

On 15 November 1997, then Archbishop Casimiro Hoyos, Pro-Prefect of the Congregation for the Clergy, presented in a Press Conference the *Instruction Ecclesia de Mysterio, On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priests*. The presentation came a week after a meeting at the Vatican with the representatives of various Episcopates, who had been involved in the study and identification of the most appropriate ways for publicizing the text.

The document reaffirmed the teaching of the Second Vatican Council (especially of *Lumen Gentium*, n.33 and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, n.24). Its main purpose was to acknowledge and promote what is specific to the vocations of the lay faithful and of ordained ministers, with the goal of encouraging real communion in the Church.

¹ Co-authored by six Sacred Congregations (for the Clergy; for the Doctrine of the Faith; for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments; for Bishops; for the Evangelization of Peoples; for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life) and two Pontifical Councils (for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts; for the Laity).

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fact, it had been requested by the *sensus fidei* of many Christians. In the past decade Bishops, priests and lay people have requested authoritative directives on the identity of priests and lay people with regard to particular cases of pastoral activity improperly exercised by non-ordained faithful.

Thus in April 1994, with the approval of the Holy Father, the Congregation for the Clergy organized a symposium in which some members of the worldwide Episcopate took part. Representing their own Episcopal Conferences, they had been chosen because this problem was particularly acute in their Churches. The Presidents or representatives of some larger groupings of Episcopal Conferences (e.g., CCEE, CELAM, SCEAM, FABC) were also invited to the meeting, as well as the Secretaries of the relevant Congregations of the Roman Curia and well-known theologians. The extensive exchange of opinions and particularly the Holy Father's final address led to important suggestions for preparing this document.⁴ On that occasion the Pope extended an invitation "to continue the work begun".

Thus, an Inter-dicasterial Commission was established for that purpose. It was coordinated by the Congregation for the

³ Cf. Prof. Winfried Aymans, "Instruction calls for necessary change in attitude and practice", in *L'Osservatore Romano*, N.7 (18.II.1998), 10.

⁴ The address was delivered 22.IV.1994 and appeared in full in *L'Osservatore Romano* (English Edition, 11.V.1994).

were in favor, but asked that ambiguous wording be avoided in the text, that the most authoritative legal form possible be used and, given the urgent need for clarification, that the document be published without delay. The Commission scrupulously followed these instructions.

On 15 May 1997 the text was discussed by the heads of the dicasteries of the Roman Curia in the presence of the Holy Father. Special attention was paid in this last stage to critical observations until a clear convergence of views among the bishops concerned was reached. The result of this lengthy and thorough process is the *Instruction* we are now considering.

**PRELIMINARY HERMENEUTIC CLARIFICATIONS:
CANONICO-FORMAL ASPECTS**

After an ample *Introduction*, the *Instruction* has two main parts entitled: *Theological Principles* and *Practical Provisions*. For a correct understanding of the document, we must first consider some of its formal aspects.

1. *The Instruction is a juridical text.* The criticisms publicized by the German media were almost exclusively aimed at the second part and complained about the "dryness" of its language. In response, it should be noted that the *Instruction* is a juridical text and must be read as such. As the well-known

merely insists that the law currently in force be observed.

As to the active subject of such acts, the same canon states that "persons who possess executive power legitimately issue such instructions within the limits of their competency."

As to their destinatary, instructions are not addressed to everyone who is a subject of the current law. The same c.34, §1 states that they "are given for the use of those persons whose concern it is to see that the laws are implemented and oblige such persons in the execution of the laws." Thus, an instruction

⁵ Cf. Aymans, *op. cit.*

⁶ Prof. Hugo Schwendenwein points out the similarity between the canonical *Instruction* with the Austrian civil law institution of *Wiederverlautbarung* (*reiteration*). "The juridical situation is not changed by a *Wiederverlautbarung* published in the official gazette, but what is already the norm in a given area is merely presented. For laws which have been frequently modified, the advantage of this process is that there is a single text of the law in its entirety with the changes made, and it need not be reconstructed with the aid of the individual gazettes containing the modifications.... However, while the practice of the reiteration of civil law normally concerns individual laws that have been modified over time, it is not the purpose of this Instruction to publish the modifications made over time. It is rather a collection of statements contained in various conciliar documents and in documents issued to implement the Council, which constitute a well-defined area." H. Schwendenwein, "A reiteration of the norms and principles of Vatican II", in *L'Osservatore Romano*, N.11 (18.III.1998), 10.

