

62. In fact the vast sums of money spent in advertising threaten the very foundations of the mass media. People can get the impression that the instruments of communication exist solely to stimulate men's appetites so that these can be satisfied later by the acquisition of the things that have been advertised. Moreover, because of economic demands and pressures, the essential freedom of the media is at stake. Since advertising revenue is vital for these media, only those can ultimately survive which receive the greatest share of advertising outlays. Consequently, the door is open for monopolies to develop in the media which may impede the right to receive and give information and inhibit the exchange of views within the community. A variety of independent means of social communication must therefore be carefully safeguarded even if this requires legislative action. This will ensure that there is an equitable distribution of advertising revenue among the most deserving media of communication and prevent the lion's share from going to those that are already the most powerful.

## **THE POPE SPEAKS**

**On 26 March Pope Paul VI received the Archbishops and Bishops of the central region of France, in the framework of the canonical visits "ad limina Apostolorum". The following are excerpts from his address:**

### **PRIESTLY MINISTRY**

We understand that you are more and more concerned by the question of new vocations to the priesthood. You must give the problem your serious attention, but not to the extent of becoming paralysed or of being induced to concentrate your looks and your hopes on impossible or illusory solutions. This difficulty is not universal in the Church, thank God, and it should rather be considered a temporary and superable one. It is necessary, therefore, to look for everything that can be done to solve the situation, according to the ways that have been established or confirmed by the Church as a whole.

approval, only six years ago. The Church considered she could rely on the grace of the Holy Spirit and on the preparation of souls, to bring forth men completely dedicated to the Kingdom of God. It is along these lines that we must all work. Can you imagine the risks of doubts, of paralysing hesitations, of disengagements that would be caused or strengthened by the public questioning of priestly celibacy, even if expressed as a wish? Do you really think this would be a solution? Which is the vital problem, the one that destroys the seeds of vocation? Is it not, in the first place, the crisis of faith, and then, perhaps even more, the very widespread fear of a definitive commitment among the young? And do you not see that this problem is made more acute when there is lack of cohesion, clarity, firmness with regard to the identity of the priest of tomorrow, whereas this identity has not changed and can not change? The young, as is normal, wish to know where they are going, what kind of life theirs will be. Think of the spiritual perspective in which your generation or even the one after you prepared for the priesthood. Remember the bracing texts that encouraged them, such as the letter of the venerated Cardinal Suhard on *The Priest in the City*. The Second Vatican Council was able to complete this perspective; it did not abolish it. To propose the role of the priest in all its greatness and its urgency, with all its demands, that is the principal problem in our eyes.

#### **Problem of priest shortage**

We will give you some suggestions not doubting, of course, that you have already begun to explore them. Within the diocese, among the dioceses, is it not possible to envisage an even better distribution of priestly forces, both diocesan and religious? Have the possibilities of the diaconate been really exploited, as regards choice of candidates, as regards their more thorough preparation? Cannot a more resolute and assiduous appeal be made for priestly vocations among older men, but also with adolescents and even children? Let us think of all these groups of young people, eager for spiritual effort and for participation in some ecclesial responsibility; are they, then, insensitive to such appeals? You yourselves, Bishops, far more in contact with the young than previously, do not be afraid to set forth to them often the problem of finding a new generation of priests, with suitable tact and enthusiasm. And may your teams of priests, even in difficult sectors, radiate the joy of their priesthood, that of ploughing and sowing for the Lord, without yet seeing the harvest, sometimes not even the germination, but always sustained by this invincible hope that a deep interior life gives!

