all things and never sectarian.

On these conditions, which are certainly demanding but also uplifting, the ecclesial *communautes de base* will correspond to their most fundamental vocation: as hearers of the Gospel which is proclaimed to them and privileged beneficiaries of evangelization, they will soon become proclaimers of the Gospel themselves.

Pastors should promote groups of the right sort and try to discourage the formation and joining up with groups of the wrong sort. The criteria, while vague, can be helpful in guiding pastors in discerning whether a group is sound or not.

Movements such as the charismatic, the Neo-Catechumenal Way, and so on are not to be repressed, nor treated as if they were suitable, much less essential, for all the faithful. Each involves a spirituality suited to some people's needs; all need to be regulated so that they remain harmonious with the essentials. If members of such movements can provide needed ministries—e.g., of catechesis—bishops and pastors might do well to invite them into their dioceses and parishes to do that. But they should no more *promote* the special spirituality of any movement than that of some particular religious institute.

Those in charge of churches, oratories, and other places of Catholic worship should seek ways of keeping them open for prayer, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and other devotional practices. Ideally, churches would be open all the time. But robbers and vandals must be guarded against, and few places should or can afford to hire guards. But having churches locked except when there are liturgical functions going on is not good. The faithful might well be encouraged to take turns using the Church in proper ways, so that the churches will be both protected and open for those who drop in.

Encouraging people to come into a church out of curiosity or for esthetic reasons is reasonable. Those motives are not in themselves bad, and such visits per se provide a certain evangelization and catechesis as well as an opportunity for more straightforward evangelization and catechesis—e.g., by having a parishioner answer visitors' questions, by providing some suitable free materials, by recordings that visitors can listen to, and so forth.

John Paul II, General Audience (12 May 1993), 6, *L'Osservatore Romano* (Eng.), 19 May 1993, 11, deals with priests' responsibility to promote (extralitururgical) eucharistic devotion:

6. Finally, I want to mention that the priest has the mission to promote the worship of the Eucharistic presence also outside of the celebration of Mass, by striving to

make his own church a Christian “house of prayer,” one in which, according to the Council, “The presence of the Son of God, our Savior, offered for us on the altar of sacrifice bestows strength and blessings on the faithful” (PO 5). This house must be a worthy place for prayer and sacred functions both for its good order, cleanliness, the neatness with which it is maintained, and for the artistic beauty of its environment, which has a great importance for the way it forms and inspires prayer. For this reason the Council recommends that the priest “properly cultivate liturgical knowledge and art” (PO 5).

That focuses on only one very narrow aspect of the pastor’s responsibility to promote Eucharistic devotion. Another is to find ways of maintaining the safety of the Church and its contents without closing and locking it most of the time. And priests who wish to can promote such devotion by talking it up, setting up certain periods for those who wish to participate in extended eucharistic adoration, restoring benediction either by itself or in connection with other devotions.

### **7–L: Responsibilities of clerics to elicit and direct the laity’s cooperation in their clerical apostolate**

Because of its importance, this section probably should be moved up so that it will come right after 7–A.

Apart from the exercise of his kingly *munus* implicit in preaching and administering the sacraments, a bishop or presbyter most clearly and fully acts in *persona Christi* as shepherd when he discerns (after receiving help in gathering information and learning about options and their likely consequences) what his particular church or parish as a *communio* should be doing, plans how to do it, chooses who is to do what, calls them, trains them, and commissions them. In this way, he really builds up the Church. Take as a paradigm a lone missionary in an isolated place, planting the faith among people who have never heard of Jesus. When he makes his first converts, he must catechize them well, and then, discerning their gifts and the possibilities for using them, call each of those converts to help—e.g., to catechize, to lead liturgies of the word in his absence, to plan and construct a suitable chapel, and so on. At the same time, he must instruct and encourage *all* his converts to share the Gospel message with their relatives and neighbors, by good example and by word.

In this way, and only in this way, the faithful cooperate together, beyond their common reception of the word and participation in the sacraments, and in cooperating become a lively and enlivening *communio* of faith. If the bishop or presbyter asked little or nothing of the faithful, and tried to do everything himself, he would accomplish much less and would fail to build up the solidarity required for a real *communio*. If the bishop or presbyter asked for and relied on volunteers, a smaller group would volunteer, and that group would become the inner circle, which would impede the full entry of others into solidarity and minimize their active participation.

All of this applies to existing dioceses and parishes. Of course, a new man coming to an existing parish or diocese has a few lay people—probably volunteers—already engaged in ministry. So, he will have to begin by re-preaching the basic gospel message, explain the need for everyone to cooperate insofar as they can, and tell people how he will proceed and why, making it clear that nobody has a claim on anything he or she is doing, and that, if he must temporarily ask for volunteers because of his not yet knowing them well enough to call individuals to tasks, volunteers will not have tenure on their ministries.

In undertaking to engage people in pastoral efforts, any complex and new efforts—e.g., an attempt to evangelize all the non-Catholics in the parish—should not be planned by the priest alone. He ought to engage as many parishioners as possible at the earliest stage of planning, so that the deliberation will be rich and the plan workable.

JP II, *Christifidelis laici*, 2, in the paragraph on two temptations, indicates how ministries can be the enemy of apostolate. Pastors must catechize people who engage in ministries about their responsibility to carry out apostolate in *all* their secular activities, and not think they are meeting their responsibilities by activism within the ecclesial context.

LG 30 says that pastors know Jesus does not mean them to bear alone the saving mission of the Church toward the world.

LG 33 sorts out the apostolate that pertains to every Christian (which is lay apostolate in the case of lay people) from “a more direct form of cooperation in the apostolate of the hierarchy.” The example is the people who assisted Paul in the gospel. The Council adds: “Further, laymen have the capacity to be deputed to exercise certain church functions for a spiritual purpose.” Here we are dealing with ministries, which can rightly include lay help with all the things it would be appropriate for the clergy as such to do.

LG 35 mentions that some lay people “do all they can to provide sacred services when ministers are lacking.”

In accord with their church’s needs and their diverse gifts and vocations, the laity have the right and the duty to help carry out the clergy’s apostolate—for example, to help with evangelization and catechesis, administration of temporal goods, and so forth. So, bishops and parish priests should recognize and endorse this state of affairs, identify and call upon individuals suited to do particular tasks, provide needed training, coordinate the work of these lay helpers, and recognize and praise good performance.

Pastors should not ask for volunteers. They need to know their people well enough to be acquainted with their gifts. They might use a questionnaire, but need to interview people. When confident someone is suited for a task, call them to do it. Everyone in the parish should be called to do something. (Those too busy or incapacitated for other things can help by prayer.) Asking for volunteers disposes the faithful to regard the parish as if it were a voluntary association, like a garden club or a Legion post. A striking example is a college chaplaincy, where the inner circle treat chaplaincy as a student “activity,” and others become purely passive because they are more interested in other activities. Members of such organizations vary in the depth of their interest and its importance in their lives, and so most happily leave the offices and most of the work to a few members. In the Church, the few become an inner circle around the pastor, and, infected with clericalism, make others feel somewhat unwelcome and even resentful of the insiders. That has various bad consequences. People who visit the parish or arrive in it receive no warm welcome—think of the Hispanics. Many people’s gifts never are used; what they could contribute is not asked for, because the little circle of volunteers can only do so much.

Those who share in the clerics’ apostolate should have the right attitude. They are called to share in ministry—that is, slavery for others. This is not an opportunity to dominate, to star, to show off, to fulfill oneself. Every such ministry should be directed toward helping make Jesus’ acts that clerics do *in persona Christi* more available, more fruitful. So, everything must be subordinated to those acts, and everything must be exactly as called for, what is ordered up. Lay ministers have no rights to shape the liturgy or catechesis, for even the clergy must conform strictly to what Jesus has given and must obey meticulously the law of the Church and every legitimate regulation.

AA 2–5 and 9 make it clear that the apostolate proper to the laity is not sharing in clerical apostolate. AA 6 does indicate that lay people should do that, too, of course. So, in welcoming and encouraging lay participation in their clerical work, clerics ought to make it clear to lay people that this sort of thing is not enough, and that it should not detract from their exercise of other aspects of their vocation that are more proper to them as lay people.

Acts 2.42 refers to the people being devoted to the apostles' teaching, *fellowship*, the prayers and breaking of the bread. So doctrine and sacraments are not all; building *communio* is an equally important pastoral responsibility. Acts 2.44–45 goes on to speak of sharing wealth and possessions, and Acts 2.46 of (Eucharist and) sharing food in homes with glad and generous hearts. Catholic pastors have failed miserably in building *communio* in parishes; evangelicals do much better at this. Here is a real and vital need for improvement. And that will only come if people are more involved in the presbyters' ministry and so in parish life, and if that does not create an inner circle around Father, but embraces everyone in a *communio* that is mainly concerned with mutual help.

