

Addresses

“Blessed Alvaro del Portillo’s Role in Drafting the Decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis* at the Second Vatican Council,” in the *Almudi Theology Dialogues*, Valencia, Spain (April 17, 2015)

In considering the origin and content of the decree *Presbyterorum ordinis*, on the ministry and life of priests, it will be helpful to first briefly mention the various changes its drafting process underwent, both during the preparatory phase of the Council and during the Council itself. We will also need to take into account the history of the various *De Ecclesia* schemas (which eventually became the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium*), since the questions about the priesthood dealt with there had direct repercussions on the preparation of the decree on priests.

I. A brief historical introduction

As is well-known, in order to determine the topics the Council would address, the opinion of all the world’s bishops was asked for,

as well as that of the Roman Curia and the ecclesiastical universities. The proposals, which were very numerous, were distributed among ten commissions and three secretariats; a large number of schemas for possible documents were prepared, to be studied and worked on in the Conciliar assembly.

But as you also know, this abundant preliminary material was almost totally discarded by the Council fathers. There were many reasons for doing so, although they came down in the end to basically two:

a) These schemas dealt with many quite diverse questions that often lacked any connecting thread.

b) Their formulation was based, in general, on a theology that had been forged down through the centuries and that was seen as sufficiently solid, without attempting any major deepening in this teaching. As far as the priesthood was concerned, the common opinion was that priests possessed the fullness of the priesthood, since their principal responsibility was to consecrate the Body and Blood of Christ in celebrating Mass; all the other priestly functions were subordinated to this *potestas* or “power.” Therefore the teaching was quite widespread that the epis-

copate did not constitute the highest grade of the Sacrament of Holy Orders; it was understood as an added power—one of jurisdiction—to the power priests already possessed, for organizing and governing the Church.

But right away the objection was raised that this vision of the hierarchy suffered from a clear defect: the failure to sufficiently consider the Church as *communio*, an insight a number of theologians had been developing in the first half of the twentieth century.

Charles Moeller offered a perceptive remark in this regard when, in a book with commentaries by various authors on the constitution *Lumen Gentium*, published in 1965, he began his article with these words: “If anyone, in January 1959, had said that a few years later [in 1964] a dogmatic constitution on the Church would be promulgated, he would have been viewed as a naïve dreamer.”¹

The Conciliar sessions began on October 11, 1962. As the work progressed, the need to deepen the ecclesiological roots of many of the topics being discussed became more evident. As far as the priesthood was concerned, in October 1963, in the second Conciliar session, a good number of the fathers expressed their dissatisfaction. As one of them pointed out, the paragraph the schema *De Ecclesia* dedi-

cated to the ministerial priesthood was very brief (scarcely a half page in length), as opposed to the nine pages dedicated to the episcopate, and was quite sketchy in content. The fear was expressed that priests would find this treatment disappointing, since they might think that the Council was not giving sufficient attention to the great service to the Church that their mission entailed.

To remedy this without modifying the schema on the Church, the possibility was suggested of preparing a message from the Conciliar fathers to priests. A proposal was presented for the consideration of the assembly, but so many alterations were suggested that the second session of the Council ended without the message being completed, and therefore it was never sent.

At the same time, some interventions by the Council fathers had pointed, though indirectly, to the need to go more deeply into the ecclesiology of communion. Here was found the foundation for the revision and new formulation of the part of the schema *De Ecclesia* that dealt specifically with priests. These new ideas helped make it clear that there was no need to send a message specifically to priests, and that what was required was to confront in depth this topic of vital importance for the Church.

1. Charles Moeller, “*Il fermento delle idee nella elaborazione della Costituzione*,” in Guilherme Baraúna (ed.), *La Chiesa del Vaticano II*, Florence 1965, p. 155.

As mentioned above, the Conciliar fathers agreed that a comprehensive vision of the Church had for the most part been lacking in their reflections. In this regard, in the proposal for the dogmatic constitution on the Church studied during the second Conciliar session (1963), chapter I, on the mystery of the Church, was followed by chapter II, on the hierarchy. Only in chapter III was the vision of the Church as the people of God and, in particular, the importance and role of the laity set forth. The observations and proposals for improvements suggested by the Fathers led to the clarifying decision that chapter II should be dedicated to the people of God (to which those who form part of the hierarchy belong equally with the lay faithful), after setting forth the mystery of the Church as a whole, since being a member of the people of God (*Christifidelis*) is common to all the baptized, whether laity or ordained ministers. And only afterwards would it discuss the hierarchical constitution of the Church (chapter III) and the laity (chapter IV).

