

Lutheran Church of Australia and Roman Catholic Church

Conversations

Pastor and Priest

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[November 1989]

Foreword

The Australian Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue has been meeting regularly in Adelaide since 3 April, 1975. These assemblies have been times of grace for all who have had the opportunity to participate.

We have met each other at depth. We have been built up by each other's faith in Jesus Christ. We have been challenged truly to listen to one another. We have been called to let go of prejudices and misunderstandings which in the beginning we did not know we possessed. We have grown in respect and love for both our traditions. We have learnt much. We have become aware that the Spirit of God is at work in our meetings, calling us to a change of mind and heart.

After our work on Baptism and on Eucharist, we decided that we needed to take up the matter of ordained Ministry. We have spent four years presenting papers, discussing the issue, and coming to consensus on the present document which we now present to our respective communions.

Pastor and Priest represents for us a significant step along a road, the end of which we pray for but have not yet reached. Although doctrinal questions involved in the issue of ordained ministry cannot be ignored, we have tried to show that these need not be church divisive. In the course of our dialogue we became convinced that full recognition of each other's ministry will need to occur as part of the process of reconciliation of churches. Our task, we saw, is to work toward convergence on doctrinal matters, but also to point the way toward reconciliation as the place where the issue of ministry is finally resolved.

Pastor and Priest is offered to our two churches by the dialogue members in the hope that it will lead to further study and discussion. We are aware that both our churches will need to decide to what extent our work is faithful to the gospel, and to our traditions, and to what extent it is helpful in the movement toward full communion.

It is with thanks to God that we present this report, humbly conscious of God's blessing upon our meetings.

I. Ordained Ministry in the Church: An Historical Overview

Introduction

1. As hearers of God's word, and as believers entrusting ourselves to the guidance of the Spirit, we have been moved to study anew the history of ordained ministry. From this history have emerged the approaches of our two churches to the office of the ministry. We are convinced that this history affirms that ordained ministry exists in the church, and that this ministry is of divine origin.

2. It is also our conviction that this history holds both churches accountable to a past testimony and to a present responsibility. Part of the present responsibility is to discern where our respective approaches to the office of ministry hinder or assist the building up of the unity of the body of Christ: in preaching the fullness of the Father's life-giving word, in celebrating sacramentally the saving presence of the Son, and in being renewed in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament

3. The New Testament provides incomparable testimony to the understanding of ministry practised and lived in the earliest communities of faith. This comes out of, and yet also departs from, the understanding of ministry witnessed to in the old Testament. Thus, for example, a priest like Melchizedek (Hebrews 7) provides the basis for comparison with, and distinction from, the ministry of Christ, which is the foundation and source of the New Testament ministry.

4. The Hebrew Scriptures reflect, essentially, three ministerial offices: those of prophet, priest, and king. The offices of priest and king were, with few exceptions, inherited; prophets, however, were designated by God in ways which transcended human organisation and convention (Isa. 6:1; Jer. 1:4-10).

5. Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed one, is neither installed in the temple as High Priest, nor is he enthroned as a king by means of a Jewish ceremony. His 'ministerial role' bears many resemblances to that exercised by the prophets of old. However, Jesus surpasses the prophets. A critical event in the life of Christ, by which a ministerial role is imparted, is his baptism. In this event, the Father declares that Jesus of Nazareth is his beloved Son, and the Holy Spirit descends upon him in the form of a dove. Invested with the authority and power of the Spirit, Jesus forms the Twelve by his life-giving word (Mark 3:14), and sends them out as his witnesses. They are the ones who participate in his mission; they are to proclaim the kingdom of God on earth (Matt. 9:35; 10:7,8). Jesus gathers them for the Last Supper, and instructs them: 'Do this in remembrance of me' (Luke 22:19).

6. Through the apostolic witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Spirit gathered Christians into communities of faith. These communities found their ongoing purpose in their own proclamation of the gospel of reconciliation and the forgiveness of sins (2 Cor. 5:17-21; Matt. 18:15-18; John 20:21-23).

7. To enable the earliest Christian communities to be faithful to their ongoing purpose, that is, to their apostolic mandate, the Spirit of God gifted them with a variety of ministries (1 Cor. 12:4-11). Ministries mentioned in the New Testament include the work of apostles, prophets, teachers, those who led house churches, presbyters, deacons, and those who exercised oversight (bishops). The main work of ministry in the early decades was the calling together and building up of the communities of faith through preaching, admonition, and leadership, as well as the ordering of the communities. The manner and exercise of ministry and leadership varied greatly in different places and times within the first century.

8. The earliest writings of the New Testament bear witness to the continuation of ministry after the resurrection of Jesus, for the life and continued health of the community. Thus, Paul writes to the Thessalonians:

We beg you, our brothers, to pay proper respect to those who work among you, who guide and instruct you in the Christian life. Treat them with the greatest respect and love because of the work they do. (1 Thess. 5:12,13 TEV).

Because the work of ministers in the New Testament communities is so important and varied, it is measured and valued against the criterion of the work of the apostles. The ministry of the apostles provides the life-giving impetus out of which the ministry of the post-apostolic period develops. Thus, all genuine New Testament ministry derives from, and is built upon, the foundation of the New Testament apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20; 4:7-16). Its motivation is service to the community (Mark 10:42-45; Luke 22:24-30).

9. The Acts of the Apostles provides a further picture of the later New Testament's understanding of ministry: the ministry of church leaders is a gift of grace which they have received from the Lord of the church (Acts 20:28). Ministers of the church bear witness to the gospel of the grace of God, and they preach the kingdom (Acts 20:24,25).

10. Elsewhere in the New Testament, ministers of the gospel are said to witness to the suffering of Jesus, not only with their words, but also with their own suffering for Jesus' sake (1 Pet. 5:1-4). Through their gospel ministry, these ministers contribute to the joy of the community (2 Cor. 1:24). In

the Johannine literature, the primary emphasis is on ministry as a 'service in love' (John 13-17). The traits and spirit of gospel ministry take on a more distinctive shape and form in the Pastoral Epistles: deacons (1 Tim. 3:8-13; 2 Tim. 4-5); presbyters (1 Tim. 4:14; 5:17; Titus 1:5); and overseers [bishops] (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7,9).

