

Post-Synod: Manila

On April 3, 1980, Maundy Thursday, His Eminence Jaime Cardinal L. Sin, Archbishop of Manila, promulgated the Acts and Statutes of the 4th Synod of the Archdiocese of Manila celebrated last October 21 to 28, 1979. The legislations contained therein will take effect on May 25, 1980, feast of Pentecost — a very propitious start to a task worthily accomplished.

This was the first Synod held in the Archdiocese after the second Vatican Council, so that, compared with the previous synods, the last one 55 years ago, its concepts and directions are manifestly influenced by Vatican II. The synodal works revolve around the concept of the People of God. The 4 synodal documents bear this out very well. The first document is the **Organization of the Archdiocese**, "that portion of God's people entrusted to a bishop"; this is followed by **The People of God themselves**; then comes **The People of God in their Work and Relationship with One Another**; and **The People of God in their Work and Relationship with the World Today**. Freed all emotions, tensions, sweat and tears which went into the deliberations and formulation of the synodal Acts and Statutes one can now breathe with a sigh of relief that it is all over. But the synod was not a sort of fireworks that once it is all over would leave in its wake charred poles and burnt sticks. What resulted was an edifice with a strong foundation, well balanced parts and functional frameworks.

For sure it could not be said that the synodal documents are all perfect. There will always be room for development and polishing

of policies. At least it could not be said that the synodal proposals were haphazardly done. The statutory part is always backed up by two pillars: the doctrinal orientation and situational analysis. The Statutes did not come out just from the blue, an offshoot of doctrinal theorizing, nor dictated mainly by prevalent situations caring less for doctrine. Both doctrine and situation form the basis for legislation.

The resulting situational analysis of the Manila Archdiocese is not very rosy in many aspects. But such an objective analysis is necessary to bring about the true status, which parts are healthy and which are not, of the biggest Archdiocese in the Philippines. The synod, for instance, acknowledges the fact that "the present structures of the archdiocese lack proper perspective-orientation, and are neither holistic nor integrative." For this reason the section on Statutes for the Organization promulgated the direction and goal of the archdiocese.

Some of the analysis made were not only valid for the Manila situation alone but for the whole Philippines as well. In fact it is sometimes difficult to distinguish whether the documents are dealing with the Philippine situation as a whole or only of the Manila Archdiocese. Some of the data mentioned are indeed helpful to view some aspects of the Philippine Church.

There are a few affirmations in the synod which are worthy of note. One of them is the recognition of small ecclesial communities or "Basic Christian Communities" in the Archdiocese. In spite of difficulties in other parts of the country and successes in others we are told that "some sporadic attempts are presently being made in various parishes of the archdiocese and have generally met with notable success" (p. 19). With proper supervision and strictly complying with the Church guidelines these "Communities de base" could be a great instrument for evangelization.

The synod also calls "for more relevant forms of ministry" (p. 32). This does not mean that acceptance is being given to forms of ministry which are strictly secular and profane. As a matter of fact, priests are also warned "against the danger of losing sight of his proper priestly identity" (p. 33). Such profane ministries improper to a priest should be exercised by the laity who "are called

to make the Church present and operative in the places and circumstances where she cannot be salt of the earth except by and through them" (p. 46).

Some minimal data, however, need precision. It is not exact as stated in the situational analysis (p. 57) that some movements like the Cursillo, Focolare, etc. are mandated organizations, neither are the Third Orders of some religious orders. On the other hand the Student Catholic Action (SCA) is notably missing among the mandated organizations. The list understandably, was taken in toto without correction from the **Catholic Directory of the Philippines, 1978.**

Those outside the synod might also wonder why there is no mention at all about the sacrament of the **Anointing of the Sick** in the section on "Sacraments in General" (p. 61 ff.). I do not know exactly the reason for this omission, the synodal delegates would know, but I believe certain misconceptions among the faithful concerning this sacrament even, if not most especially, in the Archdiocese of Manila, would warrant a separate study and proper legislation.

This is not, of course, the last of the Manila synods. As the Church of Manila embarks on its mission of evangelization of all levels and sectors in the Archdiocese on this last quarter of the twentieth century, new situations would be forthcoming that would need new and fresh solutions. The People of God of Manila led by their pastor, young and energetic as ever, with the Holy Spirit in our midst will be equal to the task.