To some extent, the *communio* that ought to exist in parishes is blocked by their sheer size. So many people cannot really get to know and care about one another. Evangelical Protestant congregations are in general quite small by comparison. So, parishioners do not get involved in one-another's weddings or even funerals; some closer bond of acquaintance is required. Families remain at the center of all those events, and often small nuclear families must carry the whole thing off by themselves with hired help.

But even small parishes seldom develop into real communities of mutual help and caring. "Pray, pay, and obey" is all that clericalist pastors and curates want from parishioners, and so they limit what the parish can be and do to what is possible within that framework. As a result, members of even small parishes, *considered just as such*, usually have no more relationship to one another than do the people who eat lunch at the same cafeteria each day or the people who ride the same commuter train each day. To remedy that, there must be genuine cooperation *among* parishioners, not merely the obedient cooperation of individuals who volunteer and do as they are asked or told with the pastor.

The document, *Instruction on Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests*, was widely read in the U.S. and some other nations as a put down for "ministries" and people in them. Actually, it recognizes the need for such service and supports it, while at the same time trying to regulate it so that it will serve the Church and not obscure what is special about ordination.

A message sent to a friend, which may be helpful:

I have been reading a bad article by Jack Risley, O.P., "The Minister: Lay and Ordained," in a book *The Theology of Priesthood* published by Liturgical Press and edited by Goergen and Garrido. The basic mistake he makes—though he makes plenty of them—is to assume that acts of lay ministry are *per se* exercises of the priesthood that all believers share.

I do not think that is true. But if you look at the end of *Lumen gentium*, 10, you will find find: "The faithful, indeed, concur in the offering of the Eucharist by virtue of their royal priesthood, and exercise it in receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the testimony of a holy life, in self-denial and active charity." That means this: Insofar as the things people do in carrying out their ministries can be part of a holy life—which of itself bears witness to God's grace and to the truth of their faith—they can be exercises of royal priesthood.

Exercise of ministries, whether by the ordained or by lay persons, will be exercises of royal priesthood, however, if and only if the minister's life as a whole is holy (the individual at least must be in the state of grace) and if those acts themselves are morally good (rather than being, as they sometimes are, venial sins—for example, if motivated by vainglory rather than humble willingness to serve). Moreover, every morally good act of a baptized person who is in the state of grace will be, on the same basis, an exercise of royal priesthood.

So, while the exercise of ministries can be exercises of the priesthood common to all the faithful, the exercise of a ministry is not of itself an exercise of royal priesthood. For, when the minister is not in the state of grace or, though in the state of grace, exercises the ministry sinfully, that exercise does not pertain to a holy life or to anything else LG 10 mentions. Moreover, the virtuous exercise of a ministry by someone who is in the state of grace is no more an exercise of royal priesthood than any other morally upright act such a person does.

The *primary* exercise by *all* the faithful, including clerics and those in consecrated life, of their common priesthood is in the interior act that constitutes active participation in the Eucharist—and that act is both an individual one and cooperation in the one, complete, ecclesial act, whose principal agent is Jesus himself. So, the primary exercise by all the faithful of their priesthood is not a ministry (that is, a service to other people); but genuinely liturgy, service to God.

Neither the ministries of the ordained nor the ministries of lay people (lectoring, distributing Communion, teaching catechism) are *per se* exercises of the priesthood that the faithful share in common. For none of those ministries is of itself the minister's personal act of cooperating in Jesus' redemptive work and the Holy Spirit's sanctifying work. Rather, those ministerial acts are of themselves personal acts that make possible and/or facilitate others' (and also incidentally one's own) exercise of the common priesthood.

Jesus' priestly act, by contrast, is of itself a ministry: his self-offering to the Father *is* his service to us, because his properly priestly act is salvific for us. But the acts in which we cooperate with Jesus' sacrifice by offering him and ourselves too are salvific for us—because in them *his* act is present—yet will not be salvific for others except insofar as they are part of a holy life that serves as witness.

*CIC*, c. 759: Lay people not only are witnesses to faith by word and example of a Christian life, “they also can be called upon to cooperate with the bishop and presbyters in the exercise of the ministry of the word.” *CCEO* 608 says more clearly: clerics according to their grade have as their first *munus* the ministry of the word according to the norm of law; “the other faithful, according to each one's aptitude, state of life and received mandate, are to take part willingly in this ministry.” That means that lay involvement in everything from lectoring to teaching catechism and door-to-door evangelization should be regulated by clerics and shaped to help them fulfill their responsibility, which is primary, in service to the word.



The subordinate, relative, and dependent status of lay ministers always must be made clear. Greshake, *The Meaning of Christian Priesthood*, 68–69, makes the point that it is appropriate for pastors to be surrounded by many fellow workers and helpers—that lay ministries are appropriate. But these must be cooperators related to the ordained pastors and dependent on them. If lay ministers become “*de facto* more or less independent pastors in a community and are commissioned to preach the word of God, if they are acknowledged as such by the community and are sent by the bishop to fill a vacant place because no priest is available, these should be ordained. Otherwise the impression is given that the sacrament of holy orders and the power conferred by it are not in fact all that necessary for pastoral ministry in the Church.”

So, lay ministers should be clearly helpers. For that reason, no one of them should be allowed to dominate the rest; at least all the main ones should report directly to the pastor or assistant priest and be overseen directly by him. And none of those on the payroll should perform special roles in the liturgy that volunteers can fill—as lectors, acolytes, and so on.

*Pastores dabo vobis*, 26, describes the priest’s role of governance—his *munus regendi*. The priest must attend to the variety of persons and their vocations, and he is to “coordinate all the gifts and charisms which the Spirit inspires in the community, to discern them and to put them to good use for the upbuilding of the Church in constant union with the bishops.” So, the pastoral office in the narrow sense is not running the parish and taking care of finances so much as discerning gifts, calling people to contribute, and coordinating their contributions so that the parish as a unit functions effectively toward making everyone a Catholic and every Catholic a saint.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 13: “The command to the Twelve to go out and proclaim the Good News is also valid for all Christians, though in a different way. . . . Those who have received the Good News and who have been gathered by it into the community of salvation can and must communicate and spread it.”

14: Declaration of the Synod Fathers (reference is in note 36), says: “We wish to confirm once more that the task of evangelizing all people constitutes the essential mission of the Church.”

Pastors should regard their mission as evangelizing their whole parish, not only those who come to them, but nonbelievers, etc. To do that, they need the help of the laity. So they must call them to evangelize, and motivate them to help do the work in many ways—primarily by finding and carrying out their personal vocations as vocations. But also, by the part of their vocation—in many cases—of helping in an organized parochial effort to evangelize everyone around, including non-Catholics of all sorts, but also including those who already are active parish members, with a view to their more complete conversion to Christ and more whole-hearted pursuit of the kingdom. Everyone a Catholic and every Catholic a saint—the required purpose of the parish, inasmuch as it is sent to evangelize.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, 70: Lay people’s “primary and immediate task is not to establish and develop the ecclesial community—this is the specific role of the pastors [clergy]—but to put to use every Christian and evangelical possibility latent but already present and active in the

affairs of the world [secular affairs = the pursuit and protection of human goods other than religion]. Then:

73. Hence the active presence of the laity in the temporal realities takes on all its importance. One cannot, however, neglect or forget the other dimension: the laity 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.

...

It is certain that, side by side with the ordained ministries, whereby certain people are appointed pastors and consecrate themselves in a special way to the service of the community, the Church recognizes the place of non-ordained ministries which are able to offer a particular service to the Church.

...

These ministries will have a real pastoral value to the extent that they are established with absolute respect for unity and adhering to the directives of the pastors, who are the ones who are responsible for the Church's unity and the builders thereof.

These ministries, apparently new but closely tied up with the Church's living experience down the centuries—such as catechists, directors of prayer and chant, Christians devoted to the service of God's Word or to assisting their brethren in need, the heads of small communities, or other persons charged with the responsibility of apostolic movements—these ministries are valuable for the establishment, life, and growth of the Church, and for her capacity to influence her surroundings and to reach those who are remote from her.

These passages make clear the distinction between lay apostolate properly so-called, which deals with secular realities, and non-ordained ministries, which are special forms of participation by non-clerics in ecclesial actions, so that they assist clerics in fulfilling responsibilities proper to them.