11. Ministry in the New Testament is concerned also with the renewal, ordering, and structuring of the communities of faith. The role of renewal is suggested in the admonitions which are addressed to the 'angels' of the seven churches in Asia Minor (Rev. 2-3) to rekindle the flagging faith and zeal of the Christian communities. The work of ordering and restructuring is indicated also in an emerging presbyteral church order. Thus, 1 Peter, for example, reflects within itself a shift from a type of church ordering in which 'prophets and teachers' - charismatic leaders - were the most prominent figures, to a presbyteral institution in the church.

12. Ministry in the New Testament exhibits, therefore, a variety of concerns. Primary among them is the building up of communities of faith. Such communities find their origin and ongoing life in the Spirit of the Lord (Rom. 5:5; 8:26,27; Eph. 4:4). It is the Spirit who is the source of those gifts which continuously enrich and enliven a gospel faith (1 Cor. 12-13; Rom. 12:3-8). It is also through the one and perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 10), into which the community of Christ's disciples enter every time they break the one bread of his body and share the one cup of his blood, that the communities are reconciled to one another and to the Father (1 Cor. 10:16,17;12:14; Eph. 2:14-18; 1 John 1:3).

The Patristic Era

13. Toward the end of the first century, the various earlier New Testament ministries become more centralised in the offices of the presbyters and overseers [bishops] who were emerging as leaders of the local churches. The distinction between these two ministries, however, is still obscure in some of the documents from the first half of the second century (*see 1 Clement*, to Corinth; *The Letter of Polycarp*, to Philippi; *The Didache*, from Syria or Palestine; and *The Shepherd of Hennas*). In all of these churches there seems to be some equivalence between presbyters and overseers [bishops]. At times, it appears that a group of presbyters exercise 'oversight'. In the writings of Ignatius of Antioch (c AD 100) we find a system where a single 'overseer' [bishop] works with a council of presbyters (presbyterium) and a group of deacons. This 'system' was to become widespread in the church.

14. In addition to the structural development of the three ministerial offices of bishop, presbyter, and deacon, the patristic era also reflects a theological development inasmuch as the word 'priest' starts to be associated with some form of Christian ministry. About AD 200 we find evidence that 'priest' is applied to the bishop's cultic role, by Tertullian, Hippolytus, and in the *Didascalia Apostolorum*. Between the 3rd and 6th centuries, 'priest' normally referred to the bishop. Eventually, presbyters came to be seen as connected to the priesthood of the bishop because of their ministerial relationship with him. Cyprian (AD 220-258) speaks explicitly about this relationship "of the presbyters joined with the bishop in sacerdotal honour".

15. By the end of the 6th century, Greek and Latin Christianity, still parts of one and the same church, started going separate ways. Although the ministerial, hierarchical structure of the Greek church was similar to the West's, it had a distinctively more mystical purpose. The hierarchical ministry was to help the whole church achieve the three steps of mystical ascent, and to this end it administered Baptism, Eucharist, and Anointing (see Pseudo-Dionysius, *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* 5.3). The hierarchical ministry also ensured right believing and correct teaching. For a church to be apostolic in doctrine, it had to be apostolic in polity. An episcopal polity, presumed to stand in unbroken succession from the apostles, had been taken, along with the authoritative canon of Scripture, and the credal rule of faith, to be one of the criteria of apostolic continuity.

The Medieval Period

16. From the end of the patristic era to the early medieval period (800-1000), the application of the term 'priest' to ministerial offices in the western church, that is, to the episcopate and presbyterate, continued. Rabanus Maurus (+856) developed a theology which explicitly related the presbyterate to the Aaronic priesthood:

For those who were called priests in the old Testament are those whom we now call presbyters, and the one who was then called 'chief priest' is now called bishop.

(*De Cleric. Institutione* 1:5-7; PL 107:297).

By the 11th century, 'priest' normally meant presbyter. Peter Damien (+1072) defined the 'priest' as the one who has the power to consecrate the body of Christ. For him, presbyter equalled 'priest'. The bishop did not belong to a new order, but to an 'excellent rank' within the order of priesthood .

17. Thomas Aquinas followed this line of thought, defining the ministry in terms of cult, and ignoring the prophetic and pastoral aspects of presbyteral ministry. St Thomas's theology of priesthood started with affirming Christ as *the* high priest (*Summa Theologica* III, q.63 art.3-6). While the whole church shares in this priesthood, ordination contributes a further qualification to the priesthood of the faithful. Ordination imparts a share in Christ's priestly person. From this 'sharing' an 'indelible character' results.

18. The notion of a permanent sacramental character had been developed by Augustine against Donatist views concerning re-baptism and re-ordination of those who had lapsed. Building on a tradition begun by Augustine, Thomas further taught that orders conferred a 'character'; thereby he affirmed that ordination perdured throughout a minister's life, and it was not to be repeated. In terms of sacramental priesthood - according to Aquinas - there is no real difference between presbyter and bishop. They differ only in jurisdiction, that is, in the extent of the authority they have to order or structure community.

The Lutheran Reformation

19. The Lutheran confessional writings distinguish the office of the ministry from the priesthood of all believers. The *Augsburg Confession* (Art. 5) asserts that the office of preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments was instituted by God in order to bring about that faith which justifies. The office of ministry is a gift of God to the church; it is divinely instituted. The various forms which the office of ministry has taken, however - ecclesiastical structures, hierarchies, and rites - are of human institution and cannot claim divine warrant. Hence they do not have to be the same everywhere (*Augsburg Confession* 15). A further distinction between the office of ministry and the priesthood of all believers is illustrated in the church's duty and right to 'call', 'ordain' or 'install' ministers, either bishops or pastors, who are essentially the same 'office-bearers'. Without a proper call, no one is permitted to officiate as pastor and preacher in the church (*Augsburg Confession* 14).

20. The belief, that the office of the ministry belongs to everyone in the church and that the pastor is merely a representative figure who acts on behalf of the congregation, has no foundation in Lutheran confessional writings. Furthermore, according to the *Apology*, the authority or power of the office of ministry refers to the functions and duties of the office, not to the person who holds the office. This authority is distinguished as the 'power of order' (*potestas ordinis*) and the 'power of jurisdiction' (*potestas jurisdictionis*). The former has to do with the word and sacraments; the latter with forgiving sins, rejecting heresy, and excommunicating the wicked (*Apology* 28:12,13).

