

## MINISTRY AND CONTEXTUALIZED MISSION

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### I. The Church and Ministries

*Ministry is a function, it is not a state.* One becomes a minister to do ministry. Christian ministry is not limited to the ordained ministries of the deacon, priest, and bishop alone. Theology of Christian ministry on behalf of the community begins with baptism. It is a public action. It is not separated from Christ's command to witness to the Gospel; hence it is basically working for the Kingdom of God. In a broader sense every baptized person is called to actualize the Kingdom of God here and now. The effective way of working, the method and the need may vary according to the place and times and this calls for multiple ministries according to the various contexts.

Thomas O'Meara defines ministry in the following manner: "*Christian ministry is the public activity of a baptized follower of Jesus Christ flowing from the Spirit's charism and an individual personality on behalf of a Christian community to witness to, serve and realize the kingdom of God*" (O'Meara, 1983:142). He denotes six characteristics for a Ministry (a) doing something; (b) for the advent of the kingdom; (c) in public; (d) on behalf of a Christian community; (e) which is a gift received in faith, baptism and ordination; and (f) which is an activity with its own limits and identity within a diversity of ministerial actions.

The *Lima Document* (1982) issued by the *Faith and Order Commission* of the *World Council of Churches* tells us that the word 'ministry' in its broadest sense "denotes the service to which the whole people of God is called, whether as individuals, as a total community, or as the universal church." (*Faith and Order*. . . no.111). The same document tells us that the ordained ministry "refers to persons who have received a charism and whom the church appoints for service by ordination through the invocation of the Spirit and the laying on of hands." (*Faith and Order*. . . no.111). When we recognize the various forms of ministry it is necessary to find the uniqueness of these varied ministries.

McBrien offers useful distinctions among the various forms of ministry (McBrien, 1987:7; Rademacher, 1991:90):

1. General/universal ministry is any service rendered to another person or group of people who happen to be in need of that service. The call to ministry in this first sense is rooted in our common humanity. In other words, every human being is called to general/universal ministry . . .
2. General/specific ministry is any special service rendered by people specifically called to serve others in the so-called helping professions and other service occupations such as nursing, social work, and legal aid . . .
3. Christian/ universal ministry is any general service rendered to others in Christ and because of Christ. The call to ministry in this third sense is rooted in our baptism and confirmation . . .
4. Christian/specific ministry is any general service rendered to others in Christ and in the name of the Church, and it fulfills the mission of the Church. The call to ministry in this fourth and most specific sense is rooted in some form or acts of designation by the Church itself. Thus it is sometimes called designated ministry . . .

We evangelize through ministry. Ministry is any service presented in charity for the building up of God's kingdom, in the name of the Lord Jesus. So ministry, in this sense,

is not restricted to ordained people alone, as the hierarchical/power structure model of Church and parish would have it.

St. Paul speaks of the ministries of healing, assisting and administering, which do not demand priestly ordination as a precondition (I Cor 12:28). When an action is done for building the Church and in the name of the Lord Jesus, it is ministry (Mk 8:35; 10:29). One can distinguish, two broad categories of ministries: formal and informal.

(a) The formal are those ministries officially established by the universal Church or the local church, e.g. ordained priesthood and diaconate, Eucharistic ministers. The other ministries can be formally approved of, if the particular authorities consider them to be especially significant for the building up of the Church. For example, a local Church might consider it important to introduce formally the ministry of the catechist, in order to highlight the critical role of catechetical instruction for the prosperous life of the Church.

(b) The informal ministries are all those apostolic actions that are directed to the building of Christ's kingdom within the Church and world. Apart from the ordained ministries, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* says, "one cannot, however, neglect or forget the other dimension: the laity can also feel themselves called, or be called, to work with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community, for its growth and life, by exercising a great variety of ministries according to the grace and charisms which the Lord is pleased to give them." (EN 73). Such ministers are catechists, directors of prayer; Christians devoted to the service of God's Word, working for justice, leaders of basic communities, and leaders of apostolic movements. "These ministries are valuable for the establishment, life, and growth of the Church, and for her capacity to influence her surroundings and to reach those who are remote from her." (EN 73).

Creating new forms of order or ordination for different ministries will require sensitivity both to the tradition of the Church and its orders and to the actual pastoral conditions. The order / ordination ceremonies of different ministries could include at least the following (Rademacher, 1991:101).

