

Chapter 8 – Formation and Life of the Clergy

We glean from Patriarch Maximos' memoranda to the Central Commission (1962) and from the "Comments of the Holy Synod on the Schemas of the Council" (1963) a few thoughts on the subject of the formation of future priests. They refer to the schema "De sacrorum alumnis formandis."

I. Concerning the "Apostolic" Visitation of Seminaries

Provision is made for a periodic apostolic visitation of the seminaries. It is also said that this visitation is requested by several Fathers of the forthcoming council. We believe that the Fathers who have asked for such a visitation do not constitute the majority. Besides, more than once the Fathers of the forthcoming council have expressed the desire to see the central administration advance in the direction of a progressive decentralization. As a matter of fact, the present centralization is excessive, burdens the Holy See of Rome with too many minor cares, and involves a considerable number of other serious disadvantages for the Church. It is not fitting at the moment when the council is preparing to initiate the movement of decentralization to introduce in the discipline of the Church a periodic apostolic visitation of the seminaries. This visitation does not appear to us to be at all appropriate. It can even cause serious conflicts between the ordinary of the place and the apostolic visitors. It can also reduce the mutual trust between the bishop and the directors of his seminary, as well as diminish the bishop's sense of his total responsibility for his seminary. Apart from a few advantages, the periodic visitation of seminaries involves a great number of disadvantages, and we therefore believe that it is not opportune. Besides, there is nothing to prevent the Holy See of Rome from ordering an extraordinary visitation, if the need arises.

II. The Teaching of the Popes

By way of introduction, there is a stress on how much the Roman pontiffs have elucidated the need for holiness in priests. On this subject we should like to make a general comment which applies to almost all the schemas proposed to date to the Central Commission. It would seem that the authors of these schemas know, in addition to the Holy Scripture, only the encyclicals of the recent popes, and above all those of Pope Pius XII. Beyond doubt, the encyclicals of the popes are very important documents of the Church's *magisterium*. We also understand that the writings of the most recent popes, assembled in convenient collections, provide citations that are easy to reproduce, thanks to the detailed indexes that have been carefully provided. However, it is not fitting that the council have such limited horizons.

After Holy Scripture, the texts that should be cited most often are those of the ancient ecclesiastical tradition, in which the Fathers of the East occupy a place of the first rank. Besides, the popes do not constitute the only voices of the ecclesiastical *magisterium*. The bishops of the entire world, the councils, the authors who are approved and truly competent on these matters should also be cited. The schemas give the invincible impression that in the Catholic Church of the present day only the Popes of Rome count for anything. This way of doing things, apart from the fact that it is false and savors of

flattery, does not facilitate the acceptance and comprehension of the texts of the council by our separated brethren.

III. Education for Celibacy.

It is strongly urged that seminarians be educated in the practice of ecclesiastical celibacy “*quo Ecclesiae ritus latini sacerdotes statum virginitatis christianae assumentes, integra animae et corporis deditione Domino interserviunt ...*” (by which the priests of the Latin Rite Church, taking on the state of Christian virginity, serve the Lord with complete dedication of soul and body...)

The expression is inexact, for in the Eastern Church as well there are priests who vow their celibacy to God. In the Eastern Churches they are even by far in the majority. Celibacy is not an exclusive glory of the Latin Church. The difference between the Latin church and the Eastern Churches is that in the former celibacy is obligatory, whereas in the Eastern churches it is optional, but recommended and held in special honor.

IV. Latin and Greek.

Greek remains the source language not only of the Byzantines but also of all the Easterners, and was used in the Western Church as well during the earliest times. Moreover, we propose to add the following:

“In the seminaries of the Eastern rites, a place of choice will be reserved for the study of their own liturgical languages, as much for the sake of a better celebration of the liturgical services as for a greater appreciation, for the benefit of the universal Church, of the patrimony bequeathed by the Fathers and the ecclesiastical writers in that language.”

V. The Teaching of Philosophy.

Philosophy is not in every sense and solely “the handmaid of theology.” This formula has done too much harm to the value of pure philosophical thinking in the Church, and to the philosophical formation in Catholic seminaries and universities. It is referred to as “philosophy adapted to theology.”

Why always hold on to this distinction, especially in a conciliar document, if not to say this opposition between “perennial philosophy” and “modern philosophy”? Philosophy, like every science, is one. Starting out from fundamental notions, it evolves, it never ceases to be enriched by new contributions, bringing to light one or another aspect of being. Why grant Thomistic philosophical thought so much prominence in the Church? It was a stage in the evolution of philosophical thought. For this reason we propose a draft that would be along these lines:

“A philosophical formation as sound as it is broad is necessary both for education and for a deeper formation in the aggregate of the ecclesiastical disciplines, as well as for apologetics and the priestly apostolate in the modern world.”

VI. Thomism.

In the Church there exist legally and in fact several theological trends, without prejudice to the fundamental identity of dogma, several ways of expressing in human terms the same revealed deposit. Divine revelation, which is universal in its thinking, cannot be linked to one human way of thinking, whatever its merits and its richness, because it is part and parcel of a particular civilization.

VII. Formation of the Married Clergy.

There should be a paragraph in this schema on the formation of married clergy, which exists in the Eastern rites. Even though, since the introduction of certain disciplinary reforms in the West, especially since the Council of Trent, Latin theologians are loath to speak of a “married clergy,” the traditional institution of this married clergy in the East is indeed a very useful and living canonical reality which the East as a whole is not prepared to abandon. That is why a paragraph on the formation of the married clergy should be included in this schema. We propose that it be drafted as follows:

“In proclaiming the superiority of the evangelical counsel of perfect chastity and the practice of ecclesiastical celibacy, the council respects the tradition of the Eastern Churches with respect to the promotion to Holy Orders of men bound by the sacrament of matrimony. It moreover directs that the greatest care be taken in their recruitment and in their priestly formation, both during their stay in the seminaries appropriate to their state, as well as after their ordination, in conformity with the holy canons in force in the above-mentioned Churches.”

