

## Vision and Mission for the Future of the Laity

### Foreword

This planned discussion programme to help you to run a series of discussions on "**The Future of the Laity**" has been designed in two parts.

- Last year we looked at the past and the present. We did this so that we could learn from our past mistakes and take the best from the past and the present into the future.
- This second part will look to 'our vision for the future' and how we can turn that vision into reality through brave strategic planning at National and Diocesan levels and through courageous yet sensitive local pastoral initiatives. You may be a small group of five or six people; you may be a large group representing a parish, deanery or diocese. You may be a lay organisation or a large or small ecumenical group. You may be the Fifth or Sixth Form of a school. You may have a guest speaker to introduce the subject matter or you may distribute copies of each bulletin to be read beforehand. You may ask or design your own questions or use those provided. Whoever you are we hope that you will find the programme useful and worthwhile in creating your vision and mission for the future.

Our aim is to have as wide a debate as possible together with our bishops, clergy and, most importantly, laity of both sexes and all ages. We especially need to involve our young people in this debate; we believe that they need a good listening to!

We can achieve our objectives by contact with our Bishops' and our Priests as well as other lay organisations and through personal contact with our schools. I hope that we can make a special effort to contact our young people and those of other faiths. We need to encourage as wide a debate as possible!

Communications should be not only through this booklet but also through word of mouth and via the 'Internet'. We will make the bulletins available on our web sites and through e-mails. Input from other countries, electronically, might be possible and worthwhile.

The Secretariat for the Bishops Conference were consulted and they nominated a number of Bishops who would assist with the production of this years planned discussion programme. Bishop Crispian Hollis of Portsmouth Diocese was unable to write a bulletin but provided a hard copy (they were not available in electronic format) of his 'Vision' and 'Mission' statements for his diocese; these are reproduced as Annex 1 and Annex 2. Other Bishops were approached and each gave details of their web site, which contain details of their vision and mission for the future. Details of the web sites for each Diocesan web site are reproduced below

#### **List of Bulletins for 2003/2004**

**Bulletin 1 Reflections on the Hallam Diocesan Assembly Ron Dalton**

**Bulletin 2 A European perspective Robert Corrins**

**Bulletin 3 Vision and Hope Gerry Murphy**

**Bulletin 4 What say the origins Frank Hart**

**Bulletin 5 New Wine and New Wineskins Gerard Mannion**

**Bulletin 6 Lay Leadership in the Future Church Fr Peter McGrail**

**Bulletin 7 Mourning and Change Arthur Keegan**

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- In response to many requests received, I outline below the bulletins for 2002/2003 for reference purposes. If you would like to have a copy of last years planned discussion bulletins, please contact me, or Chris Bolger, Secretary (see back cover), by email or telephone; or you can access our web sites [www.CatholicMensSociety.org.uk](http://www.CatholicMensSociety.org.uk) or [www.thecatholicmenssociety@groups.msn.com](mailto:www.thecatholicmenssociety@groups.msn.com)

#### **List of Bulletins for 2002/2003 (last years programme of planned discussion)**

Bulletin 1 Role of the Laity in the Church and the World Archbishop O'Brien

Bulletin 2 Historical Context of the Laity Arthur Keegan

Bulletin 3 Second Vatican Council Gerry Murphy

Bulletin 4 Experience in Northern Diocese Chris Bolger

Bulletin 5 Lay Leadership in the Future Church Fr Peter McGrail

Bulletin 6 Experience in Southern Diocese Frank Hart

Bulletin 7 Clerical and Female Perspective Fr. John Daly/Bill Hutchinson

Bulletin 8 Laity and the Catechism D & J Clarke

#### **List of web sites for Diocese consulted**

Archdiocese of Birmingham [www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk](http://www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk)

Archdiocese of Liverpool [www.archdiocese-of-liverpool.co.uk](http://www.archdiocese-of-liverpool.co.uk)

Archdiocese of Southwark [www.rcsouthwark.co.uk](http://www.rcsouthwark.co.uk)

Archdiocese of Westminster [www.rcdow.co.uk](http://www.rcdow.co.uk)

Diocese of Westminster [www.westminsterdiocese.org.uk](http://www.westminsterdiocese.org.uk)

(D of W "At Your Word Lord") [www.aywl.org.uk](http://www.aywl.org.uk)

Diocese of Arundel & Brighton [www.dabnet.org](http://www.dabnet.org)

Diocese of Clifton [www.CliftonDiocese.com](http://www.CliftonDiocese.com)

Diocese of East Anglia [website.lineone.net/~eastanglia.diocese](http://website.lineone.net/~eastanglia.diocese)

Diocese of Hallam [www.hallam-diocese.com](http://www.hallam-diocese.com)

Diocese of Hexham & Newcastle [www.rcdhn.org.uk](http://www.rcdhn.org.uk)

Diocese of Leeds [www.leeds-diocese.org.uk](http://www.leeds-diocese.org.uk)

Diocese of Northampton [www.northamptondiocese.org](http://www.northamptondiocese.org)

Diocese of Nottingham [www.nottinghamdiocese.org.uk](http://www.nottinghamdiocese.org.uk)

Diocese of Plymouth [www.plymouth-diocese.org.uk/](http://www.plymouth-diocese.org.uk/)

Diocese of Portsmouth [www.portsmouth-dio.org.uk/index.html](http://www.portsmouth-dio.org.uk/index.html)

Diocese of Salford [www.salforddiocese.org.uk](http://www.salforddiocese.org.uk)

Diocese of Wrexham [www.wrexham.diocese.btinternet.co.uk](http://www.wrexham.diocese.btinternet.co.uk)

Archbishop of Edinburgh [archbishopedin.free-online.co.uk](http://archbishopedin.free-online.co.uk)

Archdiocesan of Edinburgh [edinburghdiocese.free-online.co.uk](http://edinburghdiocese.free-online.co.uk)

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## Bulletin 1

### GROWTH IN PRAYER AND SPIRITUALITY

*Reflections on the Hallam Diocesan Assembly by a representative of St Thomas More Branch*

#### **Introduction**

The first session of the assembly was due. Each parish within the Diocese had elected delegates. One of the delegates from St. Thomas More parish was also a member of the Catholic Men's Society (CMS). The Assembly was divided into Four Sectors. These "Sectors" were considered the most crucial areas of concern within the Diocese of Hallam. Each delegate to the Assembly was allowed to choose the sector that was of most importance from their point of view. Growth in prayer and spirituality was the sector chosen by our Parish and C.M.S. delegate. Other Parish delegates were a Lady Parishioner, our Deacon and the Parish Priest.

Our Parish Priest who is also our C.M.S. Spiritual Director and Chaplain also chose the Growth in prayer and spirituality sector. Our Deacon and Lady Parishioner chose the sector titled, Coping with the shortage of Priests.

#### **The Reason for the Assembly**

The Assembly had been called by Bishop John Rawsthorne to enquire into "Renewal within the Diocese of Hallam" and would be centred on the themes of Discipleship and Mission. Our C.M.S. Member, at the request of the Branch, agreed to offer his experience at the Assembly as a possible contribution to the C.M.S. Plan for the year 2003/04. Our member saw the Assembly as an act of faith. Faith both in essence and also tradition. These themes he identified as flowing directly from our Holy Father Pope John Paul. He saw the linkage as from the Universal church in Rome to the Pope's representative in England, Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor, through the Bishop's of England and Wales to Our Bishop John Rawsthorne. In Jubilee Year, October 2000, there was a Diocesan celebration at which Bishop John said he planned to hold a Synod. However, after consultation he decided a Diocesan Assembly would be more appropriate. Such an Assembly would be more flexible and able to involve as many people as possible in the Diocese. Active rather than passive renewal was the Assembly's aim. Renewal that would be consultative and collaborative, the thrust to be spiritual discipleship and mission.

#### **Preparation for the Assembly**

The first phase of preparation began by individuals and Parishes being asked to send to the diocesan authorities what they saw as "Pressing Topics". At this stage of the process sixteen major topics were identified. Parishes were asked to distil these to the Four most crucial topics for discussion, and hopefully resolution, by the Assembly.

The four most crucial topics were identified as: -

- One, Coping with the shortage of Priests,
- Two, Young People,
- Three, Building Parish Communities,
- Four, Growth in Prayer and Spirituality.

### **The Assembly and its Sectors**

The Assembly convened and decided that two days would be needed to complete deliberations and pass resolutions on active renewal. The chosen crucial topics now became "Sectors" of the Assembly. About fifty delegates considered each Sector. The Sectors being divided into six syndicates with a leader chosen prior to the start of the Assembly. Each syndicate leader made a presentation to the Sector, thus there were six presentations within the Sector. After discussion and debate, Sectors chose what they considered were the best recommendations to put to the plenary session. The plenary session then decided which resolutions to adopt.

**Sector One**, Coping with the **shortage of Priests**, had the most resolutions adopted at the plenary. Moreover, these were mainly lengthy resolutions.

**Sector Two, Young People** had two resolutions accepted at the plenary. However, this Sector did not conclude its deliberations and was left open ended to be returned to later.

**Sector Three, Building Parish communities**, had three resolutions agreed by the plenary session.

**Sector Four, Growth in prayer and spirituality** considered six approaches to renewal in this crucial area. These were,

- 1 Public prayer of the Church,
- 2 Provision for resources for Spirituality,
- 3 Meeting people's hunger for God,
- 4 Exploring means of (extending) Communication,
- 5 Ongoing adult Formation,
- 6 Support for small open Groups.

As mentioned before, Sector Four was our C.M.S. Brothers chosen Sector.

Because small open groups are successful within our parish, our C.M.S. Brother was keen to see these encouraged particularly in Parishes where such groups didn't seem to exist. Although a small parish St. Thomas More has such diverse groups as, C.M.S., Children's Liturgy, Choir and Music Group, Journey in Faith, Liturgy Group, Parents and Toddlers, Rosary Group, S.V.P., Scripture Prayer Group, Senior Citizens, Social Committee, and U.C.M. These diverse groups not only give practical help to the parish, but are also prayerful and help their members in a spiritual way. Members who participate may come together, with the group's common aims to the fore, but they also help our parish to be a spiritual community. Each group is collaborative with all major parish projects and give practical help when and where needed.

#### **Sector Four Proposals**

At the plenary session three recommendations were adopted about Growth in prayer and spirituality. These were,

##### **Proposal One**

Provision for resources for spirituality

- a) Calling together a service group of enablers providing resources, information and support in the area of prayer and spirituality, for the people of the diocese.
- b) That funding be available for administrative costs.
- c) That representatives be set up as local link persons in parishes, where possible.

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### Proposal Two

Encourage and affirm the existing bodies (e.g. the Liturgy commission) to revitalise the full spectrum of the public prayer of the church at parish level.

### Proposal Three

On-going Formation in Prayer and Spirituality

The setting up of a diocesan and/or parish group/s to investigate the area of ongoing formation in prayer and spirituality.

### Review Period

It was agreed that there should be an overall time scale for review. Agreed all proposals have a time-scale of 6 to 9 months for initial implementing from September 2004. Agreed that each proposal be reviewed after one year and a report made as appropriate.

**Fred Dalton**, St Thomas More Branch, Sheffield, Hallam

### Questions for discussion

Our C.M.S. member focused on the sector Growth in Prayer and Spirituality. What are your views on this? What sector would you choose and why?

Within the C.M.S. do the four crucial sectors and proposals above have relevance to your Branch? Why?

Or would you identify four different crucial sectors?

Within your group, parish, school or ecumenical, do the four crucial sectors and proposals above have relevance to you?

Or would you identify four different crucial sectors? Why?

Which of the sectors would you choose as most urgent or important? Why?

The assembly seemed to struggle with Young People and left this crucial sector “open ended” to come back to later. What are your views on renewal discipleship and mission, where young people are concerned? How do you see the way forward?

### Editor's Note:

*Diocesan Assemblies are taking place all over the country and each has its own individuality related to local needs. See Annex 1 at the end of this booklet for information and details of some of them. You might like to contact your own Diocesan Office for information. Alternatively, try the Diocesan Web-site.*

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### Bulletin 2

## THE CHALLENGE TO THE LAITY – A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

### Introduction

Although Catholics in Britain are quick to point out in any discussion that we are members of a ‘universal’ Church it is surprising how little thought we actually give to the experience of being laity in other countries. For most of us the universality of the Church seems to mean little more than the convenience of being able to attend mass when we are on holiday.

It is especially the case when we consider our relationship with Europe that most British Catholics have attitudes towards the French, Germans, Italians etc. which are very similar to those of British non-Catholics. Our shared identity with the Catholic laity across Europe does not seem to have any particular influence on our attitudes. By contrast German and Italian Catholics, or French and Spanish Catholics do seem to be much more conscious of the links which bind European Catholics to one another and do see the future development of Europe, and especially the enlargement of the European Union, as a matter with important ramifications for the laity.

### Purpose of Bulletin

The purpose of this bulletin is to challenge you to consider the issues facing the Catholic laity within a European rather than a British (or even English, Scottish, or Welsh) context. Many of the issues with which we will be confronted in the immediate future will be set within European parameters. By that I mean for example that many of the ethical challenges will need to be addressed by Catholics in every European country and it will be European Directives as well as domestic laws which will be at issue. Matters such as abortion, euthanasia, and cloning are already being dealt with in all our countries and the response of the Catholic laity is not necessarily the same in every case. Likewise marriage and the family are clearly going to be high on the agenda. Do you know what the position is in France or Poland on these issues? What are lay people saying and doing about them and in particular what are lay movements doing?

In the wider social sphere we are all faced with common problems - unemployment, homelessness, families in debt, asylum-seekers, immigration, an ageing population. Lay movements are trying to respond to these issues.

### Historic influences on the laity

So in the light of such issues what are the circumstances and what is the mood of the Laity across Europe? The phrase ‘unity in diversity’ is often applied within the Church and it certainly has relevance to the European situation. Obviously the current position reflects a number of historical influences but two in particular can be highlighted. The influence of the **Reformation** continues to reach down the centuries. Broadly speaking it could be said to have split Europe in three, not the two that many people immediately assume. In some countries the Catholic Church was fairly rapidly driven to the margins or effectively eliminated. This was largely the case in the Scandinavian countries. In others such as Germany and Holland there was fierce and often violent rivalry before the Protestant and

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Catholic sides settled into an uneasy co-existence in a roughly equal basis, while in countries like France and Italy the reformers either failed to gain a major foothold or were rapidly pushed to the margins by the Counter-Reformation. The religious map of Europe still reflects this pattern and has influenced and continues to influence political and social discussion.

The second significant influence was the **impact of communism** and in particular the effects of the East/West divide which dominated so much of the Twentieth century.

The challenge which faces the laity is how we deal with the enduring legacy of these events and also how we respond to the changes which have begun to flow from the weakening influence of the Reformation and the collapse of the communist structure. It is crucial to be aware of the continuities but also essential to be equally aware of the changes. For example it is quite different to be a Catholic in Norway or France or Germany at least in part because you will be a member of a Church which has occupied a very different position within society over the past several centuries. So many things are different –your tax position, education, political party membership, trade union membership, hospitals and so on. So too is the situation in more specifically Church terms - the position of clergy and Bishops, the role of the laity.

Likewise while the West was undergoing the economic growth, and liberal secularisation of the swinging sixties the Church in the East was in some respects revitalised by the challenge of Communist persecution but at the same time it was much less affected by Vatican II.

### ***Unity in diversity- examples***

There are so many examples of what is now happening in different church communities across Europe which could be offered as illustrations of ‘unity in diversity’ which we now need to address. In rural France hundreds of parishes are without a priest and great historic Churches lie empty. Many communities are entirely dependent on lay leaders without whom there would be no Church presence at all. In Poland they are exporting priests to other parts of Europe. In Stockholm the city centre Catholic parish caters for a community where 30 different languages are spoken within the congregation. In former communist countries dozens of new catholic associations have sprung up, some the reestablishment of old Catholic Action groups and some more like the New Movements we have seen in other countries. Yet it is difficult to get Romanian Catholics and Hungarian Catholics to meet in the same room.

### ***Signs of unity***

There is certainly diversity. But is there unity? Well there are many examples of cooperation, and collaboration across national borders. The Central Committee of German Catholics and the Semaine Social de France have been promoting a project to draw people from across Europe into a dialogue to promote what they have described as a European Consciousness in the belief that the European Union cannot be simply an economic machine. In a very different way the German Church created Renovabis as an organisation to help the Church in Eastern European countries by providing financial assistance and organisational expertise to enable them to build up the mechanisms to develop the kind of Church

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initiatives which were banned under communism. There have been many gatherings, either bilateral or multilateral, involving Catholic Organisations, Movements or Groups to exchange experiences. Unfortunately, with the partial exception of Youth Organisations, Catholics from the British Isles have not been very well represented in such events. We need to ask serious questions about why we are so reluctant to involve ourselves in such European initiatives.

### ***An active laity***

As the Pope has repeatedly reminded us we are called not merely to be present in the world but to be active in it. Many can look back and recall a golden age of Catholic action. Certainly the CMS can point to the strength and range of its activity several generations ago, and many of the great Catholic Action movements on the Continent can do likewise. But it is not just the numbers which have changed it is the entire context. In the past there was an emphasis on fighting our corner and defending our interests. Today the challenge is to reach out and reevangelise.

We are dealing with what is rapidly becoming a post-Christian Europe.

And we too have changed. We are no longer a ‘people-within a people’. Economic and social success as well as lapsing has woven us more closely into the general society, and in all the countries of Europe we are effectively a minority. For example whereas in 1960 more than 95% of Belgians described themselves as Catholic it is now less than 50%.

### ***Vatican II***

The leaders of the Church attending Vatican II read the signs of the times and emphasised that the laity were central to the new circumstances and called on us to ‘consecrate the world itself to God’. In reality however we seem to have spent a lot of time adapting God to the world. By that I mean that we have accepted the direction taken by European culture and have ‘modernised’ the Church to fit. Much has been made of the need to work with ‘all people of good will’ who ‘share our values’ and one very important dimension has been the rise of the ecumenical movement. But there has been a downside to this. Action without reference to motivation has gone on so long that many Catholics including many within our movements have lost sight of the distinctiveness of the obligation placed upon us as baptised Christians. The present Pope has never made such a mistake. In 1995 he said, ‘Sometimes witnessing to Christ will mean drawing out of a culture the full meaning of its noblest intentions. . . . At other times, witnessing to Christ means challenging that culture, especially when the truth about the human person is under assault.’ But the great irony is that the most highly educated laity in Europe’s history is less well informed about its essential meaning and purpose. As Cardinal Hume said “I suspect that it is a trick of the Devil to divert good people from the task of evangelisation by embroiling them in endless controversial issues to the neglect of the Church’s essential role, which is mission.” Not only do many Catholics lack detailed formation in the role of the apostolate, they also have no personal experience of acting as part of that apostolate because in the west they have grown up after the decay of the parish movements and groups or in the East they have grown up under communism when such groups were banned.