general executory decree: the latter has to be promulgated (c.51, §2), while the *Codex* is silent on this matter as regards instructions, which--according to authoritative opinion--are communicated according to what is laid down for administrative acts (cc.54 & 56).⁸

The *Instruction* we are commenting on is primarily addressed, by reason of its timeliness and for the sake of prevention, to every Pastor of the Church, who, in accordance with c.392, §1, "is bound to promote the common discipline of the whole Church and therefore to urge the observance of all ecclesiastical laws".⁹ Specifically, the *Instruction* states: "The Holy See entrusts this present document to the pastoral zeal of diocesan Bishops in the various particular Churches and to other Ordinaries in the hope that its application may produce abundant

⁷ María José Ciáurriz, Commentary to c.34, in *Comentario Exegético al Código de Derecho Canónico* (2nd ed.), Vol.I, (Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1997), 496-97.

⁸ M.J. Ciáurriz, *loc.cit.*: "Dado su carácter interno, no están sometidas al requisito de la publicación." Cf. also A. Bernárdez, *Parte General de Derecho Canónico* (Madrid 1990), 111; and E.L. Labandeira, "Normas y actos jurídicos," in *Manual de Derecho Canónico* (2nd ed.), Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, 1991), 324.

⁹ Cf. Francesco Moraglia, "Positive role of the laity in the Church's mission", in *L'Osservatore Romano* (1.IV.1998), 10. Cf. also W. Aymans, *op.cit.*

months elapsed between the date of approval and the day of publication were probably needed for translating the text into the various languages."¹¹

4. *Involvement of 8 Dicasteries.* . The fact that seven other dicasteries, with the coordination of the Congregation for the Clergy, were involved in drafting the *Instruction* is in itself very significant. On the one hand, it can be said that this procedure conforms to the legislative provisions of the Roman Curia. According to these provisions, what falls within the competence of different offices should be treated by all, under the coordination of the office primarily concerned with the question. In the case we are examining, one has the impression that various sorts of problems had piled up over time and had to be examined from different aspects, leading to a broad curial consultation. Nevertheless, it would have sufficed if the document had only been signed by the Congregation for the Clergy, while noting the preceding inter-dicasterial consultation. As Aymans points out, "the fact that all the dicasteries involved signed with their respective heads and secretaries clearly expresses their co-responsibility as well as the importance that the Curia attaches to this subject."¹²

¹⁰ *Instruction*, Conclusion.

¹¹ W. Aymans, *op. cit.*

¹² *Ibid.*.

priests and lay people, but the *priestly ministry* in so far as lay people can collaborate in it. The document is thus concerned with only a limited area of the laity's field of activity in the Church. It is important not to forget this fact, since the vast, ordinary field of activity for lay people in the Church and the world is intentionally not considered by the *Instruction*. It is only concerned with giving appropriate direction to the exercise of particular functions by particular lay people.¹⁴

6. *Binding force of the document.* The importance of the document is also underscored by the fact that the Pope approved the *Instruction in forma specifica*. Consequently any form of appeal against it is impossible.¹⁵

As Ayman points out, curial law envisages this modality only for certain dicasterial decrees with legislative force. For Instructions, however, it should be remembered that, according to c.34, §2 of the *CIC*, if they are not in accord with the legislative provisions, they have no validity. The mode of approbation chosen by the Pope must be considered in the light of the fact that as stated in the Conclusion--by this administrative act "all particular laws, customs and faculties which are contrary to the foregoing norms, and were conceded ad *experiment* by the

¹³ Moraglia, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ Aymans, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

**OTHER HERMENEUTIC ADVERTENCES:
OBJECTIVES OF THE *INSTRUCTION***

To obviate any possible negative reaction to the document, it may be good to summarize the basic objectives of the *Instruction*. As Moraglia affirms, "the document simply reaffirms the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and of the more recent post-conciliar Magisterium on the positive role of the laity in the Church's mission."¹⁷

1. *Encourage the ordained ministers and foster the ordained ministry.* It seeks to encourage ordained ministers by forcefully reintroducing the subject of vocations to the priesthood, stressing that the Church's life depends on the sacrament of Holy Orders as a free, absolutely irreplaceable gift, because the ordained ministry (Bishops, priests, deacons) is part of the Church's very structure. Thus, the *Instruction* concludes by stating that "the solutions addressing the shortage of ordained ministers cannot be other than transitory and must be linked to a series of pastoral programs which give priority to the promotion of vocations to the Sacrament of Holy Orders."

