

## MINISTRY AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

My purpose in this paper is to explore the significance for the theology and practice of ministry of the rediscovery of the local church, so marked a characteristic of contemporary ecclesiology. After a brief review of the Second Vatican Council's statements on the local church, I will offer an explanation of the emergence of the theme and an interpretation of it, in order, finally, to suggest some implications for the ministry of and within local churches.

### VATICAN II ON THE LOCAL CHURCH

#### *Terminology*

Vatican II was not consistent in its use of the terms "local" and "particular" church.<sup>1</sup> "Particular church" appears more often and usually designates a diocese, although it is also used to refer to groupings of churches into "rites" (OE 2-4). "Local church" is used of dioceses (AG 19, 27) and of patriarchal Churches (LG 23); but "local congregations" gathered for the Eucharist are also said to be "churches" (LG 26, 28). In one passage, "particular" and "local" are both used, apparently without distinction, to refer to dioceses in the Eastern rites (UR 14).

The inconsistency in the conciliar vocabulary makes the choice of a regular terminology somewhat arbitrary, and the choice of one or another of these terms by commentators does not seem by itself to imply any major theological differences.<sup>2</sup> To avoid clumsiness and to keep to the vocabulary of this Convention's theme, I will regularly speak of the "local" church, hoping that the context will make it clear whether I am speaking of small eucharistic communities, dioceses, larger groupings of churches, or even all three at once.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The conciliar texts are reviewed in E. Lanne, "The Local Church: Its Catholicity and Apostolicity," *One in Christ* 6 (1970), 288-313; H. de Lubac, *Les églises particulières dans l'Église universelle* (Paris: Aubier, 1971), pp. 29-56; S. J. Kilian, "The Meaning and Nature of the Local Church," *CTSA Proceedings* 35 (1980), 244-55; P. Granfield, "The Local Church as a Center of Communication and Control," *CTSA Proceedings* 35 (1980), 256-63.

<sup>2</sup>De Lubac, for example, uses "particular" to refer to the diocese and "local" to refer to sociocultural groupings, but admits his choice is only practical (*Les églises particulières*, p. 41). H. Legrand makes precisely the opposite choice, acknowledging its arbitrariness ("Synodes et conseils de l'après-concile: Quelques enjeux ecclésiologiques," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 98 [1976], 193-216, at p. 195). They do not differ greatly in their fundamental interpretation of the Council's teaching.

<sup>3</sup>The revised Code of Canon Law will use "particular" Church consistently of the diocese alone, employing the rather cumbersome phrase, "*Ecclesia ritualis sui*

More important than the Council's vocabulary are its major theological concerns in its statements about the local churches. These seem to me to be twofold: first, the assertion that the distinctive and constitutive principles of the Church's existence are realized in the local church, and, second, the desire to stress that it is in the local churches that the Church's catholicity is concretely realized. I will use these two themes to structure my brief review of the Council's statements.

### *The Church Comes to Be in the Local Churches*

When the Council used the word "Church" without addition, it usually meant the universal Church; but it also supplied several indications of how this one and catholic Church comes to be. The emphasis falls on the diocese, of which the Decree on the Pastoral Office of the Bishop offers a definition:

A diocese is a portion of the People of God which has been entrusted to the pastoral care of a bishop with the cooperation of a presbyterate, so that, adhering to their pastor and by him gathered in the Holy Spirit through the Gospel and the Eucharist, they might constitute a particular Church in which is truly present and active the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Christ (CD 11).<sup>4</sup>

Of such churches, "formed after the image of the universal Church," the Constitution on the Church said that it is "in them and out of them that the one and holy catholic Church exists" (LG 23).

The Council used its discussion of the sanctifying role of the bishop as the occasion to speak about infra-diocesan gatherings for the celebration of the Eucharist. In such gatherings, the Council taught, the one Church of Christ is realized:

This Church of Christ is truly present in all legitimate local congregations of the faithful which, adhering to their pastors, are themselves called Churches in the New Testament. For in their locations, these are the new People called by God in the Holy Spirit and in full conviction (see I Thess 1:5). In them believers are gathered by the preaching of Christ's Gospel and the mystery of the Lord's Supper is celebrated, "so that through the flesh and blood of the Lord the whole fraternity of the body might be united." In every altar community, under the bishop's sacred ministry, is manifested the symbol of that love and "unity of the mystical Body without which there can be no salvation." In these communities, although often small and poor or living in the diaspora, Christ is present, by whose power the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church is gathered together (LG 26).<sup>5</sup>

*iuris*," for Eastern-rite churches, and, I believe, quite omitting the term "local church."

<sup>4</sup>For an illuminating commentary on this text, see H. Legrand, "La nature de l'Eglise particulière," in *La charge pastorale des évêques*, Unam Sanctam 71 (Paris: du Cerf, 1969), pp. 104-24.

<sup>5</sup>The statement in this paragraph that it is by the Eucharist that "the Church continually lives and grows," is echoed twice in the Decree on Ecumenism. It is by

These same local gatherings are described when the Council describes the ministry of presbyters. These, by their sanctifying and governing ministries, are said to "make the universal Church visible in their localities and to contribute effectively to the building up of the Body of Christ." Presbyters "should so preside over and serve their local communities that these may be worthy of the name by which the one and total People of God is called, that is, the Church of God" (LG 28).<sup>6</sup>

These passages offer a theological vision of the Church's self-constitution. Its principles are the call of God, the grace of the Holy Spirit, the preaching of the Gospel, the celebration of the Eucharist, the fellowship of love, and the apostolic ministry. Through these living principles, there comes to be in the world the one, holy, apostolic and catholic Church of Jesus Christ. But this Church is not only made manifest and visible in dioceses and in local congregations; it is represented there, in the strong sense of this word. The Council's statements are strong and direct: The one and universal Church is gathered together in such churches; it is present and active in them; it is built up and grows in them; it is in them and out of them that it exists; and, for all these reasons, the local gatherings of believers are rightly called "churches."

As a number of commentators have pointed out, this vision represents something like a Copernican revolution in ecclesiology.<sup>7</sup> The Church is not universal in the sense of a transnational corporation which from a central office establishes branches in major cities around the world. The universal, catholic Church arises, if you will, from below, because in every local church the full reality of what is called "the Church" is realized: the communion of believers in the holy things won for us by Christ. The Church

the Eucharist that "the unity of the Church is both signified and effected" (UR 2). And of the Eastern Churches not in communion with Rome, the text remarks: "Through the celebration of the Lord's Eucharist in each of these Churches, the Church of God is built up and grows" (UR 15).

For the background to LG 26, see A. Acerbi, *Due ecclesiologie: Ecclesiologia giuridica ed ecclesiologia di comunione nella "Lumen Gentium"* (Bologna: Ed. Dehoniane, 1975), pp. 270, 287, 401-02, 505-08. For a commentary see K. Rahner, "The New Image of the Church," *Theological Investigations*, vol. X (New York: Herder and Herder, 1973), pp. 3-29, esp. pp. 7-12.

<sup>6</sup>The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy saw "the principal manifestation of the Church" in liturgical celebrations, particularly the Eucharist, in which bishop, presbyters, and people participate actively (SC 41). Parishes and other groupings of the faithful are said "in some way to represent the visible Church constituted throughout the world" (SC 42).

<sup>7</sup>See E. Lanne, "L'Eglise locale et l'Eglise universelle: Actualité et portée du thème," *Irenikon* 43 (1970), 481-511, at 490; L. Bouyer, *L'Eglise de Dieu: Corps du Christ et Temple de l'Esprit* (Paris: du Cerf, 1970), pp. 333-43; H. Legrand, "The Reevaluation of Local Churches: Some Theological Implications," in *The Unifying Role of the Bishop*, ed. E. Schillebeeckx, *Concilium* 71 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), pp. 53-64.

universal comes to be out of the mutual reception and communion of the local churches.<sup>8</sup>

### *The Concrete Catholicity of the Church*

If the Church is one because of the common principles described above, it is catholic because they are only realized concretely in particular times and places. The universality of the Church is not the statistical fact of its being found throughout the world. In *Lumen gentium*, catholicity refers to the Church's effort to foster, purify, confirm, elevate, and take up what is good in the abilities, resources, and customs of the peoples among whom it arises. Catholicity is a theological principle:

The character of universality which adorns the People of God is the gift of the Lord himself, by which the catholic Church effectively and constantly seeks to recapitulate the whole of humanity with all its goods under the Headship of Christ, in the unity of his Spirit. By virtue of this catholicity, the several parts bring their own gifts to one another and to the whole Church, so that the whole and its several parts grow by the mutual sharing of all and by a common effort towards the fullness of unity (LG 13).