The Council of Trent

21. The Council of Trent, teaching on the sacrament of orders as the sacramental basis of the office of ministry (in 1563), affirmed that there exists in the church 'a new, visible, and external priesthood', instituted by Christ; that this involves the power to consecrate, offer, and minister the body of the Lord, and to forgive sins; and that in this sacrament a permanent character is conferred. Bishops and presbyters are the possessors of the distinctive grace which is the basis for the ministry. The sacrament of orders enables the priest to celebrate the sacraments of Eucharist and Penance. The ministry of bishops, arising out of the character they have received, involves governing, confirming, ordaining, and other functions entrusted to priests (Denzinger 1786).

The Post-Reformation Period

22. From the 16th to the 19th centuries, there were many different interpretations of what the Lutheran confessional writings say about ministry. In the period known as Lutheran orthodoxy, there was sometimes a tendency to emphasise the office of the ministry as a teaching institution: the pastor

is essentially a preacher-teacher of the pure doctrine. Other interpretations, such as those offered by Pietism, tended to emphasise the priesthood of all believers, and sometimes described the pastor's major function as preaching and the care of souls entrusted to him (*Seelsorge*).

The Twentieth Century

23. In the present century, many developments have taken place within both our churches. Vatican II situated ordained ministry firmly within the context of the mission of the whole church, the people of God. The whole people through Baptism is 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation' (1 Pet. 2:9). Furthermore, the common priesthood of the faithful and the hierarchical priesthood 'though they differ essentially and not only in degree, ... are ordered one to another; each in its own proper way shares in the one priesthood of Christ' (*Lumen Gentium* 10). The hierarchical priesthood, in turn, is reaffirmed as part of the ancient threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter, and deacon.

24. For more than a thousand years the Roman Catholic view of ordained ministry centred on the presbyter as the priest, and focused on cultic dimensions of ministry. Vatican II, with its teaching that the bishop possesses the fullness of the sacrament of orders (*Lumen Gentium* 21), re-emphasised the centrality of the bishop. It also approached ordained ministry by reference to the threefold function of Christ's unique priesthood - Christ as Teacher, High Priest, and Shepherd (*Lumen Gentium* 20). Among the principal functions of the bishop, the preaching of the gospel is pre-eminent (*Lumen Gentium* 25). This is also the first duty of the bishop's co-workers, the presbyters. At the same time, the Council affirms that this ministry is directed toward the Eucharist, and finds its consummation there (*Presbyterorum Ordinis* 2).

25. As an example of 20th-century Lutheran thinking on ordained ministry, we cite the Lutheran Church of Australia's *Theses on the Office of the Ministry*. Drawing heavily on biblical testimony, these theses affirm that ministry is a divinely-instituted office within the church, distinct from the spiritual priesthood of all believers in Christ. As such, the office of ministry exists simultaneously with the church, while the church is also bound to this office as a structure necessary for the 'being' of the church. While both Lutherans and Catholics agree that the office of ministry is essentially one of service, the Lutheran church does not teach that an 'indelible character' or 'peculiar sanctity' is imparted to those who hold the office.

26. Furthermore, while Lutherans affirm that the office of ministry is divinely instituted, they would not affirm that specific forms of ministry, such as bishops, presbyters, and deacons, are also divinely instituted. Lutherans teach that the church has the authority to establish various ecclesiastical and administrative offices as human expressions of the one divinely instituted office of ministry.

Summary

27. As we look back over the developments in ministry which have taken place in both our churches, we believe that there is substantial agreement that ordained ministry is of the essence of the church 'by divine institution'. Furthermore, we believe that this agreement represents a significant basis from which we can affirm a common faith, even while both our churches are challenged to work for a more mutually-acceptable understanding of the meaning of 'by divine institution'.

28. It also appears that two further major areas of awareness have been highlighted in the 20th-century statements of our churches on ministry. The first is the clear affirmation of a distinction between a common priesthood of all believers and a divinely-instituted office of ministry for service in the church. This awareness represents significant agreement. It also represents a shared conviction about the essentiality of ordained ministry for the ongoing life of the whole church.

29. The second awareness, however, indicates how we continue to take different positions on whether or not it is the office of ministry as such, or specific forms of the office of ministry, which are 'divinely instituted'. For Lutherans, the office of ministry is divinely instituted; it exists so that the functions of preaching the word and rightly administering the sacraments may take place. Within this perspective, the pastor has the major responsibility to ensure that the saving functions are carried out. For Roman Catholics, specific forms of the office of ministry are divinely instituted. The offices of bishop, priest, and deacon not only ensure that the word is proclaimed and the sacraments celebrated; they provide a structure and ordering for the church which enables it to exist as the body of Christ.

II. The Nature of Ordained Ministry in the Church

Introduction

30. Our discussions concerning the nature of ordained ministry have taken place against the background of the historical developments which have occurred in connection with this teaching since the time of the apostles. Our review of this history has pointed to convictions which Roman Catholics and Lutherans share concerning this ministry. At the same time, it has indicated certain areas of teaching which traditionally have divided the two churches. This has challenged us to search for greater mutual understanding, and to explore possible ways of moving toward a consensus which will be faithful to the Scriptures and the confessional positions of our churches.

Ordained Ministry: By Divine Institution

Areas of Agreement

31. Both our churches uphold the essential role which ordained ministry plays in the church. Together we affirm that it is a necessary office, instituted by the Lord himself (Acts 20:28; Eph. 4:11,12). While all people of God are called to be royal priests dedicated to the service of the gospel, ordained ministry is not derived from this universal priesthood of believers; it is not shared by everyone in the church. Furthermore, this ministry does not arise from the fact that certain individuals possess charismatic gifts; nor does it grow out of the needs of the Christian community, as though ministers serve by human arrangement for good order in the church. Nor is it to be thought of only as a delegation of authority and service from a Christian congregation. Rather, ordained ministry is God's own design for his church; it exists in the church by divine institution.

