

MINISTRY OF COMMUNIO-UNITY

**THE SYMBOLIC MISSION OF ORDAINED PERSONS
IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY**

DR VINCENT K. PETER

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MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY

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Summary

Does the mission of ordained persons re-awaken the basic service to humanity in this third Millennium? Keeping this question in mind, in this dissertation we investigate the symbolic mission of ordained persons in order to actualise the church as a mystery of *communio-unity* in a pluralistic society. The self-understanding of the church as *communio-unity* actualises the inner reality as the *communio* and an external expression as the unity of the humanity. The interlocking link between the church and society is the human (ordained) persons who confront daily life situations concretely. Hence in this dissertation we argue that the mission of the ordained persons in the society is communitarian and symbolic. The vision of Jesus Christ, fully God and human, challenges every person in history to participate in the mission of humanity in an authentic way. The climax of the prophetic mission of Jesus Christ is realised in the self-emptying (*kenosis*) sacrifice on the cross (priesthood). Thus an encountering mystery of the cross bridges the unity between the divine and the human. Therefore the prophetic mission of ordained persons re-enacts symbolically the same mission of unity in and as community in a pluralistic society.

In order to articulate this objective the thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter provides a general out-look of the theo-anthropological basis of the human (ordained) persons. The second chapter presents the sacramentological basis of the human (ordained) persons as *communio-unity*. The third chapter elucidates the prophetic-ministerial office of the ordained persons. The fourth chapter posits a new perspective of the symbolic mission of ordained persons as a service of community.

By introducing a neologism 'communio-unity' the thesis expounds the reality of the communion of all faithful in their baptismal mission and the unity of all human beings in their reception of grace of unity from the creation. Through the celebration of the sacraments in word and deed, and re-awakening the grace of unity in every human being the mission of ordained unfolds the human service of unity. The symbolic mission of ordained persons encounters every situation from the point of view of uniting everyone in communion with the God of the cosmos, and with the highest reality of being human in communion. This symbolic mission of ordained persons as the most basic service to humanity challenges every person, irrespective of caste and creed at the threshold of the third Millennium.

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VINCENT K. PETER, was born on 19 July 1965 Kiliyoor, Kerala, India, ordained priest on 19 December 1989, and obtained Doctorate in Sacramental Theology on 19 May 2000.

MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY
THE SYMBOLIC MISSION OF ORDAINED PERSONS IN VIEW OF THE THEO-ANTHROPOLOGICAL
APPROACH OF KARL RAHNER AND
CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY

Does the mission of ordained persons re-awaken the basic service to humanity in a pluralistic society? Keeping this question in mind throughout this dissertation, we investigate the "communitarian-symbolic mission" of ordained persons. The self-understanding of the church as a sacrament of communio-unity actualizes the inner reality of divine communio (koinōnia) and expresses the unity of humanity. The link between the church and society is constituted by human (ordained) persons who confront daily life situations concretely. Hence, in this dissertation we argue that the mission of the ordained persons is communitarian and symbolic. The consequent application of the characteristic "symbolic" is meant to point out to the fundamental openness of human beings and the capacity of communion with divine and human reality.

By introducing a neologism 'communio-unity', the thesis expounds the reality of the communion of the faithful in their baptismal mission and the unity of all human beings in their reception of the grace of unity from the creation. Through the celebration of the sacraments in word and deed, and the re-awakening of the grace of unity in every human being, the mission of ordained persons unfolds the human service of communion. This symbolic mission encounters every situation from the point of view of uniting everyone in communion with the God of the cosmos, and with the highest reality of being human in communion. As the most basic service to humanity, "the symbolic mission" challenges every person, irrespective of caste and creed, in a pluralistic society at the threshold of the Third Millennium.

VINCENT K. PETER, was born on 19 July 1965 Kiliyoor, Kerala, India, ordained priest on 19 December 1989, and obtained Doctorate in Sacramento-Theology on 19 May 2000.

I cordially invite you for a Thanksgiving Eucharistic celebration at 6.00 p.m. (18.00 hours) followed by a Dinner at Heilige Geestcollege, Naamsestraat - 40.

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09.05.2000

Vincent K. Peter

FOREWARD

At the dawn of the third millennium, while everyone is looking forward to a better and more peaceful global society, there is nevertheless a recognition that the challenges ahead are more crucial than ever before. Increasing development is inevitably leading to more anxiety in society. This anxiety, in turn, leads to insecurity, and poses a threat all over the world. Consequently, there is a need to ensure that future development serves the process of human development, leading to real and sustained progress in society. In this context, the church's understanding of herself and her mission in a global society should challenge every one, irrespective of cast or creed, nation or language. If the church's self-understanding is properly understood and defined, this will enable her to pursue her mission and engage in the present problems of society. As a result, the mission of ordained persons can really challenge the situation, in order to foster human development and their well-being as authentic human beings, with dignity, freedom and solidarity. This dissertation, entitled *Ministry of Community in a Pluralistic Society: The Symbolic Mission of Ordained Persons in View of the Theo-Anthropological Approach of Karl Rahner and Contemporary Theology*, attempts to identify a correct mission of the ordained by the correct vision of the human person in a pluralistic society, like India.

Many persons have contributed on this long road of research and reflective thinking. Of course, it is difficult to convey my heartfelt thanks in such a few words, however, I would like to make the following acknowledgements. The whole atmosphere at KULeuven enriched me and encouraged me to reflect upon what I am, and for whom I am, as a human person and as a priest in the Catholic church. The past five years of reflective thinking and research have enhanced me for an authentic mission of humanity in a pluralistic society.

There are many who have helped me to fulfil this task. First, I would like to mention my promoter Prof. Lambert Leijssen, whose personal charisma, approach and theological depth and vision influenced me a lot and encouraged me to look at issues in a new light. His scholarly guidance, constant encouragement, magnanimous service helped me to reach this stage. I thank him most sincerely for all he has been to me during my studies. My deep felt gratitude is also extended to the professors of the Faculty of Theology who inspired me with enriching perspectives and scholarly guidance. I am also grateful to the staff of the Secretariat of the Faculty of Theology and the Theology Library.

With immense gratitude I remember Dr. Soosai Pakiam, Bishop of Trivandrum who sent me for higher studies in KULeuven and Dr. Vincent Samuel, Bishop of Neyyattinkara who constantly encouraged and supported me during my studies over here. I am very much indebted to Prof. K. Depoortere and his colleagues at the Holy Spirit College for their concern and support. The financial support from Missio Aachen and Faculty of Theology KULeuven enabled me to pursue my study and complete the work in time. I am immensely grateful to them.

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Vincent K. Peter
Leuven - 19.05.2000

Ministry of Community in A Pluralistic Society
The Symbolic Mission of Ordained Persons in View of the Theo-Anthropological
Approach of Karl Rahner and Contemporary Theology

Honourable Prof. Dr. Marc Vervenne, Dean and chairperson of this defence, members of the Board of examiners, dear Professors, Friends and Well-wishers, Ladies and gentlemen.

At the dawning of the third Millennium the challenge to the church in a pluralistic society is more crucial than ever before. In this challenging situation the dogmatic content of theology should be intelligible with a new pastoral perspective. Otherwise the church and its mission, especially that of ordained persons, will be unacceptable. This dissertation, which is entitled **Ministry of Community in A Pluralistic Society: The Symbolic Mission of Ordained Persons in View of the Theo-Anthropological Approach of Karl Rahner and Contemporary Theology**, attempts to envisage the basic mission of the ordained.

The fundamental premise which runs through the whole dissertation is the vision of the person - a 'communitarian-symbolic mission'. This symbolic mission enters into the fundamental openness and capacity of the human and the divine reality. By proper placing of anthropology, christology and ecclesiology, within this understanding of the person, we want to present their mission as communitarian and symbolic. We arrive at this conclusion by taking into account the nature of the mystery of the church and human beings who confront the reality in every day situations.

The mission of the ordained, is it out-dated? The context which provokes me to answer this question is the world's largest pluralistic society - India, where there are hundreds of languages, castes and class divisions, varieties of religions and christian denominations, catholic churches, various political parties and social organisations etc. The major challenges of the church are outlined in the Asian Synod where the Synod Fathers stated, that "in the vastly diversified cultural world of Asia, the church faces philosophical, theological and pastoral challenges."¹ These challenges are unable to be overcome unless we take into account the whole reality of human beings and their dignity.

In a pluralistic society, the church cannot remain like one of the many social systems or metaphors. So also the ordained can not remain like care takers of these systems or metaphors. That attitude creates tension between the other religions and Christians. In order to overcome this tension the church needs an anthropology that touches the core of humanity as a whole. The interlocking link between the church and society is the ordained person who is primarily a human in vision and mission. The proper placing of them in a relational anthropology is the core fact of the symbolic mission.

According to the writing of Karl Rahner as do all other sacraments, the sacrament of Order manifests the church in the society. By placing the sacraments in the divine and the human encounter for the liberation of all, the ordained celebrate the core moment of life of the people that manifests the

¹John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia*, *Origins* 29 (1999) 358-384, p. 363.

church in the society. Hence as the partakers of the mission of the church, they perform a 'communitarian and symbolic mission' in the society

In order to support our argument, the thesis is developed in four stages. The first stage provides a theo-anthropological basis for the ordained person. Here we want to present the proper anthropology retrieves the mission of the trinitarian communion. In order to come to this point, we begin the thesis by analysing the religiosity of the ordinary people and their experience of the divine that is the cosmic God of communion. This is manifested in history through the self-communication of God, who is an other, stands in the history and challenges the humanity to a life of dignity, solidarity and communion. This trinitarian centred mission leads to the transcendental openness to the other which is the absolute goal of the hope of every human beings. If one loses this transcendental openness, then one regresses to the level of a clever animal that causes oppression, separatism, war and fighting, nationalism, and fundamentalism.

In the second stage of argument, the focus is on the symbolic nature of the church as the sacrament of *communio-unity*. That places their mission within the self-understanding of the church. As we said earlier, regarding the church there are lot of metaphors that creates tension in the field of mission also. This tension is challenged by John Paul II recently, he states that make every effort to teach the truth and dispel the confusion and correct errors that the church is a mystery. So if the church is a mystery how can the mission can be placed? Hence we argue that the mystery of the church coincides with the mystery of divine and human. This mystery is a dynamic reality in the process towards the *communio-unity* of all human beings. In which the mission finds its meaning and fulness. By introducing a neologism, '*communio-unity*' we posit a new perspective for the mission of the church in society. It examines the internal mission of the church as communion of baptised and external manifestation as the unity of humanity as a whole.

In *Lumen gentium* article 1 it is stated that the mystery of the church is the sacrament of communion with God and the unity of the humankind. This statement gives a definitive way for developing a theology of the church and its mission as the sacrament of *communio-unity*. The term 'mystery' used in this context is neither in the mystical nor in the passive sense, but it is a powerful reality which challenges everyone to come into the main stream of the life of unity by encountering the unjust system and metaphorical concepts of the people. In fact the mystery of the divine and the human unfolds in the mystery of the church. Thus the self-understanding of the church as 'sacrament' (mysterion) of *communio-unity* fulfils its inner reality - the communion of all the faithful in their baptismal mission, and an external expression - the unity of all human beings in their reception of grace from creation.

This argument leads to the third stage where we focus on the prophetic way of actualising the mission of the ordained through the ministerial office. In order to bring out the prophetic-mission the argument is centred on the self-emptying (*kenosis*) sacrifice on the cross which is the climatic expression of the prophetic mission that is symbolised in and as priesthood. The symbolic encountering of the mystery of the cross (priesthood) bridges the unity between the human and the divine. By participating this unifying mission of priesthood, the ordained symbolically express the reality in a concrete way through empowering and co-ordinating the ministries of the church and the society.

Finally we come to the fourth stage where we examine that the symbolic mission of the ordained awakens the human mission of unity as an authentic human community in a local context. Hence taking into account the contemporary situation and the pastoral needs, we shift the mission from the local church to basic christian communities and through these communities to society as a whole. These communities are the *locus* of bridging the gap between theology and practice of faith. They are the *locus* common faith experience, ecumenical movements and inter-religious dialogue in a pluralistic society.

The mission of the ordained in these communities is to co-ordinate all ministries and empower all people, without any discrimination, irrespective of caste or creed. Building up a new humanity with a new perspective is the aim of their mission. So also in order to protect the nature they have to reveal the truth of humanity with a prophetic voice. By doing so, their mission is exercised by caring for the suffering and marginalized, and defending the rights of people. Thus their mission transcends all the differences of race and nationality, all ethnic and linguistic barriers.

The symbolic mission of the ordained is realised in their solidarity with all human beings, especially with the poor. By uplifting human being from all kinds of exploitation and oppression the ordained unfold the values of society as a human community. These values are fostered by the sincere attempts to integrate their life and mission, linking their identity and religiosity, and harmonising their spirituality and apostolates. The fruit of the symbolic mission is to be judged in the way it edifies the community in mutual relationships of enrichment. Through this mission they give hope and new life to humanity and become a symbolic mediation of love and hope at the socio-cultural and personal levels.

We come to the conclusion that (1) through actualising the relational power i.e., (giving and taking) of the trinitarian communion, and through exercising the same relational power to humanity, the ordained become the hope-filled prophetic leaders of the community. This leadership is not static, but always an encounter with unity.

(2) In the building up of the community, their mission is the symbolic one of re-awakening and re-enacting the mystery of unity. This opens a deep human and divine encounter. It is not a step back to the day to day situation, but entering into the reality, announcing and empowering the people to take up bold steps against the destructive forces in life and an openness to stand for the dignity, freedom and solidarity of the humanity.

(3) The symbolic mission neither binds to earthly reality nor avoids earthly problems. It transcends the context to the realm of community. The encountering of the mystery brings out the reality of the presence of God that represents the paschal mystery of 'unity' in a concrete life-situation. In such a way, the ordained re-awaken and re-structure the Form of God's love in every creature.

(4) The mystery of God defines the human mystery in truth and Spirit for the service of all humanity. Through baptism one is introduced into the mystery of communion, and through the ordained mission the baptised actualise the church as sacrament of communio-unity in society. In this way, all the faithful fulfil the mission of humanity as a human community.

In short, the the communitarian symbolic mission encounters the mystery of God and human beings that leads to a mission of community in a pluralistic society. The human persons who are ordained to the prophetic-ministerial office make explicit the communio-unity as a service of community. This mission as a **person-centred vision in a 'communitarian-symbolic mission' is the**

most basic service that one can ever render to humanity, that challenges every human being at the threshold of the Third Millennium.

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18.05.2000

Hall Arrangements : Nicholas and Chittinapally(Organisers), Anatharackal, James, Augustine, Tharsius, Sunny, Papaiah, Roy, Nazarine, Soosainathan, Augustine, John Peter (Please arrange the Museum-hall on Thursday at 2.00 p.m. (for 130 people and arrange three places for Buffet) and put back the tables and the chairs after the programme on the 19th and also please clean the Museum-hall.).

Decoration and Setting the Tables for Dinner (plates, spoons, forks, knives, serviettes, flowers, candles etc. Please buy all that is essential for this purpose) at on Thursday (18th May 2000) at 2.30 P.M. : Kombara (Organiser), Molly, Rosmin, Angeli, Francis, Josy, Shaji.

19.05.2000

6.00 p.m. : Mass :

Celebrants : Schotsmans, Michiels, Leijssen, Vincent, John Baptist.

Liturgical Arrangements : Chanikuzy and Richard (Organisers). Please meet Schotsmans for readings. Also kindly arrange vestments for five people, and all that is needed at the altar including the sound system

Music : Lancy and Sabu (Responsible for hymns) Maria John (Organist).

Shopping : Illathuparambil(Organiser); Simplicio, Andreas (We have already arranged 40 bottles of red wine and 15 bottles of white wine. We request you to buy water, beer, coca-cola, orange juice, apple juice, tooth picks. Also please help us to serve these items on the tables during the dinner in collaboration with Amaraj and Tony who are arranging wine serving).

Aperitif and Other Drinks Serving : Amalraj (organiser), Tony. (Amal, the wine will arrive on Monday morning, at 9.00 a.m. We request you to take custody of it from John Saldanha). We have also requested Illathuparambil, Simplicio and Andreas to join you as they are responsible for soft drinks.

Buffet Setting : Leslie, Kombara (organisers), Lancy, Selvarajan. Kindly arrange buffet in three places. (The vegetarian spring rolls are to be served on all tables. The rest of the items such as Lamb, vegetarian side dish, Chicken, salad, pulav rice, fruit salad and cakes on the buffet tables).

Help in the Kitchen : Kochuparambil (Organiser), Mathai Kadavil (We hope that the food will arrive around 3.00 p.m. We request you to make yourselves free around this time)

Cleaning Dishes : Padiyath (Organiser), Cosmon, Kasper, Jose Palackal, Lawrence, Benedict, Angel, Kozimala, Jerome.

Sound System : Scaria (mike, speakers and soft music)

Upper Kitchen Cleaning : Benny

Lower Kitchen Cleaning : Thottathimyalil

ABBREVIATIONS

AG	Ad Gentes
AAS	Acta Apostolicae Sedis
BCCs	Basic Christian Communities
BEM	Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry
CA	Centesimus Annus
CBCI	Catholic Bishops Conference of India
CCC	Catechism of the Catholic Church
CIC	Codex Juris Canonici
CL	Christifideles Laici
CLSA	Catholic Law Society of America
CTSA	Catholic Theological Society of America
DE	Decree on Ecumenism
ED	English Edition
EN	Evangelii Nuntiandi
ET	English Translation
FABC	Federation of Asian Bishop's Conference
GS	Gaudium et Spes
LE	Laborem Exercens
LG	Lumen Gensium
NA	Nostra Aetate
PDV	Pastores Dabo Vobis
PO	Presbyterorum Ordinis
PP	Populorum Progressio
RH	Redemptor Hominis
RM	Redemptoris Missio
RSV	Reversed Standard Version
SC	Sacrosanctum Concilium
SL	Servants of the Lord
SRS	Sollicitudo Rei Socialis
ST	Schriften zur Theologie
TI	Theological Investigations
TMA	Tertio Millennio Adveniente
UR	Unitatis Redintegratio
UUS	Ut Unum Sint

Theses

1. Karl Rahner in the renewal of the contemporary sacramentology points out to the already present grace in all of creation. Sacramental grace is to be related to this gift of grace to humanity and to the mystery of God's self-communication (*koinônia*). Sacraments reveal this mystery of unity as grace to everybody. As one of the sacraments, the sacrament of Order realises the same mystery of unity as community in a pluralistic society.
2. Since post modern approaches aims at contextualising theological reflection, there is a task for the theologians of today to formulate a pastoral perspective on the dogmatic content of the specific sacrament, i.e., Holy Orders, in order to review a re-contextualization in a particular *locus*, like India. In this *locus*, the task of the ordained persons is to re-formulate the symbolic mission for the whole humanity.
3. The human persons and their religiosity are the starting point for envisaging a mission in a pluralistic society that should challenge all man-made systems in view of uniting everybody together in God as challenged by Jesus Christ in the history.
4. All human beings are symbolic. But the ordained persons are explicitly symbolic as they are called and sent to the basic mission of the humanity that actualises through dialogue with people. By dialogue they express the need for being of persons in communion.
5. By their prophetic-ministerial office, the ordained persons actualise the church which becomes the symbolic expression of the *communio*-unity in a pluralistic society .
6. The church as the basic sacrament reveals the *communio* (*koinônia*) of the trinitarian God by representing and commemorating the paschal mystery of Christ as *communio*-unity that challenges and be challenged by all other communities in order to realise a more human community.
7. Within the church and the society the mission of ordained persons encounters the Other as mystery-God, and others as mystery-human beings in order to actualise the human community.
8. By encountering the mystery of unity in and as the community, the ordained persons enter into the problems of the society, presenting themselves to the basic mission of the humanity and at the same time withdraw from the situation to actualise the reality that they symbolise as beings of communion as a God given gift to all.
9. The symbolic mission of the ordained persons is the most basic service of community that challenges everyone to fulfil the same mission at the threshold of the third millennium. This new millennium opens a door for a common acceptance of plurality, side by side proliferation of sects, globalisation (economy and culture), communalism, nationalism and fundamentalism that leads to a loss of sense of the qualitative God-experience as encountered and believed by Christians for centuries in the revelation brought out by Jesus. The same Jesus in the history is present today as God/human and challenges everyone in view of uniting all beings with the cosmic God of communion.

Wilcent K. Peter, a diocesan priest, comes from Neyyattinkara, South India. He holds the Licentiate Degree in Theology and the Master's Degree in Religious Studies from the Faculty of Theology, K. U. Leuven.

The dissertation will be defended in public on at..... in the promotion Room, University Hall, Naamsestraat 22, Leuven.

The dissertation can be consulted at the Faculty Secretariat.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

At the threshold of the third millennium, the mission of ordained persons is undergoing crucial challenge in a pluralistic society like India. The challenges of the church in India are the challenges of ordained persons too. The major challenges of the church are outlined in the Asian Synod where the Synod Fathers stated, that “in the vastly diversified cultural world of Asia, the church faces philosophical, theological and pastoral challenges.”ⁱ These challenges are unable to be overcome unless we take into account the whole reality of human beings and their dignity. The way we envisage human persons is the way to have an effective mission.

Since the religious beliefs and the culture of a particular society change according to the rapid growth of communications media and travel around the world, the mission of ordained persons has to be based on the vision of human person. In such a situation, the questions have been asked, how can their mission actively promote the integral development of the humanity and manifest itself in the society as community? Once again that poses a very significant question, namely how can they have a mission based on the vision of human person? This dissertation entitled *Ministry of Community in a Pluralistic society: The Symbolic Mission of Ordained Persons in View of the Theo-Anthropological Approach of Karl Rahner and Contemporary Theology* attempts to bring out the reality of the mission.

1. Contextual Significance of the Research

The context of this research is the world’s largest pluralistic society - India. By pluralistic society is meant the place where there are various castes, religions, christian denominations, catholic churches, political parties; ideological groups, movements and organisations etc.

2. Theological Settings of the Theme

The theological setting of the theme is the Council document *Lumen gentium*, article 1. Under the title “The mystery of the church” it is stated that “The Church in Christ, is in the nature of sacrament - a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men.”ⁱⁱ The main reason for beginning with this argument is that the Council Fathers discussed first the self-understanding of the church. And that gives a definitive way of being church through the celebrations of the ‘sacraments’.ⁱⁱⁱ As one of the sacraments, the sacrament of Order actualises the reality of the church in a pluralistic society. The same ideas for the theological setting are found in the theological-anthropological models developed by Karl Rahner, Walter Kasper, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and contemporary writings of liberation and Indian theologians.

3. Central Question of the Research

The central question of the dissertation is that how does the basic mission of humanity fulfil through a *communitarian-symbolic* mission of ordained persons in a pluralistic society? Where do we begin our mission in such context? What is the basic principle which touches the core of humanity? Does their mission cause division in the society or bring unity? Do they not encounter the mystery of unity as the highest value within the particularities?

4. Central Thesis of the Whole Argument

In a pluralistic context, the mission of the ordained persons is to build up the community. Hence we argue here that this mission is a *communitarian and symbolic*. The communitarian-symbolic mission encounters every situation from the point of view of uniting everything in communion, the highest reality of beings. This person-centred vision in the community-centred symbolic mission is the most basic service to humanity that challenges everyone in the society.

5. Method and Limits of the Research

The mission which we envisage here is based on theological-anthropology in view of the pastoral needs of the present pluralistic context. This is in fact a broader understanding within the one mission of the church. In order to have an authentic mission inside and outside of the church, the human persons are ordained through the sacraments of Order, as a pastor with a communitarian-symbolic mission in the society. This places itself in the reality of humanity and the problems which they face in the day to day life of the people and at the same transcends the life of people to ultimate being of communion.

6. Approach of the Thesis

Situating the human persons in a relational theological-anthropology is the basic approach of the thesis. By well placing the anthropology, the christology and the ecclesiology, the dissertation present the mission of the ordained persons that re-awakens symbolically the basic service of humanity. As the partakers of the basic mission of humanity, ordained persons make explicit the gift of *communio-unity* that is not a finished and achieved product - an already and not yet - but challenges every one to be human in vision.

7. Terminological Clarifications

(a) Symbolic: The term ‘symbolic’^{iv} is used to express the divine and the human reality in the order of salvific plan of God. It points out to the fundamental openness of human beings and the capacity of communion with the divine and human reality. The term ‘symbolic’ refers the most basic mission of God towards humanity and church’s mission towards the cosmos in which the ordained persons participate. By commenting on the contemporary theological thinking of Louis-Marie Chauvet, David N. Power writes that he brings out “a symbolic theology of the whole order of salvation, looked at from within sacramental practice.”^v This symbolic theology leads to the self in its relationship with God and humanity that gives identity as beings of communion.^{vi}

(b) Communio-unity: The term *communio-unity* is used as communion (*koinônia*) with God and unity of the humanity in its most basic theo-anthropological sense. This also expounds the reality of the communion of the faithful in their baptismal mission and the unity of all human beings in their reception of grace of unity from the creation. The reason for using this term is that then this mission can enrich, and even enter and co-ordinate the ministries of church and society for the well-being of humanity as a whole. By merging together of two terms, we want to present the mission within the church and the society. The term *communio* is used for the self-understanding of the church and her ecumenical approach and the term unity is used her function in the society for the unity of the humanity as a whole. In fact this term *communio-unity* points out the same reality of the divine and the human (*koinônia*).

This can be understood only in “the context of mission - the mission of God, the mission of the Church and the mission of the religious people.”^{vii}

(c) **Prophetic:** The need for a prophetic mission is outlined in the contemporary theology. “Christ’s embodiment in the Church prophetically calls into question the adoption of any social ordering which retains status distinctions or marginalises some of the members.”^{viii} Thus the “prophetic memory localises grace under the shadow of the cross, by relating the commemoration and witness of victims to Christ’s memory.”^{ix} The church is prophetic in her very nature of mission itself. Since the ordained persons participate in the same, their mission is prophetic too. Apart from the church’s prophetic mission the ordained persons has no identity in a pluralistic society. This prophetic mission of the church is the real challenge for everyone.

(d) **Mission:** Mission is meant here the mission of Church that is carried out by all the faithful, and co-ordinated and empowered by the ordained persons. This mission ultimately comes from Jesus the head of the body, the church. The ordained persons participate in the mission of the head, Jesus Christ, and of his body, the church. This is the duty of all baptised persons, since they partake in the same missionary nature of the church.^x

(e) **Service:** The communitarian-symbolic mission expresses the whole reality of the humanity and the basic service to the divine, the humans and the cosmos. This mission is the most basic service to humanity that challenges every one. This is not a power over the people but to remain a servant like God/human - Jesus Christ in the basic need of the humanity. Everybody is called to do the same service, but the ordained persons symbolically unfolds this service to the Other-God and others - human beings. In order to make actualise the church through the communitarian-symbolic mission of ordained persons the thesis is divided into four chapters.

8. Division and Content of the Chapters

1. Theo-anthropological Basis of the Human (Ordained) Persons
2. Sacramentological Basis of the Human (Ordained) Persons as *Communio*-unity
3. Prophetic-Ministerial Office of the Ordained Persons
4. Symbolic Mission of Ordained Persons: A Service of Community

The thesis is developed in four stages. The first and fourth are more on outward expression (society) of the ordained persons, and second and third are inward expression (church) of the ordained persons. The first stage is centred on the reality of the human (ordained) persons in the society. The second stage is the human (ordained) persons’ sacramentological expression as church. The third stage is the ordained persons’ office in the church. The fourth stage is the mission of ordained persons in the society.

The main focus of the first chapter is to bring out an existential understanding of human persons basing on the theo-anthropological centrality of beings in communion. The transcendental openness shows that all beings are related to the divine, the human and the cosmos. This openness of the beings to other (God, human and cosmos) is fully realised through the self-communication of the *communio* of the trinitarian God in the person of Jesus Christ. Therefore beings as human persons in self-communication

with others reach out to the person in the self-communication of the *communio*-Trinity that is the ground of our being human. The self-communication of *communio*, as the grace of unity, is the gift that is the basis of human dignity, freedom and solidarity. The symbolic celebration of the sacraments actualises this reality of the church in the society.

The second chapter deals with the sacramentological basis of the human persons who express the reality of the self-understanding of the church as *communio*-unity. The church is actualised through the celebrations of the sacraments where human persons as the grace filled ones become symbols of authentic persons. The symbolic encountering of the human persons actualises the church as the sacrament of *communio*-unity. The church encounters the mystery of unity through the respective office in order to actualise the *communio* (*koinônia*) of persons. The introduction of the term *communio*-unity is used here to bring out the symbolic mission of the church through ordained persons. The *communio*-unity brings out the tension between the church and society. But this tension can be solved only by encountering the mystery of unity for the realisation of communion of beings. Within this reality the ordained persons participate the same mission of the church, and they encounter the mystery of unity in order to actualise the communion of persons as a community in a pluralistic society.

The third chapter examines the encountering of the prophetic-ministerial office of the ordained persons for unity. Jesus Christ encounters the mystery at the cross where he actualised his priesthood as a state of life in full *communio*-unity with God and humanity. The mystery, encounter of unity at the cross is a full expression of Christ's priesthood. The climax of his incarnation is self-emptying (*kenosis*) at the cross, that becomes a service to humanity. His earthly encountering of humanity is prophetically actualised at the cross, thus the cross becomes the bridge of unity between the divine and the human that is the basis of the ministerial office. This office encounters every situation to manifest the paschal mystery in word and service. The existential task of it is to unfold the baptismal mission of every member of the church. The ministerial office administers the sacraments in word and deed with a prophetic view of uniting everybody into a human community.

The fourth chapter discusses the communitarian-symbolic mission of ordained persons to build up a more authentic human community in the society. The nucleus of their symbolic mission is the local community where the localisation of the mission takes place through basic christian communities. In these communities, their mission is one of empowering and co-ordinating the ministries of the church and society responsibly. The empowering and co-ordinating functions take place through a dialogue of life that is open to God, humans and the cosmos. The realisation of the truth of humanity through encountering the social, political and economic situations is part of a dialogical way of mission. Their symbolic mission always analyses the social affairs and oppressed situations and empowers the people to encounter the mystery of unity. So the mission of ordained is a *communitarian-symbolic* one of *communio-unity*^{xi} as community. This mission is a service to humanity that a person can ever render to a society that challenges everyone in the Third Millennium.

ⁱJohn Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia, Origins* 29 (1999) 358-384, p. 363.

ⁱⁱDogmatic Constitution on the Church, Vatican II, *Lumen gentium*, 21 November 1964, in AAS 57 (1965) 5-67. Translation by N. P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, Vol. 2: Trent to Vatican II* (London, 1990). Commenting on it, recently John Paul II stated that “the Church herself, as a ‘sign and instrument of communion with God and of the unity of all humankind,’ is a mystery.” Cf. John Paul II, “Make Every Effort to Teach Truth, Dispel Confusion and Correct Errors,” *L’Osservatore Romano*, 8 December 1999, 5-8, p. 5. Hermanus Wilhelmus Maria Rikhof by analysing different metaphors of the church states that “Pope Paul VI expressed it in his opening address of the second session of the Council: ‘The Church is a mystery. It gives a reality imbued with the hidden presence of God. It lies, therefore within the very nature of the Church to be always open to new and ever greater exploration.’” H. W. M. Rikhof, *The Concept of Church: A Methodological Inquiry into the Use of Metaphors in Ecclesiology* (London, 1981) p. 217.

ⁱⁱⁱ“The sacraments are (*Real*)symbols of the Church, which is the (*Real*)symbol of Christ, the divine Logos, who is the (*Real*)symbol of God, who *symbolizes* himself in creation, and because of whom human beings are able to become themselves and respond to God by *symbolizing* themselves in acts of knowledge and love.” Cf. A. Liberatore, “Symbols in Rahner: A Note On Translation,” *Louvain Studies* 18 (1993) 145-158, p. 150. “The Church and sacraments are symbolic in that they continue “the symbolic function of the Logos in the world.” Cf. J. J. Buckley, “On Being A Symbol: An Appraisal of Karl Rahner,” *Theological Studies* 40 (1979) 453-473, p. 462.

^{iv}The consequent application of the category ‘symbolic’ is meant to express the fundamental openness of the human persons to the absolute mystery God who for Christians is the God of communion. For Karl Rahner “the symbol strictly speaking (symbolic reality) is the self-realisation of a being in the other, which is constitutive of its essence,” Cf. K. Rahner, “Zur Theologie des Symbols,” *ST Bd.*, 4 (Köln, 1960) 275-312, ET. “Theology of the Symbol,” *TI*, vol., 4, tr., K. Smith (London, 1966) 221-252, p. 234. “Karl Rahner’s theology is his thoroughly unified view of the human person as fully integrated spirit and body; not primarily one or the other, but primarily the living unity of both: embodied spirit and enspirited body, or what he aptly calls *Geist in Welt*. Given such a view of the human person, ‘there is no human activity that would not be symbolic in one way or another,’ (as quoted from Piet Fransen, “Forward,” in George S. Worgul, Jr., *From Magic To Metaphor: A Validation of the Christian Sacraments* (New York, 1980) p. xiv.) insofar as the transcendental and categorical dimension of human experience necessarily go hand in hand. But if the famous Leuven professor Piet Fransen is right, “the greatest tragedy” which our contemporary Western culture has inherited from Enlightenment (and from the Rationalism which followed it) has been the neglect and distaste of precisely this symbolic dimension of all that is human.” For Rahner, “the primary sense of symbolization is precisely this self-realization through self-expression in the other. Cf. A. Liberatore, “Symbols in Rahner: A Note On Translation,” pp. 146-147. “A being can be and is known, in so far as it is ontically (in itself) symbolic because it is ontologically (for itself) symbolic.” *Ibid.*, p. 148, quoted from K. Rahner, “The Theology of the Symbol,” p. 231.

^vD. N. Power, et. al. “Current Theology: Sacramental Theology: A Review of Literature,” *Theological Studies* 55 (1994) 657-705, p. 685. That is “to speak of the *symbolic* rather than simply of *symbol* avoids taking any symbol as adequate to the expression of the divine or fixing the gaze on symbols rather than on the one who approaches humanity through the symbolic.” *Ibid.*

^{vi}“An alternative anthropology would have to move is precisely the explication of those features of the self which can hold together symbolic self-expressions and historical identity, the self as actually and potentially symbolic, the vertical and horizontal planes of human existence.” Cf. J. J. Buckley, “On Being a Symbol: An Appraisal of Karl Rahner,” *Theological Studies* 40 (1979) 453-473, p. 471.

^{vii}M. Amaladoss, “The Call to Communion: Symbol of a New World: A Challenge to the Religious,” *Vidyajyoti* 61 (1997) 446-459, pp. 449-451. “It is a common task, and we invite our brothers and sisters of all the different religious and cultural traditions of Asia to join us in this effort to bring human society and the cosmos, with each of us men and women and all other beings, into the Ultimate Harmony.” *Ibid.*, p. 455.

^{viii}D. N. Power, “Roman Catholic Theologies of Eucharistic Communion: A Contribution to Ecumenical Conversation,” *Theological Studies* 57 (1996) 586-610, p. 601.

^{ix}D. N. Power, et. al. “Current Theology: Sacramental Theology: A Review of Literature,” p. 704. “Christian presence and action in a society in need of change, especially in the interests of the poor, emerges as a sacramental question, prophetic in its action. The Church has to be prophetic in its ritual.” *Ibid.*

^x“The missionary duty, which is a duty towards God and neighbour, is plainly shown also to be a duty towards oneself.” Cf. G. Coffele, “De Lubac and the Theological Foundation of the Missions,” *Communio* 23 (1996) 757-775, p. 769. This is what Susan K. Wood puts it in a recent title, the “priestly identity” is equally the “sacrament of the ecclesial community.” Cf. F. Nwatu, “A Paradigm Shift in Clergy Formation: A *Sine Qua Non* for Inculturation in Africa,” *Asia Journal of Theology* 11 (1997) 99-116 p. 110.

^{xi}The above said conclusion of the thesis is reached by taking into account the methodological tools of the church’s theo-anthropology in relation to the mystery of God and humanity. For having an effective mission in a pluralistic society the whole reality of the human persons and their theological-position as persons and the social problems which they face are necessarily taken into consideration.

CHAPTER ONE

THEO-ANTHROPOLOGICAL BASIS OF HUMAN (ORDAINED) PERSONS

Introduction

The main objective of this chapter is to situate human (ordained) persons on a theo-anthropological foundation. There are theological writings to place the ordained persons and their mission in the church and the society, basing the arguments either on the Tradition or on the Bible. Of course, as we know, in the Tradition and in the Bible all ministerial activities are oriented towards humanity in a radical way, aiming at transforming their existential life situations.

This chapter locates the existential position of human persons in the community, in relationship with God and humanity. We examine here the theo-anthropological thrust and its nature irrespective of religions and cultures - the transcendental relation of human persons to the mystery, to God, and to others and their task in history as historical and spiritual beings. Then, their existential nature as mystery, the symbolic significance of their becoming aware of being human, and the symbolic reality of divine and human as central to the human persons, are dealt with. Finally, we conclude with the Theo-anthropological turn of them towards the Trinity, in order to ground the mission on the communion of the Trinitarian-God, for dignity and solidarity of humanity.

1. Nature and Scope of Theo-Anthropology

The church needs an anthropology,^{xi} in order to evaluate herself and be in a position to offer to nations around the globe her values and faith, and to be the church in all cultures in a concrete way.^{xi} An Anthropology of the church makes possible today, as it did on Pentecost (Acts 2: 1-12) that all peoples might understand the essence of humanity and their basic mission in the world.^{xi} The church, at the same time, is able to understand all, and be understood by all, despite deep cultural and religious differences.^{xi} In order to situate the human persons in the church and the society, we shall begin with the relational identity of human beings and their relational character of self to each other.

The core of human identity is the human self that is relational to other selves. “There is no self without relationships, no self apart from other selves, no self without being constituted by the actions of other human subjects.”^{xi} So, the human reality is totally related to the universal self. We cannot measure out fully our humanness without the reality of universal self whom we call God. There is a simple reason for this. Human beings refer to others and plan in relation to others because they are in the image of the universal self. As in the words of W. Vogels, that a “human being is ‘in the image of God says something about the human being.’”^{xi} The relational nature of the human self gives a relational character

to the human mission. In order to establish its importance let us look first to the nature and scope of anthropology.

Anthropology inquires into the basic questions about who human beings are? How did they originate? What are they? How do they behave? Why do they behave as they do? In the writings of sixteenth and seventeenth-century German scholasticism there is an anthropological turn. This “anthropological turn” happens because of the detachment of the question of human beings from the larger framework of theological and metaphysical questions. As a result of this detachment many began to interpret the idea of the humans in a new way.^{xi} They claimed that each human being could be known separately by science. Contrary to this, Walter Kasper states that the unity of the human being can be experienced only in the pre-scientific praxis of everyday life. It is necessary to postulate a unity that embraces both human subjectivity and objectivity.^{xi} This anthropology unites human beings with God and with the cosmos.

At present many people feel that too many statements in theology are just forms of mythology and can no longer seriously be believed. We can theologise in numerous ways, basing on one’s own situation of life in order to liberate all human beings. However, all these theologies should foster a mutual relationship of love rather than oppressing the life situations of persons. The basic truth behind it all is the one self which unites and relates to all, especially in every word and deed of human beings. Thus theology has to be creative to build up one self through mutual enrichment of unity in love in a pluralistic society. However, various ways of theologising lead one to an ultimate transcendental reality, ‘the image of our own’. In this situation, anthropology enables everyone to understand and to co-relate the mystery of life to the fundamental structures of one’s own experience of life and the divine reality. As philosophy focuses on the humans as subject, we have to relate the Christian mystery to this innermost, human experience through a theology built upon the reality of humanness. As we know, an anthropocentric view does not contradict theocentricity, but is inherently connected to it.

As soon as man is understood as the being who is absolutely transcendent in respect of God, ‘anthropocentricity’ and theocentricity’ in theology are not opposite but strictly one and the same thing, seen from two sides. Neither of the two aspects can be comprehended at all without the other.^{xi}

Therefore we say that anthropology does not contradict theo-anthropo-centralities in any way. Rather it enters into a deeper understanding of the meaning of human existence and its core mission in a pluralistic society. Anthropology actually co-ordinates all sciences and cultures into the essence of being human.

1.1 Uniting of Science and Culture

The Anthropology, here envisaged, is able to unite science and culture. It is not composed of bits and pieces of sciences and cultures. It has a very distinct object of discussion in terms of humanness in a relationship with divineness. As Louis J. Luzbetak states, “the physical, biological, cultural, social, and psychological understanding of what it means to be human is examined with a view to arriving at as complete and integrated a picture as possible of what we understand by *anthrôpos*.”^{xi} Anthropology, as a

science of humankind *par excellence*, attempts to understand the human persons holistically. Therefore, whatever issue it examines, it does so in relation to human wholeness. It alone assumes a distinctly holistic role, viewing humanness as a unified system. Consequently it is best described as the convergence of science and culture in society.^{xi} In all cultures human beings are the essential location of thinking and reflection about the divine and the world. The development of anthropology as the human science *par excellence*, or discipline (ministry), is primarily a new phenomenon.^{xi} It touches on the secrets of the religious life of every human person.

1.2 Basic Human Activity as Religiosity

The basis and centre of all human activity is religiosity i.e., the human person's transcendental orientation towards the divine. Without this, beings lose their identity as being human. The essence of human activity is the expression of religiosity. In fostering this religiosity in a pluralistic society, religion plays a major role. Religion appears not as one of the human activities, but as the master-activity which embraces, in a way, all other activities.^{xi} The same truth is, a little differently, pointed out by Karl Rahner from the theological point of view. Religious belief springs from a point of human existence which is more original than the point of origin of scientific reflection, and this unifies and brings into an ordered whole the multiplicity of things, including all scientific investigations.^{xi} In this regard, religion is the relationship between divine and human reality. Thus religiosity is the primary activity of humanity.

Gaudium et spes tells us that the relationship of human beings to the divine is fundamental to their very existence. In another way the human openness to the world presupposes their openness to God. If one accepts their fundamental openness to the divine, then all kinds of explorations would lead them to see the greatness of divine wisdom. The human activity penetrates to the secrets of reality and in no way alienates them from the divine. Rather, it helps them to go beyond the phenomena of nature. Human beings are not understood in relation to nature, but by their relation to the divine. Religiosity, then, is a participation in the gracious quality of being, which is essential to humanness.^{xi} It actualises the essence of human persons.

Human beings as *homo* religious, are interpreters of nature. As natural beings too, they are the necessary components in interpreting nature. Therefore, *homo* religious is not only a spiritual being but also a natural being. Through the natural and spiritual being, nature receives its meaning.^{xi} Therefore, to divide the spiritual from the natural in the basic religiosity of human beings is impossible. The basic religiosity is the human-centred cosmic activity.

1.2.1 Religiosity as Cosmic Activity of Humanisation

The human activity centres on cosmic activity in view of humanisation of society. All things on earth relate to human beings as their centre and crown. In the case of human activity, the anthropocentric vision is reasserted. Just as activity proceeds from human beings, so it is ordered towards them (*GS* 12, 1; 35). This is to say that the human activity must contribute to the humanisation of society. Human work relates to human beings and their actualisation as persons. Work is the actualisation and the development of their personal existence. Their endless potentialities are realised through it.

Humanisation means here, the openness of humanity in relationship with the divine and the human. It is a communitarian way of bringing about humanity's progress. Thus the religiosity of human beings leads to humanisation of the cosmos. We could find here that their very centrality relates to the whole existence of the cosmos. Human activity is then regulated according to the hierarchy of values of the cosmos and vice versa. Hence, "in accordance with the divine plan and will, it should harmonise with the genuine good of the human race, and allow man as individual and as a member of society to pursue his total vocation and fulfil it" (GS 35). The total, cosmic vocation of human beings comprises their existence on all levels of understanding: as persons, as related to others and as oriented towards the divine and the cosmos. This total vocation shows a more integral approach to their activity, placed in the context of serving, all over the world-society.

The main concern for dealing with human activity is to bring the whole earthly sphere into the light of God's design for human well-being. *Gaudium et spes* speaks about the mystery of creation in order to establish a theological basis for human activity in accordance with God's will. For they, created in God's image, received a human mandate to subject to him the earth and all that it contains, and to govern the world with justice and holiness (Gen. 1: 26-27; Wis. 9:3); a human mandate to relate themselves and the totality of things to him who was to be acknowledged as the Lord and creator of all. Thus by the subjection of all things, the name of God would be wonderful in all the earth (Ps 8: 7, 10) (GS 34,1). In this way human beings participate in the very work of God's creation:

Thus, far from thinking that the works produced by man's own talent and energy are in opposition to God's power, and that the rational creature exists as a kind of rival to the creator, Christians are convinced that the triumphs of the human race are a sign of God's greatness and the flowering of His own mysterious design (GS 34, 3).

Thus, participation in the work of creation involves the community of relational beings.

1.2.2 Reliosity as Relational Responsibility to Other

Human activity is a relational responsibility to Other as God, and others as human persons. From this relationality, individuality arises that gives human beings identity. "The relationality and individuality, attachment and autonomy, connectedness and independence co-exist in varying degrees within every human identity."^{xi} To exist individually is always to co-exist, to be in relation to a community. In other words, it is relational existence that begets human existence.^{xi}

Human beings become human through historical existence, through relationships and interactions with others. Paul Ricoeur states that the unity of relationality and individuality can be summed up as a dialectical tie between selfhood and otherness. Within this dialectic relationship with otherness there is something added to selfhood in order to overcome the danger of solipsism. The otherness belongs to the ontological constitution of selfhood.^{xi} This particular dialectic reminds us "that the selfhood of oneself implies otherness to such an intimate degree that one cannot be thought of without the other."^{xi} Anthropology is to be in relation to, "to exist is always to co-exist, and to co-exist is to co-experience a radical relationality - a relationality reaching back to origins, embracing the present and stretching out towards the transcendence of the future"^{xi} Therefore they are communal beings that

never stand by themselves. They are dynamically related to each other. They grow toward the fullness of themselves only in and through their relationship with each other.

Human beings, by nature, are relational beings. They possess the God-given gift of the potential to be in a relationship with the divine and with others. Their ultimate relationship to the divine makes them ecclesial beings as well as social beings, and the symbolic representation of love to the world.^{xi} “The nature of human love shows how indissolubly intellectual being and the personal are bound up with each other. Both in his natural being and in his personal being man finds his completion and his happiness only in communion with other human beings.”^{xi} Therefore, they are “essentially interpersonal and communal.”^{xi} As relational beings, they are in the process of becoming “more a man.”^{xi} The process of becoming human can be described in terms of dialogue and communion. Thus the dialogical nature of human beings reveals to us that they are in need of others to become what they themselves are.^{xi} They are in a mysterious process in which they reflect deeply about their own world in its unity and totality. This leads to the conclusion that *being* human is *being-in-relationship*. Hence we say that making and shaping oneself is identical with the process of making and shaping one’s world and history, and vice-versa. By taking responsibility for the world, humans transcend and reach beyond the world, into the silent mystery. From this mystery they come to know the world by affirming and taking responsibility for themselves, and the world, in mutual relationships.^{xi}

In the face of humanity’s growing mastery over the world, there is a relationship between power and responsibility. “Responsibility, though an experience of the self, is not a function of the self, but rather a function of the other-in-me which renders me *for-the* other.”^{xi} This responsibility is prior to commitment. On the part of both persons and groups, responsibility is a principle for action. The responsibility to the other is inseparable from one’s self. The other impresses one’s self upon one as a responsibility that is specifically one’s own, unique and irreplaceable, insofar as the self is constituted as the ‘one-for-the other.’ Therefore our responsibility, as our response to the other-in-me, opens a space to grace.^{xi}

Grace establishes and maintains an effective relationship with the divine. It motivates the actions of human persons. Responsibility emerges within this context of a grace-founded relation and grace-supported activity.^{xi} In *Gaudium et spes*, it is mentioned that, “the greater human power becomes, the further his individual and community responsibility extend” (GS 34, 3). The relational and communal dimension of the understanding of human beings fulfils their identity in receptive creativity.

1.2.3 Religiosity in Receptivity and Creativity

The receptivity and the creativity are hall-marks of the human persons. The primacy of receptivity and creativity determines at the very source of being human. They are first receptive-*from* the divine.^{xi} John Paul II repeatedly emphasises creativity as a hall-mark feature of their imaging of God. This is the basis of his anthropology. This emphasis on creativity has to be understood in the light of conditions proper to creaturely creativity. John Paul II emphasises creation as a gift:

Creation is a gift, because there appears in it man who, ‘as the image of God,’ is capable of understanding the very meaning of gift in the call from nothingness to existence.... Man appears as ‘created,’ that is, as the one who, in the midst of the ‘world,’ received the other man as a gift.^{xi}

Thus, he says that, in engaging creativity, human beings must remain “in every case and at every phase of this process within the Creator’s original ordering” (*LE* 4). What this original ordering by the creator entails is that the human being, “who discovers his capacity to transform and in a certain sense create the world, (should not) forget ... that this is always based on God’s prior and original gift of the things that are” (*LE* 37). Again, he indicates that we need first of all to foster in ourselves and in others a contemplative outlook. Such an outlook is characteristic of those who see life’s deeper meaning, who grasp its utter gratuitousness, its beauty, and its invitation to freedom and responsibility. It is the outlook of those who do not presume to take possession of reality but instead accept it as a gift, discovering in all things the reflection of the creator and seeing in every person his living image (*LE* 83).^{xi} An understanding of humanity as made in the image of God emphasises this creativity. Human creativity is indispensable in a world where oppression and misery prevail.^{xi} By way of receptive creativity human beings will be able to see the face of God, the creator, in the history of humanity.

1.3 Being in Freedom as Historicity

Historicity affects the whole being as human. Any attempt to give a non-historical foundation to the humans’ existence is an exclusive rationalism that is at once “nonhuman ” and “unspiritual.”^{xi} The consciousness of being in history brings out the real existence of world. Human beings are historical in a concrete sense because of their inner essence and because of the many with whom they share their place and time. They are historical insofar as they are the true humans, who act freely, even in their transcendence towards the divine. Hence they determine their relationship to the absolute and the world. Authentic historicity arises only where there is freedom. In this sense, where there is a togetherness of free persons in their multiplicity, there is historicity. Such historicity is found in human beings because they are essentially free and self-subsisting in personality. They freely realise themselves through a multiplicity of such personalities as the total realisation of the very essence of a personality in space and time.^{xi}

Historicity is not one aspect of anthropology alongside others. It is the basis of anthropology. Being in time and in history is precisely the way humans exist as spiritual and free beings. Every cognisant person must employ sensible perception and imagination, and thereby turn to something that is essentially historical. Human beings construct their metaphysical and moral concepts by orienting themselves towards history.^{xi} This basic free activity can be seen in God’s revelation. The free action of God takes place within the empty, but in the space of the human being, which is already historical in itself.^{xi} This task is to be realised in history.

1.3.1 Historicity a Task to Be Realised

All human persons have an existential task in the time in which they live. They have to be seen in their entire inexhaustible plenitude of nature, vocation and history. When they first begin to exist in

the world, they realise their active potentiality and task.^{xi} In history, there is an inner-correspondence and indissoluble inter-relationship between being and truth. In as much as being unfolds in history through knowledge, the history itself becomes an ontological category of expressing being and truth. In history, all material norms are conditioned by time and culture. As a result, one's own limited worldview has to be subjected in time and it should be disciplined through self-criticism. As we know, the concept of the human being outside of an historical context and without a culture is simply an abstraction. It is a dangerous abstraction that obscures the need for constant self-criticism.^{xi}

Karol Wojtyla writes that all essential problems are to be focused and condensed in a simple assertion of fulfilment in an action. Indeed, we are concerned with the person and action not as two separate and self-sufficient entities but as a single, deeply cohesive reality.^{xi} When an individual performs an action, we see the person as a subject and an agent, while an action itself appears as the consequence of the efficacy of an agent. This consequence is external with regard to the person, but it is also internal to, or immanent in the person. It is both transitive and intransitive with respect to the person.^{xi} We cannot instrumentalize the human action because it is the being in truth and practice.

But we will not see the beauty of our lives within the cosmos unless we reject an ethos of instrumentalizing. Rather we must centre ourselves in the heart of human praxis. That praxis opens us to contact with the absolute values of the true and the good and the beautiful. This contact happens within the person. It is *intransitive*, and its achievement is a precondition for a *humane* culture. Without the moral absolutes that shape the integrity of the person, our lives unravel.^{xi}

Human beings achieve fulfilment through their openness to history as an ultimate end. So also the creation achieves its fulfilment not by itself but through humanity that creates its own history. If the principles and conclusions of natural law are normative, it is because they serve to affirm persons, enhance life, and contribute to the fulfilment of human history.^{xi} Through these measures they construct a communal nature of life in history.

1.3.2 Historicity as Communitarian

Anthropology must be the retrieving mechanism of the communal and social nature of human persons in history. The inter-personal dimension of existence develops historically into a wider domain of community. A movement takes place in the life of the human subject from being inter-personal to being inter-communitarian. That is, the self in personal relationship develops outwards and becomes a self-in-community. Human nature as creative is a process in history whereby human beings create themselves as human persons. They acquire a social character through a process in nature.^{xi}

Nature is what religion's encounter with the holy interprets. This is in no sense a reduction of the holy to the natural, but rather an insistence that the encounter with the holy includes inescapably within it a message about what this natural order is, as well as who we natural human beings are. The encounter with the holy alone, but about the relation between the two, and the form of such a message is the only means by which we learn the deepest truth about God or about nature.^{xi}

It is in and through the word that the communitarian nature of humanity is made manifest. Through the word of conceptual expression, the place where this word would be spoken would be a

community in history. Thus, human beings are by nature historical and communal, and, as such, the potential hearers of an historical word of revelation.^{xi} The revealing of the word is an historical event which is also a process in history. This word itself is in its turn the synthesis of inner-worldly historical reality. It is true that human beings must pay attention to the possibility of the word of God, spoken in the human language.^{xi} The word, then, is the place of a possible encounter with, and revelation of the free God.^{xi}

God given precisely as Holy Spirit deepens and heals our own spirits for life in the divine milieu; grace in its root meaning is the outpouring of Holy Spirit for the inner renewal and outward reorientation of every person, society, and time. As created gift, human life experiences a transcendental openness to the “ever greater God” when can only be fully realised through historical activity.^{xi}

Since, human persons are historical beings, they may come to know every being in the word, at least if this word is spoken to them in their language by the free God. Thus, it only remains to find out where they are to hear this word of God as a human word through transcendental openness.^{xi}

2. Transcendental Openness of the Human Persons

In this part, we deal with the transcendental openness of human persons to relocate them in a communitarian level. Their transcendental nature is shown to be that of asking questions about their own existence. They ask questions, not only the metaphysical ones, what and why, but the questions implicit in metaphysics concerning who they are as human. It is possible for them to turn away from one inquiry to another. However, they cannot escape the questions about beings as radical and limitless. Though they are aware of the limitations imposed on them by time and space, at the same time they are the subjects of questioning that transcends the limits of time and space. Though they are finite beings, they are capable of standing outside of themselves and positing themselves in relation to that which is other than themselves. They are capable of bringing being into question and asking questions about the totality of existence. Humans raise questions about themselves, and are thereby opened to the unlimited horizons of such questioning. This questioning of being and the openness to the unlimited horizon of being reveal the nature of the human being or subject as transcendent. They are, by nature, beings that are able to go beyond (transcend) the immediately given, attaining even God.^{xi}

According to Karl Rahner, the human person is a ‘spirit in the world’^{xi} and ‘hearer of the revealing word of God.’^{xi} Human persons, as spirits, stand open for the free revelation.^{xi} They, as spirits, possess the transcendence only in relation to spatio-temporal appearance i.e., historical appearance as community. The subjectivity of the human being is as an unlimited dynamic openness to the absolute, i.e., the transcendence to the absolute. This subjective transcendental orientation is a secret ingredient of everyday life. This is always present in human beings whether they are aware of it or not.^{xi} This openness to the absolute, fundamentally determines who they are.^{xi} Therefore, this capacity for self-transcendence is what characterises them as spirits in the world. Without such an orientation to the

infinite, they would cease to be human and would regress to the level of a clever animal.^{xi} From this fact, we arrive at the point that the self-transcendental experience is the very essence of being human, and relates immediately with the experience of graced transcendence. This transcendence that we actually experience, has been radically transformed by God's self-communication.^{xi} The daily experience, then, is the 'self-communication of God.' God remains utterly transcendent, yet communicates himself to us in all our historical and material particularity through the experience of grace.^{xi} It is not an introverted subjective event of life, but is the self gift of God himself to human beings.

It is not primarily created grace, but God in God's own gratuitous self-communication. Grace precisely as communicated, is viewed anthropologically as a determination of the spiritual subject, who by grace comes into immediate contact with God. This experience of grace by the human person, understood right from the outset as "spirit-in-world," does not mean a description of introverted, subjective events.^{xi}

The transcendental experience of daily life will direct one to the possible knowledge of God and the freedom of will to act in the daily life situation. In knowledge and free will, one grasps not only a person bounded object, but goes beyond this towards the unbounded and the infinite (transcendent).^{xi} It is like the diffused light of the sun which we do not perceive of itself, and yet only in the light of which we can perceive an objects, and toward which in our conscious experience we orient ourselves. If we open ourselves to the dynamism and radicality of this transcendental experience, then, we experience the sacred mystery as God.^{xi} This transcendental God-experience can occur in any act of knowledge and freedom in daily life.^{xi} The transcendence is not towards nothingness, but is towards the pure being that has no inner limits in itself but is a being in communion. In the transcendental experience of the sacred mystery, human persons achieve an existence in life.