### ***Evangelisation in Europe***

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What is to be done about this if Europe so long virtually synonymous with Christian culture is to be brought back to Christ. John Paul is in no doubt that it will not be by means of an evangelisation like the first conversion of Europe through the heroic work of great preacher priests monks and nuns. In a secularised societies it will happen only 'if the lay faithful will know how to overcome in themselves the separation of the gospel from life, to again take up in their daily activities in family, work, and society an integrated approach to life that is fully brought about by the inspiration and strength of the gospel.'

For organisations like the CMS what this means is that we must think and act in a European context because that is where the secular context of our future life will increasingly take its shape. As citizens in a democratic society we must claim the right to have our values debated in the political arena. It is not about imposing our values on a secular world. In a highly educated and sophisticated society we need an equivalent level of Catholic formation or we will struggle to explain our position even to many Catholics who are increasingly persuaded by the quality of the secular presentation. John Paul II says in *Novo Millennio Ineunte*: "For Christian witness to be effective, especially in . . . delicate and controversial areas, it is important that special effort be made to explain properly the reasons for the Church's position, stressing that this is not a case of imposing on non-believers a vision based on faith, but of interpreting and defending the values rooted in the very nature of the human person." To explain the reasons, however, means that one must know the reasons.

This is what so many of the movements co-operating at European level are trying to do. They are engaged in educating and forming while at the same time being rooted in the practical initiatives of helping and sharing.

### ***European co-operation***

To assist in this endeavour many of them realised that it was essential to operate beyond national boundaries and in the immediate aftermath of Vatican II some National Councils of the Laity began a series of bi-annual Study Assemblies to provide both a high quality experience of formation and an opportunity for mutual exchange of experience. With the collapse of communism at the end of the 80's they immediately reached out to the East and the European Forum of National Laity Committees now draws delegations from Sweden to Malta and from Ireland to Hungary. The NCLA has been a regular participant and indeed London has played host to Study Assemblies, the most recent being at Twickenham in 1996. see web site at; <http://www.ncla.org.uk/> (this site also has a link to the CMS web site and last years planned discussion document on 'The Future of the Laity').

Their published reports are a rich source of material and through the Forum networks can formed to link corresponding organisations. It would for example be possible for the CMS to interact with organisations doing similar work in other European countries. It would also be possible for the CMS to invite speakers to Plan Launching Rallies.

First and foremost however it is necessary for the Society to make the European dimension an integral part of its thinking.

### ***Questions***

Are Catholics in Britain in your experience more or less European in their outlook

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than non-Catholics?

What implications do you think the 'enlargement' of the European Union will have for the Catholic Church?

Has the CMS, or your group, parish, school, responded to the Pope's repeated call to appeal to the politicians to include a clear reference to Christianity in the proposed European Constitution? Does the issue matter?

How should you or your group seek to raise its European profile?

**Bulletin 3**  
**VISION AND HOPE**

**Introduction**

At every Mass, when we unite to pray in the words that Jesus gave us, we use the phrase which our Society has so often taken in the titles of Plans and discussion documents: “Thy Kingdom Come”. In the prayer which follows the priest proclaims: “we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ”. That is the essence of our hope and belief out of which comes the love, or charity, which makes us the People of God. That is the theory; but it begs the questions, “What do we do whilst we are waiting?” and “How do we really make the Kingdom come?”

Being always positive in a negative world ( and what often appears to be a negative Church) is not easy. The problem is in ourselves and our environment. Father John Daley, in last year’s Plan referred to the “tittle-tattle parish” in which young people do not see God, and to which no one new wished to belong. The Church is still needed at times of birth and death ( and sometimes even for marriage) but not much else. Many still come seeking God, but do not always find him there.

If we look at our immediate surroundings, we will see that the Church appears to be in decline; but if we look at the worldwide picture of Church Universal, then we see growth and new life. In Africa, South America, Asia and Eastern Europe the Church is growing. Only in Western Europe and North America are things not looking too good. Where the new gods of materialism and consumerism are worshipped the light and truth of the Gospel becomes obscured, and is proclaimed by fewer and fewer prophets with “voices crying in the wilderness”.

**Scripture**

The Prophet Joel, writing almost 2,500 years ago said “Your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions” (Joel 3: 1-2). Is this because we use our visions to create our future which we can see as possible, and we use our dreams to imagine what we do not see as possible? Young people create a vision of how they would like their life to be in ten, twenty, thirty or more years. They will have a vision of what education they will receive, the work they will be doing, where they will live etc. An old person of, say seventy years of age, might have a vision for the next twenty years, but would be unlikely to envision the next fifty years. He/she could dream of the future spiritually, however, for themselves and other people. Is this what Joel meant? How do you discern the difference between visions and dreams? But again, it could be asked: “Is there a difference?”

If we look to Scripture for an answer we might begin at the Incarnation narratives in Luke and Matthew’s Gospels. Mary had a vision of Gabriel, the messenger angel, who told her of the Divine Plan of Salvation. This had to be a vision because Mary had to reply – to give her consent. Joseph, on the other hand, had to make do with dreams to tell him what to do. Maybe this is why, with Joel in mind, the Church’s iconography has always depicted Mary as young and Joseph as old. The prophets’ visions in the Old Testament are usually seen as taking place when times are bad, to give them the courage to prophecy to give the people hope. Isaiah

needed to see the glory of God in Heaven to show him that he was worthy enough to be an instrument of God to his people (Isaiah 6: 1-8). Daniel, too, needed encouragement with a similar vision to see hope for the future during the Babylonian captivity (Dan. 7: 9-14).

In the New Testament, Peter received his vision on Mount Tabor at the Transfiguration – but was told to say nothing about it “until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead” (Mark 9: 2-10) because he was still in training and it was not yet the time. After Pentecost it was time, but then he had to rely on dreams, such as his dream at Joppa when he came to realise that the Kingdom of God was for all peoples (Acts 11: 1-18). Paul, on the other hand, received his vision on the road to Damascus (Acts 9: 1-20) and that was all he needed. So’ when Peter and Paul finally met (Acts 15:7-21) they were of one mind, summed up in the words of Peter in his first Letter when he said: “Be ready at all times to give anyone who asks the reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3: 15). If someone asks us, can we respond in the same way? The late Cardinal Hume once said: “Everyone searches for God when they search for truth and justice and love; and if you don’t believe that how can you preach the Gospel?”

**Portsmouth Diocese experience**

Bishop Crispin Hollis of Portsmouth writes on the same theme: “If the Prophet Joel is to be believed and if we stick to the opinion commonly held among younger people that to be 60 is to be old, then we have no business to be having visions – they belong to young men, whereas people of my age should be dreaming dreams. “but dreams are insubstantial things and they vanish with the light of morning. Visions, however, have a shape and purpose to them. They force us to look ahead and they gradually become sharper as we come closer to implementing them. They draw us forward and as we approach the goal to which they beckon us they lead into change.

“I still regard myself as a relatively young man; we are a young diocese and, as far as the sweep of world history is concerned, we are a young Church.

We cannot afford to be in the business of dreaming because the future is not beckoning us into the past. We need vision and visions if we are to become the Church for the day and therefore the Church for the future.

“Without a sense of purpose and direction, we can do no more than be a reactive Church, driven by events and at the mercy of a rapidly changing world. The time has come to articulate the vision that calls us to be “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy people, a nation set apart to sing the praises of God (1 Peter 2:9)”. The articulation of this vision has begun, but it is a slow and often painful process as change takes effect. The most obvious of these is the current shortage of priests as they die and retire and there are so few new priests to take their place. This is now being felt in every diocese with the closure of parishes and church buildings and the old certainties of the communities of priests and people are being apparently swept away. So many, in sadness, feel they have lost their spiritual home and no longer have their place in the order of things. They still consider themselves as Catholics, but their regular participation has become spasmodic which does not help their spiritual life. Many, too, have tried to participate fully in the life of their local churches, only to see decisions apparently imposed from on

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high, which leaves them bitter and resentful. Priests working in parishes are fully aware of this but often keep silent because they do not have all the answers. All they know for certain is that people's expectations of them are too high, and they don't know how to cope with this.

**Editor:** For details of Bishop Crispian's vision and mission for the future of the diocese see *the Annex at the end of this booklet.*

### **NCLA reflections**

This whole question was raised by Father Ray Lyons, a Parish Priest of the Portsmouth Diocese, speaking to the National Council for Lay Associations (NCLA) last year. Two of the points he made were of particular relevance: Many priests are damaged by their life experiences and it must be remembered that they are human beings who do not sit naturally on pedestals, but require human contact on an equal footing to sustain them. Prophets are often called to do God's work through great adversity and God uses those who have been hurt most to be the healers. However, formation training does not make allowances for coping with damage and is something that, unfortunately, often not talked about. People have unrealistic expectations of priests' capabilities, assuming that they can do anything: being fundraisers, bereavement counsellors, social workers and missionaries as well as human beings, but then also want their priests to be like them. Both groups must have realistic expectations of each other's capabilities and there is a need to create structures and relationships that enable these aspirations to be achieved. This can be a painful experience and the discussion about what is expected from our priests and where they fit into parish life must take place now. The old fashioned view is of the priest of sacrifice and in many cases this model is still being worked whilst expecting the priest to be much more, including a pastor not just of the flock but also of the people. Priests are expected to be able to move from parishes at short notice, relocate and establish themselves instantly. The laity must have a better understanding of priests as individuals who need their space and privacy. The model of the priest as the servant of the parish, who merely follows the desires of the laity is also prevalent and unhelpful. A balance needs to be struck between these models and the herald proclaiming the Word of God so that priests and laity can work together equally.

### **Way forward**

As priests slowly agonise the way forward, so too must lay people. Throughout our Catholic life we have always expected everything to be done for us. How we responded or reacted was not considered to be that important. BUT IT IS. Looking back at Father Daley's image of the "tittle-tattle parish" to which no one new wished to belong, we must remember that God is good, and nothing is impossible for Him. Those who seek God will always find Him. That they sometimes find him outside of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church is often a shock to those inside, and challenges all our efforts at evangelisation or collaborative ministry. Where are we going wrong? Are we not trying hard enough, or are we trying too hard to push in the wrong direction? And is it God, in His goodness, who is holding us back or allowing us to fail so as to show us the true way – His way?

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Remember in the Gospels that whenever the Apostles or disciples thought they had a good idea, Jesus invariably said NO.

One of the most important things we expect of our priests, not unreasonably, is that they are men of prayer. Is it too much that they, too, should not expect the People of God who are entrusted to their care to be a people of prayer? Many, indeed, already are, and strange as it may seem, our prayer may be the cause of our failure, because God hears our prayer and continually stops us from following our own agendas, so that finally we will be left with no other agenda than God's own. The late Father Bill Ellis, of happy memory in the Catholic Men's Society, said so often, "When we pray, God never gives us what we ask for, but He always gives us what we need". In prayer we ask for so many things because we feel we need so many things. Maybe we should consider how Jesus has taught us to pray when we seek the coming of the Kingdom: "THY WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN".

### **Hope**

Hope is always linked to the future.

The future belongs to you

Christian hope is the expectation of the good things man can do.

Human hope is especially for the young

Spiritual hope is for all who have faith

Faith is a gift from God

**Gerard A Murphy** Waterloo 13 August 2003

### **Questions for discussion**

**Q1** What stops you and your parish community from being positive? Make a list and classify each item into internal (within ourselves) and external (from our environment). Discuss ways in which you and the parish can change these problems into opportunities.

**Q2** As the demographics of our parishes tends towards the old, are we too old to have visions? Is the process irreversible? If not, how do we actively involve young people in the life of the parish community as having not just equal, but the major part to play in forming the vision of the Church in the future? What do we need to change in ourselves to make this come about?

**Q3** What do you think are the fundamental reasons for the shortage of vocations to the priesthood? Are our male children encouraged enough to consider being a priest?

**Q4** What do you see as the main role of the parish priest? Do you think that there are "jobs" expected of your parish priest that could or should be carried out by parishioners?

**Q5** How can we as individuals, as a sodality and as a parish community help those who search for God in their hearts by searching for truth and justice and love?

**Q6** What steps will you (as individuals and as parish) take to become pro-active, articulating the vision of laity as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy people, a nation set apart to sing the praises of God (1 Peter 2:9)"?

**Q7** How can you offer human contact on an equal footing to your Parish Priest?

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What contribution can you make to the on-going formation of the priesthood to make allowances for coping with the damage done by a priest's life experiences? How can you help a priest damaged thus, without condemnation, and in Christian charity?

**Q8** How can you help yourself and others to listen to God, rather than bombarding Him with requests? What spiritual exercises have you found useful?

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### **Bulletin 4** **WHAT SAY THE ORIGINS?**

#### ***Introduction***

If you engage a management consultant to help you in determining how your organisation may find its way into the future, among the first tasks he will ask you to undertake, is likely to be to discover what your founder intended. What he sees is a living organism possessing a principle of animation; what in our terminology we would call a soul. This soul derives from a surge in the mysterious well within the founder which contains the source of his creative power. The surge brings into actuality what would otherwise have remained in the realm which is untouched by time and change. As we pray from Sunday to Sunday it is the realm where our Father's will is already done.

The consultant's question sets in train an enquiry which will enable us so to identify and describe the animating principle that it may be better actualized in the unfolding flux which is the universe of time and change. Father Conor Ward touched on this question about thirty years ago when addressing our chaplains. He had recently completed a sociological survey of a Liverpool parish and was well abreast of the nature of the task the Church faces. He said that as a matter of sociological necessity we would inevitably be absorbed by the society in which we live. If, in return, we were to absorb the society religiously we would need to distinguish between the values which possess us and the manner in which they were presented to our companions.

#### ***What the founder intended***

In determining what our founder, the Lord, intended we have four strange biographies to assist us. What they present in him is a plain intention to break away from the chains of prescription. From his first startling utterance in the synagogue to his disobedient refusal to plead before his show trial judges, he shows himself to be asserting his uniqueness. The heart of the impulse which moved him and which he bequeathed to the company he founded, the Church, is the growth towards freedom. It is this growth we must explore.

The best analogy around which we may fashion our understanding is that of our humanity, the most vivid depiction of our collective nature which Saint Paul could find. No doubt all analogies limp but we would be hard put to it to find a better guide than the Apostle to the Gentiles.

It is in point, therefore, to pursue the process of maturation over the two thousand years of our corporate life and follow the graph it draws for us, in much the way we attempt to make sense of our individual progress from infancy through youth to maturity. As David Glass had it on one occasion, as our vocabulary grows so grows our possession of ourselves.

#### ***Spiritual growth***

Within our corporate nature there is an element, the religious life, which taps into the nourishment which enables the spirit to grow and develop and achieve its transforming effect on the whole body. Its progress through the two thousand years of our corporate existence calls to mind the thesis developed by Pierre

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Teilhard de Chardin. Teilhard held that the governing principle which leads to the parousia, the appearance of the Great Christ, is the suffusing of matter by the spirit. For him, of course, the visibility of the process is impossible to discern since it takes place in sidereal time. The process of the growth outwards of the religious life, on the other hand, is plain to see: it takes place in historical time.

It is possible to identify four periods of about five hundred years each at the end of each of which there is a leap to a new understanding of what is needed to refresh and strengthen the whole of Christ's body. The first period is that of the desert fathers. In the second the anchorites coalesce into the cenobitic monastic families which formed around the Rule of Saint Benedict and spread throughout Europe. The third period sees the appearance of the wandering friars of Saint Dominic and Saint Francis. In the fourth period there arise the clerks regular, notably the Jesuits of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, who broke free from dependence on a religious house. The fathers retreated from the decadence of Rome to the desert to preserve their precious inheritance from corruption. They were available, of course, to the people who visited them from time to time. The instinct which drew them to gather into their monastic families established the exemplary communities which spread their protection throughout Europe. There is a touching account in David Knowles's *History of the Monastic Order* of a man standing on a hill looking at the deserted monastery in Durham. He laments the loss of the monks; when they were there all was well in the town.

The development of the wandering friars was a quantum leap. The nourishment provided by the hermits and the cenobites had to be sought. The friars took their service to the people. The outward movement became even more fluid when Saint Ignatius founded his missionary army.

### **Way forward**

Now, at the end of these four periods, we are at the beginning of the second millennium. Where may the outward movement now go if not into the general body of the Christian people? It is true that we have secular institutes which have the air of a religious profession. They are of value in their own right, of course. They are more significant, however, in being a threshold. Across this threshold is the door through which all the people may enter directly into formal responsibility for the development of the Church's purpose.

There were signs throughout the twentieth century of the outward movement of the founding genius. There was Catholic Action, for example, which set out to provide some outlet for lay initiative. More pointedly there was the priest/worker movement in France. .

It seems, indeed, that it is the Church in France which now has most to teach us.

### **French experience**

The Second Vatican Council made it plain that Baptism brings with it responsibility. It is likely that France did not expect to call on this insight quite as quickly as the torrent of priests leaving office threw it into relief. Parish churches were suddenly emptied throughout the land. There was a temptation to relinquish them which the French hierarchy were able to overcome. A relief, given originally for mission lands, was invoked. It enabled teams of priests and laity to ensure that the assembling of the people Sunday by Sunday, which is at the heart of the

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priestly office to achieve, was universally secured. This development, which has been in train for twenty years, has prompted continuing reflection so that, for example, in one diocese there is now a synod at work studying how a process of de-centering may be achieved in order that dependence on the centres of diocese and deanery may be reduced, enabling the uniquely local and concrete work of the Church to be identified and tackled.

### **Task of the laity**

This process reflects the vision of the Laity Decree of the Council which gives to the people the task of bringing to the community of the Church the cares of the world for discussion and resolution. In this their brother, the pastor, is to encourage and foster them, not least by the provision of the sacraments. Thus we are now talking about talking to one another. That means that, from this point of view, the Church is a company of small groups. There is no other way in which what is intended may be achieved. The elemental significance of small groups is a subject which has pursued Cardinal Cormac since he was a young priest in the Portsmouth Diocese. He now refers to them as small communities, hinting at an inner coherence of some significance. Recently, indeed, he published an article commending the development of a culture of small groups throughout the Church. In response to the article Bruce Kent commented that power and authority to make decisions remain in diocesan organs. In the nature of the case the conduct and fostering of small groups will be a lay responsibility. Therefore a way of giving juridical purchase to those who accept the responsibility will need to be found. It will not be sufficient to depend upon voluntary associations like our society.

### **Austrian experience**

In the last couple of weeks, to add force to the juridical point, Paul Zulehner, Professor of Pastoral Theology at Vienna University, has described the struggle in Austria to achieve lay participation. He speaks of arbitrary intervention from Rome and the action of bishops inimical to change. The analysis giving rise to the need for change is not simply a response to exigency. It is a clear account of where the spirit is moving.