Pastors are to instruct and oversee the laity in their various ministries. Those served by them deserve that ministries be done properly. For example, musicians who serve in the liturgy play a part that must conform to liturgical norms, provide sound instruction (with the words of hymns), and comport well with other elements of the liturgy, such as the readings and homily, the tone and importance of the celebration (penitential, a major feast such as Easter, a summer Sunday in ordinary time when many visitors are present), and so on. Most musicians need to be instructed about such matters, and the pastor must instruct them. This is an excellent reason why lay ministers need to be called rather than accepted as volunteers. Those called are invited to provide the service the pastor asks for; volunteers feel that they are entitled to provide what they wish—after all, they are generously volunteering!

Pastors should identify young men and women who might have gifts for clerical and/or religious life, invite such persons to participate in ministries such as catechizing younger

parish members about personal vocation, conducting Sunday liturgy in the absence of a priest for isolated groups who cannot get to Mass (for example, groups living in nursing homes, or vacationing in remote areas of the diocese where there are no Masses), evangelizing non-Catholic peers. Those who accept the invitation ought to be trained carefully and mentored. Those who do well should be invited to help train others. In due time, the prospect of continuing such service for life should be proposed.

**7–M: Responsibilities of parish clergy to encourage, regulate, and support their parishioners’ mutual help in living their Christian lives and doing charitable works toward nonparishioners**

AA 2–5 and 7 make it clear that whole of lay people’s life should be apostolic, and that insofar as it is, it carries out the mission of the Church. So, it is reasonable that the facilities and resources of the Church be available to laity for use in carrying out their secular apostolate insofar as that is compatible with the requirements of the hierarchy’s apostolate.

PO 6 toward end makes a point of presbyters’ duty to build up a genuinely Christian community that will promote works of charity, mutual help, and missionary activity toward outsiders. This is considered a fruit of the Eucharist whose absence would be indicative of a defect in it—a sort of formalism, even if it were experienced as satisfying and drew a good crowd.

In building the Christian community, presbyters are not to serve any ideology or human faction but to promote the spiritual growth of Christ’s body. A good sign of that is that members of the parish are not divided into an inner, activist circle and outsiders.

*CIC*, c. 215: “The Christian faithful are at liberty freely to found and direct associations for purposes of charity or piety or for the promotion of the Christian vocation in the world and to hold meetings for the common pursuit of these purposes.” These voluntary associations appropriately make use of parish facilities, which belong to the people, provided that use is fitting and not abusive, and that it is consonant with other uses.

JP II, *ad limina* address, OR Eng, 25 Jan. 1997, says services of charity *and solidarity* are part of the task of parish. In another *ad limina*, *Origins* 28 (18 June 1998), he says that administration should not define the rhythms of priests’ life in parish; prayer should.

*Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, 125, says that bishops should promote the faithful’s practice of works of mercy, both corporal and spiritual, and suggests: “the bishop strives as much as possible to set up in all parishes and church institutions certain organizations that would detect distressing situations, gather help, and strengthen bonds of love between benefactor and recipient.” The idea sounds like St. Vincent de Paul societies; and they certainly are an instance of what is needed. The important point is that the idea can be generalized greatly—not only distressing situations but opportunities for mutual help should lead to cooperation, and formal organizations are only a way of dealing with matters that individuals also should be alert to and deal with as they arise.”

Every good parish is a community of repentant sinners still aware of being sinners; so, every parish ought to be sort of like an AA chapter. Genuine moral support—bearing one another’s burdens *so as to* fulfill the law of Christ (help others fulfill their personal vocations and reach the heavenly kingdom)—is the most important work of charity.

Acts 2.42–47 and 4.32–35 describe the initial Christian community. It included sharing property. While that clearly is not essential for every Christian community, the carrying out of a Christian view of property within a parish would lead to substantial mutual help. In some cases that would take the form of giving money or goods; in others of lending things; there always would be consideration of helping with work to be done, sharing tasks.

### **7–N: Responsibilities of clerics in managing their diocese’s or parish’s temporal goods**

Temporal goods—especially parish plants and their furnishings and equipment—need to be provided, taken care of, and maintained so that they serve the central purpose of making the acts of Jesus, that the clerics make present, fully available. Clerics need to see to that. But bishops and priests ought not to spend much time on the aspects of those matters that could as well be dealt with by a deacon or layman. Focusing on those matters is bad both because it takes time and energy away from more central matters and because it gives false witness regarding the comparative importance of spiritual goods and temporal goods. Just as celibacy offers witness to the importance of the things with which clerical service is essentially concerned, so focusing on those things rather than temporalities makes it clear that the Eucharist and spiritual goods related to it are more important. It’s a shame when a pastor prides himself on building a church building rather than a diocesan or parish community, a church of stone rather than a church of people.

Of course, circumstances may require a bishop or a priest to attend to temporalities more than he wishes: there is nobody to whom to entrust them. But that situation should not be accepted as normal. Moreover, some of the burdens of the parish’s temporalities should be handed over to chosen and called out lay people. Doing that also can have the benefits of nurturing the person’s bond with the parish and building up the communion among members.

PO 17 has some treatment of presbyters’ and bishops’ responsibilities in managing the Church’s temporal goods. They are to obey the Church’s law and manage things in accord with the nature of the good. They should direct them to the goals in pursuit of which it is appropriate for the Church to have temporal goods: the arrangement of divine worship, the procuring of an honest living for the clergy, and the exercise of the works of the apostolate and of charity, especially toward the needy. What clerics receive when they exercise Church office (and that includes gifts for pastoral service!) should take care of their decent livelihood and the fulfillment of their proper duties; the rest should go to the good of the Church and works of charity. So, priestly service should not be considered a means of profit (and comforts and luxuries).

The problem, of course, is that drawing lines is not easy. Some hospitality and entertaining of fellow clerics and others involved in ministry is an appropriate part of life. But sinful structures of mutual indulgence that make for a sort of collective clerical self-indulgence easily develop as bishops and parish priests lavishly entertain and throw parties for one another at their churches’ expense.

JP II, *ad limina* talk, Origins 28 (18 June 1998) 74, says prayer, not the tasks of management, must define the rhythms of a priest’s life, even in the busiest of parishes.

CIC, cc. 531, 551, and 1267, §1: provide that gifts given others who perform various pastoral services (531) or (551) to the parochial vicar or (1267, §1) to the superior or administrator of a juridic person (which includes both bishops and pastors of parishes) on the occasion of the performance of some service (this does not include Mass stipends) are to presume the gift is to the Church unless it plainly is personal. So, as system in which clerics personally keep such gifts, unless sanctioned by particular law as a way of distributing the Church’s property, is

fraudulent. And letting priests keep such gifts is not a good way of compensating, because it fails to spread resources around to meet genuine needs, and treats pastoral service as if it were simply professional service to clients rather than ministerial service to the Church as a whole.

*CIC*, c. 533, §1, prescribes that a pastor reside in a rectory (parish house) near the Church, though it allows the bishop to approve other arrangements, especially residing in a house with other priests; *CIC*, c. 550, §1, says the assistant (parish vicar) should reside in the parish or one of the parishes he serves, but the bishop also can allow other arrangements. 550, §2, encourages some sort of common life of pastors and assistant(s).

In general, service to the faithful calls for the pastor to be handy to the Church, but not living alone argues for a common house to avoid isolation. What makes no sense at all is for pastors and assistants to have their own individual dwellings apart from the Church, to which they then come to work. Such an arrangement imposes costs, decreases service, and does nothing to deal with loneliness—indeed, it may well be an occasion of sin.

*CIC*, c. 537 prescribes that every parish is to have a finance council—a consultative body—”to assist the pastor in the administration of the goods of the parish.” Bishops provide additional norms. The pastor still has the authority and responsibility to act in all financial matters for the parish.

The diocesan norms should require that the pastor identify some lay persons with suitable skills and invite them to serve, and that some be elected by parish members. All the facts about the parish’s finances should be available and supplied to those on the finance council. They should be consulted before any significant, unusual expenditure. The council also should review regular policies and expenditures.

*CIC*, c. 1287, §2: “According to norms to be determined by particular law, administrators are to render an account to the faithful concerning the goods offered by the faithful to the Church.”

A minimal accounting, such as announcing how much is in each collection, might satisfy the letter of the law. A statement promulgated by the NCCB, 16 November 1977, “Principles and Guidelines for Fund Raising in the United States by Arch/Dioceses, Arch/Diocesan Agencies, and Religious Institutes” (*Pastoral Letters of the United States Catholic Bishops*, 4:232–37), includes (235) “Accountability Guidelines” which include:

- (1) Accountability requires the fundraiser to provide timely reports on the extent to which promises expressed or implied in the solicitation of funds have been fulfilled.
- (3) Fund-raising reports should provide both financial information and a review of the possible work for which the funds were raised. The availability of these reports to benefactors on a regular basis or on reasonable request should be publicized.