2.1 Transcendental Existence - in Knowing the Other

The transcendence of human nature shows the longing for union with God, who is the principle of love. This transcendental longing for love is actually a gift of grace. Openness and receptivity are human capacities, complimented by the "supernatural existential"^{xi} from the beginning.^{xi} This intrinsic grace is the human existential longing for love - God. This is the human capacity for the divine and the constitutive element of human beings.^{xi} The natural desire for the divine in human beings is an obediencial potency for a possible revelation of God. This is not a fundamental capacity but a supernatural orientation offered by grace as gift and ordained to the self-communication of God.^{xi} This supernatural orientation, even according to the present theology is God's donation or gift to the human.^{xi} Therefore, we may say that God himself is the ground motive and the source of dynamism of human transcendence and existence.^{xi} This supernatural existentiality incorporates the concepts of nature and grace and also relates the human being to nature and God, and the finite to the infinite. It shows that the God of love communicates himself to the creature while at the same time preserving his transcendence and freedom. The relationship between nature and grace is therefore one of quasi-formal causality. It is the relationship with the Other whereby the 'other-in-me' constitutes the subject as the 'one-for-the other' of responsibility, and yet remains absolute within the relationship.^{xi} Thus the supernatural

orientation of being human is bounded with the relationship of responsibility with the Other. This orientation is an inborn potency of the human subject to know the Other.

The supernatural, salvific and liberating knowledge of God is something added to the natural order of God's creation itself.

In all our natural knowledge of the natural world, the knowledge of persons and knowledge of things, the knowledge of philosophy and knowledge of science is present another element which possibly, but not necessarily, is already a supernatural element, depending on God's free disposition.^{xi}

The transcendental moment in revelation is knowing the self-presence of the supernaturally graced subject in all of its objective knowing.^{xi} The self-knowledge occurs only in the process of knowing an other. One is present to oneself only insofar as one is present to an other. One is in touch with oneself only by being in touch with one's world. Otherwise one is present to and in touch with an abstract, illusory self. Therefore human existence is in the world, in time and in history. It has no identity and reality apart from its relationship to its own particular world, time and history.^{xi} In short, the human existence is the existence of mutual relationship and enrichment by which they come into the knowledge of God and the world. *Gaudium et spes* gives serious consideration to the human existence both individually and collectively.

This supernatural existence in its collectivity establishes the best world order. It gives the conviction, not only that humanity can and should increasingly consolidate its control over creation, but even more, that it develops on humanity to establish a political, social, and economic order and to serve human community and help individuals to affirm and develop the human dignity through transcendence of spirit (GS 9, 1).

Karl Rahner has argued that all human knowledge and conscious activity are born from an unthematic but ever present knowledge of an infinity of reality. An absolute term of human transcendence, though it is not *nothing*, certainly is *no thing*. That is, it is neither a finite object in the world nor limited idea of the mind. Rather, it is being in an absolute sense, known surely but indirectly through the human reaching out beyond finite things to attain finite things, which is the infinite horizon of being making itself manifest in time and space.^{xi} The movement of human transcendence is simply the subject creating its own unlimited space as though it had absolute power over being. This power to reach out i.e., *Vorgriff*^{xi} constitutes the essential nature as mystery.

2.2 Transcendence as Mystery of Human Persons

Human persons are mystery in their openness to the absolute. According to Karl Rahner, the human being is "mystery to and for himself."^{xi} Human beings are inescapably involved in a reality with which they cannot totally identify themselves. In every process of growth and discovery of the human persons there is an irreplaceable element of self-education that leads to mystery. This process constitutes the very dignity of human life, and no one can renounce it. They are mystery in both knowing and not knowing themselves. They are fated to remain mystery. They are mystery because, though limited, they

seek after limitless being. They are seeking not just themselves, or the being which make them exist, but someone who is other than themselves, one whose essence is to be precisely unlimited.^{xi}

The temporal limitation of life, as well as the searching, the sorrow and the solitude which characterise it, remind the human person that he does not contain within himself the reason of his being. He is therefore a mystery to himself, knowing and desiring himself in terms of the world, and of the reality which he finds outside himself. He knows himself in knowing the reality of this world, and desires himself (or that which he desires *for himself*) in desiring things: the realities which surround him. The human person is not a pure knowing, nor a pure and absolute desiring.^{xi}

Karl Rahner states that the human transcendence is to a “mystery” and even a “holy mystery.”^{xi} The human persons are mystery in the very essence of their natures, because of their inherent relationship with God, so they can only be understood against the reference of the incomprehensible God. They are always moving towards the obscurity of God.^{xi} The human mystery becomes clear only in the mystery of Christ. In him is manifested both the mystery of God’s love and the vocation of the human person in its fullness. Human beings are perceived, at their very core, to possess the ability to relate to others from the mystery revealed - Christ. They are therefore, in relationship with the rest of creation and to the Other.

2.3 Transcendence as Mystery of Encountering the Other

Human persons as mystery encounter the Other for their own fulfilment. They as mystery, are always in desire for happiness. This happiness can only be attained in the Other who is infinite. Their desire is also therefore infinite. Only an infinite object can fulfil their desire. Therefore, they seek the infinite under the guise of an object for their desire of happiness. But they may seek this object where it is not to be found. That is in an other who is not the Other, capable of responding to the infinity of desire. In this Other, who is unlimited, they can find themselves. They as mystery, are in search of a being who is subsistent and unlimited, that is God. Thus God is the one who “lies behind the Christian encountering the world as one mysterious, largely unknown, and yet also familiar and even intimate, while at the same time enabler of and cheerleader of human agency.”^{xi} They seek this being even without being aware of it, in all their desires.^{xi}

Hans Urs Von Balthasar explains it in the example of a mother’s smile. He insists that the mother’s smile is the paradigm for understanding the human persons, and through their analogy to all of cosmic being. The mother’s smile gradually penetrates and awakens the subjectivity of the child, evoking the response of a smile in return. The mother-child relation is the created analogue for trinitarian beauty: as creatures, we are always like the child awaiting the loving initiative of the Other. The key is the primacy of the Other. The objective presence of the Other that is first a presence of love, and which, therefore goes forth first in the warmth of a smile.^{xi} We are always in a position of being first awakened by the Other, whose initiative we then carry with us in our consequent creativity. In a word, we begin always as receivers, in a kind of primary act of loving obedience - a “fiat.”^{xi} The persons who are in search of Other always encountering the other.^{xi} Reflection on the ‘Other’ invites access to the transcendence. Thus the human experience of Other is a search for the divine in the countenance of the other.^{xi}

The human person is internally oriented towards the “other” in such a way as to find its truest inner fulfilment in the *kenotic* gift of self to other. To be a person is to be in a being-communicating relation with other persons. The personal life has to be lived in the community. The bond of the community is love, especially *agape* love. That is, if you really want to fulfil yourself, you have to abandon yourself and enter into an other. The other is now present in living actuality. The other is also a person, even as I am. The other, as person, transcends the other’s descriptions. I am no longer relating to the descriptions but to the person, “yourself.” You are present for me and I am also present for you, as I was not for “him.” Each of us looks at the other. We love the other as a person, that is what we desire to experience. There is another self (just as I am a self), looking at me and acknowledging that I am a self. I am to this extent united with the other in this I-you relation.^{xi} The other is still the “other.” The other is a self, even as I am. I am a deep centre of selfhood, where we transcend all the descriptions and can no longer be called finite or particular. This is the true heart of my being. The corresponding reality must be the true heart of the other being. If I want to be united with the other, it is with this centre that I want to be united. I want to enter into the other where the other is no longer “you” for me but “I” for its own self. I want to be united with that “I.” This would be an “I-I” relation.^{xi}

On the other hand, the human persons are, *‘quodammodo omnia,’* ‘somehow everything’. They can become anything through knowledge and desire. Hence the horizon of their self-being, knowing and desiring is the totality of being. Their experiences in thinking and deciding in time make them what they are, and which they have become precisely through encounter, exchange, and interaction with the world. Therefore every reality which they have known, desired and encountered has been an actualisation of their being. Whatever they experience in their span of life stands always as an ‘other’ before them. It is an other to whom they can have recourse, and which is always there for them to explore, to discover, to desire, to will and to love more.^{xi}

Human persons are not in full possession of themselves. They find themselves by encountering an other. This encountering implies a multiplicity of interaction between subject and object, self and other, and environment. Humans find themselves progressively confronted by an ‘other’, always becoming more complex and differentiated. This progressive differentiation of levels is then linked with the progressive emergence of mediations between the subjects, their environments and their ‘other’.^{xi} They go up towards God only by going out into the world that is an other. The access to God is given to them only in the transcendence, and in their return into themselves. Only by stepping out into the world can they enter into themselves and encounter being and God, i.e. other and Other.^{xi} “Human reality is necessarily “being-for-the-others.”^{xi} Since they live their lives in reaching out towards an absolute, through reaching out to the cosmos they become spiritual beings.

2.4 Transcendental Openness as Spiritual Life

The transcendental nature of the human being as spirit opens up to the spiritual essence. In reflecting upon their questioning and upon themselves as questioning beings, humans discover that they not only apprehend individual objects but in that act “pre-apprehend” or, better, reach out toward an infinite horizon of being, so that they are already “with being in its totality.”^{xi} When Karl Rahner

elaborates the framework for Christian faith, the fundamental concept is not changed, whereby the absolute being of metaphysics becomes the absolute mystery that surrounds their spiritual lives.^{xi}

The human as spirit enters into otherness and into the world. It is an inner determination of spirituality, which should not be understood as if one of the peculiar powers of human beings. They are spirits in a peculiar way of receptivity. Because of this receptivity, the spirit may strive towards its own goal, the grasping of being as such. In this sense, they are sense-endowed spirituality.^{xi} The spiritual life of human beings is entirely related to their experience of spirit. Robert Kress is of the opinion that spirituality lies at the heart of Rahner's theological construction, both biologically and conceptually.^{xi} This spirituality is mainly "finding God in All things."^{xi}

The transcendental spiritual nature of human persons opens itself to history. Openness to Other is the very nature and essence of human beings. This openness becomes apparent when the individual is presented with an object showing itself. This peculiarity of the spiritual nature of human beings is where we arrive at historicity that is not a property which belongs to them. Rather, it is an essential element of the transcendental spirituality itself. Historicity derives from the specific spiritual nature of being human in the world. Hence, it is the historicity of humans' spirit as such. The trinitarian-centred spirituality is a peculiar one which is nothing but the inter-relationship between divine and human. Mutual conditioning exists between transcendence and historicity and inter-penetration and the unity. By developing an ontological spirituality, we can avoid a pantheistic monism and an ultimately unintelligible chaotic pluralism.^{xi}

This gracious quality of life associated with community was a primary manifestation of the spiritual nature of humanity. The spirituality thus, is human openness to the essentially shared nature of humans in the community life. This spiritual experience is founded upon the gracious quality within existence associated with the fundamental connectedness which binds everybody together, revealing that they bring forth a world not from their own selves, but from one another. It is gracious and filled with grace. It is not an other-worldly sense, but the offering, receiving, and sharing, which founds the possibility of the world itself. As an awakening to that gracious quality within their very being, the religious is vested not in a power beyond the world, but in the very power by which the world is at all. One might say the world itself is religious in the light of that ultimately gracious quality which, though usually hidden beneath the surface of experience, touches them from within the context of interdependencies which constitute their everyday lives. In this sense, the religious dimension lies hidden not in a distance that holds it apart from human beings, but rather precisely in the closeness which finds them and becomes an integral part of who they are.^{xi}

Thus, spirituality does not take them into another world of spirit apart from everyday life, but opens up a deeper dimension of grace within the world itself. The world is gracious and thus spiritual. The quality of givenness (gift, donation) is present throughout the interconnectedness of the world that breaks through in spiritual experience. Everyday life itself becomes spiritual in the light of the mutual offering of care between and among humans. In this situation, God is not apart from us but as that grace of being which gathers us into the world in the hope and promise of a human community. The spiritual

dimension reveals the underlying meaning of the world, drawing us forward in a response of care: toward one another, toward nature and for the world. Through care we participate in the empowering quality of the divine presence; for in care there is no longer a difference between God and the world.^{xi} Human persons as spiritual beings constitute their life by empowering the world.

2.4.1 Openness as Mutual Empowering

Empowering the world is the very basis of a spiritual life which is an openness to the universe. Spirituality is an experience of the divine as an empowering presence in the world. This power is necessarily present as the centre of the universe. Approaching the divine as a presence empowering the world, would draw us not toward a realm separate and distinct, but toward that very world upon which has been bestowed the richness of its presence. Hence, we approach God not only by leaving behind the world in search of a transcendent divine centre, but moreover by empowering and entering into the world, where we see an empowering presence of God. Therefore the experiencing of the empowering God is very much connected to experiencing that which is possible and hopeful within and among us, as that which touches and reaches toward us from all that is. Spirituality, here, uncovers God not “out there,” but present at the very centre of self, opening upon that realm as the beyond that is within.^{xi} In this way, spirituality acts by allowing us to experience the divine self, by entering fully into the richness of all in the world.^{xi}

The transcendental spiritual life is inter-related with the universal self and human self.^{xi} It expresses that the source of the being of human is not centred on themselves. Rather, it is the relationship through which they share and open up themselves. It is a form of emptying by which the real self immediately emerges. This self becomes real through and with others. They exist not apart from this universal self but within a world which is in all ways part of them. This universal self invites them to acknowledge, accept and contribute to who they are. Within the self, humans are partners mutually and reciprocally in one another’s lives. It opens upon a realm of connectedness which touches each from within and divides the egoism of self from one another. This self embraces all living things in compassion. It offers enlightenment and spiritual awakening in the midst of everyday life and also allows us to consider that the manifestation of the universal self takes place within the experience of the world.^{xi}

2.4.2 Openness as Communitarian Inter-Dependency

Human lives are inter-dependent with each other in day today life. Even those aspects which are their own, such as the choices and decisions that humans make, or the thoughts and feelings they have, so often *involve* and are *influenced* by others.^{xi} To an extent that they depend on others, they are subject to what is beyond their control. Yet their fundamental needs are satisfied by one another. They enrich each other’s lives. Inasmuch as they live through the contributing presence of others, the need within them draws them forth to participate, and thus share, in the life and world of these others. Their support and care for others is important in restoring their world and contributing to the progression of their lives.^{xi} Therefore mutual dependency is a gift that opens the possibility of caring for each other.^{xi} There

is an inexhaustible depth of potential within the human being. This potential allows for the power of the human, at its best, to turn the worst of tragedies into an achievement in some manner.^{xi}

Human persons have an impact upon one another through countless interactions which weave their lives together within the routines of everyday life. At present, the connections which join persons are reaching global proportions, binding their well-being and security together as never before, both for better and worse. Here, the security of each is indeed becoming dependent upon the security of all. All human persons are centres to one another, participating in a world that each offers and receives, and thus ultimately shares, with others. Then they live not by their own doing but by the grace of efforts of others within the community of human persons. Their task and greatness are to receive the gift of that human community and pass it on so that it may endure, grow and strengthen. This mutual care and inter-dependency take place in freedom.

The anthropological focus on freedom is not only the graced capacity to become finally oneself before God, but also, more comprehensively, the shared capacity to forge a common future. The freedom of human persons leads to unity as Christian faith asserts a unity for its origin, course, and goal. Such a unity has to be initiated and realised. It is the unity of a human creative possibility prepared and projected but still decidedly at issue for the multiple subjects of freedom. The material outcome of the world's history remains radically shrouded for us in the mystery of our own human freedom as well as in God's.^{xi} This brings us to a meaningful understanding of life.

2.4.3 Openness as Meaningful Human Existence

The real quest of human for the Other in other is actually a search for a truly meaningful life. Human beings' quest for God is founded in an inevitable search for the meaning of life. Without such a meaning, life has neither sense nor unity, both of which are necessary for living in communion. This quest is implicitly motivated by the tendency towards happiness. A total lack of meaning leads to the disintegration of life, and finally to mass destruction. Without having an absolute in which to anchor the significance of life, all other partial meanings of life are unable to confer any kind of unified meaning to life. The presence of an absolute is not immediate. But is mediated here and now by all that constitutes the world.^{xi} Since human mystery is unlimited human beings are not limited by the horizons of few realities. If that were the case, an ability to transcend would be depressed and the meaning of life would lose.

Taking the mystery of human persons as the starting point of meaningful life allows us to situate them within the totality of humanity. This mystery as totality, is already present in the image of self and of the world that the human persons construct and find as given, in a core-reflexive, in common sense wisdom, through symbolic representations. The mystery is present from the beginning of life. Its presence as a lived reality is what makes them 'out questions to themselves' (*GS 9*).^{xi}

The nameless being which is at the disposal of none and disposes of all, which rules over transcendence by being loving freedom, is uniquely and precisely that which we call 'holy' in the strict and original sense. For how should one name the nameless, sovereign beloved, which relegates us to our finitude, except as 'holy,' and what could we call holy if not this? or to what

does the name 'holy' belong more primordially than to the infinite whither of receptive love which before this incomprehensible and inexpressible being becomes trembling adoration? In transcendence therefore is found, in the form of the aloof and distant which rules unruléd, the nameless being which is infinitely holy. This we call mystery, or rather, the *holy mystery*.^{xi}

Therefore the experiences of the goal of our transcendence are our original experiences of the holy mystery - God. The transcendence of human to holy-mystery makes human beings symbols of God's grace in the world.

3. Symbolic Existence of the Human Persons

Symbols are part and parcel of being human.^{xi} Symbols enable us to do what is just for humankind. They are the core of human existence and basic to human knowing, loving and being.^{xi} According to Louis-Marie Chauvet, symbol designates a process of approach never fully achieved, thus transition to be done again and again.^{xi} Paul Ricoeur remarks that, "it is quite noteworthy that before all theology and all speculation, even before any mythical elaboration, we should still encounter symbols."^{xi} Paul Tillich states that, "man's ultimate concern must be expressed symbolically, because symbolic language alone is able to express the ultimate."^{xi} Therefore, "without symbols there would be neither affective wholeness nor knowledge of the truth.... Through them man's experience is brought to expression and so to discovery."^{xi}

Symbols, in the most primordial sense, are one reality rendering another present. They express or embody the reason or thing so strongly charged with meaning and allowing the other to be there.^{xi} They are the self-realisation of one being in an other. They are extremely close to the one symbolised and in this closeness become the primordial one. Thus symbols make present the reality they symbolise, which is called by Karl Rahner a "symbolic reality" ("Realsymbol").^{xi}

"All beings are by their nature symbolic, because they necessarily 'express' themselves in order to attain their own nature."^{xi} This means that, "any being has to express itself in an 'other' in order to fulfil itself, the 'other' which is the 'expression' of the original being in the 'symbol' of that being."^{xi} For example, when I tell you, "I love you," not only do you "discover" me, but through this self-realisation I discover myself. Through this self-expression I attain self-realisation. I have to express myself, even if you do not respond, if I am to reach fulfilment. "Each being forms, in its own way, more or less perfectly according to its degree of being, something distinct from itself and yet one with itself, 'for' its own fulfilment."^{xi} In this sense, being is of itself symbolic. Symbols do not represent an absent reality, but rather show the reality to be present. Thus, as we mentioned above, they render present what they symbolise. There is a difference between the symbolised (form) and symbols (external manifestation). Symbols are the external manifestation of the form that they symbolise. They are the vehicles for the form to actualise itself in reality.^{xi}

The symbol is the reality, constituted by the thing symbolised as an inner moment of itself, which reveals and proclaims the thing symbolised, and is itself full of the thing symbolised, being its

concrete form of existence... The true symbol is united with the thing symbolised, since the latter constitutes the former as its own self-realisation.^{xi}

Every finite being bears the stigma of 'being' by the very fact that it is not absolutely simple. Finite being has of itself a real multiplicity within the permanent unity of its reality.^{xi} As a result of the unity of a being, however, the plural moments in a being have an inner agreement among themselves. The plurality must be in original and originally superior unity. Such unity can only exist, if the plural moments are derived from an original unity. Thus, each being as a unity possesses a plurality that is derived from an original unity. Each being, inasmuch as it has and realises being, is itself primarily therefore "symbolic."^{xi} The ontological foundation for Karl Rahner's understanding of symbol is that being-any, being-despite its basic unity is by its very nature multifaceted or plural: "every being as such possesses a plurality as an intrinsic element of its significant unity...."^{xi} This plurality positively and not necessarily is a pointer to finiteness and imperfection.

A plurality in a being is not necessarily to be considered as a pointer to finiteness and imperfection...may very properly start from the fact that each being bears within itself an intrinsic plurality, without detriment to its unity and perfection... precisely as the perfection to its unity.^{xi}

All beings are symbolic in plurality, because they necessarily 'express' themselves in order to attain their own nature.^{xi} That is to say, all beings come to be known symbolically, giving themselves away into the 'other' and finding it in knowledge and love. The bodily person constitutes a visible figure outside of himself that brings out real human existence in the world of plurality.

The best example of symbolism is the human body and its relationship with the soul. The body can be considered as the symbol. The soul, then, is the substantial form of that body. The body is nothing other than the actuality of soul in an other, an otherness is produced by the soul itself. The body is the symbol of the soul inasmuch as it is formed as the self-actualisation of the soul. The soul renders itself present and makes its 'appearance' in the body which is distinct from it.^{xi} The soul is recognised as an originating principle of the body's parts in their arrangement and unity. The body is the self as other. It is not something added to a spirit that has its own existence. The body is the self-expression of spirit. The human person as spirit achieves its realisation by developing in body, thoughts, attitudes, and commitments.^{xi} Karl Rahner insists on unity and materiality of the human as a spirit in the world.^{xi} He argues for an essential unity of spirituality and materiality in human beings, that the loftiest metaphysical concepts are possible in and through corporeal organs, sensibility, and imaginations.^{xi} The "soul" is not independent of matter but a way of speaking about the essence of human beings, an essence that includes bodiliness.^{xi}

As the body is a symbol of soul, it is the symbol for other bodies too. For example, Jesus' bodily presence is the symbol of human existence. His bodily presence demands that human persons represent him, in and through their bodies, as morally good to others. Hence the body is the figuration of an otherness. An otherness of an other body has an ethical dimension for our own life. Thus even ethics depends on the otherness of other bodies. A desire to know an 'other' can be valued in terms of the

forming of personal and communal identity. Love and the community depend on the recognition of the otherness of the other.^{xi} The body as a figuration of otherness, serves as an opening towards unity.

3.1 Symbolic Existence of Human Persons for Unity

The symbolic function of the human being as the image of God is the unity of the finite and infinite world. This human and divine reality is made explicit in sacramentology. For Paul Tillich, “a sacramental symbol is neither a thing nor a sign.”^{xi} However, he gives more importance to the sanctity and integrity of the whole person who is not just one sacrament among many but the crowning example of sacramental unity.

The most mysterious and promising is the human. In the human body all the potencies of nature are concentrated and rise to a level of freedom. In the human body nature enters history. Body here represents the whole person as the foundation, the lower flame of the personality; the body is called the perfect organ and experience of the spirit.^{xi}

Human persons as symbols, disclose the presence of God’s love in the world. Their skills of language, the capacity for thought, the ability to ask questions to find meaning, and the radical openness to transcendence, are the constitutive factors that link them with God. Therefore we say that they are the events of a free, unmerited and forgiving, and self-communication of God.^{xi} By basing these anthropological insights, we arrive at the point that they, as symbols of God, are capable of transcendence towards an ultimate mystery for the unity of humanity. So they are symbols unity in and as community.

3.2 Symbolic Expression in and as Community

We have to understand symbols in terms of ourselves and our own life in the community as relational beings. The community has to understand symbols in terms of itself, since the process takes place in the community, where people interact with each other by sharing their life stories and insights.^{xi} A community is a combination of these different human histories. It means that the different human stories make *one history* (story) as a community. This community symbolises the reality of all those who are in and outside of it. In this way “the communal essence of Christian communities is a constant refrain in grounding the reflections upon ethics, political responsibilities and critique of the new left and new right.”^{xi} A worshipping community is “the fundamental point at which both church and World interact and transact with symbolic reality.”^{xi} The symbolic function of a person in a worshipping community is a dynamic force for social and cultural changes. Hence, symbols are the basis of being human in a community.

Human centred symbols are the very basis upon which a community is built. In fact all theologies are directed towards the symbolic dimension, so that, without being a theology of symbols, no theology is really complete.^{xi} According to David N Power’s opinion, Karl Rahner applies the notion of symbolic reality, as does Schillebeeckx^{xi} and others, to the Trinity, the incarnation, the church and the sacraments.^{xi} “The incarnate word is the absolute symbol of God; and the expressive presence of him in the world. The *logos*, in his humanity, is the revelatory symbol in which the Father expresses himself to

the world-revelatory.”^{xi} The church, as community in return, becomes the symbolic reality of the presence of Christ.^{xi}

3.3 Symbolic Reality of Divine and Human

The symbolic action of God in the person of Jesus Christ is the foundation of human and divine reality. The humanity of Jesus is the visible and effective sign of the presence of God’s salvific will. God in his salvific reality is given to us and grasped by us “in the symbol, which doesn’t represent as absent and merely promised reality but exhibits this reality as something present by means of the symbol formed by it.”^{xi} He is the unity of divine and human reality. He manifests the saving power in his salvific action. This is God’s mercy to humanity. The self-sacrifice of Jesus is the salvific mercy of God and his divine will to save and liberate humanity. The almighty God, through his power of mercy, redeemed humanity in the symbolic sacrificial act of suffering, death and resurrection.^{xi} Through the saving self-communication of God in Jesus Christ, God’s love encounters humanity. Here the symbolic saving power of God is not a mighty power but is a power of love for humanity. This power of love is a mighty power for the world.

3.3.1 Realsymbol of Divine Presence

The divine-human: Jesus Christ is the realsymbol of the trinitarian love and *logos* of God. The *logos* is the ‘Word’ of the Father, his perfect ‘image’, his radiance, his self-expression. “God, the incomprehensible abyss whom we call Father, really has a *logos*, that is, really has the possibility of offering his very own self to us in history, as a God who is historically faithful, and in this sense the true One, the *logos*.”^{xi} The *logos* is the symbol of the Father, because God realises himself by expressing himself in the *logos*. Jesus Christ, through his redemptive act, is self-disclosing of the *logos*. The humanity of Jesus is God’s expression of himself.^{xi} Through his self-emptying, the very *logos*, himself, becomes the realsymbol.^{xi} The humanity of Jesus is the revealing symbol of the *logos*, just as the *logos* is the expressive presence of God.^{xi} The *logos* is, then, the very core of the triune God. The word which is in the heart of the Trinity becomes the one who manifests a God of communion.

The incarnate word^{xi} is the absolute symbol of the triune God. As God’s absolute symbol, the incarnate word reveals not only who God is in himself, but also who and what God wants to be for us in an irreversible and unsurpassable way.^{xi} In Christ, God goes out of himself in a self-exteriorisation that is his real appearance. Christ in his humanity is the revelatory symbol in which God is present in the world.^{xi} In Jesus Christ “the self-utterance of God’s Word and its acceptance”^{xi} have taken place.

The Word of God, who is the real-symbolic expression of the Father within the Trinity, posits within himself the sacred humanity as the real-symbolic expression of his own divine person, so analogously the glorified Christ, in sending forth the Holy Spirit to the church, posits the church within himself as the real-symbolic expression of his own sacramental reality.^{xi}

The Spirit of the triune God functions everywhere for the actualisation of the *logos* in the world for the redemption of humanity.^{xi}

The incarnation challenges one to think beyond one's own mysterious nature. Human persons, as mystery, are to be understood in relation to the self-emptying of God in incarnation. The actualisation of human reality is achieved through incarnation. The incarnation constitutes the symbolic presence of God in which the symbol and that which it symbolises form a seamless unity.^{xi} The incarnation is a universal salvific will of God for the world.^{xi} In the incarnation, we encounter the supreme instance of human actualisation, in full personhood and radical humanity.^{xi}

The humanity of Jesus is a visible and effective sign of the presence of the salvific will of God. In Jesus Christ, as the historical arch-sacrament (*Ursacrament*), God's self-utterance, as forgiveness and divination, came to its historical manifestation and its irrevocable fullness.^{xi} In him God is present in fullness and in him the salvation is accepted and realised. Jesus is the definitive self-expression of God. God speaks and acts in and through him.^{xi} This means that the symbolic reality of all things, as a merely natural transcendence towards God has now received an ontological reality in Jesus. It is an infinite extension by the fact that this reality has become a determination of the *logos* himself. Thus all things are held together by the incarnate word in whom all things exist, (Col. 1:17). Hence all things possess an unfathomable depth, which faith alone can sound.^{xi} This can even be understood from the words of Christ himself. He says that "he that sees me, sees also the Father" (Jn. 14: 9).^{xi}

In Jesus, God becomes one with himself and one with humanity. It is through his suffering, death and resurrection that God made visible his humanity, and oneness with human beings. The humanity of Jesus is the focus as sacrament which refers to the reality that is God himself. The human nature of Jesus is the sacrament of God's presence in the world.^{xi} In all the sacraments, there is the reality to which the sacraments refer. This reality is always superior to the sacrament. Jesus as primordial sacrament points towards all other sacraments which have meaning only in and through his sacramentality.^{xi} If the sacraments are material signs that communicate the real presence and power of a spiritual reality, then Christ himself may be called the primordial sacrament of God's saving presence in the world.^{xi} The very humanity of Jesus unifies the Christian sacraments. If at all the church is fundamentally a sacrament, it is because Jesus is the primordial sacrament. He creates the church as a sign of love in the world, through effecting the sacraments. Jesus Christ is not for some, but for all generations. He is the sacrament of *love* for all human persons, for Christian and non Christian, those who are in the church and those who are not connected with the church. Jesus is the sacrament *of* love and *for* love in the world.^{xi} Thus, we say that "the whole universe is sacrament, vivified by the presence of the creator spirit"^{xi} in Christ. Edward Schillebeeckx writes that the personal approach to Jesus is an invitation to a personal encounter with the life-giving God^{xi} who is actualized as mystery of love.

3.3.2 Mystery of Love for Humanity

Jesus Christ is the ongoing presence of God's love. The love of Jesus is the symbolic representation of the trinitarian love. Jesus is the revelatory symbol of love in whom the divinity of the true nature of triune love is self-communicated. The love of the Trinity becomes the symbol of Jesus' persistent presence in space and time.^{xi} Trinity is the mystery of love because the mutual self-gift forms the essence of the love and the same self-gift is manifested in Jesus through the paschal mysteries. The

very essence of revelation is motivated in love and fulfilled in love.^{xi} The interpersonal relationship in the Trinity is the primordial cause and effect of love in the world. The trinitarian love is manifested by the self-sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. The whole paschal event is the manifestation of the trinitarian love.

This trinitarian love is the essence of the unity of human persons. According to Gavin D'Costa: "God's self-disclosure in Christ shows that the proper mode of being is in loving communion."^{xi} Through the self-disclosure of God's love manifested in the Christ-event, the world becomes the event of God's self-communication of love.

The love is manifested in the world's events and in people, in human love, in free acts, in sacrifice unto death, in faith, hope, charity, whatever forms these may assume in the space and time that is our history. Jesus Christ unites the historical manifestation of God's definitive gift of himself to the world and the world's acceptance of that gift.^{xi}

The manifestation of trinitarian love in the Christ-event is the ever-presence of grace. Jesus who is with us, is the absolute and gratuitous presence of God. Human existence has become an objective expression of absolute communication of God to human in him and through him. By the same token, an objective expression of the human response to that total divine gift has happened. "It is pure gift of the Father and grace, prior to all exercise of freedom, ground of the unique freedom of Christ."^{xi} The human existence of Christ is "the *personal* life of God, the Son."^{xi} This means that "the Eternal has presented itself personally within temporal and terrestrial realities."^{xi}

The eternal value is concretely at issue in all the struggles of life because the human world is freely called to God's own life. The mystery of creative love grounds the process of becoming persons both in time and in eternity. No understanding of events within it arises without being called to be transformed into love.^{xi} The love that unifies time transcends all reasons for living in time. It creates new reasons for living and is thus an innermost dynamic of redemptive passage through time. Karl Rahner's perspective presses for the meaning of this world of grace for which we have been made responsible. This offers a theology that is culturally pluralistic. For him, the whole faith is the concern, and a whole world is his hope. In short, in love and adoration, we have to bow before God whose grace in Jesus Christ offers us the courage to reach out to our neighbour in need - where alone we can find ourselves.^{xi}

The community of humankind is created in the image of God's love. This human community is based on love. God says through the community, that "I am here in this world and I remain with my grace; secretly I fill the deepest depths of humanity, keeping people in the love that I, the eternal God, have for my only-begotten Son, the incarnate Word."^{xi} According to Marion's claim, God as love "belongs neither to pre-, nor to post-, nor to modernity," but he discloses an ultimate horizon of all thought.^{xi} In the words of Walter Kasper, "a christological confession can convey a hope for the final victory of justice, mercy, love and life over injustice, oppression, hate, and death, a living hope that gives life to all humanity."^{xi} The human experience of this all-encompassing love is fully dependent upon performance and personal relationships.^{xi}

3.3.3 Inter-locking Mystery of Divine and Human

The mystery of Christ and the mystery of human persons are interlocked. The human mystery becomes clear only in the mystery of Christ, in whom are revealed both the mystery of God's love and the vocation of human beings (*GS* 12, 22, 32).^{xi} Human persons, as "being in the world" and "being in history", give an authentic expression of human existence by which they realise themselves as mystery, realising the world as mystery.^{xi} Therefore their existence is not simply part of a cosmic-process, though they are part of the universe. Together with humanity, the universe and history find salvation in the mystery of Christ. In this perspective, only the mystery of Christ can give us a fuller understanding of everything. For he has delivered and restored the humanity, universe and history. The bodily presence of Jesus in history represents the mystery of God's love.^{xi} F. Connolly summons the words of John Paul II: Preach about

the whole Christ is the Mystery of Christ. And the mystery of Christ is this: that in a man, a plain man, who is the son of Mary, God's message walks around. If you believe in this man and let him into your life, you can share what is in him, the spirit in him that will draw all of us into one. That mystery, that whole thing, is what we call Christ, and it is the truth.^{xi}

Christ entered this world in order to give witness to the truth, to rescue and not to sit in judgement, to serve and not to be served (Jn. 18: 37; Mt. 20 28; Mk. 10: 45). The church believes that Christ, who died and was raised up for all (2Cor. 5: 15), can, through his Spirit, offer to humanity the light and strength to measure up to his supreme destiny. Hence, in the light of Christ, we see the image of the unseen God, the first-born of every creature (Col. 1: 15).

4. *Anthropology Retrieving the Trinitarian Communion*

In the Second Vatican Council, anthropology is its starting-point, but Christology is nevertheless the criterion of all its statements about anthropology. It proclaims Jesus Christ as the origin and end of true humanity. As the definitive text says it: "in fact, the mystery of man is revealed only in the light of the mystery of the incarnate Word" (*GS* 22). It entitles us to call the anthropology of the Second Vatican Council not only a Christian, but also a Christological anthropology.^{xi}

4.1 Authentic Christology Theological Anthropology

The systematic clasp holding together anthropology and Christology is the concept of the "image of God."^{xi} The theology of image of God is the connecting link with whose aid the Council Fathers' attempt to bring human personality, their social constitution, as well as their creative organisation of the world, into relation with the mystery of Christ. From this image of God, the human persons find their ultimate and definitive fulfilment and completion. According to Walter Kasper, *Gaudium et spes* makes it clear that anthropology is a necessary presupposition for any Christology in the context of modern thought. Christology presupposes human persons as free subjects capable of hearing and answering. Hence theology can and must acknowledge the autonomy of human persons, rightly understood, and thereby champion their freedom. They are endowed with freedom, open and capable of transcendence. The incarnational Christology is broadened by a theology of the cross. Accordingly, the cross, which

breaks open nature's sinful turning in upon itself, is not the crucifixion of human beings, but their liberation. The re-enactment of the *Pascha Domini* is, therefore, towards human fulfilment of liberation. Anthropology then surpasses Christology, which defines human's purpose and goal as their humanisation through divination.^{xi}

Moral christocentrism makes Christ the centre of one's and the world's existence. The revelation of Jesus Christ adds an important element in the final (i.e., eschatological) content of one's anthropology. This also does not make a difference in the *original* (i.e., creational) content of that anthropology. A moral christocentrism may recognise the receptive and dialogical dimension of human existence and the need for liberation from oppressed situations.^{xi} Therefore, we can assure that Christ is the gift and centre of the humanity. Most contemporary theologians give emphasis to 'Jesus' humanity'^{xi} as the centre of humanity and the cosmos.

4.2 Encountering the Unity in Jesus of Nazareth

The Trinitarian God is encountered in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The community of persons abides in unity and lives in truth and love of Trinity.^{xi} We come to know the Trinitarian God in the paschal mystery of Jesus of Nazareth. He is the historical appearance of the full promise of God to which the Spirit awakens every time and culture. So, in the life of Jesus, as embodying the human quest through history, one encounters God's eternal guarantee of divine communion in grace in the trial of Jesus' trust on the cross and God's vindication of the preacher of the kingdom whom early Christians came to call God's eternal Son. Jesus makes himself a unity with all and with God, showing categorically that they belong together as Trinity. In effect, these perspectives in Christology help to constitute a new view of the whole Christ in a unitary history that is *yet to be* fully realised.^{xi} The encounter with Christ then has an essentially ecclesial dimension, and it leads to a life of commitment. Indeed, "to encounter the living Christ means to accept the love by which he loves us first, to choose him, to adhere freely to his person and his plan, which consists in proclaiming and in bringing about the kingdom of God."^{xi} Encountering Jesus Christ involves "inviting everyone to communion with the Trinity and to communion among ourselves in a just and fraternal society."^{xi}

Language or dialogue opens up the temporal dimension of human existence, allowing human beings truly to move in time towards unity. Through opening human reality in this way, language allows God to approach the humans in time, to come so near to them, in fact, that they may truly come to rely on God, trust in him, let him be there for them in all God's newness.

Every historical reality would be accurately described as a struggle between being and non-being. God, confessed by faith to have identified himself with this struggle, would be founded nowhere else but in the midst of it. As the infinitely suffering one, God is the being for others, entering the struggle between being and non-being, between life and death, in a way that defines God's own reality and for which only one word is adequate: love. God is the one who goes-out-of-God-into nothingness, who exists into nothingness. In this sense a mystery that can be communicated in speech, a "speaking" or self-revealing mystery.^{xi} "It is a love with which Jesus himself loves them, and it is linked to the source of the God-man's love - the communion of the Trinity."^{xi} "The unifying thesis is that God's humanity

comes from the being of God, which can only be properly thought as love, a love in turn that can only be adequately expressed in trinitarian terms.”^{xi} The perspective of a world-consciousness promises to consider the world’s search for communion with God initiated through Spirit and coming only gradually to acknowledge the historical ground of its hope in Jesus.^{xi}

4.3 Trinitarian Communion Centred Anthropology

Trinitarian-centred anthropology centres as communion in the person, Jesus Christ. Throughout his pontificate, John Paul II upholds the integration of anthropology and “trinitarian Christology.”^{xi} By trinitarian christocentrism, he means to include, not only humanity, but the entire cosmos. The incarnation of God, the Son signifies the taking up into unity with God not only of human nature, but in his human nature, in a sense, of everything that is ‘flesh’: the whole of humanity, the entire visible and material world. The incarnation has also a cosmic significance and a cosmic dimension. The “first-born of all creation,” becoming incarnate in the humanity of Christ, unites himself in some way with the entire reality of man, which is also “flesh”-and in this reality with all “flesh,” with the whole of creation (TMA 1-8.)

The paradigm of interpersonal love is the Trinity. In the Christian tradition, “God is love,” (1 John 4:16).^{xi} That is God who is *agape* in communion.^{xi} The *agape* seeks the good of the beloved one. This goes out from oneself and does not return. It wills the welfare, the being, better being of the beloved, that the beloved should thrive in terms of the beloved’s own good. *Agape* is being-communicating - the basic characteristic of a person. The persons of Trinity communicate with each other as beings of communion. This divine life is the activity of unmotivated self-sharing. This is how being is dynamic. The Trinity is a model of grace, a paradigm of self-giving, and the dynamic reality of life. This is what God *is*. He is the ultimate ground of all being. The Trinity is being itself and being in mutual communication.^{xi} The Trinity is the source of our being. “Although the mystery of the Trinity is infinitely beyond our understanding, it is also the closest reality to us, because it is the very source of our being.”^{xi} The actual community emerges from the dynamism of the inter-subjectivity and the communication of being.

Within the Trinity, the Father’s love, which is the Holy Spirit rests upon the Son as its proper object. In incarnation, this love is directed beyond the Godhead into the world and becomes the central component of the salvation plan through a personal love. This love will be creative as well as unitive, as it is in the case of ordinary love also. The creativeness is seen in the creation of the humanity of Christ, which, as a work *ad extra*, is the work of all three divine persons. Its radicalness is evident in the fact that we have the creation in the strict sense. In its unitiveness it draws the humanity of Christ into the unsurpassable union of love with the Father, which belongs only to the Son in the immanent Trinity. Here the radicalness is seen in the fact that the result is not a mere union of persons but the unity of person with the Son. Ultimately an inner-trinitarian act is the work of the Holy Spirit. If the entire Trinity acts, this is only so that ultimately the Father might act by Holy Spirit. Divine power is subordinated to divine love. In other words the true nature of divine power is revealed in its finality, which is love.^{xi} There exists in this realm something analogous to the *perichoresis* of the intradivine, and trinitarian

relations.^{xi} The Trinity is “an activity (being as a verb) rather than an entity (being as a noun, namely God as One), which is the starting point for reflection on the relationships of the divine persons to one another.”^{xi} Being here is not intrinsically personal or even interpersonal but rather intersubjective.

The relations of the three divine persons to one another and the relations of human beings to one another represent the highest form of an inter-subjectivity which is likewise operative in a limited way among quarks and other subatomic entities at the most primitive levels of organisation within creation.^{xi}

The existence of the trinitarian God is communitarian, giving meaning to human beings to share in the divine communitarian life both now and above all after death. The persons of the Trinity are to live in one another and to “indwell” in one another. Hence, the mutual indwelling is their characteristic. “Father is in me, and I am in the Father” (John 14: 10). This is a way of expressing the perfection of love as both differentiation and union. Each person claims the others’ life as one’s own. “I have given myself totally to the other.” “I am nothing but the other living in me.” “We” are “one.” It comes from the mutual indwelling. Even when we ourselves say “we,” we are able to do so only because of a certain degree of mutual indwelling and inter-subjectivity. It is a wholeness that is neither pure unity nor an extrinsically many. It is unity that is the inter-subjectivity of the many.^{xi}

A community is not a collection. It is truly one being. It has internal differentiation, but it is one. A singular being can have only extrinsic relations with anything else. This does not satisfy the divine quest for union – and, if God is love, then God must be a “quest for union,” for oneness. The love-relations must be intrinsic to the oneness, must be total self-giving that are mutual indwellings, drawing all into a vital, and a living oneness. This is the internally differentiated oneness, the dynamic oneness and the oneness made of the acts of loving. It is a self-created wholeness-Oneness.^{xi} The mystery of the Father and his love, in and as Jesus Christ, reveals the humanness of humanity, and gives the answer to the question, “what is human?” This answer cannot be separated from the problem of human vocation. Human beings confirm their identity by accepting that vocation and making it a reality.

The integration of the anthropology and trinitarian Christology of John Paul II is evident in his first encyclical, *Redemptoris Hominis*. It begins by stating that “(t)he Redeemer of man, Jesus Christ, is the centre of the universe and of history” (*RH* 1). He also links *Gaudium et spes* n. 22 with the missionary task, which is the primary service that the church can render to every individual and to all humanity in the world. Missionary activity has one purpose, that is to serve human beings by revealing to them the love of God made manifest in Jesus Christ (*RM* 2). The trinitarian character of Christology is made clear in his repeated insistence on the communal dimension of humans’ imaging of God. His christocentrism implies a central role for Mary, the perfect model of the liberation of humanity and indeed the Marian-feminine dimension of anthropology. He states that, “totally dependent upon God and completely directed towards him, and, at the side of her Son, (Mary) is the most perfect image of freedom and of the liberation of humanity and of the universe” (*RM* 37). In the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*,^{xi} we read about the dignity of the human where we see the integration of trinitarian Christology and anthropology articulated in *Gaudium et spes* n. 22.^{xi}

This link of Christology, anthropology and cosmology is the basis of the church's renewed mission in the world today.^{xi} Here, *Gaudium et spes* takes over the anthropological turn of modernity, even as it elevates and transforms the meaning of this turn: by recovering the depths of the human persons' primitive ordering towards the mystery of God revealed in Jesus Christ.^{xi} Trinitarian centred anthropology has "to transform our personal and social or political life even in present history."^{xi}

4.4 Contemporary Significance of Anthropology

To enter into the present pluralistic context, we need to take an anthropological turn towards liberating the whole of humanity. In conciliar history, for the first time, the Second Vatican Council takes up the question of anthropology as a subject. The main focus is on their self-understanding of the human persons totally.^{xi} Therefore in *Gaudium et spes* we see a systematic account of Christian anthropology.^{xi} This signals the Council's engagement in a specifically present set of issues, and takes a decisive step towards dialogue with the world of today.

Anthropological suggestions came up in the council for the renewal of ecclesiology and the deepening of the understanding of church herself. This has resulted in the furnishing of a theological account of the church-world relationship. The anthropological turn also brought the supernatural and the natural plans into close connection. The Council Fathers do not want to stop with a purely theological description of the church-world relationship. Their concern is to say something relevant to present humanity. They intend to discuss the world of today, which they could not do without a concrete reference to the present situation. If the church wants to say something about other cultures and religions, it should know all about them. Based on these presuppositions, encouraged by the encyclicals of John XXIII, they resolved in the course of their deliberations on a dialogue with the world. The Council Fathers are not speaking merely about world, rather with the world of humanity today. This is because to enter into dialogue with the world of different ideas, religions and cultures one requires an anthropological basis.^{xi}

God's word to history, the gospel, can therefore be appreciated in its particularity only to the extent that one appreciates as well its universal power of assimilation or integration, its call to an unrestricted community of dialogue among all human beings and with their God.^{xi}

Human-centred dialogue opens a forum for everybody without touching the pertinent cultural and religious questions. One of the most striking aspects in the diagnosis of human persons is that they accomplish wonderful feats in the area of nature and work. Yet they become increasingly confused about themselves, about their vocation and about their sense of life. This is the point where the dialogue has to begin. Thus, the various concerns of the people can be addressed by anthropology. The decision to start with an anthropological crisis furnishes a common ground for dialogue among the members of the church as well as with Christians of other confessions and non-Christians. The question of anthropology furnishes the starting-point. A twofold aim could be envisaged: "*ad extra*," to reveal to human beings their supernatural vocation, and "*ad intra*," to encourage believers to an active involvement in the shaping of the world-community. According to Walter Kasper, "anthropology is the Archimedean point of the Pastoral Constitution and also the basis for dialogue with the world of today."^{xi}

This Gospel of love is intrinsically a gospel of justice. Therefore the mystery of the church is an openness to all realities. As John Paul II states, “this openness to the whole world, to all peoples and to everything human, belongs to the Church’s nature.”^{xi} The church involves itself in the prophetic mission of the incarnate word on behalf of human beings, therefore, “Man is the way for the Church” (*RH* 14). Human beings’ personal relationship to Jesus could be described in terms of the most intimate friendship.^{xi} Theological-anthropology emphasises that human persons were first of all created by God in his image. It should lead everyone to a dignified solidarity of life.

4.5 Human Dignity and Solidarity in Communion

Human dignity and solidarity forms human beings as communion^{xi} communities in a pluralistic society. Hence the unity of humanity is based on the basic vision and mission of human beings. Unity of humanity always challenges one to remain a symbol of an authentic human development. Thus, the mission and “all other programmes relate to man’s integral human development.”^{xi}

All human persons are to be committed to human rights and to work for an attainment of full justice for all. This commitment flows from the basic concept of the truth of human persons. To defend human rights and promote integral human development is obviously posing the same challenge to the church herself. The church is deeply committed, together with all cultures of the world, “to defend and promote the spiritual and moral well-being of the people, in the common cause of safe-guarding and fostering human dignity, social justice, peace and freedom in the world.”^{xi}

Unity is like a pearl which is uncovered through a correct envisaging of anthropology. God’s ultimate sharing of his being is the gift of unity to humanity. Thus, unfolding the gift of unity through committed action is the vision of human persons. It is their mission. This is what we see in the words of John Paul II during his visit to India on January 1986. His message was directed to deepening ecclesial unity (inward) and extending the Church’s mission to Indian society (outward). His vision of unity is based on an anthropology that is entirely related to the trinitarian-communion. He makes it clear in his words that “I have come here in order to proclaim for the church in India the unity which Christ wills for all his followers - a unity modelled on the unity of life and love that exists in the Most Holy Trinity.”^{xi} This is a new paradigm of unity that develops with a trinitarian understanding of God and the relationship between God, cosmos and human persons.^{xi} In his words “man is the primary route that all humanity must follow - but always man in the ‘full truth of his existence.’”^{xi}

Human dignity and solidarity forms human beings in communion. In the pastoral constitution of the church in the Modern World, Vatican II bases its argument for freedom of conscience on human dignity. God willed that human beings should be left in the hand of their own counsel’ (Eccl 15:14) so that they might of their own accord seek their creator and freely attain full and blessed perfection by

cleaving to him. Human dignity, therefore, requires them to act out of conscious and free choice (*GS* 17).

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Theo-anthropology should be a rediscovery of human dignity, belongingness and solidarity in communion of the human persons.^{xi} God did not create the human beings to live as individuals, but to come together in the formation of communion and social unity and solidarity (*GS* 32).^{xi} “Solidarity is thus the fruit of the communion which is grounded in the mystery of the triune God, and the Son of God who took flesh and died for all. It is expressed in Christian love, which seeks the good of others, especially of those most in need.”^{xi} Human persons cannot help themselves because their life is frighteningly fragmented. Therefore they cannot escape the need to unify their existence in an existential way. All of them must try to provide their own unity by means of words, language, and all the other self-schematizations. It provides a more or less integrated picture of their existence. If we consider the things we have to unify, then we tend to look for some positive element that will allow us to maintain possession of these things. If human beings do not really integrate their existence, they will never escape from fear and unrest. The sacraments can help them in this regard to achieve integration in the following areas, in a real and meaningful way. First the integration to themselves, they are led to integrate their own individual limits, up to and including the final limit, death. Secondly in relation to the world, they encounter others and discover that their relationship to them is the decisive factor in their existence. Thirdly they discover the weight of other intermediaries, of other things; in particular, they discover the weight of symbols - things that are both themselves and something else at the same time.^{xi}

Conclusion

We have discussed in this chapter the theo-anthropological basis of human persons for placing the ‘communitarian-symbolic mission’ of the ordained persons in a pluralistic society. The community, that we presuppose here to be totally inter-related with the reality of the human and the divine. The more we enter into the reality of the divine, the more we enter into the reality of human and also vice versa. The transcendental nature of human persons allows them to go beyond all finite beings, as well as space and time as a spiritual being. If they do not have this transcendental openness they will be limited to history and nature, and would consequently regress to the level of clever animals.

This transcendental orientation is not outside of one’s existential human situations. Those who are really aware of their existence are open to all limitations and move towards the community of human persons. Their real history arises, without being limited to nature itself. In their plurality of nature they themselves become symbols for the actualisation of being human in the world.

The anthropological turn of human persons towards the Trinitarian communion gives a space for orienting the human mission in the world of pluralities. The Christo-centric trinitarian mystery is the model for an anthro-centric mission. It happens through active dialogue and mutual enrichment for unity and solidarity of human beings in communion.

The main findings of this chapter are (1) The theo-anthropological basis of religiosity is the core of human activity which transcends every human situation into an authentic historicity; (2) The transcendental openness of the human persons is an empowering-encountering of the mystery of unity among humanity; (3) Jesus Christ, the fully divine/human in history challenges all human beings to be authentic in their own vision and mission; (4) Human persons' orientation towards the Trinitarian communion leads to human dignity and solidarity of humanity in and as community. Based on these views, we shall explore in the next chapter the sacramentological basis of the human (ordained) persons in a pluralistic context.

CHAPTER TWO

Sacramentological Basis of Human (Ordained) Persons as Communio-unity

Introduction

We have already seen, in the first chapter, the basic anthropological orientation of the human persons to the reality of God who, for Christians, is the trinitarian mystery of unity. In this chapter we shall discuss the basic orientation of human persons as communio-unity. This chapter is divided into three sections. We shall deal with the sacramentological basis of the human persons as the church; the church as the sacrament of humanity and, finally, how the church as sacrament actualises the mystery of communio-unity. As one of the sacraments of the church, the sacrament of Order, is directed at the actualisation of the mystery of the communio-unity in a pluralistic society.

The Second Vatican Council called attention to a strange irregularity in the world. This is stated in *Gaudium et spes*.

Although the world of today has a vivid sense of its unity and of how one man depends on another in needful solidarity, it is most grievously torn into opposing camps, by conflicting forces. For political, social, economic, racial, and ideological disputes still continue bitterly, and with them the peril of a war which would reduce everything to ashes. True, there is a growing exchange of ideas, but the very words by which key concepts are expressed take on quite different meanings in diverse ideological systems (GS 4).

Looking at the world today, the above mentioned statement is more true than when it was originally stated. The world has truly become a global village as a result of the fast communications revolution. Consequently, there is a growing awareness of solidarity and a feeling of the unity of all humankind. In this situation, the true self-understanding of the church, as the mystery of communio-unity, brings out the reality of the human persons and the cosmos.

1. Sacramentology of Human Persons as Church

For Karl Rahner, the church is “the sociologically and historically tangible and structured community of those who believe in Jesus Christ crucified and risen as the definitive and victoriously prevailing self-promise of the one and living God to the world.”^{xi} This church is “at the same time holy, but always in need of being purified” (LG 8). In the words of Karl Rahner this is to “belong equally to

the nature of the church.”^{xi} Here it is emphasised that the structures of the church may change, but the core of belief will endure. “There will always be one faith, one Lord, the written word of God, the seven sacraments, the Petrine and Episcopal ministries, and the universal call to holiness.”^{xi} This ‘universal call to holiness’ (*LG* 39-42) is realised in the unity of humanity. The seven sacraments are the actualisation of the church and what she should be in the world.

At present, there is a growing awareness of the need for developing a ‘sacramentology’^{xi} based on humanity. As we know, the sacraments are instituted for the well-being of humanity. Yet they are not only for the preservation of the cultic actions or functions of the church. They touch the core of the culture of divine and human reality. In a pluralistic society the sacraments have to be effective and intelligible with regards to the life situation of human persons.

In our present pluralistic society, we have to take human persons into consideration in their totality, in terms of their mission towards the humanity. Thus the anthropological aspect of the sacraments is an indispensable rite of the communion of human beings, the *comos* and the divine.^{xi} Sacramentology touches the very core of the human persons and their existence. The church is realised by sacramental celebrations of the life of human persons. In this section, we shall deal with the role of sacraments in the life of human persons and their fulfilment on them as the church.

1.1 Sacramentology and Its Thrusts on Human Persons

The basic situations of life are always touched by grace, through the sacraments. Since the sacraments are oriented towards God, theological thinking begins from the basic understanding of human life related to God experience. In this context of life, the ordinary experience of ordinary people’s God experience is very important as the starting point of developing a specific theology. As we have seen in the first chapter, the ‘transcendence’ of the human persons is the essence of their existence.^{xi}

The human persons encounter each of the great experiences offered to them through sacraments. The sacraments offer them the possibility of co-operating in this experience in all its concreteness. Thus the sacraments give them an occasion to co-operate concretely in their own fulfilment. Therefore, as human person, one has to move beyond all limited experiences. This is the decisive anthropological foundation of sacramental life.^{xi} Martien E. Brinkman states that the existential legitimisation of the sacraments is anthropologically necessary in modern culture. We have to discover the role of ritual in transforming the human persons, and to discern ways of integrating cultural ritual forms into our proclamation of the meaning of the words and deeds of Jesus in the sacraments.^{xi} The human persons have an active role in recognising and realising the sacraments in their life.

They, as subjects and living witnesses to the self-communication of God, enter into an active participation in life through a celebration of the sacraments. The meaningful participation in sacraments enables them to find out answers to the core problems of their daily life. This constitutes faith, from which emerges the unity of the humans and God.^{xi} In this way the unity becomes “the media of the power of divine life on earth.”^{xi} The human persons, therefore, are “the unifying symbol of God’s love.”^{xi} Hence, “the other person, who is loved, is the sacrament in whom we receive God.”^{xi} The

sacraments thus deal with the relationship between the human and the divine reality. An immediate connection with the experience of God's self-communication in daily life can be felt here.^{xi}

The communication between God and human persons takes place in and through the sacramental life. At the same time, sacraments are the communication of divine life within the world itself. In such a way the world and humanity have come to be penetrated by the generosity of God through the sacraments.^{xi} They can then be understood as the communicative experience of divine life in a particular place and time. God touches the core of what is human through his self-communication that changes the whole world culturally to a human community.