The resistance described by Professor Zulehner should not surprise or dismay us. Innovation in the Church has always drawn down initial disapproval. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, was condemned for his use of Greek philosophy, later to become the Angelic Doctor.

### **Conclusion**

To erect formally a cellular structure would marry the universal movement towards informality with the order which is the unique contribution our Roman affiliation gives to the whole Church. It would draw us in a specifically Christian fashion more closely towards those amongst whom we live, not least the Christians who follow other traditions.

The law of the Church, in its monarchical character, seems to present difficulty in accommodating the reform described here. Whether it is indeed so is open to debate. In England behind the rigidity of the Common Law stood the King's Conscience to which recourse could be made. Perhaps the same principle may apply to the Church's canons. Each bishop possesses the fullness of the priesthood and in his diocese "the one and only catholic Church exists". This plenipotentiary

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endowment may well enable means to be found of applying the law generously if, after debate, the argument here advanced finds favour. In effect we could now be setting out on the formalizing of informality and throwing open a wide door to the next five hundred years of the movement outward into the universe of the Lord's founding genius.

*Frank Hart*, Arundel and Brighton

### Questions for discussion

1 The Canadian Cardinal Roy, at the end of the Second Vatican Council said that Constantine, who made Christianity the religion of the Roman Empire, had most to answer for in accounting for damage to the Church. What may he have meant?

2 We say the Church is not a democracy. What does this mean when the sense of the faithful people is a constituent in forming what we are to believe?

For example, Newman held that at the time of the Arian heresy it was the people who got the right answer and most of the bishops who got it wrong.

3 Bishops are ordained by the grace of God and favour of the Apostolic See. Does the latter override the former so that a bishop becomes a kind of branch manager rather than the father of an independent family?

4 Archbishop Quinn, Archbishop Emeritus of San Francisco, said in a lecture in England that the American Episcopate endure interventions by the Roman Curia for fear of upsetting the Holy Father. The tenderness of the thought here is quite touching. But should the Roman Curia be free to intervene in local affairs without local permission?

5 Where do you place the claim of formally declared doctrine in the scheme of things when conscientious subjective judgments are a most important constituent of our identity?

6 Following question 5, how is our personal conviction to be squared with the necessity for order? After all the mission we have is to present what the Lord intended, not some quirky thing of our own devising. Is it possible that rules and doctrine take a back seat to how we live our conscientious life?

7 Given the monarchical character of the constitution devised for the Church, is it possible for small approved groups to be formed as self-sufficient communities of God within the Church? If not, how do we, the lay faithful, present a case for change to our own hierarchy and to Rome that they should delegate responsibility (and therefore authority) and empower us, the lay faithful, to take a greater share in the evangelising work of the Church? (Let your Parish Priest and your Bishop know your answer to this question.)

8 What values possess us, the lay faithful? How do we present these to our nonpracticing or non-believing companions? (Try asking some of them how our attitudes are different!)

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### Bulletin 5

## NEW WINE AND NEW WINESKINS – LAITY, LIBERATION AND FRESH THINKING FOR THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH

### Introductory Remarks

The 'father' of liberation theology, Gustavo Gutiérrez, chose a most powerful image from St Bernard of Clairvaux's *De consideratione* as the title and central theme of one of his many works, (which was subtitled 'The Spiritual Journey of a People'). He explained his choice thus:

One of the main guiding ideas in these pages is the conviction that the historical starting point for the following of Jesus and for reflection on this following is to be found in the experience that comes from the Spirit. This is what Bernard of Clairvaux put so beautifully when he said that when it comes to spirituality all people must know how to 'drink from their own well.' In our insertion into the process of liberation in which the peoples of Latin America are now engaged, we live out the gifts of faith, hope, and charity that make us disciples of the Lord. This experience is our well. The water that rises out of it continually purifies us and smooths away any wrinkles in our manner of being Christians, at the same time supplying the vital element needed for making new ground fruitful.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose of this paper is to provide food for thought for the ongoing conversations amongst lay organisations (in this instance, the *Catholic Men's Society*) concerning the future of the church and the role of the laity in shaping that future. Above all, it seeks to encourage such groups and those engaged in discussions and activities in relation to building the future of the church at each and every level of the church, to be always mindful that they can, should and often must *drink from their own wells* if they are to be church in a manner which will be most fruitful for their own community and context.

So, rather than avoid certain issues or to go around in circles over stale old ground in a futile attempt to try and make new visions and modes of being the people of God somehow fit in with outdated and now ill-suited and often unworkable ecclesial forms, policies, and structures, this paper makes a simple plea that 'new wine' may be allowed to mature in *new wineskins*. This is not to say that we should jettison all that is old and traditional – far from it. It is simply to follow Christ's line of thinking when he warned that and new patterns of community living require new and fresh forms of existential and spiritual thinking, structure and organisation. It is a lesson the church has often had to learn anew throughout its history. But it is, above all, a lesson that brings us *liberation* from the all-too common fault of not knowing the difference between something which we cling onto to as an essential aspect of the dynamic tradition of Catholic Christian ecclesial life, and when something is simply a form, idea, teaching, structure or policy which belongs in the past and no longer holds relevance for today because it has ceased to give ecclesial life – indeed it may well have begun to drain the very vitality from the life of the church.

In such conversations as those in which many lay groups are currently engaged it

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is most unhelpful and usually unfruitful to open and/or lead with contributions, suggestions and agendas from the bishops, for in doing so we risk foreclosing much essential debate. This is because, in the present ecclesial climate, the majority of bishops in countries such as ours will make positive noises, quote positive yet selective sections of documents from Vatican II, along with the positive elements of more recent documents such as *Christifideles Laici* etc on the role of the laity, but then go on to insist that the structures of church governance, ministry and accountability will or must remain largely unchanged. Recently I heard a prominent bishop in the USA doing much the same thing, even going so far as to state that all the resources we need for a more positive future are there already. It is patently obvious to many that this is simply not the case.

In this paper, the purpose is to 'push back the frontiers' of our ecclesial thinking, much in the fashion in which the preparations for and discussions at Vatican II did. This entails daring to think beyond the current structures and ecclesial policies and, above all, encouraging laity to offer visionary contributions to the ongoing renewal and reform which will shape the future of the church. Such contributions will often be very different to and even, in some cases, opposed to those ideas concerning the future of the church and of the laity within it, which are 'handed down' from those clerical, episcopal and curial elements of the church who might be tempted to perceive of themselves as being 'on high' in some imagined ontological ecclesiological hierarchy (as opposed to being true servants and ministers of the ecclesial communities they are connected with). In other words, I am suggesting that the vision, energy, faith, gifts and expertise of the laity are the key to the future of the church. As history tells us time and again, the church may only flourish if the laity play a full and leading part in shaping the future of the church at the local, diocesan, national and universal levels. But the laity must be willing to drink from their own wells – to form their own plans and agendas for the future of their role in the church which are resonant with their own experiences.

So the laity must urge their number to campaign actively for what is theirs by right. In line with the gospel and the teaching of Vatican II, the laity can and must exercise their rights and duties under canon law to demand that their visions concerning the future of the church is listened to and valued by those in positions of ecclesial authority.

In order for the future of the laity and hence, of the church itself, to be a positive one, *fresh thinking* must be encouraged throughout the church, from the grass roots 'upwards'. So, too, must there be ever-more increasing facilitation (for want of a better word) for lay people actively to take on increased roles of ministry, leadership and governance in the church. This requires bold bishops. Many bishops today are too cautious to be capable of boldness. Hence the dialogue needs to nudge them forward by - as Vatican II says the church must - making sure that the voices and opinions of the laity are listened to. Make no mistake – there is a tide of opinion from the Vatican which has either been embraced or imposed upon various episcopal conferences which is steadfastly *resisting* increased roles for the laity and increased lay participation in areas of church governance and organisation.<sup>2</sup>

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One example of what is *not* the way forward, is for a bishop, no matter how senior, loved and well-intentioned he may be, to decide upon a preferred model and set of principles for the future of his own diocese and then attempt to impose that upon the Catholic Christian communities of his diocese 'from above' without due consultation, research, discussion and full participation of all concerned (but, most importantly, the laity), in shaping that future. Witness how many parishes, individual lay people and clergy alike, have voiced concern over the Archdiocese of Westminster's attempts to impose the 'Renew', small Christian communities programme across the diocese. I do not think the seemingly missed ecclesial irony here can be put much better than it has been by Bruce Kent, when he states that in that diocese:

... and perhaps in others, all major decisions about the life of the Church are not made by small groups but by unaccountable authorities almost entirely clerical in composition. Priorities of funding, decisions about education and schools, the opening and closure of parishes, the movement of clergy, disciplinary procedures, and the use and disposal of assets are all outside the remit and even the knowledge of small groups of parishioners, however devoted.<sup>3</sup>

Bruce Kent went on to suggest that 'it is at the level of the diocese' where real change is needed and could most profitably be influenced by bishops willing to initiate and engage in ecclesial self-examination. The tone here is intended to be critically *positive*. New models of lay ministry need to be embraced not piecemeal but enthusiastically and by the bishops who spend more of their time looking at their own churches (what else can 'episcopacy, i.e., 'oversight' entail), rather than over their shoulders to Rome. Canon law allows the laity much scope as it is, but church structures nonetheless require some changes and history is on the side of the laity<sup>4</sup> - after all the Franciscans, initially a lay movement, were so successful they ended up taking on many important roles of leadership in the church and becoming so powerful poor Francis on his death-bed said they had missed his entire point (so there is also need to be careful so as to avoid repeating such failings, too!)

### **Food for Forward-Looking Thought - Some Issues to Consider**

The very notion of ecclesial life, that is of community or *communion*, is one which demands close and ongoing attention. As Hermann Pottmeyer has illustrated, three particular principles must guide our structures of communion. They are, firstly, *catholicity* (i.e. the universality and shared nature of our ecclesial life), as Pottmeyer states 'These structures must make it possible for a multiplicity of agents and the many-sidedness of life to find space in the church to replace existing centralization and uniformity'. Secondly, *collegiality/co-operation* in our living out the gospel mission and witness: 'These structures must make it possible for decision-making to take a collegial form and for the determination of decisions to be made to involve the cooperation of all the faithful'. Thirdly, *subsidiarity* – autonomy must be respected and facilitated at the most localised and practical level possible with regard to self-determination: 'These structures must make it possible for decisions that do not threaten the unity and communion of the

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universal church to be made within limited regions of the church'. Pottmeyer contends that: 'The application of these three principles does not weaken the papacy; on the contrary, it presupposes a center of unity and a ministry of communion acknowledged by all'.<sup>5</sup>

Pottmeyer goes on to say that all three principles require a return to the 'triadic form of church structure from the early church of particular churches with local bishops, regional ecclesiastical units – most notably the patriarchates under the patriarchs, and the universal church with the pope as symbol of unity. But here, we are focusing more upon the local and regional applications of the three principles, first and foremost.

In order for such principles to be fully developed and held in harmony at every level of the church but, in particular at the local, diocesan and national levels, our discussions must also take in the very notion of the particular place, role and authority of the laity within the church itself. We are here referring, of course, to the concept of the *Sensus Fidelium* – the 'sense of the faithful' and how it is understood, respected and enhanced at the various levels of the Catholic Christian communion.<sup>6</sup> Coming to understand and to play a full role in the ecclesial application of such a concept should prove truly liberating to the lay people whatever their particular calling and form of ecclesial life. It should also remind church leaders of the necessity for consultation, dialogue and *collective* reflection. As Jan Kerkhofs states:

From the early beginning the 'people' has been very important in shaping [the church's] identity and in influencing her evolution. Indeed this has even been true for the Gospel itself. The four Gospels have developed from catechetics and liturgies in small local communities. Which is also true for the Tradition, which has always been plural, based on specific mentalities in particular Churches, as in the Eastern and Western ones. And this remained the case throughout history, as is shown in the great number of different 'spiritualities', emanating from below. In the main, two expressions reveal the lasting influence of the People: the 'sensus fidelium' and the 'reception'. The 'sense of the faithful' has to be distinguished from the 'sensus fidei' (sense of the faith) and still more from the 'consensus fidelium', though all three terms have in common that they stress the input of the faithful in expressing the faith. The 'sense of the faith' means that a believer or a group of believers live spontaneously in accordance with the great tradition of the Church. It is seen as a spiritual 'instinct'. 'Sensus fidelium' is more or less the same, but expresses the fact that most faithful feel that a doctrine or a behaviour is inspired by the Gospel, even when a new situation demands new answers. 'Consensus fidelium' means that all or most agree with truths, belonging to the core of the faith.<sup>7</sup>

And of course, if the 'people of God', that is to say (or at least to accentuate the role and authority of), by and large, the laity, have held such an important and influential place in the shaping of the church's teaching and spirituality throughout history, it further legitimates, as it does increasingly necessitate, further debates concerning the need for a more empowering understanding of the very *participation* of the laity in every facet of ecclesial existence. As Ladislav Orsy

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states, the notion of participation can be understood as:

... a manifestation of the very nature of the Church, which is an *ecclesia*, 'an assembly duly summoned', a *gathering* of the believers. In other terms, the Church is an organic body, and if so participation can be nothing else than the members of the body coming alive and fulfilling their functions.<sup>8</sup>

Indeed, Orsy goes on to explain that participation *is* communion – 'participation means that the whole body is alive and active; the members "have the same care for one another" as Paul urged the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor. 12)'.<sup>9</sup> Thus we should realise in our own discussions that true community involves full participation and this should lead us to realise the urgent need for transformed ecclesial structures and patterns of governance.

A further issue of major importance which we need to confront with regards to the future of the laity *and so* to the future of the church pertains to so many other issues which currently confront our ecclesial lives at the local level. That issue is simply the need to appreciate and acknowledge that it is not primarily our notion of parish which requires jettisoning, but rather our forms, structures and understanding of ecclesial organisation and governance. For it is there that the root of so many of the church's present problems and difficulties lie. Of course, trends and developments in the surrounding cultures amidst which the church lives will have a profound impact upon the life of the church itself but the church cannot, Canute-like, order societies to turn back the tide of unpalatable sociological developments. What the church *can* shape and control is how it *reacts* to such changes and in how it renews and reforms its own mission, organisation and self-understanding in each and every age.

To our changing world and societies, we may add the particular difficulties of the chronic shortage of priests, disagreements over differing, and sometimes competing ways of 'being church' and the legion of episcopal failings in relation to the tragic scandals of abuse and related scandals of secrecy, financial impropriety and the resistance of true accountability. Then there are those groups within the church who wish to turn back the clock and to ensure that their own particular vision of being church is given priority and dominates across the church universal. These and other challenges facing the church demonstrate a particular need for the laity to seize this moment, this 'kairos' and to come into their own to ensure that the church does, indeed, move *forwards*. The focus in our conversations, then, must be upon the *community* and not upon hierarchy – a long-outdated (and often pernicious and counter-evangelical – i.e. gospel -) concept in church and society alike.

Much current episcopal and diocesan thinking with regard to the future of the church focuses too much upon the future of parishes and the future of material resources. Little thought is given to the future of the structure and modes of governance within the church – both in universal institutional terms, national terms and diocesan and even parochial terms. Instead of devoting so much time, energy and precious resources to working out how to square the circle of too few priests to serve too many parishes, many with dwindling numbers and so coming up with temporary and usually unpopular solutions which do not bode well for

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the long-term future of the church, perhaps the efforts of bishops and dioceses and various interest groups in the church would all be more profitably employed were they focused upon the future of the church in terms of its organisation and structure – with a radical overhaul of all this – including bringing the long outdated hierarchialism to an end.

This is an especially alien form of governance in a postmodern world (indeed, we might add, a form of governance which has *always* been at odds with the gospel and communitarian ethic of Jesus of Nazareth). We must also bring to an end the continued vestiges of clericalism which not only continue to dominate relations between the clergy and laity, but which have enjoyed something of a renaissance in the church – not least of all amongst many contemporary seminarians as a 1999 NOP study of priestly attitudes has illustrated.<sup>10</sup> The concept of *subsidiarity* must be fully applied within as well as without the church and, by definition, *at every level* of the church.

Nor should we allow ourselves to become obsessed with ‘downsizing’ our parishes and community life, always edging towards a ‘less is more’ model where certain forms of small-scale community models are privileged over existing and alternative and more diverse forms of being church. In addition to the shortage of priests, along with the reluctance of certain episcopal conferences openly to embrace true and full lay ministry *within* the church. One also suspects that financial considerations often play a significant part in encouraging this tendency. That the foregoing factors are amongst the prime reasons why the church in countries such as England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland is *not* flourishing at present is borne out by the experiences of Christians elsewhere. Many have dared to ‘experiment’ with news ways of being church and of understanding what the church is and what it is and means to be church. Of course, not all of these have met with untrammelled success, but they have broadened the ecclesiological horizons sufficiently to cast new light on the systemic problems that the church is faced with across the globe. We must resist the urge to pick and choose which parts of such new thinking and practice in ecclesiology in a highly selective and uncontroversial fashion. For example, many would take the ‘nice’ and ‘safe’ parts about spirituality but to leave behind the uncomfortable and challenging aspects about active political engagement and about radically transforming the structures of the church itself and moving away from a hierarchical understanding of the church altogether. In so doing, we can, of course, learn much from those Christian communities who have engaged in such conversations in other parts of the church. Let us turn to consider some such ‘fresh thinking’ which may further inspire our own conversations.

### **‘Daring’ to Be Church -**

#### ***Learning from Visionary Ecclesiologies Elsewhere***

One of the most famous of all liberation theologians, and one who has devoted a considerable amount of his ministry and life in general to ecclesiological issues and to developing ‘new ways of being church’, is the Brazilian theologian, **Leonardo Boff**. He identifies many important issues in attempting to make the church more relevant to the day-to-day lives of the poor, oppressed and marginalised in an

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influential work entitled ***Ecclesiogenesis - The Base Communities Reinvent the Church***.<sup>11</sup> Although this work is now some two decades old (from its original publication date), much of the debate which it raised has continued to be dismissed or ignored in ecclesial circles and by church authorities in many parts of the Catholic world.

In the first chapter of that work, Boff speaks of ‘A New Experience of Church’. He outlines the gradual formation and development of the ‘basic church community’ movement, from its beginnings through initiatives in Brazil in the 1950s and 1960s in response to the shortage of priests. Obviously there are parallels to draw and lessons which we may learn here, whether the shortage is due to there being too few vocations or too many Christians in given areas. Lay people were trained and empowered to fulfil as many ministerial functions as possible in the church, short of carrying out those duties reserved for the priest. Boff believes the time has now come for even those tasks to be carried out by the lay people.

Boff identifies the central problem of the ‘atomization of existence’ characteristic of modern society (i.e. fragmentation and compartmentalisation – hence peoples’ lives lose any sense of wholeness and unity) which depersonalises individuals, spreading uniformity over independence and originality. Community breaks down and withers away. Obviously, we can see that Boff’s writings display an *increased*, as opposed to diminishing relevance for us in our ‘postmodern societies’ and in an era where globalisation has emerged as the new dominant ‘grand narrative’. Such developments have worsened all the more.