2. *Remind the laity of their specific role.* The *Instruction* also reminds us how the fundamental equality of

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

3. *Expose the functionalist and individualist errors.*

The *Instruction* also calls for critical discernment regarding certain modernistic trends that deeply affect people's idea of the ministry.

The first, the "functionalist" approach, holds that human actions and things in general cannot refer to anything beyond themselves. In this mentality what really counts is to achieve the goal one has set for oneself. As Moraglia points out, the "very sacramentality of the Church is undermined. We can understand then how, even when moved by true pastoral generosity, some eventually think that whatever does not require the sacramental power of the Bishop, priest or deacon *ad validitatem* can be assumed ordinarily and permanently by the laity. But in doing so, the ordained ministry begins gradually to be eroded. In the end we have an ordained ministry that is impoverished and dissociated (schizoid), destined no longer to be understood and appreciated by the People of God and therefore sooner or later to become obsolete, since it is no longer seen as part of the Church's very structure." ¹⁸

The "individualist" approach, on the other hand, has become more and more widespread since the 16th century and leads to thinking in terms of "personal success", "competitiveness" and "power". "In a theological context--Moraglia affirms--this mentality loses sight of the Church as

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

participation in the evangelical and ecclesial apostolate. On the contrary, this is encouraged in the right direction consistent with Catholic ecclesiology. However--as Card. Ratzinger emphasizes--"it intends to rebut and prevent the tendency towards a *clericalization* of the lay faithful, and the risk of creating, in reality, an ecclesial structure of parallel service to that founded on the sacrament of Orders." ²⁰

The doctrinal principle at the root of these concerns is *the twofold affirmation of the unity of the Church 's mission*, in which all the baptized participate, and the essential *difference of the ministry* of pastors, rooted in the sacrament of Orders, with respect to the other ministries, offices and ecclesial functions that are rooted in the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation.

5. *Encourage terminological precision.* In Article 1 of the practical provisions--entitled: "Need for an Appropriate Terminology"--the *Instruction* rightly insists on the need for a suitable terminology, clarifying the confused use of the word *ministry*, which describes both the *officia* and the *munera* exercised by Pastors in virtue of the sacrament of Orders, and those exercised by the non-ordained faithful. As Moraglia points out, "lack of terminological precision has repercussions on the

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Joseph Ratzinger, "Unity of the church's mission involves diversity of ministries", in *L'Osservatore Romano*, N. 17 (29.IV.1998), 18. Cf. Post-Synodal Exhortation, *Christifideles laici*, n.23, §6.

and the Church's universal legislation in the concrete life of the particular Churches." ²²

In view of the situation in certain ecclesial areas, specifically North-Central Europe, North America and Australia, and noting the risk that abuses in the lay faithful's participation in the sacred ministry of the ordained could spread to other ecclesiastical regions, Card. Ratzinger affirms that "it seemed most timely and urgent to define clearly the various forms of assistance open to the lay faithful in the exercise of the priestly ministry." ²³

OBSERVATIONS ON CONTENT: *COLLABORATION VS. PARTICIPATION*

In the substantive level, the most important word--a veritable hermeneutic key--is a term that appears in the title itself of the document. In effect, the title speaks of the *collaboration* of the non-ordained faithful in the priestly ministry.

The term initially used in the preliminary discussions was *participation*. Thus, the title of the symposium in April 1994, which launched the serious preparation of this document, was "The Participation of the Lay Faithful in the Priestly Ministry". However, the Holy Father himself, in his address to

²¹ Aymans, *loc. cit.*

²² Joseph Ratzinger, *loc. cit.* Emphasis added.

