

# **‘WITH YOU I AM A CHRISTIAN** (ST. AUGUSTINE)

## **A Study on Clericalism**

by the Study group on Good Church Governance (The Netherlands)

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In August 2007 a booklet was published that quickly evoked much discussion. Titled *Church and Ministry; on the road to a church with a future*, and written by four theologians of the Dutch Dominican Order, it was presented ‘on the authority of the governors of the Dutch Dominicans’. This little study about leadership in the Catholic Church especially caught the eye because of its plea “that our church communities, the parishes, in the present crisis of a severe shortage of ordained celibate priests, take – and be given – the theologically responsible freedom to choose from their midst their own leader or team of leaders” (p. 36).

In how far a few years later this brochure has had a practical impact is difficult to assess; in cases in which this ‘responsible freedom’ is made use of, extensive publicity is usually avoided. But a few things have, again, become clear. There is a deeply-felt wish for the ordained ministries to be thoroughly renewed. There is very little confidence that the responsible church leaders are willing and capable to tackle the present crisis realistically and effectively. And: the problems are not specifically Dutch, as was shown by the recognition and animated discussion following the publication of translations of *Church and Ministry*.

*Church and Ministry* pays much attention to a liturgical question: the presidency in Eucharistic celebrations. This is understandable as well as necessary, for it is here that many members of our church community experience the shortage of priests most directly. Everywhere the number of Eucharists is going down, a kind of Eucharistic famine is threatening.

But on the background of this liturgical question there are a few others. In our church we distinguish between ministers and non-ministers. This is a logical distinction, but how is it applied? In how far are we bound by doctrinal principles, how flexible are the traditions that developed, and can deformation have occurred that asks for correction?

One form of deformation we call clericalism or clericalisation. On this phenomenon the following study by our group (in Dutch: Werkverband voor de Rechtscultuur in de Kerken, WRK) offers a number of points for reflection. We wrote this study as part of our general

field of interest: studying the governmental structures of our church and offering suggestions for improved formulas and equitable application.

We also tackle this subject because clericalism is not just an interesting item for academic studies, but a key problem: a clericalised church develops and cherishes divisions which affect both its internal functioning and its witnessing to Christ's message. That is why a broad discussion is necessary.

Current definitions of the word clericalism distinguish two aspects. The first one is *outward clericalism*, meaning the meddling of churches and their ministers in political and other secular matters. The second one is called *inward clericalism*: ecclesiastical ministers tend to concentrate as much power and status as possible in their own persons. Our study is limited to the latter internal aspect.

In June 2008 the Dutch bishops published a letter on *Church, Eucharist and Priesthood*, written as a reaction on *Church and Ministry*. We do not intend to offer here an extensive comment on this episcopal text – which as a whole is rather disappointing. But on some points we think comments may be useful since they touch on the problem of clericalism.

A note on procedures should be made here. In the opening chapter of their letter the bishops say that they not only reject the general tenor of *Church and Ministry*, but also object to the way it was presented: "We think of the complete absence of communication with the Dutch bishops and with the general governing body of the Dominicans in Rome before the text was spread" (p. 4).

An answer to this reproach can be found in the present Code of Canon Law, article 212.3. All bishops should know it by heart, but those who do not will certainly have a copy within arm's reach:

*"They (= all church members) have the right, indeed at times the duty, in keeping with their knowledge, competence and position, to manifest to the sacred Pastors their views on matters which concern the good of the Church. They have the right also to make their views known to others of Christ's faithful, but in doing so they must always respect the integrity of faith and morals, show due reverence to the Pastors, and take into account both the common good and the dignity of individuals".*

The wording is a bit clumsy and restrictive, but the message is clear: people who feel unhappy about certain practices in their church and think they have sensible suggestions for improvement may say this aloud or make it known in other ways – for example by publish-

ing a booklet. Church members are invited to contribute, since they bear co-responsibility for the well-being of the church. Expressing your opinion is not an act of rebellion, and requiring prior permission smells of clerical patronizing.