II. Writing the decree on priests

The drafting of the decree that would eventually be promulgated under the title *Presbyterorum Ordinis* was entrusted to the Conciliar Commission for the Discipline

of the Clergy and the Christian People.

In the title of that commission the clergy and the Christian people were improperly distinguished from each other—reflecting a situation that, as we have seen, was little by little being overcome. With regard to the Christian people, in the preparatory stage various schemas were drawn up on the care of souls, catechesis, and the associations of the faithful.² Regarding the discipline of the clergy, eight schemas were drafted in that preparatory phase; some dealt with overly specific questions, such as the union and division of parishes, the clerical way of dressing and tonsure, and the ordination of those who had been ministers in a non-Catholic Christian religion. All discussed practical aspects of the ministry and life of priests, but without delving deeply into a true theology of the priesthood.

After the first session of the Council had already begun, Don Alvaro del Portillo, on November 8, 1962, was named secretary of this commission. Its president was Cardinal Ciriaci who, owing to some health problems, usually entrusted to Don Alvaro the task of directing and coordinating the work of the members and experts who made up that body. Naturally, Don Alvaro kept the president closely informed regarding the progress of their work. His efforts

2. In the Conciliar phase, the content of those proposals was partially used in other documents, or remained archived for their study in the future revision of the Code of Canon Law.

in confronting this task is yet another reason for being grateful for the untiring dedication of the one who is now Blessed Alvaro, His zeal in the service of the Church and his great love for the priesthood produced, as a very important fruit of the Council, the promulgation of the decree *Presbyterorum Ordinis*.³ More than a few fathers and theologians considered it of singular importance for its doctrinal and pastoral richness. Therefore, in describing the content of the decree, I will also make use of some paragraphs taken from Alvaro del Portillo's own writings about the priesthood.

Without digressing too far, it seems of particular importance to me that in the course of Don Alvaro's cause of canonization, many witnesses testified to his ability to create around him an effective climate of trust and teamwork. Even before taking part in the Council, he was well known in Spain and Italy for his human warmth, his priestly simplicity, and his deep theological and canonical knowledge—qualities that he strove to improve each day for the greater service of the Church, the prelature of Opus Dei, and all souls. He was esteemed by the Roman Pontiffs that he met personally. He came to know Pius XII when still a young civil engineer, and both John XXIII and Paul VI showed him great affection. After the Council, he was close to St. John

Paul II, whom he dealt with as a trusting son during the years of his pastoral service to the Church as Prelate of Opus Dei.

This respect and admiration was shared by many people in the Roman Curia, including cardinals and bishops others who worked there. His effective assistance was greatly appreciated by various congregations and Pontifical councils over the years. He had an admirable capacity to establish friendship with a great variety of people, whom he tried to serve wherever he could. Many expressed their joy at learning of his election as head of Opus Dei, after the death of St. Josemaría. And knowing Don Alvaro, they were not surprised when in the crucial moment of the death of the founder of an institution of the Church, in Opus Dei no "earthquake" took place; not only because of the unity of its faithful, but also because of the internal and external prestige the first successor of St. Josemaría enjoyed.

Although Don Alvaro maintained a refined reserve about his work in the Council, I gratefully preserve many recollections of my life close to such a good servant of the Church during those years, and I was a witness to his self-sacrificing dedication in the tasks entrusted to him. He frequently worked late into the night, while never allowing these efforts to lessen his dedication to his re-

3. See Julián Herranz, *En las afueras de Jericó*, Madrid 2007, p. 83.

sponsibilities in Opus Dei, in assisting the founder as secretary general.

I was usually present at the mid-day meal conversations with many of the Conciliar fathers and experts, who were invited by St. Josemaría Escrivá through Blessed Alvaro.⁴ And I frequently had an opportunity to be present—intervening as little as possible—at conversations between St. Josemaría with Blessed Alvaro about topics related to the priesthood, although they never spoke about the tasks he was carrying out in the Council. Those dialogues undoubtedly helped Don Alvaro when he had to suggest solutions to the questions that arose in the Conciliar hall or in the various commissions, in order to later present them for detailed study by the Conciliar commission of which he was secretary.

The venerable Cardinal Augustin Mayer, who worked in the Conciliar commission in charge of preparing the decree on priestly formation, often expressed his gratitude to Msgr. Del Portillo, who had enriched the study and conclusions of the document prepared by that commission.