Boff believes the base communities represent a grassroots response to modernity’s assault upon community. They represent a new way of being church which can help rejuvenate the wider church itself. Indeed, the base communities are also a *charismatic* (i.e., Spirit-oriented) response to many of the problems of the institutional church, itself.<sup>12</sup>

The new movement helps build a truly *living* church, true to the central mission of the church, of bringing to society the ‘communitarian spirit’. Boff does not, however, speak of the relation between institutional and charismatic sectors of the church in terms of opposition. He rather speaks of their *convergence*. Nonetheless, he recognises that there will always be a ‘dialectical tension’ between the global church and the localised base communities movement.

Later in the same work,<sup>13</sup> Boff speaks about the ‘Reinvention of the Church’ and outlines how the base communities movement seeks to transform the structures of authority, governance and ministry in the church. Rejecting the outdated and oppressive hierarchical model of church organisation and authority, Boff draws upon social analysis (i.e. the study by social scientists and philosophers of trends and structures in society, along with prospects for the future) to demonstrate how such ventures as the basic Christian communities allow much greater consultation, collaboration and lay participation in the church. Structures are transformed and new ministries come to the fore.

In short, the church, for Boff, has been reformed and reinvented by these groups and their imagination and commitment to a church driven as much by the Holy Spirit as by ecclesiastical structures. Great diversity in ecclesiology results, even throughout the base communities themselves, for each community has its own

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special identity and structure. Thus such developments help pull the church away from an overt obsession with a *juridical* understanding of church authority, coming from a focus solely upon a view of the church's relation to Christ as a society to its founder. Boff does not reject the need for the hierarchy, but he believes that the self-understanding of the church must be ordered correctly; first the flock, then the shepherds for the sake of the flock.<sup>14</sup> That is to say the people of the church must come first – the bishops and leaders are only there to serve the people and to be part of the wider community in the church. Of course, here we might add that Vatican II says much the same.

The old hierarchy-centred ecclesiology reverses the natural order. A focus upon the church as being driven by the spirit and presence of the risen Christ leads to a conceptualisation of the church 'more from the foundations up than from the steeple down'. This is a vision of the church where all are equal, though people will have different charisms (callings/gifts) and therefore different roles, including the socially-inevitable hierarchical roles, and the role of especial leaders, including the Pope in *the service of* (rather than the presiding over) the *unity* of the whole community. We might add that this reflects one of the traditional titles of the pope as *Servus servorum Dei* – the Servant of the Servants of God, a title which John Paul II has emphasised in his own teachings.

All services come from *within* the community and are *for* the community. Boff calls this a 'more evangelical sense of church' which recognises diversity. In turning back to our own current ecclesial challenges and discussions, from this we are reminded that the laity have both the *opportunity* and the *duty to act*, just as in other times of challenge for the church.

Boff argues that the rigidity of current church structures can be overcome and decision-making processes can become more inclusive of the whole community for the exclusion of the laity from participation in such decisions is a fundamental problem for the church in our times. Hence, the base communities help develop a new non-linear form of church structure where the roles of all, including priests and bishops are transformed. The church is declericalised as the emphasis switches to the whole 'people of God', to whom collegiality now belongs. This all offers not a 'global alternative' for the entire church, but, instead, a 'leaven of renewal' for the church. As Boff states in another work, the challenge we still face is to make our ecclesial teachings and aspirations reality:

The true difficulty involves the theological implications present in the basic statement: the Church is the People of God. There is a fundamental equality in the Church. All are People of God. All share in Christ, directly and without mediation. Therefore, all share in the services of teaching, sanctifying, and organising the community. All are sent out on a mission; all are responsible for the unity of the community; all must be sanctified. ... The concept of Church as People of God inverts the relationships with regard to ministries. In classical ecclesiology there is a Church that only takes the hierarchy into account ... Anyone who opts for the Church as People of God must take it to its logical conclusion: to be a living Church, with flexible and appropriate ministries, without theological privileges.<sup>15</sup>

Boff nonetheless recognises that equality means not everyone must perform every

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task, just as he also recognises a particular role of 'giving unity to all of the services so as to maintain harmony' and the priest and bishop fulfil such a role on the local and regional levels (with the pope fulfilling the role at the universal level). But their ministries are ones of 'unification and not of sanctification'.<sup>16</sup>

In reflecting upon what we have considered thus far, we can see that there is a strong case to be made that the laity today must take up this challenge and finally allow the ecclesial vision of the church as the people of God to flourish at every level of the church. We must be honest and ask ourselves in exactly how many dioceses and parishes in our own societies can we say it is allowed to do so? As a third and final example of these contextual and liberationist perspectives of ecclesiology, we mention, briefly, two theologians who have focused upon the *spiritual* aspects of such visionary developments. **Pedro Casaldáliga**, and **José María Vigil** discuss 'A New Way of being Church' in their work, *The Spirituality of Liberation*.<sup>17</sup>

Here they describe a Church of the poor and marginalised – where these people have 'rights and authority', in opposition not to the hierarchy, but to the bourgeois church – a church 'taken over by elites which dominate people'. The emphasis is not upon the church as institution/society, but upon the Reign of God and the church's sacramental role in serving this reign and bringing about human communion. It espouses an ecclesiology based upon the teachings of Vatican II, where the local church is seen as primary, and where the church is inclusive and egalitarian, with a 'circle of sharing' – stressing, like Boff, a horizontal over a vertical, hierarchical model of authority. Finally, they highlight the importance of practical *ecumenism* in Latin America in building up the church, serving the people and facilitating the Reign of God. Co-operation amongst different Christian denominations is something which Roman Catholic parishes in our own societies today are *particularly* poor at encouraging and developing.

Liberation Theology, the Bible and the socio-economic realities of Latin America all inform this ecclesiology and, again, it is a call to the laity that they should, can and must drink from their own wells.

So, in reflecting upon such visions of the church, we see that the laity are the key to the future life of the church, to the development of new ways of ecclesial living, new structures and new visions which further develop the self-understanding of the church. The gospel is good news about justice, human well-being, truthfulness and hence freedom. In Latin America, their shorthand for this was to speak of a theology of *liberation*. Freedom from all which oppresses, which stifles human being and prevents us from being our true selves, and from being closer to one another and hence to God. How might liberationist thinking inform fresh thinking in societies more akin to our own? We turn to consider one recent attempt to build upon and develop the work of the pioneers of liberation theology, along with the pioneers of the modern theologies of the laity. Let us draw together our considerations thus far and examine one example of what possibilities exist, in the light of such considerations, for the future of the church in our own midst.

### ***The Liberation of the Laity – Paul Lakeland's Vision for the Future of the Church***

The US theologian, Paul Lakeland, has recently published a study which first

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surveys the lot of the laity throughout the twentieth century, charting the emergence of a 'theology of the laity' along the way, and he then turns to look at the prospects for the future of the church, particularly in the light of recent scandals and the reactions to these. He turns, above all, to suggest what the future of the *laity* might be in the future of the church. Like much of our paper thus far, his central argument is that a revaluation of the nature and importance of the laity, along with a transformed understanding of the place and role of the laity in the church, *is* the future of the church. Unless the laity are allowed to develop their ecclesial mission to the full, then there will be no future of the church as such. Lakeland believes that the recent scandals over abuse in the church will eventually force the church authorities to transform the structures of governance, organisation and accountability. Above all, they will have to bring the laity on board in these changes, removing barriers to the involvement of the laity in the most important decisions and organisation of the church. The alternative is unthinkable: The price of not doing this will be mass defection of the most active members of the faith community. But if laypeople are called into a central position in addressing the ills of the church the clerical culture of the past will have to bow to lay convictions about the value of an open, democratic and pluralistic society.<sup>18</sup>

Lakeland admits that the most likely scenario for the foreseeable future would be that the church's leaders bumble along like a lazy householder, fixing faults here and there in a temporary fashion, failing to learn valuable lessons along the way, but he believes that the essential and necessary maintenance for which the church is crying out 'cannot be postponed any longer'.<sup>19</sup> This image will seem all too painfully an frustratingly familiar to Catholic Christians in our own parishes and dioceses.

Thus he outlines his own vision for the future of the church and he indicates how central a transformed understanding of and position for the laity will be in that future when he reinforces our earlier considerations in stating that:

The question about the future of the church comes down to consideration of its adaptability to dramatic change, particularly to a transformed role for the laity, and to its capacity to distinguish between what is essential and what is not. A church built on a sense of unfolding tradition should not be frightened by such challenges. The problem is that our collective memory tends to be short, so that we may too easily identify essentials with matters that are only a century or so old.<sup>20</sup>

To this I would add that we forget, all too often, one of the most defining characteristics of *Roman* Catholicism and, before it became known as such, the broader church of the western rite. The 'Orthodox' churches call themselves such because of the very fact that they observed that the church of the west, the primary Christian communion of which is now known as Roman Catholicism, was prepared to adapt itself to different cultural and historical situations. It embraced *development* in its liturgy, worship and doctrine alike.

In essence, the Roman Catholic church differs from both the Orthodox and many Protestant traditions in that it actively seeks to live in the present and to look to the future, albeit whilst learning from the past. Those other Christian traditions<sup>21</sup>

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lay an especial emphasis upon the ways and traditions of the past, most specifically the bible and the patristic era. Roman Catholicism embraces a more dynamic and ongoing understanding of *tradition*.<sup>22</sup> This is not to say that other Christian denominations do not seek to discern the 'signs of the times' but doing so is certainly one of the primary characteristics of Catholic Christianity. And yet, to survey the official teaching and attitudes of so many church leaders in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries alike, continuing down to our own day, one would be forgiven for thinking that their attitudes were more in tune with positions adopted by earlier more Conservative Eastern Orthodox Christians in some respects, and Protestant Reformers in others. John XXIII sought to brush away such thinking when he reminded figures of ecclesial authority that they were not born to be the curators of a museum, 'but to cultivate a flourishing garden of life'.

Lakeland's proposals for the future of the laity and so of the church are sometimes radical but always informed, considered and by and large eminently sensible. Like many of us, he believes that the church has a lot of catching up to do – Vatican II was a wonderful council which achieved a great deal, specifically in relation to the laity and their place in the church, but it was outdated before it had even begun. In relation to advances made in terms of liturgy, inter-religious understanding and religious freedom and dignity, to recognition of ecclesial imperfections, the importance of episcopal collegiality and consultation, to the gifts and skills of the laity, the council fathers 'said all these good, if quaint, things – *things that ought not to have needed to be said in 1965. But many of them remain less than fully realized even today*'.<sup>23</sup>

So much remains unfulfilled. Thus we must ask ourselves why this is so and we must also seek to ensure that they remain unfulfilled no longer. Our discussions concerning the laity can help ensure that we fulfil both tasks and it is the obvious arena where the church can survey the 'interim' progress made since Vatican II. Returning to Lakeland, we see he suggests that any 'Vatican III' would need to focus its attention upon and to address a number of pressing issues, (which again echo aspects of our earlier considerations), such as:

The 'democratization of church procedures and the implications for patterns of leadership'.

The place of women in the church

The nature of ministry

The relation between ministry in the church and in the world

The status and claims of Catholic Christianity vis a vis other world faiths

The scandal of Poverty

The 'cultural hegemony of world capitalism'

Globalisation and its implications for human well-being

The need to provide a new vision of the church which would demand that the bureaucratic and institutional elements of the church were radically overhauled.

And, obviously, the Role of the Laity, particularly in relation to Vatican II's unfinished business.<sup>24</sup>

Lakeland also offers some solutions to the challenges facing the church of today

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and tomorrow. In relation to the structure of the church he acknowledges that many accept that the curia is outdated and often counter-productive in its actions. Many likewise call for the process by which bishops are appointed to be radically reformed. The issue of the 'priestly, celibate caste' needs addressing, as does the 'passivity' of the laity which compounds many other difficulties in the church. Nonetheless, whilst making no claims to being able to predict the future, Lakeland offers some positive suggestions as to what the church of the future *might* look like. He believes that the **parish** of the future will look quite different compared with today and will encompass very different forms of ministry compared with the normative model of the present. As I have suggested elsewhere,<sup>25</sup> we must resist the temptation – to which recent church teaching appears to have succumbed – of viewing the primary locus of lay ministry as being in the world as opposed to the church. Such a temptation overlooks *Apostolicam Actuositatem* - Vatican II's *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* – when it makes clear that the laity have a right and duty to exercise a ministry that is both extra-ecclesial as well as intra ecclesial:

The lay apostolate, in all its many aspects, is exercised both in the Church and in the world. In either case different fields of apostolic action are open to the laity. We profess to mention here the chief among them; Church communities, the family, the young, the social environment, national and international spheres. Since in our days women are taking an increasingly active share in the whole life of society, it is very important that their participation in the various sectors of the Church's apostolate should likewise develop.<sup>26</sup>

Lakeland likewise believes that we must transform our understanding of the divisions of ministry within the church and the parish of the future will accentuate such a transformation whereby the community is no longer divided between priest and people, but rather 'between those who exercise a ministry within the community and those whose lay ministry is primarily carried out in the mission to the world'.<sup>27</sup> Lakeland believes that it does not make any difference to the fact that all ministries are *priestly* ministries, whether they are exercised *ad intra* or *ad extra*. So he speaks of the former as building up the community in order to serve the wider mission which the latter carries out in the world. Hence he believes we can come to discern between those ministers of the *church* and ministers *in the world*. Gone will be the old divisions of priest, deacon and lay-minister, to be replaced by: ... a small team of ministers, all of whom will have been ordained by the bishop to celebrate the Eucharist, though this role may not be their primary contribution to the community. It might be that one of them is a gifted preacher, another a full-time teacher in a local school, another a hospital chaplain, and perhaps another possesses a pronounced talent for administration. Their ordination to preside at the Eucharist is simultaneously the recognition that they possess the charisms of leadership. ... The entire team will recognize its accountability not only to the local bishop... but most especially to the local community that they serve.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to such a core team of leaders, there will be numerous other forms of ministry exercised by others within the community and without as well, mirroring many of those roles which already are undertaken by lay people in the church.

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Thirdly, there will still be those 'whose ministry is carried out in their daily lives in the world'.<sup>29</sup> Their lives will demand that they strive to exemplify the gospel in the world not simply through piety but through social and political witness as well. A parish council elected by all will be comprised of members of each group of ministers, with sub-committees engaging in the more detailed decision-making and planning processes necessary for the flourishing of various aspects of the community's life. The 'servant-leaders' will be responsible to the council itself, in addition to the local bishop and the parish itself, in collaboration with the bishop will appoint its leaders.

Thus, Lakeland tells us, his parish here no longer recognises a 'cultic separation' between the ordained and other ministers. More importantly, celibacy and gender are no longer controversial factors in deciding whom should be ordained. He understands celibacy as a noble personal calling but something which is in no way connected with ministry (I might add that the church has itself acknowledged as much and the reasons for the introduction and maintenance of compulsory celibacy in the first place were largely pragmatic and expedient in nature). Lakeland also tells us that he has yet to hear a convincing theological argument which justifies the exclusion of women from certain forms of ecclesial ministry. Indeed, the cultic separation disappears if a changed understanding of ministry is embraced, as celibacy and gender 'become irrelevant'.<sup>30</sup> He believes that ministerial ambition and ecclesial careerism will likewise disappear as leaders are appointed both by and for the community, as will the patronising and destructive 'infantilization' of the laity.

In Lakeland's vision of the **diocese** of the future, he again wishes to accentuate the notion of *service* over and above institution:

The diocese is not a principality, not a corporation, most definitely not a branch office of a transnational conglomerate. The diocese is the church in its fullness, an association of local communities of faith bound to one another by the gospel and by their common leader in the faith, the local bishop.<sup>31</sup>

Bishops should emerge from *within* the local community, as the norm, with that community having a large say in selecting their bishop. Again, careerism should be curtailed and shunning the practice of episcopal translation from one diocese to another will go a long way towards achieving this aim. Nor should diocesan administrators be chosen solely from amongst the ordained – they should instead be selected for their skills and on merit. True structures of accountability should also be in place at the diocesan level and this requires that a diocesan council must have executive, as well as consultative powers.

In terms of **national (episcopal) conferences**, one of Lakeland's most innovative suggestions is that they should take on a synodal structure and be comprised of representatives drawn from amongst the church in general and *not* solely comprised of bishops. Thus servant leaders of local communities, ministers of the church and ministers in the world would join bishops on this truly representative body. Its authority and remit with regards to its local church should be extended. Lakeland does not propose wholesale changes to the **universal church** as much of its form and potential bodes well for the future. It is the actual practice and nature of its governance that needs to be changed. Lakeland would abolish what he

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perceives to be an anachronistic College of Cardinals, to be replaced by a representative body of senior bishops being elected in a manner which recognises the proportion of Catholics in their particular national conferences. The curia would also be completely transformed, mirroring the diocesan transfer to a system of administrative appointments based on talent and not on ordination. From amongst the number of those members of the revised electoral college, a Catholic would be elected as pope (by necessity, of an ecclesially centrist mind) who would have demonstrated soundness in teaching, administration, common sense and, most importantly, whose character may symbolise the unity of the entire church. Lakeland envisages further radical transformation in the church of the future in relation to religious orders, the role of the theologian and the nature and mission of Catholic educational institutions.

Lakeland believes that his vision of the future sets aside ‘nothing essential’.<sup>32</sup> Thus he gives us much food for thought for the future. Lakeland, himself, believes that the church will thus take on structures more in tune with the structures and the ecclesial spirit of the early Christian communities,<sup>33</sup> and in this he echoes the work of Yves Congar whose influence looms large across his own study and influential contemporary ecclesiology as such Richard McBrien,<sup>34</sup> in addition to the ecclesiologies of liberation, which we have considered earlier. Indeed, we must also remind ourselves that the church, true to its western catholic developmental character, has engaged in an *ongoing* transformation of its structures and forms of governance, authority, organisation and, indeed, of ministry. Let us not forget that ‘Catholic reformation’ was actually a sixteenth century term and there were calls for ‘reform and renewal’ at every level of the church long before the likes of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin et al. set in train the various waves of the Protestant Reformation. The council of Trent, itself, was not simply concerned with reacting to such Protestant reformers and their doctrines. It also, like certain councils before it, was concerned with reforming the church, so to speak, ‘from within’. We must learn to think beyond the boundaries that enframe our current ecclesial thinking so as to set aside certain features of ecclesial life and structure which come to be perceived as ‘irreformable’. The character and history of Catholic Christianity shows us, time and again, the truth of Newman’s oft-quoted adage that ‘to live is to change’ (to which he added that ‘to be perfect is to have changed often’). Such thinking was the direct result of Newman’s deep study of the history of the church and, above all, of the *development* of its teaching, i.e., its doctrine.