- (a) The call of the faith community through fasting and prayerful discernment of needs and qualifications. In large parishes this could be done through representative bodies such as parish councils
- (b) Scrutinize and inquire about intention and adherence to the apostolic faith similar to the baptism questions
- (c) Proclamation of the Word announcing the presence of the Spirit in the ordaining community
- (d) Invocation of the Holy Spirit
- (e) The laying on of hands by the community presider and other leaders of the community
- (f) Ordering a specific ministry, such as teaching or reading, to a specific community
- (g) Praise and thanksgiving for the gift given to the community
- (h) Sending perhaps through a community blessing or conferral of symbol of ministry
- (i) The Amen of the people, confirming and supporting the order
- (j) Some visible communion with the larger Church

Although the call to contextualize a ministry was given very emphatically in 1988 for the religious by the Catholic Religious of India, one can see the spirit of this call also for any baptized person, it states, "we realize the urgency to internalize anew the values of the Kingdom in the historical situations of our country and to give appropriate and public expression to them. It means also that we are not satisfied with carrying out the traditional ministries like education, health care, social work, etc. merely as services, but that we

creatively reorient them to fulfill the prophetic function of religious commitment.” (CRI, 1988: no.3.2)

*Ecclesia in Asia* says, “with its (Asia) multitude of poor and oppressed people, (the Church) is called to live a communion of life which shows itself particularly in loving service to the poor and defenseless.” (EA 32). Option for the poor in Asia implies that today we need to reconsider the present state of ministries and structures, and opt for the ones that will sustain the liberation of the downtrodden. (Wilfred, 1991:114) It is necessary that Church structures at all levels make provisions for the development of various ministries that are found necessary for the growth of the Christian community (AG 15; Vijay, 2000:26). The following are some of the contextualized ministries (see Rademacher, 1991:219-221), but their functions may vary according to the place, time, and need of the people. They can be creatively adapted to different cultures.

## **II. Contextualized Ministries**

The following ministries are some of the contextualized ministries in a context, but one can develop also some associate ministries like retreat or using media effectively for the liberation of the oppressed people.

### ***A. Ministries Among the Marginalized***

#### ***1. Street Kids / Runaways***

*Description:* Helping kids who are runaways or homeless return home or get off the streets, providing basic needs, plus training programs, counseling, health care, crisis intervention, etc.

*Training / Preparation:* Develop the qualities of compassion, understanding, unconditional love, and forgiveness. Taking care of runaway kids in the institutions and non-institutional based homes.

#### ***2. Ministry Among the Alcoholics and Drug Addicts***

*Description:* People are trapped in the cunning, baffling and powerful disease of addiction. Ministry involves substance abusers and the affected members of their families, through acts of awareness, guidance, counseling, motivation, medical assistance and dedicated transforming presence that they may learn to work with the problems with positive outlook.

*Training / Preparation:* Social work training, medical training and counseling skills – empathetic approach to patients and ways of empowering the individuals, families and communities.

#### ***3. Ministry Among the HIV/AIDS Affected Patients***

*Description:* Understanding the heart breaking social, spiritual, moral and economic impact of HIV/AIDS upon the society at large. Identify the real and deeper needs, honoring their basic right and dignity. Sharing their anxiety and empathizing with them. Rendering medical and psychological help to them. Eradicating the social stigma in society.

*Training / Preparation:* Medical training, Social Work degree, doing a research in a place where this project would be launched. Preparing a team of workers of men and women for this ministry.

#### ***4. Ministry Among Prostitutes and their Children***

*Description:* This ministry depends on how one looks at a sex worker, whether as person deserving our shallow sympathy and pity which they abhor or irritation and disgust which hurts them or having empathy and concern for them. One looks at various causes and the persons' involvement with various considerations. Helping these persons focuses on the human dignity and human rights of persons and also taking care of the children from these persons. Children can be sent to normal schools, respect for oneself and for another can be developed.

*Training / Preparation:* Social analysis should be done and then a team of social workers with empathy and a sincere heart empowering them with hope. Medical attention and social resettling methods can be to be prepared.

### 5. Prison Ministry

*Description:* Unjust persons and just persons are seen in prisons today. The just persons are implicated in some crimes and the effect on their pattern of life is changed because of the environment. The prisoners do have a lot of hidden emotions, lack of freedom cause unbalanced behavior. Lack of concern, and love lead to stress and strain in their life.

*Training / Preparation:* A short course on behavior pattern of human life, psychological analysis of persons in prisons. Compassion and care for the persons who are struggling with strain and stress. Training in the moral teachings of the Church and the value of a just society.