As particular churches thus legitimately develop their own traditions (LG 13), so also by divine providence they have gathered into organic groupings, such as the patriarchates, which "enjoy their own discipline, liturgical usages, and theological and spiritual patrimonies." This *Ecclesiarum localium in unum conspirans varietas* vividly demonstrates the catholicity of an undivided Church (LG 23).

The Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church can be read as a description of this concrete catholicizing of the Church.<sup>9</sup> The Church is to "speak, understand, and in love embrace all languages and so to overcome the dispersion of Babel" (AG 4). The Church and Christ "transcend distinctions of race and nationality and so cannot be considered strangers to anyone or to any place" (AG 8). The Church must imitate Christ who "by his incarnation bound himself to the particular social and cultural conditions of those among whom he lived" (AG 10). It must seek to become "a congregation of believers endowed with the cultural riches of its people," living for God and Christ "according to the honorable customs of its people's life" (AG 15).

<sup>8</sup>See Bouyer, *L'Eglise de Dieu*, p. 337; for a typology of the shift, see J. Komonchak, "The Church Universal as the Communion of Churches," in *Where Does the Church Stand?*, ed. G. Alberigo, Concilium 146 (New York: Crossroads, 1981), forthcoming.

<sup>9</sup>See H. Legrand, "Inverser Babel, Mission de l'Eglise: La vocation des églises particulières au sein de la mission universelle," *Spiritus* 11 (1970), 323-46.



The churches must, therefore, undertake a discernment among their cultures and societies. "From the customs and traditions, wisdom and teaching, arts and sciences of their peoples, they borrow whatever can contribute to the Creator's glory, the manifestation of the Savior's grace, and the right ordering of the Christian life" (AG 22). This will require, in every great sociocultural region, a new theological enterprise, "in which, in the light of the tradition of the universal Church, the deeds and words revealed by God, contained in the Scriptures, and explained by the Fathers of the Church and by the magisterium, are submitted to a new investigation." Faith will thus pursue understanding "taking account of the philosophy and wisdom of the people," whose customs, understanding of life, and social order are in turn to be evaluated in the light of revelation. By these means a more profound adaptation of the whole sphere of Christian life will be possible:

With all syncretism and ethnocentrism avoided, the Christian life will be adapted to the genius and character of every culture, and particular traditions, along with the distinctive gifts of every family of nations, will be illumined by the Gospel and taken up into the catholic unity. Thus, new particular Churches, with their own traditions, will take their place in the communion of the Church (AG 23).

In such descriptions, the Council proposes a vision of catholicity that parallels what it praises in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World as "a more universal form of human culture, which the better promotes and expresses the unity of the human race the more it respects the peculiarities of different cultures" (GS 54). Like humanity itself, the Church is to be a concrete universal, *una Ecclesia circumdata varietate*, not one in spite of, but precisely *in* the variety of the local churches.

Two major themes thus control the Council's teaching on the local churches. These are, on the one hand, *churches*, the People of God and assembly of believers, gathered by Word, Eucharist, and Spirit, each one of them all that is meant by the word "church." On the other hand, they are *local churches*, communities in which the Church of Christ takes on flesh and bones in concrete men and women, of different times and places, in distinct cultures, societies, and polities, each of them differently and distinctively all that is meant by the word "church."<sup>10</sup>

This is, it hardly needs to be said, principally a vision of what the Church should be. The difficulties of realizing it are many and

<sup>10</sup>"The Church spread throughout the world would become an abstract entity if it did not take body and life through the particular Churches" (Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi* 62; *AAS* 68 [1976], 52-53).

great, and they lie at the basis of many of tensions and controversies in the post-conciliar Church—they have appeared in almost every one of the Synods of Bishops. The third section will explore some of the implications of this vision for the theory and practice of ministry. But before addressing them, I want to offer an explanation or at least interpretation of the emergence of the theme of the local church and then an outline of a theological justification of the theme that will also provide the basis for my remarks on ministry.

### THE THEOLOGY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

#### *Background and Context*

The theology of the local church is the latest development in the modern history of ecclesiology. It is of some importance to understand when and how it arose and how it is related to earlier moments in that history.

Ecclesiology is among the youngest theological disciplines. While its roots can be traced back to earlier ages, there is no denying that ecclesiology has only taken the very large place it now occupies in the last two centuries. The twentieth century may have been dubbed "the century of the Church," but the real origins of the modern history of ecclesiology lie in the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> It was then that the break-up of traditional Christendom, symbolized by the French Revolution, forced the Church to reconsider its role in the world. Paradoxically, the self-emancipation of the modern world from the control of the Church was itself an emancipation of the Church for a more conscious and critical self-responsibility.

Ecclesiology in the nineteenth century flowed in two main currents. The first involved a return to the sources and a rediscovery of the Church as an organic, spiritual, and sacramental reality. Its typical figures are Möhler and Newman. The second current sought the construction of the Church as an alternative and competing "world," not so much in the modern world as alongside it, theoretically justified as a sacral *societas perfecta*, autonomous and self-sufficient, its own "plausibility-structure."<sup>12</sup> The princi-

<sup>11</sup> See S. Jaki, *Les tendances nouvelles de l'ecclésiologie* (Rome: Herder, 1957), pp. 19-79; *L'ecclésiologie au XIXe siècle*, *Unam Sanctam* 34 (Paris: du Cerf, 1960); H. J. Pottmyer, *Unfehlbarkeit und Souveränität: Die päpstliche Unfehlbarkeit im System der ultramontanen Ekklesiologie des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1975).

<sup>12</sup> See K. Walf, "Die katholische Kirche—eine 'societas perfecta'?" *Theologische Quartalschrift* 157 (1977), 107-18; P. Granfield, "The Church as *Societas Perfecta* in the Schemata of Vatican I," *Church History* 48 (1979), 431-46; F. X. Kaufmann, "The Church as a Religious Organization," in *The Church as*

pal champions of this view were the Ultramontanes, who defended it by a thorough-going exaltation of the authority of the pope and of Roman liturgical and disciplinary traditions. The self-sufficient Church was the universal Church presided over by a sovereign and infallible pope.<sup>13</sup>

Of these two currents, it was this latter which dominated Catholic thought between the two Vatican Councils. Between 1850 and 1950, the former current was only marginal, serving at best by putting some flesh on an ecclesial scheme that was principally a description of the skeletal authority of the hierarchical Church.

The triumph of Ultramontanism was, of course, the triumph of a universalist ecclesiology for which Rome was not only the center but the source of the local churches. The latter were very rarely given theological attention;<sup>14</sup> none of them could be considered a *societas perfecta*; their leaders, the bishops, were considered to derive their jurisdictional authority from the pope; and it was easy to consider the Church as one vast diocese under a pope who enjoys ordinary and immediate episcopal authority over every church and every Catholic. All of this was not taught formally at Vatican I, but it did characterize the dominant ecclesiology between the Councils and the teachings and practices of the popes from Pius IX to Pius XII.

Hermann Pottmeyer has argued recently that the fundamental continuity between Vatican I and Vatican II resides in the Church's growing discovery of itself as the historical subject of its own self-realization.<sup>15</sup> Over and against a world grown aggressively alien, the Church at Vatican I asserted its right to self-determination in the unsurpassable heights of papal sovereignty and infallibility. Two things were missing from Vatican I's description of the Church: an express acknowledgement that the Church is the active subject of its self-realization precisely as the *creatura Verbi*, and the recognition that responsibility for the Church's self-realization lies in others besides the pope: in bishops, presbyters, and laity, and in the local churches.

Both of these acknowledgements were made at the Second Vatican Council. There the Church in its highest authorities was

*Institution*, ed. G. Baum and A. Greeley, Concilium 91 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1974), pp. 70-82.

