

A BASIC SCHEME FOR PRIESTLY TRAINING (Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis)

At the Synod of Bishops, held in Rome in October 1967, the following request was put by the Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, and met with the approval of the Fathers:

"Would it seem opportune to list the themes which ought to be included in all Schemes for Priestly Training, and to prepare, in collaboration with the Episcopal Conferences, a Basic Scheme (Ratio Fundamentalis), in accordance with the Decree *Optatam Totius* and the other Conciliar documents: in the next plenary meeting of the Sacred congregation for Catholic Education this scheme should be examined and drawn up definitively, so as to serve as a norm for all Schemes later to be made; its purpose being to preserve unity and at the same time allow sound variety."

As regards the list of themes mentioned above, the Sacred Congregation prepared a special index, entitled *De Ratione Institutionis sacerdotalis iuxta documenta Concilii Vaticani II renovanda* (Reforming the Scheme for Priestly Training according to the documents of Vatican Council II), and sent this to the individual Episcopal Conferences, to assist them in their work.

As for the second task, drawing up a Basic Scheme, its text is here put before the Episcopal Conferences as a necessary way to preserve unity in variety.

To clarify further its importance and purpose, the following points should be kept in view.

1. This document is intended to indicate to the Episcopal Conferences, whose task it is to draw up Schemes for Priestly Training proper to each nation, the solid foundations for carrying out or completing this

serious task; also to supply sure standards to the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education in its examination and approval of individual Schemes in accordance with the Decree *Optatum totius* no. 1.

An Obligatory Document

2. Since this document has been worked through by delegates of the Episcopal Conferences, and approved by the Holy See, it is to be taken as obligatory as regards its principal points (which are more precisely defined later), so that it may become the norm for the drawing up of individual Schemes, as the First Synod of Bishops decided.

The more easily to distinguish what is essential and therefore necessarily to be observed from what is not to be so considered, the following points must be noted.

a) For the most part it is clear from the nature of the matter itself what is of necessity required everywhere for the formation of future priests.

b) In some paragraphs elements which must be held essential, but which can (still) vary according to local circumstances, are clearly indicated: cf. e.g. nos. 50 (general coordination of studies), 75, 80, 81 (study programmes, the drawing-up of syllabuses), 93, examinations, 84, 101 (how to meet needs for special study and completion of post-Seminary formation).

c) Some points are mentioned simply by way of example or practical advice for the easier application of the principles laid down: cf. e.g. nos. 9 (variety of means for fostering vocations), 39, 40, 41 (the need for serious trial is laid down, but certain means to obtain it are only recommended), 48, 49, 50, 51 (virtues and qualities proper to the priest are stated, but some means and methods of developing them are only proposed), 52, 53, 54, 56 (the necessity of certain helps to spiritual life is affirmed, but they are not to be considered exhaustive), 91 (necessity affirmed, but not way of revising teaching methods); 27 (list of various Superiors), 29 (activity and ways of life of Superiors, e.g. community life), 31, 36 (variety of means for achieving right pedagogical and scientific approach), 38 (what is said in the concrete about Professors'

combined work, e.g. "they should meet at least once a month"), 67, 68 (the way in which training of alumni can be brought to a richer completion), 89 (reading of books in common to sharpen critical sense), 90 (the coordinator of studies), 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99 (the objects, places and times of pastoral exercises are mentioned only by way of examples).

If in some nations or regions situations obtain which demand special adaptations of priestly formation even in important points, adaptations beyond the scope of this Basic Scheme, the matter must be dealt with between the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education and the Episcopal Conferences of those places.

3. As is obvious from the nature of the case, the Document indicates only certain more general basic principles, on which the Episcopal Conferences must rely when defining their own rules. Its task is to point out suitable ways of meeting the various needs of priestly training, and to draw certain limits within which the life of Seminaries may safely go ahead.

According to the nature of its various subjects, therefore, the Document often foresees differing situations, in which individual Conferences will be able to choose their own path, more in keeping with the local conditions (cf. nos. 17, 18, 19, 42, 60, 63, 83, 84, 85, 97, 98, 101). Thus it aims at the greater good of every nation, not holding up their endeavours and undertakings, but stimulating them.

4. Some of the norms proposed in the Document are already drawn up in the form of separate sections which, if desired, may be inserted whole into national Schemes, for Priestly Training (e.g. nos 5-7, 11-14, 16, 20-26, 28-41, 44-58, 67-74, 76-79, 82, 86-89, 94-95, 99); others, on the other hand, just put forward principles to guide the necessary further elaboration (e.g. nos. 9, 15, 19, 27, 42, 43, 61-66, 75, 80, 93, 98, 99, 101).

5. In the drawing-up of the Document, three main requirements had to be met as far as possible: clarity, to do away with the dubious views about priestly training which are being spread about here and there in our day; *universality*, to supply, with the variety of conditions in view, suitable norms for the making of rules adapted to different localities;

actuality, i.e. after special consideration of the problems of our time in priestly training, to apply remedies for the dangers arising.