Who is right and are all proposals practicable? This will have to be made clear in subsequent discussions, and based on valid arguments. In any case, popes and bishops are not a priori right or have the best perceptions.

To start with, we shall look at some liturgical matters (Chapter I), then discuss a few items of church order (Chapter II), and finally make a number of notes on terms and expressions that are often used (Chapters III and IV).

## **CHAPTER ONE: DIVISIVE LITURGY?**

1. After a Sunday Eucharist the priest in charge was addressed by a parishioner. It had struck her that at the offertory he always used a text of his own, asking the people to pray that *our common* sacrifice may be acceptable to God our Almighty Father. But the missal said: *my and your* sacrifice!

Different reactions are possible here. A general one could point out that there should be some freedom to adapt liturgical texts, because liturgy must be living, tailored to the concrete situation. Unity in liturgy is not the same as worldwide uniformity down to the minutest details. One could also say that when the vernacular was introduced and we started to translate from the Latin originals, those old texts turned out to contain many stale expressions and clichés, and outmoded theology. A vital and contemporary liturgy asks for more than literal translations.

But a more fundamental counter-question is also possible here. Can there be a good reason to stress at this moment in a Eucharist, when the offerings have been made, the distinction between the faithful and their pastor? Is not it much more beautiful and sensible to indicate that the Eucharistic sacrifice is celebrated by the community as a whole? Theologically and liturgically *our common* sacrifice is the better choice.

2. Roman liturgical rubrics tell us that the priest is the first to take communion, followed by the laity present. So the host is served before the guests! This is different from what we are used to and think polite in ordinary life. There should be a good reason for this reversed order, and if it cannot be given the ruling is clericalistic.

Is this only a minor liturgical detail, not worth the fuss? No, for details too can show a view and an agenda: the priest is more important than the laity.

3. There is much hammering on the rule that only the celebrant is allowed to pronounce the words of the Eucharistic Prayer. In a 2008 letter the Dutch bishops stated that this also applies to the last sentence, the so-called doxology. But everyone who can hear and read knows that all Eucharistic prayers consistently speak of 'we': the entire community prays to God our Father.

In the early church the Eucharistic Prayer was usually improvised, and when fixed formulas made their entrance no printed copies were available for the congregation – most of whom could not read! Saying this prayer together was just not possible, and priestly soliloquy was the only way out, but this is not unavoidable any more. Reciting this prayer together makes it convincingly what it is meant to be: the prayer of the entire community.

4. Another example of liturgy emphasizing the distinction between ordained and non-ordained church members is found in what is called concelebration. There all priests present are given an active priestly role, especially when they say the consecration words together. Such celebrations clericalize the Eucharist. That we are taking part in a genuine Eucharist is sufficiently guaranteed by the ordained main celebrant, so the priestly status of other participants need not be appealed to. They should be satisfied in just taking part as ordinary church members, as lay people. (We shall return to the concept of laity further on).

5. Concelebration's counterpart is a Eucharist celebrated by a priest without any other people being present. Then the idea of common worship is completely absent, and Mass becomes a private devotion and a means for personal sanctification. Is this what a Eucharist is meant to be?

6. Following the decisions of the Second Vatican Council, which clearly was not satisfied with the customary rite, a revised rite for Eucharists was introduced in 1970. The old rite was not radically abrogated and forbidden, but from then on counted as an exception, as an 'extraordinary' form, tolerated rather than advised.

In the beginning of 2007 pope Benedict XVI, ignoring the mood of Vatican II, created more room for the use of the older rite. There is no need here for a detailed comparison of the two rites, but nobody can deny that the old rite had a number of clericalistic characteristics. Older people will remember this: the celebrant used a language which few if any of his congregation was a bit familiar with, and with his back to them he screened off large parts

of the 'Eucharistic Mystery'. Celebrating together? The external forms did not convincingly express this, to put it mildly.