<sup>13</sup>See Pottmeyer, *Unfehlbarkeit und Souveränität*, pp. 346-428; J. Derek Holmes, *The Triumph of the Holy See: A Short History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Burns & Oates, 1978).

<sup>14</sup>See Lanne, "The Local Church," pp. 288-97.

<sup>15</sup>H. J. Pottmeyer, "Kontinuität und Innovation in der Ekklesiologie des 2. Vatikanum: Der Einfluss des 1. Vatikanum auf die Ekklesiologie des 2. Vatikanum und Neurezeption des 1. Vatikanum im Lichte des 2. Vatikanum," a paper delivered at the 1980 Bologna Conference on the Ecclesiology of Vatican II. The conference papers are expected to be published during 1981.

admitted to stand under the Word of God. Not only was the authority of the bishops, singly and collegially, affirmed, but it was stressed over and over again that all the members of the Church, including the laity, have the right and responsibility to participate in the building-up of the Body of Christ in the world. Even had the Council not made its scattered remarks about the local churches, the latter's importance would have been implied in those conciliar themes; for bishops, clergy, and laity are responsible Christians as members of local churches, which thus appear as themselves each the subject of its own self-realization.

Two factors contributed to the emergence of these themes. The first of these was the retrieval and confirmation of the neglected current in nineteenth-century ecclesiology. A host of biblical, historical, and liturgical studies showed how central to the ecclesiology of the first millennium of Christianity had been the idea of the Church as a sacramental and spiritual reality, a *communio sanctorum* realized in a *communio ecclesiarum*. A fuller and more "catholic" sense of the Church emerged, the one which had prevailed before the schisms of the eleventh and sixteenth centuries had narrowed the channels within which the Catholic Church thought about itself.

The other factor was the further development and eventual acceptance by the Church of modern critical history. Applied to the Scriptures and to the monuments of tradition, historical studies revealed to what a degree the founding and decisive moments in the Church's history were also human decisions: *ius divinum* inescapably also *ius humanum*. With this came the realization how greatly the Church's historical self-realizations were bound to historical, social, and cultural conditions: when institutions and traditions were explained or justified by those conditions, they were also relativized by them. And, finally, it began to dawn on Catholics that the self-responsibility of earlier generations did not excuse them from responsibility for what they as the Church were and did in the world. They brought to their thinking about the Church that "new humanism" which the Council described, "for which man is defined above all by his responsibility for his brothers and for history" (GS 55). And so the Council embarked upon a series of reforms designed to make the Church a more authentic and more effective redemptive presence in the modern world.<sup>16</sup>

The common theme in the two Vatican Councils, then, was that of the Church as the historical subject of its own self-realization. The innovations at Vatican II were the insistence upon

<sup>16</sup> See J. W. O'Malley, "Reform, Historical Consciousness, and Vatican II's *Aggiornamento*," *Theological Studies* 32 (1971), 573-601.



the common responsibility of all members to be the active subject of that self-realization and the focusing of this effort of theirs on the local churches in their several sets of circumstances. Perhaps it is not too much of a conceit to compare this to Karl Marx's criticism of Feuerbach: after Vatican II, it is no longer possible to think about the Church as some abstract entity, squatting outside the world or even outside concrete communities of men and women: the Church in fact is the churches.<sup>17</sup>

### *The Self-Realization of the Church*

In the preceding pages, I have already anticipated the term which I believe to be fundamental to a theology of the local church. I have spoken several times of the "self-realization" of the Church and of the Church and its members as the "historical subject" of that self-realization. Readers of Karl Rahner's work will recognize here one of several possible translations of the term *Selbstvollzug* which he has made central to his "existential ecclesiology."<sup>18</sup> Readers of Bernard Lonergan may recognize his appropriation of the term in his definition of the Church as "a process of self-constitution."<sup>19</sup>

*Selbst vollziehen* in German means "to be effected, to take place, to come to be or to pass." The *Selbstvollzug* of the Church, then, is its coming-to be, its becoming. The term clearly points to the event-character of the Church's existence, but it also includes the other notion of which I have already made use, that the Church is made to come to be and that it itself is the active historical subject of its coming-to-be.

I am not convinced that the ideas carried by the term *Selbstvollzug* are yet adequately integrated into ecclesiology. All theologians, one hopes at least, will acknowledge that there is, besides the divine dimension, a human dimension to the Church. Classical

<sup>17</sup>"A universal Church, prior to or considered to exist in itself, outside all the particular Churches, is only *un être de raison*" (De Lubac, *Les églises particulières*, p. 54).

<sup>18</sup>Rahner offers "existential ecclesiology" as an alternative name for "practical theology;" from it he distinguishes a prior and fundamental "essential ecclesiology" concerned with the *Grundwesen der Kirche*; see "Ekklesiologische Grundlegung," in *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie: Praktische Theologie der Kirche in Ihrer Gegenwart*, ed. F. X. Arnold *et al.*, vol. I (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), pp. 117-18. (This has been somewhat loosely translated as *Theology of Pastoral Action* [New York: Herder and Herder, 1968], pp. 25-26.) I am not convinced of the necessity or the value of Rahner's distinction. Why, for example, should not the section entitled, "Anthropologische Voraussetzungen für den Selbstvollzug der Kirche" (*Handbuch*, vol. II/I, pp. 20ff.) not be considered part of an "essential" ecclesiology?

<sup>19</sup>Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972), pp. 361-67.

ecclesiology could hardly be accused of neglecting the latter, but it tended to locate it principally in a set of institutional relationships defined by authority and obedience. The divine dimension was often confined to the establishment of the authority structure, as in Möhler's parody: "God created the hierarchy and thus more than sufficiently saw to the needs of the Church, from now to the end of the world."<sup>20</sup> The active human subjects of the Church's self-realization were principally the clergy, with the laity the active subjects only of their own obedience. Non-institutional processes and carriers of Christian community were largely neglected.

The several different approaches to the Church which have recently replaced the classical approach have proposed specifically theological views of the Church. The emphasis usually falls on what distinguishes the Church from all other human communities; mystical communion in grace, the Word of God, sacrament, etc. While the transcendent, supernatural, spiritual distinctiveness of the Church is thus rightly safeguarded, it is often not made clear how it is also distinctive precisely as a human community, why, to use the Council's statement, "the society supplied with hierarchical organs and the mystical Body of Christ, the visible gathering and the spiritual community, the earthly Church and the Church blessed with heavenly gifts, should not be considered two realities but rather form one complex reality which consists of a human and a divine element" (LG 8).<sup>21</sup>

If the Church is spoken of only as the People of God, the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Spirit, it can appear odd to speak of the Church as a "process of self-constitution" or as the subject of its own self-realization. Yet the latter language is demanded by the former once one recognizes that those splendid phrases are not used solely of God, Christ, or the Spirit, but of a concrete group of men and women gathered as a human community, but themselves never and nowhere worthy of being so described.<sup>22</sup> And yet that is the sort of thing which Paul said of that very ordinary group of people at Corinth, and that is what we may truly in faith say of our congregations today. We ordinary sinners have been gathered

<sup>20</sup>J. A. Möhler, *Theologische Quartalschrift*, 1823, p. 497, as cited in Y. Congar, "Mon cheminement dans la théologie du laïcat et des ministères," in *Ministères et communion ecclésiale* (Paris: du Cerf, 1971), pp. 9-30, at p. 16.

<sup>21</sup>For a good statement of this central ecclesiological problem, see C. Welch, *The Reality of the Church* (New York: Scribner's, 1958), pp. 15-41.

<sup>22</sup>"The church may be fully dependent on God's act, but it is not simply God acting. It is a people believing, worshipping, obeying, witnessing. Thus we can and must make fast at the outset our understanding of the church as a body or community of human beings, albeit existing in response to the activity of God. In this sense, the ontology of the church means in the first instance the humanly subjective pole of the relationship" (Welch, *Reality of the Church*, p. 48).

together as God's People, Christ's Body, the Spirit's dwelling-place. How can this be? Must we be content simply with a succession of statements, one asserting the divine dimension and another the human?<sup>23</sup> If the biblical and liturgical statements are true, how can it also be true that we are the subjects of the Church's self-realization?<sup>24</sup>

The two sets of statements may be drawn together and integrated if we conceive of the Church as the human community which is the effect in the world of God's self-communication in Christ and the Spirit. That it is God's self-communication that defines the distinctive reality of the Church can never be neglected in an orthodox and an adequate ecclesiology. But this Church is not yet understood unless it is understood how it is that effect precisely as a human community. When it is understood what a community is and how it is formed and sustained, it will be possible to say that the historical effect of God's self-communication is precisely a community that is the subject of its own self-realization.