Returning now to the topic that directly concerns us, during the Council's first session (October – December 1962) the Commission for the Discipline of the Clergy

and the Christian People awaited specific indications from the Secretariat presided over by Archbishop Pericle Felici, on how they should study the various pertinent questions. When that session ended, it became clear that the Council's work was not progressing as quickly as hoped for. Therefore in January 1963, the Coordinating Commission drastically reduced the number of proposals that had to be examined in the general assembly. And it entrusted to the Commission for the Discipline of the Clergy and the Christian People the task of drafting—based on three schemas drawn up in the preparatory stage—a proposal for a decree on the clergy, divided into three chapters: I. Sanctity of the clergy; II. Pastoral knowledge and training of the clergy; III. Administration of ecclesiastical goods. Also included, as an appendix, was a brief exhortation on the distribution of the clergy throughout the world.

As one can see, this proposal included pastoral and practical topics that it was considered opportune to deal with in a single document. And as far as the theology of the priesthood was concerned, it was understood that, if some additions needed to be suggested (something that wasn't considered necessary at that time), the proper place to do so would be in the *De Ecclesia* schema then in

4. See Carlo Pioppi, "Alcuni incontri di san Josemaría Escrivá con personalità ecclesiastiche durante gli anni del Concilio Vaticano II," in *Studia et Documenta. Rivista dell'Istituto Storico San Josemaría Escrivá* 5 (2011), pp. 165-228.

preparation. The Commission for the Discipline of the Clergy and the Christian People produced the schema *De clericis*, which was then handed over to the Council fathers for their observations and suggested changes, to be sent in writing.

The Council, as I already mentioned, was moving ahead slowly. Therefore when the second session ended, the Coordinating Commission decided on a new reduction in the documents that had to be studied in the assembly. And it indicated that the *De clericis* schema should be drastically reduced to its essential points and summarized in some brief propositions.

The schema with these propositions was entitled *De sacerdotibus* (no longer *De clericis*), which when reworked would become *De vita et ministerio sacerdotali*. As in the previous year, to compensate for the brevity of this text devoted to priests, the Commission for the Discipline of the Clergy asked the Coordinating Commission to authorize a new proposal for a message to be sent to all the priests in the world from the Council fathers.

Those propositions were discussed for the first time in the Council Hall on October 13-15, 1964. The voting on the text showed that the fathers wanted a much broader and more organic

document on the priesthood. As Cardinal Julián Herranz remarked, then an assistant to the Secretary of the Conciliar Commission, the rejection of such a short proposal was a matter of great joy to Don Alvaro and also to the members of the commission, who had accepted very much against their will the directive to reduce the schema to a few almost telegraphic propositions. They greatly desired to be able to offer priests a text they could welcome with satisfaction, given their indispensable role in the Church.⁵ And thus the proposal of sending a message to priests was abandoned for the second time.

The Commission on the discipline of the clergy and the Christian people worked intensely to develop the theology of the priesthood sketched out in no. 28 of *Lumen Gentium*, on priests and their mission in the Church. This provided the framework for the pastoral, disciplinary and ascetical reflections that logically ensued. A month later, on November 20, 1964, eve of the promulgation of the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* and near the end of the third Conciliar session, the printed proposal for the decree *De ministerio et vita presbyterorum* was handed to the Council fathers.

Don Alvaro's work as secretary of the commission was arduous, bringing its efforts to a successful

5. See Julián Herranz, "Mons. Álvaro del Portillo e il Concilio Vaticano II," in *Vir fidelis multum laudabitur: Nel centenario della nascita di Mons. Álvaro del Portillo*, Pontifical University of Santa Croce, Rome 2014, p. 87.

conclusion in a very brief period of time. This work also included many hours of studying proposals and holding personal and joint conversations with the sixty people from seventeen countries—including cardinals, bishops, theologians and canonists—who made up the commission. One of the commission members who said he was especially pleased was Bishop Marty, then Archbishop of Reims and later Cardinal Archbishop of Paris. Equally so were the experts who collaborated most directly, among whom I am pleased to recall Msgr. Onclin (Dean of the School of Canon Law at the Louvain) and Father Lecuyer, of the Missionaries of the Holy Spirit.⁶

This new proposal for the decree was discussed during the fourth and final session of the Council, on October 14–16 and 25–26 in 1965. It was approved almost unanimously as the guideline for the work of redrafting that the commission carried out in less than 20 days. The new text was voted on in the Council hall on November 12–13, 1965, obtaining an ample approval of each of its chapters and articles. Nevertheless, proposals for amendments were also made and, taking these into account, the text was revised and printed again. During that time period, those taking part in the work praised the secretary's capacity for synthesis and his theological and canonical depth, finding the most appropriate ways to make the suggested

changes. Finally, the decree was submitted for a vote on December 2, 1965, being approved by a margin of 2,243 *placet* with only 11 *non placet*.