32. We also affirm that ordained ministry does not, however, exist in isolation from the church; it is simultaneous with it. Hence, there is a close relationship between ordained ministry and the ministry of the people of God, as all share in Christ's priestly, prophetic, and kingly work. Yet the two ministries differ essentially. Christ has instituted ordained ministry for shepherding God's people, for public preaching, and for the administration of the sacraments. Since these means of grace are the Spirit's instruments for creating and preserving faith and for bringing people into God's family, the church through all its history is bound to this ministry.

33. We are agreed in understanding ordained ministry to be the continuance of the mission which Christ first entrusted to his apostles (John 20:21-23). Ordained ministry is, therefore, essentially one of service to the Lord and his church, centering on the word and the sacraments and the pastoral care and oversight of God's people. Ministers do their work in obedience to the will of the Lord and in response to his word. Their authority, therefore, lies in Christ whom they serve and who uses them in his church as his stewards of the gospel (2 Cor. 4:1-15). This means that those who serve in this office do not possess arbitrary power over other Christians, but neither are they subject to the arbitrary commands and directions of people. As servants of Christ, they are first and foremost responsible to the Lord of the church. They are accountable to him (1 Cor. 4:1-4).

Ordination

Areas of Agreement

34. Both our churches affirm the need for the proper authorisation and public recognition of persons for the work of the ministry. Only those properly authorised may serve as ministers of the church, and no individuals have the authority to assume the public office for themselves. Whereas all believers have received gifts through the Spirit, those who are set apart for the work of the ministry have received a special gift to be conformed to Christ in the unique way of one called to the task of public ministry.

35. We are agreed that persons need to be set apart and acknowledged for the work of ministry by means of the solemn rite of ordination. Through this sacred rite, God's blessing and grace is invoked, and the person is acknowledged as Christ's gift to his church for ministry through the gracious work of the Spirit. Authorisation is thereby given for the person to undertake service as a minister of the church.

Lutheran Understanding of Ordination

36. Lutherans always have emphasised that no candidates may serve as pastors unless they have been rightly called by the church (*Augsburg Confession* 14). Ordination publicly confirms and ratifies that a person has received such a call. Ordination indicates that a particular person is duly qualified and is considered to be ready and suitable to serve in the public ministry. Lutherans do not teach that this rite confers an enduring ‘character’; yet ordination is performed only once: it publicly commissions a person for life to preach the word and administer the sacraments.

37. While the biblical practice of laying on of hands is not regarded as essential for the validity and efficacy of the office, it is invariably included as an important part of the ordination ceremony. In this rite, the Spirit is efficaciously at work through the word, creating in pastors a confirmation of their vocation and a commitment to their pastoral office. This work of the Spirit is thankfully acknowledged, and his continued grace is invoked so that ministers may be empowered to carry out their pastoral work.

38. The solemn ecclesiastical rite of ordination is considered necessary for good order in the church, and to ensure that the gospel is rightly preached and the sacraments administered as Christ instituted them. At the time of the Reformation, the Lutheran churches in Germany continued, as far as they were able, the practice of ordination by bishops. In certain circumstances, however, they adopted the practice of ordination by duly authorised pastors. This latter practice, developed in what was perceived to be an emergency situation, was held to be theologically acceptable, because ultimately it was a neutral theological matter [*adiaphoron*] whether the ordination was performed by a duly authorised pastor or by a bishop. However, ordination by bishops in the line of episcopal succession was carried out in Lutheran churches in other countries. Today, ordination in Lutheran churches throughout the world is performed either by bishops or by duly authorised and appointed pastors (the problem between our two churches concerning episcopal ordination is more fully discussed in Part IV) .

39. For Lutherans, then, ordination represents a public declaration by responsible church authorities that the ordained person is authorised to preach the word and administer the sacraments, and thus to be a successor to the apostles in their mission with the gospel. The whole ceremony indicates Lutheran consensus concerning the authority of the pastors of the church in the sense that they administer the means of grace on Christ’s behalf, and are called by him to give pastoral care and oversight to his people.

Roman Catholic Understanding of Ordination

40. Roman Catholics teach that ordination is a sacrament. The term ‘sacrament’ is applied to a variety of realities: for example, to Jesus as the sacrament of the Father; to the church as the sacrament of Jesus in the world; and to the seven sacraments. When Catholics speak of ordination as one of the seven sacraments, they mean that ordination is an officially-designated symbolic and ritual celebration of the church, the body of Christ; they acknowledge the prior activity of the Spirit in the recipients of the sacrament, as well as in the worshipping community celebrating the sacrament; they also recognise in the celebration itself the further communication of the Holy Spirit, who graces the candidates with specific gifts. These gifts establish the candidates in a new relationship with the church, calling them to contribute to its upbuilding and its mission.

41. In the ordination ceremony, through prayer and the laying on of hands, the vocation of the candidates is confirmed by the call of the church. The ministry of Christ is presented as the model; the gift of God is bestowed upon them with the promise of continued grace for the carrying out of their office; and the candidates are configured to Christ in a unique way. This configuration relates them to Christ, to a particular local church, and to the service of the people of God in that church. This gift is held to be irrevocable; ordination to the ministry is not repeated.

42. In Roman Catholic understanding, this one sacrament is conferred in three grades or orders: that of bishop, priest, and deacon.

The ordination of **bishops** confers the fullness of the sacrament of orders, by which bishops sanctify (i.e. administer the sacramental means of grace), teach, and govern. Through their reception of the fullness of orders, the bishops are in union with the bishop of Rome; they are constituted members of a

college, with responsibility for the whole church.

The ordination of **priests** establishes the recipients in a relationship of dependence upon, and co-operation with, their local bishop. Through ordination, priests receive the graces necessary for their eucharistic and other sacramental ministries, as well as for leadership, witness, and preaching.

The ordination of **deacons** constitutes the recipients in a direct relationship to the local bishop, as assistants, gracing them for certain forms of sacramental ministry, and for witnessing, teaching, and ministering to the needs of the faithful.

Function and Task of Ordained Ministry

Common Ground

43. We have found convergence in many areas in the teaching of our churches regarding the function and task of ordained ministers in the church. We share the view that they are entrusted by God with the means of grace, and are called by him to render faithful service in many different ways as they carry out their ministry. They publicly proclaim the word of God and administer the sacraments of Christ, and seek to apply the gospel to the lives of the faithful. They are given a leadership role: in worship, in equipping the saints for service (Eph. 4:11-16), in administering the affairs of the Christian congregation, and in representing Christ in the community.