Nor was it very elegant that, in the text of his so-called 'motu proprio', the pope placed himself in front. Its opening words are: "The popes have always taken care that (... a dignified worship takes place in the church"). Such papal concern is necessary and praiseworthy, but it is not an exclusive concern. Every church member must contribute, and it is not a healthy situation that popes claim a personal right to decide on every detail of worship. It would have been better if the opening sentence had said something about the responsibility of the entire church community for adequate and contemporary liturgy.

7. Looking around in churches we realize that there are clerical and non-clerical church interiors. Clerical ones are divisive: on the one side you have the space for the ordained minister – the sanctuary with its altar, pulpit and tabernacle – and on the other the nave providing room and seats for those who come to take part. In newer and reordered churches there is just one space - altar and lectern in the centre, and the chairs or pews around it. In the unavoidable cases of churches having to be closed there seems to be a tendency to keep the buildings with a clerical arrangement, which may entail the risk that the distinction between 'those who give' and 'those who receive' is given new emphasis.

It is regrettable that in liturgy the safeguarding of the ordained ministry is again and again given such emphasis. A well-ordered celebration asks for a leader, who is also explicitly appointed and authorized. But leading in worship is a serving task within the Christian community and on behalf of this community, not an office which requires that priests be assigned a heavily emphasized separate status.

## **CHAPTER TWO: STATUS AND COMPETENCES**

A distinction between ordained and non-ordained people is not only made in liturgy. The phenomenon is also found in the field of what we call church order: all the practical regulations for church life. Of course such a church order must clearly delineate competences and responsibilities, but we should also realize that those who set the rules are not only led by pragmatic and organizational insights, but also by convictions and interests. In case these convictions and interests are judged to be threatened, the practical regulations may become presented and defended as test cases for orthodoxy. Here are a few examples.

1. In our present church order only an ordained priest can be responsible for a parish (Code of Canon Law, articles 515.1 and 521.1). Real governmental power – also called

jurisdiction – is reserved to those that have received a ‘sacred ordination’, although lay people can sometimes share it (article 129).

2. Canon law explicitly requires that every diocese have a Council of Priests, a kind of senate which assists the bishop in governing his diocese. In some cases the bishop must ask the consent of this priests’ council, but basically it is only advisory (articles 495-502).

As regards a Diocesan Pastoral Council, composed of representatives of the entire diocesan community, canon law is, however, more aloof. It is desirable “in so far as pastoral circumstances suggest” (article 511). So such a council is not simply obligatory, it is up to the bishop to set it up and to decide what he wants to do with their ideas and suggestions. This non-committal attitude accentuates the clerical organizational structure of the church.

3. Lay pastors, male and female, are indispensable in today’s church, but they were not heartily welcomed by everyone, and their canonical status is still unclear. Again and again there are warnings that the distinction between ordained and non-ordained ministers should not be minimalized and that no ‘parallel clergy’ must develop. That is why lay pastors can only in exceptional cases and with special permission preach and baptize, and rarely have real governmental competences. For however professional they are, canon law says they are not clerics, not members of the church hierarchy, and accordingly ‘only’ lay people. They are appreciated as assistants and auxiliaries, but not as real leaders – which is also shown when parishes are merged and pastoral teams are formed always presided by a priest.

4. In *Church, Eucharist and Priesthood*, the Dutch bishops’ reaction to *Church and Ministry*, the ordained ministry is presented as “a gift to the faithful via the apostolic succession going back to the apostles” (p. 8). Some comment is needed here.

First of all it should be noted that the New Testament offers examples of the transfer of ministries – especially by the imposition of hands, see Acts 6.6 and 13.3 – but that the technical term of apostolic succession is nowhere used. Apostolic succession is an invention of a later period, and probably used first when Christian groups started questioning the authority and reliability of each others’ traditions. Moreover, those who try to link the transfer of ministries with the concept of apostolic succession should admit that a direct lineage can not in all cases be proved historically, and that it is the exception rather than the rule that a departing minister ordains his own successor.