This document, the decree *Presbyterorum ordinis*, on the ministry and life of the priest, was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965, eve of the solemn closing of the Council. A few days later, Cardinal Pietro Ciriaci wrote a letter to Don Alvaro from which I take a few paragraphs:

“With the definitive approval on this past December 7, the great work of our commission has been happily concluded, thanks be to God. The decree, not the least important of the Conciliar decrees and constitutions, has been brought to be successful end.”

And after recalling with joy “the almost unanimous vote,” the president of the commission responsible for its drafting added:

“I know very well how great a role you have had in all this, with your wise and tenacious work, and friendly demeanor. While always respecting other people's freedom of opinion, you have ensured fidelity to the great guiding principles of priestly spirituality. When I inform the Holy Father, I will not fail to point out all of this. Meanwhile, I want you to receive, with

6. See Javier Medina, Álvaro del Portillo. *Un hombre fiel*, Madrid 2012, p. 403.

warm applause, my most sincere thanks.”⁷

III. Coordinates of the decree

This decree has as its foundation no. 28 of the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium*, which presupposes the common priesthood of all the faithful (chapter II of that constitution) and the doctrine on the ministerial priesthood, found in the numbers that deal with the bishops (chapter III). Within this chapter, no. 28 of *Lumen Gentium* begins by putting the priesthood of ordained priests in relationship with Christ’s consecration and mission, as well as with the ecclesiastical hierarchy as a whole. It continues with a description of the bonds that unite the priest with his bishop, with his brothers in the priesthood, with the other faithful and with all men and women, called to belong to the people of God.

The close tie between consecration and mission, within the framework of ecclesial communion, provides the coordinates for the Council’s teaching on the priesthood. What is new here is not the attempt to reform the earlier teaching, but rather to place it, as Blessed Alvaro wrote, within its natural Christological and ecclesi-

ological framework. That is, within the framework of “the mission of the Church received from Christ,” [which] “is one, and is entrusted to all the members of the people of God who, by the sacraments of initiation, are made sharers in the priesthood of Christ [the common priesthood] . . . A single mission, of universal scope, and, to carry it out, a single priesthood, in which all the members of the people of God share, although in different ways.”⁸

Within that unity, the Sacrament of Holy Orders “is fundamentally and above all a configuration, a sacramental and mysterious transformation of the person of the man-priest into the person of Christ himself, the only mediator.”⁹ The priest is thereby sealed with an indelible character and made a perpetual minister for the preaching of the Gospel, for pastorally directing the faithful and for celebrating divine worship, functions that converge and attain their culmination in the celebration of the Eucharist. And as we read in *Presbyterorum ordinis*, no. 14, with an expression that Blessed Alvaro had heard so many times from St. Josemaria, the Eucharist is the *centrum ac radix*, the center and root of the life of every priest

7. Letter of Cardinal Pietro Ciriaci, president of the Conciliar Commission on the discipline of the clergy and the Christian people, to Don Alvaro del Portillo; December 14, 1965: AGP, APD D-17105 (original in Italian).

8. Álvaro del Portillo, *Escritos sobre el sacerdocio* (On the Priesthood), sixth ed., Madrid 1990, pp. 39-40. *Lumen Gentium* no. 10 teaches that the common priesthood and the ministerial priesthood differ not in degree but essentially (as was already explained in Pius XII’s encyclical *Mediator Dei*, November 20, 1947, nos. 22 ff.); but the added clarification is made that both priesthoods mutually require each other.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

and of the whole Church. As *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (no. 5) says: “The other sacraments, as well as every ministry of the Church and every work of the apostolate, are tied together with the Eucharist and are directed towards it . . . In this light, the Eucharist is seen as the source and the apex of the whole work of preaching the Gospel.”