6. The Document is deeply penetrated with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, and in places recalls its exact words. Experience teaches that it is not a waste of time to present some of the Council's obligatory rules and principles again, to prevent their being neglected because not expressly mentioned, in the Basic Scheme (e.g. nos. 11, 13, 20, 29, 30, 44, 45).

7. Therefore the Document took for itself the following rules, in order to be of the greatest possible assistance to the Episcopal Conferences in the preparing or revising a Scheme for Priestly Training: — to omit nothing that seemed useful; to add nothing that was not universally valid; always to pay attention to modern conditions. This multiple aim laid down, it was impossible to avoid some defect in the proportion of the parts, since some matters demanded more ample treatment, some more brief; some needed the style of a code of laws, others of a directory: elegance must yield to necessity.

INTRODUCTION

By the decree *De institutione sacerdotali* (On the Training for the Priesthood) the Second Vatican Council provided the principal and more general rules for today's efforts towards Seminary reform, to ensure that these efforts might go forward safely, and produce a salutary increase of piety, learning and pastoral zeal in candidates for the priesthood. Certain further determinations are needed in order that the reforms maybe adapted in the best possible way to the special needs of individual nations, and for the preservation of that unity and that image of the Catholic priesthood which it demands of its very nature, and on which the Council earnestly insisted.¹ With this twofold need in view, the Basic Scheme for Priestly Training here proposed has been worked out by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education and the delegates of the Episcopal Conferences, in common effort and consultation. Their constant care and sincere prayer, too, was to express in

¹ Vatican Council II, Decr. *Optatum totius*, Introd.; Dec. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, nos. 1,2,7, and *passim*.

this document the genuine spirit and pastoral purpose of the Second Vatican Council; also that these, expressed in more clearly defined form, might be more effective towards fitting the work of education in Seminaries, to the new needs of our times.

1. In what sense the Second Vatican Council confirms the validity of Seminary training.

In the Second Vatican Council, the Church decreed that its experience of Seminaries, tried out for many centuries, was to be maintained as valid, affirming that *Seminaries were necessary* as institutions set up for the formation of priest, and provided with those excellent educational features which, combined with others, can effectively promote the integral formation of future priests.² However, while confirming afresh this well-tried path to the priesthood, it by no means wished to pass over in silence the manifold and varied needs arising, in course of time, from out-dated means or changed conditions; it allowed for, or even prescribed not a few changes to increase the power and pedagogical efficacy of this useful institution.

Although the Council differentiated between Seminaries which are called Major and those called Minor, or Junior, it determined certain principles valid for both.³ Before the particular problems of each are brought out, however, it is first necessary to give careful consideration to what is in a way presupposed in all that is to be said below: the Seminary, as a community of young men,⁴ derives its primary force and fitness to train future priests from its own circumstances and way of life; here the young men live; its air, one may say, they breathe; they themselves have a part in determining and reforming its character. It is a question of various concurrent factors, both internal and external; of the structure of the whole community, and of its spirit, which can check or promote improvement, whose influence is, in varying degrees, apparent in everything.

In this situation, then, the primary duty of the Superiors is to obtain the collaboration of all concerned, in order to produce and perfect

² Cf. Vat. Council II, Decr. *Optatam totius*, nos. 4-6.

³ *Ibid.* no. 3.

⁴ Note no. 74 in this document gives a more detailed description of a Seminary.

this spiritual climate. It should be such as to ensure that whoever enters the Seminary may find his own vocation and carrying out God's will wholly and entirely.⁵ The material setting should not be reckoned as of little importance towards this purpose: the sober and suitable arrangement, that is, of site, buildings, furniture and so on, adequate for the life the young men are leading.

2. Position of Modern Youth as Regards Education

In any sound reform of Seminaries, moreover, present-day circumstances and their special educational needs must certainly be considered.⁶ The young men who called by Divine Providence to exercise the priestly office among men of our time *bring special dispositions* that match the mind and attitudes of modern men. So, as their outlook manifests itself at various times, one observes in them an ardent longing for sincerity and truth; they are noticeably very prone to take up everything new and out-of-the ordinary; they admire the world with its scientific and technical progress; we see them wanting to work their way more deeply into the world to serve it, with a sense of "solidarity" particularly with the poorer classes and the oppressed and a spirit of community. But besides all this they have clearly a distrust for everything old and traditionally accepted; they cannot make up their minds, and are inconsistent in putting plans into effect; they show a lack of docility — very necessary for spiritual progress — with a disposition difficult and critical towards authority and the various institutions of civil and ecclesiastical society, etc..⁷ In this pedagogical work, the educator not only does not neglect these special qualities, but endeavours to understand them, and to turn them, as far as he can, to his purpose of formation, with the

⁵ Pius XII, Apostolic Exhortation, *Menti Nostrae*, 23 Sept. 1950: *A.A.S.* 42 (195) p. 685; Paul VI, Address, *Non e senza*, given at the inauguration of the buildings of the Pont. Lombard College, Rome, 11 Nov. 1965: *Insegnamenti di Paolo VI*, III, pp. 604-605, Vat. Polyglot Press, 1965.