It is vital that we keep recognizing that it is primarily the believing community as a whole that carries the apostolic heritage through the centuries as loyally as possible. The aposto-

licity of the church as a whole is much more fundamental than the apostolicity of the ministry. The disciples who received their mission at the Last Supper formed the first Christian congregation rather than the first college of ministers. Apostolic succession is not an exclusive prerogative of popes, bishops and other ministers.

In every major social unit leadership is indispensable for a smooth working of affairs. But being a leader does not automatically mean good leadership. That is why the Bible is ambiguous about leadership: it is both praised and criticized. A good example we find in chapter 16 of Saint Matthew's gospel: in verses 17-19 Peter's leadership is highly exalted, but in verse 23 he is severely rebuked: he does not have in mind the things of God, but the things of man.

It is not the status that counts, but the performance. Emphasis on the leadership status or a formal appeal to it can be attempts to cover up failing leadership.

## **CHAPTER THREE: PERSON AND MINISTRY**

In the two preceding chapters we gave examples of the distinctions that are frequently made between ordained and non-ordained. This practice is supported by theories, and we regularly find these in doctrinal statements.

### **Common and ministerial priesthood**

In the Christian churches the terms priest and priesthood have a double meaning. On the one hand we speak of a *common* priesthood of all the faithful. They are called to offer spiritual sacrifices and declare God's praises (1 Peter 2.5 and 9; Revelations 1.6). On the other we know the *ministerial* priesthood of people who in the church community are called to carry out leadership tasks.

These two meanings should not be mixed up. Moreover, they are not a matter of either-or: as a church member the ministerial priest also shares in the common priesthood, and is a priest in both senses.

### **An essential difference?**

The difference between common and ministerial priesthood is sometimes called *essential*, for example in Vatican II's constitution *Lumen Gentium* (n. 10). Now 'essential' is a rather heavy word, and asks for a good definition. But the word is repeated mantra-like and with-

out a convincing explanation, and this evokes the embarrassing feeling that a theory is introduced here to legitimize a cherished practice.

Nobody would object to a term like *real*, for in any domain a leader has something which his or her followers or supporters do not have: a specific task, and the concomitant competences, to be a shepherd – to use a biblical image. The word *real* is sufficient here, heavier words distort the facts.

In any case, an essential difference is not a point of doctrine offered to us by the New Testament or the young Christian churches. Historians tell us this theory of an essential difference developed after the church had become an established ‘state church’ in the Roman Empire. In this political and cultural setting the concept of class was more powerful than in Jewish or Greek surroundings.

Nor is the theory of an essential difference an ecumenical heirloom. Almost every Christian church acknowledges a real difference, and the appointment of ministers is expressed in an ordination, confirmation or inauguration rite. But the distinction is rather matter-of-fact, which may have to do with a more sober and ‘executive’ view on ministries in other churches.

### **A minister is also a layman**

In daily life we distinguish between lay and professional: some people have specific knowledge, abilities and tasks, whilst others do not. Lay here has a negative meaning.

In our church communities we also know such a negative delineation. That is sensible since it makes the positions clear: you have a certain status and function or you don’t. But at the same time we try to formulate a positive content. This is because the term is derived from the Greek word *laos*, which means *people*. Every one of the faithful, irrespective of any special tasks or status, qualifies for the name lay person: a member of the people of God. So if you say that someone is a minister, you must immediately add that he is also a layman.

Theologians help us here to think and speak correctly. They say that lay refers to an *external* distinction: your baptism made you a member of the *laos*, and non-baptized people stand outside this circle. Alongside this there is an *internal* and functional distinction: between people with or without special tasks and competences.