44. As witnesses for Christ, the ordained ministers seek to spread the gospel and to reach out to the lost with the good news of salvation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:20-6:3). They are examples to the flock, demonstrating by a life of love what it means to be a servant of the Lord Jesus (1 Tim. 4:11-16). They have a special ministry of spiritual healing through counselling, guiding, and forgiving sinners in the name of the Lord (John 20:21-23; Acts 2:38-41). In a very real sense, the mission and service of the apostles is continued through their ministries in Christian communities and in the world.

Roman Catholic Emphases

45. Roman Catholics teach that Christ's unique ministry consists of the threefold function of Teacher, High Priest, and Shepherd. This threefold function of Christ is continued in the church through the exercise of its prophetic, sanctifying, and pastoral work. Consequently, ordained ministry in the church cannot be envisaged (as has happened in the past) outside of this threefold function of Christ (*Lumen Gentium* 28). As we have seen (I.24 above), the preaching of the gospel is pre-eminent among the bishop's responsibilities, and this is also the first duty of his co-workers, the presbyters.

46. Nevertheless, the Roman Catholic Church regards the mediating role of ordained ministry to be directed particularly toward the Eucharist, and to find its consummation there. While any conception of the priest as mediator between the community and God is to be understood in such a way that it 'neither takes anything away anything from nor adds anything to the dignity and efficacy of Christ the one mediator (*Lumen Gentium* 62), mediation has traditionally played an important role in the concept of the priest's service of Christ.

47. Since the sacraments of the church are seen as mediations of the grace of Christ and *as* representations of the sole Mediator, Jesus Christ, the ordained minister acts in the Eucharist 'in the person of Christ'. In Catholic teaching about the Eucharist, the presence of Christ in the minister is considered to be one of the ways in which Christ is present in liturgical celebrations. In the *Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery*¹, for example, we find described four principal ways in which the Lord is present in the Eucharist: in the body of the faithful gathered in his name (see Matt. 18:20); in the word, for it is he who speaks when the Scriptures are read in the church; in the person of the minister; and, above all, in the species of the Eucharist.

It is within this context of the various ways in which Christ is present in the Eucharist that Catholics speak of the minister as acting 'in the person of Christ'.

48. Roman Catholics are concerned that this mediating role should not be exaggerated nor lead to

¹ Section E, 'The Different Modes of Christ's Presence', p. 109; cf *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* 7, pp. 140, 141.

distortions which appear to compromise the uniqueness of Christ's mediation. They strongly affirm that Christ is the unique Mediator and High Priest. They look to his unique mediation as the source of all human mediation on his behalf among God's people. In this sense, they believe that his ministers participate in the priesthood of Christ.

Lutheran Emphases

49. For Lutherans, as for Roman Catholics, Christ's own ministry is the foundation for their thinking concerning the function and tasks of ordained ministry. They have found Christ's unique role as Prophet, Priest, and King instructive for understanding the work of the pastors of the church as they teach, intercede for, and lead the people of God. The common stress among Lutherans has been the pastoral functions of the New Testament ministry in preaching and teaching the gospel, and administering the sacraments among believers. The authority of the pastor is derived from the word of Christ which ministers proclaim on his behalf. While Lutherans recognise certain sacrificial and mediatorial aspects of the minister's role, they have not uniformly referred to their pastors as 'priests'.

50. By virtue of their ordination, however, Lutheran pastors are authorised by the church - acting on the authority of Christ - not only to be heralds of the gospel, but also to celebrate and administer the sacraments, which includes presiding at the Eucharist. Lutherans have a strong consciousness of the proclamatory character of the eucharistic prayer and liturgy. In the Eucharist 'the Lord's death is proclaimed until he comes' (1 Cor. 11:26). Through the proclaimed word, Christ is present and offers his body and blood to the assembled congregation. When the pastor, acting as Christ's servant, distributes the consecrated bread and wine, this is understood primarily as sacramental in character, and the action is accompanied by the proclamation of the gospel: 'Given and shed for you'.

51. Lutherans can agree that the role of pastor has a priestly character. Pastors, in obedience to Christ's command, 'Do this!' and in response to his gracious gift of himself, offer the eucharistic prayer, lead the people in praise and thanksgiving as they offer themselves to the Lord as living sacrifices for his service and praise, and plead the merits of Christ and his all sufficient sacrifice (Heb. 4:16; Rom. 12:1-2; see also *Sacrament and Sacrifice* IV, 46,47 and Addendum, 3). Connected with this specific function of pastors in the liturgy of the Eucharist is the priestly dimension of their more general role of interceding for their people in prayer, and representing them before the throne of grace. In these senses, Lutherans recognise a priestly role in the work of the pastor.

III. The Apostolicity of the Church as the Criterion for the Authenticity of Ordained Ministry

Introduction

52. We have seen (I.19 above) that Lutherans regard the pastorate as the essential expression of ordained ministry. Although at various times and in certain circumstances the ordained ministry of the pastorate has been given a variety of titles, it is nevertheless one, divinely instituted ministry. It was instituted by Christ for the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Other, auxiliary ministries have been established in the church for practical reasons; but these ministries exist by human arrangement. The ministry of the pastorate, however, exists not by human arrangement. It is the heir of the apostolic ministry instituted by Christ, and has the one, apostolic, foundational, and indivisible function: to preach the gospel, administer the sacraments, give pastoral care, and preserve the tradition of the Christian Church.

53. Roman Catholics agree with Lutherans that the apostolic office is foundational, but they differ about the manner in which the original apostolic service is continued. Vatican II (*Lumen Gentium* 28) understands that Jesus shared his ministry first with the apostles. The apostolic ministry is, in this sense, divinely instituted. Catholics believe that the ecclesial ministry which flows from this is also divinely instituted; it finds its primary expression in the episcopate. It is their conviction that the threefold form of the ministry which has emerged from antiquity is the result of the guidance of the Holy Spirit whereby those who serve as the ordained ministry have been called bishops, priests, and deacons.