The full development of this idea might one day make a fair-sized book. Here let me simply offer two examples of how the philosophy, phenomenology, and modern sciences of human community might contribute to the project. A number of social theorists today stress the common subjective self-production of societies and communities. This is what is meant, for example, when Berger and Luckmann say that, "society is a human product."<sup>25</sup> Social relationships define understood, known, and accepted expectations of behavior. Societies and communities are constituted, consist in, patterns of such expectations, which are legitimated by commonly shared universes of meanings and values. Anthony Giddens offers a parallel analysis:

The difference between society and nature is that nature is not man-made, is not produced *by* man. Human beings, of course, transform nature, and such transformation is both the condition of social existence and a driving force of cultural development. But nature is not a

<sup>23</sup>I do not see how Hans Küng's supposed "dialectic" in *The Church* goes beyond this simple succession of apparently opposed statements. One wants to say "Yes" to both sets of statements, but how that is possible is not illuminated. The problem returns in his views on infallibility.

<sup>24</sup>Yves Congar entitles a chapter of a recent book, "L'Eglise est faite par l'Esprit, Il en est co-instituant" (*Je Crois en l'Esprit Saint*, vol. II: "Il est Seigneur et Il donne la vie" [Paris: du Cerf, 1979], pp. 13-24). The material presented is, of course, as valuable as one might expect from Congar, but the link between the co-constituting role of the Spirit and the religious experience of the members of the Church is left unprobed.

<sup>25</sup>P. L. Berger and T. Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor, 1967), p. 61. The sentence quoted is the first element in a dialectical process of social existence. The last two elements are: "Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product." The analysis could be fruitfully applied to the Church.

human production; society is. While not made by any single person, society is created and recreated afresh, if not *ex nihilo*, by the participants in every social encounter. *The production of society* is a skilled performance, sustained and "made to happen" by human beings. It is indeed only made possible because every (competent) member of society is a practical social theorist; in sustaining any sort of encounter he draws upon his knowledge and theories, normally in an unforced and routine way, and the use of these practical resources is precisely the condition of the production of the encounter at all.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps the parallel is already apparent between saying that society is a human product, made to happen by human beings, and saying that the Church is a self-realization of which its members are the historical subject. The parallel can be made sharper by arguing that the Church itself, as a human community, is a human product, made to happen, brought to realization, by human beings. To make this case, a fuller determination of how human communities are produced, made to happen, is needed, and for that I turn to Bernard Lonergan's heuristics of community.<sup>27</sup>

For Lonergan, community is an achievement of common meaning and value. It is a potential achievement when a group of people share a common field of experience, when they have something to think and talk about together. Without this, community is not possible, for the people cannot know what they are talking about. But by itself, community of experience—at least in Lonergan's technical meaning of the term—is not sufficient for full community of meaning and value. The group needs also to think and talk about their experience and to reach some measure of common understanding and common assertion and denial: Yes, this is what our experience means and implies; No, that is not what it means and implies. But groups of people do not form effective communities if they only think, talk, and agree in judgment; they must also act in common, and to do that they must be committed to common values and to common goals. The achievement of common meaning and value—the production of community—is the result of common experiences, common understandings, common judgments, and common commitments.

As heuristic, this schema, of course, is purely formal. It yields sets of questions that one may ask about various groups which are or might be considered communities. If the Church is considered to be a community, it is not illegitimate to ask those questions of it.

<sup>26</sup> A. Giddens, *New Rules of Sociological Method: A Positive Critique of Interpretive Sociologies* (London: Hutchinson, 1976), pp. 15-16.

<sup>27</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, p. 79. I have discussed Lonergan's contribution to a foundational ecclesiology in "History and Social Theory in Ecclesiology," in *Lonergan Workshop*, vol. II, ed. F. Lawrence (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981), pp. 1-53; and in "Lonergan and the Tasks of Ecclesiology," forthcoming in the *Marquette Festschrift, Creativity and Method*, expected in 1981.



One would then ask what is the common experience that provides the potential for the self-realization of the Church, what are the common understandings and judgments that give form and act to the potentiality for community given in the experience, what are the commitments and decisions, values and goals, that render the community effectively present. If these may be identified, we have at least one possible way of understanding how the Church is a human community and, on the basis of that understanding, of asking what it means and how it can be that this community of meaning and value, this human community, is the People of God, the Body of Christ, the Temple of the Spirit. Without this or some other, parallel, effort, I do not think the question can be posed as to the relation between the divine and the human dimensions of the Church—one term of the relationship would be missing.

The Church is the social and historical effect of the self-gift of God in Word and grace. This effect exists as a human community insofar as a group of people undergo the experience of God's gift of himself in the Spirit and are brought to understand their transformed personal and intersubjective experience in the light of Jesus Christ. As wide as we may hope in faith that the gift of the Spirit is, only the Church takes form as the Body of Christ, for only these men and women are given to know whose Spirit it is that has taken possession of their lives and drawn them together to himself. The knowledge of self, world, and God that is given in Christ bears fruit in an effective life lived in the memory of the words and deeds of Jesus Christ, in the hope of his return, and in the loving activity that continues his service to God and to the world.

Precisely in what characterizes and distinguishes the Church among human communities, the Church is also the historical subject of its own self-realization. The Church stands always on this side of the God-creature distinction. The Church comes to be because the members of the Church, by God's grace, believe, hope, and love. If there were to cease to be a group of men and women who believe, hope, and love in and because of Jesus Christ, the Church would cease to be. What we could not do without God's self-gift, we can do in his Spirit and in Christ: *we* must do it, God does not do it in our place. His grace is the transcendent principle by which we are, together, ourselves made to be the historical principle, co-producers, if you will permit me, of the People of God, the Body of Christ, and the Temple of the Spirit.

I deliberately confine my description of the human acts by which the Church comes to be to the familiar theological triad of faith, hope, and love. To make the description concrete and complete, however, one would have to describe these in terms of the

sets of experiences and feelings, images and symbols, insights and concepts, judgments and statements, decisions and actions, relationships and roles, institutions and ministries, by which faith, hope, and love transform the collective existence of those who constitute the Church. These have been and are, of course, many and varied, and for discovering, understanding, and articulating them, I believe, the ecclesialogist will be greatly assisted by familiarity with the philosophy, phenomenology, and social sciences of community.<sup>28</sup> Without such familiarity, the theologian is likely to miss noticing a great deal about the Church both in the successive and simultaneous historical self-realizations of the Church and in the scriptural, traditional, liturgical, and dogmatic images, symbols, and statements about the Church. He will especially run the danger of thinking ecclesiology to be sufficiently described as the study of statements about the Church rather than as the study of the Church.<sup>29</sup>

#### *The Local Self-Realization of the Church*

When ecclesiology attends to the human acts by which its members realize the Church, its focus necessarily shifts to the local church. For such acts are always posited by concrete men and women, living in cultural, social, and political milieux, and drawn together in recognizable communities. The Church universal does not come to be because of some abstract or merely formal faith, hope, and love. It is not the Word of God in general that gathers the Church in faith, but the Word as preached in specific interpretative contexts and as a response to concrete threats to authentic human and Christian meaning. The Church does not celebrate the Eucharist in general; it celebrates it in quite concrete human groups, and the communion effected in and through such a Eucharist overcomes quite concrete experiences of alienation. The Church's hope overcomes quite concrete experiences of the demonic power of evil in persons and social structures. The uni-

<sup>28</sup>Some twenty years ago, Yves Congar noted, regretfully, the failure of ecclesialogists to make use of sociology and encouraged its use as well as that of "interpersonal ontology and of personalist philosophy" ("Peut-on définir l'Eglise? Destin et valeur de quatre notions qui s'offrent à le faire," *Sainte Eglise: Etudes et approches ecclésiologiques*, Unam Sanctam 41 [Paris: du Cerf, 1963], pp. 21-44). At about the same time, James Gustafson published his valuable effort to fill out a theological with a social interpretation of the Church, *Treasure in Earthen Vessels: The Church as a Human Community* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961). More recently, Edward Farley has offered some important elements for a phenomenological ecclesiology in *Ecclesial Man: A Social Phenomenology of Faith and Reality* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975); see my review, for whose delay I am alone responsible, "The Church as the Matrix of Faith," *Journal of Religion* 61 (1981), 188-96.