We must openly and joyously acknowledge that, simply because something has been understood and done in a certain way for a long time or even for all that recent memory can recall, it does not mean that it was always done thus in the church and should therefore be preserved as something essential to the life and character of the church. For example, when St Mary’s College, Oscott, was first opened in the nineteenth century, it trained future clergy *alongside* lay people. Or, again, in the nineteenth century north American context, as Raymond A. Schroth has illustrated:

Up through the 1830s, laymen, through a system called trusteeism, virtually controlled the daily operations of the church. According to state, not ecclesiastical, law intended partly to limit the influence of religious

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institutions, churches and colleges were incorporated under the ownership of lay boards of trustees. The boards bought the property, built the church, selected the pastor, set his salary and fired him – or attempted to, depending on the guts and political skill of the local bishop.<sup>35</sup>

No one is advocating a replacement of one all-powerful elite or hierarchy with another. The point here is that we must not be afraid to conceive of and, indeed, to rediscover and to revive, ecclesial ideas, practices and structures which may work better in our own age than much of what is now in place – for such is patently not serving the church well. Dare to think. Dare to question. Dare to change. Dare to be. Where does this all take us then? What initial tasks and steps forward should we begin with?

### ***The Future of the Church – An Ecclesiology for Today and Tomorrow?***

We should ask what an ecclesiology for our times and for our local, regional and national settings might look like. Solutions which are imposed from without and ‘above’ are no solutions at all. But how do we take the church forward into dialogue with the contemporary era? We should discuss the prime aspects of what a ‘post-modern’ ecclesiology might be, for we live in the age following the modern era and Vatican II was primarily addressing the modern world. Scholars now tell us that we are in an age ‘beyond modernity’, ‘after modernity’ – hence a *postmodern* age.

This is an age where old attitudes towards things such as religion have passed away. Not only are religious beliefs challenged, but even those who remain religious are much less likely to offer blind obedience and deference to the church today as their parents and grandparents once may have done. Overarching and universal explanations and models of most things are now treated with suspicion. People seek things more relevant to their own locality and life-situation in all fields and this is so in religion, too. The postmodern age is also characterised by the ‘consumerist turn’, where everything seems to be geared towards personal satisfaction and even religion is now ‘packaged’, organised and even ‘marketed’ as such because believers are treating religion as something they may take or leave, picking and choosing which aspects they feel will ‘work’ for them.

In seeking to offer a relevant understanding of ecclesiology for this age,<sup>36</sup> i.e., a postmodern vision of church, we must appreciate that our various understandings of the nature, purpose and role of the church today have received much direction and inspiration from the ecclesiologies which have emerged from the theologies of liberation and those ecclesiological explorations which have been influenced by them. Above all else, we have seen that the most positive principle to emerge from such ecclesiological experiments and studies is that the laity should always seek to build the church and their ecclesial lives through drinking from their own wells – through reflecting upon their own context and experience, along with their own needs, aspirations and communitarian dreams.

### ***Building for the Future***

The laity must actively campaign for its rightful role and ministry in the church of today and tomorrow. It must cease to be deferential to hierarchy as if it remained in cowering fear or blind awe of the clergy and hierarchy. When we are children,

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to paraphrase St Paul, we think and speak and act as children. But such childish ways must be put behind us if lay people are to fulfil adult and mature roles and responsibilities in the church. As John McKenzie said in the aftermath of Vatican II (referring, in the parlance of the time to lay women, as well as men, of course): It is my own belief that we shall not know the office and function of the layman until the layman himself, who knows his potentialities and his opportunities better than the clergy do, defines his office and function. When the laity become aware that the decision of what they can do and must do lies with them, they will do it.<sup>37</sup>

McKenzie's words ring as true today as then and echo Bernard's words with which we began our reflection (courtesy of Gutiérrez) – the laity must drink from their own wells. The laity must learn to find and use their voice and not in isolated circumstances or in piecemeal fashion. McKenzie goes on to make an impassioned plea for the thoughts and aspirations of the laity to be taken into account in the church, i.e., that more scope should exist for the place of 'public opinion in the church':

Public opinion is meaningful only when it reviews and, when necessary, criticizes the decisions of authority. Modern democratic processes have shown that public opinion is not a species of insurrection, and that public opinion is quite compatible with a law-abiding and orderly community. Public opinion illustrates a principle which Church officers often forget, that no one ever fights a decision which he thinks he had a part in making. Yet the suggestion that hierarchical and pastoral decisions are subject to review and criticism would seem to many to approach blasphemy. This attitude is as good an example as we can find of the excessive valuation of authority. If authority is not restrained by public opinion, which is the freedom and power of the members of society at work, then what does restrain authority? If we think authority should have no restraint other than self-restraint, then this theoretical position should be clearly stated so that no doubt is left of its meaning. It must be remembered that hierarchical and pastoral decisions have seriously damaged the Church in the past, and we have no guarantee that they will not damage the Church in the future. . . .<sup>38</sup>

How, then, are the laity to begin to drink, fully, truly and freely, from *their own* wells, rather than from those wells which are sometimes presented to them as being in the gift and preserve of a privileged ecclesial caste? First and foremost, the laity must take responsibility and ownership of their church life and ministry – and here, as we have seen, we can learn much from elsewhere. The number of studies and commentators that conclude that the laity *is* the future of the church are legion. As one leading journal put it, there is no alternative solution to the dilemmas which the church in our societies is facing:

There is only one solution, which is that lay people, who already play a prominent role, will take a still greater part. . . . The new situation will need a fundamental change of mindset by clergy and hierarchy. Bishops ask their laity to be forceful in promoting the Gospel in the secular world. They sometimes expect them, to do the impossible and become docile and unquestioning within the church itself and to accept different – perhaps even inferior –

## Vision and Mission for the Future of the Laity

standards of procedure. For example, in best business practice all employees should 'own' the decisions that are made. . . . Businesses and organisations are accountable to employees, customers and shareholders, and that builds up expectations in all lay people involved in them; bishops need to understand this by an act of imagination, for they themselves are not answerable in any such way.<sup>39</sup>

The same journal goes on to ask why the bishops are stalling on providing the 'systematic and concentrated training' that is required to equip the laity with the necessary skills and foundation for their increased roles. Given that the church in England and Wales 'already has university colleges in London, Birmingham and Leeds, all with considerable resources that could be used to service a pastoral institute', along with a wealth of Catholic academic expertise in the secular universities – the question on which the leader-writer ends is stark 'What are we waiting for?'<sup>40</sup> I will add what is at one and the same time a starker observation which can turn to a more hopeful realisation.

Lay people should *no longer wait for the bishops to act*. They should *demand* that they do so in relation to many issues (withholding financial support from dioceses which refuse to do so – a practice which has brought about greater accountability in certain US dioceses). In relation to other areas, the laity should go ahead and simply *act*. In particular, this will be the most fruitful way of proceeding at parish and deanery level. Eventually, dioceses will then engage with laity more genuinely and widely and lay people will begin take full ownership and responsibility for their own communities – whether enough priests exist to minister to them or not. This is the foreseeable future. The laity are willing and able. We must drink from our own wells and bishops and clergy must encourage and support all Catholic Christians in so doing.

### ***Beginning to Draw from the Well - Concluding Remarks***

By way of brief conclusion, then, we may say that the following factors have emerged as priorities to be borne in mind in all our conversation which attempt to make sense of the future direction which our church – local and universal – should take in the future. Lay groups engaged in discussions concerning the future of the church and their role within it should ask how each priority can be addressed in relation to each of their parish/local setting, and in their deanery and diocesan settings. They should seek to identify what particular issues and challenges are most pressing in their own ecclesial contexts and to address the question of how they might best foster the habit of ecclesial 'fresh-thinking' at every level of their Catholic Christian life and involving as many persons as possible.

### ***Unity in Diversity***

The twin poles of the universal and the local must not be played off against each other. There is no 'one-size fits all' model for the church that can be applied in all places, across all boundaries and at all times. Local differences and needs must be borne in mind and different practices encouraged where they build up the community. Local communities must also never lose sight of their interconnectedness with other Christian communities throughout the church universal.

### ***Priority of Love***

## **Vision and Mission for the Future of the Laity**

In all things, all debates, all organisational and institutional dealings, all theological explorations, all pastoral undertakings, Christian love must prevail. This has been the watchword of the Christian understanding of community from the gospels, through the epistles onwards down to our own day. The papal encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, urges us always to act through love in our actions and dialogues both within and without the church.

### **Continuous Renewal and Reform**

The church is forever moving forward and must always look around itself and explore new and better ways to bring the love of God into the lives of those whom the church touches. This means that the church, as it often said, is a community in constant renewal.

### **Mystery, Sacrament and Community**

No vision of the church should ever lose sight of its fundamental connection with the mystery which Christians call God whom they believe calls them into shared existence and maintains and sustains them in that existence. The mystery of Christ's continuous presence in the church is of vital importance here, also. The sacramental aspects of the church, whereby God's grace is channelled into the lives of all through the life and mission of the church is equally vital to any vision of the church. And so, too is the sense of 'communio', both with God and one another, both within and without 'official' church boundaries.. Hence we need not be forced to pick and choose one fixed and rigid ecclesiology. The church has always blended aspects of many rich and wonderful notions of what it is to be church and should continue to do so. Obviously, this has a direct bearing upon the life of the church at every level of its existence and in each and every place where it is lived.

### **Dialogical Church and Servant Church**

In the light of the above, the church is right to lay particular emphasis in the current age upon the importance of *dialogue* with all, within and without the church and, so too, upon the role of the church as the servant of the human family and its individual members. This last aspect of the church's mission is especially relevant given the global poverty and oppression so prevalent in our age which the gospel seeks to counter.

### **Openness and faithfulness to Gospel**

In all things, all dealings, decisions and aspects of organisation, the church, both local and universal must be open. All must be allowed a voice and to participate in the key decisions which affect the community. How else could dialogue and love prosper? The gospel, as always, can be a measure of our ecclesial living and priorities. We can use it to see how faithful our present church communities and, indeed the universal and institutional church itself, are actually being to the vision of love contained therein.

### **A Virtuous Community**

Hence all Christian communities should look to foster, develop and exemplify the rich Christian virtues both in terms of individual lives and in terms of communal living – in terms of Christian being at every level. Love will be the supreme virtue overseeing such an existence and faith and hope, those other two theological virtues take likewise must play a pre-eminent part in all aspects of our church

## **Vision and Mission for the Future of the Laity**

living. Community, the mirror of the very being of God, may then flourish all the better.

### **The Future of the Laity?**

We have sought to make a case that the laity should take the initiative in seeking to shape, influence and build the future of the church which is the very same thing as taking the initiative in building for the future of their ecclesial existence and those of their children and grandchildren and so on. Some might say that such is an unrealistic plea – that the initiative must initially come from 'on high'. In certain respects this is true – the 'reins of power' must first be loosened in certain parts of the church, but the initial impetus can and must come from the laity themselves.

To quote McKenzie once more:

Real change is real only if it is the work of the whole Church and not exclusively the work of its officers. But the initiative still lies with the officers. We shall know that a change has been made when the initiative no longer lies there. *The Constitution on the Church [Lumen Gentium]* provides that the laity should reveal their needs and their desires to their pastors, and under the proper conditions should express their opinions on those things that concern the good of the Church.<sup>41</sup>

*Lumen Gentium*, chapter IV, to which McKenzie here alludes, really does offer a charter for a ministry for our times – where the laity can minister and bear witness to God in all things. It offers a theology of daily living that is Ignatian in its tone and substance alike 'the laity consecrate the world itself to God'. There we find what amounts to the laity being told to raise their voices, to strive to build the future of the church with all their might, always to ensure that they drink from their own wells. And in both *Lumen Gentium* 33 and 34, we are again reminded that the laity's role is by no means always an *extra*-ecclesial ministry. The fullness of the universal priesthood means that it could not be otherwise than, at one and the same time, both an *intra* and *extra* ecclesial calling which all receive, though the accent will sometimes fall more heavily upon one or the other for many Catholic Christians.

Just as Paul Lakeland acknowledged, in engaging in such thinking 'outside the box' we are not announcing the 'End of the Laity' – for how could we? The laity (laos) are simply the people of God and that means the laity *is* the church. No laity, no church, therefore! Do we even need to think or speak of 'Reinventing the Church?', then? Not necessarily. We do not need to start anew nor to return to thoughts of some mythical 'golden age' when all was ripe with the church. The church, as the adage goes, is a company in *constant renewal*. Cardinal Ratzinger has also acknowledged this fact and suggested that the main problem is discerning between true and false reform.<sup>42</sup> Some disagreement may enter into the arena at this point (!), but, of course, even Cardinal Ratzinger would not seek to impose the thoughts of one person with regard to 'true reform' upon an entire church. And nor should any bishop, diocesan administration body, dean, parish priest or council or any single interest or spiritual group throughout the church. We must always seek inspiration from the gospels and epistles, from the stories of the earliest Christians and their earliest communities and from the rich and varied history and traditions of the church.

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In doing so, and here in seeking to reach a conclusion, might we come to appreciate that our task is not about 'reinventing the church' anew. Indeed, we should *not* seek to develop any *new* overarching and universal ecclesiological paradigm as such. Our primary task is rather to enable ourselves to transcend the competing and negative ecclesiologies currently in vogue in order to allow our communities to flourish in their witness to the gospel.

The emphasis upon the role of *ethics* in ecclesiology is here paramount. *Living* the gospel informs *how* we live together, understand ourselves and our community and interact with one another both within the local communities and at the deanery, diocesan, regional, national and universal Catholic Christian levels alike. Indeed, a good case can be made for Christians to realise that the gospel is a call to see and hence practice ethics *as* ecclesiology. In doing so, we will not fail to realise that we can never have an 'imposed' way of being church or an ecclesiology of 'one size fits all'. Rather the embracing of true unity in diversity in true subsidiarity whereby the lives of all Christians mirror that of the Trinity – where all mutually 'inter penetrate'<sup>43</sup> the being of all others. In such a church, there is no need ever to fear that all can and must 'drink from their own wells'. The source of all wells remains the same – the threefold being, that community of 'persons', which Christians call God. The Future for the Laity *is* the Future of the Church.

**Gerard Mannion, July 24th, 2003**

### **Questions for Reflection and Discussion for the CMS**

1 On reading this paper, what reflections emerge *for you* on the nature of Catholicity and the ongoing life and development of the church?

2 What sense (or differing senses) of 'being church' is (or are) in operation in your own parishes and dioceses and who shapes such visions of being church?

3 How might the laity begin to 'drink from their own wells' in your own parochial and diocesan settings and therefore begin to *take the initiative* in a much more pro-active sense, with regard to influencing the future of the church?

4 In what ways can the laity from amongst your parishes and dioceses engage in ongoing dialogue with church leaders and the various bishops to enable the aspirations and concerns of the laity to be fully considered when crucial decisions are made with regard to the future of the local and national church?

5 In particular, how can local Christian communities best reflect upon their own experiences and so shape and articulate their own ecclesial visions for the future?

6 Which parish and diocesan offices and structures do you think are essential and which simply creatures of their time and so open to renewal and reform?

7 Do you think there is often a tendency today to perceive the future of the local and diocesan church primarily in terms of 'rationalisation', as opposed to, for example, pastoral issues taking priority?

8 What lessons do you think we can learn from those local Christian communities in other parts of the world?

9 What are your reactions to the visions of the future espoused by those such as Boff and Lakeland?

10 What *do you* think the church of the future might look like in relation to each

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of the following aspects of ecclesial life:

Parish/Local Christian Community

Diocese

National Church/Bishops' Conference

Roman Curial/Administrative Authorities

College of Cardinals

The Papacy (which, we must remember, Pope John Paul II has asked us to consider and discuss in order to inform his own reflections of the future of his office – see the encyclical *Ut Unum Sint*).

<sup>1</sup> Gustavo Gutiérrez, *We Drink from Our Wells - The Spiritual Journey of a People*, London, SCM, 1984, 5.

Gutiérrez published a short article bearing the same title in *Concilium*, 159 (1982), pp 38-45.

<sup>2</sup> Cf., for example, 'Pushing Down the Laity' (p3) and Paul Zulehner, 'Deaf to the Faithful' (p 8-9) in *The Tablet*, 17 May 2003. The *Catholic Men's Society's* own discussion pamphlet from 2003 – *The Future*

*of the Laity* contains testimony to the dissatisfaction of many church communities with regards to the restricted roles and voice which the laity have, as well as with regard to unease at with the manner in which diocesan decisions are made and imposed upon the laity.

<sup>3</sup> 'The larger picture' from the letters page of *The Tablet*, 7 June 2003, 17.

<sup>4</sup> For a discussion of related themes which makes it clear that much scope exists under *current* canon law for an increased role for the laity in areas of church leadership and governance, see John Beal's chapter in *Governance, Accountability and the Future of the Church* eds. Francis Oakley and Bruce Russett, New York, Continuum, November 2003 (forthcoming).

<sup>5</sup> From *Readings in Church Authority – Gifts and Challenges in Contemporary Catholicism* eds. Gerard Mannion, Richard Gaillardetz, Jan Kerkhofs and Kenneth Wilson, Harmondsworth, Ashgate, 2003, 261. [The full original version is taken from Pottmeyer, Hermann: *Towards a Papacy in Communion: Perspectives from Vatican Councils I & II*, New York, Crossroad, 1998].

<sup>6</sup> For a variety of readings on this subject see the selection edited by Jan Kerkhofs in 'The Sensus Fidelium and the Reception of Teaching', Part 5 of *Readings in Church Authority – Gifts and Challenges in Contemporary Catholicism* eds. Gerard Mannion, Richard Gaillardetz, Jan Kerkhofs and Kenneth Wilson, Harmondsworth, Ashgate, 2003, pp 291-360.

<sup>7</sup> Jan Kerkhofs, *Ibid.*, 292.

<sup>8</sup> Ladislav Orsy, 'Participation and the Nature of the Church' in *Readings in Church Authority*, 349-57.352.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 354.

<sup>10</sup> Commissioned for the *Queen's Foundation Working Party on Authority and Governance in the Roman Catholic Church*.

<sup>11</sup> London, CollinsFlame, 1986.

<sup>12</sup> For more on the base communities movement, see Leonardo Boff, 'The Base Ecclesial Structure: A Brief Sketch' and 'Underlying Ecclesiologies of the Base Ecclesial Communities', chapters 9 and 10 of his *Church, Charism and Power*, London, SCM, 1985. See, also, Margaret Hebblethwaite, *Base Communities – An Introduction*, London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1993 and Andrew Dawson 'The origins and character of the base ecclesial community: a Brazilian perspective' in Christopher Rowland (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993.

<sup>13</sup> Chapter three.

<sup>14</sup> For a further sample of Boff's writings in these areas, see *Readings in Church Authority – Gifts and Challenges in Contemporary Catholicism* eds. Gerard Mannion, Richard Gaillardetz, Jan Kerkhofs and Kenneth Wilson, which contains abridged versions of Boff's 'The Reinvention of the Church' (pp56-64), and 'The Power of the Institutional Church – Can It Be Converted?', (pp 532-39).