Apostolicity and Ministry Our Common Conviction

54. We believe that the apostolic ministry is expressed in the ordained ministry of our respective

churches. The criterion for this is that the church is apostolic. This is our common conviction. By it we mean that the church of today and of all times considers itself to be identified and in continuity with Christ himself. We are further agreed that there is a necessary connection between the apostolicity of the church and the authenticity of ordained ministry in the church.

55. We are agreed, furthermore, that the apostolicity of the church consists in the identity between the gospel community of the present day and that which gathered around Christ. This identity is established by the presence of the word in the church at any and every point in its history. The word is present in the church by means of the apostolic tradition (1 Cor. 15:1-5). All Christians, by virtue of their baptism, are receivers and bearers of this tradition. They are called to live the tradition so as to make the word present in the church and the world throughout history. There is a living succession by means of which the gospel is incarnated from one generation to another. The church in each generation is a continuation of the church of the apostles in faith, witness, life, service, and authority (*Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry: 'Ministry'*, 34).

Roman Catholic Understanding

56. Catholics believe, however, that within this living succession there is a specific strand, a succession within the succession, of a group within the larger group of the church as a whole. This group exists because the tasks commanded by Christ in his commission to the disciples have to be continued in the church for each generation (Matt. 28:16-20). Those who continue this ministry in the Catholic Church are the bishops (1 Clement 42-44; see also *Lumen Gentium* 20). The episcopate is the instrument which, by divine institution, guarantees the authenticity of word and sacrament in the life of the church throughout its history. One of the functions of the college of bishops, in union with the bishop of Rome, is to act as the criterion of orthodoxy in the proclamation of the gospel (*Dei Verbum* 7 and 10).

57. Since ordained ministry is at the service of word and sacrament, apostolic succession also includes continuance in an episcopate which can act competently and with appropriate authority in such service. The sacrament of ordination is the criterion of authenticity for the threefold office (ordained ministry) which is at the service of word and sacrament.

Lutheran Understanding

58. Lutherans have commonly understood that the apostolicity of the church consists essentially in the fact that the church of today shares the same faith as that of the New Testament church. The apostolic succession of the church is constituted by its succession in the faith and ministry of the apostles. The unity of faith created by the Spirit down through the centuries, through the succession of word and sacrament, establishes identity between the church of our time and the church of the apostles.

59. If the gospel and the sacraments are to perdure in the church so that this continuing identity between the church of each generation and the church of the New Testament can be maintained, the ministry of proclaiming the gospel and administering the sacraments must function in the church. Since Christ instituted ordained ministry in his church precisely for the public administration of these means of grace, it is necessary that this office continue. Hence, the church is bound to this ministry through all its history as successive ministers carry on the function of the original apostles (Rom. 10:14,15; Eph. 4:11,12; *Augsburg Confession* 5 and 7).

60. Because of this insistence on the necessity of the office of ordained ministry and its authority as bearer of the gospel of Christ, Lutherans are committed to the need for proper, duly authorised ordination. The minister's call is ratified by ordination, and the minister is authorised to preach the pure gospel, and thus to be a successor to the apostles. The authenticity of ordained ministry is therefore publicly acknowledged by ordination performed by a bishop or a duly authorised pastor exercising *episcopate*.

IV. Mutual Recognition of Ordained Ministry: The Task Before Us

Two Areas of Agreement

61. Despite some important theological differences, we have come to recognise a large measure of

agreement between our two churches concerning the office of ordained ministry. First, regarding the nature of this ministry in the church, we affirm that this office is of divine institution. It is essentially different from the common ministry of the people of God, although it is closely related to this priesthood of all believers.

62. Ordained ministry, which is the Lord's gift to the church, is essentially a service to him and his church whereby the apostolic mission of preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments is continued. We share the conviction that for this ministry a person needs to be especially called and set apart, affirmed, and authorised through the sacred rite of ordination, in which the Spirit is efficaciously at work. We agree that the function and task of ordained ministry consists in proclaiming the word of God, administering the sacraments, forgiving and retaining sins, leading in worship, administering ecclesial affairs, and witnessing for Christ as shepherds of his flock.

63. Secondly, regarding the authenticity of ordained ministry, we are in agreement that the apostolic ministry of word and sacraments is expressed in the ordained ministry, and is foundational for authenticating this office in the church. We confess the apostolicity of the church as the body of Christ which is identified and in continuity with Christ himself.

64. In view of this large measure of convergence, the task ahead focuses on two main issues. On the one hand, Roman Catholics need to reconsider their position on the authenticity of Lutheran orders, and the legitimacy of the ministrations and services rendered by this ministry. On the other hand, Lutherans need to reconsider the claims of the Roman Catholic Church concerning the essential nature of the threefold structure of ordained ministry, and the value of episcopal ordination as a sign of apostolicity, catholicity, and unity of the church on earth.

The Task Facing Lutherans

65. Roman Catholic commitment to the essential nature of the threefold structure of ministry and to episcopal ordination is grounded in the conviction that the Holy Spirit himself has guided Christ's church in these historical developments; hence, they are to be regarded as the necessary expression of God's will for the church.

66. In facing this issue of the Spirit's guidance, Lutherans confess, as an article of faith, that the Spirit is constantly at work in the church creating, guiding, and leading God's people (Small Catechism II, 6). Accordingly, they have no hesitation in affirming that the Spirit's guidance is to be seen in the development of the church's doctrine (Tradition) where it is in conformity with the word of God and expresses God's will in ways appropriate to the gospel. However, Lutherans distinguish between the authority of Spirit-guided tradition and the authority of the Spirit-given Scriptures; the latter are the only source and norm for all teaching and practice in the church.

67. Against this background must be understood the distinction which Lutherans make between ordained ministry - necessary by divine institution and based on the clear mandate of Scripture — and the various forms which this ministry has taken historically, forms which are by human arrangement, for the sake of good order in the church. Such a distinction does not, of course, preclude the conviction that the Holy Spirit's influence is also to be seen in the developments which led to the episcopate and the threefold structure of ministry. Accordingly, Lutherans do not object to hierarchical orders per se, but only to the insistence that such orders are essential to ordained ministry by virtue of divine mandate.