Human persons exist because of grace, the gift of relationship.^{xi} Transcendental openness leads them to accept the freely offered gift of faith and of grace.^{xi} The grace of God is not limited to some but is already self-communicated for whole of humanity.

God wants each and all to be saved and because Christ's redemption is for each and all, absolutely no one in his/her concrete (experience) is a "pure nature." Man, in his very nature, is grasped by God's will in Christ's redemption. Man's historical existence is always touched by grace.^{xi}

Karl Rahner does not accept the distinct orders of creation and salvation. In the order of creation itself God granted humanity's salvation. Humanity's historical existence cannot stand outside the one order of salvation. However, salvation is always touched by grace. Without grace, salvation is impossible for human beings as creatures. By grace, he actually means something that clutches life, a real (though undeserved) attribute of humanity's concrete historical existence. Grace clutches everyone, everywhere and in every time. This is true "not only in religious acts, but also in wider life-experiences."^{xi} Thus grace can be defined as the perpetual and all-embracing presence of the divine in the world, the living together with the divine and human reality.^{xi} Karl Rahner's fundamental insights on the "cosmology" of the Christian life asserts that

the grace of God no longer comes... steadily down from on high, from a God absolutely transcending the world, and in a manner that is without history, purely episodic; (rather) is permanently in the world in tangible historical form, established in the flesh of Christ as a part of the world, of humanity and of its very history.^{xi}

One of the most important contributions that Karl Rahner has made to moral methodology flows from his theology of grace. For him, nature is a purely abstract or "analytic" concept. Pure nature and consequently a purely natural law do not exist in as much as the world we experience is touched from the first by the presence of God. If ours is a "world of grace," no moral experience and no reflection upon moral experience can be purely natural.^{xi} We cannot alienate anyone from this grace of God. Yet there are people who live without recognising and accepting the grace. The sacramental life of grace leads one in the process of the search for God, and for having a true humanity. Thus the sacraments are the means to be part of an integral human existence in the world.

1.2 Sacraments for Integral Human Existence

The sacramental life is a process of searching for the true humanity, the experiencing of God within humanity, for an integrated existence as a human person. The full realisation of sacramental life

presupposes a whole life that opens towards God. Therefore an essential part of the sacramental life is the process of understanding conversion and searching for God.^{xi} The self-communication of God in Jesus Christ is a call to everybody for an authentic human existence.

His life, death and resurrection are also a matter of flesh and blood. It touches our bodily existence in its centre. And it is not only in the materiality of our existence that a point of contact can be found. Such a point of contact is also to be found in the basic acts of human behaviour, in washing, sharing, drinking and eating. Hence, the sacraments touch not only the most fundamental material constitutive elements of our existence, but also the most fundamental human acts of our existence.^{xi}

The sacraments are not simply rites, but are deeply rooted in human life. They are the bearers of mystery among humanity. Thus sacramental moments occur whenever we celebrate the breaking through of grace into our lives and communities.^{xi}

The whole universe is shot through with the reality of God, and human beings are capable of reading the message of the world. The symbolic and the sacramental are profound dimensions imbedded in human reality and those who, for whatever reason, break all ties with religious symbolism close the windows of their soul.^{xi}

Thus sacramental practice is a manifestation of the *kenosis* of God in the lives of the least among humanity.^{xi} This *kenosis* of the incarnate word is made explicit in the cross. This means that, the manifesting of God and the manifesting of humanity occur in one and the same event.

The sacramental event is judged not according to its validity, but according to its veracity: in what way does the subject who is spoken in the sacrament give expression to this new “most real self” by taking to his or her ethical practice in the community the same gracious attitude of “letting-be” which will permit the re-inscribing of the *Logos* of the cross to occur there as well. The access to “the most real” of genuine Christian subjectivity is gained in the attitude of “letting-be.” This allows one to be spoken in the symbolic operating expression of the Church, the sacraments.^{xi}

The sacraments entail commitment of conversion in one’s own life situation. The early church employed the term “*Sacramentum*,” precisely as a commitment to the changing of one’s praxis.^{xi}

The sacraments offer us an alternative in which everything that “is” preserves its proper meaning, while at the same time co-operating in the unification of human existence. They force human beings to analyse how an integrative power of a symbol is safeguarded and surpassed. For example, art utilises the sensible to bring us to something beyond, without ever leaving the sensible realm. By contrast, the sacraments utilise the sensible to integrate human persons with a life and a person that is no longer of the sensible order alone. If we refuse this chance to move beyond the sensible, we lose the opportunity to integrate the multiplicity we experience in the universe, and, at the same time, we distort and mutilate the symbols themselves. To live in fidelity to the incarnate presence of Christ, as it is presented to us, is to be confronted by the sensible. Human persons cannot escape the invasion of the sensible. They are the grammar of God and the symbols of the primordial event of God’s self-communication in the world.^{xi}

The sacraments employ a balanced theology whereby both sin and forgiveness, the fall and redemption, weakness and strength in God, are continually restated. This very communal experience of

the sacraments is where the church as community acknowledges her needs and lays claim once more to God's definitive act of reconciliation and redemption in Christ. It gives evidence of the anthropological experience of humankind, yearning for community and relatedness to heal primal alienation and isolation.^{xi} Thus "the sacraments establish a paradigm according to which other experiences of God can be measured, namely, that ultimately such experiences of God should lead one to self transcendence and to life lived for the sake of the Other and others, not for oneself alone."^{xi} The sacramental life leads finally to a life of mutual relationship.

1.3 Sacraments for Mutual Gift of Relationship

The mutual gift of relationship of human persons is manifested through the celebration of sacraments. To illustrate grace and sacrament, Louis-Marie Chauvet contrasts two relations, that of a boat to the boat-builder and that of beloved to a lover. While the boat-builder actually produces the boat by a kind of activity that can be watched and measured, the lover does not produce the responsive love of the beloved. The lover simply stands in a relation to the beloved that allows the latter to respond. However, this response from the self of the beloved is not produced by the lover. This example demonstrates that the things which are truly human, such as love, joy, pleasure, cannot be produced or caused, but can only be symbolically represented in their gratuitous coming to be within a gratuitous relationship. This serves as a model for grace and sacrament but not as a production of something. The divine epiphany on the cross defines a causal and providential explanation of event, history, and grace. As the advent of God in the midst of human suffering, Christ is the one who offers love as a gift and seeks a response from those who receive. The most apt expression of grace is found in the symbol of the mutual gift of relationship with God and humanity.^{xi} "The gift of grace embodied in the response of faith and love, and formally understood as the communion of the beloved with the lover, comes about within this communion of relationships."^{xi}

The sacraments realise the communion of humanity. According to Bernard Bro: "to be sure, we have discovered that the notions of individual piety and individual salvation were not Christian, that the church is essentially a communion, and that any sacramental scheme must, therefore, involve "another."^{xi} The sacraments invent the fundamental laws of authentic community living. Here the otherness is offered to humans by the sacraments. The "other" is alien to me; yet he is the only instance of absolute and wholly integrative unity, because his existence includes mine. This "other" is wholly one, but his word reaches me in the varied situations of an incarnate human existence-that of Christ. He sparks my development, but he does so by offering me a salvation plan that goes beyond me. He appeals to a unifying point of reference, but he integrates all the members of the human race, all the "others."^{xi} Thus the actualisation of the paschal mystery takes place in and through the sacraments.

1.4 Sacraments for Actualising the Paschal Mystery

The paschal mystery is actualised through the sacraments. The incarnate Christ is the ground of grace through the power of the Spirit. Hence, the sacraments make explicit "Christ's incarnation and paschal mystery."^{xi} They become particularly strong moments of God's self-disclosure. The central

saving mystery becomes the prism through which we interpret the sacraments.^{xi} It is this representation of a past event that makes it newly present in history through a narrative form.

It is through its narrative remembrance, combining the original proclamation and more culture-centred expressions, that it has a vigour and force that changes and transforms human living and the coming to be of other events. It is in this way that the event of the pasch is represented in sacramental memorial, where the narrative and the praise that responds to it are linked with a ritual that expresses the reality of the gathered community.^{xi}

This expression of the Christ-event in the community transforms human persons into new being. The community itself becomes an event, within its time, as a witnessing of God's being among them.^{xi} The Christ-event takes place in human events because of an evangelical witnessing by the community. This witnessing action is one with their remembrance and ritual, shown in deed and hope, and sustained in the midst of trial and suffering by the power of the Spirit. The sacraments can not be said as the sacraments of church without the witnessing of the paschal mystery. Otherwise the proclamation of the cross would be without soil and seed. Hence Christ is present in the world and the power of Spirit transforms human eventing.^{xi}

After Second Vatican Council, we see in all the post-conciliar documents (e.g., The Pastoral Constitution on the church in the Modern World) an incarnational emphasis. This is the re-emphasis of how one can experience God's presence in all of human life.^{xi} Thus, the sacraments are

the privileged experiences of the mystery of the triune God through the paschal mystery of Christ, manifest in the self-expression of the Church as they relate to other experiences of God in innumerable dimensions of human life, both communal and personal (e.g., other forms of prayer and acts of self-transcending love).^{xi}

Edward Schillebeeckx's conviction is that human suffering is the real arena where sacraments and 'living the gospel life' are anticipatory. The sacraments are effective songs of love, healing and perfect union with God. They are the extension of the incarnation.^{xi} The sacraments are rooted in human life. They share in the common appreciation of other public rites in the rest of human life. The sacraments use the word of scriptures and symbols to ensure ecclesial belonging and continued identification with the church. The sacraments are critical and prophetic moments when participants experience ultimate truth, the reality of God and eschatological hope.^{xi} The human eventing, as a witnessing community is expressed through the celebration of the word.

1.5 Sacraments Expressing through Word

The sacraments are understood to be effective because they share in an exhibitiv power of God's own word by recalling the power of the divine utterance at creation and, most particularly, in the redemption accomplished by the word made flesh.^{xi} More foundationally, one could argue that a theology of the word can help to establish the anthropological basis of sacraments. It means that human persons communicate on the basis of a theology of the exhibitiv word, whether this word, used in human communication, is oriented toward being effective or performing an act.^{xi} In the sacraments, the saving action of Christ is made present. Therefore, they are the memorial of a past event, the visual

testimony or actualisation of the Lord's action, the proclamation of fullness in the risen Christ, the celebration of salvation in Christ.^{xi}

The salvific word presents itself as participation in a body, in a real physical communion, in Christ. There is the consciousness of Christ's presence when human persons live a pure and authentic filial relationship, and in the full radiance of truth of life. Here, Christ becomes our unifying reference point in the sacraments. He establishes us in full congruence with ourselves. Thus, he can restore us to communion with our fellow human beings. The other is then no longer "an" other. The sacraments enable us to enter into communion with that secret point where all can say, "Our Father."^{xi} Therefore, for fatherhood, there is baptism; for failure and death, there is penance and the last anointing; for social responsibility, there is confirmation and holy orders; for love, there is marriage; and finally, for human existence in time and life with the other, there is eucharist, which is not just food, but gives force and unity to human existence. The eucharist is the repast of communion. Penance is not simply the absolution of sins. It is reintegration into the reciprocal relations that form the communion of believers. When Christ says: "What you do to the least of my brethren, you do to me," or "as you measure out, so shall it be measured to you," when he invites us to love as he loves, to love as the Father loves him, we are touching on the essential characteristic of the innovation brought by Christianity. It is no longer: do unto others as you would have others do unto you," but "do unto others as you would have God do unto you." It is like to "forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." To go for confession is to do more than re-enter fraternal communion and unity. It is to ask that we might see our brothers and sisters as God sees them. If it only involved the re-establishment of peace between ourselves and others, then the psychiatrist or the lawyer could probably do a better job. The communitarian aspect of penance obviously involves much more. In penance we accept Christ's intervention. We share his energy in the battle against the evil within us. We allow God to unleash the potential for love that lies within us. We agree to conform to his image. To confess our sins is to encounter, in very concrete fashion, the unity of the two commandments; it is asking God to forgive us as we forgive others. The upward directed search for a unifying word and unifying presence bears fruit in a downward-directed communion. This communion is inalienable because it comes from another in whom there is no change.^{xi} Through the celebration of the seven sacraments the church is actualised in the world.

1.6 Seven Sacraments for Actualising the Church

The seven sacraments make explicit the church in the world. As far as an understanding of the sacraments is concerned, there is a Copernican shift in the writings of Karl Rahner.^{xi} Self-communication is understood radically as God's own manifestation towards the humanity. Then all reality is, and always has been, directed toward Jesus Christ, in whom the very self-communication of the triune God in truth and love should occur and has occurred. This central salvific event is the meaning of the whole of creation and of human history as a whole. From this perspective, the church and the individual sacraments are not to be viewed as medicinal interventions of God from outside, but as manifestations of what the world and human history already are, in their internal truth, because of the

divine self-communication. They are manifestations of the liturgy of the word, realsymbols of God's successful intention and saving events for the world. For him the movement is not one of effects proceeding from the sacraments into the world, but of a spiritual movement from the world to the sacrament.^{xi}

The corporeal exterior act is always a sign of something in his basic attitude, his 'fundamental option,' and at the same time it influences this basic attitude. It is always a 'realsymbol' in which the human being realises his basic attitude. By expressing, man posits what he expresses.^{xi}

Sacraments are signs of something that is truly present, the visible form of an invisible grace. They are efficacious signs, producing or intensifying the reality they signify. They contain the grace they signify and confer the grace they contain.

Through her visible action the church not only signifies, but dynamically produces and makes visible the reality of salvation that she represents and announces. Thus, the church is a grace-happening, not just in the sense that she effects and administrates the sacraments. It is a grace-happening in the life of believers. We see here an operating and unfolding faith, hope, love, freedom, justice, peace, reconciliation, and everything else that establishes human persons' inter-communion and their communion with God. Hence, the seven sacraments are not isolated events, but essential rites of faith whose roots are Christological and ecclesiological. They presuppose, express, and nourish the faith; but to do so effectively, they also require human response.^{xi}

The seven sacraments do not come from arbitrary decisions of Christ and much less from a church. So many human situations are taken up, such as to be born, to pass to adult life, to review one's life with a view to a new start, to marry, to fall ill. They are thus shown to be and established as divine-human situations. In fact, the life of God penetrates to the anthropological roots of human existence. There are no sacraments that are not sacraments of Christ living his paschal mystery in human situations. Yet also, there are no sacraments that do draw from the world and human the "materiality" of their sign. The seven sacraments can be thought of as the great and fundamental lines by which the Lord Jesus reaches into the depths of human nature, transforming it. The sacraments touch the deepest springs of human existence. However, they do not go down to the roots of the human condition.^{xi} The sacraments are not simply guidelines or directives, a sort of manual for living a Christian way of life. The sacramental life must cover the entire life of a Christian.^{xi}

The church attains the highest level of actualisation of her own being, when grace is victorious in the life of individuals and actually brings about their sanctification. Therefore the sacraments are moments both in the sanctification of the individuals and in the self-expression of the holy church. From this point of view, the church attains the highest degree of activity in administering the sacraments. She is then, truly holy in her members, necessarily one and the same church.^{xi} Karl Rahner articulates a foundational insight for his sacramental theology when he asserts that, "the church is the abiding presence of that primal sacramental word of definitive grace which Christ is in the world, effecting what is uttered by uttering it in sign."^{xi}

For Edward Schillebeeckx, this sacramental experience of God finally leads to liberation and reconciliation. He states

because in the last resort the one who is experienced and can be known in this action of reconciliation, the living God, is always greater than our action, this experience, this experience of God as an inner element of liberating and reconciling action, always discloses to us a new and greater future.^{xi}

At the very beginning we emphasised that the principal and enduring sacrament of Christ is the church herself. The church, with all her modes of holiness, varieties of ministry and wealth of charism, is the necessary vehicle or instrument of Christ's presence and activity in the world. Within the sacramentality of the church, the seven sacraments each manifest a particular aspect of the life of the church. While each "sacrament" participates in the reality of the whole and has meaning only in reference to her. Each sacrament also makes the saving action of Christ and the church concrete, and is essential to the life of the church in its own way; together with other charisms, gifts and expressions of holiness. These sacraments make up the great sacrament of the church.^{xi} The seven sacraments are derived from the one being of the church as the sacrament. According to St. Paul, the redemption of Christ calls the church into being (Eph. 2: 13-16; 5; 25). The sacraments empower the church to fulfil her basic sacramental nature.

The sacraments empower the individual to achieve a fulfilment of the Church's own nature, and to do so in such a way that the recipient of the sacrament doesn't remain merely passive, but himself makes a positive contribution towards this self-fulfilment of the Church in which it makes actual its own nature as the basic sacrament of salvation for the world.^{xi}

Hence, the sacraments are essential for self-expressions of the church,^{xi} through which she "attains the highest degree of actualisation of what she always is: the presence of redemptive grace...historically visible and manifest as the sign of the eschatologically victorious grace of God in the world."^{xi} Karl Rahner links the important insights about church, sacraments, the word, and grace when he states that the church is

the visible outward expression of grace, not in the sense that she subsequently announces as it were the presence of something already there without the announcement, but in the sense that in the church God's grace is given expression and embodiment and symbolised, and by being so embodied, is present.^{xi}

Through sacraments, the church manifests itself as the basic sacrament at the decisive moments of humanity.

2. Church as the Basic Sacrament of Humanity

In Catholic theology, 'the Church as sacrament'^{xi} is commonly used after Second Vatican Council. Avery Dulles states that this idea "emerged in full clarity in our own century."^{xi} Around 1950 several theologians began to affirm that the church is a "sacrament,"^{xi} and thereafter in the Second Vatican Council (*LG* 1, 9, 48; *SC* 5, 26; *AG* 1, 5; *GS* 42, 45). The church as sacrament is at once

“anthropological and theological.”^{xi} As a sacrament, the church has the task of making historically visible and present what is already implicitly active in the whole community of humans but is still looking for an explicit, concrete form. In other words, the church is the realisation of community among human beings, because she herself is community - the people of God and therefore the community of brothers and sisters. In this way, she is the ‘sign set up among the people’^{xi} as a basic sacrament of the world community.

2.1 Basic Sacrament of the World

Second Vatican Council calls the church a sacrament in view of her role as unifying symbol in the world. In her unity, “the divine destination for the whole of humanity becomes manifest.”^{xi} Karl Rahner’s idea of the church as the basic sacrament (“*Grundsakrament*”) and her function at present, is a substantial one. The church derives from Jesus who is the origin (*origo*)^{xi} and source. She lies “in the history of salvation”^{xi} and self-communication of God in Jesus and of history. The drama and the dialogue between God and the world engage with God’s irreversible triumph in Jesus Christ. It is the victory of the all-encompassing word of God and God’s “yes” to the world. This victory and God’s “yes” to humanity have become effective in the individual history of salvation. The church becomes a basic sacrament “wherever the finality and invincibility of God’s offer of himself becomes manifest in the concrete life of an individual.”^{xi} As a basic sacrament, she is the basic sign of salvation.

The Church is a *sign* of salvation, and is not simply salvation itself. But insofar as the church is the continuation of God’s self-offer in Jesus Christ in whom God has the final, victorious and salvific word in the dialogue between God and the world, the church is an *efficacious* sign.^{xi}

In her historical manifestation of the victorious success of God’s self-communication, she is an *efficacious* sign.^{xi} The church as a hierarchically and socially organised society, is the perpetual presence of the task and function of Christ himself.^{xi} The visible and social structure of the church is only the sign and means of action of Christ where the church stands forever in dependence on “the free saving act of Jesus Christ.”^{xi} Hence, she is a means of salvation by which God offers his plan of salvation to an individual in a tangible way and in historical and social dimensions.^{xi} The church as the social-historical sign of salvation is a fundamental sacrament of promise because she is the visible community of those who confess that God offers everyone salvation through Christ.^{xi} The church permeates human life in a historically tangible way through the reception of the sacraments.^{xi}

The church as the basic sacrament, “is the great, unique gesture of God and the gesture of receptive humanity, in which divine love, reconciliation and divine self-communication are eternally announced and bestowed.”^{xi} The self-actualisation of the church is truly the witnessing of faith, hope and charity. In this, the whole congregation of the faithful comes together in all its diverse vocations and functions. The church as the “fundamental sacrament means (that it is) the one abiding symbolic presence, similar in structure to the incarnation, of the eschatological redemptive grace of Christ...”^{xi} She involves herself totally in the existentially decisive situations of human life.^{xi} She effects human persons through the word spoken and incarnated. She is not only the carrier of the proclamatory word of God but

also, inseparably, the faith-filled receiver of the word. She “unites God and human beings” by listening to and proclaiming the word of God.^{xi}

The concept of “realsymbol” allows us to attribute a true causality to the sacramental signs. The church, as the persisting presence of the incarnate word in space and time, continues the symbolic event of the *logos*.^{xi} Through her symbolic work of redemption, she expresses the reality of the world to come. Since grace is triumphantly present in her, she is the historically real and actual presence of the eschatologically victorious mercy of God.^{xi} She manifests grace at an historical level and “effects” the presence of Christ, while at the same time she remains distinct from what it symbolises. She actualises herself through the mediation of grace in the world.^{xi} Here grace is not an offer to the world, but is already there, triumphantly, in the church. She becomes the meeting place of God and humanity. Then the God/human, Jesus Christ, becomes the biography of God through the event of his death and resurrection in this community.^{xi} She continues this symbolic mediation of the *logos* as a grace of salvation for all.^{xi} This is fully actualised historically by the sacrificial act of Christ on the cross, where the *logos* is “the will for the cross, the obedient death, the voluntary sacrifice of his life by the one who has power to give his life or to keep it, by the one who gave it because this was his Father’s will.”^{xi} Therefore, the church comes from the death and the resurrection of Jesus as part of the eschatological performance of the crucified and risen one.^{xi} In her, the whole Christ-event, his dying-for-us, his resurrection and his out-pouring of the Spirit, are essentially one.^{xi} This is her prophetic witnessing for the salvation of many. This witnessing of Christ’s sacrificial event, in accordance with the will of God, is the expression of himself in the church. Thus the church is the further projection of the historicity and visibility of Jesus, who is the living God of the living Spirit, in space and time. She as the persisting presence of an incarnate word in space and time, a free creation of the redemptive act of Christ.^{xi} She is the visible form of the self-service of Jesus to the reign of God. The Christ-event continues in her, and is the expressed will of God himself to the world.^{xi}

The church as the free creation of the redemptive act of Christ, is a social entity.^{xi} God expresses himself in something that is freely constituted by him. Hence, she has a social structure. Though the church is socially constituted, she is not merely a social and juridical entity. Her essence is the grace of salvation and the Holy Spirit who makes her the primary symbol of the grace, redemption and liberation of all. In this way, an eschatologically triumphant grace is fully symbolically expressed in her.^{xi} The church has social and freely chosen aspects since she is juridically constituted. This does not mean that the sign is an arbitrary one and not a reality. She as the effective expressive symbol of the presence of God; realising what she symbolises - Christ. She can never be a meaningless symbol. Even though her members fall short in their commitment, she can never entirely fall from the grace of God. She accomplishes her definitive redemptive work in the most radical way for each of her members. She concretises the symbolic reality of Christ in the history of the world, as a redemptive and liberative one. This Christ-event is an expression of faith and truth in the Spirit.

2.2 Sacrament of Faith and Truth in Spirit

The entire life experience of Christians is related to their faith experience of God. In this experience of God, faith is not a move from natural knowledge to supernatural knowledge, but is a move from knowledge to love. It is not a move from logic to the knowledge of supernatural mysteries, but a move from logic to life, where the truth must be done in order to be known.^{xi} This truth is the mystery regarding human persons. It must be known through the daily experience of life. In other words, the mystery of truth is the mystery of unity of life. “Every experience of God as mystery is precisely not a grasping, but allowing oneself to be grasped, and faith is the freedom to ‘let go’ and be drawn.”^{xi} Faith demands that we experience God’s life at the very heart of the world, in flesh, in time and in history. Hence, the church becomes the locus of the experience of truth and faith. In the church, there is a link between the contents of faith and the way “in which each believing community puts into practice in its daily life and celebrates in its liturgical gathering the gifts received from God.”^{xi} Therefore faith is not moral principles, but includes Christian moral teachings and is to be evaluated not only in one aspect of life but taking into account the entire life of a person in his/her totality. This faith can involve the entirety of the Christian confession of faith, or merely a single truth of Christian teaching on faith and morals. This one single truth is understood within the context of the entirety of the Christian message. The church, in fact, stands for the entire moral life of the people who actively “struggle for justice and other Christian realities and values.”^{xi}

Faith includes ultimately a just life in love; “faith in God as requiring a deep conviction out of which personal, social and planetary relationships can be improved, and love is the fruit of justice.”^{xi} Therefore ‘the mission of the church’^{xi} consists of providing the foundation of love on which the structure of justice can be recited.^{xi} Justice will then not be seen as an end in itself, but as a means to and expression of love.^{xi} In this situation, the church’s “confession of faith belongs to the most profound being of the Church.”^{xi} The Christian life has its historical development from one starting point, that is, the nature of a unique, concrete, historical personal event based on God’s historical act of self-communication. Therefore, through faith, one participates in Christ’s redemption and a life of grace. This participation becomes manifest in the existentially fundamental moments of human life.^{xi} As long as the church manifests the existential moments of human life, she has a greater significance in the world. So she cannot remain only on a functional level, but must be active in faith to proclaim against injustice and inappropriate happenings in a pluralistic society.

The church necessarily and inseparably has both visible and invisible aspects. The inner life of faith, worship, and love actually becomes the basis of community only as externally manifested in the profession of faith, the celebration of worship, and the service to humanity. The visible aspect makes it possible for her to hand over full reality from one generation to the next. The church is an effective symbol in the communication and maintenance of her own inner reality through the work of the Spirit.^{xi} The church, by being a visible community of faith, worship, and love, effectively symbolises the presence of Christ as prophet, priest, and shepherd-king. Through faith, she expresses a commitment to truth, through worship to transcendent goodness, and through love to the values of humanity. The truth

finds its full expression in the supreme goodness of God, and in the sovereign dignity of human persons as children of God. Dedication to these values is the source of the unity of all humankind. Yet failure to pursue these values is the source of all human fragmentation, disunity, and alienation from one another. While this dedication should characterise the life of every Christian, it is the special obligation of the ordained^{xi} who speak officially for the church, to the church and for the world. Selfish ideologies, such as falsehood, error, ignorance, misunderstanding and lies, divide human beings from one another and are all oppose to the truth. However, only truth can unite human persons.^{xi}

When the Church faithfully is witness to an uncompromising commitment to truth, to the search for truth wherever it can be found, to the manifold understanding of truth, to affirmation of truth proportional to its manifestation, and not to self-serving errors and ideologies, to narrow perspectives and culturally-conditioned formulas as if they were absolute, then she is a sacrament for the unity of all human beings at this most fundamental level. The claim of truth upon the human mind is absolute, and the Church, by witnessing that claim in her life, serves effectively to unite all humanity under that claim.^{xi}

The church is effectively a sacrament of unity of the human race when she is committed in worship to the glory of God as the loving Creator and merciful Saviour. She manifests the love of Christ when she manifests a genuine care for each person, avoiding all forms of unfair discrimination, and showing a genuine concern for the welfare and development of all. Thus, she becomes a sacrament of unity of the human family based on that love. The church, through her members, produces fruit and truly advances the unity of the human race by the effectiveness of personal witness. The church acts in the world not by kindling a fire, but by enabling the fire of faith and love to be kindled by and among persons. As Christians, members of the church not only share Christ's attitude of worship, trust, and obedience toward the Father, they share also their own attitude of love for other human beings. Hence they become a community of love for one another and for the world. In this way the church does the mysterious work of God, who unites selfish, and sinful individuals into a community of the Holy Spirit, a community of faith, worship, and love.^{xi} All that is visible and external to her serves to express this profound communitarian reality and to nourish and sustain it for the realisation of the kingdom of God.

2.3 Sacrament of the Kingdom of God

The essence of the Christ-event is the proclamation of the reign of God. The church as sacrament extends over all of human life. Therefore she has been given a specific mission to proclaim and establish God's Kingdom in the world (*LG* 5). As the sacrament of the Kingdom, she is called to manifest and exercise God's love for humankind (*GS* 45). The starting point for the reign of God is the 'will' of God for humankind. The will of God is accomplished through dedicated service in love, faith and justice. Only then will God's kingdom be realised here and now.

God wishes to bring the life-giving love and justice of the Kingdom to the world now, not simply in an 'after' of life. Faith in the power of God's love to transform this earth is what gives believers the courage and confidence to dedicate themselves to the service of God's earth in the work of the kingdom.^{xi}

The church continues this task and moves towards the fullness of the kingdom among humanity. Thus it can be said that, “the will of God is working through historical events.”^{xi} Centring on the kingdom of God would give the church a more dynamic, future-oriented and holistic character. This kingdom is fundamentally the building up of a new humanity. The diversity of peoples and religions are recognised within this perspective.

Faced with a divided world which is in search of unity, we must proclaim with joy and firm faith that God is communion, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, unity in distinction, and that he calls all people to share in that same Trinitarian communion. We must proclaim that this communion is the magnificent plan of God the Father; that Jesus Christ, the incarnate Lord, is the heart of this communion, and that the Holy Spirit works ceaselessly to create communion and to restore it when it is broken. We must proclaim that the church is the sign and instrument of the communion willed by God, begun in time and destined for completion in the fullness of the kingdom (*LG 2*).^{xi}

The Synod of Bishops of 1971 perceives the building up of a new world or the kingdom of God not merely as one of the constitutive elements among other missions of the church, but as belonging to her essence. One discovers that the church builds herself up as a church-at-the-service-of-the-Kingdom when the fundamental tasks of the local churches, such as inculturation, dialogue and proclamation, and human promotion are perceived as mutually influencing and integrating each other.^{xi} Thus “in a real and effective sense, the church is an icon of the presence of God and his kingdom in the world.”^{xi} Through the realisation of God’s kingdom, the church extends her universal mission in the world.

2.4 Sacrament of Universal Mission

The missionary nature of the church (*AG 2, 6, 9*) is based on the fact of her being the “universal sacrament of salvation” (*LG 48; AG 1*).^{xi} “The Church’s mission is not an addition to that of Christ and the Holy Spirit, but is its sacrament: in her whole being and in all her members, the Church is sent to announce, bear witness, make present, and spread the mystery of the communion of the Holy Trinity.”^{xi} The sacramental reality of the church makes her appear before the world as a sign of Christ’s closeness to every person and to all peoples in their concrete situation. As *Gaudium et spes* points out, every benefit the people of God can confer on mankind during its earthly pilgrimage is rooted in the church’s being “the universal sacrament of salvation,” at once manifesting and actualising the mystery of God’s love for men (*GS 45*). “The Church...can contribute much to humanising the family of men and its history” (*GS 40*) through the experience of charity or the beatitudes. Thus the church is described as “the universal sacrament of salvation” (*GS 48*).

When we say that the church is the “universal sacrament of salvation,” we underline her mission in the world. She points out something beyond herself and beyond her visible structures. The church, upon which is poured out the Spirit of Jesus Christ, is now the sacrament of salvation in the world. That means that she is for both believers and non-believers. Karl Rahner points out:

...God’s grace actually effects the salvation of humankind far beyond the radius of Catholics and of baptised Christians and does this for the most part without the saved being incorporated into the visible Church by Baptism; and when a catholic Christian at the same time believes that the

salvation of these innumerable people has, nevertheless, a relationship to the Church, then this statement about the Church as universal sacrament of the salvation of all humankind takes on tangible meaning.^{xi}

The claim that the church is necessary for salvation arises from her relationship with Christ, the mediator of salvation for the whole world. If she were not united with him, if she does not have within her the Spirit of Christ, then it would be outrageously arrogant for her to make such a claim. Her claim can be appreciated only from within the position of belief, of faith in Christ. The idea of sacramentality evokes the indissoluble union, in the Spirit, between Christ and his church. Without finding the very actuality of Christ, we cannot know her well, believe in her, and live her life.^{xi} Karl Rahner, commenting on the church as the universal sign of salvation wrote:

The Church, viewed as tangible, historical, and institutional entity, is the abiding presence of Christ in history. Thus, Jesus Christ is the historically concrete presence of God's promise to all humankind at all times and in all places, and the Church is the reality of God's historical promise to himself, to all humankind, the reality which always continues to make this self-promise historically present and which constantly bears witness to its irrevocability, and it does this for all people whether they have lived before or after Christ and not only when these people have become members of the visible Church by baptism, something that for the most part does not actually happen. The Church is the promise of salvation precisely for those as well who are not part of its visible membership. The incorporation of a person by baptism into the visible Church is first of all the continuation of this sign of salvation in time and in history for the people who are not members of the Church in a visible way.^{xi}

Anthropology serves the mission of the church as the universal sacrament of salvation. It provides many useful insights and deeply spiritualises the whole pastoral approach. Hence the rituals are very important.^{xi} The Decree on the Church's Missionary activity encourages Catholics to borrow the customs, traditions, wisdom, teaching, arts and sciences of their people; everything which could be used to praise the glory of the Creator, manifest the grace of the saviour, or contribute to the right ordering of Christian life (*AG 2; LG 13*).

Underlying this is an expanded anthropology which goes beyond a merely psychological consideration, which is content to relate Gospel and grace to the drama of the human persons' self-responsibility to fuller view, and which relates God's gifts and the Church as their embodiment to the larger drama of the collective and historical self-responsibility of humankind. This is a drama in which the Church participates in all its joy and hope, its grief and anguish, its greatness and its misery.^{xi}

The church is at once 'a visible group and a spiritual community.' She travels the same journey as all of humanity and shares the same earthly lot as the world. She exists to be the leaven and as the soul of society. She is to be renewed in Christ and transformed into the family of God. This common human project leads the Second Vatican Council to acknowledge that whatever contributes to the development of humanity on the level of culture, economic and social life, and national and international politics, by God's plan, also contributes in small measure to the community of the church insofar as she depends on things outside herself (*GS 44*).^{xi} Therefore, every good thing that the people of God during its pilgrimage

on earth can confer on the human family derives from the fact that the church is “the universal sacrament of salvation, at once manifesting and realising the mystery of God’s love for man” (GS 45). The church is the universal sacrament of salvation, actualised as the sacrament of human dignity, freedom and solidarity.

2.5 Sacrament of Human Dignity, Freedom and Solidarity

The church’s mission includes the nurturing of values of human dignity, freedom and human solidarity (GS 39). As the Council expresses:

Pursuing the saving purpose, which is proper to her, the Church not only communicates divine life to men, but in some way casts the reflected light of that life over the entire earth. This she does most of all by her healing and elevating impact on the dignity of the person, by the way in which she strengthens the seams of human society and imbues the everyday activity of men with a deeper meaning and importance. Thus, through her individual members and her whole community, the Church believes she can contribute greatly toward making the family of man and its history more human (GS 40).^{xi}

The church is quite conscious of her solidarity with the whole human family (LG 13, 16). As *Gaudium et spes* puts it, “this community realises that it is truly and intimately linked with humankind and its history” (GS 1). It is part of the church’s vocation and mission to be a sign and agent of human solidarity. For the promotion of unity belongs to the innermost nature of the Church (GS 42). That is why she believes that all the faithful should be actively involved in fostering peace and harmony among human persons and working for an international order based on freedom and justice (GS 77-90). The Council states:

Christians should collaborate willingly and whole-heartedly in establishing an international order involving genuine respect for all freedoms and amicable brotherhood between all men. This objective is all the more pressing since the greater part of the world is still suffering from so much poverty that it is as if Christ Himself were crying out in these poor to beg the charity of the disciples (GS 88).

“What does the most to reveal God’s presence, however, is the brotherly charity of the faithful who are united in Spirit as they work together for the faith of the gospel and who prove themselves a sign of unity” (GS 21). If the church is the sacrament of unity, it is meant to collaborate with God for the establishment of unity and solidarity in the world. She should herself be a credible sign of unity and solidarity. Vatican II describes the church as “a communion of life, charity and truth” (LG 9). She is a brotherly-sisterly community of mutual service (GS 32). Hence the Christian community should be characterised by love, freedom, equality, justice and participative decision-making. The leaders of the church are to be servants of their brothers and sisters. Their service consists of the co-ordination of the efforts of all towards a common goal while respecting the Christian freedom and dignity of each one (LG 18).

Therefore “it is not committed to any one culture or to any political, economic or social system,” but freely serves every human community “under any regime which recognises the basic rights of the

person and the family, and the needs of the common good” (LG 42).^{xi} Here the mission of the church is the sacrament of the mystery of unity. “The sacramentality of the church has to be sought in the context of the mystery (*mysterium*)”^{xi} of *communio*-unity.

3. Church as Sacrament of *Communio*-unity

The church as the sacrament is a mystery of communion with God and humanity. The Second Vatican Council’s self-understanding of the church is that “the Church in Christ, is in the nature of sacrament - a sign and instrument, that is of communion with God and of unity among all men” (LG 1).^{xi} Karl Rahner remarked that Vatican II “in all of its 16 constitutions, decrees and declarations was concerned with the church.”^{xi} Even the Vatican II did not offer a simple definition of the church. However, *Lumen Gentium*’s first chapter is titled “The Mystery of Church,” in respect of the mystery of Trinity. The church’s trinitarian basis is the ground for the history of salvation.^{xi} John Paul II, quoting from 1985 Synod of Bishops, states that “the ecclesiology of communion (*koinônia*) is a central and fundamental concept in the conciliar documents” (CL 19).^{xi} It is this self-understanding of the church as the sacrament of intimate union with God and humankind that gives birth to the expression of “the Church as the sacrament of communion.”^{xi}

The Church is the realising sign - the sacrament - of the mutual unity or *communio* of the whole of humankind, in and through her union with the living God. She is the community among men by virtue of their communion with God, the life or the living one. In this universal communion, the Church fulfils a sacramental task, that is to say, she is the effective sign of this communion. She is the effective sign not on her own account among men - the Church is only an ‘instrument’ of God’s unifying acts of salvation in this world and thus bound to service. At the same time, she is also the *sign*, because this mediatory realisation by the Church is accomplished in a sign, that is to say, the Church is the momentous visible form or meaningless presence in this world of an already accomplished communion of men - or a communion that accomplishes itself in *metanoia*, in and through their explicit community with God in Christ.^{xi}

Walter Kasper writes about the communion approach to ecclesiology. For the church, he writes, “there is only one way into the future: the way pointed by the council, the full implementation of the council and its communion ecclesiology. This is the way which God’s Spirit has shown us.”^{xi} “*Communio* does not designate the structure of the church but its essence, or as the Council says: its mystery.”^{xi} *Gaudium et spes* exhorts in this mystery or *communio* with God, the dignity of the human person and the truth of his being human exist in a special way (GS 19).

Christian consciousness is “ecclesial” conscience. It arises from a personal response to a common vocation (*ek-klesia*). The church is “the mystery of communion lived as the people of God, is the sign and the instrument of a communion to which the whole human family is called.”^{xi} This is to depart from oneself towards an opening of oneself to the truth that shines in Christ, whose historical space is ecclesial “*communio*.”^{xi} This is the place where the individuals grasp their vocations in a

dialogue with God and their brothers - where they are personalised. The individual participation in communion is the living presupposition for personal perfection. This is a way toward personality. From this point of view, to be a person means to receive “‘Christ’; both a call and a task in the history of salvation.”^{xi} This personal call to participate in unity is the mystery of *communio* in Trinity.

3.1 Mystery of the Church as *Communio* in Trinity

The church is a mystery of God’s love for the unity of the world.^{xi} The highest exemplar and source of the mystery is the unity “in the Trinity of Persons,” (*DE 2*).^{xi} The church is the concrete, sacramental sign and representation of the trinitarian mystery, an icon of the Trinity. The unity of the church can be placed only in the context of unity of humankind with an ultimate mystery-God.^{xi} John Paul II in his encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint* brings out an idea of unity of all humankind with Jesus Christ and one another as an inseparable sacrament of unity. The church as mystery of unity is not a reality closed on herself. Rather she is permanently open to missionary and ecumenical endeavour. She is sent to the world to witness, to make present and to spread the mystery of communion, which is essential to her, and gather all people and all things in Christ, so as to be for all an ‘inseparable sacramental unity.’^{xi} The church continues the same mystery of Christ for her mission in the world.

If Christ is the sacrament of God, the church is for us the sacrament of Christ; she represents him, in the full and ancient meaning of the term, she really makes him present. She not only carries on his work but she is his very continuation, in a sense far more real than that in which it can be said that any human institution is its founder’s continuation.^{xi}

The church namely “the perfect transparency” of “trinitarian love”^{xi} leads her as *communio*. The God of Christians is a community (*koinônia*) of the triune communion whose self-giving *kenosis* serves humankind, by transforming us into self-giving and serving persons for the fullness of life with others. The triune God’s self-giving service is for a universal community (*koinônia*) without limits.^{xi} The church symbolises this communion of the trinitarian mystery. In the mystery of ‘God becoming man,’ the mystery of the Holy Trinity is revealed and the mystery of our participation in the divine nature is promised to us in a definitive and historically tangible way. Therefore the content of our faith lies in the mystery of Christ that is extended in the mystery of church.^{xi} The church is not a society constructed upon the model of human society. Rather, she is communion, at once divine and human. Her vital principle is the presence of the divine persons who dwell within her and guide her from within.^{xi} John Paul II states that “the eternal initiative of the Father, who conceives the saving plan, which was revealed to humanity and accomplished in Christ, is the foundation of the church’s mystery.”^{xi} The sovereign mystery of the triune God extends over the whole mystery of her very rich unity.^{xi} God wills her, because “he wills unity, and is an expression of the whole path of his *agape*” (*UUS 9*).

The unity in the New Testament addresses the deepest knowledge and inquiry of human thought, from the very beginning. The reality of unity is not undivided within itself, which is to say, One.^{xi} The experience of the church as unity transcends all cultural variations and the unchangeable elements.^{xi} Her fundamental mission is then, to direct “the experience of the whole of humanity towards the mystery of God” (*RH 10*). Therefore the “participation in the mystery of the One God as a Community or Trinity of

Persons is the beginning, sustaining force and goal of the Church's mission."^{xi} The church as *communio* is a message and a promise for humanity and the world of today. According to Walter Kasper the church as "*Communio*-community is a primordial reality and a primordial longing for man."^{xi} The communion of people with one another is possible because God unifies us all in the Holy Spirit. So the communion becomes a community, a "church" in the genuine sense of the word.^{xi}

3.2 *Communio* as Mystery of Unity of Humanity

Communio is the mystery of unity of the human persons. The mystery of the church is lived out in history.

The church is essentially both human and divine, visible but endowed with invisible realities, zealous in action and dedicated to contemplation, present in the world but as a pilgrim, so constituted that in her the human is directed toward and subordinated to the divine, the visible to the invisible, action to contemplation, and this present world to that city yet to come, the object of our quest (*SC* 2).

In the "communion of life, charity and truth" is the "messianic people", whom God uses as the instrument of redemption, and "the visible sacrament of saving unity" (*LG* 1, *RH* 3, 18, *DV* 63, 64, *LC* 19). This "messianic people, even though it may not include all people and may often appear to be a little flock, is nonetheless for the whole human race a most sure seed of unity, hope and salvation." The mystery of unity is in the "communion of life, love and truth." This Catholic unity of the people of God "prefigures and promotes universal peace," (*LG* 13). The conciliar approach to the church is the "mystery of communion lived out in history by the people of God."^{xi}

The church as a mystery is the creation of God that escapes full human comprehension. Thus we can never fully understand or control her. However, this dimension of mystery does not deny or weaken the juridical aspects of the church, rather it relates and orders a spiritual and divine life.^{xi}

3.2.1 *Communio* Not an Umbrella Term

At present the concept of *communio* is used as a convenient umbrella term. Susan K. Wood warns that the concept of communion should not become a "term of convenience" and to promote a particular ideological viewpoint with or without good reason. "Is it becoming an umbrella term in ecclesiology generally, and in ecumenical dialogues in particular, with the result that in coming to refer to everything, in the end it will refer to nothing?"^{xi} Communion is both gift and task. It requires concrete results. The concept of communion can bring cohesion to contemporary ecclesiology, since it promotes participation, dialogue and inter-dependency. Respecting the communion the church has with the entire human family, she can act as the guardian of justice and the voice of the voiceless.^{xi}

The idea of communion is a basic and universal human experience of sharing and intimacy. Jon Sobrino suggests that "communion expresses the ideal of the church and an eternal aspiration of humanity; the communion of brothers and sisters is at the heart of scripture and tradition."^{xi} Communion ecclesiology is a useful framework for grappling with some important and difficult issues of humanity. It can relate the spiritual and institutional aspects of the church: pluralism and unity; evangelization and

salvation; primacy and episcopate, as well as the local church and universal church. It has a significant ecumenical value.^{xi}

In a fundamental sense, the church as communion affirms that “Christ established one church, an ecclesial unity of faith conferred by God; it is a unity established by grace, not a human creation.”^{xi} This divine grace transforms people into a unified body. They have a deeply shared life in faith among themselves. This is the horizontal dimension of communion. Communion affirms the unity of faith in the one church of Christ, a unity, established by Christ himself but not yet completely manifest.^{xi} Christian communion “strives for *communio* as a finished achievement.”^{xi} Therefore communion is a process towards the building up of the universe.

3.2.2 *Communio* in Building up of Universe

Communio is the mystery of unity of the human persons with one other and with the God of the universe. The church is founded to be a visible sign, so that she might establish communion in every heart and in every society. While her nature is essentially communion, she “builds up the whole of humanity in a communion of brothers” (*SRS* 40). Taking the traditional view into account, we find that the church is meant to be a sign, instrument and initial realisation of a three-fold *communio*; such as human persons’ communion with God, their communion among themselves and their communion with the cosmos. In this way her “mission is to facilitate humanity’s union with God and to promote unity and solidarity among humans.”^{xi} *Lumen gentium* states that, as a religious community, it is her mission to facilitate human persons’ ‘communion with God’ (*LG* 1) and one another. She penetrates into the totality of the believer’s life through a witnessing of a living and mature faith. This penetration into the life of the believer enables the church “to live by the gospel values of justice and love” (*GS* 21). The penetration by *communio* of human persons at the heart of the universe is symbolically expressed in eucharistic community.

3.2.3 *Communio* in Eucharistic Community

The *communio* of human persons is actualised through the eucharistic community. Walter Kasper says, *koinônia*-*communio* as community, is participation in “the blessings of salvation bestowed by God, in the Holy Spirit, in the new life, in love, in the Gospel, and, above all, in the eucharist.”^{xi} The eucharistic community is the relationship in faith and hope. This community celebrates and roots its *koinônia* in the celebration of the memorial of the Lord’s death. This constitutes its vision of itself, a basic vision of history and of the Lord’s presence in history.^{xi} The entire mystery of salvation is symbolically re-presented.^{xi} With regard to eucharistic-*communio*, the church is not only the image of trinitarian *communio*, but also its re-presentation, and, not only the sign and the means of salvation, but also the fruit of salvation.

According to Josef Ratzinger, eucharist transcends politics. The eucharist is not a place for political or social action, but for our self-sacrifice in adoration of God. Out of this self-sacrifice, will emerge the love and courage to engage in political and social struggles for justice and peace.^{xi} The

eucharistic-communio is the surpassing answer to the primordial human question about community.^{xi} This makes “the transcendence of all divisions, both natural and social, which keep the existence of the world in a state of disintegration, fragmentation, decomposition.”^{xi} The eucharist that discriminates between races, sexes, ages, professions, and social classes violates its eschatological nature and fails to be the sacrament of communion. In this act, the church finds herself challenged to live as communion through the ortho-praxis of love.^{xi}

Vatican II has noted that the eucharist is “the source and summit of Christian life” (*LG* 11).^{xi} It is eminently central for one who celebrates it and ministers it. Therefore, one of the main goals of the mission of the ordained is “to bring people together in hearing the Gospel, in fraternal communion, in prayer and in the Eucharist” (*RM* 26). The eucharist is concerned with the mediation of grace from the religious to the personal sphere that is the priestly ministry of Jesus. In the eucharistic celebration, Jesus is present as the divine victim of human sinfulness, standing in solidarity with all the victims of human history (Mt. 25: 40), seeking to put an end to all victimisations (Heb 9: 28). His presence offers both healing to human persons’ own internal victimhood, and an invitation to share in his mission, to overcome evil through self-sacrificing love. The eucharist is thus a celebration and representation of the central meanings and values of the Christian community. It is concerned with the continuation of the mediation from religious to personal, and personal to cultural/social levels.

The eucharist is closely linked to the celebration of the local community; healing the divisions within the community and placing before the community its vision and mission: to live out the meanings and values proclaimed in the Gospel and brought into living dialogue with the prevailing culture through the efforts of the ordained. Hence the ordained find their ultimate grounds in the mediation (priesthood) of Christ (grace), as well as in the personal integrity grounded in that mediation through the representation of the eucharistic community.^{xi} The symbolic representation of the ordained in the eucharist is to promote the reconciliation at the level of interpersonal relations between the members of the community. In the eucharistic community, the members are the only viable root of the community, as the builders of communion in the Spirit of Christ.

3.2.4 Communio in Spirit of Christ

The *communio* of humanity is realised through participation in the Spirit of Christ. In the mission of Jesus Christ, the world comes to know the work of the Spirit. This means that only the person who has the authority can send someone else whom he knows and has experienced well. The Spirit whom he promised is not that which emerged from and after his mission, but, as Christ is the origin and end, the Spirit is also origin and end in Christ. This universal mission of the work of the Holy Spirit intensified at the outpouring in Pentecost (Acts 2: 37-38). The out-pouring of Spirit initiated the ecclesial reality of the church as *koinônia-communio*.^{xi} Christians today are called upon to discern the presence and activities of the Spirit, in living together with people of different religious faiths and ideological convictions in a global community, and in the yet undiscovered outreach of Christ’s promise that ‘when the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth’ (John 16: 13).^{xi} By accepting the gift of the Holy Spirit, they are in communion with Christ and in communion with one another (*LG* 9, 48; *AG* 1, 5; *GS* 42, 45).^{xi}

The Spirit is not present in the church merely to sanction certain visible forms. These visible forms are there to minister to the internal and visible working of the Spirit in the church so that visible and invisible together form one incarnational reality: the body of Christ.^{xi} When the work that the Father had given the Son to do on earth (Jn 17: 4) was accomplished, the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of Pentecost in order that He might continually sanctify the church, and that, consequently, those who believe might have access through Christ in one Spirit to the Father (Eph 2: 18). The Spirit dwells in the church and in the hearts of the faithful, as in a temple (1 Cor 3: 16; 6: 19). Guiding the church in the way of all truth (Jn 16: 13), and unifying her in communion is the works of Spirit. He bestows upon her varied hierarchic and charismatic gifts, and in this way directs her, and adorns her with his fruits (Eph 4: 11-12; 1 Cor 12: 4; Gal 5: 22).

St. Paul indicates the Holy Spirit as the source of community within the church. He closes the Second Letter to the Corinthians, stating that “the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship (community, *koinônia*) of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor 13: 14). The Letter to the Ephesians also points to the Spirit as the source of our oneness when it exhorts us to be “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph 4: 3). Walter Kasper observes:

... what has been said of the Spirit has consequences for the understanding of the church. If the Spirit is the authentic presence and realisation of the salvation given through Jesus Christ, then whatever is external in the church—scripture and sacraments, offices and certainly the discipline of the church, has for its sole task to prepare men for receiving the gift of the Spirit, to serve in the transmission of this gift, and to enable it to work effectively.^{xi}

In the life of communion, the Spirit of Christ actualises the common human nature of humanity in the world.

3.2.5 **Communio in Common Human Nature**

The communion between human persons is only possible when it embraces human nature itself. This common human nature creates the very possibility of our communicating with one another. In this communication, human beings realise themselves as persons. In such a way that each person represents a unique way of being human, different from others. The distinction between individuality and personality is that individuality divides and personality makes a person open. Being a person is by nature being related to all and being open to all.^{xi} Humanity is made up of persons who have one eternal destiny. That is, their relationship is to be the “suitable condition for the development of others.”^{xi}

The subjectivity of Christ finds its proper realisation in the various persons that form the church as *communio*. It is the subjectivity and personality of real persons who form the church. This anthropological grounding assures that each and every member of the church is a “Christ-bearer” and seeks, through the fulfilment of his or her individual mission, to bring Christ’s salvific presence into the world. Here we can say that Christ becomes the “subject” of the church.^{xi} This new ecclesial consciousness as ‘we,’ is the complex intimate relationship of one to another.

3.2.6 Communion in Mutual Relationship

The communion of human persons lives together in mutual relationship. The church in the past was pre-occupied with power and dominance. But “in today’s church there should be communion, an inter-relationship and inter-connectedness for mission, based on discipleship.”^{xi} The relationship between the church and the salvation of world is the same as the relationship between sacramental word and grace in the process of salvation, that takes place in the life of an individual.^{xi} If human persons are inherently relational, it must be expressed through community. Their relationship with the church is only an instance of reality which is actually a factor inherent in their lives.^{xi}

The heart of the church as communion of persons is a “unity in love.”^{xi} “The Being-of-God is a life of communion and therefore urges that we can envisage the ultimate ground of our existence as intrinsically relational.”^{xi} The essence of God is relational and personal, that “God’s To-Be is To-Be-in-relationship, and God’s being-in-relationship-to-us *is* what is God.”^{xi} “The ultimate reality is understood as entering into personhood and ecstatic, self-transcending communion. Being is understood as being-in-relationship.”^{xi} We know from this that the trinitarian God of love is the God of relationship that is the heart of the cosmos. The church is the sacrament of the relationship of trinitarian love in the cosmos that is the heart of the society. The mission of the church as a relational one is further explained by Dennis Edwards:

Our mission as church is to be a sign and an agent of the divine relations of mutual, equal and ecstatic love, which are at the heart of the Universe. The church is this message. The Church’s being is Communion. Its very being is mutual relations. The church is the sacrament of relationships, called to witness to the relational God at the heart of the universe. This is the grace that the church is for the world. It is a grace for all ages, but one desperately important in our own.^{xi}

The historical human relations of the incarnate Son are in an ecclesial sense, perpetuated within the life of the church. This becomes an intrinsic dimension of her being and mission. As the sent Son of the Eternal Father, Jesus does not merely perform before us the drama of eternal love; but makes us participants in the drama. Here, Jesus Christ is not a ‘principle’ or a ‘program’, but a man of flesh and blood, born in Galilee, pierced by a Roman lance on the cross and seen by his disciples resurrected, bearing the marks of his wounds. God himself becomes definitively concrete in Jesus, the real man of flesh and blood.^{xi} It is in the flesh and blood reality of Jesus that the trinitarian relational love enters into the world of human relationships.^{xi}

All men are inter-related in a human constellation. One sole human being would be a contradiction in terms, inconceivable even in the abstract, because to be human is to be with others. The God-man, Jesus Christ, is no exception - as God as well as Man he exists only in his relation to the Father in the unity of the Divine Holy Spirit.^{xi}

Thus the trinitarian relational foundation of Jesus’ life and mission are the ground and the inner-determinant of his relationship with others. This relationship is essential, not accidental to his being and acting.^{xi} Therefore, the church is in community, a living reality that once lived as a historical reality. If

the church is to be a church of life, she has to be “witness to divine relationality and to relations of mutuality and equality in the midst of humanity”^{xi} especially in the context of pluralities of culture and religions.

Therefore, on the part of the church, such a self-understanding demands that she sees herself more deeply as a medium, as a system of relations whose form becomes comprehensible when she brings together in a coherent manner the elements that, as a medium, she must communicate and unite. She must unite what appears to her to be contrary properties, because Jesus Christ brought these properties together, not by happy chance, but according to the structure of his own being; namely, the perfect transparency with which God reveals himself in him and the likewise transparency with which he reveals humans as such.^{xi} This manifestation of the *communio* of human persons is actualised through a charismatic institution.

3.2.7 Charismatic Institution in *Communio*

The church as *communio* is a charismatic^{xi} institution in her prophetic way of being in the world. The church would ‘not be truly church without ... the charismatic features, whereby God efficaciously transforms the interiority of concrete persons,’^{xi} and institutional structures. Relying on *Lumen Gentium* (LG 7; 12) the church is viewed as having charismatic and institutional dimensions, with priority given to the former. The reason for this is that the church is at her birth charismatic, while ecclesial institution comes later. The church has charismatic and institutional poles. Both are essential and not *per se* in opposition. The ordained are seen as representative of the institutional pole and have the responsibility for essential structures, pastoral works, and orthodoxy. They are also responsible for the co-ordinating of charisms in the church. They also open to new charisms, which arise from the work of Spirit. As part of this charismatic responsibility they help religious congregations in the preservation of their charisms and the furtherance of internal renewal (LG 44).^{xi} The church as institution is centred “among the rich of the country and in the rich nations of the world”. Contrasted to this is the charismatic church formed by small communities, which are based among the poor.^{xi} A charismatic church will be a prophetic church which is involved in the cause of poor, the marginalised, and the oppressed.^{xi} This prophetic involvement of the church in society takes place through the local communities.

