

## APPENDIX B

BISHOP VOGEL'S TALK TO THE SPECIAL MEETING  
OF THE HOUSE OF BISHOPS

I must say first what I believe we all think — thus I hope to speak for us all when I say that we must keep our concerns in perspective. The purpose of this presentation is to present a perspective to you.

Our perspective is found in our vocation, and our primary vocation as Christians is to bear witness to the love of God for all persons in Jesus Christ, and to serve the world in Christ's name. Let us, even now, bear our witness to the world showing that we are Christian in *all* we do.

I believe it is easier to let the recent service of ordination in Philadelphia be a political victory or defeat, on the model of a secular, pluralistic society, than it is to witness, under present circumstances, to the nature of the Church as a community and to the role of the Bishop in the community. In Christian community, we have a responsibility *for* each other and *to* each other not found in a secular society.

Hugh of St. Victor said, "Where there is love, there is clarity." Love produces community; so, in the name of love, we must be clear about community. The Church is a community of witness to the resurrection. All Christian ministry (ordained or not ordained) is for the building of community. "And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ . . ." (Ephesians 4:11f., RSV)

Even in the New Testament we find that the diversity of ministries and activities within the community showed the need for a focus of the community's unity, the co-ordination of the community's activities, promotion of its mission, and the discernment of the Spirit within it. The need for oversight (*episcopate*) and the centering of the functions we have just mentioned led to the development of the episcopate in the Church's life. (Cf., ARCIC Statement on MINISTRY AND ORDINATION, Canterbury, 1973)

It is impossible to keep the Holy Eucharist out of consideration at this point, for the Christian community is most itself in the Holy Eucharist, the paradigmatic act of Christian community. (We know the Church as the "mystical body" of Christ; that ter-

minology developed because the Church was thought to be most itself in the holy mysteries.)

In the early Church the Bishop presided at the eucharistic assembly (*Didache*). The person who focuses the Church's unity and exercises oversight in the Church would properly preside at the community's most solemn gathering. Nevertheless, the Holy Eucharist is offered by the whole community; the Bishop unifies the action of the community by his presidency of the assembly. The Bishop at one time, in a sacramental manner, (1) represents the Son to the assembly, (2) represents the people to God, (3) represents the Church to itself; *i.e.*, he represents the unity of the people with each other.

Bishops are *in* community, *for* community; they are the community's servants, enabling the community to be itself. In the early Church, Bishops and their communities are never thought of apart.

Presiding over the community and focusing its unity, the Bishop, as we said, represents Christ to the Church and the Church to itself. The Bishop is able to do this, because as Bishop he is, as it has been put, the "subject of the tradition" of the community (*koinonia*). The lived presence of the Bishop is the constant call to the community to be its whole self in unity and mission. That is why the breaking of community by a Bishop is so serious.

Let us pause to notice here that a true community is governed by a lived fidelity to itself rather than by an appeal to law and statutes. Such lived fidelity is called the community's "tradition". Tradition is not something abstract found only in the past and in books; it is an on-going communal life. Even Aristotle said that friends do not need laws; if people have to appeal to laws in their relations to each other they are less than friends. Laws and canons are meant to protect community in times of stress and crisis—and to specify details for good order; the mere breaking of canons is not the ultimate offense to a Christian community.

The Bishop is not the possessor of tradition; the tradition *informs* him. As subject of the tradition of Christian community, the Bishop is the fit channel for conferring orders within the community. By conferring orders, the Bishop promotes order in the community.

Bishops associate others with them in ordination. Within a Diocese the Bishop and presbyters form a college among themselves; the Bishop and deacons constitute another community.

The important point is that ordination, accordingly, is entrance into a new community—the ministerial community—rather than the bare bestowal of a power. In ordination Bishops do not pass on a power which they possess as individuals to other individuals who do not have it. That would be a baton-passing theory of ordination; the community would count for no more than a crowd watching a relay race. It is also most important to remember that Bishops form a community with each other; the collegial nature of their ministry is emphasized by the presence and action of at least three Bishops at every ordination of a Bishop.

After all we've said about the role of the Bishop in the Church and in the Eucharist, it is most important to remember that *ordinations always take place in a eucharistic context*. Why? The answer is found in the fact that ministry is always in and for community. The early centuries of the Church's life are singularly instructive in this regard.

Dr. J.D. Zizioulas, an Orthodox staff member of the Faith and Order Secretariat of the World Council of Churches, in an article entitled, "The Eucharistic Community and the Catholicity of the Church", makes the point that "the catholic church" was a term first used by Ignatius of Antioch, and then in reference to the local church, the eucharistic community.