A careless use of the term lay can also lead to insufficient right being done to the full identity of a minister. He is not only a person who ‘offers’ pastoral care, but also someone who

is at the 'receiving end' of pastorate. Both a subject and an object. This applies, of course to the years preceding his ordination: others baptize him, introduce him in faith and worship, administer the sacraments to him. And this receiving position is lifelong: ministers, too, must sometimes find their way to the confessional and, at the end of their life journey are anointed by one of the elders of the church (cf. James 5.14-15).

The conclusion must be that about a church minister more can be said than that he or she is just a minister. The function and the person do not coincide.

People who subscribe to the theory of an essential difference or forget that in certain respects the minister is also a layman tend to identify an ordained minister as much as possible with his function. They say 'a priest is always a priest, every hour of every week'. The function is 'hardened' into a state of life.

But such an approach distorts the concrete situation in which ministers also have a private life. The coupling of ordained ministries with obligatory celibacy is a textbook example of this mixing up of office and personal life, and lays extra emphasis on the exaggerated isolation of ministers.

A similar clerical approach is heard in the many pious words that invite priests to lead, as much as possible, a form of monastic life. Of course this is an option, and it has proved beneficial, but it remains a personal choice, it is not a mode of living required by ministerial tasks.

It will be clear that whoever tries to extend ministries into states of life will have a hard job explaining the phenomenon of part-time priests. The first part-time minister was early on the scene in the young church: Saint Paul combined his apostolic work with the secular job of a tent-maker, see Acts 18.3-4 and 20.34. Throughout the centuries priests have carried out non-pastoral tasks, additional or even full-time: theologians and teachers, administrators and welfare workers.

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## **A genuine equality**

It is no surprise, then, that in our time many people question this overstressing of the distinction between ordained and non-ordained. They feel that undesirable developments have taken place that asks for correction. And they can appeal to an unsuspected authority, the Code of Canon Law which, in good concordance with the second Vatican Council, has the following to say:

*“Flowing from their rebirth in Christ, there is a genuine equality of dignity and action among all of Christ’s faithful. Because of this equality they all contribute, each according to his or her own condition and office, to the building up of the Body of Christ”* (art. 208).

Within this genuine equality we find differences in tasks and responsibilities, but equality is paramount.

### **The ‘man of God’ in clergy dress**

‘Man of God’ used to be a widespread qualification of a priest. It is a beautiful expression – in the Old Testament prophets were sometimes called men of God, see e.g. I Kings 13.1 – but male hood often also means domination. Clericalism is not a real help to get rid of that domination.

Half a century ago it quickly got outdated: the black clerical costume with its white dog collar. It is not a professional outfit like liturgical vestments, but daily dress suggesting that being part of the church institute is more important than personal identity, and that being a priest obliges one to lead a separate and clerical kind of life. Nowadays the clergy dress is worn more often again, especially by young priests. Does it mean reclericalization?

### **A double identity**

Saint Augustine of Hippo, theologian and bishop (354-430), sometimes had to think about what distinguished him from his flock, about what today we call his double identity. In a sermon he told what he had found:

*“What I must be for you makes me afraid; what I may be with you is a consolation. Since for you I am a bishop, but with you I am a Christian. The first thing refers to my duties, the other to grace; the first means danger, the second salvation”* (Sermon 340).

The words and deeds of every present-day church minister should bear this out: diligently carrying out one’s specific tasks, but first of all being a fellow Christian.

The double identity of the ordained minister will always cause tensions, and St Augustine’s beautiful words do not answer today’s concrete questions about coordination

and competences. The context will show which for a specific time or moment needs emphasis: the equality or the distinction. But we can never resign to a situation in which an individual identifies so strongly with his office that the common experience of being Christians is lost and that Saint Paul's words are no longer remembered: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3.28).

## **CHAPTER FOUR: ARGUMENTS AND NON-ARGUMENTS**

We have looked at a number of the practical manifestations of (internal) clericalism and also paid attention to the double identity of ordained ministers. This final chapter reflects on a few themes which also have something – or much – to do with clerical thinking and behaviour.