3.3 *Communio* a Task to Be Achieved Locally

The church as *communio* is one of the most fundamental ideas of ecclesiology, which is based entirely on the local church.^{xi} The church appears as a net work of groups, which, as such, guides the whole and achieves harmony with one another by building a consensus.^{xi} A fundamental concept and reality of the church as *communio* is retrieved in eucharistically founded local churches. The Council argues that: “the Catholic church consists in and of the local churches” (LG 23). This understanding leaves space again for legitimate multiplicity of the local churches within the greater unity in one faith, the same sacraments and office.

Walter Kasper is of the opinion that the understanding of unity of the church as *communio* was really “the key for an ecumenical opening.”^{xi} The unity and universality of the church is not an abstract, uniformal, and ultimately totalitarian system. The one church concretises, inculcates, and incarnates herself, in space and time. Only in this way is she a unity in fullness. The universal church exists therefore, only in and through individual churches (*LG* 23) It is represented by them and realises itself in them. It operates and is present in them (*CD* 11). The universal church and the individual church are mutually inclusive; between them there obtains a mutual indwelling.^{xi} This astonishing diversity is an expression of the incomprehensible richness of the inexhaustible fullness, and the even greater mystery of God. It stands in reality with the creation, which is characterised by a colourful diversity and by an inexhaustible richness of domains of reality, forms, varieties and individuals. No single grain of sand in the desert is entirely like another, and how great then is the difference between people - between individuals, as well as between races, peoples,^{xi} cultures, and the sexes. Thus the fact that every person is strictly unique belongs to the very foundation of Christian anthropology.^{xi}

God does not love anthropological abstractions, but rather concrete people of flesh and blood as in the case of the humanity of Jesus Christ. The New Testament speaks of the manifold wisdom of God, which has appeared in Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:10-19). Accordingly, the church must not appear monotonous, monolithic, and boring, but rather diverse, colourful, and imaginative. Only through such diversity is the church a sign of the freedom and universality of the Gospel, and of her independence from any particular culture or political system - a sign also of the worth and dignity of the freedom of persons, and of various cultures. Therefore, the church, like the apostle, is to be all things to all people (1 Cor. 9:20-23). She must examine everything and keep the best (1 These. 5:21). In this sense she must realise herself in the various local churches and religions, according to the given of history and culture, in diverse forms of proclamations, liturgy, piety, theology, canon law, societal and political engagement, social service, customs and traditions. Such a diversity - of local churches, of their traditions, rites and ordinances of charisms and role in the one church - is an expression of richness and fullness, of Catholicism in the original meaning of the word (*LG* 13). The diversity and multiformity of the church is only that which has to do with one and the same Gospel, and with one and the same reality of salvation, which in their richness and fullness cannot be completely captured by any one or final form. St. Paul asks even now “is Christ divided?” (1 Cor. 1:13). Therefore, each according to the grace given to him (1 Cor. 3:13), should contribute to the building up of the body of Christ, out of many and diverse members, and should understand himself as a part of the whole, in solidarity with it (1 Cor. 12:12-30). This is the original biblical meaning of *koinônia*-*communio*: having access to the same holy things, to the one Spirit, to the one Gospel, to one baptism and one eucharist. Such sharing contributes to community with one another. Since every local church exists by sharing in the same baptism and the same eucharist, none can exist in isolation. The nature of the local church is communion with others, and without such *communio* would lose its own identity. This *communio* should not be understood, however, only in horizontal terms as a mutual recognition. It requires without doubt a *communio*, in the one truth and in the one reality of salvation.^{xi} The church as community is no less open to other Christian denominations,

non-Christian religions, and all human beings, who sincerely search for love, truth, and justice.^{xi} The fulfilment of all human existence and all reality of the world is achieved through her.

In this approach to the church, two things are to be noticed. Firstly, the reality of the communion exceeds the boundaries of the Catholic Church. There are baptised non-Catholics who by their faith, hope and love, live the life of communion in Christ and the Spirit, and there are Catholics who do not live in the Spirit. Secondly, the spiritual, sacramental and ministerial elements, that constitute and animate the church. One discovers that they can exist in other Christian churches and communities where they can mediate salvation (*UR* 3). The council regularly adopts a universalistic perspective: the church as intended by God, reaching from creation to fulfilment in the kingdom, existing throughout the world among all the peoples and cultures of the earth, constituted and enlivened by the word of Christ and the grace of the Spirit, guided by an apostolic ministry. These elements constitute what *Lumen gentium* called the image of the universal church, in accordance with which particular churches are formed. The same sentence also asserted that it is only in and out of these particular churches that the one and single Catholic church exists (*LG* 23, 26; *SC* 42). Many consider this a Copernican revolution in ecclesiology, which fosters a renewed interest in the local churches, whose communion incorporates the whole church.^{xi} The church is a human organisation, sustained unfailingly by the power of the Spirit, but limited and conditioned by the frail, weak human beings, who receive the Spirit with more or less openness and fidelity.^{xi} In order to actualise the church in the world, the ordained play a major role in the world.

3.4 Ordained Actualising the Reality in Community

The ordained persons effect the communitio-unity of the church. “The church as the sacrament of unity”^{xi} they have to effect it in a pluralistic society through their personal mission. Since Christ is the subject of the church, he is now made present in the personal “missions” of the individual subjects.^{xi} The church is the community of brothers and sisters ‘called together’ (*ek-klesia*) to “penetrate into the sociological and historical reality”^{xi} through the subjective witnessing of them. This reality is prolonged according to different gifts, vocations, ministries and charisms. The priestly spirituality of the church is expressed as “solidarity” and communion with the whole human race (*GS* 1). Therefore there is no place for domination and control over ordinary Christians (Mk. 10: 42-45), but rather a personal call for empowering the faithful. What Vatican II exhorts the priests to do is really applicable to all the members of the church:

Because the human race today is joining more and more into a civic, economic, and social unity, it is that much more necessary that priests unite in concern and effort, under the leadership of the bishops, so that the whole human race may be brought into the unity of the family of God (*LG* 28).

The church’s office as an integral dimension of communion needs to be just as essentially in relation.^{xi} The office in the church, as understood by John Paul II, does not end in itself. This sacred ministry is a gift or charism to be exercised for the benefit of others. Thus it helps to uphold the church in her complex diversity and to build her up in her fundamental reality as a ‘communitio.’

In the church, as a structured community, the hierarchical leaders, succeeding to the office of the apostles have the responsibility of maintaining unity and of discerning the authenticity of initiatives proposed or undertaken by the faithful. The sacramental representation of the church is effected in different ways by the ordained and by the church as a whole. The ordained represent Christ by authoritatively proclaiming his word, presenting his offer of salvation, repeating his acts of forgiveness and showing his loving concern for the flock to which they are called to give themselves (*PDV* 15). Transforming of the social order in accordance with the Gospel is a concern of the church and her office. The hierarchy in its exercise of the “social magisterium,” enunciates the authoritative Catholic teaching. As their special responsibility, the ordained have “to work toward the Christian animation of the temporal order,” and to sanctify the world from within (*CA* 36). As persons who live an ordinary life, they are called to be a leaven, applying the Gospel to their situations by fulfilling their particular duties (*CL* 15). The office of the church has to take care not to infringe on the laity’s proper field of responsibility. The laity has a unique contribution to make in building up a civilisation of love, in which war and violence have no place.^{xi}

The ministry of the ecclesial communio-unity is an actualisation of the divine mission of the word and Spirit. Hence, the ordained are not the ones who extend Christ’s mission, but play a specific role here, even while the whole body participates in the mission of the head. If the church is the manifestation of the trinitarian communion, then, this communion must be reflected in the ecclesial community. The baptised and the ordained participate, each in their own way, in this communion. Through baptism, one is introduced into the mystery of divine filiation. Through confirmation, one is inserted into the mission of the Spirit, and through Holy Orders, a sign of divine paternity is given to the church. Hence, the church as a community of faith, constantly moves forward in her pilgrimage towards the Kingdom of God.^{xi}

Communio-unity is fundamentally intended in the common priesthood of all the baptised members and non-baptised. Walter Kasper says that “being the common people of God precedes all distinctions of offices, charisms, and ministries.” He continues: “in the meantime, stimulated by the Council, boards for common responsibility have arisen as parish councils, diocesan councils, diocesan synods, and bishop’s synods.” The interest of the laity and its willingness to assure co-responsibility is perhaps the most valuable and important contribution of the post-conciliar period. Not in vain did Paul VI designate, in *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 58, the truly ecclesiastical base communities as a hope for the universal church.^{xi} In fact, communio-unity puts an end to the model of a pastoral practice based on care and maintenance. It tends towards the subjectivity of the church. In this sense the faith of the faithful and the teaching of the church must be understood in a strictly correlative manner. For Walter Kasper,

The first task of the Church’s office and of its ministry to unity seems to me, in this situation, to consist in re-establishing dialogue and communication, and, by doing so, to introduce the obligatory teaching of the Church in the most persuasive way possible, into the process of inner-Church communication; in order to build up anew a full and undivided *communio* and *communio fidelium*.^{xi}

The church as communio-unity, like branches, shares the life of Christ, the true vine (Jn. 15: 5). Through communion with him, the ordained enter into living communio-unity with all believers and non-believers. The intention of the Second Vatican Council is that “the church might consider the world as

its partner, seeing it as a locus of both divine presence and absence (which is what is meant by reading the signs of the times).”^{xi} “The church as a community of communion, harmony and reconciliation has a mission to help people in conflict situations, providing a special opportunity for her to preach, through action, her message in service to life.”^{xi} Christian believers who, incorporated into Christ by baptism, constituted within the people of God and in their own way sharing in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, have their own part to play in the mission of the whole Christian people in the church and in the world (*LG* 13). This mission includes any “inequality arising from race or nationality, social condition, or sex” and insists that differentiation of ministries exists within “a true equality among all with regard to the dignity and to the activity that is common to all for the building up of the body of Christ” (*LG* 32).

The world which the council has in mind is the whole human family with the totality of realities among which it lives; the world as the theatre of human history, marked by human labour, failures and triumphs; the world which Christians believe to have been established and sustained by the Creator’s love, reduced to slavery and to sin, yet freed by the crucified and risen Christ who has broken the power of the Evil One, so that it might be transformed according to God’s plan, and may reach its perfection (*GS* 2).^{xi}

The church as *communio* gives an image of co-responsibility and collegiality involving all the faithful, a church coming to be, under the power of the Spirit in its local realisations. Within the whole reality of the church, the ordained actualise the *communio*-unity in a pluralistic society.

Conclusion

The understanding of the self-consciousness of the church as the sacrament of *communio*-unity reveals the trinitarian *communio* in a pluralistic society. In order to come to this conclusion, we discussed the sacramentological basis of human persons, who form and make actualise the church. Within the mission of church the ordained are charged with the same task of her in the society.

In order to come to the above said point, we first situated the human persons as central to the sacraments, and the sacraments as central to them. The sacraments are the binding forces for mutual relationships. The seven sacraments serve to realise the church as the basic sacrament of the *communio*-unity of humanity. Hence the human persons - centred sacramentology is for the purpose of the integral existence of humanity.

The church as the basic sacrament symbolises the reality of God and the cosmos. She is the realsymbol by which she expresses the faith and the truth of God and humanity. She places herself in the midst of humanity for dignity, freedom and solidarity of all.

This mysterious nature of the church is fulfilled as a community through the celebration of the eucharist. The Spirit of Christ binds the common human nature of each and every one together. As the relationship of the human persons, the church is a charismatic institution, that takes place through the inter communion of the universal, local and individual church.

The main findings of this chapter are (1) The sacramentological basis of the human persons is a mystery of *communio*-unity with God and human persons. (2) The self-consciousness of the church as

sacrament of communio-unity relates to the mystery of Christ who challenges all to encounter the mystery in order to actualise the unity. (3) The human persons who are ordained to the church are called to actualise the communio-unity through their respective office. We shall see in the next chapter how the ordained office functions prophetically in a pluralistic context.

CHAPTER THREE

PROPHETIC-MINISTERIAL OFFICE OF ORDAINED PERSONS

Introduction

In this chapter we deal with the prophetic ministerial office of the ‘ordained persons’^{xi} and their encounter with unity of humanity. At first we shall trace out the meaning of the priesthood of Jesus Christ and the realisation of the priesthood of the church through the ecclesial setting of the office. Thereafter the existential task of the “ordained ministerial office”^{xi} in relation to the baptismal mission is tackled. Finally, we examine the prophetic mission of the ministerial office as serving the word and sacraments in its encounter with the unity of humanity.

The ordained undoubtedly have a special role and place in the life of the church and the world, in order to fulfil the true humanity and its unity. In this situation, unfolding the character of the priesthood of the people of God^{xi} is the primary aim of those who are ordained to the prophetic mission of the church.^{xi} They relate entirely to the personal and the communal dimensions of ministry.^{xi}

The ministry of the priest is, certainly, to proclaim the word, to celebrate the sacraments, to guide the Christian community in charity ‘in the name and in the person of Christ,’ but all this he does dealing always and only with individual human beings (*PDV* 43).^{xi}

The Second Vatican Council aims at re-orienting all spheres of the church’s life into a mission towards the world. The mission of the ordained too, has to be seen “anew in this frame of renewed ecclesiology.”^{xi} Thus all ministries are embraced in the existential mission of the church. Based on this background, an authentic theology of the ordained can only be developed within “a total ecclesiology that embraces both the Christological and the pneumatological, the ontological and the functional”^{xi} dimensions. Therefore it “cannot be reduced to its merely functional aspects”^{xi} alone. In order to bring out the reality of this theology, we focus our argument on the priesthood of Christ.

1. Priesthood of Christ as a State of Life

The priesthood of Christ encompasses the very state of his life. The Christ-centred priesthood is a reminder to the church, as sacrament of communio-unity. The grace comes to her from Christ, her head and shepherd. She can do nothing without him. “The Church not only has its authentic image in Christ, but also receives from him a real ontological share in his one eternal priesthood, to which she must conform every aspect of her life” (*PDV* 13). Jesus Christ transmits his one and indivisible priesthood to the church. Thus the church becomes the people of the New Covenant.^{xi} In his priesthood, all the leitmotifs of Christian living are re-orchestrated in a harmonious unity, especially through worship,

liturgy, ethics and pastoral dimensions.^{xi} “Every other priesthood, ordained and non-ordained, share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ.”^{xi}

The biblical concept of priesthood applies to the whole people of covenant.^{xi} Christ’s priesthood depends entirely on the New Testament, where the understanding of the priesthood is entirely new that binds all people. The prophetic and cultic actions are intertwined here. Hence our understanding of the notion of priesthood in whatever way should qualify the one priesthood of Christ. For Christians first and fundamentally, the priesthood is the costly participation in the life and mission of Christ, the God/human. Therefore in the priesthood of Christ one recognises the Christian essence.

The incarnate Son of the Father became, in virtue of his personal dignity and his membership of the race of Adam, the head and representative of the whole humanity, and as such performed the act of worship of God and offered the absolute and final sacrifice which fundamentally redeemed mankind.^{xi}

The priesthood of Christ seeks to save humanity irrespective of any differences. The unfolding of the one priesthood of Christ takes place through the active participation in his life and *being-together* with the whole people of God. The church is instituted for the entire people of God, all of whom share in his priesthood.^{xi} The re-incarnating of the one priesthood reveals him as the mediator of the essence of divine/human reality in the world.

1.1 As Mediator of Love

Jesus Christ is the perfect mediator of God/human. Through his self-offering in his being the Son of God, he becomes truly human as the perfect mediator between the Father and humanity. He allows himself to be the perfect mediator by reconciling the Father with humanity.^{xi} According to the synoptic tradition, the basis for this new being of his priesthood is his attitude towards the Father’s will and his sense of solidarity with humanity; until at the end of his life, he carried out the will of Father and manifested his boundless solidarity with humanity. As a result of his attitude, nothing and no one is able to make him compromise either his union with the Father or his bonds with humanity. In him, these mutualities strengthen each other in a reciprocal way and realise the love as perfect mediation.^{xi} As we see, the whole Gospel relates to the passion of his life, all that lay at the centre of his heart as love for his Father. This ‘passion’ is the fundamental dynamic of prophetic preaching of the Kingdom of God and its radical praxis is grounded in the most profound interiority of love towards humanity.^{xi} As a consolidation of that love the priesthood exists only to make transparent the ‘Form’ of Christ’s love for the world. The one mediator of love is not over and against humanity, but among humanity. He invokes humanity to become one with him in his worship of the Father and in his saving work for the world.^{xi} Hence the priesthood has no other function than to make that love transparent to the world. In the humanity of Christ there exists the interdependence of praxis and interiority within its centre; while the mystery of his historical life provides a sound basis for developing a Christ-centred priesthood.^{xi} The only priest among the people of God is Jesus Christ, who is a priest by nature as well as by vocation. He is the mediator between God and humanity through his *way of being* to the cross of love.^{xi} Jesus in his priesthood as the perfect mediator, unfolds the mystery of truth of the divine and human.^{xi}

Seeing the priesthood in the light of the mystery of Christ requires the characteristics of life.^{xi} Revealing the trinitarian mystery of love is at the heart of the ‘Christ-Form’ and its unfolding in ecclesial existence. Uncovering the Christological depth of priesthood reveals the mystery of love within the dynamic of priesthood, that engages with the interiority of spiritual identity in Christ and with a total involvement in the reality of the world.^{xi} The one sent by the Father represents the Father and incarnates the Father’s supreme authority of love. The Father’s pastoral mission of love invests him with the mission of representing the Father in his state of being, the incarnate word.^{xi} That is to say, the intelligibility of the incarnation as the union of the divine and human nature in the person of Christ constitutes a perfect mediator between the divine and human.

1.2 As Incarnational

The priesthood of Christ is an incarnational one. It starts from the love of God who wants to save humanity. “By his incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man” (GS 22). The incarnation of Christ is capable of explaining his mission not just in its cultic sense alone,^{xi} but in its pastoral and prophetic senses.^{xi} By reading the scripture in the light of teaching of the church, we understand the total mission of Christ as an aspect of incarnation. The incarnation is in its inherent dynamism of his mission. The same is to be said of the three particularisations of his mission, such as priestly, prophetic, and kingly roles. Within these roles, the incarnational nature of priesthood remains forever.^{xi} It binds the whole reality of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the saviour of the world. The mystery of the incarnation shows that he lives in our historical situations and as in the words of John, he ‘dwelt among us’ (Jn. 1:14). It means that God established his tent as a pilgrim among humanity in order to share the very human life. Through incarnation, he has united himself with each human being. By sharing in his incarnation, everybody orients their life in harmony with his experiences in every historical period and in every human situation (GS 22).^{xi} The human history becomes meaningful in the light of his incarnation. Through the incarnation, the Lord of history becomes “the focal point of the desires of history and civilisation, the centre of mankind, the joy of all hearts, and the fulfilment of all aspiration” (GS 45). Through the Lord, the incarnated priesthood reveals everything in history through the mystery of the cross.

1.3 As Mystery of the Cross

The priesthood of Christ is related to the mystery of the cross. The title priesthood is used in the Bible for one high priest, Jesus Christ, who directs humanity to God while radically emptying himself on the cross. Thus, the cross becomes the basic image and the permanent norm of Christian priesthood.^{xi} One incorporates one’s own life into the cross of Christ. The mystery of Jesus’ priestly identity unlocks the mystery of the cross.

On the cross the figure of the obedient Son appears as the most definitive representation of trinitarian love. The obedient love of the Son in its trinitarian depths illuminates the mystery of Christ and his redemptive mission in the world.^{xi} “On the cross you have the self-surrender of Jesus, out of love, to the mystery of God.”^{xi} Jesus crucified and forsaken at the cross then, becomes the bridge (unity) between the divine and human.^{xi} The life of Jesus as the drama of trinitarian love is unfolded in the

mission-sending of the Son.^{xi} This divine self-giving love overshadows all human forms of love and service. At the same time, it becomes the ground for a new and radical experience of *agape* in the lives of people.

Christ gives up his life on the cross as the Son of Man and Lamb of God. His priestly sacrifice on the cross consists of the fact that “though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich” (2 Cor 8:9). This priestly reality is expressed in normal every-day situations (Nazareth, Bethlehem, public life, passion, and death.) in a human history like ours. As divine and human, he fulfils in love and manifests his life as a gift of love for others.^{xi}

During Christ’s earthly life, his prophetic mission was exercised and recognised by many. Then he entered, through death and resurrection, into the priestly and kingly mission. On the cross, Jesus totally dedicated himself to the will of God.

The priesthood that he exercised on the cross was the flowering of the total dedication of his will to that of the Father during his life time, and the kingship attained through the resurrection was the completion of the authority he had already manifested in his preaching and mighty works.^{xi}

In his self-sacrifice on the cross, we see the completion of his prophetic mission. Actually the prophetic mission of Jesus led him to his sacrifice on the cross by which he completes the priestly function and enters into kingship.^{xi} His sacrifice on the cross actualises his deed and word more visibly.

As his word was essentially a deed-word (he himself was God’s final, irrevocable deed-word to human beings and the only valid reply from them to God) and his witness of life, therefore the sacrifice of his life was all part and parcel of his mission; it sealed the word of the Father and the response of humankind in blood-the perfect *martyria*.^{xi}

The cross of Christ is the perfect model of the mission and the response of all those who enter into the mystery of the cross.

The mystery of the cross challenges each and every one to be present and respond to unhealthy situations in the form of obedience and love. The cross of Christ is the testimony to his obediential love of the Father and the world. On the cross, we see only the victim, and the death of obediential love that substitutes all legal and external blood offerings of the people. Therefore, in the light of the cross, Jesus as high priest is the characteristic of an official priesthood. In him the person and mission are identical to each other.^{xi} In Christ,

Penetrating the whole doomed predicament of human existence and being obedient to the Father’s directions are simply one and the same.... All norms, ultimately, come down to Son’s unlimited capacity for obedience: the Father asks him to give tangible proof of the divine love for the world and loads upon him, the totality of men’s free turning away from God.^{xi}

Christ’s obedience in the trinitarian life and love is the most definite point of access to the inner disposition of love and the unique human life. Thus, the priesthood of Christ is devoted to ‘becoming as all men are, even to accepting death, death on a ‘cross’ (Phil. 2:8). Obedience to his mission led Jesus to embrace his priestly identity, fully disclosing ‘the self-emptying love of the Son’. The priesthood of Christ, revealed on the cross, challenged him to have a personal and social existence in the world. “The Cross that holds together the strands of expiation, substitution and exchange, sustains also the praxis of

living out with others and for others the crucial aspect of human suffering and the tragedies of both of personal and social existence.”^{xi} Thus, we can say that the mystery of the cross is revealed through a life of love that forms the priesthood of Christ as his state of life.

1.4 As A State of Life

The priesthood of Christ is not an addition to his life but his state of life. That is, his priesthood is the stand he took before the will of the Father, through the perfect gift of all that he has, to the Father, and for the Father’s sake in the world.

In his mission of reconciliation and mediation, Christ invests the gift of himself to the Father and the Father’s acceptance of it with the modality that makes it the emptying of all that he is ... when the Son stands before the Father in readiness to give himself ... he thus abandons to the Father the disposal of what is his ... he becomes potentially a victim to be sacrificed.^{xi}

The priesthood of Jesus is the very being of his life of wisdom. His wisdom and power lead him to give himself for the life of others. Jesus is the definitive priest precisely because, in the very act of offering the sacrificial victim, he becomes himself the victim that is offered. Therefore the priesthood is not simply an image charged to Jesus, but is intrinsic to his very nature, having its source in the very essence of his own divine person. This is because it is the mode of his gift of himself to the Father and is an expression of his consecration of love. “He is a consecrated priest, *par excellence*, by his very nature ... he contains in himself the concept of all that is priestly ... containing in himself the unity of priestly love.”^{xi} Jesus, as priest and victim, is not simply realised in the Gethsemane and Golgotha experience, but is at the heart of the mystery of the incarnation and the cross. The priesthood of Christ gives profound meaning to the carrying out of his mission in the world. The expression of his absolute ‘newness,’ constitutes the one source and essential model of the priesthood for all Christians and for the priest in particular (*PDV* 12).

Sharing in Christ’s priesthood means that all become, like him and in him, responsible and united with humans’ historical journey towards fullness of life and their liberation.

The authority of Jesus Christ as Head coincides with his service, with his gift, with his total, humble and loving dedication on behalf of the Church. All this he did in perfect obedience to the Father; he is the one true suffering Servant of God, both Priest and Victim.... The priest is to perform this service freely and willingly as God desires... in order to bring to humanity the fullness of life and complete liberation (*PDV* 21).^{xi}

The priestly model of the Second Vatican Council rests on the idea of the transformation into “Christ the Priest in order to render them able to act in the name of Christ the Head in person”(PO 2). The priesthood of Christ unveils ‘the prophetic mission’^{xi} where the understanding of the priesthood of the church is very important.

2. Actualizing One Priesthood of Church in Discipleship

The priesthood of the church manifests the discipleship of one humanity. It makes one the true disciple of Christ. John Paul II emphasises the relational and transcendent meaning of discipleship in the Gospel tradition where he directly relates to the priesthood. The ‘richness and weakness’ of the

priesthood lies precisely in the very dynamic of discipleship, in which what is asked is beyond the human capacity to fulfil the will of God. Therefore, those who are called to priesthood, are called essentially to go beyond their own limits and the limits of society. This going beyond the limits of their own personal strength is the hallmark of Gospel discipleship. It is the originating form of those who are called through discipleship to mission.^{xi} This mission of discipleship is to reform the form of God in the world.

It is not a matter of our becoming masters through believing that practice makes perfect; what happens is that in and through our openness and suffering God becomes our master. Often he leads us where we do not want to go, and breaks the form of our lives... so that His Form may come to expression.^{xi}

The New Testament picture of the discipleship has greatly influenced the spirituality of the priesthood, especially the conformity of life-style to the model of Christ. It is the role of the apostle that has shaped the Christian understanding of their mission for others.^{xi}

The Christian priest lives always between the mission of his office and the intimacy and demand of personal discipleship. For those who are called and sent, their office is so rooted in the very heart of their following that ministry and life can no longer know of any division. The twofold transcendence of Christian priesthood as a stance both towards the Father and towards the world, as interiority and as praxis, is brought into an ever-deepening integration in a life of mission rooted in radical discipleship.^{xi}

To be a priest is to be a disciple of the Lord. To be a disciple is to have developed a habit of listening and an attitude of learning from others.^{xi} When Christ called disciples to follow him, he asked them to be poor and detached. “They left everything and followed him” (Lk 5,11). They abandoned all they had, possessions, occupations, family and country, in total dedication of themselves for the service of humanity. The disciples of Christ should shine in the community with a life of simplicity and detachment, mortification and self-denial in the example of Christ.^{xi} There is a common dignity of members deriving from their rebirth in Christ, a common grace of filial adoption and a common vocation to perfection (GS 32). It is, then, in union with all the baptised community that the ordained offer the sacrifice of the paschal mystery that realises the apostolic mission of the new people of God.^{xi}

2.1 Realisation of the Mystery

The priesthood of the Church is actually a call to participate in the mystery of God for the sake of humanity. It is a journey towards the fullness of life. The mystery of the priesthood has its beginning in the Trinity and, at the same time, is a consequence of the incarnation.

Priesthood is not merely a task which has been assigned - it is a vocation, a call to be heard again and again In the midst of Jesus’ ministry ... he called his first priests individually and by name to preach the Gospel ... and he made them his own companions, drawing them into that unity of life and action which he shares with the Father, in the very life of the Trinity.^{xi}

‘The priest’s identity,’^{xi} as the synod fathers wrote, has its source in the Blessed Trinity.’ “The priestly identity, like all Christian identity, takes its source in the Most Holy Trinity.” “It has its ultimate source

in the love of the Father” (*PDV* 12, 18) who sends his Son, arrayed with his authority, to gather into a unity the scattered children of God.

The priesthood is “*Officium Laudis*” *Gloria Dei vivens homo*.^{xi} These words are profoundly linked to the glory of God and humans’ self-realisation as mystery. The psalmist utters that “not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory” (Ps. 115:1). Repeating often these words of the psalmist, we understand that “realising” ourselves in life has a point of reference and an end that are transcendent, both of them included in the concept of the “glory of God.” The priests are called to make their life an *officium laudis*.^{xi} God’s glory is placed as mystery in the order of creation and in the order of redemption. They are called to live this mystery in its fullness in order to participate in the great *officium laudis*, which is unceasingly taking place in the universe. Only by living in depth the truth of the redemption of the world and of humanity can we come close to the suffering and problems of individuals and families. Then, they can fearlessly face the reality of evil with spiritual strength. They accompany the faithful toward fullness of life in God. *Gloria Dei vivens homo*.^{xi} Their vocation is to give glory to God, the mystery. The love for God’s glory does not distance them from life and all that life entails. On the contrary, their vocation brings them to discover the full meaning of life. Each of these different vocations is close to their priestly heart. They are the personal signs of Christ, a “living instrument,” (*PO* 12) so that they act “in his name” (*PO* 2) and serve in the ecclesial community as the foundation of unity for all vocations, ministries and charisms in a mysterious way (*PO* 6, 9).^{xi} They are oriented more radically towards that which all are called to be, becoming servants of the mystery of the church for others, while seeking to be examples of ecclesial life.^{xi} They see each one as a particular path along which God guides and leads people through self-emptying by themselves.

2.2 Self-emptying for Other

The priesthood of the church is self-emptying, not for oneself but for others. It is the spirit of ‘emptiness’ enables one in its full meaning of service and love. This form of emptying is the form of Christ and the state of life. The priesthood, is shaped within the obediencial love, the poverty of *kenosis*. It participates in the eternal priesthood of Christ and continues in the church for the sake of all. These modes of emptying are transposed into modes of ministerial presence and pastoral love in the community. As humans those who are called to priesthood find the source of this self-renunciation in the living out of the spirit of the counsels. They receive the gift of their own self through the self-renunciation that is intrinsic to every one’s life. The church, too, receives life through the *kenosis* of her members, and it is at the level of both ecclesial and personal spirituality. Then, the priesthood moves along its own journey of self-discovery and the fulfilment of its mission.^{xi} This choice and ministry is a special *service* or *diaconia*.^{xi} This is a participation in the humiliation (*kenosis*) of Christ (Phil 2:5-8) in order to be a sign of how the Good Shepherd loves and in order to build up the church as *communion* (*koinônia*) with Christ and with all mankind (1 Pet 5:3; 1 Cor 9:19; Mk 10:44). The priesthood as self-emptying is a sacrifice to God and humanity. The self-emptying nature of the priesthood challenges one to be responsible for their own sacrifice for others.

The self-sacrificial nature of priesthood manifests the definitive sacrifice of Jesus for other. Thus, the priesthood is an offering of oneself 'for-the-other.' They are in the true sense victims that can be articulated both ethically and in terms of responsibility.^{xi} To be oneself, the state of being a bond, is always to have one degree of responsibility more, the responsibility for the other. It cannot be other than their own responsibility. While they are called to substitute themselves for the other, they, in being assigned as 'one-for-the-other,' can find no substitute. Though the Other calls them vicariously to substitute their selves for Christ and to stand in his stead, even to the point of suffering or death. So they can find no one who will stand in the stead of their responsibility.^{xi}

Every Christian, in fact every person, is summoned to manifest in his or her own life the essential structure of being 'for-the-other'. Indeed, the mark of the truly human, with which the truly Christian is existing 'for-the-other'. To be human is to be not 'for-self' but 'for-the-other'. Thus the priestly existence and even every human is 'for-the-other'. Therefore, the priests are called to be 'for-the-other'. They show forth in their ministry 'for-the-other' the structure of existence. This ordering towards-the-other happens in the ordination when a person enters into a new relationship of ethical responsibility within the church. The priesthood is a gift or call that issues from-the-other. Its exercise is always responsive to-the-other. The priesthood finds its model in Christ whose life was perfectly ethical in that it was responsive to the will of the Father and oriented towards-the-other. Christ, as the high priest, is the one whose life was absolutely 'for-the-other' to the point of suffering and dying 'for-the-other.'^{xi}

The priesthood of the church has to be understood in terms of service to faith and love. It is a gift to the whole church. It continues the mission of Christ who gives himself up to her by emptying himself.^{xi} Therefore the priesthood is instituted in order to function the church for the sake of the world. So that all her members may actualise the spiritual sacrifice that gives them access with Jesus to true sanctuary of humanity. The priestly activity of the church begins with missionary evangelisation, which is a call to constitute a new community or to join a community to which one does not yet belong. Within the community, the priesthood of the ordained must be an agent of growth of community and unity of humanity. These objectives are to be achieved through preaching, liturgical worship, and pastoral governance. In their prayer and sacrifice they intercede with God on behalf of the community.^{xi} The ecclesial signification of priestly ordination is what ultimately distinguishes it from 'the common priesthood of the baptised' (*PDV* 15).

2.3 Common-Ministerial Priesthood

The priesthood exists not out side of the people of God that includes both ministerial and common (universal). Therefore the ministerial priesthood cannot be exercised, if there is no common priesthood.^{xi} So, it is an important factor to unfold the priesthood of the people of God, the church. Both modes of priesthood mutually empower the building up of the church as a symbol of communio-unity of the humanity. The ministerial priesthood directs to other ministries where it is exercised by the power of Jesus. In such situation they have to equip the community for their ministry by making Christ present as their foundation and standard of life.^{xi} Hence there is no meaning of speaking about the priesthood without entering into the reality of priesthood of Christ^{xi} and the people of God.

The priesthood of the people of God,^{xi} does not mean that the church identifies only with the common priesthood. But in the church, the ministerial and common priesthood exist within an ecclesial framework. Though the initial point of reference is Christological, its expression is totally ecclesiological. So to act in the priesthood is to perform an ecclesial mission. The faithful, through the common priesthood act by virtue of their union with Christ. In a broad way each way of expressing the priesthood possesses properly an ecclesial nature. Therefore the priesthood of the church consists not only alone but by the integration into a single organic entity.^{xi} The fundamental basis of the priesthood is the whole people of God. Hence the ministerial priesthood finds its immediate theological setting within the church. This is very important for the realisation of the one church. So we come to the conclusion that the priesthood is not static one but dynamic as a process towards the unity of humanity. Frank D. Wulf writes the priesthood of the ordained “represents the priesthood of the Church and makes this palpable in the sacramental and social reality of the Church.”^{xi} The powers are given to them not as an individual official but as representative of the church. Through them the church fulfils her essential nature of priesthood and her priestly mission,^{xi} as a sacrament of *communio-unity* in the world.

The priesthood of all believers consists in the calling of the faithful to witness God and his will before the world, and to offer up their lives in the service of the world. It is God who creates the priesthood and hence, he creates fellowship among believers. Each one knows that he appears before God on behalf of others, and knows that others appear before God on his behalf. Each one is responsible for other people, called to share in his struggles and in his difficulties, called to bear his sins and to stand by him in everything. This priesthood of all believers is a fellowship in which each Christian lives before God for others and is in turn supported by others, as St. Paul says, bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfils the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). The worship of this priesthood develops from within the community and within the very secular world.^{xi}

In the centrality of the priesthood of Christ, the two forms of priesthood participate each in its own way. Their participation in the one priesthood of Christ shows clearly that they intrinsically related to each other.^{xi} “The common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless ordered one to another; each in its own proper way shares in the one priesthood of Christ” (*LG 10*).^{xi} The Second Vatican Council clearly affirms that there is only one mission and there are many ministries in the church. The ordained participate in this one mission by co-ordinating all other ministries within and out side of the church for the actualization of the one mission in the world.

Indeed the ministerial priesthood does not of itself signify a greater degree of holiness with regard to the common priesthood of the faithful; through it, Christ gives to priests, in the Spirit, a particular gift so that they can help the people of God to exercise faithfully and fully the common priesthood which it has received (*PDV 17*).

The common priesthood of the church, conferred initially by the sacrament of baptism, enables the faithful to participate actively in the church’s life of worship and mission of activity. The faithful exercise their priesthood by the witness of a holy life, by self-denial, and by active charity, thereby participating in the prophetic and royal dimensions of Christ’s priesthood.^{xi} The common priesthood is

acquired through being consecrated to God in baptism and is exercised first of all by witnessing to Christ (prophetic), by joining in offering the eucharistic sacrifice, by prayer, and thanks giving, and the reception of the sacraments (priestly), and by the personal and social conduct of Christians in their secular life (royal). Therefore the common priesthood involves more specifically priestly functions.^{xi}

The Vatican Council refuses to attribute a higher degree to the ministerial priesthood. Instead, it situates the two kinds of priesthood in different categories for a specific mission of the church. The aim of both priesthoods is the same, that is: the realisation of the true humanity. It would be more important here to find out the true meaning of the priesthood than its differentiating elements. All those who are ordained to the ministerial priesthood are directed towards the manifestation of the one humanity.

God is experienced by the Jews as one who comes, leads, abides, and hides. Similarly, Christ was experienced by Christians, as one who comes, leads and hides. In the words of P. E. Fink: “In the baptised, the priesthood of Christ lies hidden, needing to be identified, needing to be called forth. In the ordained, the priesthood of Christ leads, goes before, and serves to call forth what is hidden in others.”^{xi} The common priesthood is a primary dimension of Christian life deriving from the relation that each Christian has to the unique priesthood of Jesus.^{xi} The one priesthood of Christ embodies into two modes of priesthood. They call forth each other so that Christ himself is unveiled in a pluralistic society. The ordained embody Christ who calls the baptised^{xi} and pours out the divine present in each person and every circumstance and draws out a person’s deepest nature and identity as children of God. In a culture of death, priesthood seeks to acknowledge life. It gives birth to the divine who is present in each person. The ordained through the celebration of sacraments, make present the divine in each season of persons’ lives and they open up hope for those who run into desperate and tragic times.^{xi}

The ministerial priesthood of the ordained is completely a service, both for the existential priesthood of Christ and the common priesthood. John Paul II states that “the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood of the faithful.”^{xi} It involves a public representational mission rather than a personal giftedness. If at all the common priesthood is more exalted, because the ministers are ordained for the sake of service to the people of God.^{xi} With the one definitive sacrifice to all, the dignity and mission of priests of the new and eternal covenant has an essential share in Christ’s priesthood. It is the basis of the ministerial priesthood.^{xi}

2.4 Ministerial through the Rite of Ordination

The one priesthood becomes ministerial, through the rite of ordination. Through ordination, the ordained become the ministers of Christ and church for the sake of the world. The priestly character binds them in particular to Christ as the head of the body.^{xi} The Second Vatican Council takes careful steps to present the two forms of priesthood^{xi} are not in competition but in co-operation, particularly in their highest exercise the celebration of the eucharist (*LG* 38).^{xi} Through ordination, the human persons become the ecclesial ordained for the purpose of performing ministerial service. They embody the existence of the church in a public way. They represent and make Christ present, visibly and sacramentally.^{xi} They receive an integral share in the official mission of Christ.^{xi} The rite of ordination recognises the “authority of persons whose lives and teachings guarantee the community’s rootedness in

Christ.”^{xi} The ordination is a process of involving several closely related elements that has also public effects and consequences.^{xi} Ordination

does not elevate the ordained man in a personal and subjective sense over the non-ordained. Rather, it tends an objective ordination of the office holder to Christ and his office. It is this objective ordination that does not belong to the non-ordained in the same way as to the ordained.^{xi}

The ordination is calling for a permanent mission on behalf of the church for others. By it, they are made sharers in Christ’s own pastoral office. This possession of an office distinguishes them from lay persons. Through it, God calls and sends forth leaders endowed with the special power of the Spirit,^{xi} in order to render dedicated service to all, in view of their unity. The ordination gives them the authority, that is, the legitimate power to act on behalf of the Christian community, in meeting needs and solving problems.^{xi} Hence their mission has already assumed a form whether adequate or less than adequate. Here the true grace is always greater than the forms in which it appears. But the mission is found only in those forms which are defined by the church, not behind or above.^{xi} Though the mission is found in those forms, enacting the reality is very important.

2.4.1 Sacramental Significance

The ordained represent Christ, in which they sacramentally make visible and active an invisible reality. Apart from their presence and mission they are only a group of believers, unable of themselves to represent the church. Thus it can be seen that,

even though the priest represents a reality that is already at least partially visible, his is truly a sacramental, and not a merely juridical representation. But what he adds is drawn not from them, but from Christ. And it is precisely this contribution that, along with theirs, truly constitutes the Church, and therefore the Church at prayer, i.e., the priesthood of the Church.^{xi}

The “sacramental representation” of Christ is the basis for the relationship of ordained to the church.^{xi} Thus they belong to the constitutive element of her so that God may be fully praised, thanked and his glory achieved by humanity.^{xi}

The relationship of the ordained with Christ makes present and visible the church’s intimate relationship with Christ and the world. They are in continuation of Christ by being a living and transparent image of Christ’s mission, the head. Thus, the “priests are a sacramental representation of Jesus Christ, the head and shepherd.” They are called “to prolong the presence of Christ, the one high priest and making him visible in the midst of the flock entrusted to their care” (*PDV* 15:1, 16:1).

We have already seen in the second chapter that the church is the ‘sign’ and living ‘memorial’ of Christ’s permanent presence and activity in our midst and on our behalf. So also they find the full truth of their identity in being a source, a specific participation in, and continuation of Christ’s mission of unity itself.

In the Church and on behalf of the Church, priest is a sacramental representation of Jesus Christ, the head, authoritatively proclaiming his Word, repeating his acts of forgiveness and his offer of salvation-particularly in baptism, penance, and the eucharist - showing his loving concern to the point of a total gift of self for the flock, which he gathers into unity and lead to the Father through Christ and in the Spirit (*PDV* 15,4)

The principle model of ordained offered by Vatican II, is the sacrament of Christ, servant head of the church.^{xi} They are “the sacrament of Christ, the sacred sign of Christ’s effective presence in the world.”^{xi} They, as ministers are “the signs of Christ, the Good Shepherd because he shares in a special way in his being, he prolongs his work and is in union with his experiences of life.”^{xi} As essential signs of Christ, they are a constitutive element of the church. They are the sacraments of the church. They attain their purpose in serving the church just as she realises her mission through a necessary relationship to her ordained. There exists “a true equality between all with regard to the dignity and to the activity which is common to all the faithful in the building up of the Body of Christ,” the church. But by the will of Christ some are constituted “teachers, dispensers of the mysteries and pastors” (*GS* 32).

By participating in the one priesthood of Christ, the ordained take a committed life for others. The sharing in the one priesthood is not something that “one simply ‘has’ or can rely on. It is something that is given to them. It must continually be imparted to the people anew.”^{xi} This is one with Christ for re-incarnating the community of God here and now. The re-incarnating priesthood of Christ is not only at the time of sacrifice of the eucharist or the celebration of the sacraments but it touches the whole life and existence. They are the one who accept and recognise the self-sacrifice of Jesus, to unfold the priesthood of the all who are baptised (Christians) and non baptised (non Christians) in the ministry to humanity. The ordained may be ‘offering gifts and sacrifice’ but the gift that is given is the gift of self’.^{xi} The sacrifice that they offer is the sacrifice of self to other.^{xi}

2.4.2 Sacrifice: But Not Cult Official

The sacrifice of the ordained of themselves is sacramentally for the other. The power to render the sacrifice of Christ sacramentally is exclusively proper to it alone.^{xi} Even though the ordained make present the self-gift of Christ for the church, they have no advantage over the common priesthood. However, they have the power to posit an external action. In this sense, they offer the sacrifice, only insofar as the visible expression of the original sacrifice of Christ is given to the entire church. The sacrifice offered above all else is the one sacrifice of Christ. With this sacrifice, the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful is united. And it is to this sacrifice that the mission of ordained is directed. In this sacrifice their mission finds its meaning and fulfilment. For the ministry of proclamation of the Gospel, draws its force and power from the sacrifice of Christ himself (*PO* 2).

In the New Testament, the term sacrifice relates to an offering in spirit and truth.^{xi} This sacrifice always focuses on the community.^{xi} As far as our understanding goes, the priesthood links itself primarily with sacrifice.^{xi} So essential nature of priesthood is sacrificial and its structure is for-the-other. The ordained are called upon to act for humanity in their relations with God. In other words, they stand at the meeting-point between people and God. They are for the human other and the divine Other.^{xi} They render present Christ’s definitive sacrifice to the faithful. They actualise the co-offering and contribution of Christ’s sacrifice.^{xi} Hence, the ordained priesthood is self-sacrificial. In this context, living eucharistically is living for you and for all, then this finds its extreme expression in the sacrifice of oneself for-the-other in suffering and death.^{xi} The priesthood and sacrifice are correlative to each other.

There must be an ordained to offer sacrifice. The holy and living sacrifice we offer is our self-offering together with the self-offering of Jesus.^{xi}

The priesthood of ordained makes present all the salvific realities of Christ and sacrificial act of Jesus. This can be rightly understood only in connection with the ‘enfeeblement’ of the cultic priesthood and of the prophetic mission.^{xi} The cultic ministry of Christianity has its effect only in the priesthood of ordained because it does not repeat the salvation reality but re-enacts the Christian priesthood and victimhood of Christ.^{xi}

The priesthood of ordained is not of their own making something present but depends on the eschatologically final grace of Jesus Christ.^{xi} They render the eschatological sacrificial act of Jesus sacramentally present in a particular community, belonging to the church from the beginning. They dispense the grace that belongs not to them but to the church. They make the body and the blood of Christ present from the first as the sacrifice of the church. In so far as Christ has offered the sacrifice of cross as a sacrifice for humanity, as a consequence, the reality of priestly sacrifice belongs to everyone in the church.^{xi}

The ordained priesthood reflects the salvation reality of Christ in the life of the persons. The salvation reality is posited by God himself to the humans, in which they are capable of positing an act that pays homage to God and sanctifies themselves. The ordained is a “man of the word and of the community, the one who presides over it in the person of Christ and in the name of the church.”^{xi} The service of the ordained is then anything that helps to express, concretely and historically the coming of God’s kingdom rather than only cultic actions.^{xi} This is a vocation of journeying towards the humanity and the divinity.

2.4.3 Vocation to the Profession of Life

The vocation of the ordained is the vocation of life. It means that one should be a servant of the life of Christ, the giver of life. Every vocation has an individual history of its own, related to quite specific moments on the life of each one.

The ordained significance of the power is according to the will of Christ a permanent, imperishable gift. It is a commission of new, necessary existential life in the world. Since this commission to the life of Christ is a permanent one, it is a vocation. This kind of existence is what we call a sacrament of life.^{xi}

The grace granted in the sacrament of Orders does not imply a higher quality of spirituality and interior life, but a specific gift of grace that is given for the performance of their service to people. The fruit produced by this specific grace is measured according to their fidelity to vocation and its realisation in life.^{xi} Through ordination the vocation is recognised publicly and sealed sacramentally in the church.^{xi}

The uncertainty regarding the new settings of the ordained does not reduce the official institution of the priesthood, which will exist always in the church. This will continue in a new way of life as profession in the world. “The priest has had a function in human society which has been recognised and valued by that society itself. It has been taken for granted that the divine calling to the priesthood is at

the same time an earthly profession too.”^{xi} This profession is not static one but this is a process towards the fullness of life. Hence it is not professionalism but ‘professionalization.’^{xi}

There are vocations in the secular sphere, which do not indicate at the outset a profession which society would want or expect as one’s means of support. The poets, philosophers and artists are few examples of such kinds of vocations. So, even in the secular sphere there is a mutual grounding and relationship between a vocation and a profession. Then, there is no impossibility on the part of society to institutionalise a vocation in a sociologically recognised profession and it can be a criterion of the authenticity of the vocation itself in its very existence. The vocation and profession are identical to each other. Karl Rahner is really critical towards the reality of the ordained that is contradictory in its function and causes scandal to the world.

Nevertheless in this period of transition we will have to ask ourselves again and again whether from the very heart and centre of our existence we are succeeding in really understanding and constantly renewing our acceptance of our own priesthood without tacitly attaching to this understanding the prior condition that the priesthood itself must be capable of being lived in such a way that it also constitutes our worldly profession.^{xi}

There is a distinctiveness of the ordained profession from other professions. The highest dedicated and selfless services are demanded from the life of the ordained, and also the whole personal and public life. It certainly implies an existential vocation to life. This kind of existential vocation is a profession too. Taking the term profession here signifies “a comprehensive and permanent task which to a very large extent demands that his whole life shall be committed to it and which is prior to any process of institutionalisation in terms of secular society.”^{xi} It is a generally accepted finding of social history and history of religion that every society needs institutions of transcendence. The

job (of the ordained) is to provide a public symbolic representation of the dimension of the divine that embraces everything and gives it unity and meaning and, as it were, to articulate verbally and still more symbolically fundamental consensus without which a society cannot live.^{xi}

The ordained have a definitive place in society, a prestige arising from their office itself. The holiness received at ordination clearly restricts their prophetic calling from a secular profession. Hence, the cultic power of the ordained, which is a new obligation to bring to development of the old ‘vocation’ given by baptism and confirmation. It is not a new obligation to a new vocation of existential life.^{xi} The vocation of the ordained is in a way a profession too. The task one assigns to priesthood is that “the priesthood itself must be capable of being lived in such a way that it also constitutes our worldly profession.”^{xi}

The ordained, thus, become sharers in many different life choices, sufferings and joys, disappointments and hopes of the people. In every situation, their task is to show the divine presence to human situations as the final end of their existence. They become the ones to whom people entrust the things most dear to them and their secrets, which are sometimes very painful too. They become one with the sick, the elderly and the dying. They become aware that they are the true sharers in Christ and can help in their final journey to God. As a witness to Christ, they are the messengers of humans’ supreme

vocation to eternal life. The exercise of the ministry enables them to deepen their own vocation in a *way-of-being*.^{xi}

The ordained have a call, a particular vocation: “One does not take this honour upon himself, but he is called by God” (Heb. 5: 4).^{xi}

Every ordained priest has as his vocation from Christ and the church the task of teaching God’s word, as it is lived and understood in the church, of leading God’s people in our common efforts to build up a community of faith and, finally, of sanctifying that portion of God’s flock, entrusted to our care, specifically through sacramental ministry.^{xi}

The priestly vocation is a specific call within the broader context of the Christian vocation. It is born out in their personal experience as priests. This vocation first appears in the context of the Christian life. The ordination is the beginning of the journey that is ‘vocational’ at every step. The ordained are called to a number of tasks and their ministries, derived from their deeper level of vocation that is their mission. These tasks are the expressions of ordained mission, which always remains the underlying reality of “being a priest.” The situations and circumstances of life constantly call upon the ordained to confirm their original choice, to respond ever anew to God’s call. The ordained life, likely every authentic form of Christian existence, is a succession of responses to God who calls.^{xi} Their vocation is renewed in every historical situation, if it is lived as an encounter with Christ’s mission. “He called them... *to be*, with him and to be sent out to preach” (Mk 3:13-14). Thus, the vocation is not a static one, but is a journey towards the very mission of life in consecration.

2.4.4 Consecration as a *Way-of-Being*

The consecration^{xi} touches the whole being of a person. No human beings can escape from their innermost *a priori* definitive state of sanctifiedness or consecratedness in the concrete order of salvation. It is present in everyone in advance, as the condition of the possibility of any ecclesial-cultic consecration. In the ordinary sense of the term, consecration in baptism, confirmation and ordination are ecclesial-cultic manifestations of consecratedness, conferred by grace. In consecration there is an “existing, embracing, and sustaining man’s whole existence, always and everywhere present in the light of God’s salvific will as an offer of God’s self-communication to man’s freedom.”^{xi} The consecration concretises an already existing state-of-consecration offered by God in creation which “symbolises the participation”^{xi} of all human beings in the incomprehensible mystery. Therefore, the consecration of a person to the community helps to realise the reality of human existence.

In the community, the life of the consecrated is an identity, *a way of being*.^{xi} Since it is *a way of being*, there is no need of any conflict between the ontological and functional levels of ministry. The bond with Christ and the community becomes then indispensable. Therefore, consecration is not a supplementary task tangible to *being-Christian*, but it is a concrete specification of that *being-Christian* in the community.^{xi} *Being-Christian* involves in *being-human* in the community. In this way, the consecrated persons encounter the concretisation of grace in a historically shaped and sociologically explainable way. In a broad sense, then, the consecration is the community’s response to God’s grace in a tangible human community. The recipient becomes aware of experiencing a new way of life through

consecration. It is an existential consecration one shares with other human beings.^{xi} The ordained are called continually to discover afresh in themselves the ultimate experience of the Holy Spirit. In whom they share with everyone and they make it fruitful,- for this special task to which they are appointed^{xi} and consecrated. The deepest source of the Christian *way-of-life* is an engagement in the social and ethical issues of life and the world.^{xi} Through consecration they are moved by the Holy Spirit to an existential mission in the society.

The consecration and mission are always yoked together. The ordained are sacramentally anointed by the Holy Spirit that configures them for Christ in a new way. This brings about a change in the being of the ordained as well as in their activity.^{xi} The Holy Spirit configures them in a new and special way of life of Christ. It forms and strengthens them with Christ's pastoral charity. He gives them an authoritative role in the church as servants of the proclamation of the Gospel and of the fullness of Christian life. Indeed, they participate in a specific and authoritative way in the "consecration and anointing" and in the "mission" of Christ (Lk. 4: 18-19), (*PDV* 15: 5; 16: 1). The relation of ordained to Jesus Christ and the church, find in the very being of them by virtue of their sacramental consecration, anointing and activity (*PDV* 16: 5).^{xi}

2.4.5 Priestly Character in Mission

The proper understanding of the idea of priestly character contributes to the understanding of the mission of ordained. The character implies that this sacrament can never be repeated again.^{xi} Catholic theology teaches that through the act of ordination^{xi} they receive a character^{xi} that permanently imprints a mark upon them and by which they are able to administer the sacraments. Because of the permanent nature, the character calls for a total and lasting commitment to the people of God.^{xi}

The lifelong permanence of this reality which imprints a sign-and this is a doctrine of faith referred to the Church tradition as the priestly character-expresses the fact that Christ irrevocably associated the Church with Himself for the salvation of the world, and that the Church herself is consecrated to Christ in a definitive way for the fulfilment of His work. The minister, whose life bears the seal of the gift received through the Sacrament of Orders, reminds the Church that God's gift is irrevocable. In the midst of the Christian community which lives by the Spirit, he is a pledge, despite his defects, of the salvific presence of Christ.^{xi}

It grasps the whole being of the person ordained, so that they become a man of God, not simply a delegate of the community. The sacramental character places them beyond the sphere of human decision and the individual's personal history of salvation.^{xi} They are indelibly sealed with the mission of Christ through this sacrament.^{xi} This is to be responsible for others who are in trials and difficulties in a pluralistic context. Hence, to speak of character in terms of an enduring call is immediately to move to the level of an ethics of response and responsibility. The character received through the sacrament has an ecclesial, or social significance. Therefore, we can say it is ethical.^{xi}

God's free self-communication opens on 'a believing and loving yes' (a *response*) - but this is a process which can be sustained, lost and deepened. The response 'yes' to God's love is said out of that real, spiritual and final character of being. This has been given in the Sacrament and is a present reality in the ordained.^{xi} This response implies a new (ecclesio-ethical) relation that is established as the

character received in the sacrament of order. It does this by placing a person in a social or ethical relationship with Christ and his church. This responsible relationship does not establish through an initiative or decision of an individual, but by Christ and his church. Therefore, it is for an individual irrevocable one. The sacrament of Order establishes a relationship in which the persons are constituted as essentially responsive. They are called to witness publicly to the ethical structure of reality in their own life through being responsible ‘for-the-other,’ and also to constant renewal of that responsibility.^{xi} ‘Such a renewal of ordination is the *yes of our good will*.’^{xi} It is ‘*God’s work* in us.’^{xi} In other words, the freedom of response summons to co-operate with the always pertinent situation of responsibility ‘for-the-other.’ The call is for an enduring response to ‘other’ in freedom, which always precedes responsible action. The mission of ordaineds is not something that happens to an individual and remains as private. This has meaning only in so far as it is situated within the ethical community. Within this community, they are called publicly to show forth the existential reality of being for-the-other. The ordination is a public awakening to the primacy of the ethical attitude and responsibility to the community. It provides them a forum for freedom of service. This service is irrevocable (unrepeatable) and thus, has an irrevocable character. When we understand it in an ecclesial context, the call first given at ordination perjures as a call to the ethical service of God and neighbour. By stressing the ethical nature of sacramental character, the ordaineds get a firm place within the ethical and ecclesial context.^{xi}

2.4.6 Ecclesial Dimension of Character

The communitarian and personal dimensions of character of the ordaineds mutually relate to each other in the church. The “character in fact imparts a quite specific place and function to its subject in the *visible* church as worshipping community.”^{xi} In communion with other ministers in the church, a community receives its own minister.^{xi} The character must be understood in relation to the charisms one receives in the community (2 Tim 1:6). The sacramental character bears witness to the fact that they are summoned to serve others with every ounce of humanity that they possess.^{xi} This mission of the ordained is stamped on their very being. Therefore, it is inseparable from their being, because of the radical orientation to God and to the community. The character forms a new being and a new creation emerges from it.^{xi} Moreover, the new being that is fashioned by it, is meant to be the instrument of the mission that has to be fulfilled. Thus, by its very nature it is dynamic. In other words, the essential orientation of character is towards action and mission. Consequently, this means that priestly actions, attitudes and behaviour, are to flow from his priestly being.