²³ *Ibid.*

Therefore, it is clear that if the Pastors entrust them, in an extraordinary way, with some tasks ordinarily and properly connected with the pastoral ministry but not requiring the proper character of Orders, lay people should know that these tasks are existentially rooted in their baptismal ministry and nowhere else! It must always be remembered that *the exercise of such tasks does not make pastors of the lay faithful*: in fact, a person is not a minister simply by performing a task, but through sacramental ordination."²⁴

The terminological shift is important. In effect, *participation* ("to take part in") in the ministerial tasks could not strictly speaking take place without the subject ontologically taking part--for that matter--in the ministerial priesthood itself. This could only happen with priestly ordination. From this we see the aptness of the term *collaboration* ("to work with") when applied to the non-ordained faithful's cooperation with the ministerial work of priests.²⁵

²⁴ John Paul II, "Address to a Symposium on Collaboration Lay Faithful in the Priestly Ministry" (22.IV.1994), in *L'Osservatore Romano* (11.V.1994).

²⁵ In fact, "the Latin verb *allaborare* used in c.225, §1--the canon defining the essential role of the laity in the Church--can also mean "to collaborate". Cf. Prof. Herbert Schambeck, "Lay mission is to imbue the world with Christian spirit", in *L'Osservatore Romano*, N.9 (4.III.1998), 10.

legitimately exercise the tasks and functions mentioned. The document wants to state, however, that the non-ordained faithful do not have the *right to demand* that they be assigned to the above-mentioned tasks or functions.

Elsewhere the *Instruction* says: "the *officia* temporarily entrusted to them ... are exclusively the result of a deputation by the Church" (Art.1, §2). "Deputation by the Church" is a shorthand expression for "deputation by the Church's lawful Pastors". This complete formulation, used in other passages of the *Instruction*, avoids an identification of the Pastors with the Church herself. And §3 of the same article correctly indicates that "the temporary deputation for liturgical purposes--mentioned in c.230, §2--does not confer any special or permanent title on the non-ordained faithful". The following sentence states that it is unlawful for the non-ordained faithful to assume titles such as *pastor, chaplain, coordinator* or *moderator*. As Aymans affirms, "what applies to temporary deputation applies with all the more reason to permanent deputation for liturgical or pastoral tasks (cf. *CIC*, c.230, §1, 517, §2)." ²⁶

2. *Lay collaboration is supplementary*--i.e., only in cases of necessity. By their ecclesiological nature all of these particular functions belong to the realm of the ordained ministry, in which a lay person, however, can collaborate in cases of necessity, if he

²⁶ Aymans, *op. cit.*

aid. Thus, for the good of the faithful--and that is what always counts--he will be glad when a priest is available to celebrate the Eucharist.

The *Instruction* enables us to indicate many other analogous situations. "However--as Aymans points out-- it would be a mistake to conclude that it reduces the role of the laity in the Church to a mere "stopgap".

3. *Responsibility for abuses.* The practical provisions of the *Instruction* are not limited to listing possible or actual abuses, but they always seek to indicate the theological coordinates underlying the respective field of activity and thereby to draw the necessary consequences. As Aymans rightly observes, "the problems mentioned are caused, first of all, by the fact that they are found in a border area."²⁷ Abuses occur, according to Aymans, when exceptional solutions become alternatives, changing an extraordinary competence into an ordinary one, or, on the other, when the limits provided for collaboration are unlawfully extended and a competence is assumed that has not been given.

"In this regard--Aymans continues--it should be pointed out that the laity usually cannot be considered responsible for true and proper abuses. They in fact fulfill—normally with good intentions--that role which has been introduced in their particular

²⁷ *Ibid*

general provisions, and 11 articles containing specific practical provisions in as many areas where collaboration of the lay faithful is possible--and in fact exists--in the pastoral ministry of priests. Without reproducing that part of the *Instruction*, we can focus our attention on the strictly dispositive parts of the text, following the original numbering of the articles.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Article 1: Care in using the terms *Ministry* and *Minister*

John Paul II had emphasized the need to clarify and distinguish the various meanings that have accrued to the term *ministry* in theological and canonical language.²⁹ “For some time now, it has been customary to use the word *ministries* not only for the *officia* (offices) and non-ordained *munera* (functions) exercised by Pastors in virtue of the sacrament of Orders, but also for those exercised by the lay faithful in virtue of baptismal priesthood” (§1). The *Instruction* made the following reminders:

