

## \* QUOTABLE QUOTES \*

In the last few years, especially since the Extraordinary Synod of 1985 and in preparation for the Synod on the Laity 1987, much has been written about the changing role of the laity in the Church. The following are a few quotations from reports of episcopal conferences or speeches of bishops on the subject. It seems clear that most want to abolish the second-class status of lay people and almost all want to encourage a greater involvement of lay people at all levels.

The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences at its Fourth Plenary Assembly held in Tokyo in September 1986 urged a renewal of structures based on communion, collegiality and co-responsibility:

In our efforts to give a faith-response to the challenging call of Asian realities we are guided and strengthened in our convictions by the teaching of Vatican II. The Council called for a renewal of inner structures on the basis of collegiality, communion and co-responsibility, and it recognized the values of subjectivity, and the maturity, dignity and freedom of all the members of the Church. Concretely, it asked for a shift of emphasis so as to recognize the laity of our Churches as full-fledged members, with their own gifts and charisms, their rights and duties.

The principles of communion, collegiality and co-responsibility stressed by Vatican II demand that we re-examine our ecclesial structures with respect to their purpose and thrust and reorganize them to yield optimum benefit. The renewal of inner ecclesial structures does not consist only in strengthening and multiplying the existing parochial and diocesan organizations, nor in creating new ones. It consists in creating the right atmosphere of communion, collegiality and co-responsibility for an active and fuller lay initiation, participation and action.

The 1985 report from England and Wales stressed the prophetic function of the laity:

All those who are baptized share, in diverse forms, in the task of presenting and developing doctrine. It is to the Church as a whole, to His People, that God entrusted the

'sacred Tradition and the sacred Scripture which make up a single sacred deposit of the Word of God' (DV no.10). All believers who receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 John 2: 20 and 27) cannot err in the faith and this special quality is manifested through the supernatural sense of faith (*sensus fidei*) when 'from the bishops to the last of the faithful they manifest a universal consent in matters of faith and morals' (LG no.12)...Developed always in cooperation with the episcopal doctrinal ministry...this doctrine requires a much more thorough participation by well-qualified lay people in the teaching role of the Church in schools, seminaries and dioceses.

The Indonesian Bishops in their report indicated a deeper awareness of responsibility on the part of the lay people:

"The participation of believers is taken for granted almost everywhere, not, in the first place, because of the shortage of priests, but because the people are aware of their priestly nature based on the initiation-sacraments."

The bishops of the United States selected co-discipleship as the theme for their presentation to the 1987 Synod.

"Co-discipleship for the Mission of the Church in the World."

This includes four basic theological concepts:

First, we are all disciples of Jesus Christ.

Second, all of us share responsibility for carrying out His mission.

Third, the church's mission is the extension of Jesus' proclamation and promotion of the Good News in the service of the Kingdom.

Fourth, while the church's understanding of its own nature is described in Vatican II's "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church," its mission to the world is best expressed in the "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" (Nos.40-42).

Bishop Margeot of France spoke of the need for a shift in vision emphasising the diaconal role of the laity:

It is essential that we move from a pyramidal, hierarchical Church to a Church which, as a whole, is diaconal, is the mystery of *communio* with God and of participation in the mission of Christ. This transition to a Church in which the whole people of God becomes aware of its prophetic, royal and priestly mission is no easy business...The transition from the pastor as the person who is the orchestra to a pastor who leads the orchestra (who stimulates the laity and educates and trains them for the communities) is a real transition implying death and resurrection.

The Bishops of Brazil in preparation for the 1985 Synod had this to say in their statement:

In the Church which came out of the Council the lay person feels himself to be an active and responsible partner. Previously Christians had no opportunity to assume a more immediate role in evangelization. Now those who are conscious of their mission are glad to become involved. The Church is ours. They take responsibility for celebrations, they distribute the eucharist, they take over certain services, they organize their own communities in relation to the concrete situation...

The basic ecclesial community is the school for the missionary spirit and the place where the majority of Christians experience their call to mission.

Bishop Terrazas of Bolivia suggested a need to listen more carefully to the pilgrim church. He said:

The Church must take up an evangelical-dialogical attitude towards people today and must move from aloofness to nearness...Instead of being self-complacent, it must honestly listen, with respect and with humility, to the truth, the cares and the victories of the people on their way in history. The link between faith and justice must be set out more explicitly. The Church must also grant greater liberty and creativity to lay people who commit themselves to the service of changing the world and provide them with strong support when they find themselves in the conflicts which are characteristic of their vocation.

Bishop Monsengwo Pasinaya of Zaire mentions the need for development of lay ministries:

The laity have become much more intensely involved in the apostolate thanks to the general institutionalization of various non-ordained ministries exercised in the living small communities. In order to provide better coordination of the pastoral and prophetic action of the laity in the country, the National Council of Catholic Lay People in Zaire was set up in 1984.

Pro Mundi Vita Report #107 on the Laity speaks of several pastoral letters of the Bishops of Madagascar urging greater involvement of laity:

In Madagascar, between 1964 and 1984, twelve pastoral letters were written to encourage lay involvement. The English bishops asked that "the admission of women to the ministries of lector and acolyte be taken seriously". Moreover, they said: "We must find more appropriate means of detecting and developing the ministries and leadership roles of the laity."

The report of the Tanzanian Church speaks of the need to clarify the relationship between clergy and laity:

The forthcoming Synod on the Laity can formulate more clearly how we should understand the relationship between the ordained ministry and lay ministries and the role of the laity in evangelization. The consultation process in preparation of this Synod must call the laity to their task within the *sensus fidei* of the whole People of God (LG no.12).

The Scandinavian bishops' conference urged greater diversity within the unity of the universal Church.

The local Churches should be able to develop greater diversity in all fields without this threatening the unity required in the universal world Church. In this regard, the relationships between centralism and universalism should be better explained theologically.

Australia and New Zealand also pleaded for diversity and subsidiarity but also emphasised the need for unity:

Diversity among the local Churches and the principle of subsidiarity show that local solutions must be found for local problems, as long as these solutions do not threaten the unity of the local Churches with, and under, the Holy Father.