What you are by the free gift of the order of grace, be that in the stature of your personality, in your way of thinking and loving, has always and clearly the courage of the truth of your priesthood. Let no shadow obscure the light that is within you. Let no detour distance you from the structure of your sacred character.^{xi}

The character impressed upon the ordaineds is the guarantee of faith to unveil Christ’s own mission.^{xi} Thus, the mission of ordained is a unique manifestation and vehicle of the saving presence of God in a sacramental community.

The notion of character has tended to promote the impression of a certain metaphysical clericalism that placed the priest on a higher level than the rest of the faithful in a theological perspective

which is more faithful to historical and critical evidence, it is better to understand ‘the sacramental character’ of orders as the visible rite which incorporates the ordained into his order and which therefore includes certain rights and duties. Its principle focus is the mission which the ordained has to be of service to the Church. For that task he is “set apart” for the Gospel and at the same time, “not separated” from the rest of the faithful since he is one like them from baptism. The impossibility of re-ordination is based on the fidelity of the divine election rather than by an ontological change within a person.^{xi}

The sacramental character implies not only an acknowledgement of the faithfulness of God, whose gracious gifts are given irrevocably and without regret, but also protects the right of the community and humanity that are independent of the personal quality of the office holder. In a positive sense, however, this means that the services to which they are called, lay claim to whole existence in the community.^{xi} The mission common to all Christians and the ordaineds flow from the same source through baptism.^{xi} The ordained persons belong to a community of disciples. They are animated by the presence of the Holy Spirit on the way to the Kingdom of God^{xi} through laying on of hands.

2.4.6.1 LAYING ON OF HANDS

The laying on of hands emerged within the New Testament^{xi} period as the sign of an appointment to the office of the church leader. It shows “the calling (or acceptance) by the community and appointment to or for a community.”^{xi} There are theological opinions that by the laying on of hands an ordained “receives a grace of state in order to lead his flock to the truth.”^{xi}

The laying on of the hands is an offering of the *epiklesis* by other ministers of the community. The community realises through the sacramental act of the gift of Spirit to the one who is ordained. The ordained do not have the Spirit in order that they in turn may pass it on to others. It is the Spirit who causes them, to be an assembled church.^{xi} The rite of the imposition of hands, is the recognition of an inward charism that bestows on the candidates a public quality before the community.^{xi} The candidates receive from Christ himself the mission in its fullness when the sacramental gesture of the imposition of hands is duly performed.^{xi}

Apostles send their disciples by conferring on them the gift of the Holy Spirit. The same way the ordained are also set apart for their mission by the same grace of the Spirit. Through this ancient gesture of the church the bishop empowers the ordained with the grace of the Spirit that is present in the church. The bishop lays his hands on the ones to be ordained in silence. All those who are present reflect upon the awesome grace that is being conferred upon them. The hands of the bishop represent the action of the church and signify the grace of orders. The sacrament of Order within the assembly expresses the view that the community has relationships within it and of its relationship to Christ.^{xi} As a sacrament it guarantees the strength to carry out the ministry and gives testimony to the authority and power of the Holy Spirit that is at work in the church. In this sacramental moment the bishop declares on behalf of the church that the ordained are being marked out as servants of the Lord to carry out his mission. Through this gesture they join the company of those who,

For the past two thousand years made their way through all ages and all lands to declare your name before kings and nations. Into the unbroken chain that you began when your son our Lord said ‘Go

into all the world. I am with you; into the unbroken chain of mission, of labour in common destiny, of a new strength and power.^{xi}

Following the action of the bishop, the ordained, who are present, impose their hands on the heads of those being ordained. With this sign all come to realise that there is one Spirit, one power and one mission for the sanctification of all. The newly ordained are responsible to assure the zeal of the apostles and martyrs. This is possible only through the unfailing support of the Spirit. It permeates the entire life of the church, and in which the newly ordained have now come to share. Thus, for all time the Spirit of God will rest upon them, animating their lives and ministries. They are ordained to the community for a special task to perform, for that, they are set apart in the church herself.

The invocation of the Spirit upon the ordained is for the performance of the ministries and to be the ministers of that Spirit. It is a holy and mysterious plan of God enacted by the church, by which the ordained ministers will render human service, and the people of the community will receive also a human service.^{xi} The ordained are placed at the disposal of God's Spirit in order to do necessary service to humanity. They form one office on behalf of the community and for the blessing of the people through laying on of hands.^{xi}

Like God's hands, human hands should be instruments of compassion, peace, blessing, and work. They are God's visible hands for the works done through humanity in order to help the needy and abandoned. The laying on of hands is basically the passing on of the sacred tradition of service to the community from Moses down to the present. It is a symbol of the transference or bestowal of power for dedicated service to the community. Vatican Council II insists that the ordained are set apart in the midst of the people of God. This is not in order that they should be separated from that people or from any human being. They would be powerless to serve people if they remained aloof from their life and circumstances (*PO* 3). The laying on of hands is for the public witnessing of the mission of word.

2.4.6.2 PUBLIC WITNESSING OF THE WORD

The ordained become public and official witnesses of the word by laying on of hands. It enables them to speak and act in the name of Christ that means to make him present through witnessing of life.^{xi} They live as images of the word that made effective on them at the day of bishop's laying on of hands. Since the word has been entrusted to them, they live in relation to it. That is the sole source of all they speak, enact and exemplify.^{xi} Karl Rahner consolidates the meaning of laying on of hands in a prayer, that resonates within the heart of the ordained.

Your almighty Word and the fire of your Spirit will make me into a priest of your Son my Lord. Your Spirit will come down upon me, the gift of God's grace, which is not a Spirit of timidity but a Spirit of power and love and self-control (2 Tim. 1: 6-7), the Spirit that enables the priest to offer sacrifice and witness to your Word, the Spirit that rescues us from ourselves and offers up our lives with Christ's sacrifice for the salvation of the world.^{xi}

The ordained render present themselves as the sacred ministers of Christ and of the church, by means of authoritative proclamation of the word of God, the administration of the sacraments and the pastoral direction of the faithful (*PDV* 16:1c).^{xi} They are configured to Christ, the priest and teacher, sanctifier and Shepherd by the imposition of hands (*LG* 18; *PO* 2).^{xi} The New Testament writings stress that it is

the same Spirit of Christ who introduces these persons, chosen from among their brethren, into the mission. Through the ordination, they preside over the eucharist and exercise leadership in the community and empower the communion and unity.^{xi} The gift received by the imposition of the hands is a mystery of unity that empowers communion among people of God.^{xi}

They are empowered to continue the ministry of reconciliation, of shepherding the flock of God, and of teaching through the laying on of hands.^{xi} To the apostles and others, through the sacramental laying on of hands gives the Spirit that empowers them to continue the same ministry of Jesus. There is an identity of the mission of Christ and the mission of ordained at the present time. This mission of Christ suggests a way of life to them. The fruitfulness of the mission depends on the degree of vertical and horizontal unity of humanity and of ecclesial communion. “When the relation between the two forms of priesthood in the church is understood in explicitly ecclesiological terms, this provides a clearer exemplification of the leitmotif “*communio*” present in *Lumen Gentium*. Communion is promoted through practice of life. All in the church have communion in the Holy spirit, through Christ, with the Father, and hence also with each other.^{xi} In this empowering mission of communion, the ordained act in person of Christ the head of the church.

2.4.6.3 IN PERSONA CHRISTI CAPITIS

The ordained act in the person of Christ, the head. Recently John Paul II stated that “the ordained pastors, who are members of the one Body of the church, represent its head, who is Christ.”^{xi} The traditional teaching concerning the identity of them is that they stand *in persona Christi* because through their words and deeds they witness the mission of Christ. Whatever deeds they perform are of Christ himself.^{xi} This problem is more or less solved in Vatican II by taking into account that the ordained act in *persona Christi Capitis*.

The priesthood... is conferred by its own particular sacrament. Through that sacrament the priest by the anointing of the Holy Spirit are signed with a special character and so are configured to Christ the priest in such a way that they are able to act in the person of Christ the head.^{xi}

It explicitly shows that without the body the head can not function. Therefore, “the priest represents Christ as head and pastor of the Church”^{xi} through the gifts received from God.^{xi} The ordained, as the head of the church, directly orient towards the service of the community. David N. Power states: “Inserting the word *Capitis* alongside in *persona Christi* both highlighted the relation of the ordained minister to the whole body..., and allowed for the inclusion of all the services that the priest exercised in the Church.”^{xi} Moreover, the relationship of them to the baptised community is dynamic, since it empowers the former to act as living images of Christ’s headship by the working of the Holy Spirit. The essential distinction can be fully grasped only in the light of the action of the Holy Spirit. It permanently guarantees the fundamental holiness of the life and activity of the church.^{xi} Through the charismatic gift of the Spirit, they witness to show, as head how they transcend the life of all members.^{xi} Exercising, within the limits of the authority the mission of Christ as shepherd and head, they gather God’s family as a brotherhood all of one mind, and lead them in the Spirit, through Christ, to God the Father (*LG* 28). Therefore, the person and work of them, together with the members in the church and in the world are indispensable and irreplaceable.

Lumen gentium shows the importance of the words spoken by them at the culmination of the eucharistic prayers. They are the ministers of the eucharist, dispensers of the divine mercy in the Sacrament of reconciliation, consolers of souls, guides for the faithful in all of the most difficult moments of life. Thus, they act by the mandate of and *in the person of Christ, the head*.^{xi} They act in *persona Christi, the head* when they speak the words of consecration in the eucharist and the words of absolution in the sacrament of confession. They represent Christ, the unique priest and the mediator of the world. Then, their words become the word of Christ and they act in him. One of the most important elements is the personal (existential) commitment from the part of them as the head of the body of Christ, the church.^{xi} The ordained act in the person of Christ the head act in a responsible way to humanity. They can offer “in persona Christi,” the one and eternal sacrifice of the New Covenant.^{xi}

The mission of the ordained rooted in the apostolic succession, and vested with “potestas sacra” (LG 10; PO 2, 6)^{xi} consisting of the faculty and the responsibility of acting in the person of Christ, the head and the Shepherd (PDV 15).^{xi} The Second Vatican Council posits that they share in the priesthood of Christ considered precisely as head, i.e., head of the body, the church.^{xi}

The ordained through the ordination impart a new relationship not only to Christ, the head but also to other members of the body of Christ. They take responsibility for the communal life of the whole church.^{xi} The mission of ordained can be viewed only from a proper ecclesiology based on a proper Christology. Here, the sacrament of Orders is a sacrament essentially for the church rather than a sacrament of the church.^{xi} The sign character of it makes present an ecclesial reality and both Christic and ecclesial dimensions are present. The Christic reality occurs in and through the ecclesial reality.^{xi} The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* remarks that they have the task “not only of representing Christ - Head of the church - before the assembly of the faithful, but also of acting in the name of the whole Church.”^{xi}

The ordained proclaim, realise, celebrate, and signify a reality beyond itself, that is the ecclesial reality. By virtue of ordination they sacramentally represent the ecclesial reality of the word-event. They stand in the stead of the community and for the community. Thus, they become a type of a corporate personality in which the community recognises itself. They are sacramental signs of the community and the community represents the reality of Christ. They stand then, *in persona Ecclesiae* as well as *in persona Christi Capitis*.^{xi} This affirms the importance of the reception, recognition, and even the call of them on the part of the ecclesial community. They continue the mission of the incarnate word. So, the other members of the community are enriched by their words and gestures. This is a leadership that reflects and communicates God’s justice and love in the community.^{xi}

The priest is no longer only the person who presides in the Eucharist in Christ’s name; his role as the one who presides in the person of Christ extends to his whole mission and activity. In this his being and action are specifically distinct from the being and action of the layman in the church.^{xi}

In reality, both minister and recipient are active subjects in a common activity. Though the ordained represent Jesus Christ, the recipients allow themselves to be drawn into the ritual action in so far as it is an action of Christ. The sacramental action is a priestly operation directed to God through

mutual encounter. We cannot regard this action as simply the action of these two parties. The communal nature of them becomes operative in a sacramental ritual in embracing the whole people of God.^{xi} In acting in the person of Christ, they are empowered to grow as sacraments through which Christ as the head of the body leads the community.^{xi}

The New Testament emphasises on the community dimension of mission. This can be seen in early Christian writings and their witnessing in the community.^{xi} The distinct character of the ordained must be sought within the self-understanding of the great sacrament of the church. In the celebration of the sacraments they act both in the person of Christ (*in Persona Christi*) and in the person of the church (*in persona ecclesiae*).^{xi} In the celebration of the eucharist, they act *in persona Christi capitis et ecclesiae*. The expression *in persona ecclesiae* does not occur as such, but its substance is conveyed by “the name of the whole people.” Saying “*in persona Christi et ecclesiae*” shows that we need to understand the mission of the ordained “sacramentally.” That is, they are the sacramental *realsymbol* of both Christ and God’s priestly people, the church. On the level of the sacramental rite they represent in the sign that which in this external sign-reality happens inwardly: the *communio* of head and members in their common surrender to the Father. This has opened again for human beings the way to the Father, and the answering surrender of human beings, who follow Christ on his way to the Father. In the one person of the ordained the unity of the *totus Christus, caput et membra*, finds at the same time its symbolic expression.^{xi} They do not act in place of the church, but the church acts in and through them as her representative.^{xi}

2.4.6.4 IN THE ECCLESIAL ORDER

The ordained place themselves against the common experience of the faithful and deepen their involvement in the life of the community.^{xi} The sacrament of Orders as an instrument of the Holy Spirit is the “holy ordering” of the church according to the saving purposes of God.^{xi} The ordination intends to include persons in the schedule and pattern whereby the Christian assembly enacts the meaning of the Christian faith. It incorporates persons as leaders in the structure of the *ordo*.^{xi} This *ordo* is the prototype of the ‘church order’.^{xi} The power of the local community gives meaning to the mission of ordained. Then,

the person who speaks holy words awakens hope for God’s just and gracious speaking. The person who passes out food awakens hope for God as the host at the widest of all meals. The person simply seated, peacefully and attentively presiding in the midst of an active assembly, suggests to us that the order of this meeting is profoundly and reliably centred in God. Stylised ritual movements and words and flowing ritual garments heighten the strength of these living symbols.^{xi}

Therefore, the ordained symbolise of the presence of God in the community. It means that they are the one ordained to the community in a very special way for the building up of the people of God. Their life reawakens the faith of the people in order to march towards the fullness of life. They do not set apart from the profane world in order to touch what is holy. It is the way of recognising that what is profane in itself.^{xi} Pope John Paul II said on his 50th Sacerdotal Jubilee that, “as a priest, God has called me to be a man of the Word, a man of the sacrament, a man of the mystery of faith.”^{xi} “The ordained is the sacrament in the church of what the church is to be as sacrament in the world.”^{xi} The ordained,

through their symbolic service of human mission represent the reality of Christ and the church that is the ministerial office in the world.

3. Ordained's Ministerial Office for Re-enacting the Reality

The ordained, together with other members of the church, “participate in the priestly office of Christ.”^{xi} They receive the office of representing Christ in and for the church. The ministerial has to facilitate a concrete mission of humanity in relationship with all faithful. The ministerial office itself is to be understood as the fact that “God has united himself in a direct way with humanity, and that this unity is necessarily historically manifested.”^{xi} We shall see in this session the meaning of the ministerial office and its contextual symbolic representation.

3.1 Ministerial Office and Its Features

The fundamental theological position for understanding the office derives from the fact that God has united himself in a direct way with humanity. This unity between God and the humans is necessarily and historically manifested in the church. Therefore, the basis for the unity of all people is entirely dependent on the office of the ordained. In a very true sense, this office stands before God in the name of the community. As we discussed earlier, the essential continuation and expression of the high priestly mission of the incarnate word is actualised by this office. In this office there are elements of liturgical worship of God and speaking in his name that form an inner unity of God and people.^{xi} From this understanding of unifying mission of the ordained, let us examine, what is meant by the term ‘office’.

The German term used for this mission in the church is *Amt* that generally means ‘office’. The term *Amt* remains also for official or ordained mission. More universally the term *Dienst* is used which means ‘service.’ It corresponds to the broader sense of “ministry” in the community.^{xi} This does not mean to carry out some of the functions but it is the basic mission of the humanity by way of dedicated and committed service to the whole people of the world.

By using the term *Amt*, Karl Rahner means that the charismatic element belongs constantly to the nature of church more so than to its official institutions and sacraments.^{xi} The terms ministry and office are the same for the charismatic nature of the church. The office of the ordained is “purely a ministerial one,”^{xi} in the sense that it serves the word of God and the community. Then, it is the “ministerial office”^{xi} in the broader sense. The term *kirchlichen Amt* is more exactly translated as the “ecclesial ministerial office.” The gratuitous nature of service is “a gift of ministry to exercise an office.”^{xi} It refers to the service of the community that keeps the Gospel and the Tradition alive. It finds its meaning as a service to the community within which and for which the office exists. It is not a matter of keeping power but to do committed service to the people of God in word and deed.

In original sense, the term *minister (servitium)* expresses only the work by which the church’s members continue as the mission and ministry of Christ within church. However, when the term is distinguished from and compared with the various *munera* and *officia*, then it should be clearly noted that only in virtue of sacred ordination does the word obtain that full univocal meaning that tradition has

attributed to it.^{xi} Through this office, the grace mediates to bring out personal authenticity, cultural progress and social harmony.^{xi}

The church is one for the whole of humanity. So there is only one ministerial office. This office is nothing but the responsibility to build up the community of truth and love in word.^{xi} It is obvious in the life of Jesus. His leadership and authority formed a community of followers around him. He shared his insights with them, and instructed them how to behave and build up a new humanity. He saw his mission as one ministry even though it involved authority and leadership.^{xi} The one ministry “is to represent the priority of the divine initiative and authority on the life of the church and to serve, to bring together, build up and lead the community through word and sacrament”^{xi} for the eschatological fulfilment of the reign of God.

The one nature of the ministerial office is by nature flexible because the church is in a process of becoming. In this sense the office is an essence for actualisation of the reality of the church.^{xi} Thus it has the responsibility to serve the word more effectively by proclaiming to the core existence of the people. Hence the office has to make the church appear with a human face in a pluralistic society.

If we reduce the specific nature of this office to the power to pronounce certain words of consecration, then the priestly office is hardly a human vocation that can satisfy the heart of a young man. If, on the other hand, it involves the task of leading the ecclesial community, then it does indeed involve real human charisma: the ability to meet people and talk with them, the ability to organise and direct human beings, and the capacity for management. Such a task calls for a courteous, responsible and balanced human being, and it demands initiative, imagination and real knowledge of human nature.^{xi}

The office is determined not by a sacred power but by the socio-ecclesial mission of love and service to the world.^{xi} Joseph Ratzinger re-interprets the concepts of “office”, “jurisdiction”, and “power” as a share in Christ’s mission, and opens it up to humanity, brotherhood and concrete love, so that we glimpse the primal meaning of “Gospel” as to preach the good news to poor.^{xi} Breaking the word for the poor means that the office does give service for the poor in whom the church exists. Hence, “the proclaiming of the word and the dispensing of the sacrament, spring from a single common root and they are ultimately one in nature.”^{xi}

3.2 Word and Service in Love

There is an intimate relationship between the word and service. The “Word” itself denotes service to the community. The ministry of word essentially points towards the service of the reign of God. This is also clear in the Second Vatican Council documents.

Any ministry which has the word of God as its object and focal point stands under the word of God as its critical point of reference. Was not this the gist of the Council’s affirmation that “the living teaching office of the Church... is not above the word of God, but serves it (*Dei Verbum*)?”^{xi}

God provides the resources for each one to serve within the church. Thus, the particular place and function of an individual in the community are comprehensively described with a word that carries no overtones of authority, rule, dignity or power. The word is *diakonia*, that is a service to the community.^{xi} Every action that helps towards building up the community is basically a committed service to the world.

Then we say that the ministerial office refers to the leadership of a committed service. It is, therefore, for those people who are in need of service from the church.^{xi} In this way, it is a service for “helping human beings respond to and correspond to God, and doing so in the very manner in which God acted in Jesus—convincing or persuading them from within, on the basis of a great love.”^{xi} The ministerial office becomes a gift for humanity by accepting the redemptive work of Christ. So their authentic identity is the servant of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.^{xi} The very essence of these service addresses to the world of the needy who are in need of liberation. In this sense the “priestly service means doing good by communicating that good which is God’s and is God.”^{xi}

The priest is in fact ‘bound to service in the Church community for his brothers and sisters, i.e., to the Christian community in its mission in the world, not simply through a personal will but through the Christian community and a charismatic gift of God, both of which transcend the priest as person.’^{xi}

In short, service is an experiencing of God’s love among the people of God. Therefore, the ministerial office is an office of love. The ministerial office can then go way back to find its origins and its dynamism as both ‘Office’ and ‘Love’. As we have seen in the first part, coming into the light of the crucified love, the authority of ministerial office comes to be perceived as having its ground only in the power of the cross of love. The ‘absolute light’ of crucified love in which authority and office emerge, humbled and transformed.^{xi}

This office exists as the relationship of love within the members of the church. Then, this has no other function than to make transparent the love of Christ for his body, the church. This is at the heart of its sacramental and liturgical task and also the foundation of its pastoral work. These tasks entrusted to them ‘of building up the Body of Christ’ demand the most profound interiority of a ‘state of life’.^{xi}

By exploring the depth of the biblical foundations of the ministerial office in the community, Joseph Ratzinger states that

The person who becomes a priest is grafted into his mission. For this reason, an intimate personal relationship with Christ is fundamental for priestly life and ministry The priest should be a person who knows Jesus intimately, has met him and has learned to love him ... He should learn to spend his life for Christ and His flock.^{xi}

The apostles’ life can be summed up in the evangelical following of Christ in order to be faithful to his mission of love through their respective office.^{xi} This office is a charismatic one in a pluralistic society.

3.3 Charismatic Gift of the Office

As we have said earlier, the main purpose of using the term ministerial office is that the charismatic element belongs to the nature of the church herself. Of course, in a Catholic ecclesiology there is no hostility between the official institutions of the church on the one hand, and the charismatic element on the other.^{xi} Both the institutional character and the charismatic element of the church are mutually connected to each other. By using the term priestly office, Karl Rahner suggests an ecclesiology that recognises the unique character of the charismatic element.^{xi} In order to explain its uniqueness, the term “the ministerial office” is used. It means that the “gifts of the Spirit can only be regulated by a gift of the Spirit.”^{xi} The ministerial office is a gift of the Spirit.

The ministerial office intends that the work of the Spirit must be integrated into the life of the whole church. There are different charisms and ministries in the church. They are all united in the Spirit of God for the realisation of the one church. The ministerial office do its service for the church not because of its power but because the power of the Spirit works in the church that leads it to the reality of the church. The nature of the church makes the office distinctive and effective, since it exists within the church through the work of the Spirit.^{xi}

The recent theological discourse of the ministerial office in the church is bringing a hopeful future to the church. In the words of Hans Jorissen, the agreement achieved in dialogue with the churches of the Reformation state that

on the basis of the universal priesthood of all believers and within the framework of the church which is apostolic as a whole, or in the churches, a special office founded by Christ is recognised as one of the constitutive characteristics of the church.^{xi}

This office is a charismatic gift of God to perform committed mission for the people. The service of others is not a matter of self-righteous good works. It is something that must derive from God and direct towards God and each one, according to the call and the charism received (1 Cor. 12: 11). The church as a humanly organised society has the “Spirit animating it like a soul, as well as the manifestation of this gift of the Spirit, for it has to bear witness through history precisely as such a Spirit-endowed society.”^{xi}

The ministerial office is a charism inherent within the very nature of the church. It is not dependent upon the individuals who hold a particular office. It hierarchically organises so as to carry out the mission entrusted to her by Christ. The church is guaranteed that she will be faithful to her mission, by the promise of Christ to remain with his followers through the Spirit until the end of history. If the Spirit were not the guiding force of the official ministry of the church then it would cease to be an historical society. The church’s relationship to the apostles guarantees that she has the enduring mission to manifest the grace of the Spirit in her sacramental life.^{xi} Since the Spirit of Christ grounds ecclesiastical office, it follows in succession to the apostles. Therefore, they inherit the promise of the Lord, made to them until the end of time. This truth does not diminish the possibility of holding the office in the church. But, the office can at any time in its history rebel against the Spirit, because, the office-holders are weak and sinful individuals. Thus, the church is always subject to her own humanity and she can at times move away from her essence.^{xi}

The official church is preserved by God’s grace. Thus, we can say that the office “belongs to ecclesiastical ministry as a charismatic element, transcending the institutional order.”^{xi} The charismatic gift of the Spirit has precedence over any ecclesial law. Office in the church does possess a charismatic nature that transcends the limits of juridical regulations. The office in the church is to manifest the grace of Christ in the world that transcends all the juridical norms of the church. Therefore, the assistance of the Spirit is not a sporadic happening within the church, but a permanent aspect of the church’s nature herself.^{xi} The charismatic nature of office is not dependent upon the individuals who happen to be ordained. But it consists in the permanent grace-filled nature of the church herself.^{xi} The Holy Spirit is the source of charismatic gifts that the Spirit distributes “as he wills” (1 Cor 12: 11) among the faithful.^{xi}

This gift of the Spirit leads those who preside in the church as leaders to judge the genuineness and proper use of it.

3.4 Charismatic Leadership

The charismatic nature of the leadership is a gift of the Spirit for witnessing the unity of the office. The gift of leadership is an important one to the Christian communities. By the end of the first century, the leaders or elders, were believed to possess a special authority at once cultivated by and responsible to the Spirit.^{xi} The charismatic leadership makes present the will of God to the humanity.

The hierarchical structure of the church includes its charismatic leadership, and it cannot be understood apart from it.^{xi} Hans Küng writes that “the ministry exercised by special commission, as much as charismatic ministers without special commission, is in its own way, a *charismatic ministry*.”^{xi} The mission of ministerial leadership recognises in such a way that the liberating leadership of the Lord Jesus is perpetually present in the life of the Christian faith Community.^{xi} Here, the faith leads the leaders to practical life-situation. So, the charisma of leadership unites the church and her offices through the charism of service to the people. In the apostolic era, the church had the duty to witness to the unity of office in a more concrete social form through Christian communities. These Christian communities were the expressions of their very life itself. The basic structure of the earliest communities of Christian believers was the same as what was then the basic unit of civic life in the cities, namely the household.^{xi}

The ministerial office will be in future to lead and to build up the community. Its task and nature are “clearly understood in the light of the position of community leader.”^{xi} They have to exercise their power of leadership through their very existence, deeds, words and the living, believing, hoping, loving and witness to God’s message.^{xi} The ministerial leadership intimately relates to the ministry of mediation of grace, and religious values.^{xi} This is “associated with the functions of shepherding, proclaiming the word and leading prayer.”^{xi} In this leadership the people turn to affirm them in their renewed roles. The leadership of the community conceives of on the basis of the nature of the church as the fruit of salvation and mediating salvation.^{xi} This is unlike the leadership functions of a secular society. It understands in their active relationship to the community that has to promote the Christian maturity in the world. Thus, the ministerial office is primarily as communitarian leadership and as a service, it reaches down and takes hold of the very depths of the priests’ existence.^{xi}

The ministerial leadership empowers the community, facilitates and co-ordinates other ministries, and supports individual and common growth of the humanity.^{xi} The ministerial office is in the midst of the community, not over against it or apart from it. It has to co-ordinate all other ministries of the community and needs to be one among the people, speaking their language, in solidarity with their culture, hearing their questions, calling them to go deeper in faith and in commitment to the mission reality of the church. This is a task to be available for the needs of others and accountability to the local and the universal church. This leadership does not limit to the liturgy alone but it relates the leadership in the community. The ordained represent the community sacramentally, and preside over its liturgy. Hence, they designate to the leadership of that community.^{xi} In addition to it, the ministerial leadership

offered by them will vary according to the individual gifts. Such as some involve in education, others in counselling or visiting the sick etc.^{xi} However, the prime aim is to foster leadership in the community and to realise values of life that promote the being and the experience of oneness in the world. This leadership also involves the discerning of God's presence in the cry of the oppressed, in the struggle for justice and in the search for peace and unity.^{xi}

What is important at the present situation is the revitalisation of baptismal faith^{xi} that is to be the true messenger of the humanity. This implies a new awareness that they are all humble ministers and instruments of the mystery that transcends humanity. Such a communitarian leadership requires an attitude of service and diversity of the charisms. Thus, the church bears witness to the love that animates her the life in the world.^{xi} The ministerial leadership is for the restoration of the sectarianism caused in the past centuries. The task of it is to seek to restore the social and cultural dialectics and the scale of values to the full integrity.^{xi} The ministerial leadership shares the authority in responsible service to others.

3.5 Authority in Service

The ministerial office is a leadership of authority in service to the people. This is shaped by Christ as the ecclesial *diakonia* of Christians from the beginning of his mission.^{xi} This authority is not to be interpreted or considered as "lording it over others"^{xi} with power. Such power politics is outside the scope of the Gospel. As we have already discussed, the persons are ordained for a responsible service to community. As Christ is the servant of all, he commands that those who have authority are identical with that service. Therefore, the authority is for the service of humanity.^{xi} Authority has no power over the lives of others but it is subservient to them. The power of ministry is entirely for the sake of service to the world and it must be responsible one to unite all.^{xi} Through the sacramental consecration, they participate "in the authority with which Jesus Christ, through his Spirit, guides the church" (PDV 21). The mission of the ordained is always a service to humankind for the sake of the reign of God. They have received "the power of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 1: 8) in order to witness to Christ and instruments of new life."^{xi}

In fact the authority is in becoming a slave to others by doing responsible service. The first service which Jesus offered to those he came to save, is to become one of them. The service is always for the community. In this way, the washing of feet on Holy Thursday has significance. Holy Thursday is the servants' day. The day servants have their feet washed. The leader of the community should not be washing feet that day (they should be doing that every day). On Holy Thursday, the leader of the community should have their feet washed to remind them that they are the servants, in service to the community who wash their feet.^{xi}

The ministerial office is established on the foundation of apostles for the upbuilding of the church (Eph 2:20; Rev. 21:14) "and is completely at the service of the Church" (PDV 16)^{xi} and the world.

Priests could not be the servants of Christ unless they were witness and dispensers of a life other than that of this earth. On the other hand they would be powerless to serve men if they remained

aloof from their life and circumstances... In the pursuit of this aim priests will be helped by cultivating those virtues which are rightly held in high esteem in human relations. Such qualities as goodness of heart, sincerity, strength and constancy of mind, careful attention to justice, courtesies and others...(PO 3).^{xi}

The office takes the form of cross that requires a whole hearted surrender that makes a state of life.^{xi} As Jesus, the redeemer on the cross, crucified and forsaken, the church and her ministry call to assume a form that is appropriate to a broken and share. Thus, the call to ministerial office as an objective mission in the church is a call to live the cross both ecclesially and personally. Hence this office is to gather those who are abandoned and forsaken by the many responsibly.^{xi}

3.6 Communitarian Co-responsibility

The ministerial office has a radical communitarian form and it carries out only as a collective work. The 'Church as the basic Sacrament' makes it clear that ministerial office must be an expression of ecclesial life. As we have already stated, the mission of the ordained cannot be isolated from its ecclesiological context. The recognition of their mission and of the ecclesial character of a Christian community relates indissolubly and mutually.^{xi}

The ministry has no existence, without having a specific community. The ministry depends not only on the meaning of the church but also on the self-understanding of the local community where one really experiences daily life. Therefore, the church, community and ministry always linked together in both theory and practice. We cannot speak about one without the other. The mission of ordained comes from the trinitarian community and forms the community. It exists for the community and stands before the community not to dominate but to serve as a living sign of the Christ-Servant.^{xi} In such a situation, nobody can claim to be the ultimate source of ministry.^{xi} The ministry has to be recognised in co-responsibility.

The ministerial office offers a co-responsibility with the community of faithful. This is to help the people to transcend their lives to divine and to one another. The people who are longing for the transcendence, intimately relate in their longing for a living community.^{xi} God's plan for the living community finds in their determination of the permanent collegial ministry of responsibility.^{xi} There is a co-responsibility between the ordained and the community to carry out the same mission. Therefore, a community without ministries is not fully a Christian community because it cannot adequately fulfil Christ's mission of unity. The ministries without community are likewise incomplete because they lack their principle mission.^{xi} Every ordained has

as his vocation from Christ and the church, the task of teaching God's word, as it is lived and understood in the church, of leading God's people in our common efforts to build a community of faith and, finally, of sanctifying that portion of God's flock entrusted to our care, especially through sacramental ministry.^{xi}

The collegial responsibility of ministry demands a responsible action from all baptised members.

3.6.1 Unfolding of Baptismal Mission

The ministerial office has to unfold the baptismal mission of the church. Through baptism we all share in the same mission that is the preaching of the reign of God and the call to holiness. The ordained are primarily to be Christians and their mission is to be a concretization of baptismal mission.^{xi} Walter Kasper states, there is no difference on the level of being Christian within the communion of all Christians, but the distinction has to do with calls and ministries.^{xi} According to Avery Dulles what they share in common is much more important than the things differentiate from each other. The participation in the one mission of Christ is very important than that of holding on difference.^{xi} What is common to all baptised is the dignity of every Christian.^{xi} All are called to holiness and all share in the mission of Christ. As priests, they have to encourage lay people to live out their baptismal call.^{xi}

The ministerial office is commissioned to be an icon of the church in her identity as a sacrament of Christ. Conversely the assembled church is the icon of its identity. They proclaim, realise, celebrate and signify a reality beyond itself, and this reality includes the church. The ministerial office represents the baptised community and unfolds the baptismal grace.^{xi} Individual Christians are called to bear witness to the grace of God and to contribute to the life and the mission of the church through the sacrament of baptism. In this way they all co-operate in rendering the gift of grace historically tangible in the public life and ministry of the church in a responsible way.^{xi}

The essence of the ministerial office can find its significance in its intimate relationship with baptismal community. It has the existence only in the mutual exchange of the gifts of Spirit first and foremost is to be accepted and recognised in the community. The ministerial office shares the inner most Spirit to the community. All baptized members have to share Spirit of mutual enrichment for the unity of all. Christ wills that all the baptised to do ministry for the unity of the people of God.^{xi} As members of the church they are as equals to the ordained. The explicit unity of the mission of the baptised people can be seen in the creation account where God comes to dwell in the interpersonal union between human beings by sharing his inner most Spirit. The finding God in the inner sanctuary of the other is the highest form of human community. As the participators of the mission of Christ, the human lives are to be cared for more than any other in the world. Jesus Christ demands this kind of costly discipleship from those who participate in his mission through baptism.^{xi} The participation of the costly mission of Christ means to witnessing the unity of humanity. The baptismal community is the basis for the mission where the baptism is the acceptance of the mystery of the incomprehensible One.^{xi}

The traditional understanding of baptism is the entrance into the church and to the fullness of Christian life. The Christian life here means that which orients towards God and the neighbour. In the sacrament of baptism we must speak of God, his eternal life, his self-communication through the grace of the Holy Spirit. The baptism imparts the life, which God gives them through his self-communication, or indwelling, or sealing with the Holy Spirit, in order to make them capable of eternal life in immediate unity in community.^{xi} Baptism is a God given gift in order to participate in the very human life itself. Prior to baptism each human person is called by God and given his grace:

God loves all human beings, having called them by their name. At the moment of calling them into existence, God has already, in free love, inserted himself with all his reality in each person as innermost strength and as final end. God offers himself to all persons and to their freedom as their goal and, at the same time, as their innermost strength and their dynamism toward that goal, even though human freedom may reject that offer that is always given and always irrevocable.^{xi}

In baptism, we come forward to love others and render service to others. The divine offer of faith, hope and love is present in each person through the gift of the spirit. The divine life that embodies itself comes into the visible, social form of believers in baptism. In this way baptism is the concrete becoming-visible of the divine life and an ecclesial reality. This ecclesial reality is the historical and social manifestation of the divine grace. The baptism is God's coming into the innermost being and God's offering of self to humans' freedom as the power of faith, hope, and love directed toward God.^{xi} The baptismal grace becomes more deeply rooted at the centre of human existence and it is an invitation of the Spirit to be an authoritative messenger of the word. This invitation is heard in various ways and times. In baptism, Christians are granted an enduring legal stand in order to take part in the church's life and her mission^{xi} and to witness the unity of the humanity.

3.6.2 Witnessing the Unity of Humanity

The ministerial office brings together all the baptised to witness the unity of the humanity. The baptismal mission is the ground of the fundamental manifestation of the unity within themselves (as spirit and matter), in the world (human beings and Christ) and to the transcendental reality (church and incomprehensible mystery). Through baptism the unity of humanity comes into expression in a visible reality.^{xi} The baptismal mission is "foundational and constitutive of all Christian dignity and missionary responsibility."^{xi} It is not only incorporation into the church, but an eschatological orientation and initiation into the Kingdom of God.^{xi}

The common elements give a primary importance in *Lumen gentium*, such as the terms used there for all the baptised 'priest- prophet-king' that gives a fundamental structure to think about Christian believers.^{xi} The task of ministerial office is to help the people of God to exercise faithfully and fully the baptismal mission for the salvation and liberation of the world.^{xi} To be a baptised means to be called to a greater witness; to bring the witness of the gospel to others; to be a sign for others who are not baptised.^{xi} The grace of baptism enables individual Christians to hear and respond to others in more specific callings. Through it they become "the right, the task and the necessary empowerment to become active participators in the functions of the church."^{xi} The baptism constitutes the basis for Christian life and so for each and every ministry in the church, whether it derives from ministerial office or sacramental power or the rank with which the individual Christian can invest in his/her life. If one is not baptised, then s/he cannot validly receive any other sacrament, nor lawfully be invested with any official power in the church.^{xi}

The members of the church can not exist for themselves. Without the laity there is no sphere to exercise the powers of ministerial office.

The concept of lay in the ecclesiastical sphere has nothing to do with that of profane or ignorant, or of some one who on account of his inexperience is helplessly dependent on the expert, or of the unecclesiastical or religiously indifferent or the mere object of hierarchic powers. The layman is someone who is called into the communion of believers of Christ by the sacrament of baptism and he does not mark the boundary between the sphere of the profane and the sphere of the sacred. Rather it refers to someone who has a definite position within the one consecrated realm of the Church.^{xi}

Karl Rahner is not placing the lay people in the world of the profane. They are called by God to share the grace which is communicated in Jesus to humanity at large and to the church in particular. Their witnessing to the world is really grace of life. “The layman must have specific tasks towards the world and in the world which determines his status in the Church and not merely in civil life.”^{xi} All Christians have an original place and unavoidably involve in public life. They have an apostolic task to fulfil in the world and they have to be apostolic precisely by their Christian life. They are subjects by reception of grace in baptism, but not merely passive recipients of the grace, or an object in the church. They must edify the church by fulfilling their Christian responsibility. In this way, the aim of all is to build up the body of Christ that is the tangible spatio-temporal presence of the redemptive grace of God. Here they find an ontological approach to mission in the church,^{xi} being united with a eucharistic community.

3.6.3 Unity in Eucharistic Community

An inner unity of the ministerial office stems from the sacraments of baptism and eucharist. These sacraments express a living community of Christ.

It is of course true that baptism already joins man to the body of Christ, for we are all.... baptised by the Spirit into one body (1 Cor. 12: 13). But both the union of the many grains of wheat in the one bread and the communal eating from the one sacrificial table of Christ are signs of the unity and unitedness of the table companions of Christ among each other.^{xi}

The church becomes an event most intensively in the eucharist which can be celebrated only by a community who gather together in one baptism. Therefore, The eucharist must be spoken of as the sacrament of ecclesiality, incorporation into the mission and life of the church.^{xi}

The Holy Spirit allows the intrinsic union of the baptised with Christ the high priest in order to become for the world both a matter of faith through witnessing to his unique mediatory role, and a channel of grace through partaking in his on-going mediation by means of spiritual sacrifice, repeatedly culminating in the eucharistic sacrifice which they offer together with the ordained.^{xi}

The ordained are sent by the church to proclaim the Gospel in the name of Christ. The word of God is fully realised in the person of the ordained through the celebration of eucharist. The ordained “is in the supreme mode in which this word can be realised, that namely of the anamnesis of the Death and Resurrection of Christ which is achieved in the celebration of the Eucharist.”^{xi} The church as “the Body of Christ in which every member, ordained or not, share a common dignity through baptism and in the

Eucharistic assembly.”^{xi} “It is in the eucharistic sacrament that the Church is perfected as the body of Christ.”^{xi} The ministry of ordained effects the eucharist as the primordial symbol of communion, and the eucharist effects the community.^{xi} In eucharistic community there is a real possibility of loving beyond ones own ability of love and there is the possibility of being loveable and attractive to others beyond ones own ability.^{xi}

The sense of being ‘for-the-other’ can aptly be interpreted eucharistically. All ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolates bind up with the eucharist and direct to it. The eucharistic celebration is the centre of the assembly of the faithful over which the ordained preside; and their ministry is directed to eucharist and finds its consummation in this (*PO*, 2, 5). The centrality of the eucharist in its sacrificial nature, is the central position of the altar in the life of the community.

The Altar, however, stands first and foremost in the parish church is the representative of the diocese and the primary place for the care of souls.... Hence, if every pastoral work finds its central point in the Altar of Christ, then the life of the parish, issuing from the altar of the parish church, is and remains the basic form of the care of souls.^{xi}

Flowing from the altar of Christ, the life of parish, as the basic form of care of the souls is essentially sacrificial. “Only when every step he takes proceeds from the altar and goes to the altar, only when all his words are a preparation to and an echo of his sacramental words, is he truly a priest and a pastor; only then will all he does remain priestly.”^{xi} The word of the ordained at the altar is the unifying word of humanity. Though they are within a community of faithful, the word that they witness is to bring effect in the people of other faiths even. In order to pray the eucharistic prayers one has to be ordained within the community and represent the eucharistic community.

It is only a baptised individual who can be a priest, that the eucharist which he celebrates is from the outset the eucharist of the holy people of God, that he can only teach in as much as he himself hears in a spirit of belief, and in as much as it is the faith of the universal church that he preaches, for the church as hearing and as encompassed by the victorious grace of God is she who is indefectible.^{xi}

The eucharist is the centre of all the other sacraments. All Christians are united to each other in it. Their oneness is the historical tangibility of the eucharistic community. The eucharist is “the sacrament of our ecclesiality, of our incorporation into the mission and life of the church.”^{xi} The eucharist is the sacrament of unity by representing the reality of Christ-event in a particular context.

3.6.4 Contextual Representation of Reality

The ministerial office has to serve the people of God through making present the reality of Christ in a particular context. In every society, this serving mission is basically present in various ways and forms. The ministerial office of the church proclaims an authoritative and efficacious word of witnessing to the world. It considers as nearness to Christ for the well being of people. The intimacy on which the word of witnessing depends in the most profound way is the self-communication of God in the Spirit.^{xi}

One who holds the ministerial office must exemplify the serving mission of Christ. Therefore, human person as a minister of the church “who loves God most unselfishly, who most steadfastly carries the cross of existence as Christ’s cross.”^{xi} Anyone who fails to see this fact reduces the church to a mere sociological organisation, because the very meaning of the church is more than what we think. Those who are holding the office are obliged to mediate the truth and grace in their own context. The ministerial office recognises the fundamental mission of the church by way of mediating salvation in words and liberative deeds. Actually, it is a participation in the mediator role of the mission of Christ and it comes from fully participating in his mission.^{xi} As the true followers of the mission of Christ, the ordained are the ones who have to witness the cultic ministries in prophetic way in each and every context.^{xi}

4. Ministerial Office a Prophetic Mission of Encountering

The ministerial office has a “prophetic” mission^{xi} through administering and making explicit the church in the world. Therefore, it is a “prophetic office.”^{xi} In the mission of Christ, both prophetic and cultic elements are closely conjoined. This prophetic mission “has a profound anthropological value, as a light and vital force coming from the incarnate Word.”^{xi} Likewise, it is in the cultic activity of the ministerial office, the prophetic mission of the church reaffirms and the definitive sacrifice of Christ represents. The task of the prophetic mission is to bring out the reality of the word universally. Through the word, the liberative message of Christ is communicated to the world of pluralities. This is possible only because there is present something in the world, that which belongs to God’s own reality: that is the prophetic witnessing of the word. This mission of witnessing word irrespective of any cultural bounded level sets the humanity free from their muteness by pointing beyond the whole created order.^{xi} In order to bring out the prophetic mission of the ministerial office let us see first how the truth is witnessed in a prophetic way.

4.1 Witnessing the Truth of Divine and Human

The ministerial office as prophetic mission has to witness to the truth of God and the truth of humanity in their way of being together as a community. Through their preaching, they not only narrate the truth objectively but also express their own particular nature of truth on the personal existential commitment to others.

Truth of revelation cannot be genuinely transmitted from one person to another unless it is possessed by the teacher not merely intellectually as a position but as something existentially realised by him, this is at any rate valid for the truth of the Gospel.^{xi}

Hence, in the personal commitment of them, Christ can either grant a direct vision to humans or can come to them in and through the word.^{xi} John Paul II writes, the God of truth “expects us (priests) to be vigilant defenders and devoted preachers of the truth” (*EN 78*)^{xi} However, insofar as Jesus Christ is the eschatologically final truth of God to humanity, they do not announce a totally new prophecy in the public sphere. They witness to a unique revelation of Jesus Christ that is no more than the self-manifestation of their own salvific reality of truth.^{xi} The expression of the truth takes place in word and especially through liberative practice of faith. The word and sacraments are mutually interrelated and

enriched in the expression of truth. This truth we experience as the word, incarnated, pitched its tent among us. The expression of truth leads to an existential commitment.

This word calls for an existential commitment on the part of the one who speaks about it.

If the priest preaches Jesus, his life and death, then what he says is not mere talk, because by his word he is present among us who lived this life and died this death for our salvation. If he preaches sin, judgement and redemption, he can only do this because he lifts the chalice of the blood which was shed for our sins, and because he preaches the death which was judgement on our sins and our salvation. If he speaks of the earth, then he cannot forget that he lifts up the fruit of our poor fields and vineyards as a sacrament into the eternity of heaven. If he speaks of the humanity, of its dignity and its depth, he alone can tell the real truth about the human person - 'Ecce homo' - and truly show the flesh of sin, which is laid on the altars of God in sacrifice.^{xi}

The ministerial office is the herald of word of God by virtue of its holy and existential prophetic mission. The words of them never endanger, for they are the word of God and fill with the Spirit of God. In short, they speak the words of totally transcendent other that no creature can do as such.

It is God who inexpressibly transcends everything that is or can be thought outside himself; it is the uncharted, terrifying remoteness of the God whose transcendence it is that cannot be expressed by what is created as such. Such are the words spoken by the priest.^{xi}

At present pluralistic society, a one-sided cultic or sacramental view of the Christian mission is inadequate, but their life has to be a life in word and sacraments. They have to be the visible continuation of the liberative mission of Christ. They find themselves inserted into the trinitarian dynamics with a particular responsibility of committing to word and sacraments that lead them to witness the truth of life. Thus, their identity springs from the *ministerium verbi et sacramentorum*.^{xi} This prophetic existential commitment to word and sacraments reflects in their life of love.

4.2 Existential Commitment to Word

The prophetic mission of the ministerial office is an existential commitment to the word and deeds. The word spoken by them is not theirs but the expression of the reality of the word in an existential situation. Then, the human primordial word can be the analogy for the incarnate word.^{xi}

The sacramental word of the office witnesses in love. They speak by their own existential responsibility, the greatest word that persons can ever speak. In the sacramental word, God's highest act of love becomes the presence of salvation among humanity.^{xi} This act of love liberates the people. They carry out the mission of love despite of their own weakness and sinfulness. For the efficacy of the word, the Spirit grounds the tasks of preaching in love and administering the sacraments of love.

For when we administer a sacrament, when we speak the efficacious word of grace, God seizes us whether we will or not-whether what we say comes from the heart or the heart locks. God himself out of its miserable chamber and speaks the word that brings forth fruit once it finds a willing heart, thirtyfold, sixtyfold, a hundredfold, unto eternal life. We are permitted to dispense God's grace. So we have received a great grace.^{xi}

The sacraments are collective, the most concentrated and effective forms of the spoken word. The most efficacious of God's word of love that entrusts to the office is evident in the sacrament of

eucharist.^{xi} The ultimate love of the Father and the self-sacrifice of his Son makes available and effective in eucharistic word. In the eucharistic expression, we encounter the word of love that is spoken most perfectly in human situations. In the eucharist, the message given is the real presence of love through the cultic action of the office along with the participation of the faithful who seeks love in the love of God. Since the eucharistic word has a determining effect on all other ministerial tasks, every other act of mission relates to it. Even though the ministerial office actualises the sacramental sacrifice of love only, they discover in the eucharist a constant communicator of the word. The ministerial office itself intimately connects to the word-the love as a sign of salvation and liberation. The first and the last thing they do, are to make present the mystery of love in sacrifice and sacraments. The first and the last word they speak are the sacramental word of love.^{xi} Their committed attachment to the primordial word challenges them to be the proclaimers of the word.

4.2.1 Proclamation of the Word

The ministerial office as a prophetic mission has to proclaim the word. Then, they become as “the proclaimers of the Word-event.”^{xi} The word that transcends all human experiences, makes present the salvation-reality here and now. This is a sign and indicates the supernatural reality. The word as a sign historically manifests itself the saving reality of humans. It means that the supernatural salvation-reality is present in our midst as a sign through proclaiming the word-event. That is, “the word belongs to the fundamental constitutive elements of sacramental reality, and this in such a way that the ‘sacramental’ function is inherent in the word when it first makes its appearance in the essence of Christianity.”^{xi}

The fundamental salvation-reality for Christians includes the word as an intrinsic element. Then, the Christian application of the word as sacramental means that a sign in which the saving will of God makes present in history. Here any human word can be considered as sacramental but the word has to make present the salvation reality, that is, to liberate the people from their oppressed situation. In Christ, we can not see that he is imparting true propositions but he is self-revealing of his own being as the saviour and liberator. Thus, the word is sacramental that presents the hidden and yet present salvation-reality of Christ. The word itself brings the presence of Christ here and now.

There is an inner unity of the Christian sacramental mission. This inner unity is a relationship between cultic and prophetic mission. In the mission of Christ we see a unity from ‘above’ the word, that is, God’s salvific message to creation, and from ‘below,’ that is, Christ’s reason for his obedient death on the cross which is creation’s yes to God.

The priesthood of *Christ* himself comprises both these elements in an interior unity. It is more prophecy, revelation of the word, a mission to preach, because Christ as God-man is himself *the* decisive *salvation-reality*: mediator and therefore priest and victim.^{xi}

The uniqueness of the Christian mission comes from the uniqueness of Christ who is the revealer and the revealed of word itself. This event of word has an exhibitiv character. The sacramental nature comes from the church as the proclaimer of the word to the community and their calling determines how

effectively the word is proclaimed to secular society. The whole existence of the office is in bearing witness to the word and effective of the liberation of world.^{xi}

Through an existential proclamation of the word and of witnessing, an ordained person acquires an exhibitiv character in the society. The reality of the word takes place through the reality of the administration of the word. Then, the word proclaimed and administered by them has the degree of 'event' character. The theological and the technical sense of the term 'event' character achieves its highest point in the celebration of the sacraments. Through it, they get the character to perform the task of the ministerial office in the church. The word is not merely speaking 'about' something but the word allows what is said to take place in the humans and to be grasped by them. This word which comes from the church and the Spirit has an exhibitiv character to authentically witness the victorious grace of God. The authoritative witnessing of the church to the world is one central essence of the ministerial office. The event of God occurs when the word is announcing itself historically and sociologically in the sacramental authority. This witnessing of the word is understood as the basic sign of God's presence in the World. So through the word, the world experiences the self-offer of God in the given situations.^{xi} This way of life in the word makes ministerial office to live in God and people. The ordained should be conscious of their responsibility in their preaching "not to teach their own wisdom but God's Word." "They should not expound the word of God in merely general and abstract terms, but must apply the perennial truth of the gospel to concrete circumstances of life" (PO 4).

The word of God as a salutary word brings about the reality that which it proclaims.^{xi} The word of preaching is the efficacious proclamation that "brings about what it speaks of, the grace announcement: it is truly the word of life, creative word of God."^{xi} We have seen already that God's word reaches its culmination in the incarnation, in which the word becomes flesh for the sake of human liberation. The prophetic mission no longer looks forward to some saving act that is still to come, but it makes represent the reality that has already been actualised in Jesus Christ. The word of Christian proclamation, when spoken with prophetic power, brings about the saving presence of Christ and leads to faith and conversion. Here, "the priest is he to whom the efficacious word of God has been entrusted."^{xi}

Priest is the proclaimer of the word of God, officially commissioned and appointed as such by the Church as a whole in such a way that this word is entrusted to him in the supreme degree of sacramental intensity present in it. His work as proclaimer of the word is in this sense essentially directed towards the community (which is at least potentially in existence). To express the matter quite simply, he is the one sent by the church to proclaim the gospel in her name.^{xi}

The prophetic mission of ministerial office comes from Jesus Christ to proclaim the gospel in every age.^{xi} The mission of Jesus comes from God himself.^{xi} The ordained are sent out first of all to proclaim the good news and to continue the deeds of Jesus.^{xi} Thus, the ministry of word flows over into deed. The priestly mission in New Testament involves tireless commitment to service and self-sacrifice for the sake of the flock. Whether one takes proclamation or shepherding as the key concept, in either case a certain "over-againstness" must be recognised. Speaking with authority, the heralds or the shepherds stand "over against" the hearers and followers.^{xi} They are then, in the true sense evangelizers of the word.

4.2.2 Evangelizers of the Word

The ministerial office does the evangelization of word. Evangelisation means in the first place to preach and to teach, to proclaim with authority the word of God in every human existential (such as poor and rich, high and low castes, ethnic and linguistic, democratic and socialistic, and religious and political) situations. It takes place by means of sacramental and pastoral activities in the world. The goal of it, is to bring the word of God more effectively into the existential lives of individuals and communities. This is actually the practice of the sacraments for the unity of all.

To proclaim with authority the word of God, to assemble the scattered people of God, to feed this people with the signs of the action of Christ which are the sacraments, to set this People on the road to salvation, to maintain it in that unity of which we are, at different levels, active and living instruments, and unceasingly to keep this community gathered around Christ faithful to its deepest vocation (*EN 68*).

Joseph Ratzinger emphasises the primacy of word in ministerial office. The ordained are not primarily cultic figure but evangelists. This priority of word does not displace the sacramental or pastoral dimensions. The office is a service of the word, modelled on the figure of Christ, the good shepherd.^{xi} John Paul II by reflecting on himself says “as a priest, God has called me to be a man of the word, a man of the sacrament, a man of the “mystery of faith.”^{xi} The content of the ministry of word consists in “the pastoral preaching, catechetics and all forms of Christian instruction, among which the liturgical homily should hold pride of place.”^{xi} The ministry of the word is preaching in usual and conventional sense of the word to the world. The preaching takes place not only during mass but also in the church, communities and other occasions of everyday life. This is also done in the street, hospitals, and other places.^{xi} Therefore, the whole life of the ordained is a life in word. They are the ministers and emissaries of the word in the world.

4.2.3 Emissaries of the Word

The prophetic mission of the ministerial office is the official emissary of the word. The word, which is proclaimed is the service to edify and actualise the church and is also the charism of the Spirit and the grace to sanctify one’s own life and others. “The proclamation of the Gospel is essentially dependent upon the evident fact that the grace which is preached is a reality in the preacher himself.”^{xi} Through the preaching of the word, they get an existence in quite a new way. Through the ministry, they do not bear witness to their own life, but to Christ. So they are the emissaries of Christ to the world. Their ministry as the emissaries of Christ comes from the unique ministry of Christ, and not from their position in the world.

The official priestly herald of the message of Jesus utters his word as one who is authorised to make present culturally the salvation-reality of Christ. And because of this, as well as by the mission which lies upon him from Christ through the apostolic succession, he utters his word not as one addressed by the Word of God; he does not bear witness to his own Christian life but he speaks of the word of Christ itself as such.^{xi}

Wherever and whenever the prophetic mission ministerial office performs, they reveal themselves as emissaries of Christ. They are commissioned by Christ. Through their life-witnessing, they have to make present the salvation reality of word in the crucial situations of the life of the people. Through preaching of the Gospel they have not only “the power to keep the faith as a preacher in this wholly new situation” but also the “need-to-enter-into-action of faith in the essentially new situation of the emissary.”^{xi} Thus, “the priest is the faithful emissary sent by God to rescue a whole people from death and to set to them the road to life.”^{xi} This mission has an important role as the partakers of the apostleship of Christ and the church.