### 6. Refugee / Migrant Ministry

*Description:* Displaced persons are often separated from their own families; they are often subjected to abuse and exploitation. (Metti, 2000:93). Assisting migrants in obtaining necessary work residency permits, finding housing, and health care; teaching basic survival skills in an adopted culture, such as shopping, finding transportation, teaching language, budgeting, citizen rights, value of currency, etc. Legal aid, social work; religious instruction, organizing recreation, food distribution, leading prayer and Scripture groups.

*Training / Preparation:* Bilingual and bicultural ability to put oneself in another's shoes; familiarity with the network of agencies providing services. Knowledge of laws governing migrants.

### 7. Ministry to the broken families

*Description:* Helping broken and separated families and to deal with care towards maintaining ties with the family and the local community. Helping people through, for unification and reconciliation. Organizing support groups and offering retreats.

*Training / Preparation:* Church teaching and marriage tribunal procedures; preparation in counseling and psychology. Personal experience with broken families may serve as an excellent preparation. Attitude of the ministers must be nonjudgmental, compassionate, and trusting.

### 8. Empowering Women

*Description:* Culturally defined identities and roles have been so ingrained in both men and women; that they need to double their efforts to counteract these ingrained attitudes and accepted cultural patterns. Developing the qualities of gender sensitization that is an inherent part of growth as a human person.

*Training/ Preparation:* Critique of society on gender based issues, training in development of a just society, analysis of society especially on gender justice. Cultural

transformation through their own forms of art and cultural expressions: folklore, street-plays etc.

#### *9. Facilitator of Inter-faith Dialogue*

*Description:* The Church has “to discover and acknowledge the signs of Christ’s presence and of the working of the Spirit” in other religions (RM 56). While acknowledging the other religions, we are called to dialogue with them to bring social transformation. This important ministry is to bring together other religious leaders as well as the common people for greater harmony and peace. Efforts have to be taken to conscientize people to remove their prejudices against other religions and to avoid politicization of religions.

*Training/ Preparation:* Study of other religions, their philosophy, world-view, worship, festivals, etc. Living with them and participating in the rhythm of life to understand their perspective of divine. Experience of Ashram life and dialogue of prayer and theological exchange will be helpful. Participation in dialogue of life and action are crucial to bring peace and harmony.

#### *10. Social Justice Ministry*

*Description:* In Indian society, people are placed in graded inequality according to their caste. Dalits are the lowest in the caste hierarchy system and they experience discrimination in all spheres of life. Purity/pollution concept makes them as impure persons and they live in fear, inferiority complex, servility, subservience, hopelessness, despair and abasement. This means, in cumulative effect, slavery and social death. Tribals in India are poor and are socially deprived of their rights. They are exploited by non-Tribals constantly. Bringing social justice among marginalized is a main concern today.

*Training/ Preparation:* Social analysis must be done to understand the problems both historically and structurally. Mobilization of people and networking with other agencies in social justice should be envisaged. Programs to alleviate poverty and readiness to fight for justice should be designed.

#### *11. Ministry of Reconciliation*

*Description:* Reconciliation aims at healing a broken relationship. This presupposes that the causes and the responsibilities for the conflict have been established. To uncover the truth is the essential first step. Reconciliation can be offered when basic trust has been rebuilt. Open conflict between groups, persons lead to breakdown of trust. True reconciliation comes with empty hands and without preconditions. This ministry helps people to manifest love affirming the other no longer as an enemy but as a partner.

*Training/ Preparation:* Communication can become an important instrument to prepare the way from confrontation to reconciliation. Openness to truth and getting rid of prejudices in persons and religions are important for this ministry. Counseling skills and effective communication methods help to prepare different groups for reconciliation.

### ***B. Associate Ministries***

The following ministries can help to deepen the effect of the contextual ministries. A methodology to reflect and work is important in any situation, and along with these activities one can also grow personally with spiritual direction and retreat. Use of media gains importance for continuing the ministries in a vibrant way.

#### *1. Spiritual Direction*

*Description:* Helping the directee to advance in their spiritual life through one-on-one meetings on a regular basis; acting as mirror for the directee so as to enable him/her to reflect on life experiences and God's presence therein.

*Training/Preparation:* Spiritual director should be familiar with the movements of the spiritual life. One's own life experience in the spiritual realm may be helpful but often a formal training program in spiritual direction is beneficial.

## *2. Retreat Ministry*

*Description:* Presenting retreats to groups and individuals on a wide range of topics or acting as a coordinator of a retreat center – scheduling retreats, coordinating in-house activities or hospitality, cooking, housekeeping, grounds keeping, maintenance.

*Training/Preparation:* Previous experience as a retreatant is very helpful as well as an education in Scripture, spiritual direction, behavioral sciences, organizational and public relations skills.