⁶ John XXIII, Address, *E grande*, to the First Congress held in Rome from all Italy, to foster sacred vocations, 21 Apr. 1961: *A.A.S.* 53 (1961), p. 311.

⁷ Vat. Coun. II, Declar. *Gravissimum educationis*, Introd.; Const. past. *Gaudium et spes*, ch. II; Paul VI, Address, *Salutiano con vivissima*, to the leaders of the association "*Movimento Adulti Scouts Italiani*," 5 Nov. 1966: *Insegnamenti*, IV, pp. 538 seq.

cooperation always between what is more useful for better priestly formation and what is less useful, not useful at all, or an actual obstacle. All things considered, it is impossible to ignore the fact that in these last years particularly there are problems, originating from youth or from modern society, which exercise a powerful influence on the whole work of formation, and therefore demand greater efforts from educators.

Two futures of modern youth need particular attention: their keener sense of their own dignity as persons, and their keener feeling for the things and the men of this world, whether for its undoubted goods, or its particular spiritual situation, which displays more perceptibly as the days go by the effects of a neglect of religion.⁸ These two factors combine with other; in their hearts and create a kind of common mentality, one which requires in Seminaries, besides other remedial measures, a greater esteem for the person, and the removal of anything whose reason is an unjustified "convention;" everything must be done in accordance with truth and charity; genuine dialogue must be established among all parties; more numerous contacts with the world must be encouraged, to meet the just needs of right formation; finally, everything that is prescribed or demanded should show the reason on which it is based and should be carried out in freedom.⁹

If these things require the revision of certain elements of training accepted from past practice, they also demand a genuine pedagogical effort, one relying on mutual trust and understanding with a right notion of freedom, and particularly the knowledge of how to distinguish the means and the ends of education. For if useful dialogue and fruitful enquiry about means can be instituted in collaboration with the students, at all times and from the beginning there should be kept well in view the purpose of the Seminary and of all education, as the basis of all considerations,¹⁰ to which any discussion of this kind must be re-

⁸ Cf. Paul VI, Radio Address, *La vicorrenza*, for the feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, 22 Dec. 1964: *Insegnamenti*, II, p. 761; address, *Le parole*, to the members of the Catholic University Confederation of Italy (FUCI), 6 Dec. 1966: *Insegnamenti*, IV, p. 611; address, *Noi sappiamo*, to the faithful in audience, 25 Sept. 1968: *Insegnamenti*, VI, pp. 927 seq.

⁹ Cf. Vat. Council. II, Const. *Gaudium et spes*, nos. 25, 26, 47; Paul VI, address, *Salutiano con vivissima*, cf. note 7.

¹⁰ Cf. Vat. Council. II, Const. *Gaudium et spes*, n. 31.

ferred. The more clearly the sublime purpose of their formation is put before the young men, the more willingly will they join forces to seek means best fitted to attain it. Guided by their resolve to promote the common good, and by the will of God, they will arrive at a true sense of freedom and authority.

3. Catholic Priesthood as the Proper End of Priestly Education

The proper end of priestly education is based on the idea of Catholic priesthood as it arises from divine revelation, clarified by the constant tradition and magisterium of the Church. This teaching, which must be the formative element in every Scheme of Priestly Training, infusing therein its special force and significance, can be taken from the very words of the Second Vatican Council.

All priestly power and ministry in the Catholic Church derives its origin from the unique and eternal priesthood of Christ, who was sanctified by the Father and sent into the world (cf. Jn. 10,36), and made his apostles in the first place, and their successors, the bishops, sharers in the same priesthood. In different ways the various members of the Church share in that one same priesthood of Christ: the general, or common, priesthood of the faithful constitutes a certain simple degree of this sharing, the faithful who through baptism and the anointing of the Holy Spirit "receive consecration as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood. It is their task, in every employment, to offer the spiritual sacrifices of a Christian man."¹¹ Priests share in the priesthood of Christ in a different way: they "do not possess the high dignity of the Pontificate; they are dependent on Bishops for the exercise of their power. They are nevertheless united to them in priestly honour. In virtue of the sacrament of order, they are consecrated in the likeness of Christ, high and eternal priest (cf. Heb. 5, 1-10; 7, 24; 9, 11-28), as genuine priests of the New Testament, for the work of preaching the gospel, tending the faithful, and celebrating divine worship."¹² For this reason, therefore, the *ministerial priesthood* of priests surpasses the general priesthood of the faithful, since through it some in the body of the Church are assim-

¹¹ Vat. Coun. II, Decr. *Optatam totius*, passim.