**SUNDAY SERVICES WITHOUT PRIESTS**

You also tackle the question of Sunday congregations without priests, in rural sectors where the village forms a certain natural unity for life as for prayer, which it would be dangerous to abandon or disperse. We clearly grasp the reason for this, and the advantages that can be drawn for the responsibility of participants and the vitality of the village. The present-day world prefers these communities of human dimensions, provided, of course, they are sufficiently substantial, alive and far from the spirit of the ghetto. We say to you then: advance with discernment, but without multiplying this type of assembly, as if it were the best solution and the last chance! In the first place, you are convinced of the necessity of choosing judiciously and preparing the animators, laymen or religious, and already at this level the role of the priests seems essential. Then, too, the aim must remain the celebration of the sacrifice of Mass, the only true realization of the Lord's Passover. And above all let us consider clearly that these Sunday gatherings will not be enough to rebuild living and influential communities, in a context of populations that are not Christian or are falling from Sunday practice. It would be necessary to create at the same time other meetings, of friendship and reflection, groups made up of priests and laymen with a better formation, which would help their immediate entourage to weave bonds of charity and to shoulder better their family, educative, professional and spiritual responsibilities.

**CATECHETICS**

Catechetics. In the context of "lapsed belief" that you describe, we understand the necessity of a pedagogical approach to faith in Christ, often slow and progressive, close to human experience, which restores to the Christian message its savour as Good News, its attraction, and makes it as audible as possible. Jesus expressed himself in parables that smacked of the soil and all the apostles, beginning with St. Paul, tried to smooth the way to faith, for the different mentalities.

However, if we give what the apostle called spiritual "milk" to beginners, to Christians on the thresh-old, let us find at the same time the means of nourishing more substantially those who already believe, who are capable of a doctrinal formation, who desire a more advanced spiritual and apostolic life. And we must proclaim the Message to everyone without ever allowing the progressive character of the presentation or the adaptation of language to bring about inconsistency with the true doctrine. We will not profit in any

way by building with poor materials (cf. 1 Cor. 3, 12). And we must find the means of making the Gospel heard boldly and clearly, where so many alien voices inculcate other human messages in a myriad ways. Oh! certainly, some people are experiencing this in a harsh way. Certain lands seem to have been long impervious to the Gospel: the call of God, of Christ, does not seem to find any echo in many hearts. What an ordeal for the apostle! And yet, "woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!" (1 Cor. 9, 16). Perhaps it is necessary in the first place to stimulate an atmosphere of prayer in order to hear it. The Christian Message has always an abrupt character, which obliges the listener to the choice of faith and which, moreover, paradoxically is more attractive than is thought. Let us believe in the force of God's Word!

**On 28 March the Archbishops and Bishops of the Episcopal Conference of the North Region of France were received in audience by Pope Paul VI on their visit "ad limina". Here are excerpts from his address:**

### **CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES**

The synthesis of your Reports emphasizes your attachment to the territorial parish. This bears witness to your realism. The parish will remain the most adequate place for the gathering of the People of God. The very vast majority of the faithful would rightly be disconcerted by the devaluation and abandoning of an ecclesial sign which can and must find a new lease of life. The examples of this renewal are fortunately very numerous. But you stress at the same time that the parish is called to an ever increasing extent to form within it a variety of little communities of reflection, action and prayer, in accordance with the often very varied environments that compose it.

You note this appearance or awakening of Christian groups. Reading your Reports, we feel both the hopes and the apprehensions aroused by this transformation of your rural and urban parishes. We understand your joy when you discover Christians, young people especially, who are dreaming of communities on a human scale, called forth by the Paschal Event and Pentecost, eager



to love one another, share, bear witness to the Good News, reveal to their brothers the meaning of human existence! Yet you are not without fearing the dispersion, the lack of roots, the isolation, the possible errors of these young and generous communities. To pass from the unity to the multiplicity of the Christian gathering, is an extremely delicate step. That is why you have the imperious obligation to remind all your faithful often, and above all those who are engaged in the experience of these new communities, that they must thoroughly verify their membership of the Church according to the criteria set forth in our Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* and those you specified yourselves in your Report.