1) “Only with constant reference to the one source, the ministry of Christ, may the term *ministry* be applied to a certain extent and without ambiguity to the lay faithful: that is, without it being perceived and lived as an undue aspiration to the ordained ministry or as a progressive erosion of its specific

²⁸ *Ibid*

²⁹ Cf. John Paul II, "Address to a Symposium on **Collaboration of Lay Faithful in the Priestly Ministry**", *loc. cit.*

permanent title on the non-ordained faithful. It is unlawful for the non-ordained faithful to assume titles such as *pastor, chaplain, coordinator, moderator* or other such similar titles which can confuse their role and that of the Pastor, who is always a Bishop or priest” (§3).

Article 13: Necessary Selection and Adequate Formation

“Should it become necessary to provide for *supplementary* assistance in any of the cases mentioned--i.e., in the other articles below--the competent authority is bound” by the following criteria:

1) He should “select faithful of *sound doctrine* and *exemplary moral life.*” The importance of this criterion of selection should be obvious: conduct reflects doctrine, and the good conduct of such non-ordained faithful in the exercise of their functions would depend on their intellectual comprehension of the doctrinal foundations of such functions.

If this is important in those functions with juridic significance--i.e., there is a possibility of invalidity or at least illicitude--it is no less important in those which otherwise expose the sacred to irreverence or profanation due to lack of knowledge or sensibility on the part of the extraordinary minister.³⁰ This principle is further concretized in the following norms.

³⁰ A common example of this is the carelessness with the particles of the Holy Eucharist quite often displayed by extraordinary ministers.

2° Those “who do not enjoy good reputation”--and this obviously so as to avoid scandal in the rest of the faithful. Thus, it would not be enough that the Pastor himself knows that the layman in question is living a worthy life; he must also project such righteousness to the rest of the community--e.g., upright profession and professional practice.

3° those “whose family situations do not conform to the teaching of the Church”--e.g., irregular marriage situation.

3) “Those chosen should possess that level of formation necessary for the discharge of the responsibilities entrusted to them”. More specifically:

1° “In accordance with the norms of particular law, they should perfect their knowledge particularly by attending, in so far as possible, those formation courses organized for them by the competent ecclesiastical authority in the particular Churches”.

It is interesting to note that the *Instruction* hurries to advert that these courses should be carried out “in environments other than that of the seminary, as this is reserved solely for those preparing for the priesthood”--thus forestalling

3^o Precisely to avoid a functionalistic, pragmatic and utilitarian conception of ministry in the Church--Card. Ratzinger adds--it is essential to emphasize clearly the doctrine on the nature of the ministerial priesthood and on the unity and diversity of ministerial tasks in the service building up the Body of Christ." ³¹

SPECIFIC PRACTICAL PROVISIONS

Article 2: The Ministry of the Word: Preaching in General

This ministry refers to the pastoral preaching, catechetics and all forms of Christian instruction, among which the liturgical homily holds pride of place (§1). The *Instruction* emphasizes the following norms:

1) “The non-ordained faithful, according to their proper character, participate in the prophetic function of Christ. Therefore, (they) can be invited to collaborate, in lawful ways, in the exercise of the ministry of the Word” (§2).

2) “The use of the expression *admitti possunt*--in c.766 of the Codex which establishes the conditions under which non-ordained faithful may be invited to preach *in ecclesia vel oratorio*--makes clear that in no instance is this a right”.

³¹ J.Ratzinger, *loc. cit.*

Article 3: The Homily

The homily is the “preeminent form of preaching, (in which) the mysteries of faith and the norms of Christian living are expounded from the sacred text throughout the course of the liturgical year” (§1).³² Thus, the *Instruction* makes the following reminders:

1) “*The homily must be reserved to the sacred minister, priest or deacon, to the exclusion of the non-ordained faithful, even if these should have responsibilities as pastoral assistants or catechists in whatever type of community or group... All previous norms which may have admitted the non-ordained faithful to preaching the homily during the Holy Eucharist are to be considered abrogated by c.767, §1*” (§1).

2) “*The diocesan Bishop cannot validly dispense from (this) canonical norm, since this is not merely a disciplinary law but one which touches upon the closely connected functions of teaching and sanctifying*” (§1).