<sup>29</sup>See J. A. Komonchak, "Ecclesiology and Social Theory: A Methodological Essay," *The Thomist* 45 (1981), 262-83.

versal Church arises insofar as the several communities of faith, hope, and love recognize and receive one another as redeemed for God by a common Savior and in a common Spirit.

The recognition of the existential priority of the local churches can be obscured if the principles of the unity of the Church are considered only abstractly and, as it were, "objectively." For example, it may be said that the Church is one because one Word of God gathers people all over the world into the one Christ and in the one Spirit, or because all of them submit to the authority of a common Scripture and tradition or worship at a common table. All of that is true, of course; but its truth is only significant if it is concrete. There are what may be called "objective" principles and representations of the Church's catholic unity; but these are principles of *catholic* unity only because here, there, and everywhere they effectively gather people together as communities. And they do this only because the one Word of God illumines this community here and that one there, this one in this moment and in this place, that one in a different place and time. The "objective" principles effectively mediate community only insofar as they are subjectively received as the redemptive principles of the histories of diverse communities. As commonly acknowledged objective representations of Christian meaning and value, the Scriptures, the creeds, the tradition, the sacraments, the apostolic ministry, etc. provide the possibility of the unity in and among the churches; but they are effective principles of that unity only when and insofar as they mediate the gathering of individuals into local communities and of the local communities into a catholic unity. They do not fulfill this role in virtue of some prior, supposedly universal meaning, ascertainable and interpretable without reference to concrete situations and problems, but in virtue of their capacity to illumine and to transform a nearly infinite variety of situations and problems.<sup>30</sup> The unity of the Church under one God, one Lord, one Spirit is effectively realized "from below" in the unity realized in and among the various and different communities.

<sup>30</sup> "... Christianity only stays alive and real if each successive period, from out of its relationship to Jesus Christ, declares anew for Jesus of Nazareth. Then it is impossible to determine 'first' the essence of the Christian faith in order subsequently—'in the second instance', as it were—to interpret it as accommodated to our own time. Anyone who, with the Christian churches, affirms the universal significance of belief in Jesus must have the humility loyally to shoulder, along with that, the difficulties accruing to it—or else must surrender the claim to universality. Only these two possibilities are genuine and consistent. To accept the universality while at the same time denying the hermeneutical problem—thereby positing one exclusive definition, *ne varietur*, of essential Christianity—is neither an accessible road nor an authentic possibility; it is to disregard and evacuate of all substance the true universality of the Christian faith" (E. Schillebeeckx, *Jesus: An Experiment in Christology* [New York: Seabury, 1979], p. 575).

For that reason it is difficult to make the social and cultural differences among the churches a secondary theological principle of the Church's life. For it is only in societies and cultures that the questions arise to which Christianity addresses itself. The social and cultural conditions are the interpretative matrices of a Christianity made concrete. It is only an abstract Church, joining together abstract individuals, that could be considered to have been adequately described without reference to the social and cultural conditions in which individuals and communities ask about the meaning and value of their lives.<sup>31</sup>

This mediation of the universal by the concrete is already visible in the Scriptures themselves, which offer a gospel of universal relevance only in the form of quite specific receptions and interpretations of that message by communities of early believers.<sup>32</sup> The missionary mandate of the Risen Lord is the Church's reason for believing these particular mediations to be of universal relevance; and it is possible, with the help of a fundamental anthropology, to build upon that conviction the general lines of a Christian interpretation of human existence.<sup>33</sup> But this will necessarily remain at a comparatively formal level; what that human existence, so interpreted, may or must be concretely can only be known by asking questions in and out of concrete and differing situations. As J. J. von Allmen has remarked, "God does not save anthropological abstractions, but men and women of flesh and blood."<sup>34</sup> It is communities of such men and women who, recognizing and receiving one another in the Lord and his Spirit, realize a concretely catholic church.

To focus ecclesiology on the local church also reflects an altered understanding of the relationship between the Church and the world. I suggested above that the Church's increased consciousness of its self-responsibility was a response to the modern world's self-emancipation. In a first moment, that response took the form of a retreat, a withdrawal into a carefully constructed

<sup>31</sup>This is, as I will remark below, why H. Legrand is correct in saying that "the theology of the particular church is a chapter in the theology of the relationships between the Church and the world" ("Inverser Babel," p. 334).

<sup>32</sup>Note how in Edward Schillebeeckx' massive volumes on Christology the New Testament materials are presented as the reflections of the diverse early Christian communities. See also De Lubac, *Les églises particulières*, pp. 53-54; Bouyer, *L'Eglise de Dieu*, pp. 336-38; J. J. von Allmen, "L'Eglise locale parmi les autres Eglises locales," *Irénikon* 43 (1970), 512-37.

<sup>33</sup>See Schillebeeckx's discussion of "anthropological constants" in *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord* (New York: Seabury, 1980), pp. 731-43. I have offered some formal considerations in "Moral Pluralism and the Unity of the Church," forthcoming in *One Faith, One Church, Many Moralities?*, ed. J. Pohier and D. Mieth, *Concilium* 150 (New York: Crossroads, 1981).

<sup>34</sup>Von Allmen, "L'Eglise locale," p. 516.



Catholic "world," independent and self-sufficient, identifying itself by the concentration of its life and authority in the symbol and the ministry of the pope—*Roman Catholicism*. But perhaps one day the retreat will be understood as having been for the sake of the return now in progress, as the Church, with a growing sense of self-possession and self-responsibility and with a fuller awareness of the common task before an enormously varied world, sees itself as a project of self-realization in and to the world, as having a distinct role to play in the self-responsibility of humanity for its members and for its future. As greatly as that return to the world has been promoted by the supreme universal authority in the Church, both in papal encyclicals and in conciliar documents, it will only be achieved if the local churches assume their own responsibility in their several situations. As Pope Paul VI put it in *Octagesima adveniens*:

In the face of such widely varying situations, it is difficult for us to utter a unified message and to put forward a solution which has universal validity. Such is not our ambition, nor is it our mission. It is up to the Christian communities objectively to analyze the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the Gospel's unalterable words, and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgment, and directives for action from the social teaching of the Church. . . . It is up to these Christian communities, with the help of the Holy Spirit, in communion with the bishops who hold responsibility and in dialogue with other Christians and all men of good will, to discern the options and commitments which are called for in order to bring about the social, political, and economic changes seen in many cases to be urgently needed.<sup>35</sup>

(Not entirely by the way, those remarks give a rather good illustration of a universal papal ministry that understands itself as the promoter of the self-responsibility of the local churches.)

It would be a mistake, however, to confine this self-responsibility of the local churches to the realm of the social, political, and economic. This would be to use a distinction between spheres of human life that is at best artificial and at worst ideological. It would suggest that there is a first moment in which the Church realizes itself and then a second in which it looks out upon the world to consider what it may contribute. (The Council did not wholly overcome this way of thinking, as is clear especially in the "typological descriptions" it offered of the respective roles in the world of clergy, religious, and laity.)<sup>36</sup> Such a view assumes that

<sup>35</sup> Pope Paul VI, *Octagesima adveniens*, 4, AAS 63 (1971), 403.

<sup>36</sup> See E. Schillebeeckx, "The Typological Definition of the Christian Layman according to Vatican II," in *The Mission of the Church* (New York: Seabury, 1973), pp. 90-116; J. A. Komonchak, "Clergy, Laity, and the Church's Mission in the World," forthcoming in *The Jurist* 41 (1981).

the Christian meanings and values can be interpreted and articulated solely by reference to the individual or at least prior to a consideration of the social, political, or economic. But that is an abstract Christianity, addressed to abstract individuals. Individuals are what they are only in cultural, social, political, and economic contexts, and these cannot be denied a mediating interpretative role in the determination of what Christian meaning and value are. At the Council, this was most clearly seen in the Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church, where, as remarked above, it is not only the culture and society of a people that is judged in the light of the Gospel, but the faith itself which must undertake a new quest for understanding in the light of the philosophy and wisdom of a people.

