

## **B 2.4 How can we properly value ordained Ministry in its relationship with baptismal Ministries in a missionary perspective?**

The Final Documents of the Continental Assemblies express a strong desire for the Synod to reflect on the relationship between ordained and baptismal Ministries, emphasizing the difficulty of doing so in the ordinary life of communities. In the light of the teaching of Vatican II, the synodal process offers a valuable opportunity to focus on the relationship between the exercise of baptismal dignity (in the wealth of vocations, charisms and ministries rooted in Baptism) and the ordained Ministry, seen as a gift and an inalienable task at the service of the People of God. In particular:

- a) In the footsteps of the Second Vatican Council, the necessary relationship between the common Priesthood and the ministerial Priesthood is reaffirmed. They are “interrelated” because each one “in its own special way is a participation in the one Priesthood of Christ” (LG 10). There is no opposition or competition or ground for claims between the two. Their complementarity should be recognised;
- b) The Continental Assemblies express a clear appreciation for the gift of the ministerial Priesthood and, at the same time, a deep desire for its renewal in a synodal perspective. They also point out the difficulty of involving some Priests in the synodal process and note the widespread concern for instances where Priests struggle to face the challenges of our time, are far from the life and needs of the people or are focused on the liturgical-sacramental sphere only. They also express concern for the loneliness experienced by many Priests and emphasise their need for care, friendship and support;
- c) Vatican Council II teaches that “the divinely established ecclesiastical ministry is exercised on different levels by those who from antiquity have been called Bishops, Priests and Deacons” (LG 28). From the Continental Assemblies emerges the request that the ordained Ministry, in the diversity of tasks, be for all a living witness of communion and service in the logic of evangelical gratuity. They also express the desire for Bishops, Priests and Deacons to exercise their ministry of guidance and unity in a synodal style. This included specific aspirations to recognise and enhance the gifts and charisms present in the community, to encourage and accompany processes for the communal embrace of mission, and to seek decisions in line with the Gospel and through listening to the Holy Spirit. Also requested is a renewal of seminary programmes so as to be more synodally oriented and more in contact with the whole People of God;
- d) In reflecting on ordained Ministry at the service of the baptismal life, the first phase of the Synod presents clericalism as a force that isolates, separates and thus weakens and dissipates the energies of a healthy and wholly ministerial Church. It indicates that formation is the privileged way to overcome it effectively. Clericalism is not viewed as the prerogative of ordained Ministers alone but is present in different ways in all the components of the People of God;
- e) Many regions report that trust in ordained Ministers, in those who perform ecclesial duties, in ecclesial institutions and the Church as a whole has been undermined by the consequences of the “scandal of abuse by members of the clergy or by people holding ecclesial office: first and foremost, abuse of minors and vulnerable persons, but also abuse of other kinds (spiritual, sexual, economic, of authority, of conscience). This is an open wound that continues to inflict pain on victims and survivors, on their families, and on their communities” (DCS, no. 20).

## **Question for discernment**

**How can we promote in the Church both a culture and concrete forms of co-responsibility such that the relationship between baptismal Ministries and ordained Ministry is fruitful? If the Church is wholly ministerial, how can we understand the specific gifts of ordained Ministers within the one People of God from a missionary perspective?**

## **Suggestions for prayer and preparatory reflection**

- 1) How does the ministry of Priests, “consecrated to preach the Gospel, shepherd the faithful and celebrate divine worship” (LG 28), relate to baptismal Ministries? How does the triple office of the ordained Ministry relate to the Church as a prophetic, priestly and royal People?
- 2) In the local Church Priests with their Bishops “constitute one Priesthood” (LG 28). How can we help strengthen this unity between the Bishop and his Priests for more effective service to the People of God entrusted to the Bishop’s care?
- 3) The Church is enriched by the ministry of so many Priests who belong to Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. How can their ministry, characterised by the charism of the Institute to which they belong, promote a more synodal Church?
- 4) How is the ministry of the permanent diaconate to be understood within a missionary synodal Church?
- 5) What guidelines could be adopted for the reform of seminary curricula and teaching programmes in colleges and schools of theology in order to promote the synodal character of the Church? How can the formation of Priests engage more closely with the life and pastoral realities of the People of God they are called to serve?
- 6) What paths of formation should be adopted in the Church to foster an understanding of ministeries that is not reduced to ordained Ministry but at the same time enhances it?
- 7) Can we discern together how a clerical mindset, whether in Clergy or Laity, inhibits the full expression of both the vocation of ordained Ministries in the Church as well as that of other members of the People of God? How can we find ways to overcome this together?
- 8) Can Lay people perform the role of community leaders, particularly in places where the number of ordained Ministers is very low? What implications does this have for the understanding of ordained Ministry?
- 9) As some continents propose, could a reflection be opened concerning the discipline on access to the Priesthood for married men, at least in some areas?

How can an understanding of ordained Ministry and the formation of candidates that is more rooted in the vision of the missionary synodal Church contribute to efforts to prevent the recurrence of sexual abuse and other forms of abuse?