3) “The practice, on some occasions, of entrusting the preaching of the homily to seminarians or theology students who are not clerics is not permitted” (§1).

³² Cf. *CIC*, c.767, §1.

liturgical norms (§3).

6) “Homilies in non-Eucharistic liturgies--e.g., blessings--may be preached by the non-ordained faithful only when expressly permitted by law and when the prescriptions for doing so are observed” (§4).

7) “In no instance may the homily be entrusted to priests or deacons who have lost the clerical state or who have abandoned the sacred ministry” (§5).

Article 4: Participation in the Pastoral Work of the Parish Priest

The *Instruction* deals in this section with two fundamental realities:

1) **Participation of non-ordained faithful in the pastoral care of a parish** - The *Instruction* begins this article by stating that “the non-ordained faithful may *collaborate* effectively in the pastoral ministry of clerics in parishes, health-care centers, charitable and educational institutions, prisons, Military Ordinariates, etc.” (italics added). Nevertheless, subsequent allusion to c.517, §2 makes it clear that it is dealing not so much with a simple *collaboration*, but with “a *participation* in the exercise of the pastoral care of a parish” (c.517, §2 *in medio*, italics added)--i.e., a real exercise of the

only with strict adherence to conditions contained in it to wit:
1° it is “*due to a dearth of priests* and not for reasons of convenience or ambiguous advancement of the laity, etc.”

2° it is only “*a participation in the exercise of the pastoral care*, and not directing, coordinating, moderating or governing the parish--which are competencies of a priest alone” (§1).

c) “These forms of participation in the pastoral care of parishes cannot, in any way, replace the office of parish priest” (§1).

2) **Tenure of Parish Priest** - “The parish priest is the pastor proper to the parish entrusted to him and remains such until his pastoral office shall have ceased”. The following clarifications are made as regards the duration of this tenure: (§2)

a) “The presentation of resignation at the age of 75 by a parish priest does not of itself (*ipso iure*) terminate his pastoral office. Such takes effect only when the diocesan Bishop...shall have definitively accepted his resignation in accordance with c.538, §3.”

b) “Having reached the age of 75 does not constitute a binding reason for the diocesan Bishop to accept a parish priest’s resignation”. In fact, the Instruction points out that

in the pastoral care (properly speaking) of the Parish, this article deals more specifically with the structures provided by law for the collaboration of the non-ordained faithful with the hierarchy at the parish and at the diocesan levels. Noteworthy are the following reminders:

1) *Council of Priests (Presbyteral Council)* - "*Membership in it is reserved to priests alone. Deacons, non-ordained members of the faithful even if collaborators with the sacred ministers--i.e., as per Article 4--and those priests who have lost the clerical state or who have abandoned the sacred ministry do not have either an active or a passive voice in the Council of Priests*" (§1, italics added).

2) *Diocesan and Parochial Pastoral Councils and Parochial Finance Councils* - These are the only two structures provided by the Code, which may have non-ordained faithful as members with the following conditions (§2):

1° They have "*a consultative vote only* and cannot in any way become deliberative structures."

2° "*Only those faithful who possess the qualities prescribed by the canonical norms may be elected to such responsibilities.*"

3) *The Parish priest presides at Parochial Councils* - "*Any deliberations entered into (or decisions taken) by a parochial council, which has not been presided over by the*

Article 6: Liturgical Celebrations

Two areas are covered in this article of the *Instruction*:

1) The **Holy Mass in particular** - “Abuses which are contrary to c.907 are to be eradicated” (§2) to wit:

a) “Deacons and non-ordained members of the faithful may not pronounce prayers--e.g., especially the Eucharistic Prayer with its concluding doxology--or any other parts of the liturgy reserved to the celebrant priest”.³³

b) “Neither may deacons or non-ordained members of the faithful use gestures or actions that are proper to the same priest celebrant.”³⁴

³³ This abuse--the congregation pronouncing parts of the Eucharistic Prayer, specifically the *Through Him, with Him...*--is not uncommon in the Philippines. To be sure many times it could be by the initiative of the faithful, but even so it should be the duty of the pastor to explain these matters to them, even by way of a general advertence even within the Mass itself, in the moments permitted to him by the rubrics (e.g. before the final blessing).