This is, of course, to vindicate again the importance of the largest referent of the Council's term "local church," sociocultural groupings, whether the ancient patriarchal churches or new churches of distinct social and cultural identity. The Council once referred to these groups of churches as *matrices fidei* (LG 23), a phrase that may be understood to refer to the interpretative matrices of Christian experience. A sentence from *Evangelii nuntiandi* is relevant here:

Evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into account the people to whom it is concretely addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols, if it does not answer the questions they are themselves asking, if it does not touch and move their concrete life.<sup>37</sup>

Evangelization, of course, is a primary means of the Church's self-realization, and the pope's description makes it clear to what a degree the self-realization of the Church is itself a hermeneutical or interpretative achievement. An adequate anthropology of the Church's self-realization as a community of interpretation must be able to show how the universally relevant Christian message illumines and is illumined by the problems of individual and social existence as these are experienced in the variety of linguistic, social, cultural, political, and economic self-realizations of humanity. Where and when it is possible to speak of distinct self-realizations of the human, it would then be possible and necessary also to speak about distinct self-realizations of the Church. The catholic Church would then fulfill its redemptive role in the world when the local churches become genuine *matrices fidei*, matrices of a quite concrete faith, hope, and loving service.

<sup>37</sup>Pope Paul VI, *Evangelii nuntiandi*, 63 (AAS 68 [1976], 53).

## MINISTRY AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

*The Ministry of the Whole Church*

There is today something like a consensus among all Christian communions that it is the Church itself that is the primary minister of Christ in the world. Vatican II reflected this view in its very choice to discuss the common constituents of the Church's redemptive presence in the world before distinguishing the status and roles proper to hierarchy, laity, and religious. Two conciliar themes give it further expression: the description of the Church as a sacrament, "a sign and instrument of intimate union with God and of the unity of the whole human race" (LG 1), and the insistence, often repeated, that all the members of the Church have a right and responsibility to take part in the building up of the Church and in its service in and to the world. Both themes are (or ought to be) verified on the level of the universal Church and in all the local self-realizations of the Church.

The Church first and chiefly serves as the instrument of God's grace in the world because it is the social effect of that grace. A new community of meaning and value appears in the world, in which the gift of the Spirit becomes articulate through the incarnate Word of God, the focus of this community's memory and hope, faith and love. The articulation of the founding meanings and values in confessions of faith, acts of worship, words, images, and symbols, interpersonal communion, social relationships, acts of loving service, reflective theologies, etc. at once realize a new and distinct social phenomenon and offer the concrete possibility that other men and women will have the opportunity themselves to know what this world really is, what mystery of sin and grace really defines their lives, who that God is who is their source, center and goal. The life of the Church as the effect of grace defines the historical probabilities that the Word of God will be the effective principle of individual and social existence. This instrumental role of the Church is perhaps even clearer today when society at large no longer supplies "plausibility-structures" for the Christian interpretation of existence, when society appears rather as a vast market-place of competitive meanings and values, none of which is likely to attract adherents if it is not rendered plausible in the lives of concrete individuals and communities.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup>These ideas have been developed particularly by Peter Berger; see *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1967). F. X. Kaufmann has used them for very perceptive analyses of contemporary Catholicism; see "The Church as a Religious Organization," pp. 70-82; *Kirche begreifen: Analysen und Thesen zur gesellschaftlichen Verfassung des Christentums* (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1979); "Kirchliche Institutionen und

The whole community performs that role in the world. And the community that performs it is itself realized by the operations and acts of all its members. The Council used Paul's metaphor to make the point:

As in a living body, no member is purely passive but shares at once in the life and activity of the body, so in the Body of Christ which is the Church, "the whole Body achieves its growth through the proper working of each part" (Eph 4:16). Indeed, such is the unity and the links among the members of this Body, that a member who does not work according to his own measure for the growth of the Body profits neither the Church nor himself. In the Church there is a diversity of ministry, but a unity of mission.<sup>39</sup>

Less metaphorically, we could say that in the building-up of the Church, its self-realization, the members of the Church mediate one another. All are not apostles, prophets, or teachers, but each of these needs the others. Ministry and community mediate one another.<sup>40</sup> One person ministers in one respect to another person and is ministered to in another, and no minister never needs to be ministered to. There is even a sense in which a minister owes it to the freedom of those to whom he ministers that he is able to minister at all. And, underlying all, there is the profound sense that all are the very inadequate servants of a Word and grace which transcends them all and of which none is a more worthy recipient.

This is to say that the acts by which the Church comes to be in the world are realized by all the members of the Church. This holds, of course, of the acts of faith, hope and love, without which something other than the Church is realized. It also holds of the acts of worship by which the Church manifests most clearly the source, center, and goal of its life—the whole Church is the subject of its liturgical life.<sup>41</sup> And it holds also of the three offices of Christ,

Gegenwartsgesellschaft," a paper delivered at the 1980 Bologna Conference on the Ecclesiology of Vatican II, forthcoming.

<sup>39</sup>*Apostolicam actuositatem*, 2; see also *Presbyterorum ordinis* 2, and AG 21: "The Church is not truly founded, it does not fully live, nor is it a perfect sign of Christ among men, unless along with the hierarchy a genuine laity is present and at work."

<sup>40</sup>This is in part what is meant by the "dialectic of ministry and community" which A. Jaubert and B. Sesboue discover in the New Testament; see *Le ministère et les ministères selon le Nouveau Testament: Dossier exégétique et réflexion théologique* (Paris: du Seuil, 1974), pp. 23-28, 369-70. Bengt Holmberg develops this idea with the use of sociological categories in *Paul and Power: The Structure of Authority in the Primitive Church as Reflected in the Pauline Epistles* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), pp. 117-18, 198-201, 203-04.

<sup>41</sup>See Y. Congar, "L'Ecclesia ou communauté chrétienne, sujet intégral de l'action liturgique," in *La Liturgie après Vatican II*, ed. J. P. Jossua and Y. Congar, *Unam Sanctam* 66 (Paris: du Cerf, 1967), pp. 241-82. The broad implications of conceiving the local churches as "Eglises-sujets," or "self-responsible churches," are explored by H. Legrand in several essays: "Synodes et conseils" (see n. 2); "Ministères et liturgie: courants et besoins nouveaux," in *Faith and Society: Acta*



Priest, Prophet, and King, which the whole Church represents and serves in the world. None of this is to deny that there are distinct ministries in the Church; it is only a first attempt to insist that such ministries only make sense *in* the Church and as articulations of the Church's primary ministry. Ministers do not enjoy some prior possession of the goods that constitute the Church, which they then parcel out to others. The goods—including the ministry—are given to the Church—*Has enim claves non homo unus, sed unitas accepit Ecclesiae*<sup>42</sup>—and particular ministries articulate and realize what the whole Church is and does in and for the world. All particular ministries do that and the Church thereby becomes the sign and instrument of Christ's reconciling love.

Something like this is the ecclesial context in which the ordained ministry makes sense. Ordination must be understood by reference to the self-constitutive sacraments by which the Church becomes a community, baptism and the Eucharist. The ordained do not stand above the Church, or between the Church and Christ. Their ministry is Christ's gift to the Church and they arise and function, in the power of the Spirit, within the Church. If an essentially distinct function is to be assigned them (LG 10),<sup>43</sup> this cannot be understood without reference to the "true equality that exists among all with regard to dignity and to the common activity by which all believers work for the building up of the Body of Christ" (LG 32).

### *Ministries in the Local Church*

It is, of course, only in the local churches that any of this is ever realized. The Church is the sacrament of Christ in particular cultural, social, political, economic, and communal settings. The Church becomes such a sign and instrument if particular groups of men and women are gathered by Christ's Word and the Spirit's

*Congressus Internationalis Theologici Lovaniensis 1976*, ed. M. Caudron (Gembloux: Duculot, 1978), pp. 271-86; "Le développement d'Eglises-sujets à la suite de Vatican II: Fondements théologiques et réflexions institutionnelles," forthcoming in the proceedings of the 1980 Bologna Conference on the Ecclesiology of Vatican II; "L'avenir des ministères: bilan, défis, tâches," *Le Supplement* 124 (Feb. 1978), 21-48.