¹² Vat. Coun. II, Dogmatic Const. *Lumen gentium*, no. 10.

lated to Christ the Head, and are promoted "to serve Christ, their Master, Priest and King, and to share his ministry. Thus the Church on earth, is constantly built up into the People of God, the Body of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit."¹³

"There is an essential difference between the faithful's priesthood in common and the priesthood of the ministry or the hierarchy, and not just a difference of degree. Nevertheless, there is an ordered relation between them: one and the other has its special way of sharing the single priesthood of Christ."¹⁴

When raised to the priesthood, priests enter into manifold *relationships with their own Bishop*, with all the other priests, and with the people of God.¹⁵ For "since all priests share one and the same priesthood and ministry of Christ with the Bishop, the very unity of their ordination and function demands their communion in the hierarchy with the Order of Bishops . . . , Bishops, therefore, must regard their priests as indispensable helpers and advisers in the ministry and office of teaching, sanctifying and nourishing the people of God."¹⁶ Together with their Bishop "they make a single priesthood, though there is a difference in the duties by which it is carried into effect. They render the Bishop present, in a way, in individual local communities. Their association with him is marked by confidence and generosity. To the best of their ability they shoulder his tasks and anxieties and make the exercise of them their daily care."¹⁷

This true sharing in one and the same diocesan priesthood creates many close ties among the priests themselves: "priests in virtue of their ordination are established in the priestly Order and are intimately united in sacramental brotherhood."¹⁸ "which should be spontaneously and cheerfully demonstrated in mutual help, spiritual and material alike, pastoral and personal; shown too in reunions and a fellowship of life,

¹³ Ibid. no. 28.

¹⁴ Vat. Coun. II, Decr. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 1.

¹⁵ Vat. Coun. II, Const. *Lumen gentium*, no. 10.

¹⁶ Which is to be borne in mind particularly in the spiritual and pastoral formation of the student (cf. chs. VIII and XVI).

¹⁷ Vat. Coun. II, Decr. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 7.

¹⁸ Vat. Coun. II, Const. *Lumen gentium*, no. 28.

work and charity"¹⁹ "in this way priests display that unity by which Christ desired his own to be made perfect in one, in order that the world might know that the Son was sent by the Father."²⁰

Every priest, however, is taken from among the people of God in order to be appointed on behalf of the same people. Though by the sacrament of order they exercise the office of father and teacher, "they too, like the faithful are our Lord's disciples, and are called by God's grace to share his kingdom. For they are brothers among brothers with all who have been reborn in the font of baptism. They are likewise members of the one same Body of Christ which all Christians are called to build up."²¹ Therefore, "they must, like fathers in Christ, take care of the faithful, by baptism and instruction (cf. 1 Cor. 4,15; 1 Pet. 2,23). Being examples to the flock (1 Pet. 5, 5), they must take charge of their local community and serve it in such a way that it may deserve to be given the title of the Church of God (cf. 1 Cor. 1, 2; 2 Cor. 1, 1) which is the title that distinguishes the one People of God in its entirety. They must be mindful of their obligation truly to show the face of the priest's and pastor's ministry to believers and unbelievers, to Catholics and non-Catholics, by their daily life and care; to bear witness to all of truth and life; as good shepherds, to search out even those (cf. LK. 15, 4-7) who after baptism in the Catholic Church have fallen away from sacramental practice, or worse still, from belief,"²² that through their tireless work "the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation"²³ may shine out before all men and become the sign of God's presence in the world.²⁴ "Together with the Religious and their faithful, they should show by their lives and utterance that the Church, merely by its presence here with all that it has to offer, is an inexhaustible source of those virtues which the world needs today."²⁵ "A priest, however, has a duty not only to his own flock but to the whole community, to which

¹⁹ Vat. Coun. II, Decr. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 8.

²⁰ Vat. Coun. II, Const. *Lumen gentium*, no 28.

²¹ Vat. Coun. II, Decr. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 8.

²² *Ibid.* no. 9.

²³ Vat. Coun. II, Const. *Lumen gentium*, no 28.

²⁴ *Ibid.* no. 28.

²⁵ Cf. Vat. Coun. II, Decr. *Ad gentes*, no. 15.

he must strive to give a truly Christian character" a genuine missionary spirit and one of Catholic universality.

Ministry of the Word

The priestly ministry as expounded by the Second Vatican Council is chiefly put into practice in the ministry of the word and the work of sanctification.

"Since nobody can be saved without faith, the first duty of priests as fellow workers with the Bishops is to preach the Gospel to all men,"²⁶ carrying out our Lord's command: *Go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature* (Mk. 16, 16). This they fulfill when "being on good terms with people, they turn them to God; or by preaching openly they proclaim the mystery of Christ to unbelievers; or give Christian instruction or explain the Church's teaching, or endeavor to discuss contemporary problems in the light of Christ's word."²⁷

The aim of the ministry of the word is to bring men to faith and the sacrament of salvation, and it attains its peak in the celebration of the Eucharist: "their mightiest exercise of their sacred office is at the eucharistic worship or assembly. There, acting in the person of Christ, they make the proclamation of his mystery; they unite the aspirations of the faithful with the sacrifice of their head; in the sacrifice of the Mass, until the coming of the Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 11, 26), they present and apply the sole sacrifice of the New Testament, the single offering Christ makes of himself as an unblemished victim to the Father (cf. Heb. 9, 11-28). The ministrations of reconciliation and relief is their high function on behalf of penitent or sick faithful. They convey the needs of the faithful and their prayers to God the Father (cf. Heb. 5, 1-4)."²⁸ Thus the office of preaching has as its special characteristic that it must be completed by the work of sanctification, by which the priest, acting in the person of Christ, cooperates in building up the Church.