In regard to the previously mentioned duality of the priest’s consecration and mission, we find among the Council fathers two tendencies that accentuate either the consecration or the mission. Don Alvaro del Portillo described the situation thus: “Throughout the Conciliar debates about the decree on priests, two positions arose that, considered separately, could appear opposed and even contradictory to one another. Stress was laid, on the one hand, on the aspect of evangelization in the announcement of the message of Christ to mankind; on the other hand, the accent was placed on worship and adoration of God as the goal to which everything should converge in the ministry and life of priests. An effort to attain a synthesis, a conciliation, became necessary, and the commission put all its efforts into harmonizing these two viewpoints, which were not opposed nor, therefore, mutually exclusive.”¹⁰

As the members of the commission remarked, Don Alvaro’s untir-

ingly efforts to combine and harmonize these viewpoints were decisive for reaching the desired conclusion. “These two diverse doctrinal positions on the priesthood,” Msgr. Del Portillo says in his book on the priesthood, “attain their full significance when integrated within a total synthesis, which allows one to see how these two aspects are absolutely inseparable facets that complement and mutually highlight each other. The ministry in favor of mankind can only be understood as a service rendered to God (see *Rom* 1:9); and, in turn, the glory of God demands that the priest be eager to unite to his own praise that of all mankind . . . We see here, therefore, a dynamic perspective of the priestly ministry that, in proclaiming the Gospel, engenders faith in those who do not yet believe (see *Rom* 12:1), so that, by belonging to the people of God, they may unite their sacrifice to that of Christ, forming a single body with him.”¹¹

We find confirmation of these words in no. 2 of *Presbyterorum Ordinis*: “Through the ministry of the priests, the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful is made perfect in union with the sacrifice of Christ. He is the only mediator who in the name of the whole Church is offered sacramentally in the Eucharist and in an unbloody manner until the Lord himself comes. The ministry of priests is directed to this goal and is perfected in it.”

10. *Ibid.*, 42.

11. *Ibid.*, nos. 42–43. See the reflections of then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, “*Il ministero e la vita dei presbiteri*,” in Crescenzo Sepe (ed.), *Sacerdozio. Un amore più grande. Symposium internazionale in occasione della promulgazione del decreto conciliare Presbyterorum ordinis*, Milano 1996, pp. 90-91.

The Holy Father Francis insists without ceasing on a Church that doesn't remain closed in on itself, but that goes out to all men and women, always in close union with Jesus Christ. We can cite here some recent words of his to the clergy in Naples:

“I would like to conclude with three things. First: adoration. ‘Do you pray?’ — ‘I pray, yes.’ I ask, I thank, I praise the Lord. But, do you adore the Lord? We have lost the meaning of the adoration of God: we must bring back the adoration of God. Second: you cannot love Jesus without loving his Bride. Love for the Church. We have met many priests who loved the Church and we saw that they loved her. Third, and this is important: apostolic zeal, that is, being a missionary. Love for the Church leads one to make her known, to go beyond oneself in order to go out and preach the Revelation of Jesus, but it also impels one to go beyond oneself to approach that other transcendence, namely adoration. In the context of being a missionary I think that the Church has to journey a little more, convert more, for the Church is not an NGO, but is the Bride of Christ who has the greatest treasure: Jesus. Her mission, her *raison d'être* is precisely this: to evangelize, in other words, to bring Jesus. Adoration, love for the Church and being a missionary. These are the three things that came to mind spontaneously.”¹²

IV. Structure and content of “Presbyterorum Ordinis”

The introduction makes clear the need to continue developing the doctrine on the priesthood, already found in the constitution on the sacred liturgy and in the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium*. The decree continues with three chapters: 1) the priesthood in the mission of the Church; 2) the ministry of priests; 3) the life of priests.

The second chapter, the most extensive one (nos. 4-11), sets out the priestly functions: preaching the Word of God; being ministers of the sacraments, above all of the Holy Eucharist; and instructing the People of God in the faith, seen here as a synonym for the pastoral care of the faithful. It then considers, within the framework of the priestly ministry, the relationship of priests with their bishops, with their brothers in the priesthood, and with the lay faithful.

The language is mostly theological in the first part of this section and, without losing this characteristic, in the second part there begin to appear some pastoral, ascetical, and disciplinary consequences. Later on these would be put into practice and receive juridical formulation through successive post-conciliar Pontifical documents, and eventually in the 1983 Code of Canon Law, and the Code

12. Pope Francisco, Words to the Clergy in the Cathedral of Naples, March 21, 2015.

of the Canons of the Oriental Churches in 1990

Among these ascetical and pastoral consequences, we can underline here the make-up of the presbyteral council (no. 7), as well as the related reflections in no. 8; the sacramental bond of fraternity found among all priests, especially among those who form a single diocesan presbyterate, united among themselves by special bonds of apostolic charity, ministry, and fraternity. No one can live in isolation; we all need the friendly support of brothers with whom we meet frequently and who look upon us with affection, notice what we need, contribute to our smile, and help us in our daily life. The text continues with reflections on the relationship between young and not so young priests, and also expresses great esteem for associations that foster the holiness of the clergy in the exercise of their ministry. The number that we are commenting on closes by recalling the special solicitude that priests should show in serving brothers of theirs who are going through moments of special difficulty.