³⁴ This is another area where abuses have proliferated in Philippine churches, many times at the instigation of the priests themselves. The rubrics of the *Roman Missal* and the provisions of the *General Instructions for the Roman Missal (IGMR)* are quite explicit and specific as regards the gestures and postures of the celebrant and the congregation during the Holy Mass, precisely because the liturgy is the

Article 7: Sunday Celebrations without a Priest

The *Instruction* starts by stating that “much good derives for the local community from this useful and delicate service” in those cases when “in the absence of priests or deacons, non-ordained members of the faithful lead Sunday celebrations” (§1). However, it clarifies that this is only so when such is carried out “in accordance with the spirit and the specific norms issued by the competent ecclesiastical authority”--specifically:

1) “A *special mandate of the Bishop is necessary* for the non-ordained members of the faithful to lead such celebrations. This mandate should contain specific instructions with regard to the term of applicability, the place and conditions in which it is

public worship of the Church--i.e., its regulation cannot be left to private and individual initiative.

Thus, the Code clearly stipulates: “The liturgical books approved by the competent authority are to be faithfully observed in the celebration of the sacraments; *therefore no one on personal authority may add, remove or change anything in them*” (c.846, §1; emphasis added). Examples of such abuses are: the faithful extending and/or lifting their arms and/or holding hands with each other during the *Our Father*; the celebrant inserting words of his own composition--*ad lib*--into the text of the Missal, especially in-between major prayers or when he addresses the faithful, and even before the Consecration; the non-fulfillment of the stipulated postures and procedures when Holy Communion is received by the hand.

Article 8: The Extraordinary Ministry of Holy Communion

It is in this article perhaps where the most obvious abuses can be observed. Thus, the *Instruction* starts by categorically stating that “the canonical discipline concerning extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion must be correctly applied so as to avoid generating confusion”. It proceeds to concretize this criterion:

Main Principle: “A non-ordained member of the faithful, in cases of true necessity, may be deputed by the diocesan Bishop (...) to act as an extraordinary minister to distribute Holy Communion *outside* of liturgical celebrations *ad casum vel ad tempus* or for a more stable period” (§1).

Thus, the so-called *extraordinary ministers* (or *lay ministers* of Holy Communion as they are commonly called) are so deputed, in principle, only for distributing Holy *Communion outside liturgical celebrations* (i.e., outside the Mass or Holy Week services).

1st Exception: “In exceptional cases or in unforeseen circumstances, the priest presiding at the liturgy--supposedly this includes the Mass--may authorize such *ad casum*” (§1). Again we have to note that this should be in *exceptional* or *unforeseen* circumstance. Obviously, if such were to happen Sunday after Sunday, it wouldn't be exceptional or unforeseen anymore; thus, to make use of this prerogative regularly would be an abuse.

ordained ministers to distribute Holy Communion.

It is important to note that the *Instruction* categorically states that this exceptional function “is *supplementary* and *extraordinary*, and must be exercised in accordance with the norm of law” (§2). This norm of Law is precisely concretized by the three situation outlined above by the *Instruction*.

In the case of a Mass, the first situation cannot arise (since the celebrant is precisely an ordained minister); the second situation hardly arises, since the celebrant normally should be able to distribute Holy Communion himself. Thus, normally, only the third situation would be the probable cause for exercising this prerogative, and even then, the *Instruction* itself considers as an abuse “the habitual use of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion at Mass, thus arbitrarily extending the concept of *a great number of faithful*” (§2 *in fine*).³⁵

Other possible abuses: Aside from the previously mentioned phenomenon of the regular use of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, the *Instruction* points out

³⁵ This is perhaps one of the more glaring inconsistencies between the norm and the present praxis in the many parishes, where *lay ministers* distribute Holy Communion on a regular basis, Sunday after Sunday, and even daily. This obviously needs to be addressed by the Bishops, according to the tenor of the present *Instruction*.

a mandate as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion.

In both cases, what is at stake--obviously--is the danger of eroding in the mind of the faithful the conviction of the essential difference between the common and the ordained priesthood, and the danger of clericalizing the laity and thereby disempowering them from fulfilling what they really--vocationally--ought to do: to put Christ in the middle of the temporal (secular) realities.