<sup>15</sup> Leonardo Boff, *Church, Charism and Power*, London, SCM, 1985, 133.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> London, Burns & Oates, 1993, pp 181-191.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity – In Search of An Accountable Church*, New York, Continuum, 2003, 258.

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- <sup>19</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., 262.
- <sup>21</sup> In their beginnings, at least, and in aspects of the self-understanding of such denominations by certain of their number since.
- <sup>22</sup> For a readable discussion of such themes in ecclesiological development, cf. Keith Ward, 'Orthodox and Catholic Traditions', ch. 10 of his: *Religion and Community*, Oxford, OUP, 2000.
- <sup>23</sup> Ibid., 263 (my italics).
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid. 263-6.
- <sup>25</sup> In my paper, 'Who leads, Who Serves? The Concept of Laity in a Postmodern Age', presented to the Conference on *Ministry, Authority, Leadership – What is the Future for the Laity?* at the University of Lampeter, Wales, June 2002.
- <sup>26</sup> *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, no 9.
- <sup>27</sup> Lakeland, *The Liberation of the Laity*, 267.
- <sup>28</sup> Ibid., 267-8.
- <sup>29</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid., 270.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid., 271.
- <sup>32</sup> Ibid., 282.
- <sup>33</sup> Ibid., 285.
- <sup>34</sup> E.g. compare McBrien's comments in his introductory text, *Responses to 101 Questions on the Church*, New York, Paulist, 1996, 67-70.
- <sup>35</sup> Raymond A. Schroth '19th century lessons in Lay Governance' in *The National Catholic Reporter*, November 01, 2002.
- <sup>36</sup> I shall explore the prospects for so doing at greater length in my forthcoming work - *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity - A New Paradigm for the Roman Catholic Church?*
- <sup>37</sup> John L. McKenzie: 'The Tension Between Authority and Freedom' in *Readings in Church Authority*, 124. Originally from John L. McKenzie, *Authority in the Church*, London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1966, ch. 13.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>39</sup> 'Train the Laity Now' in *The Tablet*, 9 June 2001, 827.
- <sup>40</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>41</sup> John L. McKenzie: 'The Tension Between Authority and Freedom', 125. McKenzie has in mind, in particular, *Lumen gentium*, chapter IV, no. 37.
- <sup>42</sup> Cf. part V of *Called to Communion – Understanding the Church Today*, San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1996, pp 133-56. An abridged version of this can be found in *Readings in Church Authority – Gifts and Challenges in Contemporary Catholicism* eds. Gerard Mannion, Richard Gaillardetz, Jan Kerkhofs and Kenneth Wilson, 546-51.
- <sup>43</sup> I.e. perichoresis.

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### Bulletin 6

## LAY LEADERSHIP IN THE FUTURE CHURCH

### ***The role of lay people in our parishes and creative ways of meeting the challenges that the future church offers***

#### ***Introduction***

In preparing this paper last year (*see Bulletin 5 in last years 'Plan' programme-ArthurKeegan, Ed.*), I began by naming our present reality, and outlining a crucial choice concerning ministry and structure that is presented to us by that reality. I then mapped the journey that is taking us from a past of certainty to an uncertain future. I will continue by proposing a theoretical model to track that transition from past to future. Finally, I will explore the kinds of ministerial patterns and local structures that seem to be suggested by that transition. This exploration will not result in a blueprint for action, because all I can perceive are four broad outlines, painted with a thick brush and a very shaky hand. It will be up to you - in the future - to judge their authenticity and perhaps one-day paint in the details.

#### ***Beyond the Threshold: The Mission of the Future Church***

Last year I outlined the forces that have driven us onto the threshold upon which we find ourselves. Whether or not we progress beyond it depends upon the choice I outlined last year. If we continue to attempt 'business as usual' we will never achieve a new sense of direction and purpose. But the exploration of our own liminality has done more than express what is happening to the Catholic community. It also identifies where the world is. So let us see what might happen if we select the other option – if we recognise that the mission of the Church is not primarily carried out within the four walls of the parish church. So what is that mission? What is the Church here for?

The Second Vatican Council challenged the Church to be alert to the 'joys and hopes, grief and anguish' of our world, and there to speak the Good news of Jesus Christ. We are not Christians for ourselves, but for the sake of the Kingdom of God. We do not simply have in mind our personal salvation: we are called to have a concern for the transformation of the whole created order in all its dimensions. The structures through which that mission has been carried have changed over the centuries to reflect contemporary needs, but the mission itself has remained constant. As the Pope has said: It is not [...] a matter of inventing a new "programme". The programme already exists; it is the plan found in the Gospel and in the living Tradition, it is the same as ever. Ultimately, it has its centre in Christ himself, who is to be known, loved and imitated, so that in Him we may live the life of the Trinity, and with him transform history until its fulfilment in the heavenly Jerusalem. This is a programme which does not change with shifts of times and cultures, even though it takes account of time and culture for the sake of true dialogue and effective communication. This programme for all times is our programme for the Third Millennium. But it has to be translated into pastoral initiatives adapted to the circumstances of each community. (*Novo Millennio Inuente*, 29)

The challenge for us as we negotiate this threshold in our history is exactly that – to find new pastoral ways of fulfilling our mission in the reality of post-modern

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England.

### ***Two aspects to avoid***

The earlier analysis of post-modern society highlighted two related aspects that are profoundly unhealthy and sinful. The first is the lack of a unifying meaning to life (in other words, a 'metanarrative'). The second is the dreadful fragmentation created by the 'pick and mix' approach to life and identity - a fragmentation that leads to a divided self and a lack of any sustained sense of belonging. The Good News that is particularly needed in our age is one that addresses this fragmentation. Christ calls us to proclaim to the women and men of today that they are destined for something rather different - not to live fragmented lives, but lives that find their core of meaning through a genuine communion of life that has its focal point in the life of the Trinity. The Pope once again lays down the challenge:

To make the Church the home and the school of communion: that is the great challenge facing us in the millennium which is now beginning, if we wish to be faithful to God's plan and respond to the world's deepest yearnings. (N.M.I. 43)

### **LEADERSHIP IN THE FUTURE CHURCH**

So the question is, what might such a school of communion look like at local level? Whilst again insisting that I can offer no blueprint, I would like to suggest four broad outlines that I believe will be the same everywhere. These are the exercise of the Baptismal Priesthood of all believers, the need for a truly local dimension, the need for genuine conversation, and the pivotal role played by the Sunday Eucharist. I shall consider each in turn.

#### ***The Exercise of the Baptismal Priesthood of All Believers***

We must take seriously the call of Vatican II that all believers by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation are consecrated to share in Christ's priesthood. All - and not simply the ordained - are called to carry out his three-fold ministry of priest, prophet and King. All are called to worship God, refusing to bow down before idolatry in our world - the contemporary idols of success, or of physical beauty or of our culture's obsession with the new. All have been consecrated to proclaim the Good News, naming truth in the face of falsehood. All have been configured to Christ the Servant King, who made his entire life a gift of love, and who showed particular concern for the poor and oppressed.

Consequently, the cutting edge of the Church's mission in our country cannot be identified simply with the ministry of the clergy or even of professional lay workers. It is men and women who on the basis of their own experience can help others - be they their neighbours, their friends, their drinking companions, their co-workers; help them to make sense of their lives in the light of the Gospel. The Church is called to be at the heart of the market place of meaning that is society and its mission to the world is carried out by those who negotiate meaning in the multiple fora of life today.

That is the priesthood that the men and women of our society are calling out for: the ministry that can say with integrity 'I know what this feels like too' - be it parenthood, be it the dole queue, be it the mortgage. This is the ministerial channel through which the Gospel can penetrate our society and transform lives. So in

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looking to the future of our local structures, the question should not be 'How many parishes can Father X run? How many Sunday Masses can he reasonably be expected to celebrate?' But, rather, what kind of local structures do we need if we are to support our lay people in being the Church in the world?

This does not in any way undermine the ordained priesthood. Rather, it clarifies the relationship between the different members of the community. The catechism puts it this way:

While the common priesthood of the faithful is exercised by the unfolding of baptismal grace - a life of faith, hope and charity, a life according to the Spirit, *the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood*. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians. *The ministerial priesthood is a means by which Christ unceasingly builds up and leads his Church.* (Catechism, 1547)

The leadership role of the ordained priesthood in the future Church, then, is to release, support, uphold and guide the ministry of the laity. Of course, that requires a change of mindset in the majority of our laity, many of whom expect the priest to do everything. It also calls for a change of perspective in not a few of our priests.

### ***The Local Dimension***

Instead of the unique focus upon the ministry of the ordained, our mission to the world calls for a range of new ministries. For example, such ministries would support people in their experiences of aloneness and helplessness. They would draw men and women out of the fragmented market place of meaning into experiences of community. They would reveal God's presence and activity through compassion as well as action. But these very ministries themselves require support in turn.

For such support to be authentic, it needs to be local. Which brings me to the second of my four areas. Almost inevitably, parish structures will become bigger. In response we need to set in place a balance to the emerging pattern of ever-larger ministerial structures built around a reducing number of priests. For that reason, I suggest that we should be starting now to bring into being *smaller* ministerial units - localized groupings that in most cases would be, if anything, smaller than current parishes. Future changes at the macro-level - clustering or amalgamation - would thus create larger parish communities that already contained local ministerial groupings. We should be identifying now those wise and experienced lay men and women who are immersed in their locale, who understand its needs and who have a clear sense of the mission of the Church there. Their primary role would be to gather the Christians in their area for support, prayer and discernment around the Word of God. In other words, we need to create local teams that have a pastoral and catechetical focus, and we ought to prioritise training local people to facilitate this work.

In considering the local dimension, we also need to remember two other structural elements: the catholic school and the ministry of the diaconate. Let us never underestimate the real ministries that can be performed around our Catholic schools. They remain the primary point of contact between your 81% and the local parish. In many places they are the most visible sign of the Church's ministry to

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the disadvantaged, and our teachers and especially head-teachers often are the members of our community who have the closest ear to that joy and hope, sorrow and anguish. We need to ask how at local level we work more closely alongside our schools, complementing the support they give to families who are struggling with parenting, or bereavement, or just making ends meet. How do we offer catechetical processes that engage with the realities of their lives – especially around the sacraments of First Communion, reconciliation and Confirmation? To do so requires the Church to have that local ‘heart’ for which I am pleading. The local setting is also the sphere in which the ministry of Deacon similarly takes its proper role. All too often, the Diaconate is reduced to a liturgical function – visibly assisting or substituting the priest in the sanctuary. That perspective risks placing him in a top-down understanding of ministry. Instead, can we not understand him from a local standpoint, exercising his particular ministry of word and service within (though not necessarily leading) the kind of local teams I envisage? The symbolic effect that this would have on his liturgical role will be considered in a moment.

### ***The Need for Genuine Conversation***

The local facilitation that I suggest is key must have at its heart an ability to engage in genuine conversation, the third of my areas. If our local leaders are not good listeners then they will block rather than help the ministry of other laity. (The same, of course, is also true of the ordained clergy.) In each locale the Church has a duty to help its lay members to negotiate their path through the post-modern world so that they can perform their ministry to men and women today. It can only do this by creating spaces within which its members can explore that experience, share it, and bring it into the light of the Gospel. However that listening has to be creative. It is not sufficient for us to put on courses and workshops that offer a one-way information flow – lay people are tired of being invited to speak, only for that to make no difference to the direction that the Church takes on the ground. This calls us to look at the manner in which meaning is negotiated and constructed within those local institutions themselves. The places where conversations between Catholics go on cannot just be places where finances are discussed or events planned – be they the kind of local teams I suggested earlier, or more formal parish or diocesan pastoral councils. Above all else they should be places of real discernment, places where the real needs of the local community can be named and brought into the light of God’s Word, under which they should always meet. They need to be fora within which the voices of the ordinary men and women of our communities can be heard in such a manner that they form the basis of pastoral action. Lay leadership, thus, cannot simply be identified with *action* – but must also be rooted in a collaborative approach to discernment and decisionmaking at local level that involves both clergy and laity together.

### ***The Pivotal Role of the Sunday Eucharist***

If we do not develop such local patterns of Church, with trained and supported local leadership, then the Catholic Community in our country risks being reduced to a declining number of self-referencing liturgical congregations. On the other hand, there is a risk that without due care such local groupings could themselves fragment the Catholic community. Fortunately, there is one glorious check that is

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built into our system – the centrality of the Sunday Assembly. My fourth point is that this becomes pivotal because it is the point at which all the local groupings come together.

The Eucharistic community is over-fragmented as it stands. For too long Catholics have regarded the Sunday assembly as a gathering of individuals, as a setting for private devotion and the subject of personal obligation. However, with the inevitable reduction in the number of Sunday Masses we are faced with an opportunity – to more visibly gather as a community around one table and beneath one proclamation of the Word. To bring to one celebration all those who are engaged with the church’s mission, so that they might bring with them the realities with which they are engaged. Offering with Christ the joys and sorrows of their local community so that it might be transformed, drawing support from others whose experiences are similar – or different.

The preparation for each Sunday Mass ought to be carried out within the spirit of conversation I outlined earlier. If it is truly to be the celebration of the community, then that community needs to have a voice in its execution, so that the Mass authentically and creatively expresses the realities of the Body of Christ in that particular place. A collaborative process of preparation would also enable homilists to break the Word of God with the realities in which their hearers are engaged before them. And where a deacon is at the service of the community, this approach to the Sunday Mass draws out the full symbolism inherent in his function. He is not present in the liturgy as the priest’s right-hand man, but to symbolize to the community its own ministry – expressing visibly the continuum between the Sunday assembly and the ‘joy and hope, sorrow and suffering’ of men and women at the most local level. The deacon thus becomes the ‘sign of seamlessness’ between the Eucharistic assembly and the whole mission of the local Church. This is only possible if his own ministry is rooted in the local reality. It would also make clear that the Assembly gathered so that it might be sent out again. The Body of Christ goes out from the assembly to continue His mission in the world. The celebration of the Eucharist would thus become that which the Second Vatican Council saw of it – the summit and source of the entire Christian life.

### ***CONCLUSION***

This, then, is the challenge. We will fail if we allow ourselves to become institutionally frozen at local level. We will fail if we create an impression of permanence in our local institutions, and a false set of expectations concerning what those institutions can deliver. We will fail if we privilege the means, the structures by which the Church of Jesus Christ in England and Wales has sought to carry forward its mission over the mission itself. We will fail if we become something that Christ certainly never intended – a Church of scattered congregations, each one becoming more and more inward-looking. This is the choice that faces us as we stand on our current threshold. Dare we seize the potential for creativity in this moment. Dare we recognise this opportunity to do in our own age what our ancestors did in the 1840s and 50s – to create a configuration of the catholic community at local level that engages with and meets the needs of its members whilst facilitating their mission to the world. Dare we

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construct a way forward in which the ministry of the laity is not an add-on, but at the core of everything we do and say? Otherwise we will never come near fulfilling those priorities that emerged from the Liverpool consultation and which crystallise so much the feelings of so many at this time.

**Peter McGrai**

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### **Questions for discussion**

The Second Vatican Council challenged the Church to be alert to the 'joys and hopes, grief and anguish' of our world, and there to speak the Good news of Jesus Christ. (para. 2 above). Give examples from your experience and suggest how you 'speak the good news'.

Christ calls us to proclaim to the women and men of today that they are destined for something rather different – not to live fragmented lives, but lives that find their core of meaning through a genuine communion of life that has its focal point in the life of the Trinity (see para 3 above) What does this mean to you where you are? Discuss. Is it an option or a solution for you? Is it an option for the Church?

We cannot just remain within the current parameters, for example by supplementing or replacing priests with deacons, eucharistic ministers or lay parish administrators. Do you agree or disagree? Share your views with one another and listen carefully.

How can we ensure access to Mass and the sacraments, care for the sick and elderly and a meaningful participation of our young people in the life of the mission of the Church? How do we do it now? How well is it working? What other options are there?

Two aspects to avoid. The first is the lack of a unifying meaning to life, the second is the dreadful fragmentation created by the 'pick and mix' approach to life and identity - a fragmentation that leads to a divided self and a lack of any sustained sense of belonging. (see para. 3. above). Discuss. How can you avoid them?

What actions would you take?

'We are not Christians for ourselves, but for the sake of the Kingdom of God'. (para. 3.5. 'Mission for the future). Discuss. How do you/we evangelise? How do we live the Gospel?

All – and not simply the ordained – are called to carry out his three-fold ministry of priest, prophet and King (para.4.1. Baptismal Priesthood of all believers).

Discuss. What do you see as your ministry? What is your lay vocation?

If our local leaders are not good listeners then they will block rather than help the ministry of other laity. (para. 4.3. Need for genuine conversation). How good a listener are you? How do you measure 'good listening' - in yourself - in other people?

## Vision and Mission for the Future of the Laity

### **Bulletin 7**

## **MOURNING AND CHANGE- A WAY OF LIFE**

**Reflections by Arthur Keegan, Plan Promoter, Catholic Men's Society**

### **1 Introduction**

Jesus said, in one translation of the beatitudes, "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*" (Matt. 5:5). Another translation I read made me think a little more; it said, "*O, the bliss of those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*". I used to think about 'mourning' as a process of bereavement as in 'mourning for the loss of a loved one', so how could there ever be 'bliss' in that tragedy? So, what did Jesus mean by these words? What was he helping us to understand?

### **2 Kubler Ross model**

During my search for understanding, someone recommended that I read the work of Elizabeth Kubler Ross and that experience caused me to reflect more deeply on the meaning of mourning. Most of what follows reflects those studies, leading me to the concept that mourning is a way of life and a positive way of learning to live with constant changes in life and in the Church. So, let us begin by asking ourselves a few questions! How do I/we respond to the changes of life and Church in a personal way? How do I/we cope with constant change in life in the parish, the home and at work? What are the stages of the coping process for this change? What are the causes of resistance to change?

### **3 PERSONAL RESPONSE TO CHANGE - stages of the coping process**

Let us look at what some of the causes of resistance to change are: fear of losing control personally, in the Parish, Deanery, Diocese or at home; uncertainty - fear of the unknown; how will we manage without a Priest? the shock of the new; having a Eucharistic service is not like mass. losing the comfort of well-established routines; worries about new knowledge and skills and qualities needed; I can't do that! the ripple effect of one change causing another; first clustering then closing our church, then amalgamating with the next parish(es). change generating more work for ourselves; 'Father used to do that' and 'we do not know how' and 'we do not have time'. past resentments colouring current behaviour; carrying over denial or anger from previous change and expressing those feelings at the beginning of a new change. some changes posing real threats; no Sunday mass, no visiting for the sick etc. You may be able to add to this list from your own personal experience.