The relationship of priests with the laity (no. 9) is explained in terms of service, and also of respect for the role that corresponds to them in the Church and in civil society. I dare to say that the priest has to learn each

day to love souls, one by one, without excluding anyone. Both in personal dealings with each individual and in the pastoral care of families—the great challenge of our day—and of the Christian community as a whole, the priest has to continually strive to make himself all things to all men, as St. Paul exhorts (see *1 Cor* 9:22). Thus he will help foster in everyone the “joy of the Gospel” Pope Francis speaks of—a joy that “fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept his offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ joy is constantly born anew.”¹³ Then there will grow in the people of God, both priests and laity, an eagerness to go forth to seek many other souls, so that they may come to share in the supernatural and human joy that doesn’t fit in any heart, no matter how big it is, and that always strives to overflow and spread without limits.

With a concern for the good of the whole Church, no. 10 offers some practical suggestions: reforming the process of incardination by adapting it to specific needs, and facilitating special pastoral tasks that redound to the benefit of the particular churches in which they are carried out, through personal dioceses or prelatures that can be inserted harmoniously in the hierarchical organization of the

13. Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhort. *Evangelii Gaudium*, November 24, 2013, no. 1.

Church, as is set forth in *Communio-
nionis notio*.¹⁴

Chapter II ends with no. 11 of the decree, which deals with vocations to the priesthood. This has to be a constant concern on the part of the whole Church and in a special way of bishops and priests. As the archives of Blessed Alvaro del Portillo make clear, this section of the decree caused a conflict of jurisdiction that lasted from November 1964 to May 1965. And since the members of the commission had already returned to their respective cities and countries, Don Alvaro had to try to resolve this problem almost on his own.

The conflict arose because the commission preparing the decree on priestly formation had dedicated nos. 2 and 3 of the decree to the fostering of vocations. Members of this commission went to Don Alvaro and asked him to remove this section from *Presbyterorum ordinis*. But Blessed Alvaro didn't see how he could agree, since it would be inconceivable to have a text about priests without referring to their solicitude for vocations, a concern that had to be a constant yearning in every priest. Both the Secretariat of the Council and the Coordinating Commission intervened in this controversy. Finally the decision was made to submit the question to the opinion of the Conciliar fathers, when they gathered again for the fourth and final session of

the Council. This was done, and the vote resulted in the decision that although the topic was already well covered in the decree *Optatam totius*, it could not be left untreated in the decree on priests, since its omission would be an inexplicable gap.

I will now turn very briefly to chapter III of the decree, on the life of priests (nos. 12-21). Stress is laid on the need for priests to strive seriously for sanctity, as all the faithful are called to do. I think the nucleus of this chapter is found in no. 14, where unity of life and pastoral charity are described.

Pastoral charity impels the priest to seek holiness in the exercise of his ministry. The Conciliar text overcame a vision according to which acts of worship and personal practices of piety were seen as sources for gathering spiritual energy, which later would be poured out—almost we could say, gradually drained—in the activities proper to the priestly ministry. Two parallel lines were thus set up: that of personal sanctification and that of priestly work. The decree united these two lines, making clear that the participation of the priest in the mediation of Christ—acting *in persona Christi capitis*, in communion with the bishops and with the whole Church—is directed inseparably to both God and men. These two aims are harmoniously fused in a priest's unity of life and mutually demand one another. So much

14. See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter *Communio Notio*, May 28, 1992, no. 16.

so that the one cannot subsist without the other; all of a priest's actions contribute both to his personal sanctification as well as to the good of souls.

The decree ends with an exhortation to trust in God, who never abandons his Church. The conclusion (no. 22) is an impassioned song to hope, taken from the letter to the Ephesians: "Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus" (*Eph* 3:20–21).

I end by invoking the protection of the *Mare de Deu dels*

Dessamparats. May our Lady of the Forsaken lead us by the hand on our journey in life, so that we begin each day with a renewed eagerness to pour out our heart to God in prayer and to give ourselves to souls. I take advantage of this talk to ask everyone to pray for the Pope and those who assist him in governing the Church, for all bishops and priests, for priestly and religious vocations, and for the holiness of all the Christian people.

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