Article 9: The Apostolate of the Sick

The *Instruction* begins by affirming that “in this area, the non-ordained faithful can often provide valuable collaboration” and that “these constitute a Christian presence of the greatest importance to the sick and the suffering” (§1). In fact, this seems to be one area where the laity can really collaborate with the pastoral work of the priests, given the shortage of sacred ministers and the non-sacramental nature (at least for the most part) of this *ministry*. Thus the Instruction reminds the Pastors of the following (§1):

1) “The non-ordained faithful particularly assist the sick by being with them in difficult moments, encouraging them to receive--and by helping them to have the dispositions to worthily receive such--the sacraments of Penance and the Anointing of the Sick.”

ordinary or extraordinary minister of the sacrament, since such constitutes simulation of the sacrament” (§2).

Finally, we might add that even if the *Instruction* does not specifically mention it, the administration of Holy Eucharist to the sick seems to be one area where the extraordinary--non-ordained--ministers of the Holy Eucharist can really play an important role, given the shortage of priests.

Article 10: Assistance at Marriages

The *Instruction* first states “the possibility of delegating the non-ordained faithful to assist at marriages” since, on the one hand this is strictly an ecclesiastical norm (for the *canonical form* of marriage); and on the other hand, because such delegation “may prove necessary in special circumstances where there is a grave shortage of sacred ministers” (§1). It then proceeds to remind the Bishops of the following norms:

1) *Only “the diocesan Bishop may concede this delegation”* (§1). “With the exception of an extraordinary case due to the absolute absence of both priests and deacons who can assist at marriages, no ordained minister may authorize the non-ordained faithful for such assistance. Neither may an ordained minister authorize the non-ordained faithful to ask or receive matrimonial consent according to the norm of c.1108, §2” (§3).

Article 11: Extraordinary Minister of Baptism

“Apart from cases of necessity, canonical norms permit the non-ordained faithful to be designated as extraordinary ministers of Baptism”, but the *Instruction* reminds the Pastors of the conditions for the licitude of this extraordinary designation:

1) “There is *no ordinary minister* or in cases where *he is impeded*, (but) care should be taken to *avoid too extensive an interpretation* of this provision and such a faculty should not be conceded in a *habitual* form.”

2) The Instruction concretizes a *negative list* of reasons for that deputation, which would therefore make such deputation illicit:

1° “the ordinary minister’s excessive workload”;

2° “his non-residence in the territory of the parish”;

3° “his non-availability on the day on which the parents wish the Baptism to take place.”

Article 12: Leading the Celebration at Funerals

³⁶ The *CIC* states that “a suitable lay person is to be chosen who is capable of giving instruction to those to be wed and qualified to perform the marriage liturgy correctly” (c.1112, §2; cf. c.1111 for the validity of the delegation).

desirable--to a degree that is gleaned from the following texts and reasons:

a) The text explicitly states “even at some sacrifice to themselves”.

b) “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-practicing members of the faithful.”

2) “The non-ordained faithful may lead the ecclesial obsequies”, with the following conditions:

1° “There is a true absence of sacred ministers.”

In the absence of further explication within this article of the term *true absence of sacred ministers*, we have to attend to the sense given to this term in the previous article as regards the sense of lack of ordinary minister for baptism, including the negative list of situations when this is not verified.

2° The deputed non-ordained extraordinary minister must “adhere to the prescribed liturgical norms”, and should therefore “be well prepared both doctrinally and liturgically”.

CONCLUSION

Second, the shortage of ordained ministers must be addressed by fostering vocations to the priesthood, not by substituting priests with laymen. “Solutions addressing the shortage of ordained ministers cannot be other than transitory and must be linked to a series of pastoral programs which give priority to the promotion of vocations to the Sacrament of Holy Orders.”

In conclusion we can say that the activity of the lay faithful is in no way placed in doubt by the *Instruction*; on the contrary, it is precisely from the laity’s commitment and dedication that the Church expects a great deal both now and for the future. However, as one commentator would say, “commitment and dedication must develop harmoniously within the framework of the Church’s hierarchical constitution, that is, in the spirit of true *communio*, which requires the acknowledgment and appreciation of reciprocity, to avoid at all costs an egalitarianism that erodes identity.”³⁷

³⁷ Moraglia, *op.cit.*