If you are aware of your own and your families or friends possible reactions at various stages in the change process, you can begin to understand and empathise with those around you. With knowledge of the options available, you can plan to help yourself and others through the experience.

#### **3.1 SHOCK** and surprise in response to the event or change

"I can't believe it!" Deal with it. The sooner you believe it, the better it will be for you

**3.2 DENIAL** responses such as "not me", "not now", to hide from the inevitable or find ways to prove that it is not happening. I have always done it this way - these new ideas will blow over. You may try to find a logical explanation for what

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is happening rather than responding to and dealing with your feelings. The longer you take to recognise what is happening, the longer it will take to get through the process. St. Augustine understood deliverance from such denial when he wrote, "Lord, you turned my attention back to myself. You took me up from behind my own back where I had placed myself because I did not wish to observe myself, and you set me before my face."

Resistance to change is normal, and most of us initially will react against change until we understand its purpose. During denial, seek full information and explanation of what change is necessary and what is expected.

Suggested actions: become involved in vision building ('imagine' how it could be). don't try to ignore the changes by keeping busy; channel your activity usefully into something you can do.

Seek training opportunities to develop new knowledge and new skills.

**3.3 ANGER** can be low level, "why me?", "why now?", or it can become a tendency to blame everyone else and lash out at them; it can become a negative situation, which saps your energy and can render you unable to function.

It can become a way of life if we are not careful.

"Don't get mad, get even" is good advice. Don't waste your energy being angry about an inevitable change. Use the energy you would be wasting to get on with it. Look to see if you can derive any benefit from the change, and work towards that. Anger can also lead to stress and stress can lead to anger; a self-perpetuating destructive pattern of behaviour. Should we have some training available in anger management or in stress management?

**3.4 BARGAINING** by making every effort to postpone the inevitable, offering changes in attitude, behaviour etc, if only the process can be halted. Living too long without anticipation makes it impossible to accept the new reality fully, and inhibits us from beginning to set new goals, and to recreate a new future.

Use recreation wisely.

The longer you put off the inevitable, the further you will be behind those who cope well with change. Changing behaviour is not optional; the option is when and how and what.

**3.5 DEPRESSION** and apathy can be caused by the loss of a limb of security, a shattering of your plans, or your assumptions. Everything seems pointless. A natural stage which may well disappear and reappear at various times throughout the process. The early form can be as paralysing as anger. Get out of depression by doing something simple and positive, then reward yourself with a pat on the back. Repeat the procedure. Set some short term goals. Accept that progress will be made step by step and, celebrate and reward your successes.

**3.6 ACCEPTANCE AND LETTING GO.** This can be a peaceful, neutral phase, where you stop being too busy, beginning to let go, where you can start to allow yourself to be helped and, in turn, you can help others to accept and to move on/forward, to make progress. At the stage of 'Letting go' you can make the effort to detach the past from the future ready for -

**3.7 DECISION.** Consciously changing your inner image of what you and your life will be like after the change process. Deciding what works and what does not.

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Taking on the change and looking forward, beginning to feel more optimistic and enthusiastic. Taking constructive steps to cope with the change.

**3.8 MOVING ON.** Linking up at the end of the change process with another beginning, a commitment to the new ideas, and new behaviours. You will be integrating the change into your life so it becomes part of your norm - "the new me!". You are not alone. Most of the concerns and challenges facing you are common throughout the parishes in private and in public. It is natural to feel any or all of the above, and not necessarily in that order. Be prepared for ups and downs. Learn to accept that there is little likelihood of a levelling off of changes in your parish or personal life. Managing change is a key skill, and understanding change processes and developing self motivation and change skills are essential for your happiness (or, dare I say it, 'Bliss'?)

### 3.9 The change curve

For you and I to understand the whole process Dr Kubler Ross produced a Change Curve model which shows clearly the stages you and I pass through:

### 4 SOME PRACTICAL TIPS - PICK AND MIX!

4.1. Aim for a rapid recovery from the coping process. Decide now that you will avoid resisting the next change. Seek support from family, parishioners, friends, and a mentor (from a Bereavement Group perhaps or a Diocesan Training Centre).

4.2. Look for someone who copes well with change. What do they do? What can you learn from their actions and attitudes? Try it, to see if it works for you.

4.3. Use your imagination, you have come to your current position today, do it differently and behave differently from today. Keep up to date and be mobile, physically and mentally.

4.4 Learn to live with uncertainty and ambiguity. Be prepared to make mistakes and learn from them. This will free you to improve yourself continuously. Do better than yesterday. If you need more knowledge and skills and qualities, then get them. Get help to develop those skills. Is there any training, coaching or counselling training available?

4.5. Get a reputation as a problem solver and a facilitator of change, not an accuser of other people or part of a 'Blame Culture'. Try to be nonjudgemental.

4.6. Accept that you have no right to a role for life, or the right to a particular Church or Parish. Get on with doing your role or job in the parish and continue improving yourself.

I hope that some of these reflections on 'mourning as a way of living' will prove useful and helpful to you in your parish, deanery, diocese, ecumenical group, school group and in your life. May God's bliss be with you.

### Questions

What do you know from experience about the mourning process? Share your experience and listen to the experience of others. Try not to be judgemental. What is your understanding of "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted*" (Matt. 5:5)? Share and listen carefully with heart as well as mind. Solomon's prayer was for the gift of 'listening heart'.

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Have you dealt recently with a major change in your personal life or your church life? What resistance to change did you find? How did you deal with it?

Does the change curve help you to make sense of how you deal with change? Share with the group the stages you find easy and those you find difficult. See if you can learn from each other. Be sensitive!

How and when have you experienced denial? What do you think of St Augustine's prayer about his denial? Can you say that prayer- and mean it?

Can you recognise within yourself when you are 'stuck' in one stage, (such as anger); when your anger transfers from one change to the next without you even realising it? Share with the group and listen to what they have to say.

Share your experience of how you have learned to let go and to accept changes.

Who and what has helped you most to move on. Listen and learn.

Are there any training courses available to help you? Are there any coaching or counselling events or people available? If not, should we create some?

### **Vision and Mission for the Future of the Laity**

#### **Annex 1**

# **A CHURCH FOR THE 21st CENTURY**

**BISHOP CRISPIAN HOLLIS**

**AUTUMN 1997**

# **A CHURCH FOR THE 21st CENTURY**

***A VISION FOR THE DIOCESE OF PORTSMOUTH***

## Vision and Mission for the Future of the Laity

### *Visions and dreams*

If the Prophet Joel (cf. 1) is to be believed and if we stick to the opinion commonly held among younger people that to be 60 is to be old, then I have no business to be having visions - they belong to young men, whereas people of my age should be dreaming dreams - But dreams are insubstantial things and they vanish with the light of morning. Visions, however, have a shape and purpose to them. They force us to look ahead and they gradually become sharper as we come closer to implementing them. They draw us forward and as we approach the goal to which they beckon us they lead us into change.

I still regard myself as a relatively young man, we are a young diocese and, as far as the sweep of world history is concerned, we are a young Church. We cannot afford to be in the business of dreaming because the future is not beckoning us into the past. We need vision and visions if we are to become the Church for the day and therefore the Church for the future.

Without a sense of purpose and direction, we can do no more than be a reactive Church, driven by events and at the mercy of a rapidly changing world. The time has come to articulate the vision that calls us to be "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy people, a nation set apart to sing the praises of God." (cf. 2)

(1) cf. Joel 3:1 (2) 1 Peter 2:9

### *The Bishop*

I wrote in my recent Ad Limina report that the eight years that I have so far spent as Bishop of the Diocese of Portsmouth have been among the most challenging and yet fulfilling of my life. Not the least of those challenges has been to take on responsibility for leadership in the diocese. It has not been easy for me to do this, because I suppose I do not think of myself as a natural leader, but I know that "the buck stops with me" and I am very aware that the diocese is waiting for and wanting vision and direction for the future.

When I was ordained as a bishop, I solemnly promised to be faithful to the teaching of the Apostles, to build up the body of Christ, to sustain the people of God and to lead them in the way of salvation. These responsibilities are God-given and I intend to fulfil them as best I may.

I understand, therefore, that it is for me to state the vision for the diocese, so that all who live in the diocese and work for it may be very clear about where we stand and where we hope to go.

The time for consultation is over and, after 8 years, during which time I have listened, observed and reflected, I feel that I am in a position to state very clearly the sort of Church I want us to be.

There have been many partial statements of this over the years and I look back particularly to the Southampton Conference of 1991 as being a special moment. The coming celebration of the Millennium gave me the opportunity last year to outline some of the characteristics that I hoped to be in place in our Diocese of Portsmouth as we enter the 21st century. In these reflections to day, I hope to pull all those strands together so that we have a benchmark against which to judge and evaluate all future developments and policies.

### *The Vision*

There are two vital words which have been current in all that I have been saying over the last few years and they define precisely for me what I understand the Church to be. It has to be a **COMUNION** and it has to have a **MISSION**. We have to be a community with a sense of purpose.

Everything else depends on that. All our pastoral priorities, the work of all the Commissions and Agencies, the work of all those organisations which support the structures of the diocese have to measure themselves and what they do against the demands of Communion and Mission.

Such a Church is the one described in the Acts of the Apostles where St Luke writes, "They remained faithful to the teaching of the Apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers... they were looked up to by everyone. Day by day, the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved".

Acts 2:42-47

When I spoke to the Joint Council of Priests and Laity in October 1995, I described that vision in slightly different words but it is still the same vision of what I want us to be.

"Our vision and hope - is of ourselves as the gathered community of the disciples of the Lord, united in Baptism and bonded together by Christ in the Eucharist.

Our mission is so to live out this communion' in the power of the Spirit that we proclaim the Gospel by our words and become the Good News by our way of life.

Another way of saying all this is to quote those beautiful words of the Prophet Zechariah, which I

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shared with you before:

'In those days, ten men from nations of every language will take a Jew by the sleeve and say: we want to go with you, since we have learned that God is with you.

Those words speak to me of a vision of the Church as a community which is so compelling and so attractive that others are irresistibly drawn to it, It speaks of a communion" which is inextricably bound up with "mission.

Another way of understanding our missionary vision, which is devastatingly simple, is to return to the last words which the Lord spoke to his disciples just before the Ascension:

"Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time."

I am very aware that in all that I have said so far, I am really describing **MISSION** and now I want to turn my attention and yours to our understanding of **COMMUNION** because that is vital if we are going to grasp fully the vision.

St Luke writes in Acts about the 'brotherhood' of the first Christians and he stresses that it was so powerful that it was irresistibly attractive to others, so much so that they were very eager to join it. It is about that and it is about community but, for the Christian, it has to go even deeper because "communion" is a way of describing the very life of God.

This has to be revealed to us and it is in Christ, the Word of God, that we begin to discover the inner life of God. Christ teaches us that love is to be found at the heart of God's life.

Address to Joint Council p.5 (October 1995):

Matt 28:19—20

Not only is there the love which unites Father and Son, that love which we call Spirit, but we discover that we too, created in the image and likeness of God, are brought into that communion of love which is God. For our part, what we have to do is to love one another because "everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God."

God, Father, Son and Spirit, defines "communion" and we are invited to share in that unique set of relationships which characterises the divine life. The "communion" we are considering and seeking finds its origins in God and at its heart we find relationship, community and communication.

The Church is a "communion" between God and us, the people He has chosen, and between the brotherhood and sisterhood which is ours. The "communion" is established in the Word of God and in the Sacraments which are the wonderful and mysterious ways in which God communicates with us and makes it possible for us to communicate with one another. At the heart of our evangelical communication - our "mission" is the sharing of our experience of God. This is the living "communion" between us and its communication is at the heart of our "mission".

### *Collaboration and Partnership*

If we are united in a "communion" which enables us to fulfil our "mission", then the principles of that "communion" must dictate the way in which we work.

Gone are the days when the affairs, the direction, the decision-making and the planning and implementation of pastoral strategies can simply be the preserve of the Bishop and the clergy. To be a "communion" demands that clergy and laity work together and that we work collaboratively.

Together we form the gathered body of the disciples of Christ and, therefore, together we own the Church we hold so dear. If no attempt is made to involve all the members in the work of evangelisation and mission of the Church, in its maintenance and in its ongoing life, nobody can be blamed for feeling that the Church is only present on the margins of their lives. The sign we give is unmistakable.

As a matter of priority we need to develop structures of collaboration in the diocese if our vision is to become a reality.

The principles of this are really quite simple and I have often spoken of them, but, if I may, I will outline once more some of the more important features of working in collaboration. It will be important to remember these principles in your ongoing discussions. They are not simply plucked out of the air but find their origin in the very life of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit - the life of the Trinity.

1) We belong to God and our dignity and calling comes from the fact that we are all baptised. We are all commissioned for mission by Confirmation and we are bonded together in "communio" with the Lord and with each other by the Eucharist. These sacraments are common to us all and our varied and different ministries flow from them.

2) Good relationships are needed because only out of them can flow the trust and recognition which lie at the heart of collaborative ministry. Good relationships do not simply happen; they have to be worked at and that may involve pain as well as joy.

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3) There needs to be a shared vision, a goal and a purpose which engages enthusiasm and commitment. My purpose today is to share my vision with you, together with my own enthusiasm and commitment, and to ask you to work with me in making it real.

4) There needs to be an enabling of persons, coupled with the recognition and welcoming of gifts. Every member of the Church has a contribution to make and it is very important that they have the opportunities to do so.

5) In the end, we are not about trying to produce a better or more efficient diocese, however nice and good that might be. We are to be a community of love; this is to be the sign we give. The Good News we proclaim is about transformation - and even transfiguration - of the community and of the beauty of a unity which has a deep respect for the different and the diverse.

6) We need to discover and affirm a fundamental desire to work together because we are called to be a community of disciples, not isolated individuals or, indeed, isolated parishes or commissions. The call to collaborative ministry has nothing to do with the shortage of priests; it has everything to do with our innate dignity as disciples of Christ called by Him into mission.

### **Practical consequences**

In the first instance this review concerns the Commissions and Agencies of the diocese. It is the best place to begin because their work is one of the major ways in which I am enabled to exercise my ministry. I want to share this vision of diocese with them so that together we can make it a reality. However, it, inevitably also concerns many other groups because it is about the life of the whole diocese.

No one can be untouched by this vision and it is important that as far as possible it should be owned by the whole diocese. Of course, it demands change from us all - changes in attitudes and priorities, change in working relationships and readjustment of vision. I hope the process does not prove to be too painful but I cannot guarantee that it will not be so.

Change is about growing and if we cease to grow, then we cease to live. As John Henry Newman so succinctly puts it "In a higher world it is otherwise, but here below to live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often."

We will all be touched by this process but I am convinced that we are on the right lines and that this is the way forward. I want to suggest a few of the ways in which we will all be affected if this vision is to be come a reality.

#### 1) The Bishop

"It is in the ministry of bishops that the communion nature of the Church and renewed understandings of hierarchy, authority and power can become particularly visible and fruitful. His style of leadership and his proposals for diocesan life will give clear messages about what this means in practice. In particular, he can affirm patterns of collaborative ministry and give priority to structures and plans which make it possible."

I need to ensure that all my councils are as widely representative of the diocese as possible. I want to concentrate especially on enabling people to use the gifts that they have. Increasingly I wish to gather the people of the diocese in their various groups so that, together, we can discern and plan for the way ahead. In practical terms, this requires a severe look at my diary and at the sorts of commitments which occupy me at the moment because I need to concentrate more on my role as teacher and preacher, This means making much more time for prayer, reading and reflection.

#### 2) The Clergy

The work of the clergy - priests and deacons — is absolutely crucial to the development of a collaborative Church. Far from their importance being diminished, their pastoral and sacramental role assumes even greater significance even though the priorities may need to change. The primary work of the clergy is to enable the community to grow rather than to run the parish.

This means that we have to enhance our skills of discernment so that all our people feel that they have the opportunity to serve both the "communion" and the "mission"

'J.H. Newman: Essay on Development The Sign We Give : p 24

of the Church. Increasingly this means that we have to learn how better to work in partnership with others, which will require a real openness to ongoing formation.

We need to make sufficient time to listen with care to what people are saying and hear them when they speak of their needs. If we are to make that time then the skill of delegation must be developed: the ability to discern when to 'let go' is crucial.

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There is a very real and proper role of leadership for the priest, though it may be different and changed from that with which we have become accustomed. But, let no-one say that the priest is not important - as the minister of Word and Sacrament his role in leading the people is vital.

### **3 Religious communities**

The presence of Religious Communities in the diocese is a very important aspect of all our lives and I value very much the contribution made by our active and contemplative communities.

The contemplatives support us all by their hidden life of prayer and sacrifice, by their hospitality and by their sharing of the facilities of their houses. Those in active work also make a major contribution to so much of our diocesan life.

All I would urge on our religious communities is that they continue to respond as positively as they have always done to the priorities which are those of the diocese. I can ask no more.

### **4) Lay people**

In a collaborative Church, the gifts and talents of all are priceless and need to be readily offered and accepted. The parish is yours - it does not belong to the priest. Your calling is not simply to help Father, but to be in partnership with him and with each other in the community's work for the Kingdom.

Ministries and ways of serving the community in the parish are many and varied and the discernment and fostering of them is very important.

Beware of the temptation to see your faith as something entirely private. The world in which we live can cope with privatised religion because it presents no threat. A faith which is deeply and personally lived, but in community, becomes a powerful force for good in the whole community and can be one of the major factors which shape the wellbeing of society. It can also be seen as a distinct threat to our materialist and secular world and we must be prepared to accept the consequences of that.

### **5) Parishes and Deaneries**

The parish is, for most of us, the place where we experience the Church - this is where Christian faith is caught and taught, so the parishes are crucial to the life of the diocese. In an earlier document - "Under the Guidance of the Gospel" - we spoke of the need to respect parish agendas in all our plans. If the diocese is to develop and grow then this must continue to be the case. The role of the diocese is to help and support the parishes as they discern and develop their own agendas. It is also the role of the diocese to provide a framework - a vision - in which this can happen.

If the diocese is to be collaborative, that pattern has to be found also in the parishes, so I remind you again of the need to establish and develop Pastoral Councils at parish and deanery levels.

There are now a good number but the pattern is by no means diocesan-wide. These Councils are a very important way to share the mission that is ours. Both Councils at deanery and parish level, which are active, need to respond to the priorities which are those of the diocese.

The Deanery represents the community of parishes in a given area and has the task of fostering and co-ordinating that communion. No group of people can afford to go it alone. "Communio" means recognising the need we have of each other.

### **6) Schools**

I have tried, over the years, to emphasise the value and importance of our diocesan schools and I want to do so again here. They form a vital part of our apostolate to young people and their families and we would be immeasurably poorer without them. The challenge our schools face is in seeing themselves as an integral part of the "mission" of the diocese. They must constantly explore ways of working with the parishes that feed them - and in that process the parishes need to meet them half way.