### **Back to the Last Supper**

Somewhere in the middle of his pontificate Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) started sending an annual letter to the priests. And a good pastoral idea it was: the pope getting into regular touch with an important group of workers in the pastoral ministry. But it was not a good idea to do this on the occasion of Maundy Thursday. Of course, priests have a special bond with this day as they preside when the congregation shares bread and wine in Jesus' memory. But presidency does not mean monopoly: the invitation to commemorate Jesus goes out to all church members of all times. And the suggestion that at his last supper Jesus instituted the sacrament of the priesthood is at best a post-factum interpretation, a pious fiction. The twelve disciples present then and there were primarily the first members of the starting church community, symbols of the entire 'renewed Israel', and only secondarily its future ministers. Maundy Thursday should not become a clerical festivity.

Historically, moreover, it cannot be proved that presiding over a 'supper celebration' was always and everywhere reserved to ordained ministers. This may gradually have become a general rule, but such a monopoly has no biblical foundation.

### **A priest for ever**

For centuries newly ordained priests have been welcomed with 'You are a priest for ever'. This is a pious exaggeration, for we only need to proclaim the Lord's death 'until he comes' (I Corinthians 11.26). After his 'second coming' there will be no need for an intermediating priestly ministry, for everybody will see God 'face to face' (cf. I Corinthians 13.12).

A priest for ever is a biblical expression, but it has nothing to do with the ministerial office in our church. It is found in an Old Testament story about Abraham meeting Melchizedek, the legendary king of Salem (see Genesis 14). When the author of the letter to the Hebrews wanted to indicate that Christ's priesthood far surpassed the priesthood of the ancient Jewish disposition, he reverted to this old narrative (see Hebrews 7.3).

A recent obituary notice of a priest ended with the sentence: "In heaven, too, he will be a priest, for ever". When we meet in heaven we may ask him if he recognized himself in this final sentence, but in the meantime we hope he will feel happy in a non-clerical presence before God.

### **Meal and sacrifice**

A Eucharistic celebration can be defined in various ways. We can say it is a *sacrifice* during which Jesus' life offer is present again in our midst. But we can also call it a *meal* or a supper during which, by breaking and sharing, we commemorate Christ's last supper with his disciples. Both characterizations have biblical and theological legitimacy, but much stress on the sacrifice character may raise doubts: is it an attempt to legitimize a sacrificial priesthood? And that is a term that, in the Christian church, only applies to Jesus: he is the only priest of the New Covenant, as the letter to the Hebrews extensively argues (chapters 7-10).

Those who prefer to speak of a *sacrifice* also tend to think of a *valid* sacrifice, and this is understandable since a sacrifice is supposed to have effects, for example real reconciliation. But such a validity approach does not mean much for people who speak of a meal. Coming together for a meal during which the life and death of our Lord are commemorated may become slovenly routine, but can it ever be invalid?

### **Sacraments**

In their comment on *Church and Ministry* the Dutch bishops say that the priestly ministry has "not only a functional, but first of all a sacramental character" (p. 8). This sounds impressive, but the opposition is false and based on a too simplistic definition of the concept of sacrament.

For most of us the word 'sacrament' refers first of all to the familiar seven sacraments as specific liturgical phenomena. But its content is richer. 'Sacrament' can refer to many other aspects of Christian life. The Second Vatican Council calls the church a sacrament, and theologians call Christ 'the sacrament of meeting God'. *Church and Ministry* reminds us that St Augustine already spoke of a sacrament when the congregation confirmed a prayer

by saying *amen*. Sacrament, as a translation from Greek *mysterion*, is rarely found in the New Testament, and it never refers there to any of the seven sacraments. [ordet sacramentum betyder oprindeligt en ed eller hellig forpligtelse. KRJ's tilføjelse]

There is no objection to calling priestly ordination a sacrament and to saying that the priestly ministry entails a sacramental status, as long as we see it as a part of the sacramentality of our faith as a whole. Priests, deacons, bishops and popes cannot claim this word monopolistically. Sacramental status is a gift to the entire church, and baptism gives sacramental status to every church member. The most one can say is that ordination gives a kind of additional sacramental status. Claiming more smells of clericalism. Undue emphasis on the sacramentality of the ministry creates confusion rather than clarity. And saying that ministries in other Christian denominations lack sacramentality means tailoring a term to clerical party interests.