4.2.4 Apostles of the Word

As emissaries of the word, the ministerial office receives an existential character as apostles. Their service is an apostolic ministry, that is, there will be an apostolic element by the day-to-day living of the Gospel that reflects their life itself.^{xi}

When the ordained commits his whole life to proclaiming the gospel of Christ, because it is the good news of that reality which he makes present to humanity in cult and sacrament, then he is carrying out a task which is not merely as a man and a Christian. Then he is really an apostle, i.e., one who is sent; one who must go out from the familiar ground of his own life, bearing his own life with him; who has to penetrate into places where he does not really feel at home, to ‘inflict himself’ on people who have made no request for him to come to them, to say things which find no real answering resonance in his own life, nor ultimately any convincing testimony in it.^{xi}

The New Testament speaks of the ministry in continuation of the prophetic task begun by the apostles. The ordained, in their prophetic mission have to be both pastoral and cultic persons. “Because Christ, whom the priest makes present in his own time, was both indissoluble unity; priest and prophet, sacrament and word.”^{xi} He is an apostle of the present world as well as a prophetic messenger to the context. To be an apostle means to be a missionary of the word. As witness to Christ, the word they are the messengers of humanity’s supreme vocation to eternal life.^{xi} Since they are sent for the mission of supreme vocation of life, they are the poets of the ultimate reality of the world, the God.

4.2.5 A Poetic Will of the Word

The ordained are the poets of God in a pluralistic society. As poets of God they have to do the will of God. But there is a distinction between the words of the ordinary poets and ordained. The words of them have an exhibitiv power. Karl Rahner distinguishes and contrasts the words of the priests and the poets. The words of the poets spring from the depth of their heart, whereas the words of the priests proceed from the mouth of God. “It is God’s Word that is said by the priest.” Every priest is not poet by the mere fact of speaking God’s own primordial word. But they must be true to their life. They say what is true and speak God’s own truth. The words of them make the saving reality of Christ’s presence to those who hear. But the words of the poets exist merely on the level of a message based on the utility of imagination.^{xi}

This poetic will of God articulates openly and marvellously the silent suffering taking place in human minds and hearts. Today's people not only pose the core question, who is listening to us?, but also ask who cares about our suffering?, and how to achieve fulfilment in suffering? They listen to people, and then dare to put into words all the hidden dimensions of their suffering. The preaching of the word without entering into the hidden realities of the pain and suffering of the people is irrelevant. They are called to be poets of God's word to all nations. In remaining faithful to God's word, they give voice to the pain which their people suffer in silence. For this reason, what the poets do by profession, that is, put into human words the unspeakable sorrows and joys of their contemporaries, so also they do by listening and sharing the pain and suffering of this world by the grace intrinsic to a faithful communion with God's word.^{xi} They then, receive the mandate from God to preach in view of the liberation of their people. They form the community of the redeemed and strengthen them in their suffering and promote joy in their mind through preaching. Through their official mission to preach enables them to utter the words with the authority of Christ for the liberation of all. As the mouth of God, the prophetic mission of them bestows on them the obligation to articulate the word of God amid the sorrows and joys of the communities. So, every ordained person creates for the parisoners and people a heavenly home within the history of world. "He must create and make visible a single communal place which is the heavenly home on earth."^{xi} They represent Christ and his mission as being human for others. This service to the world is the essence of them.^{xi} The word that they speak not just a word about God, such as theologian might utter but they as witnesses find themselves possessed by the word of which they are the bearers of it. The word, spoken rightly, wants to observe the whole life of them and subject it to itself.^{xi}

4.2.6 Prophetic Witnessing of the Word

The ministerial office is a prophetic witness of the word in the world. The witnessing is a matter of "making present the reality that is being proclaimed."^{xi} The prophetic role of the ordained will be highly esteemed in the Third Millennium than in the past. As prophets of the community, they must commit their life for the service of the community and struggle hard to eliminate the mythology of life. The prophetic voice will boom an age dominated by the mythology of career into a path of strong person rather than a pilgrim or a floating person. They as prophets, involve a serious commitment to the work of justice, the building up of right relationships within one's own communities and with the wider world community. This commitment is to the inseparability for the Christian community of a reverence for Christ and action on behalf of him present in our sisters and brothers, the poor and the rich and suffering people.^{xi}

The prophetic witnessing of ministerial office is a gift and the will of God. The various gifts which they receive from God, are to build up community. These gifts are the grace of God and willed by him. Therefore, the will of God works in all ministers of the word. Since Christ is a bearer of God's will, the bearers of this united and unifying witness, embrace by the victorious grace of Christ.^{xi} The exercise of the holy and authoritative office therefore, is the gift of mission of the word. The word-centred mission leads to building up of a human community. In the present order of salvation, there is no church in which to minister without witnessing of the word.^{xi} The prophetic mission of the word is primary one

to bring peace among the people. The fullness of the prophetic mission involves the priestly and the pastoral aspects of every one in the given social situations.^{xi}

4.3 Unity of Prophetic and Priestly Office

In the ministerial office, there is a unity between priestly and prophetic offices. In order to show the unity of the priestly and prophetic offices, it is better to analyse first the traditional understanding of the distinction between priests and prophets. The office of prophets is the real locus of self-revelation made by God, that is to say, God himself established a new relationship between himself and the humans. The prophets manifest God's word to an earthly community. The priests make visible of human's word to God.^{xi} The prophetic office is not capable of being organised and it does not tie to a class or a group or country. It does not spring from a necessity inherent in the essence of the world, that is, the hopes and aspirations of humanity. The prophetic office cannot pass on from one generation to another. It does not lose its essence throughout successive periods. From the standpoint of the philosophy of religion and the history of religion, there is a slight distinction between priests and prophets. It must treat separately. Karl Rahner mentions it, in order to point out that the function of the priests is distinct from that of the prophets. From a perspective of the philosophy of religion, he instigates his own understanding of both the prophetic and the priestly dimension of ministry that happened prior to the New Testament writings. The priestly and prophetic office as from below and above have union with the priestly sacrifice of Christ.

Priesthood is in itself an expression of the attitude, determinable from 'below', which man by his 'nature' has to adopt towards God; the prophetic office, where it is in fact realised, an expression coming from 'above' of the revealing word of God 'above' nature, and even where it is only supposedly given. It is still an expression of man's willingness to listen to any message which might possibly proceed from God to man at a particular point of history.^{xi}

Only from this perspective of understanding the unity between prophetic and priestly offices can we see in the person of Jesus that the cultic and prophetic life coincided as the eternal word of salvation and liberation of the humanity. Thus, Christ becomes the corner stone of the ministerial office that has a prophetic witnessing into a pluralistic society. In such a way of understanding the ministerial office, we can say that it is an encountering of the faith in the practical life of each and every one in the society.

4.4 Prophetic Mission in Encountering

Encountering the social situations is the hall-mark of the prophetic mission of the ministerial office. It demands two ways of encountering that is encountering to the self and the present situation of the society and the world as a global society. If someone says that one does not find any problems to encounter, is the one who does only cultic function of the church, but the one who opens the eyes and sees the crucial contextual and global problems and encounter them in the light of the word is administering the prophetic mission through the respective ministerial office. To bring out the reality of the word-event in the day today life situations of humanity is very important rather than to carry out certain formalities and carriers.

The ordained's lives are the constitutive factor of their office too. They can not claim to have a private life that exists alongside with their priestly life. They have to render all their capacities for an effective apostolate of encountering for the unity of humanity. Karl Rahner writes, that "the church's highest office is an office proceeding from the Spirit; an office which can operate only by a living assent, integrating all that is personal into self, made by the innermost centre of the person."^{xi} The official and authoritative commission is to transcend all that is subjective through the interior participation and of the whole selves as subjective. They have to overcome every gap between their office and their personal life. Such a gap is a violation of the law of integration of personality. "If you try to keep yourself, giving the church only your fulfilment of particular duties, then you have violated a basic law of your life and Christianity: that office and person must be one."^{xi} They have to fulfil the unity between their calling and lives, their office and existence.^{xi} This kind of existence actualises through an encountering of the social situations which makes people inhuman and oppressed.

In otherwise, we can say that the centre for forming this office is faith and praxis.^{xi} Praxis is not mere application of prior general principles, but is rather an event of freedom. Praxis is not merely the handmaid of theories. It has consequently the creation of a unique future and its own autonomy in a pluralistic society. The concrete ministerial elements of the church can occur only in the concrete experience of life. In such contexts, the articulation of the church's prophetic mission of ministerial office builds up from the experiential encountering with the concrete, general, sociological, cultural and more particular ecclesial situation. The word of God encounters in each and every situation without losing its own self-understanding of ecclesiology. Thus, the church exposes herself anew to the forward-pressing sociological situations.^{xi} Hence, the encountering demands mutual self-giving, freedom and acceptance of each other in view of unity^{xi} of all humanity in community.

4.5 Encountering of Humanity for Community

The prophetic-ministerial office encounters the human situations for community. Their task is to promote fellowship with God and with each other.^{xi} "A priest is ordained for the service of the word and for the communion of humanity with God and with one another."^{xi} The prophetic-ministerial office helps "others to achieve 'unity of life'" (PO 14).^{xi} They "have been palced in the midst of the laity to lead them to the unity of charity" (PO 9).^{xi} This is the foundation of unity for ecclesial and human community of every age to come. Therefore, in the prophetic-ministerial office, they are called to live in harmony with love of Christ and to be the signs as the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

The priest is servant of Christ present in the Church as mystery, communion and mission, He serves Christ in the Church as mystery since he actuates the Church's sacramental signs of the presence of the risen Christ. He serves Christ in the Church as communion because he builds up the unity of the Church community in the harmony of different vocations, charisms, and services. He is servant to Christ in the Church as mission because he makes the community a herald and witness of the gospel.^{xi}

In the order of redemption, this mission of unity is found in humanity of the word made flesh and the sacrifice on the cross. To live in unity with this mission of cross is to live the pasch in passing over from

this world to the things of God. To be united in faith with the word is to enter into a communion with the eternal word^{xi} in encountering social situations for the community.

Conclusion

The one priesthood of Christ is the ground for developing the priesthood of the church as the disciples of one God. The priesthood of Christ is his total self-giving (*Kenosis*) for human beings. His self-giving sacrifice at the cross is the climax of his mission which begins from incarnation. At his death on the cross, he experiences the total forsakeness and abandonment by all. Hence the God who is forsaken and abandoned becomes the unity of the humanity.

The traditional way of expressing the ministerial and common priesthood has an important role in the church as one disciples of Christ. The difference in priesthood comes through ordination. The main intention of the ordination is the *way of being* together with God and people i.e., with divine and human. The term ministerial priesthood gives more meaning to express the same mission of Christ. This is to realise and to empower the common priesthood by entering (ordination) into one ministerial office of the ecclesial order.

The mission of the ministerial office, that is in word and sacraments, is both, at the same time, institutional and charismatic. This is an existential mission in the world. The primary mission of the ministerial office is to do the ultimate service that a human person can ever render to the humanity in a particular context.

The ministerial office has the mandate to take up same mission of the church as the community of baptised. The competency of the ministerial office depends on how far it unfolds the baptismal mission of the people in the society. Its main mission is to make aware of the responsibility and the mission of baptised community. The eucharist is the place where we fully express the divine and human reality as participators of the church's sacramental mission. This is the place where all baptised realise the mission of unity and love. Hence the altar stands as the symbol of Other for the others in the process of unity. The otherness of the Other at the altar always challenges one for a prophetic witnesses.

The ministerial office actualises through the prophetic witnessing of truth in love. This happens through an existential commitment to the word and the sacraments. The office receives sacramental character through the proclamation and expression in word and sacraments. Therefore they are the emissaries and apostles of Christ in encountering of the self and social situations. The main peculiarity of it is that the encountering always brings unity among humanity. This one unifying mission is a prophetic one in a pluralistic society. The prophetic-ministerial office gives a space to time an existential mission in the society and the world. The main findings of this chapter are (1) The priesthood of the ordained is to fulfill the existential priesthood of Christ in the church and the society. (2) Ultimately the priesthood relates to the mystery of the cross where Jesus encountered the mystery of unity between divine and human. (3) Within the church the ordained have a specific office which is ministerial to the people that define their mission. (3) The ministerial office actualizes the church through acting in the mission of the head, Christ himself. (4) The ministerial office by participating in the prophetic mission

of Christ gives a prophetic witnessing to the society by administering the sacraments and proclaiming the word. (5) As a prophetic- ministerial office, it encounters all the problems, which affect the dignity of the humanity. We shall see in the next chapter, how the prophetic mission of ministerial office fulfils as service of communio-unity in a pluralistic context.

CHAPTER FOUR

SYMBOLIC MISSION OF ORDAINED PERSONS: A SERVICE OF COMMUNITY

Introduction

In this chapter we investigate communitarian symbolic^{xi} mission of the ordained for a global unity and the well-being of humanity in the context of local community. We shall discuss here the most basic mission of the ordained towards humanity, through the local community; and then how this mission is localised in the basic Christian communities which are the *locus* of new evangelisation through dialogue. The new evangelisation of the ordained for global unity takes place through an effective commitment to the different activities as their symbolic mission. They strive for the unity of humanity by being human in a pluralistic society.

With the rise of mass media and the rapidity of communications, the world is said to have become a global village. Now, most of the economic, social and political problems have a global impact. In this situation, unless the dignity of humans is promoted, it is difficult to promote justice, peace, love and unity. The mission of the ordained also faces the same challenge everywhere, especially in a pluralistic society. Unless the ordained' give leadership for integral human development and the common good^{xi}, by a co-ordinated action, and viewing the unity of humanity, their mission will not be recognised either globally or contextually.

It is impossible, these days, for anybody to close their eyes on the urgency felt in every corner of the world, to protect the environment as the common property of all, and from the selfish and imprudent exploitation of nature by a handful of individualists. As a result, the whole way of carrying out mission now changes through inculturation, inter-religious dialogue, liberation of the poor, ecumenical movements, and the emergence of basic Christian/human communities.^{xi} Hence the success of the mission of the ordained entirely relates to how far they make the people involved in these fields aware of their responsibility to remain the symbol of the unity of humanity.

1. Mission of Ordained Persons in Local Community

The mission of the ordained aims at a human community. Hence the concrete meaning of ministry^{xi} can be understood only in relationship with the community.^{xi} As we discussed in the first chapter, the basis of this new mission centres on Trinity on its christological depths (AG 1). Since the plan of God extends to the whole universe, the mission is unique and universal, though its concrete task may vary from place to place according to the circumstances (AG 6). The identification of the symbolic mission of the ordained according to the plan of God makes it at once cosmic and historical. As cosmic, it embraces everything, not only human beings but also the whole of creation. As historical, it realises itself in history, in space and time, and in the human life itself. This mission is also a dynamic process

and its completion is in the future of uniting all in divine-God.^{xi} In this symbolic mission, all Christians are called to collaborate with the saving and uniting plan of God through their word, witness, and action. The ordained do this mission through an ongoing dialogue with the world, its cultures, religions, and socio-political and economic situations. In the process of doing this mission, they welcome and constitute communities who are called by the Spirit, chosen to share their faith and their commitment. These communities are the nucleus of the people's movement. That means these dynamic communities can not be limited in themselves structurally. By doing so, they narrow down the mission of communion. The very identity of these communities is to be on mission, until the attainment of unity of humanity. The primary focus of the ordained is not only to these communities but also they have to challenge the pluralities of the world communities and their own development. Then everybody can feel that they are at the service of these communities. The plan of God actualises through these communities by reconciling and uniting all things and people in love i.e., God. From this background let us focus on the symbolic mission of the ordained in local community.

1.1 Local Community as Parish/Local Church

There has been a sustained theological reflection on the 'local church'/'parish community' (*LG* 23; *SC* 42)^{xi} quite recently. In the local church, the congregations of baptised persons gather in specific place with a specific purpose. This is the place where Christians are born and nurtured, just as they are born and raised as humans within their family. The local community is the miniature of the mystical body of Christ where the ordained as the heads of the community serve. This is a community of prayer, spiritual life, mutual service and apostolic activity; liturgical, and caring and missionary community.^{xi} The local community recognises one church of Christ, which attains "its greatest event-fullness especially in its celebration of the eucharist."^{xi} Karl Rahner points out, the parish is the local actualisation of the church and most intensely an event because the union of faithful with Christ and with each other is realised visibly and intimately by the celebration of the eucharist. This is primary, normal and original form of local Christian community because of the principle of locality and a union of people who live together as neighbours in same place.^{xi} James A. Coriden states that

the parish community is the Holy Church, the people of God, the salvific community of the Messiah, the family of the baptised living in one specific area, in the midst of human community. It is the bearer of salvation for all those who make up the larger human community and the public manifestation of God's love. Consequently local church bears serious responsibilities in the society.^{xi}

The local church is a public sign and an agent of the unity in diversity of cultures. Basically it is the sacrament of divine relationships inculturated in a geographic area.^{xi} In the local church, the ordained are the signs and agents of unity in diversity. They are "sign and instrument of communion, as an extension and representative of the unifying role of the bishop in the local church."^{xi}

There has been lot of discussions concerning where to begin the ministry in the church. Karl Rahner argues that the ministry begins from below, i.e., local community. For him, as discussed earlier, theology is the ordinary experience of the ordinary people. In this experience of people, the ordained are

the essential links between the local communities and global communities. They spread the mission to domestic and basic communities in order to realise them as human communities. Therefore the theology of the local community lies at the context where the actualisation of reality of the church herself takes place. Hence the local community is the concrete form of the essence of the church.^{xi} This local community has a territory so that “it can share qualitatively the mystery of the church as the sacrament”^{xi} of communion. On this basis, we can say that “the territorial parish has a theological quality.”^{xi}

The local community expresses a spiritual reality in which a person learns not only his temporal existence but also his cosmic-spatial existence. For that the church provides “a local group of neighbours in order to be able to celebrate the eucharist and thus, fully realise itself historically and sociologically.”^{xi} The real task of the church and her credibility lies in the local community. It is in the true sense catholic in vision and mission.

1.2 Local Community as Catholic in Vision and Mission

The word catholic comes from two Greek words, *kata*, a preposition meaning ‘according to,’ and *olos*, meaning ‘whole, entire’ or ‘complete.’^{xi} Theologically catholic means study of God in its wholeness.

If a theology of being *catholic* exists, then this must have something to do with the study of God.

But since all theology is a human effort to understand faith, a source from above must be joined to a source from below. The Trinity and the human family create the foundation for being catholic.^{xi}

The human family is one in spite of the varied cultures, races, languages, traditions, ideologies, hopes and expectations. The theological anthropology in Christ - the fully God and human brings the fullness of this diversity into a unity, that is at the same time unique and universal in nature. The differences, in this context, can enrich the common bond of humanity.^{xi}

In recent years, the humans have become more conscious of the cosmos with the exploration of space. What they do here on earth has its effect on the universe, just as the universe has its effect on this small planet. Christianity has long professed an inter-relatedness between earth and universe under the one creator God. God offers a saving presence to all in the universe. Everything and everybody in the universe is included in this saving presence. The restoration of all things in love, peace, justice and liberty for all, has begun and been actualised in Jesus and extends outward to include all people and all of creation itself. The Spirit continues in this process of restoration. The individuals contribute and accept the effects of this divine will and plan.^{xi} In this universal plan of God, the catholicity of the local church belongs to the church as a responsibility to the humanity.^{xi} This catholicity presupposes a profound communion, uniting individuals to the local community and then being in turn united to the church and world. This universality will distinguish the church from any Christian sects and even from other religions and religious communities. Catholicity incorporates into the church, the gifts of diverse cultures, races, and nationalities into the process of unity. No one excluded, since all belong by the universal decree of salvation of unity for all.^{xi}

The church becomes concretely catholic by becoming particular or local. This is grounded in the Second Vatican Council’s profound notion of catholicity

the gift of the Lord himself by which the Catholic Church ceaselessly and effectively strives to restore all of humanity with all its goods under the headship of Christ and in the unity of the Holy

Spirit. In virtue of this catholicity, the individual parts bring their own gifts to the other parts and to the whole church so that the whole and each of the parts are strengthened by this mutual sharing and by the common effort to achieve a fullness in unity (*LG 13*).^{xi}

Thus being catholic means having a sense of universal perspective of unity. In this sense, the church is not merely a local community or a sum of all the local communities. Being catholic means a fullness as well as the communion of churches in view of unity with God and humanity. The church as catholic is open to all truth claims wherever it is found. No single doctrine, ritual, creed, text or interpretation of scripture expresses fully the catholicity of the church. It cannot be any narrow way of looking at theology. Catholicity includes a broad spectrum of theologies, spirituality, and actually the concrete expressions of Christian life. Whatever is truly human and good can find a place and embrace it within the catholicity.^{xi} If the church is catholic, then every effort should be made to promote unity of Christians and the human persons with universe and its creator. Hence the catholicity must be seen not only a perfection accomplished but also a task to be realised^{xi} in history. The catholicity will realise through a practical ministry in the local community that leads to a practical mission of love that uncovers greed, racism and oppression of minorities and liberation of the poor.^{xi}

Another manifestation of catholicity is the sense of communion and linkage of the ordained to the universal church. Their relationship to the local community manifests the catholicity of the universal church. The call of God, the word of Christ, the presence of the Spirit, the celebration of the eucharist, the fellowship of love and the apostolic ministry are the constitutive principles of the church. Wherever these principles generate a community, it is the church, not merely a part of the church, but the full reality of the people of God and the dwelling place of the Spirit.^{xi}

The Second Vatican Council fittingly recalls that the unity of the universal church is neither the result nor the product of the union of the local churches. The relationship of the local churches to the diocesan and universal churches is not like that of the members to their federation or like the parts to whole, rather they are mutually inclusive. The local churches and universal church exist within one another. They are in communion with one another. The local church and “the one catholic church exist in and out of the local churches” (*LG 23*).^{xi} This mutual inclusion demands attitudes and actions in concrete, a real communion of minds, hearts and activity, like that for which Christ prayed at the Last Supper, that “they may be one” (Jn 17: 11).

In the parish, the church exists in the concrete everyday lives of the people. It celebrates the death of the Lord, breaks the bread of the word of God, prays, loves and bears the cross of human existence.^{xi} This kind of local expression of the world-wide community of the faithful is catholic.^{xi} This community is also a profoundly catholic event - the local community gathered around the table of the Lord is supremely conscious of and connected to the church world-wide. This awareness is spoken explicitly in the canon of the mass; “Lord, remember your church throughout the world.”^{xi} Today ‘catholic’ is no longer a dogmatic term but an empirical attribute of our being church.^{xi} Hence these communities become the *locus* of mission.

1.3 Local Community as Communion of Communities

The focus of mission in the local community is communion. The idea of “Communion of Communities” is a mirror for pastoral planning.^{xi} The local church is called to embody the living force of mission of communion.

Communion and mission are profoundly connected with each other; they interpenetrate and mutually imply each other, to the point that communion represents both the source and fruit of mission... It is always the one and the same Spirit who calls together and unifies the Church and sends her to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth (CL 32).^{xi}

The local community can embody the church only if it looks to the community’s multiplicity and it maintains communion with the church universally. The task of the ordained is to effect this communion.^{xi} Wolfhart Pannenberg notes that “the reality of communion in Christ should permeate and transform the earthly relationships of the people within each local community.”^{xi} The local realisation of the church obviously includes all people around it. The constitutive principles are believed and accepted through the free actions of persons. In *Christifideles laici*, John Paul II observes,

The parish is not principally a structure, a territory or a building, but rather ‘family of God, a fellowship with a unifying spirit,’ ‘a familial and welcoming home,’ the ‘community of the faithful.’ Plainly and simply, the parish is founded on a theological reality, because it is a eucharistic community. This means that the parish is a community properly suited for celebrating the eucharist, the living source for its up building and the sacramental bond of its being in full communion with the whole church (CL 26).^{xi}

A local church viewed within the catholic tradition is a eucharistic community. It means that when it celebrates, there is communion and relationship in faith and hope, a community celebrates its *koinônia*, roots its *koinônia*, in the celebration of the memorial of the Lord’s death. This is what constitutes its vision of itself, its basic vision of history and of the Lord’s presence in history.^{xi} When the local church “lacks an ecclesiological foundation and are not sincerely seeking communion, such communities cease being ecclesial and may fall victim to ideological or political manipulation.”^{xi} Then

it would be a mistake to think of the universal church as simply federation of local churches, with one of these local churches (the church of Rome) supervising the affairs of the federation. The local churches are not simply organisational divisions of the one universal church.^{xi}

The universal church is essentially a communion of local churches. Communion as we discussed in the second chapter, means a sharing of life because the one Holy Spirit is in all the churches and is everywhere the same undivided’ life-giving divine person. All the churches are in inner and invisible communion with one another in one community of faith, worship, and love. They are the one, visible, universal church when they manifest visibly this inner communion with one another. The visible relationships between these local churches are essentially encouragement to one another to be more truly what they are supposed to be, communities of faith, worship and love. The local churches in their mutual relationships can call and challenge one another to be more authentically what they mean to be. The only purpose of the local churches is to interact with one another to build one another up as true communities of the Holy Spirit.^{xi}

1.4 Local Community as *Locus* of Human Mission

The human acts are the acts of faith, hope and love, which are the virtues. These are not exclusively for Christians alone. The community, together with the ordained, under the power of the Spirit, moves to take up these actions. By doing so, they build up the local church as a human community. Thus in the local church, “a group of unique persons, a community exists in a particular place and time for the realisation of the Church as a sign of unity.”^{xi}

The human community is part and parcel of its surrounding culture, context, geography, history and environment. The inculturation has obvious implications for its mission and activities. Wherever it is, the local community must act and discern what witness and action needs to take in its own neighbourhood.^{xi} The mission of the local church grows out of its sense of locality in view of a human community.

In the parish community, the parishioners come together in various ways to worship, to share their hopes and doubts of God’s movement in their lives, to plan for the religious education of their children, to act together in the cause of justice, liberation and peace. The task of the parish is to nourish its religious life so that it may act beyond itself both in word and in deed, witnessing to the saving presence of God. Some of its activities will be structured and routinized in committees, councils, and agencies. A parish community without any organisational elements would lack an important foundation for its communication and growth. More than this, a parish is similar to a primary group since it allows and even expects commitment among its members and personal involvement. A parish community can be made up of a number of closely-knit smaller (primary) groupings-families, neighbourhood groups, prayer groups, and basic Christian/human communities.^{xi}

The responsibility for mission of every local church has been clearly affirmed by the International Mission Congress in Manila.

Every local church is “sent” by Christ and the Father to bring the Gospel to its surrounding milieu, and to bear it also into all the world. For every local church this is a primary task. Hence we are moving beyond both the vocabulary and the idea of “sending churches” and “receiving churches,” for as living communities of the one church of Jesus Christ, every local church must be a sending church, and every local church (because it is not on earth ever a total realisation of the church) must also be a receiving church. Every local church is responsible for its mission, and co-responsible for the mission of all other churches.^{xi}

As the basis and fundamental reality of the church, the local community is the place of mission. Therefore, the local community is itself of first importance and the ordained within the community related to all other communities around it. Then the ministry within the local community is the community’s responsibility. In the parish, the ordained are no longer the sole persons responsible for carrying out many tasks that manifest, but they have to co-ordinate and activate community life in unity. Their mission in the community is “supervisory” and “empowering” the people. The ministry of supervision involves the proper and effective use of authority if it realistically discharges.^{xi} The parish community cannot simply wash its hands of ministerial responsibilities and leave them to one or a few

office holders. The members of the parish community, in virtue of their baptism, confirmation and common priesthood, acting in solidarity, are the united subjects of pastoral action with the ordained. The ordained are well aware that it is not out of their charity they collaborate with all baptised members but it is their primary duty to collaborate with them for developing a human community. So far the ordained were the central focus in the parish. Now slowly the idea is changing to the parish community as the centre. All the ministries, including the ordained, now widely share within the parish community.^{xi} These local churches, deeply rooted in their own cultures, enter into a dialogue with the societies around them and co-operate with other Christian groups.

1.5 Local Community as *Locus* of World Church

The local community is the *locus* of the “world church.”^{xi} These days we hear, from all around the globe, much about globalisation. As a result, people continue to seek

their identity by clinging to local cultures and particularisation.^{xi} In this context, the idea of Robert Schreiter’s “homogenisation and particularisation”^{xi} in the world church is taken into account. The world church is the constitutive factor of local culture. The quest for a larger community begins in the local communities. From there, these communities actualise on regional, national, and global levels. The special task of such communities in a multi-religious society is to stress the need for models of concrete local community as the first reality of the world church.^{xi} These communities can mediate the sense of world community through actively entering into economic, social, political and cultural levels etc.

The people now confuse with changing their local culture and receiving an alternative one. In this changing context, the most theo-anthropological level, the culture of love has fostered in view of unifying all. This task demands on viewing evangelization in a unified and holistic manner (*RM* 11, 20, 24-36, 83). Only with such a vision, the church can promote an integral mission towards the people of a pluralistic context. The integral and holistic evangelization demands

the service of humanity (not windy words but social development of all not only Christians and struggle against poverty and the structures producing it), inter-religious dialogue and inculturation (walking towards the truth and working hand-in-hand in projects of common concern), explicit gospel proclamation (living in mutual love and unity), and liturgical and sacramental life (authentic practice of Christian/human life), and witness of Christian living (praxis oriented gospel life).^{xi}

All these are integral elements of the local church’s total mission of ‘evangelization’ (*EN* 17, 24, *RM* 41) in view of a world church.

Christians foster authentic justice and peace-with a key eye to non-violent social transformation basing on faith-vision of human dignity. In this way, although the local church is very small, through this interaction it will not withdraw or develop a “minority complex” but it will be productive actor within broader society.^{xi} The local church by interaction and dialogue with culture must ‘inculturate’ by sinking

deep roots among all peoples whose life and history it gladly makes its own. In the local church, the ordained must recognise the challenges that they face locally and globally. They are to be aware that their mission is “God’s project” (*RM* 24) and will happily bear fruit in conformity with the patience of God’s loving design for all people in their own context. According to Johann Baptist Metz, “the base-church is the world-church.” It has three characteristics. (1) It has a solidarity in being and acting together as human. (2) It is a link between redemption and liberation, grace experience and liberation experience, mysticism and politics. (3) It is building a base church, not a “copy-cat” church, but one inspired for the future.^{xi} A world-church “is a church with a new concretion of Catholicity.”^{xi} Catholicity represents the universality which means that which is equally valid for all and “the Christian faith is open (critically) to all, to every people and to every culture.”^{xi} From these basic points, we shall examine how mission of the local church enters into local culture.

2. Localisation of Mission in Basic Christian Communities

The localisation and concretisation of the world-church find expression in the basic Christian communities.^{xi} Leonardo Boff is of the opinion that “unlike the dominant classes, base-communities do not seek their own class interests, but are struggling for a cause that is truly *universal*: justice for *all*: participation by *all*; etc.”^{xi} *Instrumentum Laboris* points out that “the emergence and growth of basic Christian Communities, charismatic movements and Basic Human Communities are also very positive elements in a number of particular churches.”^{xi} The emergence and growth of BCCs may not spring entirely from the people, nor is it entirely something imposed from above but is in fact, a combination of both. They are the means of the collaborative mission of ordained and laity. They are indeed an answer to the hidden aspirations of people to come together and to grow as human beings and to experience the joy of service.^{xi}

The BCCs find their goal where “the parish becomes top heavy structure and rigid with administration, exclusively territorial and occasionally a mere cog in the wheel of the diocesan administration.”^{xi} In order to carry out the mission of the church and make the power of God in the depth of societal life, it is obvious fact that in BCCs there are committed laity working at the grass-roots as it is their basic vocation to humanity.^{xi} The laity through their charisms and gifts lead the communities to active involvement in the world. Hence each one contributes to the life and mission of the church and in the service of unity of humankind.^{xi}

The BCCs, concretely realise “the communion model of the Church,”^{xi} as well as offer the laity the possibility to work at the grass-roots level. They are the ideal *locus*^{xi} to facilitate the discovery, development and recognition of the different charism of the members so that they blossom into ministries. Since the BCCs are close to the realities of life, they possess the tremendous possibility to bridge the gap between theology and its actual practice. The members of the BCCs, through their

personal experience of the faith, daily contact with the concrete situation in the society, and their competence in diverse disciplines, are eminently suited to engage in theological reflection.^{xi} Therefore, the BCCs consist of persons who are socially aware, responsible and committed in the community. So “that they can get involved in each other’s growth as human beings in every facet of their personality - physical, spiritual, intellectual, economic, cultural, civic and political, etc.”^{xi} They are trying to set a pattern of Christian life that is deliberately in contrast to the individualistic, self-interested, and competitive approach to ordinary life so inherent in the present culture. They are neither in competition with the parish nor identical with the parish. A parish as institutionalised in the first place, is from above and at the same time as a living basic community is from below.^{xi}

The BCCs help and encourage the parish itself to become a basic community of “creative, spontaneous, living Christianity, with its responsibility accepted and carried out from the ground up.”^{xi} They are the place for creativity and imagination in discovering and actualising the truth and love being practised in their own lives. In short, the task of them is to hear the lament of human beings who feel isolated in spite of all their social security and all their social networks.^{xi} The existence of these communities is not a new idea born in someone’s mind. They have been the original nature of the church herself. Now they realise very effectively all over the world. In BCCs, Christians come together and support each other, love each other in a truly tangible way, help each other in need, and answer to each other.^{xi} Karl Rahner re-inforces the idea that the central elements of Christianity are realised in life, and, thus, set the church in a given place.^{xi} In many places, the BCCs are creating a new community of solidarity together with the ordained. John Paul II highly appreciates the participatory role of the people of God in building up the body of Christ through BCCs. In his address to Filipino bishops, John Paul II urged that the BCCs are ways to teach the tenets of faith. He states,

By creating a deeper bond between their members, a bond sustained above all by the Church’s sacramental and liturgical life, these fraternal communities become the leaven of Christian life, of care for the poor, destitute and marginalized, and of commitment to social transformation. You see these communities as a way to teach the tenets of the faith through a catechesis that is closely related to real life situations, and therefore as an effective means of safeguarding the community from the inroads of fundamentalism. They also serve to channel popular devotions in the right direction, by giving them a solid biblical and theological foundation.^{xi}

Ponnumuthan Selvester maintains that BCCs “have a prophetic role in society. They, as the first cells of the church, have to permeate the ecclesial life in the parish, diocese, the universal church and in the whole of humanity.”^{xi} But all these forms of them open to a cultural and historical diversity in the way in which they are embodied. This can be a key to an understanding of how church’s life may develop at this age. These communities exist in virtue of individual and corporate responsibility of all baptised members because the basic aim of them is integral human development. The ordained have only a marginal but original help here. That is to be with them “to realise the communion”^{xi} and unity with humanity.

The basic character of the BCCs is to discern the signs of the times in the light of faith. In a pluralistic society, poverty is the greatest sign of times. Due to the massive poverty, we realise the great

value of social analysis that is inevitable for pastoral planning for a world-church.^{xi} Therefore, BCCs constantly call to analyse and discern the reality, to review or establish options and priorities of action and commitment of service to the world. This way of experiencing the church at the grass-roots level inaugurates a church model that is liberating, prophetic and communitarian.^{xi} Hence, the prophetic mission of the ministerial office is basically oriented towards these communities. The hopes, suffering and happiness are the means to perform their mission and rising up of unity in community is the result of their mission. Then the poor attain liberation from all oppressed way of systems.^{xi}

2.1 Locus of *Ortho-Praxis* of Mission

If at all the ordained carry out the mystery of Christ, it has to be realised and practised in the community as communion with God and unity of the humanity. In this regard, BCCs want to live faith not as privatised one but as a shared, real experience that mutually nurtures and supports. Such a deep faith sharing is at the roots of an attempt to improve inter-personal relationships within the community. This makes possible the participation especially in the decision-making process, in contrast to a rather passive attitude of the faithful or a too vertical orientation in exercising power or authority by the ordained. The Asian Colloquium expresses the recognition of the ministry of community is a key element in the contemporary society.

Ministries apply more properly to those services which Church members undertake with a certain stability and exercise on a sufficiently broad basis, thus sharing formally in the Church's responsibility to signify the presence to men of Christ's saving action. All such ministries must be recognised by the community and authenticated by it in the person of its leader. Thus, every service and ministry of the Church supposes a charism but not every charism blossoms into ministry.^{xi}

The BCCs, even when they enjoy a fair amount of internal autonomy, enter into all cultures and problems of the world. The leadership of the ordained encourages people to enter into other cultures in order to foster culture of love and unity. Without loosing the linkage to the parishes, BCCs multiplied within each parish, keeping their spontaneity and flexibility. The prophetic office of ordained closely and intimately relates to these communities. They spread the light of Christ through these members against all kinds of injustice either in the context or the universal level.^{xi} The growing awareness of the diversity of vocations and of their respective responsibility leads to consider that BCCs are the constitutive factor^{xi} of a society.

The leadership of community in charism guarantees not by rules and regulations but public affirmation within the community. Delegation of ecclesiastical authorities is used to effect the relationship with the wider community. But this is not the ministers' authority over the people. The ministers empower the community for communion and unity. They do really witness the basic claim of faith in their life. And reception of their witness by the community is an essential component of their authority.^{xi}

The BCCs are an actual community of human beings who really feel that they belong to one another. They are in "true sense a family, a church community, a confederation of love, a union of genuine Christian believers. Such community as unity in which living Christian love is not only

theoretically proclaimed but concretely practised.”^{xi} In the BCCs, the ordained are community leaders who work together with the people for the real unity of all. There is respect and love for each other. In BCCs every one has a task to play for the growth of each other. Here the ordained feel responsibility and oneness with the community. They experience a living and powerful example of Christian life for their brothers and sisters.^{xi} In the words of Walter Kasper “our communities will only be living communities if we reflect anew on the origins and sources of human and Christian life.”^{xi} The unity of humanity can fully realise where they live and experience life together. The ordained have a specific task to realise unity in their own life situations. This unity attains its fullness in mutual service.

The small community brings people of a small neighbourhood together and they begin to experience for the first time the meaning of Christian brotherhood, helping people to meet on an inter-personal level and by beginning to translate the Christian message into practical actions to meet each other’s needs.^{xi}

In stressing the importance of ministry, Karl Rahner observes that the essentials of Christianity do not remain at the level either of theory in people’s head or of the Sunday sermon, but have to become life-immediate, realistic and habitual at the heart of everyday life. He proposes that where the church herself has not been established visibly as the sign of God’s mysterious grace, the baptised members must act in small groups and be recognised as acting in the name of the whole church. He states,

In a secularised world, in which nothing Christian can anywhere be simply taken for granted, the Church must be sustained even in its institutions and in its ministry much more than it is now by a readiness to believe freely on the part of its members at the base, on the part of basic communities; the latter will not be content simply to be cared for by an institutional Church, but will themselves on their own responsibility take an active part in forming the Church and will have a right to be taken seriously in their activity and responsibility by the authorities.^{xi}

These communities are called the servant communities. That means a community that recognises the leaders that God has given to them, a community that dialogues with leaders, a community that invites those leaders and all to sit together at the table of the Lord and feel fidelity among themselves.^{xi} Such communities show mutual communion of the humanity.

2.2 Locus of Communion of Humanity

The real communion of the people takes place in and through the BCCs. The Bishops’ Institute for Missionary Apostolate of the Federation of Asian Bishop’s Conference (FABC) in Trivandrum, in the light of the theme: “The Christian Community as the Bearer of the Good News,” perceives the BCCs as playing a vital role in fostering ecclesial communion in the church. The meeting terminated with an open letter to the bishops of south Asia:

Given the nature of the Church as a communion, various new forms of community, such as those usually referred to as “basic Christian communities,” within which inter-personal relationships are fostered, the life of faith and the missionary commitment are shared, need to be encouraged and nurtured. Their ecclesial character requires, however, that they remain open to the larger community of the parish.... The same ecclesial character of these basic communities will also

demand that forms of leadership emerge within them through a spontaneous process, to which recognition will have to be given.^{xi}

The Third Plenary Assembly of FABC observes that the local church-community is perceived of being called to give witness to the values it believes in and to incarnate them through dialogue and praxis of life. These communities are the sign of presence and action of the Spirit. In these grass-roots communities, so often alive with the freshness and enthusiasm of early Christians, an experience of genuine Christian fellowship and love is often found, as well as the emergence of diverse charisms and ministries.^{xi} On this basis John Paul II calls all faithful for parish renewal in the context of a theology of communion through living communities.

... small, basic or so-called “living” communities, where the faithful can communicate the Word of God and express it in service and love to one another; these communities are true expressions of ecclesial communion and centres of evangelization, in communion with their pastors (CL 25-26).

The Fifth Plenary Assembly of the FABC held in Bandung, Indonesia envisioned the BCCs as the ideal way of being church. It declared that the church in Asia will have to be a communion of communities, where laity, religious and clergy recognise and accept each other as sisters and brothers. The Word forms them into small Christian communities, where they pray and share together the Gospel of Jesus, living it in their daily lives and they support one another and work together, united as they are “in one mind and heart.” It is a participatory Church where the gifts of the Holy Spirit are recognised and activated, so that the Church may be built up and its mission realised. Built in the hearts of the people, it is a Church that faithfully and lovingly witnesses to the Risen Lord and reaches out to people of other faiths in a dialogue of life towards the integral liberation of all. It is a leaven of transformation in this world and serves as a prophetic sign pointing to the Kingdom that is yet fully to come.^{xi}

The BCCs are called to conversion of heart and to the re-establishment of justice in love. Insofar as they try to extend to the world the reality of communion, they themselves are already trying to live as communities. In the BCCs, the ecclesiological model of the church as communion/ community ceases to be a theoretical variable of ecclesiological analysis. They become the existential witnesses to a reality of the church, that is growing in communion and participation to become a human community. In the BCCs this model is a promising proto-type of a necessary ongoing process of historical becoming that is to culminate in the eschatological kingdom, where community is to be lived in full, definitive communion.^{xi} Thus these communities are oriented towards the ecumenical life of the people.

2.3 *Locus* of Ecumenical Movements

The BCCs are ecumenically oriented ones. The real experience of people proves that sharing of a common faith is a crucial element for fostering the internal growth of the community. These communities seek to live the values of Christ, which are fully human values. They learn from others and co-operate with other religions and cultures with greater openness through dialogue, involvement and reflection. They, therefore, are the *locus* for ecumenical dialogue and to encounter with other faiths too. They present a concrete possibility for inter-personal relationships, common prayer, celebration, a joint pursuit of justice and peace and a living search for a specifically Christian way of life. The new kinds of

prayer experience, new liturgical symbols, etc., make their appearance there.^{xi} This all happen because the Holy Spirit penetrates into pluri-cultural situation and implies these towards union with Christ.^{xi} Hence in implementing the mission of ecumenical evangelisation, these communities must be docile to the Spirit, sensitive to what the Spirit is working not only within the church, but also within the entire society.^{xi} They are the meeting point or linking up of various ecclesiological institutions and even other institutions. Thus the very plurality of ecclesiological views reveals the inability of any given one to exhaust the mystery of the church to unity. The church can derive benefit from this plurality by reflecting consciously on the mystery.^{xi}

The problem of ecumenism is not to bring the unity that does not yet exist, but to live fully and faithfully, under the action of the Holy Spirit, that unity in which Christ instituted the church. The church's unity will not be expressed fully until Christians make Christ's desire as their own, and accepting among his gifts of grace as the authority that he gave to the apostles.^{xi} Therefore the unity of the churches is the process towards to fullness of life. If the catholic church is the sign of unity it must go and meet all the people of the world and be united with them irrespective of all their difference. This is what we see in the life of Christ, he is a gift of unity and he enters into the heart of all, encounters for unity and proclaims publicly the things that hinder the unity of the people. Thus the truth of catholic church has to be encountered and practised in a socio-politico, spiritual and cultural context.

The vision of the catholic unity is always human promotion of life. As John Paul II says, "the unity of faith, in adherence to revealed truth; the unity of hope, in the journey toward the fulfilment of God's kingdom; the unity of charity, with its multiple forms and applications in all areas of human life."^{xi} On this road to unity we have to accept, first, what is the element that brings all together rather than what differentiates one another. If we can find out the common ground for unity then ecumenism will be very easy to proceed. This common ground is the mystery of communion of the Trinity. This communion of faith leads to better experience of God.

2.4 *Locus of Common Faith Experience*

The BCCs as a uniting force, share their deep religious experience with one another. So also they help each other to arrive at a deeper and more authentic commitment to God and people.^{xi} In this commitment, sociologically the BCCs implement a new pattern of personal and social relationships. Ecclesologically, they are common centres for reading and interpreting life, and for hearing the word of God. The BCCs integrates the conscious co-responsibility of all under the action of one and the same Spirit. In common religious experience, building up of the BCCs is a dynamic process that which is to be lived rather than a programme to be taught and explained.^{xi} This dynamic process leads to emergence of community of the humans. At the heart of the experience is a life of communion that is gradually discovered by the participants as they live out their community life.^{xi} This human interaction between the members enables them to become more and more fully human. Each one challenges to personal conversion in these communities. The structures and activities in these communities engage to orient towards facilitating and sustaining relationship among the members. Their faith-experience as a community, is fundamental and primary.^{xi} As an ecclesial event,^{xi} the BCCs are the fruits of a process of

discernment, commitment, constant evaluation and persevering effort undertaken by the whole church.^{xi} This recognition and search for conversion make the Christian commitment for liberation different from that in political parties. Unless there is a change of direction in one's life, from selfishness to a life with others, there will not be true liberation.^{xi}

The socio-economic and cultural factors are changing from place to place. It is very difficult to define what exactly its function is. The Medellin document offers a description of this phenomenon:

A BCC is the first and fundamental ecclesiastical nucleus, which down at the grass-roots level, brings richness and expansion to the faith and to the religious worship, which is its expression. This is the initial cell of the Church, and the radiant centre for its evangelising efforts for human advancement and development.^{xi}

The doctrines of the church become more clearly aware of the dialectical relationship between "man" and societal "structures." With the political, economic, social structures often marked with justice, liberation and peace and well-being of the masses need to be the deep concerns of the BCCs today. "It constantly moves forward in mission as it accompanies all humankind in its pilgrimage to the Kingdom of the Father."^{xi}

Her mission requires that she herself embody in her own life and structure the kingdom values of freedom, fellowship and justice. It also requires that she contributes to the promotion of those values in the ordering of human society. The struggle for a new society is therefore a constitutive element of the Church's evangelising mission.^{xi}

"These communities are a sign of vitality within the church, an instrument of formation and evangelisation, and a solid starting point for a new society based on a 'civilisation of love'" (RM 51). These communities carry out more faithfully Christ's liberative mission and concretely manifest their entry into the process of a holistic evangelisation.^{xi}

2.5 *Locus of New Evangelisation*

The BCCs are the common basis and great mediation for an 'evangelisation'^{xi} that is humanising, transforming, and liberating the people. There is a most dramatic shift now in theology of the Catholic Church. The shift in theology lays more emphasis on the prodigal love of God, made flesh in Jesus, the risen crucified Lord, rather than emphasising sin and hell.^{xi} Now more stress is given to the BCCs where the love of Christ is emphasised for the liberation of all. Therefore together with Avery Dulles we can say that we are in a period of "new evangelisation."^{xi} For an integral evangelisation, the church has not changed her identity, teaching, faithfulness as the community of disciples for unity of all. However, the style and approaches, the emptiness and expressions, have definitely been rethought. This re-formulation has been influenced by better perception of politico-economic, socio-cultural, and religious realities of today's changed and changing world. In brief, the *content* of Jesus' message remains perennially valid but the *context* is constantly undergoing transformation.^{xi} According to Avery Dulles, since Vatican II, one of the most important developments in the Catholic Church is the "evangelical turn" which is found in the ecclesial vision of Paul VI and John Paul II.^{xi} In the present era, BCCs are the place for

evangelisation. Such awareness does not necessarily flow down from above. It is more likely to well up from within and from below. People are coming together as a small community in parishes after realising their basic call from God in baptism. They realise that they have a task to accomplish, a task of doing justice in word and deed. Trained people go around to evangelise their neighbours, through home visits and give an emphasis on community conversion to God.^{xi} In fact, the process by which these communities come into existence helps to underline evangelisation as their constitutive activity. The most appropriate setting for evangelisation of culture is BCCs. In the Encyclical *Redemptoris Missio*, John Paul II perceives the BCCs as a force for evangelisation.

These Communities as a sign of vitality within the Church, an instrument of formation and evangelization, and a solid starting point for a new society based on a “civilisation of love”... take root in less privileged areas...become a leaven of Christian life, of care for the poor and neglected, and of commitment to the transformation of society... Within them, the individual Christian experiences community...is encouraged to share in the common task. Thus these communities became a means of evangelization and of the initial proclamation of the Gospel (*RM 51*).^{xi}

In this setting, lay people interact most naturally, within their homes and neighbours as a small community. The gospel truths are best understood and the kingdom values are best integrated among the laity within these communities. Thus the laity’s participation in the evangelisation of culture must be encouraged and sustained.^{xi} This is the prior task and responsibility of the ordained in a pluralistic society. In BCCs, “the dialogue and witness” are linked together.^{xi}

2.6 Dialogue of Life as New Evangelisation

A new evangelisation is not re-evangelisation but a commitment to new ardour, methods and expression.^{xi} This new evangelisation is the “the civilisation of love”^{xi} and it “consists of proclamation, witness, dialogue and service.”^{xi} The need of today’s civilisation of love, the dialogue is to be a dialogue of life where the people strive to live in an open and neighbourly spirit, sharing joys and sorrows, and their problems and pre-occupations. Such a dialogue of life tangibly gives expression to “Dialogue of Action” in which Christians and others collaborate for the integral development of people around the world.

Believing that God’s Spirit is operating in the hearts and lives of all the peoples, beyond the boundaries of the visible Church (*LG 16, GS 22, RM 28*), we see it as our duty to enter into dialogue with the people of other religious and cultures. In our relationship with people of other religions we see that our mission is to be characterised by the Trinitarian qualities of relationality, mutuality and communion. In our context, it will be expressed in practice by dialogue, prophetic witness and collaboration.^{xi}

As Standley Samarth says, “dialogue is not a concept; it is a relationship. Community is not a concept; it is people, men and women, sharing the meaning and mystery of human existence, struggling together in suffering, hope and joy.”^{xi} Such a dialogue in community or a dialogue of life takes place in markets, street corners, during festivals and holy days. It needs to extend the humanitarian projects an effective weapon against crisis in community and society. Thus people, their world and their problems are the

starting point of dialogue.^{xi} In short, dialogue is precisely the expansion of “communication and human development.”^{xi}

“Dialogue”^{xi} is both an old and a new word. In theological discussion, “dialogue is quite a new word.”^{xi} In the new context, the word “dialogue” does not have a fixed meaning. It is a process towards truth. The concept of dialogue here, is rich enough not only to support a theology of interfaith relations, but to support a theology of mission as well. “The word ‘dialogue’ names the fundamental attitude with which the church is called to counter the world. It follows that there is no need to move ‘beyond dialogue’. In this sense, dialogue is an end in itself.”^{xi} Dialogue is not a question of whether one voluntarily uses dialogue in evangelising or not, rather, dialogue is an evangelising process in itself. It develops new contexts where the seed of truth starts to grow within and among the communities. It is the slow but sure incarnation of God’s truth among the people. It is not a substitute for evangelisation, but an expression of evangelisation itself. “This new evangelisation fosters the harmony of the nature. Harmony and ‘the culture of wholeness’ are characteristic of all peoples. The theme of harmony provides an acceptable entry point for the ‘dialogue of life.’”^{xi}

Dialogue is often understood to be an event or an activity. Yet dialogue is an endeavour that must be given a priority that is relative to all the other events and activities that fill the human beings’ common life.^{xi} The dialogue in action would demonstrate concretely the openness and fraternal element of the Christian in a pluralistic context. Dialogue is that interaction between people in which each one is to give oneself, and seeks also to know the other as the other.^{xi} According to John Paul II, the “true dialogue involves both giving and receiving, speaking and listening.”^{xi} For him, the church is committed to being a sacrament of unity among all peoples. She pursues the path of dialogue, particularly inter-religious dialogue, on many levels so as to bring God to the many groups, which suffer from injustice, discrimination or marginalisation. At the same time, she contributes through the application of her social doctrine to build societies based on principles of justice, peace and harmony.^{xi} This dialogue is the dialogue of life and heart.^{xi} In dialogue religions possess a prophetic role of sharing a common cultural and socio-political structure. In this context the tasks of religions are to promote peace and development, freedom and human rights, active witnessing of faith. In this process of dialogue of life, the BCCs are not simply a movement or association but *a way of being church* in the world.^{xi}

2.6.1 A New *Way of Being Church*

At the heart of the BCCs, for engaging with others is a dialogical way. This dialogical model of the church is perceived as the new *way of being church*.^{xi} In this new *way of being church*, dialogue is more than a conversation of experts but it has to become “an attitude and a practice of every Christian.”^{xi} Consequently, “It will bring about the realisation of a truly participative church engaged creativity in dialogue with other believers and believing communities for the communion of life.”^{xi} John Paul II exhorts the people to have dialogue in all structures of lives. He urges the leaders of all nations to build up anew the concrete ways and means where justice, peace and development can promote with openness, trust and respect. Hence dialogue becomes the church’s participation not only in evangelising people but

also in creating ‘the civilisation of love’ in the world. It is a process of evangelisation itself, and a realisation of her mission. The church wishes to dialogue with all peoples. She would like to dialogue with other Christians, believers in God, and even people of good will who commit themselves to human values (*GS* 92). Therefore, the members of the church have to involve the wider range of issues pertaining to human rights and freedom, to labour and business, economics, and politics, etc. One perceives that the whole church is called to be dialogue of life with fellow Christians, members of other religious traditions, as well as members of various social and political groups.

(At this point), the Church is becoming involved in a wider range of issues pertaining to human rights and freedom, to labour and business, health, women, the arms race, the international order and other issues of justice and peace that seriously affect the lives of the people of Asia and specifically the poor and the downtrodden... In every situation, the Church is called to a dialogue of life with fellow Christians of other Churches, the billions of other religions and the members of various social groups.^{xi}

The human solidarity in sharing common humanity is stressed in dialogue. The sense of common humanity brings people of different faiths to struggle together for common purposes in the society.^{xi} Through dialogue and practice of truth, these communities actualise the truth of humanity.

2.6.2 Actualising the Truth in Relationship

The ‘truth of humans’ provides the main rationalisation for primacy of religion and their spiritual life. Respect for this truth of humans leads everyone to recognise the dignity, fraternal solidarity and collaboration among human beings. Dialogue is a powerful means of collaboration between people in eradicating evil from life and society. It is a means to establish right order in society and thus contributing to the common good of all humanity in every walk of life.^{xi} Therefore dialogue proceeds from “the internal drive of charity” (*ES* 64), respected and open to the opinions of others, willing to rise beyond one’s vested interests and ready to be transformed within. In other words, dialogue should be motivated in love to seek truth and to share it with others. It must take into account human friendliness, mutual understanding and interior persuasion. It must also consider the personal and civic rights of individuals and promote and defend common ideals such as religious liberty, human brotherhood and civic order. The fruit of dialogue must be union between people and union of people with God. In dialogue, we allow God to be present to one another and we also open ourselves to God.^{xi} This dialogue deeply roots on the experience of God together with all people. Hence God becomes the foundation of unity. The church also commits to offering her share of truth through evangelisation. It fulfils the task in charity, bearing in mind St. Paul’s exhortation: “Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him, who is the head, into Christ” (Eph 4: 15). Commenting on John Paul II, Manuel G. Gabriel writes that the bishops must do everything possible to promote this dialogue according to the commitment of the church, barring all rivalry and polemics in the process. Likewise, the bishops also have to inform and collaborate with these religions about the church’s involvement in the people’s struggle and welfare: Justice, freedom, progress, peace.^{xi} In a pluralistic society harmony is one of the most important one. “Living in a pluralistic world filled with tensions and conflicts, religious communities must be the first to live in peace and harmony with each other in mutual acceptance and co-operation.”^{xi} Then only, they can be, in dialogue, search for a new relationship in the society.