²⁶ Vat. Coun. II, Const. *Gaudium et spes*, no. 43.

²⁷ Vat. Coun. II, Decr. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 6.

²⁸ Vat. Coun. II, Decr. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 4; Const. *Lumen gentium*, no. 28.

The *Priest presides* over the people of God when they are gathered together, through the celebration of the Eucharist. He should, therefore, be such a man as can likewise be recognized by everyone as acting in the place of Christ the Head; for "priests with the authority they have been given carry on the work of Christ Leader and Shepherd. In the name of the Bishop they father the family of God together into one united brotherhood. In union with the Holy Spirit they lead them through Christ to God the Father. To enable them to do this, or any other priestly work, priests receive spiritual strength."²⁹ By this power the priestly or hierarchic ministry differs from the general priesthood of the faithful not only in degree but essentially.³⁰ For though the faithful can and must have some part in the task of spreading the Gospel and in pastoral duties,³¹ only the man who has received the sacred order of priesthood can fully exercise the sacramental ministry, above all that of the Eucharist, from which the other ministries derive, and to which they are directed. And so, *set apart for the Gospel of God* (Rom. 1, 1) he should not hesitate to dedicate his whole life to the service of God and man, indeed to lay down his life for his sheep.³²

4. Activity and Life of the Priest Today

The *priestly office*, as essentially defined by the Church, is today carried out in an *entirely new situation*, which comes to light as a result of mankind's new needs, and from the nature of modern civilization.³³

The main factors today determining mankind's needs arise from the heightened regard for the human person, or the progressive alteration of the religious sense. If not always openly and in fact, at least virtually, the dignity of every man is acknowledged, his right to progress, to manifest his mind freely, to have a part in his own development and in that of the material world. As man's dominion in the world grows more com-

²⁹ Vat. Coun. II, *Decr. Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 4.

³⁰ Vat. Coun. II, *Const. Lumen gentium*, no. 28.

³¹ Vat. Coun. II, *Decr. Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 6.

³² Vat. Coun. II, *Const. Lumen gentium*, no. 10.

³³ *Ibid.* nos. 11, 12.

plete, in conjunction with great changes in society, less room is granted to traditionally accepted forms of Christian life. While, in the general upheaval, Christian groups display a more personal form of religious life, which shows itself in special reverence for the word of God and the sacred Liturgy, and in acquisition of a more mature conscience. The number is daily increasing, too, of those who are partly or wholly losing their due familiarity with the Church, and leaning towards a natural sort of religion and ethic. Indeed, all too often they go to such lengths that atheism — once restricted rather to philosophies — is becoming ever more common, little by little affecting the minds of great numbers of people. These various features of modern civilization must be constantly borne in mind, since the life and activity of the priest, and his preparation for his task must have reference to them.³⁴

Through the various ways of social communication, young men who today enter a Seminary are closely attached to that kind of society, and their outlook is affected by problems concerning religion, especially priestly activity and life. They often approach theological studies with a sincere will to serve God and men in the priestly life, without, however, what was formerly the normal thing, a confident and clear grasp of the benefits of religion, of which they must at sometime become the heralds and administrators. These things from time to time cause grave difficulties to arise in the Seminary, yet they form the true and principal object of education, to which Superiors must give special care and attention. In their method of formation they should first of all try, not so much to remove these various obstacles by some sudden, radical intervention, but rather step by step to purify minds and intentions. In particular, they should employ judgment and moderation, to ensure that the sound element in the young men's aims may steadily grow and gain strength; thus their priestly life and work may in future bear richer fruit.

The generous and keen spirit of the young men will help towards this end, and their zeal to be of use to human society; even at times also the doubts they must overcome and their critical examination of the faith: since the people to whom they will be sent as priests, whose

³⁴ Vat. Coun. II, Decr. *Presbyterorum Ordinis* no. 13.

religious outlook is full of doubt and uncertainty, will not accept a priests' teaching authority easily and without prejudice the doctrine which the priest tries, *ex officio*, to teach them.

The young men, then, must be so trained that this particular situation, which they at present experience with the whole Church, may not only not lead them into any danger of spiritual collapse but in fact stimulate them, with firm hope and faith in God, to try new ways and means of easier communication with the men of today. For the world "now entrusted to the pastors of the Church to cherish and serve, was so loved by God that for its sake he gave his only-begotten Son (cf. Jn 3, 16). Indeed this world, held down by many sins, does in fact possess abundant possibilities and could provide the living stones (cf. 1 Pet. 2, 5) with which to build a dwelling place for God in the Spirit (cf. Eph. 2, 22). The same Holy Spirit, while urging on the Church to open up new ways of approach to the world of today, inspires and fosters timely adaptations for the priestly ministry."³⁵

This up-to-date adjusting of priestly activity and life is at present causing anxious concern in many minds, and raising all kinds of questions everywhere. Hence, too, much discussion and writing, and many proposals about the priest himself, his nature, his proper place in society, his style of life, his better preparation for more effective fulfillment of his