Dioceses and parishes probably can satisfy those guidelines by making available audited annual financial balance sheets omitting the inventory of holdings such as land and buildings, furnishings, equipment, books, and supplies but showing other assets (including invested funds, whether restricted or not), liabilities, income, and expenditures summed up under fairly broad headings, supplemented by some details about special projects and funds, such as church building or remodeling, for which special collections have been taken up.

But a strong case can be made for reforming diocesan and parish finances so that it will be possible to allow all who contribute to their support to know *all* the details of their finances—e.g., to look at the books and see each and every expenditure. The argument that the laity will not be able to understand the propriety of the diocese's and parishes' possession and use of goods and money is not sound; they will understand well enough if the information is presented in an understandable form and if what is being done is reasonable. The real clerical concern is that the laity will understand all too well.

Of course, opening up the books will require paying clergy reasonable salaries so that they can afford to pay those legitimate expenses that now are hidden amongst various budget items. And the reasonable salaries still can be limited by fringe benefits that will supplement them, such as rent-free living space, the use of telephones paid for out of parish funds for personal as well as church calls, and so on. Greater knowledge of diocesan and parish finances would allow the laity to contribute more effectively to deliberations about temporalities—something desirable inasmuch as these matters do affect them and that participation in deliberation will help motivate their just contribution.

Bishops and priests taking over as pastors often redecorate quarters extensively to suit personal tastes, paying little attention to the costs they are imposing, real needs, and disproportion to what many of their people can afford. They also impose costs for travel to be with fellow clerics for many special occasions—and waste considerable time on that. They entertain fellow clerics at Church expense. In effect, the system is one in which “we take good care of ourselves” comes before “we serve the people Jesus gives us to serve.”

NCCB, *Built of Living Stones*, begins the Preface:

One of the most significant and formative experiences in the life of a parish community is the process of building or renovating a church. As part of that process, parish members are called upon to study the Church's teaching and liturgical theology and to reflect upon their personal pieties, their individual tastes, and the parish history. By bringing together these personal and ecclesial elements in faith and in charity, parishioners help to build a new structure and to renew their parish community.

That sounds fine. But when and where did anything like that sort of involvement by ordinary parish members ever occur? Pastors (and people in the diocesan curia) and so-called experts they trust make the decisions and people are told and expected to pony up. The people of the parish ought in fact to have veto power over everything except what Church law and liturgical norms absolutely require. Experts and artists should not get what they want, but be required to come up with something that most of the people like or at least find acceptable. People who will show up and want to take part are not stupid and will listen to cogent arguments: that would cost twice as much, that would not hold up well, that would require costly maintenance.

Most of what is the latest in art and architecture is never very good. Most of it will be despised long before its functional life is over. Popular taste lags, and that's fine because what people have liked over some time usually is not so bad and won't be despised so quickly. So, if

original art works are commissioned, conservative rather than far-out artists should be preferred. Sketches and models should be required and studied and criticized by the people who will have to live with it. Good quality reproductions are better than originals that people can make no sense of.

Tithing is not the way to go: it is unfair to those who are less well off—including some with large families—and asks too little of those who are affluent. See DMQ question. Tithing including substantial charitable donations incurs on right to choose own charities. Ancient economy was different; tithe was more like a modern tax on those who produce goods. For some commentary on biblical tithe law, see Anchor Bible, 3B, 2421–34.

It is far more important for pastors to build the Church of living stones than for them to build churches.

*Directory of the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, 181, says that in building (and the same would be true of remodeling) churches, the bishop “carefully avoids anything that smacks of gauche novelty and whatever offends rather than promotes the sacredness of the place and the devotion of the faithful (SC 122–127).” The document goes on:

And finally, he takes care lest, in the building, renovating or furnishing of churches too much money be spent and parishes burdened with excessive debt; for it would be incongruous if, for the sake of stone churches, the apostolic work and charity of the living Church should be compromised; for if it is a question of one or the other, these must certainly be put before the adorning of temples.”

It’s no argument that people waste a lot of money on other things, so that lovely and very expensive churches are justified. The conclusion does not follow. The question is what bishops and pastors should raise money for.

The Jerusalem temple is not a precedent for our church buildings. The temple had a centrality in the OT—it was God’s unique dwelling place and the sacrifices had to be done there. Jesus personally fulfills the OT temple; he says it will be destroyed. He is the NT temple, gathering the people of God into his own body. Their worship is in spirit and in truth, rational worship. Moreover, God’s dwelling in Jerusalem was terminal, for Israel was the promised land; in the NT, the promised land is the heavenly kingdom, and in the heavenly Jerusalem the “temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb” (Rv 21.22). Christians in this world are more like the Israelites in the desert: a pilgrim people. So, Christian churches are like the meeting tent and portable tabernacle, described in Exodus. Not tablets of stone but the body of the Lord is in the tabernacle. And that body is viaticum, not only when received by the dying, but whenever received—food for the journey of this life toward eternal rest in heaven.

The family home is not a precedent for the church building. For though the parish family is like a family in some important ways, it also differs. The parish is not a survival community, and its members are not tied to this building as a natural family is to its land and home. Nor should magnificent public buildings be regarded as a precedent for grand churches. Those structures make a statement about human greatness and power and wealth. Church buildings should make no such statement.



But shouldn't they reflect the magnificence of God himself? No building can do that as the holy Christian community, made up of living stones, can. And it shows God's magnificence most clearly when it wastes its resources on evangelization and caring for the poor.

What about Chartres? Some special justifications. (1) This was a catechetical project, at a time when people had no public media and most could not read. (2) It was a community project with a great deal of popular participation. That contributed per se to the *communio* of the real church—the living stones. (3) They assumed they were investing their work for the long term.

*CIC*, c. 1188 says that the practice of displaying sacred images in churches for the reverence of the faithful is to remain in effect, but also says they are to be moderate in number and suitable in order to avoid confusion and occasion for inappropriate devotion.

*CIC*, c. 1190, §3, forbids transferring permanently or alienating, without permission of the apostolic see, "images which are honored in some church with great reverence by the people."

In building and remodeling churches, pastors ought not to virtually do away with statues and images. Where there are duplicates—e.g., a statue and a picture of the Blessed Virgin—the number should be reduced, but the faithful should be involved in the decision making process. (Stained glass should not count for duplication of images.)

One might argue that c. 1190 applies only to rare cases. Perhaps. But the idea is important: pastors wrong their people when they arbitrarily get rid of a statue or picture they don't like but the faithful want to keep.

*CIC*, c. 1190, §1: "It is absolutely forbidden to sell sacred relics." That should be taken very seriously, for there is a real temptation of poor churches to do it, and those who buy also do wrong. But the issue is charging for the relic itself; it is not forbidden to charge for the reliquary, a stipend for authenticating the relic, or handling costs, shipping, and insurance.

*CIC*, c. 1210: "Only those things which serve the exercise or promotion of worship, piety, or religion are permitted in a sacred place; anything not consonant with the holiness of the place is forbidden. In an individual case, however, the ordinary can permit other uses which are not contrary to the holiness of the place."

It would violate this canon to conduct business within a church building, even if that business were meant to benefit the church. So buying and selling should be outside the church itself. It would violate it to use the church for any purpose that might be divisive, such as discussing civic issues or holding political or union meetings. Anything immodest in the way of entertainment would be absolutely excluded.

But some functions that are not strictly religious might be permitted by the ordinary—e.g., graduation exercises from the parish school, a concert or organ recital with decent though nonreligious music, when there is no other suitable space the conduct of some charitable work or a gathering to communicate urgent information regarding health, safety, etc.

In some cases, while the law would require the ordinary's permission, that may be presumed or the use permitted by way of exception (*epikeia*)—for example, the use of the church to shelter people during an emergency such as a flood or fire during cold weather.

*CIC*, c. 1213: “Ecclesiastical authority freely exercises its power and functions in sacred places.” Thus, the cathedral or other church may be used by the bishop or pastor to hold meetings about parish affairs, to teach catechism, even to discuss diocesan and parish financial problems.

*CIC*, c. 1254, §1: To pursue its proper purposes, the Catholic Church by innate right is able to acquire, retain, administer, and alienate temporal goods independently from civil power.

§2: The proper purposes are principally: to order divine worship, to care for the decent support of the clergy and other ministers, and to exercise works of the sacred apostolate and of charity, especially toward the needy.

This canon should not be read as meaning that administrators of Church property may disregard civil law or that the Church has some sort of special rights in regard to property.