### **The year of the priest**

On 16 March 2009 Pope Benedict XVI announced a special 'year of the priest'. It started on 19 June 2009 and will end on 19 June 2010, the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of saint Jean Marie Vianney, the parish priest of Ars in France. The general theme of this special year is 'Christ's faithfulness, the priest's faithfulness', and items on the agenda are: proclaiming Vianney the patron saint of all priests in the whole world, publishing papal texts on the priesthood, and a worldwide convention of priests in Rome.

It is a good thing that some extra attention is paid to priests, for their ministry is in a crisis and they work under heavy pressure. Whoever is worried about the clericalization of the church will certainly agree with the pope who, in a 2009 letter to all priests, invites them "to acknowledge and promote the specific dignity of the laity and the role they play in the church's mission" – a quote from Vatican II. But the goodwill is lost when the pope speaks of a "sacramental equation of the priest with Christ who is the head".

Moreover, one wonders in how far the theological views and the pastoral practice of a village priest in 19<sup>th</sup> century Ars can be exemplary for our times and in the entire world. He once said that without the priest our Lord's death and suffering are of no avail, and that it is the priest who on this earth continues the work of redemption.

### **Images of the church**

The Dutch bishops blame *Church and Ministry* for selectively referring to Vatican II's metaphor of the church as the People of God. The council texts, they say, also use other imagery: Mystical Body, Christ's Flock, God's Acre, God's Realm on Earth (p. 6).

This may be true, but Vatican II gave People of God a central position, even devoting a special chapter to it in *Lumen Gentium*, the document on the church (parr. 9-17). The metaphor of the People of God was not only judged to have the best biblical credits, but its choice also meant a theological change of perspective and a policy statement for the intended church renewal.

Nowadays People of God seems to be falling out of favour in church pronouncements. Is this because a church that thinks clerically and hierarchically sees it as a disturbing democratic concept?

### **CONCLUSION: THE CLERGY LINE**

In the sixties of the previous century Anglican bishop John Robinson got much attention when he published a few booklets on church renewal. In *The New Reformation* (1965) he made this observation:

*"I have no doubt that the Church should ordain, set apart, and otherwise acknowledge with prayer, thanksgiving and authority, those called and commissioned to special functions in the name of its Head and members. What I question is whether most of the traditional lines of demarcation which run through the ministry of the church, and which were accepted by the Reformers without serious question, bear any more relation to the battles of tomorrow than the trenches of yesterday's war. In fact they are increasingly becoming a positive hindrance to freedom of manoeuvre ... We should be ready to recognize that this 'clergy line' is neither native nor essential to the Church."*

Fifty years ago Pope John XXIII convoked the Second Vatican Council. One of the most important gains from the conciliar period (1962-1965) was the radical rethinking on the church: first we have the church community in which all people are equal, and only then we have serving ministries and ministers.

In our country almost everyone understood the message. The Pastoral Council (1968-1971), which tried to apply the attainments of the universal council, showed that people from various sections and with different positions could quite well deliberate, on the basis of sound arguments. Nobody's position was threatened.

This 'Prague Spring' of the church was not followed by a glorious summer. We rather see a return of the old clerical power positions. Apparently a maximum of uniformity is the target, authority is stressed again, the main question when a new bishop is looked for, seems to be whether the candidate is willing to toe this line. In this climate *Church and Ministry* is a necessary publication, even if it could not work out every detail.

*When Jericho was besieged it was the priests who blew the seven trumpets of rams' horns, but only as the entire people started shouting the wall collapsed (Joshua chapter 6).*

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