³⁵ There is a more detailed picture of this new situation in which the priest's apostolic work is carried out, in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the more recent Papal documents, e.g. Vat. Coun. II, Const. *Gaudium et spes*; John XXIII, Enc. *Pacem in terris*, 11 April 1963: *A.A.S.* 55 (1963), pp. 257 seq.; enc. *Mater et Magistra*, 15 May 1961: *A.A.S.* (1961), pp. 401 seq.; Paul VI, Enc. *Ecclesiam suam*, 6 Aug. 1964: *A.A.S.* 56 (1964) pp. 609 seq.; Enc. *Populorum Progressio*, 26 March 1967: *A.A.S.* 59 (1967), pp. 257 seq.; address, *Potrebbe bastare*, to those present at the Congress held in Rome on the adaptation of pastoral care to modern needs, 9 Sept. 1966: *Insegnamenti*, IV, pp. 388-392; address, *Benedicamus Domino*, to their Excellencies the Bishops of Latin America about to attend the second General Assembly held in Medellin, 24 Aug. 1968: *Insegnamenti*, VI, pp. 403, seq.; address, *Questo annuale incontro*, to the Lenten preachers and parish priests of Rome, 17 March 1969: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 17-18 March 1969, p. 1; address *Il Sig. Cardinale*, to the Sacred College, 15 Dec. 1969: *L'Osservatore Romano*, 15-16 Dec. 1969, p. 1 seq.

task.³⁶ The Seminary, obviously, must never be unaware of these things nor ever neglect them; but on the other hand must carefully guard and preserve what the priesthood possesses of certain and lasting good. The task of this *Ratio Fundamentalis* will be to safeguard this acquired good; the Episcopal Conferences, with full freedom, will see to the adaptation to the needs of time and place of other contingent elements.

I

GENERAL RULES

1. The Scheme for Priestly Training drawn up by an Episcopal Conference in accordance with no. I of the Decree *Optatam totius*, is approved by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education first of all "ad experimentum," for trial.

If within the period of trial some urgent need arises to adapt the Scheme in any part to fresh circumstances, such changes are not excluded so long as the Holy See is informed in good time.

Before the period of trial is finished, the Episcopal Conference's Scheme will be revised in the light of experience by the Episcopal Commission for Seminaries,³⁷ with the help of experts, and will be submitted for fresh approval of the Sacred Congregation.

Such revision and approbation will afterwards be repeated at certain times, as shall seem necessary or useful to the individual Episcopal Conferences.

The right and duty of drawing up a Scheme for Priestly Training in their nation or region, and of approving special experimentation as may seem opportune, belong to the Episcopal Conference alone, and not to individual Bishops.

³⁶ Vat. Coun. II, Const. *Gaudium et spes*, nos. 4-10; Paul VI, homily *Hodie Concilium*, at session IX of the Second Vat. Coun., 7 Dec. 1965: *Insegnamenti*, III, pp. 720 seq.

³⁷ Vat. Coun. II, Decr. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 22.

2. The rules of a Scheme thus worked out are to be observed in all the Seminaries for diocesan clergy, whether regional or national; their particular adaptations will be determined by the competent Bishops in the Rule of Life proper to each Seminary.

Training Schemes of Religious Institutes are also to be adapted to these rules, comparing like with like.³⁸

Where Seminary students carry out their philosophical and theological studies in Faculties or other Institutions of Higher Studies, reference should be made to the rules laid down by the Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education in the document *Normae quaedam*³⁹ under no. 33.

3. The Scheme embraces basic priestly training under its human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral aspects: these parts must be aptly fitted together to ensure that the priest is prepared for the needs of our time.

4. It is of primary importance that all priestly training, while taking account of the documents of the Holy See concerned with the formation of students, should conform to the spirit and norms of the Second Vatican Council, as they appear in the Decree *Optatam totius* and in the other Constitutions and Decrees which touch on the education of clerics.⁴⁰

II

THE PASTORAL CARE OF VOCATIONS

5. Vocation to the priesthood has its setting in the wider field of Christian vocation, as rooted in the sacrament of baptism, by which the

³⁸ Paul VI, cf. address, *Questo annuale incontro*, loc. cit.; cf. address *Il Sig. Cardinale*, loc. cit., cf. note 35.

³⁹ In these rules certain more general points are put before the Episcopal Conferences, with which they can draw up the Schemes for Priestly Training proper to each nation.