### **7) Commissions and Agencies**

As I have already said, the Commissions and Agencies are those bodies which enable my ministry as Bishop. They have no independent existence of their own and they need to share the vision that is mine.

Because the respecting of parish agendas is to be an integral part of the vision for the diocese, then commissions and agencies are clearly there to help me serve the parishes.

There has not always been a clear diocesan vision for all to share, and this has led to Commissions and Agencies developing their own agendas and ploughing their own furrows. Good work has often proceeded on parallel lines and I want those lines to begin to converge. The question that must be asked now is not 'how do we reform the commissions that we have'. It is far more fundamental than that. We must ask ourselves 'what commissions or diocesan

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structures do we need in order to implement our vision for the diocese? What support structures do we need in order to serve the priorities of “mission” and “communion”? Another way of putting it would be to ask what we would put in place if we were starting from scratch in a totally new diocese. This is not an academic question but one which needs to exercise us in all the demands and practicalities that it contains.

8) Lastly, there are what I call the support structures and I want to single out those which deal with Finance, with Communications and with the responsibilities which we have for our churches and other buildings.

a) First and foremost the diocese is a pastoral and evangelising community. Its agenda cannot be driven by money, possessions or buildings. But these are important tools given to us to be used properly as a means to an end. The Finance Office has long held this view that the pastoral priorities need to be established to enable the best use of our resources.

I hope this vision will go some way towards remedying that.

b) Communications are increasingly important because if we cannot communicate our Good News, then we cannot be in business at all as an evangelising community.

It is also very important that that we learn better how to communicate among ourselves so that we can be aware of the availability of resources and strengths which are present in the diocese.

c) We have a proper responsibility for our heritage and, quite apart from Statutory requirements, we owe it to those who have gone before us ‘marked with the sign of faith’ to care for those things which have come to us as a result of their generosity and sacrifice.

### **Hopes and Priorities**

The vision I have presented has been debated for a long time in the diocese over the last eight years and so, in itself, it is not up for debate. The question now is: “how do we transform the vision into reality?”

In this penultimate section, I want to outline what, for me, are the salient points of the vision. These are the factors which are not negotiable and which need to feature in this diocese in the 21st century.

a) We have to accept that the diocese should understand itself as an Evangelical and an Evangelising community. We find our origins in the Gospel and in the teaching of Christ and the Apostles - that is our “communion” - and we are called and charged to proclaim and be Good News - that is our “mission”. Everything else about the diocese has constantly to refer back to those characteristics.

b) We need structures, both pastoral and administrative, which properly reflect our vocation to “communion” and “mission” and they must be collaborative in the way they work. To quote the modern phrase, it is important that we all sing from the same hymn sheet.

c) Christian Formation for young people and adults has to be a priority and this must focus the attention of clergy and laity. All, whose concern this is, need to work much more closely together, although I acknowledge that a great deal of work has already been done in this respect.

d) We need to pay much more explicit attention to Liturgy and Spirituality. This too demands formation and the investment of resources. It concerns the quality of our liturgical celebrations, the development of a high standard of music in the parishes and proper training for all those who participate in our liturgical celebrations. It has been well said that if our liturgy is celebrated collaboratively as it should be, then we will have no difficulty in understanding and implementing collaborative working in our other diocesan structures.

There is a hunger for prayer and a thirst for a spirituality which is relevant to the lives of our people. We must be equipped to answer that need.

e) It concerns me that we have no proper structure in our diocese to answer the needs of what might be loosely termed Social Responsibility.

We are constantly being challenged to address contemporary relationships between the Church and the world in which we live and we struggle to find a consistent voice which is both informed and relevant.

f) It is increasingly clear to me that we cannot achieve our potential as a Christian community if we attempt to do so without reference to our brothers and sisters in other Christian communities. Ecumenism has, therefore, a very important part to play in fostering both “communion” and “mission”. We have a very important things to say throughout the diocese and we must witness to the fact that Ecumenism is an integral part of the vision of the diocese.

g) I have mentioned Communications already. I do so again here because it needs to be given a high priority in all future plans for the diocese.

I am not simply referring to the way in which we use the media, though that is important and we need to devote time and resources to it. I am speaking also of the manner and style of our

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relationships because they are an integral part of the sign we give and cannot be distinct from the Gospel of Good News that we live and preach.

h) Wherever they do not exist I want to see the establishment of parish and deanery pastoral councils throughout the diocese. Where they do exist, I want to see them nurtured and developed so that by the year 2000 we can have a firmly rooted Diocesan Pastoral Council which is properly representative.

These structures will not happen by accident so there needs to be an allocation of resources and support to enable them to come into place.

Not only do they need to be established as one of the real signs that we mean business by “communion” but they need to be monitored and supported where they exist and formed and encouraged where they are beginning.

The Commissions and Agencies have a direct responsibility to these councils, and need to be represented on and answerable to the Diocesan Pastoral Council which is at the heart of our collaborative structure.

The Councils at all levels are a major way in which the vision of diocese can be shared and implemented.

### **Closing remarks**

Finally, I make no apology for having taken up your time. You have asked for a vision; we need a vision for the diocese and this is an attempt to answer that need.

It only remains for me now to ask you to enter into the process by which this vision becomes a reality-

It will mean hard work and clear thinking, together with much prayer and reflection, but we are not starting from scratch - much great work has already been done and I am grateful for that.

Our development must continue. I am aware that it may take a long time to get it absolutely right but we must not sacrifice the good for the perfect. Therefore, as a start, I would like any structural changes we feel we need to make to be in place by the autumn of 1998. I expect change because to remain as we are is not an option.

It is important to remember that we are in God’s time and in His hands, which is why prayer is such an important part of this process. But we must never forget that we are His people – “once you were no people and now you are God’s people” — and it is God Himself who both calls us into “communion” and sends us out on “mission.”

This is a process of renewal and it is one which - I hope - we can cheerfully undertake in order to be a Church which can enter the 21st century with confidence, with conviction and with a sense of what the Lord is calling us to become.

1 Peter 2: 10

### **The Question**

“What changes are needed within

a) Commissions and Agencies

b) *Parishes* and Deaneries

c) Councils and Committees

d) Ourselves - clergy, religious and laity if the vision of ‘Communion’ and ‘Mission’, as outlined by the Bishop, is to be a reality in our Diocese.”

Groups do not have to address every category, but only those which are appropriate for themselves.

However, I do want all groups to consider (d) in their discussions, otherwise we may be tempted to change structures but not ourselves

Annex 1

# ORGANISING FOR COMMUNION AND MISSION

BISHOP CRISPIAN HOLLIS

1999

## A Structural Review for The Diocese of Portsmouth 1999

### **Introduction**

In November 1997, I presented the diocese with a vision of the sort of Christian community I wanted us to be and in my document "A Church for the 21st Century" I wrote:

"There are two vital words which have been current in all that I have been saying over the last few years and they define precisely for me what I understand the Church to be. It has to be a Communion and it has to have a Mission. We have to be a community with a sense of purpose. Everything else depends on that.

All our pastoral priorities, the work of all the commissions and agencies, the work of all those organisations which support the structures of the diocese have to measure themselves and what they do against the demands of communion and mission." (A Church for the 21st Century, 1997, p.2)

When I presented this vision to the commissions and agencies of the diocese, I asked them the following question: What commissions or diocesan structures do we need in order to implement this vision for the diocese?

As I began to reflect and consult upon the responses I received and upon the challenge of restructuring the commissions and agencies, it became clear that a radical review was called for: one which embraced every aspect of diocesan life.

The diocese is the bishop and the communities that make up parishes working in collaboration for communion and for mission in the world. It is what the Second Vatican Council describes as the local community of God's people, entrusted to a bishop. The bishop is the leader of the local Church but is unable to exercise his ministry of mission without the collaboration of the communities of the diocese. Therefore, it is my responsibility in the diocese of Portsmouth to ensure that our parishes work together in vibrant communion and with a sense of mission in the world. My hope is that we can be a diocese formed of parishes in which there is a vivid awareness of God, celebrated and proclaimed within the gathered community. All those working within the structures of the diocese have an essential part to play in helping the parishes to achieve this purpose.

### **1. Discernment and Foundations**

"In the Church there is a diversity of ministry but unity of mission" (Apostolicam Actuositatem, 2). In trying to be faithful to that, I have sought to bring together as many people as possible to share in the life and work of the diocese. This has been a process that began when I first met with all the clergy at Park Place in February 1990 and which has been marked by other key moments and events in subsequent years:

- The Diocesan Summer Conference held in Southampton in 1991
- The document Under the Guidance of the Gospel of 1992
- The establishment of the Joint Council of Clergy and Laity in October 1995
- The vision outlined in A Church for the 21st Century published in 1997
- The Called by Christ conference held in Bournemouth in October 1998.

The establishment of a new framework for the working structures of the diocese flows directly from this process of discernment. There are three underlying principles providing a firm foundation for the review of the commissions and agencies that form the diocesan curia:

- The Bishop's ministry of teaching, sanctifying and governing
- The call to communion and mission
- The need for collaboration.

I claim no originality for these principles; they are central to the vision of the Church as proclaimed in the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium, 21ff). In the same Council's Decree on the Bishops' Pastoral Office in the Church, it is written: "The bishops feed their sheep in the name of the Lord, and exercise in their regard the office of teaching, sanctifying and governing." (Christus Dominus: 11)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that communion and mission are inseparable: "When the Church fulfils her mission of proclaiming the Gospel, she bears witness to men and women, in the name of Christ, to their dignity and their vocation to the communion of persons. She teaches them the demands of justice and peace in conformity with divine wisdom." (2419)

Furthermore, it is only in collaboration that the Church can flourish. "If we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow completely into Christ, who is the head by whom the whole Body is fitted and joined together, every joint adding its own strength, for each individual part to work according to its function. So the body grows until it has built itself up in love." (Eph. 4:15-16)

### **2. The priority of formation**

I am convinced that continuing formation of clergy and lay people must become a priority in the life

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and structures of the diocese.

This view is absolutely consistent with the contemporary vision of the Church as expressed in her teaching from the Second Vatican Council until today. Most recently, The General Directory for Catechesis (1997) has taken up the insistence on the importance of adult formation in today's Church as already found in *Christifideles Laici* and *Pastores Dabo Vobis*.

"Continuing formation in the faith is directed not only to the individual Christian, to accompany them in their journey towards holiness, but also to the Christian community as such so that it may mature in its interior life of love of God and of the brethren as well as in its openness to the world as a missionary community." (General Directory for Catechesis, 70)

"The formation of the lay faithful must be placed among the priorities of a diocese. It ought to be so placed within the plan of pastoral action that the efforts of the whole community (clergy, faithful and religious) converge on this goal." (*Christifideles Laici*, 57)

"Permanent formation is a requirement of the priest's own faithfulness to his ministry, to his very being. It is love for Jesus Christ and fidelity to oneself but it is also an act of love for the people of God, at whose service the priest is placed. Indeed, an act of true and proper justice: the priest owes it to God's People, whose fundamental right to receive the Word of God, the sacraments and the service of charity... he is called to acknowledge and foster. On-going formation is necessary to ensure that the priest can properly respond to this right of the People of God." (*Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 70)

All this formation must be rooted in the Scriptures, in prayer and in spirituality. It must help people — and the communities to which they belong — to connect their faith with daily life, lived in a diverse and media-dominated culture. In *Evangelic Nuntiandi* Pope Paul VI emphasises that evangelisation is never complete unless it constantly relates the gospel to our actual lives, personal and social.

Within our formation, and therefore among the priorities of those structures which enable formation, there needs to be a developing awareness of our responsibilities for justice, ecumenism, inter-faith and multi-cultural issues. There needs to be an inherent respect for the dignity of people of all levels of ability.

### 3. At the service of Communion and Mission

The Diocesan Curia is "composed of those institutes and persons who assist the Bishop in governing the entire diocese, especially in directing pastoral action, in providing for the administration of the diocese and in exercising judicial power." (Canon 469)

A significant part of our Curia is currently made up of the Commissions and Agencies that assist me in my work and they were particularly invited to respond to the challenges of A Church for the 21st Century. From their responses, from much of what was said or implied at the Called by Christ conference and from the principles outlined above, themes have emerged to help us to discern the best way of establishing ourselves as a community with a strong sense of evangelical purpose.

By being faithful to these themes, the new Curia will be:

At the service of communion by

- supporting the Diocesan vision
- enhancing and enabling the work of the parishes
- affirming and supporting the work of the laity and clergy by supplying resources and training
- facilitating the ministry of priests and deacons
- having clear priorities
- offering better communication
- encouraging mutual trust
- respecting canon and civil law

A stimulus to mission by

- being more visionary
- distinguishing between evangelisation and administration — the latter being at the service of the former
- being geared to serving and supporting the parishes in their "front-line" ministry
- being dynamic and developing to meet the changing needs of the local Church

A model of collaboration by

- encouraging a collaborative way of working and being fully collaborative at all levels
- displaying a sense of unity and shared purpose through effective communication and co-operation
- existing in a simplified and streamlined form
- sharing buildings and offices

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- working in harmony
- being subject to appraisal and evaluation
- ensuring security of employment for those at present employed by the diocese.

### 4. The Diocesan Structure

The diocese is, as I have already said, the communion of the parishes with their lay people, priests, deacons and religious gathered under the leadership of the Bishop. The role of the Bishop is crucial as a focus of unity. He must ensure that God's people are nurtured and formed. It is his task, together with the clergy, to keep God's people in communion and bring them God's life through the Gospel and the sacraments.

The Bishop's Council assists the Bishop in his ministry and decision-making. The Council is made up of three Vicars-General, one of whom will, be Moderator of the Curia.

At present the Curia largely consists of the Commissions and Agencies and this is the structure that needs to be renewed. Commissions and Agencies will be replaced by Departments whose leaders will be answerable to one another, and to the Bishop through the Moderator. The Heads of Departments represent the leadership of a community of apostolic endeavour; they cannot be seen as a collection of independent and unrelated specialists working in isolation from one another. If we are to implement the vision of communion and mission for our diocese, we have to work together, collaboratively and in partnership.

In addition, there are a number of statutory groups and individuals which advise the Bishop and they include the Council of Priests, the College of Consultors, the Vicar for Religious, the Deans, the Council of Laity and the Chapter of Canons. This is clearly an unwieldy arrangement and there is much duplication. The structures and the relationship between them are also under review as part of the whole process outlined in this document.

### 5. The Shape of the Curia

There will be eight Departments.

Five departments will enable the Bishop's ministry of Teaching and Sanctifying:

- Mission
- Catechesis
- Liturgical Ministry
- Collaborative Ministry
- Schools — Ethos and Personnel

Three Departments will assist the Bishop in his ministry of Governing:

- Schools - Governance
- Finance

In addition the structure must also retain The Diocesan Trustees as the body which ensures the compliance of the diocese with the requirements of Civil Law. It is the legal body whereby the diocese exists in Civil Law.

The work of the departments and all members of the Curia is essentially interconnected and always directed towards formation for Mission and Communion. There cannot be "hard" dividing lines between them for they are to work collaboratively.

The Curia will be managed by the Moderator of the Curia (cf Canon 473~2) who will be a Vicar-General and a member of the Bishop's Council. He will work with the Heads of the new departments and together with them will be accountable to the Bishop and the parishes.

The Bishop also has a judicial ministry that he exercises through the Judicial Vicar and the Diocesan Tribunal. Independent from the administration of the diocese but integral to the notion of the Curia, the Tribunal is competent to deal with all judicial processes, including the work of the Marriage Tribunal. Where appropriate, it is there to rule on any conflict or dispute within the structures of the diocese.

### 6. Formation and Collaboration

The whole of the new structure that I have outlined aims to be a model of collaborative ministry and partnership in decision-making, diocesan administration and pastoral activity. There needs to be closer contact and co-operation within all these areas, and, in particular, the advisory bodies needed to be reviewed and renewed.

- The Council of Priests consists presently of the Bishop's Council and elected and appointed members. The Bishop is obliged to select the College of Consultors from the Council of Priests. The present Council's mandate runs until the year 2000 but proposals for change have been made and will need to be examined.
- The Diocesan Pastoral Council will be formed by the Council of Priests and an equal number of

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lay people — representatives from the Deaneries plus members appointed by the Bishop. It has been meeting in embryonic form already as the Joint Council of Priests and Laity and is most likely to develop from that.

- In future, any priest who is a Head of Department will be a member of the Council of Priests.
- Any lay Head of Department will be a member of the Diocesan Pastoral Council.

Within the Curia, the Moderator and the Heads of each of the Departments will be committed to:

- The vision of the Diocese
- Collaborative methods of working
- The formation of teams and team working
- Goals and objectives compatible with the Diocesan vision.

### **7. A community with a Sense of Purpose**

The sole purpose of this proposed renewal of our structures is to enable us to implement and own the vision of the Church we hold so dear. Christ calls us to be the sort of community that is irresistibly attractive in a world in which community has lost its meaning. We are to be truly that gathered community of Christ 's disciples, renowned for our holiness, for our love and for our constant eagerness to share with others the riches of beauty and truth that we treasure.

Our mission is so to live out our communion in the power of the Spirit that we proclaim the Good News by our words and become Good News for those among whom we live.

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### **PRAYER BEFORE MEETING**

O Most Holy Mother of God, seat of Wisdom and refuge of sinners, we your children here assembled in your name, most reverently and lovingly invoke you. Deign to look down from your high throne in heaven on our undertaking. It is humble but you have made it great and your name has made it sacred. We are very weak and ignorant, be our strength and enlightenment, obtain for us a generous and self-denying approach in our efforts, a wise and holy prudence in our councils, humility in our thoughts, charity in our words and a mutually loving, forbearing and fraternal spirit. Keep far from us all pride, obstinacy, rivalry, contention, self-conceit and self-seeking. Obtain for us in whatever we think or say or do this day, we may have no other motive, will or aim than the glory of God and the salvation of souls. So that what we have begun in your name may not be wholly unworthy of your patronage, and loving you in life we may be succoured by you in death and received by you in heaven, through Christ our Lord. Amen. I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, Our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate; was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

### **PRAYER AFTER MEETING**

O God, who was pleased that all generations should call the Mother of your Son "blessed", grant that we who meet together may ever remember that we are her children who is the Mother of purity and are under her patronage, who is the Queen of Heaven. Inflammate us with a generous and ardent zeal for your glory and for the salvation of the souls you have so dearly purchased. Inspire us with a profound submission to your holy will, an utter distrust of ourselves, and an absolute confidence in you. Give to our work that blessing without which all work is fruitless. Give to our deaths that peace which is the pledge of eternal joy. Give to our souls that rest for which they are created; for our hearts O Lord are restless until they rest in you. And grant that as we meet here as brothers, so we may one day meet before your throne and together sing your praises, who are the God of our hearts and our portion forever. Amen.

Immaculate Heart of Mary –  
Pray for the Catholic Men's Society.