## *3. Ministry of Personal Care*

*Description:* This ministry is one to one, caring people, reaching out to other in times of need. A confidential ministry, that is, a continuous, conscious effort to maintain the bond of trust between the person receiving care and the caregiver. This ministry focuses on the unique needs of each person and lasts as long as the needs exists; it could be a lay ministry under the guidance and supervision of the pastor, Church staff, and / or other leaders.

*Training / Preparation:* Counseling and Psychology course and leadership training. Attitude of a minister should be of compassion, care, love and openness.

## *4. Ministry through Media*

*Description:* Mass media is shaping societies, their culture and their structures. It influences language, psychology, behavior and life styles. Study on the advance of mass media and information, and the impact on the behavioral patterns of individuals, families and societies. A growing consumerism, individualism, and manipulation of gender justice is evident in the mass media.

*Training / Preparation:* A degree in Mass Media or Journalism is important. Study of local media, specially the electronic media's impact on the people. A research in the influence of people in the region will give a clear picture of the impact of media today.

## ***C. Ministries to help the Marginalized***

The following ministries gain an importance today to help the marginalized persons to be aware of the civil society and also to promote a leadership among the people to involve in politics.

### *1. Public and political involvement*

*Description:* Being conscious of the social and political implications of the Gospel and being committed to the transformation of society. Continuous dialogue with the civil society and participation in the political life should challenge the fundamental forces, and help to emancipate the oppressed. Involvement in the name of basic issues affecting the life of the whole community, nation and humanity.

*Training / Preparation:* Leadership qualities should be developed and participation in civil society on a smaller level is to be encouraged. Full participation in elections, involvement in social issues and full participation in politics.

## 2. *Campus Ministry*

*Description:* Enabling college students to develop values through participation in volunteer, social justice, liturgical, and social activities, includes counseling and working with other college departments to develop educational programs.

*Training /Preparation:* Ability to relate to young adults, understanding of moral, spiritual, and social development. Often a Master's degree in theology or religious studies is helpful.

New needs, and therefore new potential ministries, will appear all around us as we progress in the new millennium. For this reason, we need to reflect on the ministries of the future. "The Church must in all its structures reflect the common dignity and equality of men and women, and be an example and model to the others discriminating in Asian cultures." (Vijay, 2000:26). Lay people should be trained to work at the grass roots level, and to work with small communities. Need for pastoral ministers, nurses, educators, health care instructors, agriculturists, community organizers, economists, mechanics, etc. are felt, in these areas, lay people with dedication and commitment could involve in society and actualize the Kingdom of God.

Authority and service were understood as two complementing dimensions of **leadership**. Minister is a charismatic and prophetic leader, an apostle of Christ, co-worker of God and fellow worker with others. Facilitation of the growth of the communities to maturity is important aspect of the minister. The aspect of leadership emphasized the spiritual authority of the ministers as they authentically communicate the Gospel in word and deed. Without a wise leadership, a Church can not easily rise up to the needs of the times.

## III. Steps Towards Developing Authentic Ministries

### 1. *Commitment to Jesus*

Ministers learn the values from Jesus. Personal commitment to Jesus gives the deeper meaning of discipleship. They become attached to Jesus to such an extent that they share his vision of life and ministry. They are called to share his ministry. They are called to be a witness of Jesus Christ, including the martyrdom, suffering and death. Ministers also need to belong to a praying community. Within this community they will celebrate the Eucharist, reconciliation, and all the sacraments of the Christian tradition.

### 2. *Learn from the people*

The first step is that the ministers learn from the people. This indicates the social situation of the people, their culture, customs, success and failures of communities. People live in a situation with all constraints, adjusting to the different hardships in families and in the surroundings. The Church has to become conscious of the social life of the people and also be culturally sensitive. Faith tradition grows and is enriched only when it interacts creatively and critically with contemporary human social processes. (John: 2000:80).

### 3. *Promote individual initiative*

To believe in oneself is an important step for growth. Too much of a dependence on others can cause codependence and can annihilate freedom. Developing leadership qualities and administrative skills are important. Relying on the power of the people

whom they serve and developing self-reliance is a positive welcome step. In all these activities the focus should be for effective transformation of society.

#### 4. *The leadership of the marginalized*

If the marginalized and oppressed people have to rise up and understand their faith, leadership must emerge from these groups. As Christ chose the people from the marginalized communities, the Church has to choose leaders from them. To live the dimension of baptism and to deepen the faith in God, they have to be immersed in the social situations to become effective leaders. The socio-economic and political conditions should shape their leadership and having their faith and hope in Christ will give a meaning to organize themselves and plan out different ways how one can serve a community and give them real freedom and liberation.