⁴⁰ Either by a Commission or a Secretariat, to which the care of the Seminaries has been entrusted. Such Commissions or Secretariates, as also the so-called *technical Commissions* of experts were highly recommended by the Synod of Bishops in 1967: their composition, duties and competence are to be more accurately determined by the Episcopal Conferences.

people of God "is founded by Christ for a fellowship of life, charity and truth; it is taken up by him as the instrument of salvation for all men; it is sent on a mission to the world at large as the light of the world and the salt of the earth (cf. Matt. 5, 13-16)."⁴¹ This vocation, aroused by the Holy Spirit, "who dispenses his gifts in variety, for the Church's advantage, according to his wealth and the requirements of the ministries (cf. 1 Cor. 12, 1-11)"⁴² is aimed at the building up of the Body of Christ in which "there exists a diversity of members and functions."⁴³

6. As manifestations of the unsearchable riches of Christ (cf. Eph. 3, 8) in the Church, all vocations claim high esteem, and therefore must be developed with all care and concern towards their maturity and increase. It is, then, for the whole Christian community⁴⁴ but in a special way for priests, "as educators in the faith, themselves or through others, to train each of the faithful to follow his vocation according to the Gospel, and practise sincere and fruitful charity. They must show the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit how to use that liberty with which Christ has made us free"⁴⁵ so that they "may reach their Christian maturity."⁴⁶

7. Among the many vocations unceasingly aroused by the Holy Spirit in the People of God, the vocation to a state of perfection, and above all the vocation to the priesthood, has a special importance. By the latter a Christian is chosen by God⁴⁷ to share in the hierarchical

⁴¹ Cf. Vat. Coun. II, Decr. *Optatam totius*, Introd.; Paul VI, in the Motu proprio, *Ecclesiae Sanctae*, 6 Aug. 1966: A.A.S. 58 (1966), p. 781, as regards missionary areas, cf. Decr. *Ad gentes divinitus*, no. 16.

⁴² *Normae quaedam ad Constitutionem Apostolicam Deus scientiarum Dominus de studiis academicis ecclesiasticis recognoscendam*, published by the S. Congregation for Catholic Education, 20 May 1968.

⁴³ E. G. Decr. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, Declar. *Gravissimum educationis*, Decr. *Perfectae caritatis*, Const. *Lumen gentium*, *Gaudium et spes*, Decr. *Unitatis redintegratio*, Const. *Sacrosantum Concilium*, Decr. *Apostolicam actuositatem*, etc.

⁴⁴ Vat. Coun. II, Const. *Lumen gentium*, no. 9; cf. Paul VI, address, *Il nostro desiderio*, to the faithful in audience, 5 May 1965: *Insegnamenti*, III pp. 928 seq.

⁴⁵ Vat. Coun. II, Const. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 7.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Vat. Coun. II, Decr. *Optatam totius*, no. 2.

Priesthood of Christ "to nourish the Church by the word and grace of God"⁴⁸. At the different stages of life this vocation shows itself in different ways: in youths, in men of more mature years, and also, as the constant experience of the Church testifies, in boys—in whom it not infrequently shows itself, like a "seed", in company with a distinct piety, an ardent love of God and neighbor, and a leaning towards the apostolate⁴⁹.

8. From the consideration of the great needs of Christ's faithful and an understanding of our Divine Saviour's invitation to all: "Pray the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into his harvest (Matt. 9,38: Lk. 10,2), it is obviously a serious duty for the whole Christian community continually and in faith to foster religious and especially priestly vocations. Therefore in every Diocese, region, or nation, a Vocations Organization should be established and built up, in accordance with the Pontifical documents on the matter. Its function is the due coordination of all that belongs to pastoral action for the fostering of vocations, neglecting no suitable means, and to promote this work with equal prudence and zeal⁵⁰.

"This vigorous collaboration of all God's People springs up in response to the initiatives of Divine Providence, which endows with the natural qualities they need those whom God has chosen to share the hierarchic Priesthood of Christ, and assists them by his grace. At the same time, God leaves the rightful ministers of the Church to designate as acceptable those candidates whose acknowledged fitness is combined with the complete freedom and honest purpose essential in those who seek so great a role. Once she has accepted them, the Church then dedicates them by the seal of the Holy Spirit for the worship of God and the service of the Church"⁵¹.

To promote the Organization and foster vocations, Bishops should take the greatest care to make use of the combined efforts of priests,

⁴⁸ Vat. Coun. II, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 6.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*; Cf. *Decr. Christus Dominus*, no. 15.

⁵⁰ Cf. Vat. Coun. II, *Decr. Optatam totius*, no. 2.

⁵¹ Vat. Coun. II, *Const. Lumen gentium*, no. 11.

religious and lay people, especially of parents and teachers⁵², and also of Catholic associations, on the pattern of any general, organically coordinated pastoral care.

9. Everything necessary to obtain vocations from God should be encouraged, in the first place the prayer demanded by Christ himself (cf. Matt. 9, 39, Lk. 10, 2). Private prayer is called for, and prayer in common at suitable times in the liturgical year, and on solemn occasions fixed by ecclesiastical authority. This is the primary purpose of the *World Day for Vocations*, instituted by the Holy See, to be kept every year by the Church throughout the world⁵³. Everything, too, should be encouraged that can rouse and open men's minds to recognize and welcome a divine vocation. The example of priests "who openly manifest true paschal joy"⁵⁴; well-organized pastoral care of youth in the dioceses; sermons and catechesis that treat of vocation; spiritual preparation such as retreats: all should be regarded as important features of this pastoral work.