<sup>42</sup> Augustine, *Sermo* 295:2; PL 38, c. 1349. In Augustine's later thought, Peter received the keys *in persona Ecclesiae*. See A.-M. La Bonnardière, "Tu es Petrus: La péricope 'Matthieu 16, 12-23' dans l'oeuvre de S. Augustin," *Irénikon* 34 (1961), 476-90; Y. Congar, "Introduction générale," in *Oeuvres de saint Augustin*, 28: *Traité Anti-Donatistes*, vol. I (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1963), pp. 100-09, and, in the same volume, "L'interprétation de Matth. XVI, 18," pp. 716-17.

<sup>43</sup> It is perhaps worth noting with regard to the Council's formula, *essentia et non gradu tantum*, first, that it is of rather recent provenance (the Council refers only to two statements of Pius XII), and, second, that its interpretation is an entirely open matter.

grace and so realize human communities of redemptive meaning and value. Such communities are a common achievement to which all contribute and for which all are responsible, ministering to and with one another. In this context I would like to draw out some implications for ministry of an ecclesiology which focuses on such local churches.

In the first place, local community is both the theological and the existential matrix of community. This was once a great deal clearer in our practice than it is today. It was once enshrined in the prohibition of absolute ordinations, ordinations, that is, without a reference to a concrete community.<sup>44</sup> It was reflected as well in the expectation that presiding over the Eucharist would be determined by leadership in the community and not vice-versa,<sup>45</sup> and in the canonical requirements that "the one who is to preside over all should be chosen by all" and that "no bishop should be forced upon an unwilling people."<sup>46</sup> It was expressed in the original sense of a vocation, which so stressed the primacy of the community that a person could be chosen and ordained against his own will.<sup>47</sup> Finally, it appeared in the ordination rite in which the people were present and considered to be participating in the *epiklesis* spoken by the bishop in their name and confirmed by their "Amen."<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup>The sixth canon of the Council of Chalcedon reads: "No one is to be ordained absolutely a presbyter, a deacon, or in any of the ecclesiastical orders, unless a city church, a rural church, a martyr, or a monastery has been assigned to him. Those who have been ordained absolutely this holy Synod determines to have received an invalid (*akuron*) ordination, and they cannot act anywhere, to the disgrace of the one who ordained them." See H.-M. Legrand, "The Presidency of the Eucharist according to the Ancient Tradition," *Worship* 53 (1979), 413-38, esp. p. 431; E. Schillebeeckx, "The Christian Community and its Office-Bearers," in *The Right of a Community to a Priest*, ed. E. Schillebeeckx and J. B. Metz, *Concilium* 133 (New York: Seabury, 1980), pp. 95-133, at p. 101; E. Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), pp. 38-41, 52-58; C. Vogel, "Vacua manus impositio: L'inconsistance de la chirotonie absolue en Occident," in *Mélanges liturgiques offerts au R. P. Dom B. Botte* (Louvain, 1972), pp. 511-24.

<sup>45</sup>See *passim* the works of Legrand and Schillebeeckx cited in the previous note.

<sup>46</sup>See Legrand, "La liberté dans la nomination des évêques," in *La charge pastorale des évêques*, pp. 148-67; *The Choosing of Bishops: Historical and Theological Studies* (Hartford, CT: CLSA, 1971); *Election and Consensus in the Church*, ed. G. Alberigo and A. Weiler, *Concilium* 77 (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972); *Electing our own Bishops*, ed. P. Huizing and K. Walf, *Concilium* 137 (New York: Seabury, 1980).

<sup>47</sup>See Y. Congar, "Ordinations 'invitus, coactus' de l'Eglise antique au canon 214," *RSPT* 50 (1966), 169-97.

<sup>48</sup>See P.-M. Gy, "La théologie des prières anciennes pour l'ordination des évêques et des prêtres," *RSPT* 58 (1974), 500-617; "Ancient Ordination Prayers," *Studia Liturgica* 13 (1979), 70-93; H. Schulz, "Das liturgisch-sakramental übertragene Hirtenamt in seiner eucharistischen Selbstwirkung nach dem Zeugnis der liturgischen Überlieferung," in *Amt und Eucharistie* (Paderborn, 1973), pp. 208-55; H. Legrand, "Theology and the Election of Bishops in the Early Church," in *Election and Consensus in the Church*, pp. 31-42.

Much of that no longer describes our church practice. Absolute ordinations have been the common practice for well over a millennium. The participation of the people in the selection of their ministers is minimal today. Vocations are conceived individualistically if not privately, and a man is first ordained and then found a community over which to preside.<sup>49</sup> The ordination rites have been revised, but the ecclesial context in which they carry their meanings is not what it once was.

By and large, the operative principles for the selection of ministers and for the exercise of their office today presuppose a universalistic, "descending" ecclesiology. In no one of the senses of the term is a local church free to determine the criteria for the selection of ministers or for the exercise of their ministry; these are set by Roman authority. The people and clergy of a diocese usually have very little to say about who shall be their bishop; Rome decides that. The people in a parish probably have even less to say about the selection of their pastor; the bishop does that. There is very little structural recognition that ministers ought to be accountable to their people for the performance of their ministries.<sup>50</sup>

In all these respects, the ordained ministers usually descend upon their communities from without. This gives structural expression to a view of the ministry as mediating between Christ and the Church. It often builds upon a "Christo-monistic" model, for which authority and power flow directly from Christ to Peter and the other apostles, from them to bishops and priests, and only through them reaches the laity whose principal role is to receive and to obey.<sup>51</sup> There are obvious parallels between this view and an

<sup>49</sup>With, one trusts, a certain amount of irony, C. Duquoc notes the only remnant of the ancient discipline whereby "no one can claim the presidency of the community if he has not been called by it": "I have never heard it said that anyone has a vocation to the episcopate . . . we can only speak of vocation in connection with priests of the second degree" ("Concepts of Ministry," *The Tablet* 233 [1979], 309; this valuable essay was first published as "Théologie de l'Eglise et crise du ministère," *Etudes* 350 [1979], 101-13).

<sup>50</sup>The proposed new Code of Canon Law includes among the reasons for which a pastor may legitimately be removed ways of acting that bring loss or disturbance to the community, lack of skill or permanent disability, loss of respect among the worthy members of the community and permanent aversion, grave neglect or abuse of his office, and poor administration of the temporal goods of the community (C. 1717). No such list is given for the case of bishops. The impotence of people with regard to incompetent or abusive ministers is being felt today with increasing acuteness.

<sup>51</sup>"Christo-monistic" is Legrand's term for the view of ministry that prevailed in the preconciliar manuals; see, for example, "Insertion des ministères de direction dans la communauté ecclésiale," *Revue de Droit Canonique* 23 (1973), 225-54. Schillebeeckx, in his recent article and book, makes use of a similar typology when he contrasts a "pneumatological and ecclesial conception of office" to one with a "direct Christological foundation."

ecclesiology for which the universal Church is constructed "from above."

At the same time, however, that these practices are being defended and even confirmed, two related developments are taking place which suggest that they will not have a great future. The number of men willing to present themselves for ministry under these conditions has declined precipitously.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, the churches are experiencing a great increase both in types of ministries and in the numbers of men and women willing to undertake them. In part, of course, the shortage of priests has provided the opportunity for and almost made necessary the emergence of such ministries; but the latter also reflects the Council's insistence that all Christians are responsible for the self-realization of the Church and its expectation that the Spirit will raise up within the Church the charisms, services, and ministries it needs. That these two conciliar principles are at work is evident in the fact that the ministries and ministers have as their existential matrix a revival, occurring in almost all local churches, of the sense of the Church as a reality of initial and primary local realization. These local communities are of many kinds,<sup>53</sup> but they seem to agree in experiencing and conceiving of the Church as a group far smaller than the diocese, smaller even than the parish.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Reports on the statistics can be found in J. Kerkhofs, "Priests and 'Parishes'—A Statistical Survey," in *The Right of a Community to a Priest*, pp. 3-11; "From Frustration to Liberation? A Factual Approach to Ministries in the Church," in *Minister? Pastor? Prophet?: Grass-roots Leadership in the Churches* (New York: Crossroad, 1980), pp. 5-20; J. A. Coleman, "The Future of Ministry," *America* 144 (1980), 243-49; W. Goddijn, "The Shortage of Priests," *The Tablet* 235 (1981), 363.