Dialogue as relationship is primarily an openness to all religious traditions and structural organisations. A truly dialogical relationship has no other purpose than its true relationship with each other. It is common to justify dialogue as something that helps us to understand ourselves better, as something that contributes to our own growth and maturity. To speak of dialogical relationship is an abstract and “secular” way to speak of the commandment of neighbourly love. Love one’s neighbour as oneself is to be in a dialogical relationship with one’s neighbour. More specifically, the New Testament puts the command in striking form: we are to love our neighbours *as God has loved us* (1 John 4: 19).^{xi} The commandment to love one’s neighbour as Christ has loved us translates for the Christian into the dialogical imperative. This imperative is to seek dialogue and to be open to dialogue whenever and from whomever it is offered. Then Christian discipleship involves a call to unconditional openness to the neighbour. However, the difficulty is with the ambiguity of human beings’ lives, not with the ambiguity of the call. The call to dialogue, to open, trusting and loving relationships with the neighbour, is clear and unambiguous.^{xi}

Dialogue is understood as a relationship to be experienced, described and developed as a lifestyle in a pluralistic society. Dialogue is a welcoming way in which the humans can be more obedient to the commandment of Decalogue: “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.” Therefore, they see dialogue, as a fundamental part of their Christian service within community. In dialogue they actively respond to the command “to love God and your neighbour yourself.” As an expression of their love, their engagement in dialogue testifies to the love they have experienced in Christ. Dialogue is their joyful affirmation of life against chaos, and their participation with all who are allies of life in seeking the provisional goals of a better human community. Thus, the dialogue is living out of faith in service of community with neighbours. In dialogue the emphasis must be with people of living faith than on ideologies.^{xi} “Living together in dialogue should help communities-particularly in multi-religious societies-to shed their fear and distrust of each other and to build up mutual trust and confidence.”^{xi} The dialogue is a search for new relationship between people of different faiths and ideological convictions in a global society. Therefore, this relationship is new challenge for the church and ‘dialogue in community’ becomes a recurring phrase in the ongoing discourse to a world community.^{xi}

2.6.3 Dialogue of Inter-Religious Faiths

The inter-faith dialogue that is born of religious experiences and genuine spirituality intensifies the dialogue of new evangelisation. This dialogue is possible only on the basis of mutual respect of religions. In this situation, the basis for inter-religious dialogue is that “human beings in society share common *human concerns*, like justice and peace; it is quite another to say that they share common *beliefs* on what it means to be human.”^{xi} As far as the Christians are concerned, the theological reasons for inter-religious dialogue^{xi} are (I) God in Jesus Christ has himself entered into relationship with people of all faiths and in all ages, offering the good news of salvation. The incarnation is God’s dialogue with humanity. (2) The offer of a true community inherent in the gospel through forgiveness, reconciliation and a new creation, of which the church is a sign and a symbol of communion, inevitably leads to dialogue. The freedom and love which Christ offers, forces to be in fellowship with strangers so that all

may become fellow-citizens in the household of God. (3) There is the promise of Jesus Christ that the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth. This truth is to be sought not in isolation of lonely meditation but in the living, personal confrontation between God and human beings. Dialogue is full of opportunity because Christians can discover new aspects of the servanthood and lordship of Christ, and new implications for the witnessing by the church in the context of moving towards a common human community. In short, the faith in Jesus Christ, who became human for all humanity in all times, sustains us in dialogue. The Christians' dialogue with another implies neither denial of the uniqueness of Christ, nor any loss of one's own commitment to Christ, but rather that a genuinely Christian approach to others must be human, personal, relevant and humble. Such a dialogue presupposes a spiritual renewal in the church as communion and is at the same time itself a sign of such renewal in churches, religions and societies.^{xi}

Our communion with people of other faiths is, prominently, a form of living our own faiths. To the Christian, it is living the witness shown to him in the incarnation. To one who is not a Christian in the above sense, and who considers the incarnation as an event given in Christian faith, it is likewise living the "witness" in the light of his own faith. Dialogue between them should not only be possible use even fruitful for understanding man as man, and for understanding the deeper truth to which man bears witness, which elevates him to spiritual freedom and so to a vision of the spiritual presence in all the religious expression of man.^{xi}

In dialogue one of the claims is that an encountering with different traditions does not make less loyal to one's own Tradition. On the contrary, dialogue with another traditions leads to a deeper understanding of and loyalty to ones own faith tradition and stand for the values of common humanity. Therefore, dialogue needs to be as holding promise of love rather than threat for faith. Every religious tradition has their strong points and weak points. Strength in one area usually at the cost of weakens in another area. Almost every Christian tradition holds that the personal piety needs to be balanced by the commitment to social responsibility. A community that strongly emphasises one ends up by giving little more than lip service to the other. This should be a community experience of love for the social responsibility of those who live around. The common factors bind every one together is the word of God.^{xi}

Inter-religious dialogue should stress also the need to study fundamental questions in the religious dimension of life. As we examined in the first chapter, religions are to be humans' responses to the mystery of human existence and quests for meaning in the midst of confusion of life. Religious organisations and universities have to support the long-range study of the deeper questions which today ought to be taken up not just separately by individuals of each religion, but also together in the larger interests of humanity. Dialogue is, therefore, both an expression of faith and a sign of hope for a new humanity.^{xi} Initiating, encouraging and explaining the nature and purpose of inter-religious dialogue must be an unending process in a pluralistic society. In different historical, political, and cultural contexts, each generation comes to terms with the reality of pluralism. They seek new relationships between different communities of faith for the sake of enhancing the quality of life. Dialogue does not accept the gulf between religions as permanent, and asks people of each tradition to withdraw the path

they have travelled in history. To probe into the depths of fundamental questions of life is a dialogical imperative today because the quest for meaning is necessary in the presence of mystery that surrounds all life.^{xi} The Catholic Church recognises the truth contained in the religious traditions. This recognition makes true dialogue possible. The church's approach to other religions is one of genuine respect; with them she seeks mutual collaboration.^{xi}

Inter-religious dialogue is more than living together in tolerance. Tolerance is also the basis of a dialogue in which the 'self' and the 'other' discover and enrich each other. So that, as we unveil our 'self' in the 'other', and the 'other' in our 'self,' will find that our deepest identity and bonding transcend all differences in an immanent I-thou communion.^{xi} This we have discussed already in the first chapter. In this I-Thou communion involves interaction and collaboration in following levels. First the growth in the experience of God in the light of the challenge of the faith of other, secondly, providing a common moral and spiritual foundation to public life. These two aspects closely related to each other.

If dialogical encounter is to be possible, each partner must have openness or emptiness within oneself without losing the sense of absoluteness. Openness means the possibility of change, and emptiness means the ability to understand the other from within oneself... This openness or emptiness which is intrinsic to true religions is the basic presupposition for dialogical encounters between religions. Both parties must be ready to listen to the other and undergo changes through such encounters.^{xi}

Inter-religious dialogue becomes a concern only in two situations. First, existentially, people who belong to different religions are living together in one society. Secondly, ideologically, we have a positive view of and respect for other religions.^{xi} Recognising the legitimacy of other religions is not equivalent to asserting that all religions are the same or that all religions are equal. This is the sort of language that is quite irrelevant in dialogue. One can make such statements only after an objective comparison between religions as systems. Since religions involve personal faith commitments, such objective comparisons are not possible. An authentic dialogue leads others to a basic unity in pluralism: a unity that is found in God who is the origin of all things. This unity has to be achieved in history, precisely through dialogue.^{xi} Religions are media of divine-human dialogue. John Paul II explains what unites the different religions are more profound than what divides them.

If it is the order of unity that goes back to creation and redemption and is therefore, in this sense, "divine," such difference-and even religious divergences go back rather to a 'human fact,' and must be overcome in progress towards the realisation of the mighty plan of unity with dominates the creation.^{xi}

The gospel cannot really dialogue with cultures without dialoguing with the religions, whether great or popular, that animate them, without taking into account the socio- economic and political situation that both conditions and is conditioned by the cultural world views and value systems. Inter-religious dialogue will be an academic exercise unless it has an impact on the promotion of common human and spiritual values for the building up of a new humanity of freedom, fellowship, and justice.^{xi} This call for a common religious conversion according to Knitter is

a conversion and commitment to the victims, the oppressed, the struggling poor.... Such a conversation and such a preferential option to respond to the human and ecological suffering that criss-crosses our cultures and religions would form the starting point... for inter-religious co-operation and conversation.^{xi}

Very often inter-religious dialogue becomes difficult due to narrow vision of humanity. Dialogue among fundamentalism and communalism is very important one, because most of the problems spread out from the above-said factors.

2.6.4 Process of Integral Liberation

Dialogue is a process to the integral liberation of the humanity. It is not only a means but also an end in itself. Therefore, dialogue is a *way of being*, a way to fullness of life. The promotion of justice is an essential dimension of evangelisation in dialogue.^{xi} Thus there are close links between evangelisation and human advancement, development and liberation (EN 31).^{xi} Because of this close link the bishops of Latin America, at Puebla, spoke of “liberative evangelisation” (EN 62) in the third millennium. John Paul II states that in speaking about the various aspects of authentic development “the Church fulfils its mission to evangelise” (SRS 41) the social order of the society to a community of God. This liberative dialogue always encounters the unjust factors of a society.

As a process, the true integral liberation of people will be never achieved. But this is the basic duty and right of the humanity to struggle against all kinds of oppressions till their last breath. If they really dedicate themselves to this basic right and duty of the humanity, then, they can really see the evil factors of the world. One of the major challenges today is extreme poverty suffered by a major section of the people.^{xi} This economic backwardness is compounded by a host of social problems, like exploitation, unemployment, corruption, casteism and unbalanced economic globalisation. In the pluralistic context, the Asian Colloquium on Ministries sums up the challenges

In economics: how to contribute to the eradication of stark poverty by an authentic dialogue of life with the poor of Asia, without fostering materialism,-In social life: how to preserve the authentic values of personalism and family life in the face of urbanisation and technological progress.- In political matters: how to help our people find an Asian style of authentic participate leadership in government at all levels.- In cultural matters:- how to find their own national and Asian identity, by blending ancient and modern values in the face of the future ahead.^{xi}

The powers of domination at the local, regional, national and international levels are often inter-linked and work in collusion to create such an inhuman situation. The most vulnerable are those groups, which have been traditionally marginalised in society. They are the tribals, the dalits, other backward communities, and women. Aloysius Pieris points out, working from the position of the poor and with the poor will result in preaching of the Gospel from the perspective of the poor of Yahweh and with that poverty of spirit that prepares us to encounter Christ.^{xi} G. Gutierrez comments as well.

If the ultimate cause of man’s exploitation and alienation is selfishness, the deepest reason for voluntary poverty is love of neighbour. Christian poverty is meaning only as a commitment to solidarity with the poor, with those who suffer misery and injustice. The commitment is to witness to the evil, which has resulted from sin and a break of communion. It is not a question of idealising

poverty, but rather of taking it on as it is - an evil - to protest against it and to struggle to abolish it.^{xi}

The traditional culture and ethos and various institutions embodying them, are undergoing profound changes under the impact of industry, science, and technology. The process of modernisation has opened up new avenues of development which has also caused a deep crisis in values, widened the gap between the rich and the poor, intensified the spirit of competition and consumerism, greed and bribery. The result is a pseudo-culture that combines the worst elements of tradition and modernity, to oppress even more violently the poor and weak.^{xi} The contemporary experience of the poor and the oppressed people, of their suffering and struggles against injustice, and the persons, manner and means by which others are oppressed, is regarded as the soil in which theology is to be rooted.^{xi} According to Michael Amaladoss, work for liberation in terms of transforming socio-political and economic structures will be ineffective unless it can find inspiration and motivation from the religions and goes hand in hand with cultural transformation affecting peoples' attitudes, world views, and value systems.^{xi} John Paul II writes that it is in the humanity of Christ (Person of Christ) every human person, without discrimination of class, language, culture, or ethnic and social group, encounter integral liberation. Proclaiming peace for his disciples and for all people, Jesus laid the foundation for the precept of fraternal love, solidarity and reciprocal help on a universal level. It is a principle of good politics also.^{xi}

An Integral liberation in the Christian sense cannot be separated from conversion to God. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* states that evangelisation must “deliver a message, especially relevant and important in our age, about liberation” (EN 29). The faith and love of the community is more deeply committed towards an integral liberation in God, the mystery, and oriented towards the poor. The church too must discern the signs of the times. They enshrine a call to us, bishops, priests and people, to evaluate afresh our dedicated services and commitment to the welfare of God's people and, if need be, to re-orient our activities so as to prosper, in a bigger and more enlightened way, the lot of the poor. In some cases, this may mean intensified efforts; in other cases, radical change. This is particularly the case with our education institutions. “Sarvodaya”, the good of all and particularly of the weak and lowly, should be the goal of our endeavours, as we strive to further and strengthen the thrust for social justice.^{xi}

The people are looking forward to help each other in the community. The accumulation of wealth in one part of the world or at the hand of some is, the destruction of the community. Some enjoy at the expense others. In the real life of community, everybody works and earns money not for themselves but shares with others especially those who are the poor, as they too are created in the image of God. Working for justice implies working for those who can not defend themselves for their rights. By working for the poor and acknowledging their human dignity, we proclaim the great truths of the fellowship of humanity and the common parenthood of God. Working for the poor is a religious duty to which we are all called to. It implies involvement in development work and in working for justice.^{xi} In the document *Justice in the World* the 1971 Synod of Bishops make this point clear.

Listening to the cry of those who suffer violence and are oppressed by unjust systems and structures, and hearing the appeal of a world that by its perversity contradicts the plan of its creator, we have shared our awareness of the Church's vocation to be present in the heart of the world by proclaiming the Good News to the poor, freedom to the oppressed, and joy to the afflicted. The hopes and forces which are moving the world to the very foundations are not foreign to the dynamism of the gospel, which through the power of the Holy Spirit frees men from

personal sin and from its consequences in social life. The uncertainty of history and the painful convergence in the ascending path of the human community direct us to sacred history; there God has revealed Himself to us, and made known to us, as it is brought progressively to realisation, His plan of liberation and salvation which is once and for all fulfilled in the paschal mystery of Christ.^{xi}

An authentic theology is a theology of liberation of the humanity in the person of Christ. Liberation of theologies from all kinds of narrow ways of interpreting theology is truly the liberation of the poor. All redeeming and saving liberation mark the humans as one family. The poor people are the real-life victims of injustice-made in the world. Hence they can best perceive the rupture between such injustice and God's project. To be or become poor is to perceive this from the standpoint and condition of the poor whatever the social and economic condition might be. It always picks up the primary inspiration of Jesus' own life and mission (Lk 4: 18-21).^{xi} It is a deeper commitment, a growing involvement expressed through an option for the poor.^{xi} "To opt for the poor entails a practice; it means assuming the place of the poor, their causes, their struggle, and at the limit, their often tragic fate."^{xi} This is the basic responsibility of the humans towards the humanity. The ordained have to proclaim to each and every corner of the world for the integral liberation of the people. Therefore, dialogue should lead to process of integral liberation of whole of humanity.

2.6.4.1 INTEGRAL LIBERATION AS PROCLAMATION

Dialogue is a conversation and sharing between persons and communities. There is mutual respect for each other, but also mutual honesty with regard to each one's identity. One cannot really speak to the other at the religious level without witnessing to one's own deep convictions, spiritual experiences, and moral options based on values and liberative deeds of life. In the context of a conversation between persons, proclamation can only be dialogical. On the other hand one can not really dialogue unless one is true to one's identity and is ready to confront the other with one's own vision and options. Otherwise, dialogue would become a harmless searching for a common ground that would spoil down to the lowest common denominator. If dialogue is more than exchange of views, then it is not worth spending time on it. The urge for proclamation bursts out from the true believer, who feels the desire to share what he or she has discovered and experienced. Here the Spirit is calling one to witness to the great deeds of God in ones own and in community's life and history. Because one feels that one has something very special to contribute that will give a meaning to people's lives, namely, the love of God as manifested on the cross and the resurrections of Jesus and the gift of a new life. The preferential love for the poor and solidarity with those who are seeking justice and recognition of their human dignity is another way of proclaiming Christ. Such proclamation is in deeds rather than words.^{xi} Paul VI holds as the goal that the Gospel transforms culture and cultures, everything that defines the life of the human community. In order to do this, both the witnesses given by a Christian life lived fully, and explicit proclamation of the Good News to others are needed (*EN* 18-24).^{xi}

The unity of the Christians is vital for the proclamation of the Gospel to the world. However, this union is not directed to Christians alone, but to the entire world. So that the world may believe that the Father has sent his Son, for his eternal glory and for our salvation (Jn 17: 21-23). Unity is a gift, which Christians could never completely achieve on their own. They have to work for its realisation. Indeed, the church has a sacred duty to work for and preserve this unity that is none other than 'the fullness of

fidelity to her Lord. Without minimising the critical power of certain ideologies in order to change the society, one must acknowledge the failure to do justice to the transcendental dimension of life. For that one has to commit oneself in dialogue by encountering with ideologies.

2.6.4.2 ENCOUNTERING IN COMMITMENT

Normally, the word ‘commitment’ is a common usage in the religious and secular world. Commitment means entering into serious “personal and community encounters.”^{xi} It raises the question of the nature of commitment itself, particularly in a pluralistic society. Therefore, religious identities cannot be understood or experienced in a static manner. They have to affirm, rediscover and grow in relation to both their own community and those of their own personal faith. Identify, based on commitment, is a dynamic process that constantly needs to be redefined, revised and affirmed. Commitment can never be a settled or established a position. It is both an assent and a question, a road and a destination, an arrival and a departure. By committed encountering, humans can regard themselves as pilgrims responding to the initiatives of God through sharing the joy and burden of existence, seeking resources for personal and social fulfilment.^{xi}

Our view of faith is no longer that of an assent to a creed, a list of truths. It is a commitment to a person, Jesus Christ as well as committing ourselves for others. This means a whole-hearted and existential commitment to others who are around a particular context. This kind of commitment we see in the person of Jesus Christ. His commitment was to God and others who were around his contextual life. Therefore committing ourselves is to love the other in service and sacrifice, even unto death. This committing ourselves to death should not be for fundamentalism or religious dogmas but it should be for the progress of human unity. It is a commitment to solidarity and communion, because it is in mutual love and service that we live and experience the mystery of God as unity. Therefore evangelisation is not the proclamation of some abstract body of truths to believe in and not only a call to a change of heart but a program of life to which we commit ourselves for actualisation of true humanity.^{xi} In a pluralistic society this open commitment for actualisation of true humanity is the path towards inter-religious dialogue.

2.6.4.3 CONTRA FUNDAMENTALISM - COMMUNALISM

Fundamentalism^{xi} is a narrow affirmation of truth, not only of one’s own religion, but one’s own interpretation of it. Due to it, others are simply deceived. Therefore, people lose their respect for religion. Then, there is no openness for dialogue. Fundamentalists are so convinced of their position. They often tend to be aggressive zealous advocates of religious ideas. When fundamentalism becomes communalistic, then there is a strong fortress. In this situation dialogue becomes impossible.

Communalism^{xi} believes that people who share the same religious faith also share the same economic and political interests. It tries to instrumentalise religion as a political force. It abuses the emotional power of the people and the absolute character of faith. The other believers are not accepted. They are considered as enemies, therefore, they are to be fought against. In this situation, the religion loses its prophetic character and becomes simply an estimation for political power. Then dialogue with religions becomes impossible because it becomes one of the political tools.

The fundamentalism and communalism cannot tackle down in religious level. Religious emotion is only a tool that the communalist issues. Very often a small group of people in power or searching for power seeks to gain this support of the masses by exploiting their religious sentiment. Similarly, fundamentalists are people who are afraid to face reality. Their absolute certainties are reactions of fear. Faced with rising tides of uncertainties, they hang on to simple and easy solutions to problems. The duty of the mission of the ordained is to make people aware of the reality of the pluralities of religions. Here a dialogical approach has greater chance of success than to be aggressive to others. Aggression makes the other self-defensive.^{xi}

Dialogue is the most fundamental condition for human existence. It is fundamentally the opening of themselves to another so that they might speak and reveal what they are. It is a way of knowing themselves and of disentangling their own point of view from other views and forming what they are to be.^{xi}

Fundamentalism and communalism, and all sorts of ideologies, hold many people enslaved. Others are considered as slaves to the ignorance, misinformation, and prejudice nourished by the media. Making all people really free from all these things is a challenge today. Even, in the democratic societies freedom is denied in so many ways. Therefore, dialogue should lead to process of integral liberation of all people.

2.6.4.4 INTEGRAL EVANGELISATION AS NEW MISSION

Nowadays, all speak of evangelisation, more as a dialogue and think in terms of human relationship with the other churches, with other religions and, indeed, with all people.^{xi} Dialogue is central to everybody's life. Especially for the ordained, it is the key aspect of the relationship between God and people. Oscar Lipscomb comments that in the closing words of the final document *Gaudium et spes*, and at the close of Vatican II, the Council Fathers stated:^{xi}

....such a mission requires us first of all to create in the church itself mutual esteem, reverence and harmony, and acknowledge all legitimate diversity; in this way all who constitute the one people of God will be able to engage in ever more fruitful dialogue, whether they are pastors or other members of the faithful. For the ties which unite the faithful together are stronger than those which separate them: Let there be unity in what is necessary, freedom in what is doubtful and charity in everything.^{xi}

The ordained share in the mission entrusted by Christ to the apostles. This is to penetrate and animate by a profound missionary spirit. Truly catholic spirit of mission looks beyond the boundaries of the diocese, country or rite, to meet the needs of the world. Thus the spirit must be prepared to preach the gospel everywhere. This also means that the ordained are men of mission and dialogue. In all their relationships, they have to witness to fraternity, service, the quest for truth, as well as a concern for the promotion of justice and peace. Finally, this means that pastoral task of the new evangelisation requires a new fervour, new methods, and a new expression for the announcing and witnessing of the gospel.

John Paul II writes: especially in those areas where Christians are in a minority, priests must be filled with special missionary zeal and commitment. Lord entrusts to them not only the pastoral care of

the Christian community, but also and above all the evangelisation of those of their fellow citizens who do not belong to Christ's flock (*RM 67*). According to Avery Dulles a vital church is one "that looks outward, spreading the good news and inviting others to join. It is not enough to evangelise those who come into our buildings; as bearers of the gospel, we must move into the neighbourhoods and work places to evangelisation."^{xi} The ordained are the evangelisers of life that takes place through dialogue of life. The evangelisers must be experts in humanity who have a profound knowledge of the heart of present-day human beings, participating in their joys and hopes. They are at the same time contemplatives, in love with God, able to bring the modern world in contact with the life-giving energies of the Gospel.^{xi} The ministerial priests in particular, and every Christian, share in this evangelising mission.^{xi} In the new evangelisation, the most urgent aspect is the renewal of pastoral workers, and particularly of the ordained. The interior attitude animates those who work for evangelisation (*EN.74*). Namely, their very spirituality is a guarantee of the authenticity of evangelisation. It can all be summed up in the "fidelity that creates communion."^{xi} As we discussed in the third chapter, the "priest is consecrated in his being as well as in his activity by the sacrament of orders."^{xi} They are endowed with a special character and grace that assimilates them to Christ, the head and shepherd. Their mission is neither irrelevant to their consecration, nor resemblance to it, but represents its intrinsic and vital purpose: consecration is necessary for mission. Consecration and mission are under the seal of the Spirit, and the influence of sanctity in power (*PDV 24*).^{xi}

3. Ordained Persons' Contextual Mission of Unity

We have discussed in the previous part, the localisation of the mission in and through the BCCs. This mission takes place through an authentic dialogue of life that is the *new way of evangelisation* in a pluralistic society. In this part, we deal with how the new evangelisation can be carried out through the ordained persons in a particular context. The thrust of the mission of the ordained in the global and particular context is to direct very concretely the culture of love. This culture of love always realises in the unity of humanity. Basing on the above said affirmation, the moral authority of the mission of the ordained has to be critically evaluated at the dawning of the third millennium in a pluralistic society.

On this road to culture of love, they have to respect the mystery of God's action in other persons. Their mission without orienting towards the mystery is an oppressive one. That will lead to oppression of poor, supporting the production of arms, keeping side with arising of fundamentalism and conservatism. The mission to the mystery is always creative and unitive. This creative mission leads to a holistic view of the globalisation of love and peace in the society.

3.1 A Holistic View of the Society

The promotion of justice needs a holistic approach in the field of evangelisation. Politically and economically the ordained have to promote the sense of common good as the foundation for public life, and a sense of participation and responsibility in every individual. Unless they help the growth of integrated human beings, mere socio-political changes will not help. Nowadays changing political parties is very common everywhere. It shows that people are uneasy with their present day of life. The forming of the many political parties also shows an insecure future for the people. Thus the human

promotion is the basic duty of every body. The participation in public life requires an accurate analysis of the issues under debate. The ordained sometimes pontificate from the pulpit about principles, but they have little idea what it would mean to put them into practice.^{xi} In this situation, all our religious effort should lead to conversion of heart and building up of community. Hence the religion itself plays an important role in the society and it should be prophetic to worldly situations.^{xi}

The role of the ordained, in this situation, is to make people aware of these problems for the sake of the humanity whom they face in their daily lives. They have no other mission other than human promotion. Their mission discovers its own precise role in promoting justice in a global and local context. The church, then, could be torn between two contrary poles in order to liberate and save the people. On the one hand the church has to be involved in the realities of the world in order to bear witness to the values of the gospel. On the other, in the world as it is, with the growing differentiation between social institutions, the church has to respect the autonomy of secular institutions. There is Christian social doctrine, but there is no Christian economical or political ideology. Even if the church condemns Marxist socialism and capitalist liberalism, it does not have a third way of its own to offer (SRS 41).^{xi} The mission of ordained asserts this way of service in society. This is not direct participation in the politics or social organisations^{xi} but prophetic proclamation of unjust handling of things in the society. In order to survive and function, they may come to terms with the powers that even be at their service. Because of their very concern to survive and continue to do the good that they are doing, they may tend to be silent. Then the problem becomes worse if the church herself, mutes her prophetic voice to protect humanity through the institutions. In this situation to divide the task between the ordained (prophecy) and the laity (involvement) seems a superficial solution. Therefore, as we have seen in the third chapter the task of the ordained entirely relate to the laity. This task is to awaken the baptismal grace of the laity for a prophetic witnessing through life and institutions to the society.

The social implication of the gospel is one of the means to promote vision of the community. Nowadays we see in the church, when there is no social application of the gospel, and fully dedicated social involvement of the church, people go away from the church. If they can apply the Gospel message in day today life of the people, then the people will come to the church and consider her a true community of God. Thus, at least in some areas, fighting for justice has been one of the reasons for the people opting to become disciples of Christ. In these cases, the concerned governments may oppose to evangelisation, because they are worried not about what people believe, but about its social consequences in terms of awareness, desire for freedom, and demand for rights.^{xi} The basis for this view of liberation is the integral dimension of evangelisation.

First of all, we have a holistic view of salvation. This salvation is not only for the “soul” but for the whole person and humanity. The creative love of God transforms not only the hearts of human beings, but also their lives and the world where they live. Just as sin introduces a disorder not only in human beings but also in the earthly and social existence, forgiveness promises a new heaven and a new earth. The miracles of Jesus are the symbols of the creative and transformative love of God. The mission of the ordained is this holistic one of liberating the nature of humanity in love. Their leaderships in the

church and the BCCs, all people feel at home and take responsibility for the world and for a secular society.

It is at the base of the churches that people must get to know one another, must come more closely together; it is here that strangeness and mutual misunderstanding must be broken down, here people must pray together, exchange spiritual experience, and jointly undertake responsibility for the world, for secular society.^{xi}

Another aspect of the problem becomes more evident today is its global nature of widening gap between rich and poor. International production and commercial patterns and policies make sure that the rich become richer and the poor becomes poorer within and among nations. In order to make the sporadic fights among the poor is the intention of the so-called rich. Here the politics seems to be more and more at the service of commerce. Their fate is often decided in the proxy wars for the rich and the powerful. Their fate is often decided in the board rooms of multinational companies, or in the political arena of the superpowers. One striking example of a global crisis, of which people today are becoming aware, is the plundering of the earth's resources and the consequent ecological destruction.^{xi}

3.1.1 A Global Vision on Ecology

The mission of the ordained is always presupposing a balanced ecological vision.^{xi} In the Bible we see that "God saw that it was good" (Gen. 1: 25). To men and women, the crown of entire process of creation, the Creator entrusts the care of the earth (Gen. 2: 15). This brings concrete obligations in the area of ecology for every person.^{xi} "If human beings do nothing about the humanity and the earth, then all the evidences suggests that we are on a slippery slope towards human and ecological destruction."^{xi} Fulfilment of these obligations supposes an openness to a spiritual and ethical perspective capable of overcoming selfish attitudes and "life-styles which lead to the depletion of natural resources."^{xi} We have to nurture and to sustain the universe' life perfectly. For that all have to personally witness through a life-style that would promote and facilitate an ecologically-sound life. This involves the mission of the ordained, joining in efforts to safeguard the world's atmospheric integrity and quality, and to resist globally the causes of atmospheric destruction.^{xi}

Today, we see a general change in attitude taking place toward the natural world, a change that is truly a sign of the times. People are becoming more devoted to the natural world. The ecosystem supports all the manifestations of life including human beings. Hence we become more cosmic-centred rather than self-centred. Indeed there is a sense in which all human activities are judged by the extent to which these foster a mutually enhancing human-cosmic relationship. This has implications for all our lives and thoughts, and inevitably affects our theology and liturgy. Then the very human nature is to create communion and to bring people to the moment of insight about the inter-relatedness of all things in the cosmos.^{xi} In this context, the notion of church as the sacrament of communio-unity has significance and mission of the ordained becomes a recognisable one to world.

The mission of the ordained is to understand the human and an ecological concern and struggle for justice in the contemporary experience of suffering and injustice. All are called to the promotion of life through common involvement in communal harmony and promotion of fuller life through the

renewal of the death-dealing mechanisms and social structures. Such partnership ministry is for the human wellbeing.

Human well-being in this world ... can serve as a much more workable, practical and “down-to-earth guideline and criterion for inter-religious dialogue than can philosophical or mystical notions of God Because human wellbeing is being threatened today, in such humanly specific and cross-cultural ways-e.g. starvation, nuclear war, ecological devastation, systems of economic injustice, we more readily know what we are taking about in discussing how to save humankind than how to conceive of the ultimate.^{xi}

As Jon Sobrino has pointed out, what was primarily important for Jesus was that people commit themselves to work for the Kingdom. Aloysius Pieris states even strongly that at the heart of *homo religiosus* there is a “revolutionary urge ... to regenerate a new humanity.”^{xi} In order to regenerate a new humanity the influence of new scientific technology should be critically evaluated.

3.1.2 Humanity in Techno-Scientific Era

The mission of the ordained has the responsibility to make people aware of the problems arising from technology and science. Their mission does not adhere to technologies but they have to witness how these technologies badly affect the wellbeing of humanity. John Paul II states that “scientific and technological progress is not always accompanied to the moral and ethical values which alone can ensure its correct application for the genuine good of people today and tomorrow.”^{xi} These moral problems are handled well by the moral theologians and they must take necessary steps for the community’s integral development. In the process of localisation of the church’s mission, all Christian scientists and technicians who belong to the local community can not close their eyes but must constantly gather together to evaluate the moral problems and make the society aware the good and bad intentions behind it. They must have a listening mentality to the position of church for the sake of the world community.

The role of the mission of the ordained is to make the community alive the problems arising from modern scientific research and to those who are working in science and technology from the local community. For that, the moral theologians should be more practical to the situations rather than only to theoretical level. They have to make ongoing studies about how these technologies influence on people and loose the identity of the humanity. Naturally, the science and technology must contribute for the well being of the society. The science is a search for the understanding of nature and its laws. It follows its own principle of rationality and immanence. The principle of rationality supposes that one can understand nature only if one can see and measure, experiment on, and control it. As long as science is dealing with nature there is no problem. But it can be led to materialism. That is dangerous for the community as a whole. Technology invents the mechanical means to use the laws of nature, discovered by science in order to control and exploit it.

Modern technology gives rise to industrialisation and urbanisation. Unabridged production, commercialism, consumerism, an unlimited quest for profits, individualism and competition, unjust accumulation of wealth by some at the expense of the impoverishment of others, uncontrolled exploitation and destruction of nature-these are some of the consequences of the abuse of technology. This abuse leads to a crisis of the values. It is moral rather than an intellectual crisis. This crisis is a problem, not of faith, but of selfishness, both individual and collective.

People have not become less religious; but either they have no time for religion and go in for easy substitutes, or they do not take seriously the demands of religion on their lives.^{xi}

In this situation taking the responsibility is critical question among the people. As pastors of the world, the mission of the ordained is to lead the community in a true way rather than being a taboo. If they can make alert people the problems that they go to face then there will be people to listen this prophetic voice.

Thus the ordained together with the community have to create new symbols that bind the humanity's well being. They have to make religion meaningful to the contemporary world situations. They must preach about sharing, participation and solidarity to people. Lack of true meaning, leads to alienation from life so that people seek refuge in drugs and etc. Selfishness leads inevitably to oppression, exploitation, and violence, exporting and importing of arms, and community and religious clashes etc. The greatest challenges of mission in the faces of contemporary culture are showing people how to find meaning in self-giving and sharing for the well being of humanity.

Even the advances of science and technology can not solve the worldly problems. Rather they increase the perennial problems of life and death, of sickness and unmerited suffering, of selfishness and ill will, of the need for love and community of ultimate meaning and transcendence. Though now the religious expression and practice have changed, the people have not become less religious. They find traditional religions less satisfactory so that they become either more fundamentalist or search for new religious movements. To reinstate the relevant of the prophetic role in such a situation is perhaps the greatest challenge facing religions and the church and the ordained today.^{xi} As John Paul II points out "what is needed for greater social justice is that: that economic development and the technical instruments it produces should be placed at the service of man: at the service of the whole man, and every man."^{xi} Today people are in urgent need of civilisation of love rather than weapons.

3.1.3 Civilisation of Love against Weapons

The media makes world a global village. Here we need a civilisation of love rather than globalisation of "weapons."^{xi} John Paul II states that "a crisis of civilisation which can be countered only by a new civilisation of love, founded on the universal values of peace, solidarity, justice, and liberty."^{xi} Through evangelisation, the culture of human becomes the civilisation of love.^{xi} All noble efforts of people must be to bring about a 'civilisation of love.'^{xi} The end product in the realisation of the spiritual vision of humanity and "all-true human culture" is "civilisation of love." In the speech to the World of Culture, John Paul II, characterises this civilisation with the

understanding and respect for the inalienable dignity of every human being created in the image of God...where there is justice and peace in which there will be ample room for legitimate differences, in which disputes will be settled through enlightened dialogue and not through confrontation.^{xi}

In the civilisation of love "where the rich willingly share with the poor, where the poor can be freed hunger and want, and where everyone comes to realise that 'man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God' (Mt. 4:4)."^{xi} Civilisation of love calls for "building a common culture without violence, a community that places its security not in the manufacture of more deadly weapons but in mutual trust and practical concern for a better future for all children."^{xi}

The word globalisation^{xi} is now a very commonly used. The globalisation is not only just an economical system, but it transforms space and time. As we know, now whatever good or bad done to the global village affects everybody, especially the poor and the weak. Therefore, if at all there is a global threat that affects every part of the planet is the globalisation of weapons.^{xi} The result of it can be heard in everyday news from all over the world where there are wars, murders, drugs, looting, diseases, hunger, etc. The supply of the weapons causes everywhere civil war and ethnic strives. Then the hungry mob searches for food and moves to where they hope to share a life of prosperity. By analysing the present global situation Hans Küng writes:

The many social evils are indebtedness, trade deficit, low savings and investments, industrial non-competitiveness, inadequate health care, poor quality secondary education, deteriorating social infrastructure and widespread urban decay, a greedy wealthy class, a truly parasitic obsession with litigation, a deepening race and poverty problem, widespread crime and violence, the soared if a massive drug culture, the inbreeding of social helplessness, the profusion of sexual license, the massive propagation of moral corruption by the visual media, a decline in civic consciousness, the emergence of potentially divisive multiculturalism, the emerging gridlock in the political system and an increasingly pervasive sense of spiritual emptiness.^{xi}

The mission of the ordained is entirely linked to these social situations. If they keep quiet who is going to speak about all social problems? Therefore, their duty and responsibility are to make the world aware of global threats, and to preach goodness to people prophetically.

Arms production and of its exporting and importing challenge all the countries to spend more money for security. If all are equal in democracy why some are treated with all privileges and security? Democracy should begin from the local community to be a sign to the world. The ordained together with all the members of the Christian churches should take up leadership and form a strategy to annihilate all the weapons and weapon industries from the world and mobilise the people to bring peace and unity. This will be a challenging mission in a pluralistic society at the dawning of the third millennium. Instead of globalisation of weapons culture as a last resort of life, the mission of the ordained should foster the word of God that is sharper than the two edged sword prophetically.^{xi} Then the value of the mission of the ordained will be fulfilled in the society. They have to foster the globalisation of love for unity of humanity as mentioned earlier. The wealth of the countries should be spent for this kind of mission, rather than spending money for destructive and unproductive means like productions of weapons such as chemical weapons and star wars etc. All scientists who work in this butchery have to rehabilitate into the scientific works of human promotion of life.

The Arms race is the worst basic factor destroying the community life. Because of the availability of modern technological arms, even the poor countries feel insecure. They buy it for their own existence, along with food and other necessary things. This is one of the greatest challenges to the mission of the ordained in the world. Poverty can not be considered within a limited view, but rather within the kind of global social system that makes people poor. The mission here is not charity but having a prophetic voice to reorganise the economic system of the world, especially stopping all kinds of production of destructive weapons and technology in global and contextual society. The media should also foster a

new way of life of love and peace rather than functioning as a mere advertising company. This will give a new life for the people of global society.

3.1.4 Mass Media in Global and Particular Contexts

The ordained can not close their eyes to the vital influence of mass media around the globe. John Paul II states, “for the new evangelisation to be effective, it is essential to have a deep understanding of the culture of our time, in which the social communications media are most influential.”^{xi} He continues that the means of social communications have become so important as to be for many the chief means of information and education, of guidance and inspiration in their behaviour as individuals, families and within society at large. In particular the younger generation is growing up in a world conditioned by the mass media (*RM 37*). He then asks: Since the very evangelisation of modern culture depends to a great extent on the influence of the media, is it not enough to use the media simply to spread the Christian message and the Church’s authentic teaching? It is also necessary to integrate that message into the new culture created by modern communication. The new culture originates not just from whatever content is eventually expressed, but from the very fact that there exist new ways of communicating with a new language, new technique and new psychology (*RM 37*).^{xi} The freedom of speech and expression is not to do what one wants to do, but does it in view of bringing unity and peace. For that the media should bring a holistic view of the society. The magisterium has always emphasised the “holistic mission” of the church (*EN 18, RH 15, PDV 96*). Thus the mission of the ordained brings together all in God.

3.2 Binding All in God Globally and Contextually

The mission of the ordained binds every thing in God globally by actively involving in the contextual problems. According to David Power, rediscovering of the sense of human love and unity is important in the teaching of the gospel values. The ordained are very close to the people in all kinds of ministries. Thus they have to be conscious of their modes of expression and of their approach to the sacred. They have to foster within communities the seed of being the life of faith of the community. In today’s world, the mark of the mission is the care for the suffering, the marginalised and the defence of justice. In such way, Christians bring out the problems of humanity, as well their hopes, the unique experience of the cross of Christ, their understanding of the presence of Christ among the poor, suffering and those who are causing suffering for the poor.^{xi} The ordained have to serve human beings and society according to the mission they received and opted. The ethical life of the mission of the ordained in the context is the love that implies respect for every person and their rights. It implies rules of social justice aiming at recognising what is each person’s due and at harmoniously sharing earthly goods among individuals, families and groups. In additions, Jesus stressed the universal quality of love, above and beyond the differences of race and nationality constituting humanity^{xi}; so that they become reconciled with all people through pastoral charity.

3.2.1 Reconciling All in Pastoral Charity

As the continual manifestation of ‘pastoral charity,’ of Jesus’ life, the mission of the ordained is a daily enactment of it in a pluralistic context. Pastoral charity is the virtue by which we imitate Christ in

his self-giving and service. It is not just what we do, but our gift of self, which manifests Christ's love for his flock. Pastoral charity determines our way of thinking and acting, our way of relating to people (*PDV* 23). The ordained are as the living images of Christ, the head make humanity one with Christ in an interior way. In and with him the pastoral charity becomes the grace for all. They are configured to Jesus the good shepherd by virtue of their consecration.^{xi} They are called to imitate and live out his own pastoral charity. The gift of Christ's love, is described as the unique gift of self made by the bridegroom to the bride. The ordained stand in this spousal relationship with regard to the community (*PDV* 22).^{xi}

The pastoral charity is rooted on the incarnate word. Pastoral charity, as a following and imitation of Christ, is the most important aspect of priestly spirituality. Without this evangelical aspect, the ordained can not find their own identity as persons.^{xi} Pastoral charity should characterise the lives and activities of the ordained.^{xi} They are the "witness of truth and life" and in their concern as faithful shepherds they will also search for those "who have fallen away from the sacraments or even from the faith" (*LG* 28).^{xi}

The pastoral charity's correct application will depend upon faithfulness to the new graces of the Holy Spirit in sociological, cultural and historical circumstances. They must be 'the aroma of Christ' (2 Cor 2:15) or his 'transparency' (Jn 17:10) in the circumstances of place and time for the concrete human being (*PDV* 15-16, 42, 60).^{xi} Juan Esquerda Bifet writes that every Christian is called to share the life of Christ, who is prolonged in the church and who is present and resurrected in the life of every person, in every ecclesial community and in every historical age. The ordained share their priestly existence in a special way. They extend their work and live in harmony with their experiences of pastoral charity.^{xi} They must be "person of charity" who practice 'love without exclusion or partiality.'" Thus one must respond to "the universal call to holiness" and become "a person of the Beatitudes" (*RM* 87-90).

Pastoral charity demands the ministry to all human beings irrespective of any discrimination, and requires a specific life-style. For this, there belong simplicity, modesty, unpretentiousness, openness, accessibility, brotherliness, an existence marked by dialogue, an ability to mediate and reconcile, and a willingness to commit oneself and to take responsibility. Here to be a priest means to be a pastor who reconciles the people of God.^{xi} The power of the pastor is a power in the service of reconciliation. Their service is "a prudent pastoral practice of calling forth everyone's gift to be used for the common good."^{xi} A pastor is a true servant of Christ. A true servant is one who liberates people to see their own power to effect changes and overcome obstacles by recognising each other.^{xi} They are persons of reconciliation and compassion for all. Here the compassion is a communal thing i.e., passion together. Compassion is together-loving and together-suffering in a community for a common goal basing on a common ground of love. A proper community development is impossible without the compassionate spirit of its leaders. The community is to be a living example to the world of reconciliation that breaks down the human hostilities between races, classes and genders. In a servant community, all care for one another.^{xi} The unique nature of the ordained can focus only on their ministry of reconciliation. It gives a unique nature to all those who are ordained and non-ordained in the communities.^{xi} This ministry demands of them an intense spiritual life, filled with qualities and virtues those are typical of a person who "presides over" and "leads" a community. The qualities and virtues such as faithfulness, integrity, consistency, wisdom,

a welcoming spirit, friendliness, goodness of heart, decisive firmness in essentials, freedom overly subjective viewpoints, personal disinterestedness, patience, an enthusiasm for daily tasks, confidence in the value of the hidden workings of grace manifest in the simple and the poor (*PDV* 26). By doing so they safeguard the mystery of faith in the lives of the people.

3.2.2 Mystery of Faith in Unity as Community

The ordained are the stewards of the mystery of God in the community. Hence we say that they are first of all, persons of faith.^{xi} They have within themselves the ‘mystery of faith’ that transcends the contingent events of everyday life.^{xi} This is clearly put forward by Yves Congar that “faith is my response to God’s action communicated to me through his word.”^{xi} Karl Rahner warns against any pretension of life in faith, but encourages everyone to be realistic in faith. “Do not pretend that our faith is untroubled and without conflicts but show to others what really we are.”^{xi} A life of faith is only possible to a person who is sustained by faith and in grace at the same time living that faith courageously. Witnessing to the incomprehensible mystery of faith to the people is not an impossible one. Because, as we have discussed in the first chapter,

the core of the Christian message holds that this incomprehensible mystery of God has become comprehensible in Jesus Christ, the immeasurable God became measurable in him in space and time, the invisible visible, the distant present, that the eternal silence became audible in our world.^{xi}

Thus the ordained person is “truly steward and dispenser of the mysteries of God”^{xi} and they have been called to serve and be stewards of this mystery.^{xi} This mystery of Christ is present and operative through the office of the church.^{xi} Christ entrusted a special mission to the apostles in the name of the church. That mission is to locate “the church as a household of faith within the dynamic presence of the trinitarian ‘economy’, and links this household to the eschatological promise of the fulfilment for the whole ‘*oikoumene*’.”^{xi} Karl Rahner associates the mission of the ordained with that of Mary who witnessed and shared in the suffering of her Son, through real and courageous faith by bearing the cross for others.^{xi}

The cross is the condition of every human activity. Only through the cross we do ourselves achieve authenticity and depth in our own existence. Nothing is worth doing, unless one agrees to pay this price.^{xi} The ordained are God’s signs and witnesses in the world primarily by entering totally into the mode of Jesus’ being on the cross.^{xi} Thus “the holy service of the priest offers a light in the darkness of human existence and the sound of the word entrusted to him by the grace of ordination echoes through his acceptance of the cross of ministry.”^{xi}

The ordained always keep in mind the paschal mystery that is the great hidden treasure of their life.^{xi} Paschal mystery is a gift that they share with others through their existential-being-of-lives. The paschal mystery is at the time of struggle and suffering bearing the cross of others. At the same time, it is the experience of joy, peace and the new life of Easter. The paschal mystery challenges to join the everyday lives in the ongoing, continual, recurrent movement from death to life, from self-centredness to loving self-transcendence. Peter Schineller writes “to be truly human means to love, a self-sacrificing

love that goes out to others, rather than remain self-centred, self-engrossed.”^{xi} The paschal mystery gives the deepest insight into the meaning of being human. It also gives the deepest insight into the mystery of God. Unity can be facilitated both by collaboration and witness in the field of development and progress by dialogue and change of heart. Even the church is called upon to live by grace on the unity of the most Holy Trinity.^{xi} In ‘basic human community’ people share with each other their life as reflecting the mystery of the Trinity.^{xi} From this above said understanding of the mission in a pluralistic society let us come to a concluding part where we discuss symbolic mediation, by the ordained, of the mission of mystery of Trinity as gift of unity in community.

4. Ordained Persons’ Symbolic Mission of Community

The central focus of this part is how the symbolic mission of the ordained actualises the unity of humanity. John Paul II, at the *ad-limina* visit of Indian Bishops reminded that “at the very centre of all your pastoral solicitude ... is the church’s unity.”^{xi} He regards the church’s unity as the very centre of all pastoral works, the bishops are engaged in. The unity of bishops with the clergy, religious, laity, seminarians and catechists, even out side of the church with leaders of other religion, is almost indispensable if they want to evangelise effectively in a pluralistic society. The ministry to families, whose unity is threatened by socio-economic, political pressures and problems, requires efforts from the ordained. All their growth and sustenance depend on the life emerging from the centre of the unity, who is the God and human himself.^{xi} Therefore, they must promote dialogue of life for the unity of all humanity. This unity is further enhanced by the pluri-formity of religions for the integral development of the humanity.

4.1 Integral Development of the Humanity

The symbolic mission of the ordained is for “the integral development of the humanity.”^{xi} The concept of poor is a wide one for the integral development. A narrow way of thinking is unhealthy to the people and their development. According to John Paul II, the poor are not only those who live without the basic physical or spiritual necessities of life, but they also include the millions of refugees, those who are facing total putting out due to drought or famine, those who never had formal education, the powerless and the victims of justice, those deprived of their human rights and freedom (religious freedom included), those who have lost meaning in life or have lived immoral lives, those who have suffered due to the breakdown of relationships. Thus, according to him, poverty is a comprehensive concept that includes the physical, moral, spiritual and political dimensions of human life.^{xi} The basic mission of the ordained towards the poor is the fundamental option of Christ’s own mission.

The Church is the pilgrim people of God travelling towards its goal, the eschatological Kingdom in the Father’s house. As the Church moves among and together with other communities and religious traditions ‘she recognises in the poor and the suffering the likeness of her poor and suffering Founder’ (LG 8). She feels therefore especially called to defend and promote everywhere the inalienable dignity of every man, woman and child, in every nation and of every social condition.^{xi}

For, John Paul II “this liberation brought by the cross of Christ is the springboard for different types of human liberation on account of man’s full dignity.”^{xi} If we go against this, then, it would be an infidelity to the example of Jesus, who came “to preach the Good News to the poor”^{xi} The primal message of the incarnation is “to preach good news to the poor,” “to proclaim release to the captives,” “recovering of sight to the blind,” “to set at liberty those who are oppressed,” and “to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord” (Lk 4: 18, 19).^{xi} If it is so, the effective advocacy for the poor requires addressing the social systems and structures, which create and sustain their poverty.^{xi} This redemption touches “the very concrete situations of injustice to be combated and of justice to be restored.”^{xi} According to him, “the link between Redemption, evangelisation, liberation and integral human development (IHD) is anthropological and theological.”^{xi} All the initiatives in the field of education and youth activities, in the care for the sick, the dying, the aged, in the social organisation and services to and by the poor - all these constitute what he describes as the “Messianic programme of Jesus of Nazareth,’ the ‘programme of the Gospel” to realise God’s Kingdom.^{xi} “The pilgrim people lose the vitality, if they will not take on the perspective of the poor by entering into their lives, by waiting to learn from them where they might discern God.”^{xi}

Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priest, clearly states about the mission of ordained to poor. “Although he has obligations to all persons, the priest has the poor and the lowly entrusted to him in a special way.”^{xi} William Shannon observes that

a priest who strives to live a truly interior life will be better able to enter into the sufferings and sorrows of people from the inside, rather than being a sympathetic, but outside, spectator. For his inferiority will not allow him to forget his contemplative union with all of God’s people.^{xi}

This is what we see in these words “I am called to be both a contemplative and to immerse myself in ministry among the poor.”^{xi} As we have seen earlier, in the new evangelisation, there are new sectors for evangelisation since situations of evangelisation have changed considerably. Hence “the preferential option (neither exclusive, nor excluding) for the poor and for young people and of special concern for the family, the environment of work, social justice, culture, etc”^{xi} are taken into consideration for an integral development of humanity.

The integral development of humans is a process of liberation in their own concrete situation. Actually the integral Christian liberation is marked by the sign of hope. This liberation includes the whole of human life, “including the political dimension.”^{xi} This symbolic mission of integral human development leads them “beyond time and history...beyond man himself” (*EN 28*). Thus we say that the liberation is immanent and transcendent (*EN 27*). This way of integral development of humanity is “erected on the three great pillars...the truth about Jesus Christ, the truth about the Church, the truth about human beings.”^{xi} The disunity and divisions in society affect the poorest of the poor. Hence their symbolic mission is an actual solidarity with all human beings.

4.1.1 Solidarity with All

One of the main features of the symbolic mission of the ordained depends on a sense of solidarity with all,^{xi} especially with the poor.^{xi} The Second Vatican Council finds solidarity and dialogue as the basis of the whole relationship between the church and the world. The church which is “composed of men,” forms a part of the whole human family. The church is inserted into the human family (*GS 1*).

Solidarity always associates with the ideas of dialogue, but at the same time deeper than dialogue itself. It is a renewal in Christ according to the Gospel which implies solidarity with the poor, involvement in the task of this world, solution to misery, to war, to social injustice, and inequalities. The joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of the human beings of this age, especially those, who are poor, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anxieties of the followers of Christ. For theirs is a community composed of humans, united in Christ, are led by the Holy Spirit in their journey to the kingdom. This community always realises a deep solidarity with human kind and its history (*GS* 1). As Jesus taught, the concern of the ordained is for all humanity and their compassion is for all in need. It provides a starting point for all things that they do and say, when they love one another. They are aware that the ultimate test of their love of God is the love they show to one another especially to the poor.^{xi} If those who make any differentiation on the basis of race, class or castes, the persons who are really convinced of the human dignity, should persuade them for the mission of solidarity with all. Because this mission of solidarity is not something one adds to one's vocation to the priesthood but it is something central and intrinsic from one's very first moment in the order as human.^{xi} The solidarity with all people of the society is not authoritarianism. The authentic disciples of Christ seek solidarity with people and walk with them in compassion as Jesus himself has done. This mission gives high value for them in a pluralistic society. Their goal is to preach the Gospel in a cross-cultural situation irrespective of any kind of discrimination.^{xi}

As ministers, all are called “to carry out a sincere review of their lives regarding their solidarity with the poor” and to fight against hunger by changing their lifestyle (*RM* 59-60). A high priority for the symbolic mission of the ordained is to be in solidarity with the poor in the local church. This involves accompaniment in the suffering arising from violence, exploitation, as well as political and economic domination. It also includes working with the marginalised people on the fringes of society. Thus, they can learn from the poor a clear sense of their faith and their dependence on God. John Paul II teaches “as pastors of the people of God, priests must also be alert to the challenges of the world today and sensitive to the problems and hopes of their people, sharing their experiences and growing, above all, in solidarity toward the poor.”^{xi}

The most authentic model of church, according to Leonardo Boff, is the church from the poor. He asserts that “it is the *theology of captivity and liberation* arising from the church of the poor which best speaks to situation of millions of poor and oppressed Christians in the Third world.”^{xi} Solidarity with the poor and enunciation of their hopes and aspirations imply a redefinition of roles and a redistribution of responsibility within the church. The hierarchy is called to be in solidarity with the laity and to encourage them in their creativity. The laity, from their part, must be willing to assert their right to be actively involved in the struggle for human liberation.^{xi} Thus “the process of development and liberation takes concrete shape in the exercise of solidarity, that is to stay in the love and service of neighbour, especially of the poorest” (*SRS* 46, 52, 57). Solidarity with the poor finally reaches to the integral development of the humanity. When the symbolic mission of the ordained takes a drastic step to uplift the poor, then they lead the society and the world into socio-economic stability.

4.1.2 Socio-Economic Stability

An authentic symbolic mission of the ordained strives for an integral socio-economic stability in the society as well as globally. The economic development is to be placed at the service of every human being. It must respect primacy of persons and human solidarity.^{xi} The human dignity is held supreme in all initiatives to overcome poverty and economic development. The humans are not tools of economic systems. On the contrary, these systems are set up so that their inner value is protected and enhanced. This takes priority over economic progress. Therefore, it is not a matter of mere bread and butter for the poor, but economic development should serve every person, regardless of social status, race or creed and discrimination.

There is an increasing awareness in the world that progress is not the exclusive right of some privileged individuals or even nations, but that the benefits of development should extend to all. In a world of great inequalities, where pattern of thought and behaviour change ever so slowly, it is imperative that all sectors of society feel duty-bound to hasten the achievements of that measure of social justice which consists in ensuring the basic necessities of life for every citizen.^{xi}

Since economic development affects each and every one in the world, it is the responsibility of the ordained, wherever they are, to look at the world's economic situations and to make alert the people at any level of economic mismanagement by anybody. Each and every ordained person is challenged by the global mission of love to make their own local community to exercise economic activities based on integral development of the humanity. The economic development, the value of work, the role of education and social development strategies must be promoted for the sake of people. Through the well administrative set up of the parish community, the ordained normally involve the laity in the social uplifting of each and every person in society.

4.1.3 Unfolding Values of the Society

The symbolic mission of the ordained unfolds the values of the society. During John Paul II's visit to India, he told the ordained that "you are heralds of the Gospel and builders in this great land of India. You are servants of the Church in this land ... with such a bounty of cultural traditions and yet a land in need of many human endeavours for its progress and development."^{xi} This statement points out his vision of the mission ordained in the light of Indian situation. The priorities of the mission of them are (1) proclaiming the Gospel, which demands that they be human 'totally imbued with the word of God, constantly seeking to penetrate its mystery and meaning; ever eager to share the truth of the Gospel with others.' This, in turn, strengthens the Christian communities. (2) The promotion of Christian formation promotes an enlightened and zealous laity, directed at improving the social, economic and political structures of society. For that, they need the leadership of the ordained through formation and guidance. (3) The fidelity is to administer the sacraments for the spiritual benefit of all people. Fidelity to eucharist and penance is an essential one since the priestly identity is intrinsically linked to their performance. (4) Ordained persons' own commitment "as men of the Church" necessitate that they have to love the church as the body of Christ, the mystery of unity of the humanity. To be persons of the church, involve a total acceptance of the church and seeing oneself as part of the world and its healing. (5) 'Solidarity with the poor and fraternal interest in youth. Love for the poor and youth is the shape and destiny of the church. (6) Foster the value of family relationships, the practice of family prayer,

catechetical training and devotion to the sacraments, the sacredness of human life, and the promotion of family rights among the people.^{xi}

The fundamental rights of the human person are inscribed in human nature itself, they are willed by God and therefore call for universal observance and acceptance. No human authority can infringe upon them by appealing to majority opinion or political consensus, on the pretext of respect for pluralism and democracy. Therefore, the church must be committed to the task of educating and supporting lay people involved in lawmaking, government and the administration of justice, so that legislation will always reflect those principles and moral values which are in conformity with a sound anthropology and advance the common good.^{xi}

The human values are the sincere attempts of the ordained to integrate life and mission, to link their identity and work, and to harmonise their spirituality and apostolates. The value of their mission is actualised through each local church when it is more responsive to people's situations, needs and problems. Through this mission, the local community itself becomes missionary. Hence their mission to the local church is an attempt to affect the society at large, and to move beyond the borders of the local church to reach peoples of other lands and cultures.^{xi}

The ordained seek a wider collaboration with all people of good will even from other religions and ideological groups. In today's pluralistic society, an openness to doing mission in new ways, both by life-style and by apostolic work, has an important value. The ordained have to concretise the creativity through new ways, apostolates, and new forms of faith witness. Community aspects of team work as well as consensus and full participation in mission are the life-giving witnessing of all participants. They remain open to exploring new structures that place them more at the service of people and effective mission. Hence the symbolic mission of the ordained never functions in isolation or in a *vacuum*. Everyone is called to ministry struggles to respond to the social, cultural, political, economic, as well as religious needs of the community.^{xi} In these circumstances, the committed mission of them is highly valued in the society. As disciples of Jesus, they must turn their attention to all that

threatens, weakens, diminishes, and destroys the life of individuals, groups, or peoples. Such a mission contributes human promotion which includes denouncing injustices, supporting victims in their just causes, crying for the marginalised and suffering, joining together with all persons of good will who seek to build a more just and human society, engaging in the analysis of the given situation in order to arrive at the root causes of poverty and injustice, and faith reflection on pastoral action.^{xi}

Through unfolding the values of the society their symbolic mission becomes the human way of being in the society.