This activity should observe the laws of sound psychology and pedagogy, and must be aimed at men of different ages; but nowadays

⁵² Vat. Coun. II, Decr. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 11; Pius XII, Apost. Const. *Sedes sapientiae*, 31 May 1956: *A.A.S.* 48 (1956), pp. 357 seq.; Paul VI, Apostolic letter, *Summi Dei Verbum*, 4 Nov. 1963: *A.A.S.* 55 (1963), pp. 984 seq.; cf. address, *Il grande rito*, on the completion of 400 years since the institution of Seminaries by the Council of Trent, 4 Nov. 1963: *Insegnamenti*, I, pp. 288-290; address, *Il nostro desiderio*, loc. cit., note 44; address, *Vous nous offrez*, to the "Altar boys" from all Europe, 30 March 1967: *Insegnamenti*, V, pp. 126-127.

⁵³ Cf. Vat. Coun. II, Decr. *Optatam totius*, no. 2; Decr. *Perfectae caritatis*, no. 24; Decr. *Christus Dominus*, no. 15; Decr. *Ad gentes divinitus*, nos. 16, 39; cf. also Pius XII, moto proprio *Cum nobis* "on the creation of Pontifical Organizations for Vocations to the Priesthood in the S. Congregation for Seminaries and Universities" 4 Nov. 1941: *A.A.S.* 33 (1941), p. 479; with added *Statutes and Rules* promulgated by the same S. Congregation 8 Sept. 1943; Motu proprio *Cum supremae* "On the Pontifical Organization for religious vocations," 11 Feb. 1955: *A.A.S.* 47 (1955), p. 266; with the added *Statutes and Rules* promulgated by the S. Congregation of Religious (ibid. pp. 298-301).

⁵⁴ Vat. Coun. II, Decr. *Optatam totius*, no. 2; Pius XII, Apostolic Const. *Sedes sapientiae*, 31 May 1956: *A.A.S.* 48 (1956), p. 357; Paul VI Apostolic letter, *Summi Dei Verbum*, 4 Nov. 1963: *A.A.S.* 55 (1963), pp. 984 seq.

fresh effort is urgently needed: more men show a vocation at a more mature age (sometimes after practising a career): special undertakings and programmes are demanded to detect, develop and form vocations.⁵⁵

10. The fostering of vocations should be done in a generous spirit, not only for one's diocese and nation, but also for other dioceses and other nations: the needs of the Universal Church should be remembered, and the action of God who calls individuals to different tasks: to the secular priesthood, or missionary work, or to the religious institutions. To make this end easier of attainment, single Centres are desirable in the individual dioceses, which may be expressions of the cooperation and unity existing between both clergies, diocesan and religious, in favor of all vocations⁵⁶.

(to be continued)

⁵⁵ Cf. Vat. Coun. II, Decr. *Optatum totius* no. 2; Decr. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 11; Const. *Lumen gentium*, no. 11; Decr. *Perfectae caritatis*, no. 24; Decr. *Apostolicam actuositatem*, no. 11; Decr. *Christus Dominus*, no. 15; Const. *Gaudium et spes*, no. 52; Decr. *Ad gentes divinitus*, no. 39; cf. also Pius XII, Apostolic exhortation, *Menti nostrae*, 23 Sept. 1950: *A.A.S.* 42 (1950), p. 683; address, *Una parola, to newly-weds*, 25 March 1942: *Discorsi e Radiomessaggi*, IV, pp. 11-17; John XXIII, address, *E grande* to the First Congress from all Italy for the fostering of vocations, held in Rome, 21 April 1961; *A.A.S.* 53 (1961) 308-314; address, *Quod spectaculum*, to those present at the first international Congress for ecclesiastical vocations, 26 May 1962: *A.A.S.* 54 (1962), pp. 451-453; Paul VI, Apostolic Letter *Summi Dei Verbum*, 4 Nov. 1963: *A.A.S.* 55 (1963) pp. 985 seq.; Radio message given for the celebration of the "World Day for Vocations," *Pregate il Padrone*, 11 April 1964, *Insegnamenti*, II, pp. 240-242; *Quest'anno* 5 March 1967: *Insegnamenti*, V, pp. 699-702; *La Quinta Giornata*, 19 April 1968, *Insegnamenti*, VI, pp. 133-136; written message, *La celebrazione*, 19 March 1969: *A.A.S.* 61 (1969), pp. 330-33; S. Cong. for Seminaries and Universities, *La preminente*; Instruction on the work of Catholic Action of the fostering of vocations, 1 Oct. 1960.

⁵⁶ Letter of Cardinal Amelito G. Cicognani, Sec. of State, to Card. Pizzardo, Prefect of the S. Cong. for Seminaries and Universities, 23 Jan. 1964.

⁵⁷ Vat. Coun. II, Decr. *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, no. 11; Decr. *Optatum totius*, no. 2.

⁵⁸ Vat. Coun. II, Decr. *Optatum totius*, no. 2; cf. the document referred to in note 55; as regards late vocations, cf. Apostolic Exhortation, *Menti Nostrae*, 25 Sept. 1950: *A.A.S.* 42 (1950), p. 684.

⁵⁹ Vat. Coun. II, Decr. *Optatum totius*, no. 2; *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, nos. 10, 11.