68. While Lutherans have tended to emphasise the one, single-structured, special ministry, they have also stressed in their ecclesiastical practice the importance of oversight (*episcopo*) within this one ministry. The office of pastoral supervision of a wider regional or national kind always has been an integral part of the Lutheran practice of ordained ministry. While the precise form which such oversight (*episcopo*) may take is regarded as a matter of human arrangement (*adiaphoron*), the need for such general pastoral oversight is clearly recognised. Such *episcopo* is seen as necessary for maintaining the apostolic gospel and its effective proclamation, and for good order in the church. Even where the traditional link with the historic episcopate was lost, the office of *episcopo* has been maintained in restructured form (for example: president, superintendent, bishop; or in communal, collegial forms).

69. Lutherans recognise that the church operates on different levels: for example, in the local congregation; in the grouping of congregations in a region; or on a national or international level. This has meant that, in practice, the one ministry of word and sacrament has been represented by various forms of spiritual shepherding. Such shepherding includes the function of *episcopus* as distinguished by the church from the regular office of pastor.

70. The Lutheran Confessions uphold *episcopus* in the church as being by divine mandate. To it has been given the functions of preaching the gospel, forgiving sins, judging doctrine, and excluding the manifest ungodly from the Christian community (cf *Augsburg Confession* 28.21-23 [German version]). Authority for these functions is regarded as stemming not from human power, but from God's word alone. Parish ministers and churches are enjoined and called on to be obedient to bishops because of the authority of Christ which they bear.

71. An important function of such *episcopus* is the ordaining of pastors into the office of the ministry. This function of *episcopus* is considered to be necessary for ordination. Lutherans, therefore, ask Roman Catholics to consider whether the nature of such ordination does not adequately ensure the establishment of an authentic ministry in the church, over against Roman Catholic commitment to episcopal ordination.

72. Together with this attitude to *episcopus*, there is an openness among Lutherans to the various grades within the ministry. There may, indeed, be a difference between the presbyterate and episcopate; however, this difference is regarded as one of function, rather than a distinction in principle (cf *Augsburg Confession* 28.53). The *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* makes the specific declaration that the Reformers desire to retain the church polity and the various ranks of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, even though they were created by human authority (cf *Apology* 14.1,5; *Smalcald Articles* 10.1).

73. Such a clearly-defined position with regard to *episcopus*, together with an openness to the various forms which the ministry may take, implies that recognition and even implementation of ordained ministry in the form of bishop, parish pastor, and deacon does not present theological problems for Lutherans, provided that this particular form of ministry is not made exclusive, so that the traditional Lutheran emphasis on the pastorate comes to be regarded as unauthentic and invalid (cf *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* [M] 53.b).

74. With regard to the Lutheran attitude to ordained ministry in the Roman Catholic Church, it is a matter of history that the authenticity of this ministry has always been acknowledged. Lutherans acknowledge that the apostolic ministry is present in the Roman Catholic episcopate, presbyterate, and diaconate.

The Task Facing Roman Catholics

75. It must now be asked whether Roman Catholics are able to acknowledge the authenticity of ordained ministry as it expresses itself in the Lutheran Church. Catholic difficulties in answering this question stem from the following convictions:

75.1 That ordained ministry expresses itself fully in the office of bishop (*Lumen Gentium* 21), and that standing in the historic succession belongs to the fullness of the episcopal ministry.

75.2 That ordination is one of the seven sacraments of the church, given by Christ (*Lumen Gentium* 21; cf II, 40-42 above).

75.3 That the threefold gradation of bishop, priest, and deacon is the God-given expression of ordained ministry.

75.4 That the authenticity of ordination depends on the ordination of a priest by a bishop in the apostolic succession. Therefore, Roman Catholics assert that there is a 'lack' (*defectus*) in the ordained ministry of the Lutheran Church. The nature and implications of this perceived 'lack' (*defectus*) should be clarified.

76. By way of response, the following arguments need to be considered:

- 76.1 The Catholic claim that the full expression of ordained ministry is found in the office of bishop does not rule out the understanding that Lutheran pastors exercise a ministry which carries out functions of the ministry which Christ instituted for his church, that is, of word and sacraments. Catholics have come to understand that other churches and ecclesial communions can be authentic and real manifestations of the church of Christ (even if in Catholic understanding this may not be a complete manifestation). The admission in the *Decree on Ecumenism* 3 that such communities ‘can truly engender a life of grace’ and ‘can aptly give access to the community of salvation’, and that ‘the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as a means of salvation’, would seem open to this interpretation (cf 13.22; and *Lumen Gentium* 8).

If the Roman Catholic Church recognises that the Lutheran Church is a means of salvation and is a true manifestation of the church of Jesus Christ, then there must be a true ministry, since a true manifestation of the church cannot have a false ministry or a non-ministry. Signs of such a manifestation would be the clear presence of the faith, witness, life, service, and authority of the apostolic church. The presence of authentic faith and fruitful sacraments point to an authentic manifestation of the church of Christ, which then presupposes authentic ministry.

- 76.2 Lutherans are convinced that in the ordination ceremony the candidate is gifted by God with the authority and ability to function as a minister of the church of God. The grace of God for this minister is bestowed through the proclamation of the word of God, with the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the laying on of hands. Lutherans do not call this sacred rite a sacrament in the Lutheran sense of the term ‘sacrament’.

Nevertheless, Roman Catholics may be able to acknowledge the operation of God’s grace in the establishment of a candidate in the ordained ministry of the Lutheran Church, without requiring that Lutherans acknowledge this to be a sacrament in Roman Catholic terms.²

- 76.3 We have acknowledged agreement on the divine institution of the office of the ministry, and noted the Lutheran recognition that the office of pastor may take different forms to meet varying needs in the church. We note, also, Lutheran acceptance in principle of the expression of the pastorate in the offices of bishop, priest, and deacon, as of human authority. However, Catholics say that the divinely instituted episcopate has ‘handed on to different individuals in the church various degrees of participation in this ministry’ (*Lumen Gentium* 28), and that the exercise of this divinely instituted ministry at different levels has from antiquity been divided among bishops, priests, and deacons.

In the documents of Vatican II there is more consciousness of the historical development of the ministry than there was in the decrees of the Council of Trent. Catholics argue that this historical development is irreversible for the church because, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it emerged at an early stage in the history of the church, it was soon universally adopted, and it was subsequently endorsed by the authority of the whole church.