<sup>53</sup> For reports from several different regions, see *The Right of a Community to a Priest*; sociological studies of the new communities are badly needed. For an example, see K. Dobbelaire and J. Billiet, "Community-formation and the Church: A Sociological Study of an Ideology and the Empirical Reality," in *Faith and Society*, pp. 211-59.

<sup>54</sup> Perhaps this is the place to explain that part of the reason I have not devoted more space to the bishop and the diocese is what I see to be "the tension between the *theoretical* and the *real* structures of the Church," as Karl Rahner puts it. The bishop at the Council is represented as the chief preacher and teacher, chief liturgist, and chief leader of the Church. But, as Rahner goes on, "this description is surely very unrealistic: in reality the bishop is surely a kind of higher administrative official, watching over and co-ordinating the real and essential work of the Church, while this latter, the real care of souls, the kerygma, the word of grace in the sacraments, the witness to Christ before the world, is in reality . . . carried out by the priests in the parish" ("Pastoral-Theological Observations on Episcopacy in the Teaching of Vatican II," *Theological Investigations*, vol. VI [Baltimore: Helicon, 1969], pp. 361-68, at p. 366). Similar contrasts, I believe, could be drawn between what the Council says about the diocese as a local church and the average Catholic's perceptions of the diocese. Theologians might usefully consider the enormous sociological differences between what was an episcopal see for an Ignatius or a Cyprian (on whom the Council's theology of the episcopate greatly builds) and at least the very large dioceses of today. What might be theologically true of one need not be true of the other.



For the most part, the revival of the community sense must be evaluated very positively. It clearly speaks to an experienced need which, precisely because the phenomenon is so widespread, it is difficult to reduce to purely psychological or sociological reasons.<sup>55</sup> It provides an opportunity for an experience of the Church as realized in the concrete conditions of everyday life and speaking to the cultural, social, political, and intersubjective contexts of peoples' lives. Being the Church has immediate, almost tangible meaning. Responsibility for the Church's life and service is shared by all. If there are dangers to be feared in the emergence of such communities, they will not be met effectively by appeals to a parochial or diocesan principle, unless these also reveal and encourage the strengths the communities often show.

Nor should it be forgotten that some of the dangers that do appear derive from an insistence upon a theory and practice of ordained ministry that appear to have lost their ecclesial roots. It is not their fault that many of these communities today—and many more of them in the foreseeable future<sup>56</sup>—cannot celebrate the Eucharist regularly. They are not lacking leaders, but, under present discipline, many of these leaders cannot be ordained. That the meaning and necessity of ordained ministries should here or there be called into question may be regrettable, but it is also what might be expected when the Church's regular discipline does not permit genuine charisms of leadership to be acknowledged and sacramentally confirmed.<sup>57</sup> That in fact the present practice of ministry increasingly represents a new separation of orders and jurisdiction—and this after the Council sought to reunite the two<sup>58</sup>—is due principally to the fact that church leaders and communities have had to see to the concrete needs of the Church under

<sup>55</sup>In his essay, "Ministères et liturgie," Legrand criticizes the new communities as confined to the middle class and to students (pp. 272-73) and therefore being insufficiently typical of the Church to be used as a model. This may once have characterized the French church, but there surely are many other types of community emerging today.

<sup>56</sup>According to Goddijn, there are already in France 20,851 parishes without resident priests ("The Shortage of Priests," p. 363). That their number will increase there and almost everywhere else can be seen by consulting statistics on the median age of priests.

<sup>57</sup>See *The Right of a Community to a Priest*, especially Schillebeeckx, "The Christian Community and its Office-Bearers," pp. 120-27. This material is greatly expanded in *Ministry*, pp. 75-99, 134-42.

<sup>58</sup>See *Lumen gentium* 21, where all three of the ministerial functions are said to be given in ordination; see J. Neumann, "Die wesenhafte Einheit von Ordination und Amt: Priester und Laien im Dienst der Kirche," in *Der Priestermangel und seine Konsequenzen: Einheit und Vielfalt der kirchlichen Ämter und Dienste*, ed. F. Klostermann (Düsseldorf, 1977), pp. 95-128; J. A. Komonchak, "'Non-ordained' and 'Ordained' Ministers in the Local Church," in *The Right of the Community to a Priest*, pp. 44-50.

a discipline which no longer permits them to put into practice a more adequate ecclesiology and theory of ministry.

These less acceptable dimensions of the revival of local communities and ministries appear to me to be rather a high price to pay for canonical prescriptions most of which everyone agrees do not follow from the dogmatic essence of either the Church or the ordained ministry. The stakes are very high, too: the significance of the Eucharist for the life of the Church, the meaning of ordination, the integrity of a Church whose historic strength has always lain in the repudiation of a dichotomy between the spiritual community and apostolic office. A good deal of what has been meant by historic Catholicism, it seems to me, hangs in the balance.<sup>59</sup>

To move briefly to another subject: if in fact the one and universal Church is realized in local churches in which all members share the responsibility of making the Church come to be, then a good deal more will have to be done to provide institutional means for the exercise of that common responsibility. The Council did not only call upon all members of the Church to be active subjects of the Church's self-realization, it recommended the establishment of collegial bodies to achieve this. Since the Council, we have seen the establishment of the Synod of Bishops, Episcopal Conferences, diocesan pastoral councils, senates of priests, parish councils, etc. How effective these have been, of course, would require very varied judgments. It seems to me that we are still trying to get used to them, and that the chief difficulty lies in our habits of conceiving authority monarchically and as a monopoly of the clergy. The proposed new Code of Canon Law, for example, is very nervous about assigning anything more than consultative power to any one of these bodies vis-à-vis the superior authority.<sup>60</sup> Consultative authority, of course, can mean many things, and it has been suggested that, canonically, it means a lot more than we Americans may be inclined to think. That may be true, but it is also clear that in the minds of some of those responsible for the drafting of the new

<sup>59</sup> For a splendid description, rich in theological insight and imagination, see Rosemary Haughton, *The Catholic Thing* (Springfield, IL: Templegate, 1980). Since writing this book, Mrs. Haughton has been devoting herself to a ministry to new communities. Her essay, "'There is Hope for a Tree': A Study-paper on the Emerging Church," is in wide (unpublished) circulation; it can be read with a good deal of enthusiasm for the hope it embodies and with an equal sadness that she does not expect much to come from the "official" Church.

<sup>60</sup> See J. A. Komonchak, "A New Law for the People of God: A Theological Evaluation," to appear in the *Proceedings* of the 1980 Convention of the Canon Law Society of America; and "The Status of the Faithful in the Revised Code of Canon Law," in *The Revised Code of Canon Law: A Missed Opportunity?* ed. P. Huizing and K. Walf, Concilium 147 (New York: Crossroad, 1981), forthcoming.

Code, authority is almost defined by the ability to make decisions without the impediment of other people's views.<sup>61</sup> This, I think falls rather far short of an adequate notion of authority and of the Council's teachings about how the Church comes to be.

#### CONCLUSION

I have spoken at much greater length about the local Church than about ministry. I have done so in part because I think that much of what is happening today in the theory and practice of ministry is fairly familiar to most, but especially because I think that a theology of ministry must always begin with a theology of the Church. And a theology of the Church must always be the study of the concrete men and women who in every time and in every place constitute the Church and of the local communities in which, by God's grace, they are gathered by the Spirit into the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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<sup>61</sup>In a discussion of the possibility that bishops might initiate an extraconciliar collegial act, one member of the Code-commission argued that this could infringe the freedom of the pope who might be left with nothing to do except accept a *fait accompli* or, and this was an example given, he might find himself facing a thousand bishops who opposed clerical celibacy, when his only choice would be to declare them excommunicate! (See *Communicationes* 8 [1976], 103-04). In another discussion, a warning was given against the "psychological and moral force" which could be inflicted on a bishop's freedom if others were given a consultative or a deliberative vote and he were left with only a right to veto: "these surely are grave questions," it was said, "in Germany, Austria, the United States, etc., as they were before in Holland" (*Communicationes* 9 [1977], 185-86).