4.2 Being-Human By Being-Christian

The ordained persons, as being Christians, grows to being more human. They as Christians, have a deep relationship to the church and the world. They must be "good Christians before they can become a good priest."^{xi} Today, the ordained need their reasons for *being* (*being* a human as well as a priest) much more than their manner of living. The question always comes to them, what makes a man become a priest? A man becomes human before he can be a Christian and a priest. The essential obligation in their lives is the building up of a deep attitude of faith and trust in God.^{xi}

The only authentic meaning of being ordained is being a true Christian, that is to be in service of the world. In this mission

‘the priest’s identity,’ as the synod fathers wrote, ‘like every Christian identity, has its source in the Blessed Trinity,’ which is revealed and is communicated to people in Christ establishing in him and through the Spirit, the church as ‘the seed and the beginning of the kingdom’ (PDV 12).

The ordained, as being human by way of Christian, render human service to the world.

4.2.1 Human Service to the World

The symbolic mission of ordained is a human service in a pluralistic society. Since Second Vatican Council, the church has an understanding that “the action on behalf of justice and the transformation of social structures are no less central to the church’s mission than the ministries of evangelisation and worship.”^{xi} This statement makes clear the mission of the church and, within her, the mission of the ordained. The mission of her seeks to liberate rather than to dominate and to give rather than to take. She herself is called to render the spiritual service of bringing the world into union with creator and Lord through ministry. By giving and serving, she builds herself up in love and grows into the full maturity of Christ its Head (Eph 4: 13-15-16). Karl Rahner posits that the ordained should represent Christ and his ministry in the world - a man for others and a service to the world is the essence of priesthood.^{xi} The ordained are considered to be a men for others and a men of service. The *diakonia* of Jesus Christ is the model for the service. The people expect today from them a total dedication in their service to God and to the world.^{xi} The mission of them can do such service in effective manner if they are able to see the ministry in its fullness as purely a human service to the world, which is ordered by God in the Son through the Spirit, in creation and especially in incarnation.

The ministry can only be understood fully within the community it serves.^{xi} The ministries are at the community’s service to the world. The only possible way the church can do her service to the world, if she holds the key to justice, happiness and prosperity. She must first take this key, open the door and walk through so that others can follow.^{xi} Therefore, in order to make actualise the church in the world, they have severe roles in today’s pluralistic society. They are the one who must believe in himself, who are called to serve the church and also long to do justice to the world.

God’s will must constitute “justice”, and that will is that our world not be destroyed but come to fulfilment in ways beyond our wildest expectations. God wills to realise this through the church; and this the church can do only if it witnesses to God’s unfathomable miracle.^{xi}

Through the church their symbolic mission of human service is mediated in the society.

4.2.2 Personal Socio-Cultural Mediation

The symbolic mission of the ordained is the mediation of values into personal and cultural levels in the society where varieties of cultures prevail. This mediation refers to religious values and to the level of personal value. The personal mediation is the primary mediation of grace, upon which all other mediations are depended. In the cultural mediation of grace the preaching of the Gospel is fundamental one. The personal mediation of grace is constituted by dialectic play between limitation and transcendence, and integration and operation. The Gospel is a principle of both integration (identity) and operation (self-transcendence). Integration of the Gospel provides to basic identity of the church, from which it cannot defeat without losing her identity. As a principle of operation, it provides the dynamism that constantly transforms both the church and history as it breaks the bounds of what should be the

kingdom of God on earth. The Episcopal mission concerns with the cultural mediation of grace. This ministry grounds in a personal identity that itself is grounded in the grace of Christ. The church has an antecedent expectation that persons who are chosen for the ministry, are exemplars of personal authenticity grounded in grace. As integrator, episcopal ministry is concurred with fidelity to the Tradition. As operator, episcopal ministry enters into creative dialogue with culture, both transforming cultures and shedding new light on the Gospel itself.^{xi} Normally, episcopal ministry acts as a higher level of integration over and above the social level. This higher level of integration is exercised not at a higher level over and above the social level, but at a higher level within social level. Bishops are then seen as higher level social organisers of the ecclesial life of the church, being concerned with the day-today questions of the church, rather than as cultural agents preserving the church in truth and dialoguing with culture.^{xi}

The social ministry of mediation corresponds to presbyteral ministry. It is dependent upon the prior exercise of episcopal ministry. This ministry concerns more with the practical life of the local community. This ministry has two movements: first, an integrative movement which seeks to heal the division between persons and groups in the community by bringing them together in prayer and good works. Secondly, an operative movement that seeks to apply Gospel meanings and values to find new solutions to the practical problems of people living together in justice and peace. The aim of such a ministry is to restore a distorted social dialectic to the dynamic balance that is essential to human flourishing. If there is no healthy way of this dialectic play, the result will be the social marginalisation of the poor and the powerless.^{xi} Forms of ministry vary from community to community. The fruit of each ministry has to be judged by the way it edifies the building up of the community in love. All ministries within the church are subject to the common good of humanity.^{xi} This is exercised by mutual relationship of the ordained within the community for the sake of the society.

4.2.3 Mutual Relationship in Love

The symbolic mission of ordained is expressed in mutual relationship. At present we notice that the pastoral leadership of the ordained gives way to a collaboration that bears witness to the communion of persons.^{xi} The leadership of the ordained is in relationship *with* a group, *in* a particular situation, and *for* a specific purpose. The variables of personal involvement in the society are equally as important for leadership. That is the quality of a potential leader. There are at least four major variables now known to be involved in leadership, (1) the characteristics of the leader; (2) the attitudes, needs and other personal characteristics of the followers; (3) characteristic of the organisation, such as its purpose, its structure and the nature of the tasks to be performed; (4) and the social, political and economic milieu. This means that leadership is not a property of the individuals, but a complex relationship among these variables.^{xi} This leadership involves Spirit-inspired gifts of the leader to the community that is not only a social reality but can also be a spiritual one. Thus St. Paul can rightly call it a charism, one of the spiritual gifts for building up of church (Rom 12: 8).^{xi}

In the first chapter we have already discussed about the theo-anthropological mission of humans in relation to Trinity. A trinitarian approach to mission is necessarily collaborative and co-relational one. It involves modelling community in various ways,

particularly through various kinds of team ministries both inside and out side of the church. A theology of the mission that centres on trinitarian communion supports a spirituality that is radically critical to all forms of clericalism. Its guiding idea is that of mutual and equal relationships. It is empowered by a vision of agape love. The criterion of mutual and equal relations is fundamental to the mission. In such a communal context, the exercise of power undergoes a transformation.^{xi} In this situation, Bernard Loomer's insights into the nature of power are particularly helpful. He distinguishes between unilateral power and relational power.^{xi} Unilateral power is the power to strive to influence in order to simply advance one's own purposes. This kind of power operates only in one direction, seeking to increase one's own influence and status. Relational power, by contrast, is the capacity to both influence others and be influenced by them. It involves the capacity to receive other people's insights, and to take account of their feelings and values. Relational power frees one to act co-operatively, to be influenced, without being threatened and without losing one's identity and freedom.^{xi}

Bernard Loomer sees Jesus "at the bottom of the hierarchy of unilateral power," but at the "apex of life conceived in terms of relational power."^{xi} Relational power is the power "from below." It is non-violent, participatory, and empowering. This reflects a leadership that is faithful to the Gospels where all forms of dominating power are forbidden (Mk 10: 42-45) and where only the leadership of the servant is allowed (Jn 13: 1-15). More and more we see that one of the crucial tests for the fidelity of the mission of the ordained is to ask whether power is exercised unilaterally or relationally. As a symbol of unity they should show to their society the relational power of mission. But it needs to be supported, by the sense of close connection with pope, bishops' conferences, diocesan bishop and presbyterium of the diocese, members of the local church, BCCs, ecumenical communities and human communities. The binding force for all these is the communion-in-love in view of unity as a gift/donation from God. This relational power of the church constitutes her message that is the very being of the church herself. Those who are called to mission are public symbols and agents of the relational power. Actually this sharing of relational power in mutual relationship of love is what fundamentally gives shape to ordained spirituality that is not other than the spirituality of humans themselves. From this we come to conclusion that the ordained "are the visible signs and agents of the trinitarian communion which is the very being of the Church."^{xi} By participating the relational power of the trinitarian communion the ordained become the hope-filled prophetic leaders of the community.

4.3 Hope-Filled Prophetic Leadership

In the community the symbolic mission ordained is a hope-filled prophetic leadership. Recently John Paul II, in his address towards the religious leaders of the world in Inter-religious Assembly at St Peter's square, stated that, "I have always believed that religious leaders have a vital role to play in nurturing that hope of justice and peace without which there will be no future worthy of humanity."^{xi} He points out that

The basic attitude of hope on the one hand encourages the Christian not to lose sight of their final goal, which gives meaning and value to life, and on the other offers solid and profound reasons for a daily commitment to transform reality in order to make it correspond to the plan of God (*TMA* 46).^{xi}

The symbolic mission of the ordained is a third day ministry of hope of resurrection. Jonah was rescued on the third day and Jesus was found in the temple on the third day. Paul's sight was restored on the

third day. So their symbolic mission helps people to believe in, and to move from the first day - the Good Friday of sin, suffering, and death, through the second day - Holy Saturday of waiting and watching, and to the third day - the Easter of resurrection and new life. They help persons to see the paschal mystery, the movement to the third day of new life, as an ever-recurrent reality in their lives.

The resurrection of Christ is a divine approval of his unselfish love and his risky struggle against suffering. It is the confirmation of Christ's love till death. According to Kristiaan Depoortere, "in Christ the supremacy of God's love is confirmed"^{xi} and hope becomes irreversible. Therefore, they stand in the place of Christ to share their experience of the third day of resurrection in hope. Through their unselfish love and struggle for justice, they bring the experience of resurrection into the community. On the basis of their belief in resurrection, "a faithful community is obliged to take care of the poor and the suffering."^{xi} Hope brings us into a right relationship with God and humanity. The absolute reality of God is the goal that determines human nature itself. God is the human destiny, but not any other things in the world. The more we are capable of achieving as human beings, the more we become bitterly aware of human incapacity to penetrate to the perfect reality of the word.^{xi} Therefore, hope in God makes to realise human existence as *being-hopeful* for perfection of life. The ordained are as the "bearer of the mystery" and "doctor of the soul," they experience the resurrection event.^{xi} Their experience of the resurrection-event, will give them insight to be with the suffering and poor in the world. This way of life of them causes Christ to be represented, the great pastor of unity of the humanity that leads them to a communitarian-symbolic mission.

A communal life-style and ministry can only be authentic when it sustains in freedom that comes from solitude and 'prayer'.^{xi} An authentic ritual leader always articulates a new world in hope. This is an authentic way of giving leadership in the world as we have discussed in the third chapter. The role of a ritual leader and prophet reaches into perfection in Jesus. 'It is true that Moses was trustworthy in the household of God, as a servant is ... but Christ is trustworthy as a Son is, over his household. We are his household as long as we fearlessly maintain the hope in which we glory (Heb 3: 5-6) God. To show us the vision of a Kingdom beyond human understanding and the way into his glory' it was that (he) should suffer before entering into his glory' (Lk 24:26). His entire life is a ritual of letting go. It is a pilgrimage of faith in darkness on his way to God the creator. All the while he remains his own ritual leader. The task of the prophetic mission is also to nurture, and to evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around them.^{xi} This prophetic leadership in solidarity with all is like the leadership of Moses. He was both a leader and ritual leader for the Israel people. In leading the people out of oppression and bondage under the Egyptians, Moses as ritual leader inspires the travellers in the wilderness with the vision of an entirely new world, 'a land of streams and springs' (Dt 8:7). He repeatedly articulates the conditions they must fulfil, if this alternative world is to be reached. They must let go of all that obstructs their journey into the promised land - their nostalgic yearning for Egypt, their sinfulness, the tempting attractions of the surrounding pagan cultures. 'Be careful not to forget Yahweh your God, by neglecting his commandments; he was the one who gave you the strength to act effectively' (Dt 8: 11, 18) with the hope of a new world.

At Emmaus, Jesus himself is the ritual leader, challenging the two disciples to own up to their loss and that of their community in a creative way. Jesus leads them through the first stage of separation in which they freely express their anger and sadness that things had not turned out as they had so

sincerely hoped. Jesus does not judge or condemn their anger (Lk 24: 17-24). They then, enter the phase of their ritual journey. Here Jesus, having obtained their trust, strongly challenges them to recognise and accept their loss. They will then, be open to a community and personal newness beyond human immigration, resulting from the death and resurrection of Jesus (Lk 24: 25-32). In Jesus and Moses before him, we have a model not just of the role of congregational (and all church) leaders, but also of the qualities required of them. They are future-oriented or hope-filled people, since they believe their primary task is to challenge a culture to interiorise a vision not yet realised. They recognise that the group is trapped in an unconscious denial of loss. They believe that they must publicly articulate this refusal to face uncomfortable realities, even though the process of confrontation may isolate them as leaders. Their task is to empower the group to assume responsibility for its own mourning because the group is tempted to become overly dependent on the ritual leader. Neither Moses nor Jesus surrender to this temptation. As the re-accumulation stage for the Israelites is about to begin - the entrance into the promised land - Moses slips away in a spirit of remarkable rage (Dt 34: 1-7). When the two disciples at Emmaus were in danger of becoming over-dependent on Jesus' presence, Jesus suddenly withdraws to allow them to test their new-found apostolic strength by returning to Jerusalem - the re-accumulation phase of their ritual of loss (Lk 24: 30-35).^{xi}

In a pluralistic context, the mission bases on the idea of "the fullness of man is the glory of God." Letting, enabling, helping them (the people of different cultures and religions) to be themselves from their very heart of their relationship with God and with one another, draws them into the kind of religious social transformation. That is, as we say, letting God be present to humans lives. What the mission activity is all about is letting God be more fully present to all people. Letting him be more fully himself, in his images, his daughters and his sons. This is what we are entrusted that they would let him be himself in his own world.^{xi} Hence, the symbolic mission of the ordained has the task of stimulating, organising and contributing to formation of the society contextually.^{xi} That makes them as a missionary to the context.

4.3.1 Missionary to the Context

The role of the symbolic mission of then the ordained is although basically same in action, it differs contextually in its function.^{xi} Karl Rahner is of the opinion that many of the functions which are *de facto* exercised by them, can be conceived as non-priestly official functions. It does not affect the theological essence of the priesthood itself. In short, there are various functions of them in the community. Such as the way in which the word is proclaimed, the concrete form of the community to which they are attached, the precise manner in which the various official functions are co-ordinated. Hence, the status of the ordained is valued by the secular society.^{xi} All these factors must fulfil their missionary task. Their existence should not be alien to the place where they do their symbolic mission of the church.

For Karl Rahner, the mission of the church in the contemporary situation depends upon the priestly life. On the one hand, it must justify them in the concrete circumstances of their lives as men of today in entering upon the situation boldly and confidently. On the other hand, it must give a concrete

form to the church's official institutions in those ways, which most effectively correspond to its mission.^{xi} This mission is to make present the salvation reality of the word through their life for the eschatological fulfilment of the kingdom of God. For this, the priestly life is adorned with various gifts for the realisation of the one body of Christ.

The symbolic mission of the ordained, whether it will be prayer, preaching, offering the eucharistic sacrifice, administering the sacraments or service to others, flows from the *pascha* and is directed toward making it effective among the people. At the same time, such priestly activity is ordered towards the kingdom that is the eternal proclamation of God's glory.^{xi} The life of the ordained is very much taken into account for the effective proclamation and witnessing of the gospel truth. The *Lineamenta* the Special Synod for Asia, comments that "the evangelising mission of the church depends entirely on its credibility given by the witness of life of the evangeliser."^{xi} Each of them must have the heart of a missionary to do the universal mission of salvation entrusted by Christ to his church through the apostles.^{xi}

Taking up Paul VI's concern for evangelisation, John Paul II strongly emphasises the missionary dimension of the mission of the ordained. In his encyclical on Missionary Activity, *Redemptoris Missio* he quotes from *PO* 10 that

the spiritual gift that presbyters have received in ordination prepares them not for any narrow and limited mission, but for the most universal and all-embracing mission of salvation 'to the end of the earth.' For every priestly ministry shares in the universal scope of the mission that Christ entrusted to his apostles (*PO* 10; quoted in *RM* 67).^{xi}

Through their missionary life, they actualise the symbolic mission of being-church in the society.

4.3.2 Symbolic Mission of Being-Church

The symbolic mission of the ordained symbolises the mission of the church herself. Karl Rahner is encouraging all to act like the apostolic community and their ministerial service of skill and wisdom for the realisation of the church.

What the early church called *presbyters* or elders, a name that did not have much to do with age, but had everything to do with skill and wisdom. Priests need to be people skilled in faith, wise in tradition, who can discern ministries in others, form communities, and preside prayerfully over Christian assemblies. In many parts of the world, this might mean ordaining competent local leadership, people who are in touch with the real needs and possibilities of the people they serve.^{xi}

The ordained are at the service of the church and her actualisation through the work of the Spirit but not the controllers of the Spirit. This Spirit leads to communitarianism rather than individualism. They are coming from the church to work for the church. Through their work in the Spirit all realise their communio-unity with God and one another.

The priests with the Spirit of God who anoints the priest to conform him to Christ and enables him to relate as pastor to the community and with the community to the world. The priest is at the service of the Spirit but not the controller of the Spirit. He has to follow the lead of the Spirit as Jesus followed it in his lifetime. He must allow the creativity and initiative of the Spirit in the

community for the liberation of the people. This Spirit does not lead to individualism. Therefore the priest is essentially a community person. He comes from the Church, works in the Church and for the Church - for a Church called to be at the service of the world. The Church here is not a collection of charismatics with individual vocations, but people made one by the unity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (*PDV 35*).^{xi}

Richard Malone gives an insight that the mission of the ordained is neither over the church nor under the church. It is a constitutive factor of the church as a mystery of unity of humanity.

The ordained ministry arises with the Church and has in bishops, and in priests who are related to and are in communion with them, a particular relation to the original ministry of the apostles-to which it truly succeeds-even though with regard to the latter it assumes different forms. We are warned that the ordained ministry is not to be thought of as existing prior to the Church, because it is totally at the service of the Church. Nor should it be considered as posterior to the Church, as if the Church could be imagined without this priesthood.^{xi}

The symbolic mission of them co-ordinates the charisms, which are given by the Spirit to the members of the community for its edification. The community is not only an end in itself, but it should be seen in the context of service to the world. Their symbolic mission represents the headship of Christ: to inspire, to direct, to encourage, to foster initiatives, and to help charisms to develop. Thus, the heart of their mission is an intensification of baptismal priesthood.^{xi}

4.3.2.1 SYMBOLIC MEDIATION OF PRIESTHOOD

The symbolic mission of the ordained is the mediation of the priesthood of Christ in the church and society.

The ordained are to do so by furnishing example and encouragement, thus symbolizing that the continuing temporal mission of the Church is guided by its glorius head, and the baptized by infusing the justice of Christ into social structures, thus symbolizing that the continuing social activity of the Church is that of Christ immanent in each members of his ecclesial body.^{xi}

While Schillebeeckx observes the church with human face, he writes that many priests find their identity in small Christian communities where they want to give a new form to the concept of priesthood. They work it out in actual practice and sharing their responsibility with others.^{xi} Through their symbolic mediation of the priesthood of Christ, they symbolise the liberating justice of God. Philip J. Rosato summarises,

... its guiding christological motif is Jesus Christ as the divine justice-in-person sent into the world so as to assume the injustice of humanity, and through his selfless death to liberate humanity once and for all; the priesthood of Christ the liberator is grounded in his credibility as the one who pleads before the Father on behalf not only of the freedom of oppressed but also of the conversion of their oppressors; the priesthood of the ordained manifests its special nature through authoritative announcement, in word, gesture and pastoral love, of the liberation brought by Christ whose headship they represent so as to remind the baptised that justice has a transcendent dimension; those who partake in the priesthood of the baptised hear, appropriate and act upon this reminder and attempt to renew the temporal order in the name of Christ, whose earthly body they are and whose immanent presence in the human search for justice they symbolise; the interrelation

of the common and ministerial modalities of priesthood can be ascribed to their orientation towards a single goal - the promotion of the liberating justice of Christ in society.^{xi}

In the third chapter, we have already discussed that after second Vatican Council, Christians have become more aware that all those baptised are “priests, prophets, and kings”^{xi} and the ordained are the servants of common priesthood. Hence they are at the service of the community for unity of the humanity. The priesthood proceeds from the depths of the inexpressible mystery of God. That means the priestly life springs from the love of the Father, the grace of Jesus Christ, and the sanctifying and unifying action of the Holy Spirit. This priestly life plays out in service to a community so that all may become receptive to Christ’s saving action (Mt. 20: 28) (*PDV* 12).

Dialogue is the contributive factor of priesthood. We need to bring together theory and practice, creating a dialogue between the truths of tradition and theology on the one hand and the experiences and the insights of the ordained on the other hand. If we are to be intentional and responsible about the future shape of priesthood, we need the dialogue that involves sound theological reflection. In the communal life of priesthood enjoys one another’s company, trust and support. They themselves are important and become forums for true dialogue, that speaks heart to heart. The dialogical way of priesthood provides a more firm foundation for the church in local communities. The attitude of closeness is a spiritual attitude of committed dialogue and of insertion in human history on the light of incarnation of the word (*EN* 19-20, 63-65, *AG* 10, *GS* 44,53, *LG* 10).^{xi} This priesthood is the process of re-incarnation of the word that is liberative and committed action in each and every cultural context. Juan Esquerda Bifet clearly brings out this idea of priesthood in modern world.

It is the present processes of liberation, inculturation, immanence, dialogue, commitment, etc. that becomes an objective analysis of reality, enlightening it and transforming it in the light of the Gospel. It is necessary to place the modern world in contact with the life-giving powers of the Gospel.^{xi}

Ordained persons have to carefully discern the charisms and strengths of the faithful who might be leaders in the community. They have to listen to them. Through dialogue they have to encourage their participation and co-responsibility. This will lead to a better distribution of the tasks, which enable them to dedicate themselves and to encounter situations.^{xi} So that they can represent better the presence of Jesus, the word of God.

4.3.2.2 SYMBOLIC PRESENCE OF THE WORD OF GOD

The representation of the presence of the word of God is the goal of the symbolic mission of the ordained. This consists in proclaiming the word of God contextually. Even though they are commissioned by the church as missionaries, they can constitute the community at the sociological level through the proclamation of the word. According to Karl Rahner “since the essence of his priesthood consists in proclaiming the word of God this imparts to it from the outset of *missionary* character.”^{xi} One may note a missionary dimension to ordination, which Karl Rahner says is foundational, in as much as the ministers are ordained to proclaim God’s word.^{xi} As missionaries, they have to proclaim the word by seeing the needs of the people in a particular context by taking into consideration the different socio-

political structures of the secular society and different denominations of Christian and religious communities.^{xi}

The ordained should welcome the richness of the divine word in their lives. To be in touch with God's message will bring forth "the excelling knowledge of Jesus Christ" (Ph 3:8).^{xi} The sociological fact does not condition the word of God, but the word of God enlightens the event in order to change it into the "sign of the times" (GS 2).^{xi} The word, just as it is and in its entirety, must reach concrete situations (*anthropological and sociological*). The word builds up the community locally as its universal mission (*dimension of missionary communion*).^{xi} In the first place the people of God is formed into one by the word of the living God which has to be sought from the mouth of them. It is the first task of priests as co-workers of the bishops to preach the word of God to all human beings (PO 4, PDV 26).^{xi}

Sociologically it is the fact that all groups need some form of leadership to survive, and presumably the church too needs it. The basic vocation of the Christian leadership is to nourish among people the perception of the world in terms of the word of God. Although ordination associates with the charism of leadership, it nevertheless basically means whatever service of the Gospel demands in a particular context. The core determinant is living out the word of God in a way that is Good News for the poor. In this sense, it has no fixed meaning and generally our fixed meanings are invalid. In this context the ordained are co-ordinators and animators of charisms that are in the community.^{xi} They bring up the Christian community in the light of the word of God. They have the role to foster responsibility for what the church is to unity, holiness, apostolicity, and catholicity in the world.^{xi}

4.3.2.3 SYMBOLIC MISSION OF IMMANENT UNITY

The symbolic mission of the ordained is to reawaken and actualise the mystery of immanent unity among people. This mission is related to the mystery of God which comes in the symbolic realm of the salvific plan of God. The origin of ministry (mission) relates to mystery (*mysterion*) that we have already seen in the first chapter. In the Pauline sense mystery is God's universal loving plan of salvation for the world. God loves all people, desiring everyone to be saved and to come to know the truth (1 Tim 2: 4). The goal of ministry is to serve the unfolding of this wonderful design God has for the people (RM 41).^{xi} Therefore this mission is to unfold the mystery of God and humanity. As participators of the mission of God, the mystery has central importance. The word "mystery" is to be taken in its technical, theological and biblical sense. The word "*mysterion*" focuses on God's loving plan of salvation for all people. It centres on Christ and reflects the wisdom of God. Through it the meaning of the whole of human history is manifested. Its pattern is always "paschal," moving through death to renewed life. Life itself has a paschal configuration. All people struggle to move from darkness to light, from captivity to freedom, from dryness to growth, from alienation to union. Life has an internal dynamic focus on the movement from death to life in all of its dimensions: from falsehood to truth, from apathy to responsibility, from imagination to participation, from loneliness and isolation to universal communion, from sin to grace. The paschal nature of life builds upon the common humanity and experience. It responds to human needs. It forges an authentic bonds of solidarity and mutual compassionate respect. The paschal nature of all life and experience continually provides openings for a deep human-divine

encounter. It allows the human-divine life experience of one person to encounter with the same experience on another persons. The rich potential to sound the depths of authentic interpersonal and interfaith dialogue of life as encountering the mystery of divine and human in this paschal experience of life.^{xi}

The heart-to heart encounter is the direct effect of Holy Spirit's action for bringing people in sharing of the paschal mystery of communion. The Spirit continually penetrates the concrete lives and histories of people from within and offers them a real mutual participation in the paschal mystery. The examples of lived paschal mystery and the "passion of humanity" prevail in today, such as war, famine, oppression, poverty, sickness, hatred, death; human suffering are massive-even widespread. This suffering must never be personalised and has human faces. Precisely in this context God seems to be absent or hidden (*deus absconditus*) that a missiology of a theology of the cross is eminently realistic. Hence the mission and dialogue are always in the form of cross. The passion of humanity continually presents to believers of all faiths a moment for authentic dialogue and human solidarity. The ordained are called to take up this challenge. The need for their mission is to appreciate God's love and patience, to take approaches from the very heart of the Gospel's paschal message, and to place themselves with God's suffering involvement with all humanity. They are personally invited to re-image their lives so that they may become truly 'paschal missionaries.'^{xi} Because all ministries flow from God's loving plan of salvation (*mysterion*). Then the ministers necessarily seek to be deeply rooted in this mystery.

The ordained, as mediators of mystery, emphasise the personal appropriation and integration of the *mysterion* into their lives, activities, their very consciousness. This very life itself enhances the spirituality that demands a life of complete docility to the Spirit, intimate communion with Christ, and following Jesus along the path of suffering and humiliation. As the mediators of the mystery, they enhance the humanity with the same mission of God. They are missionaries above all because of what they are as a church whose innermost life is unity in love, even before they become missionaries in word or deed (*RM 23*).

The symbolic mission of the ordained relates to the creative mission of unity of God in creation. Creation is an act establishing harmony from chaos as the story of Genesis recounts (Gen: 1: 1ff). Therefore the cosmos reveals God and is the sacrament of his love for all things: "Because the Spirit of the Lord has filled the world and that which holds all things together..." (Wis. 1: 7). All of creation is a reflection of God's truth, goodness and harmony. The *New Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that each of the various creatures, willed in its own being, reflects in its own way a ray of God's infinite wisdom and goodness.^{xi} Despite division and the power of sin and death, God continues to reveal himself in manifold ways to humanity (Heb. 1: 1-3). All are touched by the same Spirit of God. "The Spirit, therefore is at the very source of human's existential and religious questioning, a questioning which is occasioned not only by contingent situations but by the very structure of his being" (*RM 28*). The re-awakening and re-structuring of the Spirit of God (unity) in every creature are the creative vision and mission of the ordained. They seek to invent God's constant loving presence in the depths of persons, community and universe. In a word they must strive to develop a deep "*mysterion-consciousness*" in their ministry. The call to mission emerges into this consciousness and seeks a definite

commitment as one meditates on one's role in the loving plan of God. Only a life of faith and prayer (meditation) leads one to personally experience God's love and plan of salvation (*mysterion*). It is precisely in this process that ministry becomes a personalised invitation for the mature Christian. In short meditation of the mystery is the only means to discern one's call to ministry. Ministry manifests in a variety of forms and apostolates. The church's various ministries seek to reach the total person within community for the sake of the unity of the humanity.^{xi}

4.3.2.4 SYMBOLIC MISSION: A SERVICE OF COMMUNITY

The symbolic mission of the ordained is the call to be witness to the love of God as communion with him and unity of the humanity. This witness always embraces both unity and diversity.^{xi} Their mission is a sign of unity but not of uniformity. The trinitarian approach to mission is catholic which involves the celebration of difference and radical inclusivity.^{xi} Through the charism of leadership and proclamation of the word, they represent the community and minister it for the communion of all. John Paul II in *Christifideles laici*, employs the concept of communion to speak about mystery, mission and responsibility of all the faithful in the church (CL 18, 19, 20, 31, 32). The mission of the ordained is the visible focus of the deep and all embracing communion between Christ and the members of his body.^{xi} Their mission is the symbol of faith, love, hope and truth to all the ages to come through the actualisation of church. Therefore an authentic mission restores the life of the humanity in communion and unity.

An adequate theology of ministry will ground the various manifestations of ministry in service to communion-liturgy, evangelisation, catechesis, reconciliation, peace making, family ministry, pastoral counselling all will find their root meaning in the proclamation and /or restoration of the life of communion.^{xi}

Their symbolic proclamation of the 'word of justice'^{xi} is for the communion of humanity. By commenting on the Second Vatican Council, Philip. J. Rosato writes that "the Council incorporated the main themes of the papal encyclicals on social justice, into decrees representing nothing less than the nature, function, mission and goal of the baptised and the ordained."^{xi} Their symbolic mission forms the nucleus of ecclesial life, represent Christ's ethical mandate and broadcast Christ's own practical response to the Father's will in the world: "seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all else will

be given to you" (Mt. 6: 33). Therefore their task is the proclamation of Christ's kingdom of grace (justice, love and mercy). That is the key disclosure function of the church in relation with the incomprehensible mystery-God who defines the human-mystery for the communio-unity of all. For the realisation of it, their symbolic mission has to give priority to the actualisation of the truth through their social encountering. For that they have to extend their symbolic mission not only to the people of their own congregation but outside of it, irrespective of caste, religions, discrimination and linguistic differences. As the symbolic mediator of the mystery of the unity of God, they have a specific role within priestly community and to realise the unity of the humanity in the society.

In this model the identity of the priest is, like in the first, in relation to the community of the faithful, but this community is not just a flock, the object of the pastoral activity, but itself a

priestly community entrusted with the work of mediating God's salvation to the world. The priest is a unifying factor within the priestly community with a specific role.^{xi}

In this symbolic mission, they remember that by their life and interests they show the face of a truly priestly and pastoral ministry to believers and unbelievers, and to Catholics and non-Catholics. They seek the life not of their own but for others as Jesus himself had come not to be served but to serve.^{xi}

By taking up the model of Second Vatican Council and situating it more explicitly within the trinitarian framework of its ecclesiology of communion avoid all the ambiguities regarding the theology of ministry.^{xi} The church as the sacrament of communio-unity, the ministry of communion actualises the divine mission in word and Spirit. If the church is the manifestation of the trinitarian communion, then, this communion must be reflected in the ecclesial communities. The baptised and the ordained participate, each in their own way, in this communion for the sake of the society. Juan Esquerda Bifet states that the priests are as sign of the Good Shepherd in sociological and historical circumstances, also in the present moment of a time of grace and of a world that is changing, since they belong to a Church that is united with the joys and hopes of present-day society and is engaged in a new evangelisation. Hence their spirituality or life-style will be in keeping with these concrete realities.^{xi} The understanding of the Church as sacrament of communio-unity attempts to integrate various ministries in the service of common and unique mission. The reflection on new identity of mission is to be based on the identity of their symbolic mission of a "Church-communion."^{xi} Their mission symbolise the thrust of unity in the church that they may be 'one mind and heart,' where their mission is to reconcile and mediate, while respecting legitimate pluralism of all and everything. As we have seen in the third chapter, the prophetic ministerial office is to make the community truly prophetic to the society. This mission recognises radically a new faith in justice and hope-inspired communities. All their programmes link the Gospel message with the needs of the society today. Their living witnesses is the need of dialogue with the society and to encounter all kinds of sectarianism and violence. Their living witness shows through their life-style and attitude to God's mercy, concern for the relationships and encounter excessive individualism.^{xi}

The ordained are not isolated individuals, but are open to others and other communities as windows. The need for openness shows that the Spirit is operating in other communities and religions. Since the mission of Christ himself was formative of community, i.e., of kingdom of God, the symbolic mission of the ordained is too community-forming. For this diversity of ministries and charisms is given by the Spirit for communion of the humanity within the church and society. Since the Holy Spirit makes the church in communion, there is an effective unity and in the outpouring of the different hierarchical and charismatic gifts (*GS* 4).^{xi} Collaboration, dialogue and discernment are the best way for all to realise genuine communion and to participate in the mission to evangelise the world.^{xi} The communion, present an essential to church's nature,^{xi} must be made visible in concrete "signs such as communal prayer for one another, the desire for closer relations between Episcopal conferences and between bishops, fraternal ties between dioceses and parishes, and communication among pastoral workers with a view to specific missionary works"^{xi} in the society.

The symbolic mission of the ordained is a call to be present with people as a witness to the *communio* (*koinônia*) with God and unity of humanity in their own local church. Their role is to help

baptised members to build up an authentic community for the sake of the society. It involves encouraging all acts of others, which are directed towards building up of the community within the church and outside the church. It points to a deeper meaning of *communio-unity* through proclaiming the word and effecting it sacramentally for the sake of the society by celebrating and participating in the divine communion with the mystery- the Trinity-God and unity with humanity. This symbolic mission of the ordained is a service of community in a pluralistic society that challenges all human beings at the dawning of the Third Millennium.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed on the ‘communitarian-symbolic’ mission of the ordained persons in and through local and BCCs in the society. Their symbolic mission is for the unity of humanity. This mission make explicit the memories and hopes of people in a particular context, normally, we called it local church. In the local church, one experiences one’s life from birth to death and encounter to other religious communities for unity as community. Regarding the ordained, the local church is the basis for the spreading out of all ministries as a one-mission. The legitimacy of the local church is the legitimacy of the catholicity. Thus the local church has an entity as a theological locus.

At the dawning of the third millennium, the emergence of the Basic Christian Communities gives a new light for the local church. Most of the places around the globe especially in Asia, (India), the emergence of the BCCs challenge the ordained to have a new outlook in their mission. These BCCs are the new *way of being-Church* in the society especially in a pluralistic context. The mission of the ordained in BCCs is a co-responsible one. They have to co-ordinate and empower the baptismal mission of faithful for well-being of the humanity.

In BCCs the mission of the ordained is not only for the Christians, but for those who are living in and around these communities. These communities are the basis for a new evangelisation. This new evangelisation is the dialogue of life that commits one to the very core of life itself in sharing with others. That is, to share the very truth of the humanity with others. The new evangelisation liberates the people from all kinds of oppressions such as from religions, politics, socio-economic and cultural situations.

In this situation, the ordained stand in the community, not as representatives of particular community, but as the symbolic representatives of the basic mission of humanity. This symbolic mission is not taking a step behind the day today situations of the society but enters into the core realities, empowering the people to take a bold step against the destructive ways of life. The globalisation of the economy by multinationals, by using wrong means, is the global threat to the humanity. One of the examples is the globalisation of weapons, which brings one-sided accumulations of the wealth, and, on other side, terrible killings and poverty. The misuse of the media causes harm to the society. In this situation the narrow view of seeing the contextual problems will not be so effective. Therefore the mission of the ordained is a thoroughly symbolic one that aims at the total liberation of the whole of humanity, to attain salvation through the praxis of faith. Thus the theo-anthropological symbolic mission of the ordained is neither bounded to earthly realities nor going away from earthly problems. This is the

mission of representing the reality to the present society by encountering the mystery - God. The symbolic encountering of the mystery in a particular context brings out the presence of God. But their mission is not merely bound to it alone, again they have to encounter differently till the humanity attains *communio* with God and unity with one another. The mission of unity is already, but not yet. For this, the symbolic priesthood of Christ is the basis and challenge. The ordained, through their committed symbolic mission, bring about the communion of the baptised and the unity of the humanity in a pluralistic society. The main findings of this thesis are (1) In a pluralistic society the mission of the ordained is entirely situated in a local context with a universal view of humanity's liberation and salvation. (2) The localisation of the mission takes place through the Basic Christian Communities where they co-ordinate and empower the ministries of the church and society. (3) The mission of ordained is the symbolic one of *communio-unity* in a pluralistic society. (4) Their symbolic mission is a service of community in the global village, that is a pluralistic society a challenge for all human beings.

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Promoter: Prof. L. Leijssen

Correctors: Prof. A. Denaux, Prof. J. Lamberts, Dr. B. Broeckaert

Summary

Does the mission of ordained persons re-awaken the basic service to humanity in a pluralistic society? Keeping this question in mind throughout this dissertation, we investigate the “communitarian-symbolic mission” of ordained persons. The self-understanding of the church as a sacrament of *communio-unity* actualizes the inner reality of divine *communio* (*koinônia*) and expresses the unity of humanity. The link between the church and society is constituted by human (ordained) persons who confront daily life situations concretely. Hence, in this dissertation we argue that the mission of the ordained persons is communitarian and symbolic. The consequent application of the characteristic “symbolic” is meant to point out to the fundamental openness of human beings and the capacity of communion with divine and human reality.

The vision of Jesus Christ, fully God/human, challenges every person to participate in the mission of humanity in an authentic way. The climax of the prophetic mission of Jesus Christ is realized in the self-emptying (*kenosis*) sacrifice on the cross (priesthood). Thus, the encounter with the mystery of the cross bridges the unity between the divine and the human. Therefore the prophetic mission of ordained persons re-enacts symbolically the same mission of unity in and as community.

In order to articulate this objective, the thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter provides a general discussion of the theo-anthropological basis of the human (ordained) persons. The second chapter presents the sacramentological basis of the human (ordained) persons as *communio-unity*. The third chapter discusses the prophetic-ministerial office of the ordained persons. The fourth chapter posits a new perspective of the symbolic mission of ordained persons as a service of community.

By introducing a neologism ‘*communio-unity*’, the thesis expounds the reality of the communion of the faithful in their baptismal mission and the unity of all human beings in their reception of the grace of unity from the creation. Through the celebration of the sacraments in word and deed, and the re-awakening of the grace of unity in every human being, the mission of ordained persons unfolds the human service of communion. This symbolic mission encounters every situation from the point of view of uniting everyone in communion with the God of the cosmos, and with the highest reality of being human in communion. As the most basic service to humanity, “the symbolic mission” challenges every person, irrespective of caste and creed, in a pluralistic society at the threshold of the third Millennium.

Theses

1. Karl Rahner, in the renewal of the contemporary sacramentology, points to the grace already present in all of creation. Sacramental grace is to be related to this gift of grace to humanity, and to the mystery of God's self-communication (*koinônia*). The sacraments reveal this mystery of grace as unity. As one of the sacraments, the sacrament of Order realizes the same mystery of unity as community in a pluralistic society.

2. Since post-modern approaches are aimed at contextualizing theological reflection, there is a task for the theologians of today to formulate a pastoral perspective on the dogmatic content of the specific

sacrament, i.e. Holy Orders, in order to review a re-contextualization in a particular locus, like world's largest pluralistic society, India. In this locus, the task of the ordained persons is re-formulated as the "symbolic mission" for the whole of humanity.

3. Human persons and their religiosity are the starting point for envisaging a mission in a pluralistic society where a person-centered vision is a community-centered symbolic mission.

4. Though all human beings are symbolic, the ordained persons are explicitly symbolic because they are called to the basic mission of humanity. It takes place through dialogue with the people where they express the need to be persons in communion.

5. By situating the ordained persons in proper ecclesiology and in the society, the thesis elucidates that they make explicit the church in the society through their prophetic-ministerial office, where the church is the symbolic representation of communion of the baptized and unity of the whole humanity.

6. The self-consciousness of the church, as the basic sacrament of *communio-unity*, reveals the Trinitarian *communio (koinônia)* by representing and commemorating the paschal mystery of Christ who reveals in history that mystery of communion in God and unity among human beings.

7. The "communitarian-symbolic mission" of ordained persons leads to the field of human science with a view of new humanism. The era of third Millennium opens the door to a common acceptance of plurality, the side by side proliferation of sects, communalism, nationalism, and fundamentalism, that leads to the loss of sense of the qualitative God-experience that has been encountered by Jesus Christ. He is present in history as God/human and challenges everyone with the view of uniting all with the cosmic God of communion.

8. This mission has a wide of scope in the field of cultural anthropology, globalization (economy and culture) and individualistic imperialism of the people and society. This mission opens up a new perspective of service to humanity irrespective of cast and creed. It also challenges every religion, culture, science and in fact the whole oppressive system in society.

9. By placing the mission of ordained persons to basic Christian communities, the dissertation posits a new ecclesiology in the context of ecumenism and plurality of religions. In this renewed context, the self-understanding of the church challenges and is challenged by other communities in order to have a more authentic human community with dignity, freedom and solidarity.

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The vision of Jesus Christ, fully God/human, challenges every person to participate in the mission of humanity in an authentic way. The climax of the prophetic mission of Jesus Christ is realized in the self-emptying (*kenosis*) sacrifice on the cross (priesthood). Thus, the encounter with the mystery of the cross bridges the unity between the divine and the human. Therefore the prophetic mission of ordained persons re-enacts symbolically the same mission of unity in and as community.

In order to articulate this objective, the thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter provides a general discussion of the theo-anthropological basis of the human (ordained) persons. The second chapter presents the sacramentological basis of the human (ordained) persons as *communio-unity*. The third chapter discusses the prophetic-ministerial office of the ordained persons. The fourth chapter posits a new perspective of the symbolic mission of ordained persons as a service of community.

By introducing a neologism ‘*communio-unity*’, the thesis expounds the reality of the communion of the faithful in their baptismal mission and the unity of all human beings in their reception of the grace of unity from the creation. Through the celebration of the sacraments in word and deed, and the re-awakening of the grace of unity in every human being, the mission of ordained persons unfolds the human service of communion. This symbolic mission encounters every situation from the point of view of uniting everyone in communion with the God of the cosmos, and with the highest reality of being human in communion. As the most basic service to humanity, “the symbolic mission” challenges every person, irrespective of caste and creed, in a pluralistic society at the threshold of the third Millennium.

Theses

1. Karl Rahner, in the renewal of the contemporary sacramentology, points to the grace already present in all of creation. Sacramental grace is to be related to this gift of grace to humanity, and to the mystery of God's self-communication (*koinônia*). The sacraments reveal this mystery of grace as unity. As one of the sacraments, the sacrament of Order realizes the same mystery of unity as community in a pluralistic society.
2. Since post-modern approaches are aimed at contextualizing theological reflection, there is a task for the theologians of today to formulate a pastoral perspective on the dogmatic content of the specific sacrament, i.e. Holy Orders, in order to review a re-contextualization in a particular locus, like world's largest pluralistic society, India. In this locus, the task of the ordained persons is re-formulated as the “symbolic mission” for the whole of humanity.
3. Human persons and their religiosity are the starting point for envisaging a mission in a pluralistic

society where a person-centered vision is a community-centered symbolic mission.

4. Though all human beings are symbolic, the ordained persons are explicitly symbolic because they are called to the basic mission of humanity. It takes place through dialogue with the people where they express the need to be persons in communion.

5. By situating the ordained persons in proper ecclesiology and in the society, the thesis elucidates that they make explicit the church in the society through their prophetic-ministerial office, where the church is the symbolic representation of communion of the baptized and unity of the whole humanity.

6. The self-consciousness of the church, as the basic sacrament of *communio-unity*, reveals the Trinitarian *communio (koinônia)* by representing and commemorating the paschal mystery of Christ who reveals in history that mystery of communion in God and unity among human beings.

7. The “communitarian-symbolic mission” of ordained persons leads to the field of human science with a view of new humanism. The era of third millennium opens the door to a common acceptance of plurality, the side by side proliferation of sects, communalism, nationalism, and fundamentalism, that leads to the loss of sense of the qualitative God-experience that has been encountered by Jesus Christ. He is present in history as God/human and challenges everyone with the view of uniting all with the cosmic God of communion.

8. This mission has a wide range of scope in the field of cultural anthropology, globalization (economy and culture) and individualistic imperialism of the people and society. This mission opens up a new perspective of service to humanity irrespective of cast and creed. It also challenges every religion, culture, science and in fact the whole oppressive system in society.

9. By placing the mission of ordained persons to basic Christian communities, the dissertation posits a new ecclesiology in the context of ecumenism and plurality of religions. In this renewed context, the self-understanding of the church challenges and is challenged by other communities in order to have a more authentic human community with dignity, freedom and solidarity.

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**MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY
THE SYMBOLIC MISSION OF ORDAINED PERSONS IN VIEW OF THE THEO-ANTHROPOLOGICAL
APPROACH OF KARL RAHNER AND
CONTEMPORARY THEOLOGY**

Does the mission of ordained persons re-awaken the basic service to humanity in a pluralistic society? Keeping this question in mind throughout this dissertation, we investigate the “communitarian-symbolic mission” of ordained persons. The self-understanding of the church as a sacrament of *communio-unity* actualizes the inner reality of divine *communio* (*koinônia*) and expresses the unity of humanity. The link between the church and society is constituted by human (ordained) persons who confront daily life situations concretely. Hence, in this dissertation we argue that the mission of the ordained persons is communitarian and symbolic. The consequent application of the characteristic “symbolic” is meant to point out to the fundamental openness of human beings and the capacity of communion with divine and human reality.

By introducing a neologism ‘*communio-unity*’, the thesis expounds the reality of the communion of the faithful in their baptismal mission and the unity of all human beings in their reception of the grace of unity from the creation. Through the celebration of the sacraments in word and deed, and the re-awakening of the grace of unity in every human being, the mission of ordained persons unfolds the human service of communion. This symbolic mission encounters every situation from the point of view of uniting everyone in communion with the God of the cosmos, and with the highest reality of being human in communion. As the most basic service to humanity, “the symbolic mission” challenges every person, irrespective of caste and creed, in a pluralistic society at the threshold of the Third Millennium.

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GENERAL CONCLUSION

The central theme of this dissertation focuses on the mission of ordained as a person-centred vision in a community-centred symbolic mission: a service of community. This mission as a symbolic one encounters the mystery for the unity of the humanity.

The mission which we envisage here is based on the vision of the fully divine/human, Jesus Christ. As a historical person he challenges all human beings and is challenged by all to manifest the reality that he symbolises. Through his encountering of the mystery, he manifested the being of person in communion as Father, Son and Spirit. The substance of beings, the persons in communion, is self-communicated in Jesus Christ in his historical life. Hence he remains in history as a living presence that challenges everyone to remain beings in communion for the well-being of all human beings.

This communion of being is impossible to know and, in fact, it is the inability to experience it fully that remains always a mystery, as a challenging force for everyone to fulfil what they are. However, this mystery can only be experienced through our own being of communion with each other, since every being is unique in itself in its actualisation of unity. Everyone is symbolically expressing himself or herself to achieve his/her own fulfilment through being together in solidarity and love. The ordained as the beings are symbolic and they symbolise the basic mission of unity by encountering all the contextual situations.

The task of the ordained is to understand and be familiar with the mission of Christ. In doing so they should remain his true reminders (disciples) by co-ordinating the ministries of church and society and empowering all human beings to realise their basic vocation of beings in communion with God and humanity. Hence everybody is called and designed for this same mission but the ordained are chosen among many by ordination and sent among others to unfold the basic mission. The result of their symbolic mission is the realisation of the communion of beings together, as a community. Hence their mission is ultimately a process of community building, that challenges everybody to commit themselves through their particular charisms. Therefore the mission of the ordained is a service to humanity that challenges all to enter into this through their responsible service, according to the charism which they hold, either in the church or in the society.

The mission of the ordained is not centred on a single problem or a particular context as such, but transcends the context in order to fulfil the reality, which their mission symbolises. Through this symbolic mission one can enter into the problems of the society and enrich everyone in mutual respect of life. All the sacraments and reception of the sacraments are directed to this task.

The running thread of the whole dissertation is ‘the human (ordained) persons’ who face the problems, and challenge the situation in day to day life. They are challenged to fulfil the basic nature of humanity as communion of beings. In fact the self-awareness of what they are, and for whom they are as

human, challenges their mission in a society. The ground of such self-awareness is the being of persons in communion. This is the vision that leads to a symbolic mission. Developing such self-awareness inevitably involves internal reflection, examining the humanity of Christ and, finally, his communion with the Trinity. External action leads to an analysis of the present context and an exploration of the problems, which hinder human dignity, freedom and solidarity. Hence the central focus of this mission leads to the mystery.

In order to embrace the symbolic mission, we make use of, the theological tools of the church, ultimately the classical term, mystery. The term mystery is not a negative (no-thing) term, but is a powerful reality that challenges everyone to encounter the other in order to symbolise what they are. This encountering the other in space and time is the realisation of unity in history, but the reality is still to be achieved in each and every moment of life and the time yet to come.

The interlocking link between the church and society is the human (ordained) persons. By proper placing of them in a relational anthropology we present a core mission of the humanity. Hence their mission symbolises the divine and human reality in a pluralistic society. By introducing a neologism ‘*communio-unity*’ we posit an internal mission of the church as *communio* of baptised and her external realisation as unity of the entire humanity.

Therefore the mission of the ordained is argued as communitarian and symbolic. By placing their mission as symbolic expression of the core reality of the human and the divine we want to avoid the tension between the different ministries within the church and society. And at the same time we present a new perspective of mission.

Encountering the Mystery of Unity

The “theo-anthropological basis of the human (ordained) persons” analyses a vision of the human in performing a mission through encountering the mystery of unity. The starting point for such arguments is the religiosity of humanity itself. The term ‘*religiosity*’ means here not a popular religiosity but a basic activity that is a process of transcending everything towards the divine, the human and the cosmos.

This basic activity creates the history of humanity, as the final objective of their mission. In this historical process, they encounter the “Other” as mystery-God and others as mystery-human beings, only in view of uniting everything together. This encountering of the pluralities of beings opens them as transcendental beings and at the same time they symbolise themselves the reality of what they are. The transcendental openness to the mystery is the absolute goal of their hope. If they lose this transcendental openness, they would regress to the level of a clever animal that causes oppression, separatism, war and fighting, nationalism, and fundamentalism.

An authentic Christology as a theological-anthropology helps to envisage the human (ordained) persons and their mission. The classical Christology defines the fully divine and human in the person, Jesus Christ, who is the self-communication of the trinitarian God. The historical encountering of Jesus Christ challenges, every situation, and every one to communicate and actualise themselves as communion of beings. This communion is not an abstract reality but it challenges everyone to be in

communication with each other in order to realise themselves as beings in communion. This reality fulfils itself in the self-consciousness of the church.

Encountering the Mystery as Sacrament of Communion-unity

The communitarian-centred symbolic mission of the ordained make explicit the reality of the church as the sacrament of communion-unity. In contemporary theological thinking, as we have mentioned in the introduction “the Church cannot be genuinely renewed, unless our starting point is her nature a mystery.” The mystery of the church is ultimately related to the mystery of Jesus Christ, who challenges every one to encounter the mystery of unity. Through this encounter the church symbolises the reality of God and humanity and effects it by enacting the salvific will of God in a particular context and expressing in him the church’s faith as a community. The church finalises the unity of humanity in the person of Jesus Christ. Through the work of Spirit this reality is manifested in the church and society as a service to humanity. The Spirit leads the church to commit herself for the values of the kingdom, ultimately the value of unity. This mission is carried out by ordained persons through their one ministerial office.

Prophetic-Ministerial Office Encountering for Unity

The prophetic way of actualising the mission happens through their respective ministerial office. In order to bring out the prophetic-mission of the office the argument is focused on Christ’s mission. This takes place through participating in pastoral charity which is fulfilled in his prophetic witnessing of life on the cross. Christ’s priesthood is the encountering of the mystery of unity on the cross, hence the cross becomes the bridge (unity) between God and humanity. The cross stands for the ultimate ‘yes’ to God who is the destiny and the hope of humanity. Jesus Christ encountered the mystery of the cross by emptying (*kenosis*) himself for the unity of all. Thus his priesthood becomes a mediation of love that is incarnated within history. The ordained encounter the same reality by enacting the one mission of the church through entering into the one office.

The function of the ministerial office is to unfold the baptismal mission which is hidden in the members of the church. As a human and a christian the baptismal mission is the same mission of church. Through the charismatic leadership and prophetic witnessing their mission fulfils in the baptised community for the sake of the humanity as a whole. Through the prophetic encountering of the ministerial office, the church is actualised as a sacrament of communion-unity in and through the local church. Hence the prophetic mission of ordained challenges on how far it awakens the human mission of unity in a society.

Localization of the Unity through Basic Christian Communities

The symbolic mission of ordained in a society is to awake the human mission of unity in a particular context. Taking into account the contemporary situation and the pastoral needs, the argument in this chapter is that the mission extends from the local church to basic christian communities and through these communities to society as a whole. These communities are the *locus* for bridging the gap between theology and practice of faith. They are not isolated, but they stand in the midst of society as a service to humanity. They are the *locus* of common faith experience and of ecumenical movements.

Their symbolic mission in these communities is to co-ordinate all ministries and empower all people, irrespective of any discrimination, either of castes or class divisions. They have to make the people aware of the problems around the world, especially the globalization of weapons and so on, in a dialogical manner. Evangelization, proclamation and liberation are all depending on how far their mission enters into dialogue with society in view of uniting everyone with human dignity. The integral growth of human beings and the promotion of being human is part of their holistic mission. In order to protect the ecology they have to reveal the truth of humanity in a prophetic manner. By doing so, their mission becomes a caring for the suffering and marginalized, and defending the rights of people both contextually and globally. By the very fact, the mission of ordained transcends all the differences in race and nationality, ethnic and linguistic barriers by building up the humanity in love and justice.

Symbolic Mission of Unity as a Service to Humanity

The mission of the ordained builds up the human community. Their mission is realised in their solidarity with all human beings, especially with the poor, and their integral liberation for an authentic dignified person. This is a challenge to be involved in the suffering arising from violence, exploitation, political and economic mismanagement and neglect of the poor by the main stream of society. In terms of their mission in uplifting every human beings from all kinds of exploitation and oppression, the values of society as a human community unfold. These values are the sincere attempts to integrate their life and mission, linking their identity and religiosity, and harmonising their spirituality and apostolates. It also includes denouncing all kinds of injustice, and supporting victims in their just causes and joining together with all persons of good will who seek to build up a more just human community. The fruit of their mission is to be judged in the way they edifies the community in mutual relationships. Through this mission they give hope and new life to humanity and become the personal and socio-cultural mediation of love and hope.

Symbolic Mission Encounters for the Community

Through actualising the relational power of the trinitarian communion and exercising the relational power in humanity, their symbolic mission becomes the hope-filled prophetic leadership of the community. This leadership is not static one, but always an encounter with unity for the realisation of the communion. Through this symbolic mission, they have to co-ordinate different ministries in the church and society and empower people to realise their dignity as authentic persons. In the building up of the community, their mission is the symbolic one of re-awakening and actualising the mystery of immanent unity. This opens a deep human and divine encounter. It is not taking a step behind the day to day situation, but entering into the reality, and announcing and empowering the people to take up bold steps against the destructive forces of life. The symbolic mission based on the theo-anthropological approach is neither bounded to earthly reality nor avoiding earthly problems. It represents the reality to the present context by encountering the mystery-*communio*-God and at the same time withdraws from the situation in order to realise the *communio*-unity. The symbolic encountering of the mystery in a particular context brings out the reality of the presence of God that represent the paschal mystery of 'unity' in a concrete life-situation. In such a way, their mission re-awaken and re-structure the form of God as love in every

creature. The mediation of the mystery is the means of discerning their own call to human service, by presenting and withdrawing from the situation in order to transcend the context to the realm of communion. The encountering of the mystery of unity is related to the vision and mission of the trinitarian communion of love. Hence the mystery of God defines the human mystery in truth and spirit for the service of all. Through baptism one is introduced into the mystery of communion, and through the mission of ordained one accomplishes the mystery of communio-unity in the church and society. As the encounter of the mystery of communio-unity, they fulfil the mission in and as community. The the-anthropological basis of mission is a symbolic one of encountering the mystery of God and human beings. This symbolic mission is a service to humanity in order to build up the community in love and justice. In short the human persons as ordained to the prophetic-ministerial office fulfil the communio-unity as a service of community in a pluralistic society. This symbolic mission as a person-centred vision in a community-centred mission is the most basic service that one can ever render to humanity that challenges every one in the society at the threshold of the Third Millennium.