*CIC*, c. 1284, §2, °3, makes it clear that administrators are to “observe the prescripts of both canon and civil law . . . and especially be on guard so that no damage comes to the Church from non-observance of civil laws.” And *CIC*, c. 1290, incorporates (with the limitations that canon law does not provide otherwise and that civil law is compatible with divine law, and [*CIC*, c. 1547] that proof in tribunals may be by witnesses even if civil law would require documents) into canon law civil law’s provisions about contracts.

Rather, the point of canon 1254, §1, in asserting an independent right of the Church regarding property, is to claim what proper respect for religious liberty would provide for the Church, and what everybody has in any halfway decent polity. What the canon means to override is either a generally unjust system—e.g., one that excluded private property entirely—or one that picks on the Church in a discriminatory way.

§2 of 1254 spells out the purposes of the Church that justifies having property. This means that no administrator rightly acquires property unless with the reasonable expectation that it will serve at least some of those purposes, that every administrator rightly uses the Church’s money and goods only for those purposes, and that any administrator should get rid of anything that can no longer serve those purposes.

What does that exclude? The Vatican Museum, and things like it around the world, where the Church preserves objects of art and antiquities that don’t serve any ecclesial purpose, and cannot reasonably be expected ever to do so again, but some broader, general cultural purpose. It does not exclude acquiring real estate to meet reasonably anticipated needs for new parishes, but does exclude speculative real estate investments and holding properties or engaging in profit-making activities to provide more secure income streams. It also excludes holding on to things, such as hospitals and schools, if they no longer can be operated as a genuine apostolate or charitable work.

*CIC*, c. 1286: Administrators of goods:

1° in the employment of workers are to observe meticulously also the civil laws concerning labor and social policy, according to the principles handed on by the Church;

2° are to pay a just and decent wage to employees so that they are able to provide fittingly for their own needs and those of their dependents.

This canon excludes practices such as employing undocumented workers (except within the narrow bounds the law permits) and paying them off the books. It requires dioceses and parishes to pay lay persons a family wage. Working for the church ought to ensure treatment in accord with all the requirements, and in each case whichever are stricter, of both the law and the Church's social teaching. To protect employees in case the person offering employment dies suddenly, is transferred, forgets, or is tempted to renege on promises, the terms and conditions of employment ought to be in writing.

Provisions for the clergy sometimes are not fairly extended to and adapted for lay employees. Moreover, while not every job can offer security, and sometimes employees can be justly fired or laid off, clerics need to consider carefully the impact of such actions, put themselves in the employee's place, and conscientiously apply the Golden Rule. Mention horrible cases in which undertakings have been set aside, and people who risked much to serve the Church left out to dry.

In determining a just wage for employees, a key question is what to count as "needs." The answer is: employers must be consistent. They themselves are entitled only to receive and spend on themselves as much as is required to meet their own genuine needs (see *LCL* 801; refer back to explanation in 3-B). Whatever they take to be a need for this purpose also must be considered a need when calculating a just family wage for employees!

Care for the poor is a proper function and a special obligation of both dioceses and parishes. Caring for the poor is per se an apostolate, for it bears witness to the truth of the gospel, and many additional occasions for apostolate arise in the process of caring for the poor. Money should be raised and appropriate goods in kind collected specifically to care for the poor; whenever goods the poor might be able to use are being disposed of, giving them to the poor should be considered.

Such care should involve mercy in the true sense. But it also is required, up to a point, by justice insofar as dioceses and parishes have resources greater than needed to meet their own genuine needs.

Because the resources available for caring for the poor always are limited and far less than the needs of the poor, reasonable priorities need to be set and methods should be adopted to assure that available resources are not wasted on frauds and on the poor whose needs should and will be met by others if proper procedures, sometimes including legal steps, are followed.

For the sake of witness, dioceses' and parishes' care for the poor ought to be carried out by agents of the church as such, not by clerics as individuals or by lay people not clearly acting as agents of the Church. Care for the poor should not be commingled with programs organized to meet various needs of members of the Church itself including some who are not poor. If the Church's care for the poor is carried out in collaboration with a public, secular, or non-Catholic religious entity, care should be taken to ensure that the structure of the cooperation does not diminish the witness value of what the Church does.

The work of public programs and other private programs that might provide needed help must not be duplicated. An important part of the Church's service to the poor is to be expert in helping them obtain everything that they are entitled to and encouraging them to seek other legitimately available help and showing them how to get it. That means a diocesan office to develop such expertise and teach all the relevant people in the diocese—clerics, lay administrators and administrative assistants, religious, and so on—how to make use of that expertise.

*CIC*, c. 1267 concerns responsibilities of those receiving unsolicited offerings. §1: Unless the contrary is established—i.e., is morally certain—anything a superior or administrator of an ecclesiastical entity receives is to be presumed to be for the juridic person, not a personal gift to the individual. §2: A just cause is required to refuse donations; if anything substantial is at stake and a public juridical person is the potential recipient, the ordinary's permission is required to refuse a donation, or to accept one with a condition attached—and if that could be burdensome, the conditions of *CIC*, c. 1295 also must be met. §3: "Offerings given by the faithful for a certain purpose can be applied only for that same purpose."

This last is very important and often violated in practice, sometimes with very thin rationalizing cover.

It does not do to get the person to omit specifying the condition in a way that would be legally binding by giving a verbal assurance that it will be met without that: if one accepts the condition, one should accept its being legally binding; if one does not want to be bound by it, one must say that and promise only what one really intends—e.g., I'll try to do that if I don't find some good reason not to.

A diocese wished to build a new diocesan building in a central location by demolishing a parish church deemed no longer necessary. Warned that the land had been donated subject to a condition that if not used for a church it would revert to the heirs of the donor, the diocese included a small church on part of the ground level of the new building. That solved the legal problem. But it seems to have evaded the moral issue.

*CIC*, c. 1300: "The legitimately accepted wills of the faithful who give or leave their resources for pious causes, whether through an act *inter vivos* or through an act *mortis causa*, are to be fulfilled most diligently even regarding the manner of administration and distribution of goods, without prejudice to the prescript of can. 1301, §3."

The last-mentioned prescript declares null any stipulation by a donor excluding the ordinary's supervision of the fulfillment of the will according to the donor's intentions, as provided for in the preceding two sections of the same canon. So, that prescript does not limit the obligation of diligent fulfillment set out in can. 1300, but only specifies that that obligation be fulfilled under the ordinary's supervision.

The qualification "legitimately accepted" indicates both an obligation not to accept donations where it will be impossible or unreasonable to carry out the donor's intentions, including those regarding the manner of administration and distribution of goods, and an obligation to see to it that donations accepted illegitimately are returned rather than kept and used without regard to the donor's intentions.

The word *wills* here means declared intentions, which may be in what is usually called a will, but may be in the oral or written expression of the intent of a living person, including someone about to die, to donate.

The phrase “are to be fulfilled most diligently” applies to each and every aspect of the donor’s intentions, not only to those expressly mentioned—I assume because they have rather often been ignored.

In the case of a living donor, a straightforward, honest, and nonmanipulative effort can be made to explain why those to whom gifts are offered would prefer donors to alter their stated intentions. In other words, negotiation regarding the conditions is okay, but only if the potential recipient is candid—that is, provides the information the potential donor would wish to have, and in no way suggests that intentions will be honored unless certain they will be.

*CIC*, c. 1307, §1: “A list of the obligations incumbent upon pious foundations is to be composed and displayed in an accessible place so that the obligations to be fulfilled are not forgotten; the precepts of cann. 1300–1302 and 1287 are to be observed.”

The requirement means, for example, that a parish should have posted in the sacristy a list of Masses and other liturgical or devotional functions it has a duty to carry out to fulfill its end of a donation that was accepted, and have posted in its office a list of other things to be done to fulfill its end of donations accepted to, for instance, provide prizes for certain attainments or certain sorts of help to the poor.

*CIC*, cc. 1308–1309, authorize reduction of the obligations of Masses under specified conditions, or the transfer of Masses to days, churches, or altars different from the specified in the foundations. Sometimes it is impossible or unreasonable to keep promises. Parish priests cannot do this; the bishop must act.

*CIC*, c. 1310, provides procedures for getting out from under for cases other than Masses. §1: if the ordinary has been expressly authorized by the founder to do so, he can make just and necessary changes. §2: If keeping the promise becomes impossible through no fault of the administrators, the ordinary can equitably lessen the obligations after hearing those concerned and his finance council and with the intention of the founder preserved as much as possible—in other words, can resolve the problem as best he can. §3: any other change has to be authorized by the Holy See.