"A fundamental function," Dr. Zizioulas writes, "of this 'one Bishop' was to express in himself the 'multitude' of the faithful in that place." (p. 323 of the above-mentioned article found in ONE IN CHRIST, 1970-3; all following quotations are *ibid.*) The Bishop was, in other words, an expression of the wholeness and unity of an identified community. Dr. Zizioulas goes on to point out that the conferring of orders was restricted to the eucharistic community, and that ordination was "an exclusive right of the Bishop, *not as an individual but as the head of this eucharistic community . . .*" (p. 324) It was the eucharistic context and the place of the Bishop in the eucharistic community which expressed the "catholic" nature of the church, Dr. Zizioulas states. "Catholic" is here used in its basic Greek sense of the "wholeness" of the Church.

Dr. Zizioulas goes on to say that the Bishop possessed the exclusive right to ordain "because of his capacity as the head of the eucharistic community—*hence his inability to ordain outside this community*—and in relation to his role as the one who offers the entire community in the Eucharist to God . . . he must himself be existentially related to a community. There is no ministry in the

catholic Church that can exist *in absoluto*." (p. 334) He concludes that "there is no apostolic succession which does not go through the concrete community." (p. 335)

The point is, community is always, in some sense and in the first place, intimate, and so local. Ordination by the laying-on of hands is the *culmination of a process which begins in a local community*, which is to be served by an ordained minister. Our canonical requirements for ordination reflect this process by the certification required of a proposed candidate for ordination at the parochial level by those who know the candidate personally, the rector and the vestry; and by the testimonies required of the Commission on Ministry, the Standing Committee, and the Bishop, on the diocesan level.

I will conclude these remarks with certain observations about the use of such terms as "irregularity" and "validity" in relation to ordination.

There is little trouble with the word "irregularity". A sacramental action is said to be irregular if it is attended by some canonical impediment. Because of the canons which were broken at the service of ordination in Philadelphia, there can be no doubt that, on any interpretation, the ordination was irregular.

The concept of "validity" offers certain complications, because the word is used in several senses in the contemporary theological community. In the use of the word suggested by the Roman Catholic theologian F.J. van Beeck, it means "ecclesiastical recognition". A ministry, on this view, may be genuine and true without being valid. The question to ask is, "Does a Church juridically recognize the ministry?" This interpretation of validity has found great favor among ecumenical theologians; because, on the view, when one Church says that another Church's ministry is invalid, it means no more than that the former Church does not juridically recognize the ministry of the latter Church. Such a statement does not say that the ministry of the Church being judged is not a true, efficacious, and genuine one. For reasons next to be given, I do not think that such juridical recognition as is required by this use of the term "valid" can be given to the service of ordination in question.

The other meaning of "valid", the one with which most of us are probably familiar and which was learned from the theological manuals of a generation ago, is "efficacious". In this use of the term, a sacrament is said to be valid if it is "strong", if it actually

effects what it signifies. If certain criteria are met (*i.e.*, if the proper matter, form, intention, minister, and recipient are present), then the grace of the sacrament is offered with absolute certitude (*ex opere operato*, "from the work worked").

In trying to determine the validity of the service of ordination in Philadelphia according to the use of "validity" we are now considering, special attention must be paid to the intention and minister of the sacrament. The "proper intention" of a sacrament is not just the "right words"; the proper minister must have and will the proper intention. The intention must originate in the community and be sacramentally personified by the community's Bishop or his delegate within the episcopal college. Such authorization is necessary, or the people and Bishop are not acting as a community—as one—as the Church.

Where there is no such authorization, where the jurisdiction of one Bishop and community is usurped by a Bishop (or Bishops) without jurisdiction, community and collegiality are broken. But ordination, we have seen, is entrance into the ministerial community.

The question then arises: "Can those who fracture community, *by the act of fracture*, admit to community?" "No," is the only answer I can conceive. Only a service, or rite, has been undergone.

There are different levels of communication in the instance before us with contradictory messages: (1) the words of the service, which say one thing; (2) the fracturing of the episcopal college by the way the service was done, which says something else. The situation in which the Church thus finds itself is called a "double bind" in psychology; which message should one believe? One is wrong either way, for no *one* thing has been said or done.

To conclude, I must say that I am touched by the testimony of my brother Bishops who participated in the Philadelphia service. I can accept the service as the act of outreach and concern it was intended to be, but not as an ordination. The ingredients of ordination simply were not present.

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