#### 5. *A deep knowledge of religions*

Religious knowledge is important. A shallow understanding gives misgivings. Communalism and fundamentalism are the blocks towards growth in society. Along with a deeper knowledge of Christianity, one has to also learn about other religions. The best religious insights are drawn to vitalize and empower the society to reshape itself. This is central to the mystery and process of the incarnation.

### **IV. Challenges to Inculturated Ministries**

Although the ministries can be evolved from the roots of scripture, traditions of the Church and the local context, the different ministries face many challenges in a changing world. The following are some of the challenges to the Church in the present day context.

1. In society, cultural pluralism or multi-culturalism should be respected. But at the same time, the gospel, as presented by the community, must be able to cut across cultural divisions. Today, monocultural aspects grip every nation because of the narrow understanding of nationalism, more divisions and terror are experienced in a region/country, multi-culturalism is a fact that leads to an understanding of human beings in their respective cultures.

2. True inculturation would presuppose also a correct reading of history. There is a general trend to interpret history from the perspective of the dominant or majority group; the traditions and cultures of the lower strata and of the minorities are passed over in silence or presented in a distorted way. A true history must take into consideration all the section of the people. For example, the history and culture of Malaysia is a history of Malays, Chinese and Indians, and not of Malays alone. "The church which evangelizes out of these cultures in an inculturated manner can prophetically show in them and offer to the world a great light and power of life and hope: a providential sign of the Kingdom of God who raises up and saves the entire universe out of those who are crucified in history." (Irrarazaval 2000: 116).

2. *Swadesi* and *Swaraj* as a paradigm of inculturated liberation, experimented by Gandhiji in an eminent way shows that India is non-west; India has its own independent thinking and rule. *Panchayatraj* Model is emerging to give the leadership to the local people as well as giving assurance of democracy at the local level. Democracy should be maintained in the region, human dignity and human rights should figure as a top agenda



to transform societies. Can different ministries enter into this realm to give meaning to the people?

3. Composition of people's movements consists of members from different religions and ideologies, and since every people's movement champions some specific social causes, dialogue of action can very well include collaboration with people's movements. The challenge of the Church is to evolve relevant and meaningful ministries to work with these movements although these movements may contain secular ideologies and at times rigid and less open to transcendence.

4. The impact of globalization which affects a country's economic, political and cultural life more directly in Asia: "there is also the aspect of a cultural globalization, made possible by the modern communications media, which is quickly drawing Asian societies into a global consumer culture that is both secularistic and materialistic. The result is an eroding of traditional family and social values which until now had sustained peoples and societies. All of this makes it clear that the ethical and moral aspects of globalization need to be more directly addressed by the leaders of nations and by organizations concerned with human promotion" (EA 39). Can the Church effectively challenge the impact of globalization? What type of ministry should be evolved to counter globalization and what is the methodology?

5. *Incarnational spirituality* gives reverence to the grace of specific times and places and the actual situations in the ministry. In the incarnate Christ, ministry occurs when Jesus actually meets the sick, possessed by evil spirits, lepers, the tax collectors, the Samaritan woman, and the woman caught in adultery. In the same way, it will be the actual pastoral situation that will be a grace-filled sacrament and that will shape the minister's spirituality. This grace can be experienced and received in the slums, in the prisons, in the hospitals, on the campuses, in the classrooms, and at nuclear missile sites. Hence, according to the place, situation and times, the minister has to evolve a contextualized spirituality that would help the minister to sustain the ministry. *Only in solidarity with people based on an incarnational spirituality can vouch for true justice which includes cultural identity and vice versa.* (see SRS 47).

## Conclusion

Ministries proclaim Jesus and are also witness of Jesus. *Ecclesia in Asia* says, "There can be no true evangelization without the explicit proclamation of Jesus as Lord" (EA 19). *Evangelii Nuntiandi* says, "The first means of evangelization is the witness of an authentically Christian life" (EN 41). Mission is the explicit proclamation of the Gospel of and about Jesus has a certain "permanent priority" (RM 44), the words of proclamation must likewise be rooted in an authentic being of the church. Proclamation and the witness of the Christians are best attributed to Francis of Assisi, "Preach always; if necessary, use words." David Bosch noted, "The deed without the word is dumb, the word without the deed is empty." Hence, proclamation and witness go together to bring the divine love to the people. This calls for engagement with the world so that this reality is transformed with the rule of God having justice, peace, and equality. Christians find their true identity when they are involved in mission, in communicating to others a new way of life, a new interpretation of reality and of God, and in involving themselves liberating others.

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