SC 124: “Ordinaries, by the encouragement and favor they show to art which is truly sacred, should strive after noble beauty rather than mere extravagance.” In other words, avoid costly stuff external to divine worship itself; provide simple, functional, high quality structures, harmonious furnishings, and so on. The *GIRM* (2000 edition) 292–93 says of the special equipment for liturgy: all these elements should form a deep and organic unity. The idea is: reject the cheesy and vulgar, choose a simple, functional style, and make sure everything is in that style and fits together as well as fitting with the structure.

Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000), 74–84, makes the case for both priest and people together facing toward the east during the Eucharistic prayer and even says (81): “A common turning to the east during the

Eucharistic Prayer remains essential. This is not a case of something accidental, but of what is essential. Looking at the priest has no importance. What matters is looking together at the Lord. It is not now a matter of dialogue but of common worship, of setting off toward the One who is to come.”

I do not think it is essential to face the east in the sense that this is part of revelation; and I do not think that churches ought to be renovated to accommodate that. If it were revealed, I do not think so many churches would have been built where it was impossible. However, it does seem to me that new churches ought to be designed so that both priest and people will face east during the Eucharistic prayer, and that where that was the case before remodeling and the former arrangement could easily be restored, that ought to be done. Ratzinger’s own solution to structure problems is (83): “Where a direct common turning toward the east is not possible, the cross can serve as the interior ‘east’ of faith. It should stand in the middle of the altar and be the common point of focus for both priest and praying community.” He seems to suggest a two-sided cross (84): “That is why there could be a cross of the Passion, which represents the suffering Lord who for us let his side be pierced . . . as well as a cross of triumph, which expresses the idea of the Second Coming and guides our eyes toward it.”

*CIC*, c. 1216: “In the building and repair of churches, the principles and norms of the liturgy and of sacred art are to be observed, after the advice of experts has been taken into account.”

SC 122: Ordinaries are to take care that in encouraging and favoring truly sacred art, they should seek for noble beauty rather than sumptuous display. The same principle applies also to sacred vestments and ornaments. . . . And when churches are to be built, let great care be taken that they be suitable for the celebration of liturgical services and for the active participation of the faithful.

In any major remodeling or new building, any experts consulted must be multiple, so that one-sided views do not prevail. Also, all relevant competencies should be included—architects, construction people, liturgists.

The faithful who will use the newly built or remodeled church also should be consulted and taken seriously from the earliest planning stages. To prepare them, they should be supplied with relevant church documents to read. When choices are to be made about sacred images, stained glass designs, and so forth, the faithful should be consulted. It is outrageous when they have nothing to say about these matters which are at least as much within their competence as clerics’, they will be using the space, and they will pay for it.

Materials should be inherently beautiful and durable, but should not be more expensive than necessary; costly decoration with gold, precious stones, imported stone and rare woods, luxurious textiles, etc. is not appropriate. Style should be functional—adapted to the use to which the space is put, so that everyone, even if handicapped, can see well and hear clearly, participate and circulate easily, and so that both the unity of the assembly and its hierarchical ordering will be manifest.

Maintenance should be minimal; cleaning and upkeep should be easy.

Remodeling that thwarts circulation or that rearranges functions incompatibly with the shape of the space is bad. The choir should never become the focus of attention; it should be out of the congregation's line of sight, if possible. Pews and kneelers are necessary, and they should be comfortable; many people have problems kneeling without suitable kneelers. It should be borne in mind that the space will be used for a long time; trendiness should be avoided, and idiosyncratic tastes not indulged.

On the basis of reflections on a historical account of Christian churches of the past, Louis Bouyer, *Liturgy and Architecture* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), 92–119, offers some ideas about the physical structure of a Church that would be relevant for people building or remodeling churches.

He says many things I am not especially sympathetic to. He would have no pews, at most light and movable chairs; he thinks being seated promotes passivity. One very good idea: the choir should be in the first ranks of the faithful, facing the same way. He wants the altar to be clearly the most beautiful thing in the church. He wants the baptistry to be outside or near the entrance. He wants the blessed sacrament to be kept in a tabernacle built into the north wall; I would prefer a chapel especially for it, not one with a saint's statue, and opening from a side wall.

The woman's anointing of Jesus with very costly ointment (see Mt 26.6–13, Mk 14.3–9, Jn 12.2–8)—in Jn the anointing is done by Mary of Bethany and Judas estimates its worth at 300 denarii, which would be a laborer's wage for 300 days—provoked the criticism that the money should have been given to the poor, to which Jesus responded by saying that she had done a good thing (Mt 26.10, Mk 14.6) and: “For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me” (Mt 26.11; Jn 12.8 is almost the same); Mk 14.7: “For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you will, you can do good to them; but you will not always have me.” Some commentators point out that Mk alludes to Dt 15.11: “For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command you, You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in the land.” So, Jesus' remark is not to be taken as justifying setting aside responsibilities toward the poor, but presupposes that they are being conscientiously fulfilled.

Still, the passage often is used to justify extravagant expenditures either for buildings and equipment associated with worship (but extending to rectories, decoration of religious institutes' properties, and so on) or even for things more remotely connected, if at all, with the Lord's honor. (Nothing is too good for God and his priests; a cardinal must fly first class; etc.)

Thomas, commenting on Mt 26.10 (“For she has done a beautiful thing to me.”) quotes St. John Chrysostom (where? probably in a commentary on Mt) who says that when someone does something good but could do something better, one must distinguish between before and after: afterward, the person is to be commended; beforehand, he is to be advised to do what is better. “Therefore one should believe if she had asked the Lord for advice beforehand, he would have said that she should give it to the poor.” Quoting that as his commentary on the phrase without further comment, Thomas apparently concurs with Chrysostom's judgment.

And it makes good sense. In many cases, someone who is enthusiastic but very well intentioned goes to excess in giving a gift or making some gesture; carping criticism at that point shows bad will, and the gracious recipient shows appreciation for the good deed rather than criticizes the lack of good judgment. Judas in Jn (the disciples in Mt; “some” in Mk) criticizes, not appreciating the good deed and manifesting a bad attitude (in Jn, Judas is a frustrated thief). But those who use the deed as a model miss the point Chrysostom makes and Thomas appears to endorse.

Of course, one might argue: But the costly ointment was well used, since it was used on Jesus as a preparation for his death, something absolutely unique and more important than any other historical event. True, and the Holy Spirit no doubt knew that in moving the woman to do what she did and the incident to become part of the gospel. But that was not part of the woman’s own intent. And, what is more important, it cannot be the intent of those who now use her example as a model. The model ought rather to be taken from the Last Judgment: if one wishes to treat Jesus with great honor, serve well the poor, whose lot he shares. In them he remains always with us.

John Paul II, General Audience (21 July 1993), 3, *L’Osservatore Romano* (Eng.), 28 July 1993, 11, deals with poverty for clerics:

It is right then that presbyters have earthly goods and use them “for those purposes to which the teaching of Christ and the direction of the Church allow them to be devoted” (PO 17). The Council did not fail to give practical directions in this regard.

Above all, the management of ecclesiastical property, properly so called, must be guaranteed “according to the norm of ecclesiastical laws and with the help, as far as possible, of skilled lay people.” This property is always to be used for “the organization of divine worship, the provision of decent support for the clergy, and the exercise of works of the apostolate and of charity, especially for the benefit of those in need” (ibid.).

The goods acquired by the exercise of any ecclesiastical office must be used primarily “for their own decent support and the fulfillment of the duties of their state. They should be willing to devote whatever is left over to the good of the Church or to works of charity.” This must be particularly stressed: neither for priests nor for Bishops can ecclesiastical office be an occasion of personal enrichment or of profit for their own family. “Hence priests, far from setting their hearts on riches, must always avoid all avarice and carefully refrain from all appearance of trafficking” (PO 17). In any case, it must be kept in mind that all possessions must be used in the light of the Gospel.

JP II here merely repeats Vatican II’s teaching. Everything he is saying in this section is said more fully and clearly in PO 17.



**7–O: Responsibilities proper pastors of parishes as such, where other priests are assigned or who help out on an ad hoc basis.**

CIC, c. 519 assigns the pastor special responsibility; he has and should exercise ordinary authority, under the authority of the bishop, over his parish.

So, the pastor should see to it that the other priests do their jobs properly, should prevent abuses of the liturgy, should direct. At the same time, he should strive to lead so that others can cooperate as brothers. In particular, he should listen carefully to them, be considerate of them, and provide good example by his self-sacrificing dedication.

The pastor who uses his position to reserve to himself the things he likes doing and assigns others all the dirty work is not showing the servant attitude ministry requires.

CIC, c. 528, §2: “The pastor is to see to it that the Most Holy Eucharist is the center of the parish assembly of the faithful.” (see also CIC, cc. 897–98) This may seem pretty obvious and easy. But it means, among other things, that he is to see to it that he is not the center. It means that the music is not to be the center.