- 76.4 The *Decree on Ecumenism* 22 speaks of a *defectus* of the sacrament of orders in separated ecclesial communities.³ We believe that this word *defectus* is open to the interpretation of

² We note that *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* 41-44 (M) gives an account of ordination as conveying grace, while not calling it a sacrament. The official Vatican Response to this section notes that the description of ordination meets in many ways the Catholic concept of ordination as a sacrament and that the essentials of a sacramental understanding can be recognised in the broad treatment given to it in that text (*Origins* 17 [1987] 44). This is seen as a significant convergence.

³ There are no Roman Catholic pronouncements on the validity or invalidity of the Lutheran ministry. Vatican II avoids this terminology, using instead the term *defectus*. It should be noted that the language of validity is easily misunderstood. In this statement we have preferred to use the term authenticity. The concept of validity is concerned with the divine warrant and assurance which the church gives that a liturgical action is an authentic

'short-coming', and that this is a preferable interpretation to that of 'total absence'.⁴ The fundamental 'shortcoming' which Catholics find in Lutheran orders is the lack of episcopal ordination in the historic succession, in major parts of the Lutheran communities. However, this 'shortcoming' does not mean that Roman Catholics cannot see Lutheran ministry as efficacious. There are Lutheran churches where bishops ordain pastors. And even where there are no bishops, the pastors are ordained by 'presidents' exercising *episcopo*.⁵

77. Because of the historical difficulty which Catholics have had in recognising Lutheran ministry, it is important that consideration be given to further factors which might enable Catholics to move toward clearer recognition of the authenticity of Lutheran ministry.

78. In our agreed statement on *Sacrament and Sacrifice* we discerned between the Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches in Australia a shared faith in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and in the sacramental capacity which the Eucharist has to make present to Christians in each generation the sacrificial saving act of Christ (See *Sacrament and Sacrifice* III, A; and IV, 43). This indicates that we have much in common in our view of ministry, since both churches ordain ministers to celebrate the Eucharist, and we have found substantial levels of agreement about our eucharistic faith.

79. Traditionally, Catholics have assumed that, in the administration of their sacraments, God provides grace even in the face of human shortcomings.⁶ Should not this assumption help Catholics toward an understanding that God does provide grace in structures and ministries in other ecclesial communities?

Toward Reconciliation

80. If the Roman Catholic Church can accept the arguments advanced above - and since Lutherans accept that the office of ministry exists in the Roman Catholic Church - what possibility would exist for a mutual recognition of ministries? From a Catholic perspective, the key issue is the lack of fellowship in episcopal ministry which stands in apostolic succession. Catholics can only invite Lutherans to consider ways in which they could accept this, given that Lutherans see themselves free to enter into communion with the historic episcopacy.

81. It is doubtful if such recognition can be achieved simply by a process of theological agreement or even by canonical act. The recent documents of the International Roman Catholic/Lutheran Joint Commission (*The Ministry in the Church*, 1982; *Facing Unity*, 1984) and of the Anglican/Lutheran International Continuation Committee (*The Niagara Report on Episcopate*, 1987) show a common conviction that the mutual recognition of ministries can be brought about only through a process in which the churches reciprocally accept each other.

82. This process of moving toward a structural relationship of full ecclesial communion will involve recognition that the two churches confess the one apostolic faith (including a common understanding

act willed by God. The application of conditions for validity is restricted to the ecclesial communion that defines them, and the conditions can be changed by competent authority [See Pius XII's *Sacrosanctum Ordinis* of 1947 in which he changed several of the conditions for the validity of ordination]. Not all the conditions are by divine authority (*Jure Divino*). The fulfilment of certain conditions does not cause the validity but enables the validity to be known.

⁴ See *Decree on Ecumenism* 22, n. 75, and also par. 3 where *defectus* appears to be what inhibits full ecclesial communion, but does not nullify it.

⁵ While Catholics believe that the bishop possesses the fullness of orders, it is theologically significant that priests have, at times, with papal licence, ordained others as priests. Cf. Denzinger-Schönmetzger [DS] 1145-46, Boniface IX, 1400-1403; DS 1290, Martin V, 1427.

⁶ This assumption is based upon the Western Catholic principle of *ecclesia supplet*. This principle means that in the blessings of salvation through the church's sacramental system, the 'church supplies' for any of the deficiencies which human shortcomings may impose upon the proper administration of the sacraments. The principle further presupposes the 'effective grace' of Christ which is communicated in the sacraments. Compare the orthodox principle of 'economy' (*oikonomia*), which refers to certain exceptional dispensations from church law, precisely so that the blessings of salvation may not be impeded by human shortcomings (see 1 Tim. 2:3-7; Matt. 28:20; Gal. 3:5; Eph. 1:10, 3:9; Col. 1:25).

of the church's ministry). It will culminate in the common celebration of the Lord's Supper, the sacrament of unity.

83. The actual shape of such a relationship remains to be determined. One aspect of this process might be a partial (or incomplete) recognition of ministry, based upon an acknowledgment that the ministry in the other church exercises essential functions of the ministry which Jesus Christ instituted for his church, and which is believed to be fully realised in one's own church. This partial recognition will include the affirmation that the Holy Spirit also operates in the other church through its ministry, and makes use of this ministry as a means of salvation in the proclamation of the gospel, the celebration of the sacraments, and pastoral leadership.

84. Each of the above-mentioned documents sketches stages in the process of full and reciprocal acceptance of churches. While our group has not yet moved to a detailed consideration of these matters, we commend this approach. We recognise that preliminary stages in the process are mutual respect for ministries, and practical cooperation. Provisional structural relationships appropriate to each stage should be developed in order to consolidate the level of recognition reached, and to promote further growth. For example, when a stage of practical cooperation has been reached, some joint exercise of ministries should be considered, both at the level of episcopate and at parish level. Leaders should meet leaders and pastors meet with pastors, for prayer, reflection, and consultation leading to further co-operation on specific projects .

85. Complete recognition will come when there is full acceptance of each other as churches, with full eucharistic fellowship, and joint mission. As we work toward this goal, our hope is kept strong by the Holy Spirit, who in our own time has been active in the growing openness of our churches to each other. We pray that the Spirit will help us, and continue to build up the unity of the body of Christ (Eph. 4:4-6).