This evolution of the parish makes us think of a comparison, that of the vocal and instrumental concert. Each community is a little different from the others, like voices and instruments. But one and all, in order to remain authentically ecclesial, must be very concerned to remain in communion, to find the means to meet to celebrate the same Saviour, adhere to the same Gospel, participate in the same Bread of life and resume the same apostolic mission together. Recently, moreover, in the Letter to French Catholics, you laid down the major guidelines by which they must be inspired. And the more the priests themselves live this unity among themselves, whatever their age or their specialized ministry may be, with respect, trust and brotherly love, the closer will be the unity among communities.

### ADVANCEMENT OF THE LAITY

We note, in your Reports, another main concern; the advancement of the laity. Is it necessary to assure you that we quite agree? It is the Lord's will that all the baptized and confirmed should take part in the apostolate. This is one of the major guidelines of the Second Vatican Council.

A preliminary remark: concern for a trained and responsible laity should not, of course, make us forget the urgency of calling priests and preparing them well. On the contrary, it demands this, as we have recently recalled.

This having been said, we warmly encourage your efforts for the formation, at all levels, of a Christian laity, for the apostolate cannot be improvised, and it must draw its principles and its methods from the Church. Those who work in apostolic movements, the leaders particularly, cannot claim to carry out a work of evangelization without seeking to deepen this specific Christian formation. The faith which must imbue their action cannot be deduced from a mere glance at life or from an analysis of events,

although it sets itself to do so. It springs from the Gospel read in Church, it is strengthened in prayer, it is nourished in the sacraments, and puts into practice in the first place the fundamental charism of Christians: love, universal love.

And we add: a doctrinal formation. Many movements are already trying to make provision for it, according to their means. For the laity in general, we know, too, that possibilities of doctrinal renewal have been organized in the Catholic Institutes of France and your respective dioceses. We hope that many of the laity will thus receive a solid theological teaching which will enable them to understand the mystery of the Church. Such laymen, fully present in the realities of this time, and sometimes at the critical points where the fate of civilization is at stake, will be better able to discern values and exchange values, for a true evangelization.



These laymen, far from being instruments of the hierarchy, will acquire their identity and come of age, by respecting likewise the identity and the specific mission of their pastors. It is important to maintain and renew the indispensable organic bond between priests and laity. Each one intervenes according to his particular vocation. The priest does not have to replace the militant, or the militant to replace the priest. The Church does not want either a clericalism, which would claim to monopolize the apostolate, or a "laicalism" cut off from the priesthood on the pretext of autonomy. What is necessary, is intelligent persevering articulation: it will be creative, and will prove that the Church, far from being a relationship of forces, is a communion.

As for the fields and methods of apostolate, realism makes it necessary to show flexibility and diversity. The different environments of life are a privileged ground, to the extent to which the laity endeavour to evangelize particular mentalities and to stimulate commitments inspired by a Christian spirit. Realities of a strictly family nature, educational responsibilities, problems of conscience of professional and civic life etc... must not be neglected. The political dimension of problems, however important it may be, must not mask the other aspects of daily life, or harden interpersonal relations. And to avoid ghettos, it is important to bring about wide meetings within the People of God.



Finally it is necessary to steer for the goal of evangelization: if it is necessarily interested in the humanization of structures, it wishes more deeply to open minds to the Gospel and even to provoke in the hearts of people Christ's fundamental question to the disciples:

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**"Who do you say I am?". Respect for the autonomy of the temporal order and the growing phenomenon of secularization must not make us forget the necessity of bearing witness explicitly to the faith.**

**We know that certain apostolic movements are accepting more and more "catechumens" or unbelievers of goodwill; it is a sign of their influence. This fact must not, however, paralyse specifically Christian reflection, or reduce its spiritual revival, or lead to ambiguous action.**

**We call upon you to examine these points again with our Pontifical Council for the Laity, the structures and members of which we have just renewed. We are well aware that you share these wishes. The laity expect from you closeness, benevolence, friendship, but also discernment, frankness and courage. It is the same love and trust we all bear together for the Christian laity that makes us desire for them an authentic and vigorous apostolate, that of the salt which does not lose its savour, that of the leaven which mingles with the whole dough to make it rise.**