Pastor is to see to it that no liturgical abuses creep in (see also 839, §2). He is also to work so that the faithful frequently “approach the sacraments of the Most Holy Eucharist and penance.” He is to endeavor that the faithful are led to “take part consciously and actively in the sacred liturgy” (see also CIC, c. 898)

CIC, c. 530: Pastor of parish is especially entrusted with certain liturgical functions—which means he is to see they are done, and that others don’t do them without his consent.

CIC, c. 525: Pastor should make sure that parish records are made properly and carefully kept; should preserve confidentiality, but supply needed copies promptly.

CIC, c. 536: The bishop may require that there be a pastoral council in every parish; even if he does not require it, pastors do well to establish one. This council, over which the pastor presides and which never meets without him, is only consultative. It is to assist in “fostering pastoral activity.” All who by their office share in pastoral care in the parish ought to be included, along with a representative group of the lay faithful, chosen from among those who are suitable and willing to serve.

- 1) The pastor should present to the council any new pastoral moves he is thinking of making before he makes them, so as to receive their advice.
- 2) Members of the council should be free to bring up any pastoral problems they perceive and have them discussed.
- 3) All existing pastoral programs and policies should be considered systematically and repeatedly, over a period of a year or two or a longer period if there is much of (1) and (2) to be dealt with.

The pastor should see to it that there are no liturgical abuses, whether in the Eucharist or in any other sacrament.

For a definition of liturgy, see SC 7: it is an exercise of Jesus' priestly office. It makes present and carries on the work of saving human beings. In it, full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members. The essential and unchanging elements of the liturgy are central; the changeable aspects are subordinate—particular ways of realizing the essentials. Nevertheless, liturgical acts include both the essential and the changeable—what Jesus wants realized and the way his Church undertakes to realize it.

Liturgical acts as unified wholes always are ecclesial. Unauthorized changes are not ecclesial but individual. So, each unauthorized change, whether an omission, a substitution, or an addition creates a gap in the flow of the liturgical action. So, when unauthorized changes are made, the fabric of the liturgy is mutilated, like a tapestry with various holes, breaks, extraneous bits of fabric stitched in, seams where there had been done.

Since the liturgy is sacred and unauthorized changes mutilate it, making such changes is a sacrilege. Since making such changes is forbidden by Church law, it is disobedience. Since the faithful are entitled to participate in genuine liturgy and clerics have been ordained to provide it for them, making such changes is a disservice, a betrayal of responsibility, a sort of fraud. Since clerics serve as models for the people they are called to serve, making such changes is scandalous: it tends to encourage the faithful in irreverence, disobedience to Church law, and irresponsible action toward fellow Church members, not least toward the clergy. Since clerics tend to imitate one another and to regard what most other clerics do as acceptable, making such changes, even very small ones, is scandalous also by leading other clerics to make them—and sometimes to make more serious ones.

The nonessentials that express and realize the essentials ought not to be the focus of attention. They should be unobtrusive. In making unauthorized changes, clerics and other ministers call attention to themselves. That distracts people from the essentials. It distracts them from focusing on Jesus and on their own cooperation with him.

Moreover, imagine one owned (or administered a parish or other community that owned) a very valuable painting. And imagine that someone mutilated that painting by cutting some small holes in it. Even if the person who did that was trained in fine art and was sincerely convinced that the changes made the painting more interesting and esthetically pleasing, one would find the mutilation deeply distressing. Probably one would be very angry at the person who had taken it on himself "to improve it." Particular liturgical acts—for example, this celebration of the Eucharist—are far more valuable than the most valuable painting in the world. Of course, nonbelievers would not agree, and even Catholics who are not clearheaded might disagree. But any well-instructed and devout person, even without theological training, sees the point very clearly. Small wonder, then, that even small unauthorized changes in the liturgy cause deep distress in such people and make them very angry.

Someone might object: the Church herself has made many changes in the liturgy, and accepts a variety of rites. Indeed, she even accepts as valid an ancient eucharistic prayer that omits the formula of institution. (See OR [Eng.], 14 Nov. 2001, pp. 6–7. So, small changes cannot be all that important. Reply: the objection misses the point. It's not that small changes invalidate the sacraments. Most do not. It's that only what is authorized for a particular church or group of

churches by its proper pastors provides the formula for action by that church as such. What is unauthorized simply isn't liturgical, but personal. When those ordained to lead or appointed to minister make unauthorized changes, they drop out bits of the liturgy, and if they replace them, those items are acts of those individuals who participate in them, but not of the church as such, even if all present join in.

Congregation for the Clergy, *The Priest, Pastor and Leader of the Parish Community* (18 Oct. 2002), 26:

26. Like the diocesan pastoral council, the provisions of law foresee the constitution of a pastoral council at parochial level, should such be considered opportune by the Bishop, having heard his council of priests. The basic task of such a council is to serve, at institutional level, the orderly collaboration of the faithful in the development of pastoral activity which is proper to priests. The pastoral council is thus a consultative organ in which the faithful, expressing their baptismal responsibility, can assist the parish priest, who presides at the council, by offering their advice on pastoral matters. . . . There are clear reasons for such [parish pastoral councils]: In the present circumstances the lay faithful have the ability to do very much and, therefore, ought to do very much towards the growth of an authentic ecclesial communion in their parishes in order to reawaken missionary zeal towards nonbelievers and believers themselves who have abandoned the faith or grown lax in the Christian life.

Here parish pastoral councils are thought of not only as appropriate to advise the pastor in general but to work with him in shaping collaboration by the laity, not least in evangelizing nonbelievers and recalling fallen away Catholics to repentance and active participation.

Having made the point that clerics should regard themselves as brothers to lay people and regard them as their brothers and sisters, John Paul II, in his Letter to Priests for Holy Thursday 1989 (6, L'OR [Eng.], 20 March 1989, p. 7), goes on to describe the responsibility of the priest to lead and govern the people entrusted to him:

6. Cultivating such an attitude [of brotherhood] towards all the lay faithful—the laity and their lay state—who themselves have been marked by the gift of a vocation received from Christ, the priest can carry out this social task which is linked with his vocation as a pastor, that is to say, he can “gather together” the Christian communities to which he is sent. The Council on several occasion emphasizes this task. For example it says that priests “exercising . . . the function of Christ . . . , gather together God's family as a brotherhood all of one mind and lead them in the Spirit, through Christ, to God the Father” (*Lumen gentium*, 28).

This “gathering together” is service. Each of us must be aware of gathering the community together not around ourselves but around Christ, and not for ourselves but for Christ, so that he can act in this community and at the same time in each person. He acts by the power of his Spirit, the Paraclete, in the measure of the “gift” which each person receives in this Spirit “for the common benefit.”

Consequently, this “gathering together” is service, and all the more service, to the extent that the priest “presides” over the community. In this regard the Council emphasizes that “priests should preside in such a way that they seek the things of Jesus Christ, not the things which are their own. They must work together with the lay faithful” (PO 9).

This “gathering together” is not to be understood as something occasional but as a continuous and coherent “building up” of the community. It is precisely here that the cooperation of which the Council speaks is essential. Priests must “discover with the instinct of faith, acknowledge with joy, and foster with diligence the various humble and exalted charisms of the laity”, as we read in the Council’s Decree (ibid.). “Priests should also confidently entrust to the laity duties in the service of the Church, allowing them freedom and room for action” (ibid.).

Referring to the words of Saint Paul, the Council reminds priests that they “have been placed in the midst of the laity to lead them to the unity of charity, so that they may ‘love one another with fraternal charity, anticipating one another with honor’ (Rom 12:10)” (ibid.).

Drawing together elements from Vatican II, this passage is unusually clear and rich in teaching about pastoral governance. Centrally, that task is to gather together the *communio* in unity of faith and hope, and to lead it in unity of charity toward heaven.

The gathering is a service. The pastor is to gather people around Christ, not around himself. Thus the forming of an inner circle—inevitable when volunteers are sought—is to be avoided. The governing must seek the things of Christ, not of the pastor himself. And the Pope goes on to point toward discerning charisms and promoting their good use. Everyone is to be encouraged to contribute according to his/her gifts for building up the *communio* of faith.

John Paul II, General Audience (19 May 1993), L’OR (Eng.), 26 May 1993, 11, provides an unusual and perhaps unique treatment of presbyters’ role in pastoral governance of the community:

1. In the previous catecheses we explained the presbyters’ task as coworkers of the Bishops in the area of teaching authority (instructing) and sacramental ministry (sanctifying). Today we will speak of their cooperation in the pastoral governance of the community. For priests as well as for Bishops it is a sharing in the third aspect of Christ’s threefold *munus* (prophetic, priestly, royal): a reflection of the high priesthood of Christ, the one Mediator between God and men, the one Teacher, the one Shepherd. In an ecclesial perspective pastoral work consists principally in the service of unity, that is, in ensuring the union of all in the Body of Christ which is the Church (cf. *Pastores dabo vobis*, 16).

2. In this perspective the Council says: “Priests exercise the function of Christ as Pastor and Head in proportion to their share of authority. In the name of the Bishop, they gather the family of God as a brotherhood endowed with the spirit of unity and lead it in Christ through the Spirit to God the Father” (PO 6). This is the essential purpose of their activity as pastors and of the authority conferred on them so that

they may exercise it at their level of responsibility: leading the community entrusted to them to the full development of its spiritual and ecclesial life. The presbyter-pastor [i.e., shepherd] must exercise this authority by modeling himself on Christ the Good Shepherd, who did not impose it with external coercion but by forming the community through the interior action of his Spirit. He wanted to share his burning love with the group of disciples and with all those who accepted his message, in order to give life to a “community of love,” which at the right moment he also established visibly as the Church. As co-workers of the Bishops, the successors of the Apostles, presbyters too fulfill their mission in the visible community by enlivening it with charity so that it may live in the Spirit of Christ.

3. It is a demand intrinsic to the pastoral mission, whose inspiration is not governed by the priest’s desires and personal opinions, but by the teaching of the Gospel, as the Council says: “They should act towards people not according to what may please men, but according to the demands of Christian doctrine and life” (PO 6).

The presbyter is responsible for the organic functioning of the community. To fulfill this task the Bishop gives him a necessary share in his authority. It is his responsibility to ensure that the various services, indispensable for the good of all, are carried out harmoniously; to find appropriate assistance for the liturgy, catechesis and the spiritual support of married couples; to foster the development of various spiritual and apostolic associations or “movements” in harmony and cooperation; to organize charitable aid for the needy, the sick and immigrants. At the same time he must ensure and promote the community’s union with the Bishop and the Pope.

4. The community dimension of pastoral care, however, cannot overlook the needs of the individual faithful. As we read in the Council: “It is the priests’ part as instructors in the faith to see to it either personally or through others that each member of the faithful shall be led in the Holy Spirit to the full development of his own vocation in accordance with the Gospel teaching, to sincere and active charity and to the liberty with which Christ has set us free” (PO 6). The Council stresses the need to help each member of the faithful to discover his specific vocation, as a proper, characteristic task of the pastor who wants to respect and promote each one’s personality. One could say that by his own example Jesus himself, the Good Shepherd who “calls his own sheep by name” (cf. Jn 10:3–4), has set the standard of individual pastoral care: knowledge and a relationship of friendship with individual persons. It is the presbyter’s task to help each one to utilize well his own gift, and rightly to exercise the freedom that comes from Christ’s salvation, as St. Paul urges (cf. Gal 4:3; 5:1, 13; cf. also Jn 8:36).

Everything must be directed toward practicing “a sincere and active charity.” This means that “Christians must also be trained so as not to live only for themselves. Rather, according to the demands of the new law of charity, everyone as he has received grace ought to minister it one to another, and in this way all should carry out their duties in a Christian way in the human community” (PO 6). Therefore, the priest’s mission includes calling to mind the obligations of charity;

showing the applications of charity in social life; fostering an atmosphere of unity with respect for differences; encouraging programs and works of charity, by which great opportunities become available to the faithful, especially through the new emphasis on volunteer work, consciously provided as a good use of free time, and in many cases, as a choice of life.

5. The presbyter is also called to be involved personally in works of charity, sometimes even in extraordinary forms, as has happened in the past and does so today as well. Here I especially want to underscore that simple, habitual, almost unassuming but constant and generous charity, which is manifested not so much in huge projects—for which many do not have the talent and vocation—but in the daily practice of goodness, which helps, supports and comforts according to each one's capacity. Clearly the principal concern, and one could say the preference, must be for “the poor and weaker ones, to whom the preaching of the Gospel is given as a sign of messianic mission” (PO 6); for “the sick and dying,” to whom the priest should be especially devoted, “visiting them and comforting them in the Lord” (PO 6); for “young people, who must be looked after with special diligence”; as well as for “married couples and parents” (PO 6). In particular, the priest must devote his time, energy and talents to young people who are the hope of the community, in order to foster their Christian education and their growth in living according to the Gospel.

The Council also commends to the presbyter's care “catechumens and neophytes, who must be gradually educated in knowing and living the Christian life” (PO 6).

6. Lastly, attention must be paid to the need to overcome a too limited vision of the local community and every particularist and, as is usually said, “parochial” attitude to foster instead the community spirit that is open to the horizons of the universal Church. Even when the presbyter must devote his time and concern to the local community entrusted to him, as is the case especially for parish priests and their closest coworkers, his heart must remain open to the “fields ripe for the harvest” beyond all borders, both as the universal dimension of the spirit and as the personal participation in the Church's missionary tasks, and as zeal in promoting the cooperation of his own community with the necessary spiritual and material aid (cf. *Redemptoris missio*, 67; *Pastores dabo vobis*, 32).

“Through the sacrament of Holy Orders,” the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, “priests share in the universal dimensions of the mission that Christ entrusted to the apostles. The spiritual gift they have received in ordination prepares them, not for a limited and restricted mission, ‘but for the fullest, in fact the universal mission of salvation “to the end of the earth”’ (PO 10; OT 20; cf. Acts 1:8), ‘prepared in spirit to preach the Gospel everywhere’ (OT 20)” (CCC, n. 1565). [Note: The OR's translation of the quotation in this paragraph differs from the official translation of the source, which I therefore quote.]

7. In any case, everything depends on the Eucharist, which contains the vital principle of pastoral leadership. As the Council says: “No Christian community is

built up which does not grow from and hinge on the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. From this all education for community spirit must begin” (PO 6). The Eucharist is the source of unity and the most perfect expression of the union of all the Christian community’s members. It is the presbyters’ task to ensure that this is really so. Unfortunately, it sometimes happens that Eucharistic celebrations are not expressions of unity. Each person attends individually, ignoring the others. With great pastoral charity, priests will remind everyone of St. Paul’s teaching: “Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf,” which is “a participation in the body of Christ” (1 Cor 10:16–17). Awareness of this union in the Body of Christ will encourage a life of charity and effective solidarity.

The Eucharist, therefore, is the vital principle of the Church as the community of Christ’s members: here pastoral leadership finds its inspiration, strength and extent.

Here JP II in many respects is following Vatican II’s PO 6. That conciliar article deals with priests’ responsibilities as pastors in the narrow sense of the word, in which that role of church leadership is distinct from their responsibilities as teachers and preachers, and as ministers of the Eucharist and the other sacraments and leaders in prayer and devotion. The Pope, however, is more explicit than the Council about what is being dealt with.

He begins by saying that pastoral work in this sense consists principally in the service of unity—in ensuring the unity of the Church. That point is not in PO 6, but, as the reference indicates, is in PDV 16, where it is made by quoting from the *Instrumentum laboris* of the 1990 session of the Synod of Bishops (which was the basis of PDV: “He [the priest] is a servant of the Church as communion because—in union with the bishop and closely related to the presbyterate—he builds up the unity of the Church community in the harmony of diverse vocations, charisms and services.” However, even in PDV it is not so clear that the service of unity is the principal element of priests’ work as pastors in the narrow sense.

The significance of what the Pope is saying can be brought out by contrasting it with most priests’ working understanding of their pastoral leadership role. They tend to think of it as management: (1) regulating what goes on in the parish and (2) administering temporalities—that is, handling money and maintaining the physical plant (and perhaps building or remodeling it). The Pope’s view is that the pastor’s primary concern ought to be to coordinate the actions of everyone in the parish, to promote harmonious action by all participants. To do that, pastors must know their people, help them discern their unique gifts and personal vocations, and provide suitable support for the diverse sorts and groups of people who make up the parish.

Pastoral leadership, according to the Pope, is to be exercised by enlivening the community with charity so that it may live in the Spirit of Christ. In other words, pastors need to strive to get everyone to contribute willingly and generously what he or she can contribute. That is far from the usual approach: to make unilateral decisions, perhaps with rubber stamping by the parish council, where that is possible, and to ask for volunteers for various tasks and make use, insofar as possible, of whoever volunteers, without regard to their gifts and calling for

the task. (So, people lector who don't read well, teach catechism who are doctrinally confused, and so forth; while people with the requisite gifts that do not volunteer are never called to serve.) The Pope's conception would work toward parishes in which everyone contributed according to his/her abilities and received care according to his/her needs for it.