VIII. A Manly Formation.

We think that the schema should make a greater effort to provide a manly formation to future priests. In the Church there is too great a tendency to consider the clerics as perennial minors, as overage children who cannot assume their responsibilities. In this system, there are evidently cases that turn out successfully, but in many other cases the results are mediocre.

Reviving the Diaconate

Concerning the draft of a schema “On the Sacrament of Orders” presented to the Central Commission in its session of January, 1962, the patriarch said what he thought about the restoration of an active diaconate and about a few other related questions concerning the age of the ordinands.

1. The statement is made that the restoration of an active diaconate “*ne fiat nisi de iudicio Sanctae Sedis*” (should not be done except by the judgement of the Holy See). This regulation must apply only to the Latin West, for, in the Eastern Church, the institution of a functioning diaconate has always been accepted and therefore has no need of being restored, nor does it need any authorization by the Holy See of Rome.

2. It is stated that “permanent” deacons are those who do not aspire to receive priestly orders. It should be added: “normally” or “generally,” for there is nothing to prevent one or another of these deacons from later being raised to the priesthood if his bishop deems it opportune and if he fulfills all of its conditions. The diaconate is not a sentence never to rise to a superior level, if all the conditions are fulfilled. Just as a priest is not necessarily destined to become a bishop, but nevertheless can become one, so, too, a deacon may always remain a deacon, but he can also become a priest if he fulfills the necessary conditions.

3. The schema sets forth the liturgical functions of the deacon. To be truthful, it is necessary to add at the end a clause such as the following: “*Haec omnia juxta disciplinam unuscuiusque ritus*” (all these things according to the discipline of each rite). This is because the liturgical functions enumerated in these lines relate only to the Latin rite, which, to repeat, is not the only rite of the Catholic Church and must not serve as the exclusive point of reference in the Council’s decrees.

4. It is affirmed that “by a general dispensation set down for certain regions, or by a particular apostolic dispensation,” married men can be ordained deacons. I completely approve this new discipline which is inspired by the age-old custom of the East and answers the needs of the Church in many countries. However, it is well understood that this general or particular dispensation is necessary only for the West. In the Eastern Church, the ordination of married deacons has always been considered licit, and is currently in force, independently of any dispensation from the Holy See of Rome or from the patriarchal See.

5. It is said that deacons, if they are celibate and fulfill all the other conditions, can be ordained priests by their bishop, “*accedente dispensatione apostolica*” (by means of an apostolic dispensation). This dispensation seems to me to be superfluous, for, on the one hand these deacons are celibate and fulfill all the conditions for acceding to the priesthood. What more is needed, and why is such a dispensation necessary? Such a restriction makes the situation of celibate deacons worse than the situation of celibate laity, which is contrary to all justice and to the whole ecclesiastical spirit. To repeat, the status of these deacons must not be considered as exceptional, barely tolerable, and restricted by all sorts of prohibitions.

6. The schema states that the level of education of deacons must be fixed by “instructions emanating from the Holy See,” according to the needs of each nation. I think that it is more appropriate to leave to the regional councils or national conferences the responsibility for determining the level of education, since the bishops of the place are expected to be better informed on the needs of their country. Since there is talk in the entire Church of the need of a certain administrative decentralization, this is a concrete case in which decentralization should be put into practice.

7. A married deacon can continue to attend in part to his civilian functions. The schema says that that can only be done through an indult from the Holy See: “*Quodsi Sancta Sedes indulserit*” (insofar as the Holy See permits). I think that the bishop’s authority suffices and that there is no need to have recourse to the Apostolic See for that. In my

opinion, the supreme authority of the pope must never be burdened with too many responsibilities about details. That does not diminish the pope's prestige, but on the contrary reinforces it. There are matters that the local authority can regulate more easily and more effectively on the spot. The central authority should intervene only in order to provide general rules and to settle conflicts. Let it be said by way of a general principle: Excessive centralization is a danger for the Church.

8. It is said that a deacon can be reduced to the lay state through a rescript of the legitimate authority and "for just cause." It seems to me that in order not to be arbitrary it is necessary to determine what this legitimate authority is and what this just cause may be. We believe that the legitimate authority is naturally the authority of the deacon's own bishop.

9. The schema reserves all dispensations concerning the age of the ordinands exclusively to the Apostolic See. If this discipline is to be applied to the East, it is fitting that the same power be granted in the East to the patriarch, as the head of a Church. Besides, he is in a better position to judge the appropriateness of this dispensation than a Roman dicastery. Once again I repeat that responsibilities must not be reserved to the supreme authority when they can be carried out by the local authority.

10. I approve the idea of having deacons spend a year in pastoral practice before their priestly ordination. But I believe that this year need not necessarily be spent in a seminary or other institution. In the East we consider that the normal place for a deacon to be is with his bishop. It is by learning from the bishop and living in community with him that he will learn the practice of the sacred ministry.

11. The schema provides that candidates for the diaconate, if they are celibate, cannot be ordained before they are thirty years old. This severity appears excessive to me. I do not see why, if priests need only be twenty-five years old, functioning deacons must be thirty years old, inasmuch as the ministry of the latter is easier and both groups are celibate.

12. The requirement for married deacons is forty years of age. It seems to me that thirty-five years suffice.

13. I should like to specify that the subdiaconate must not be a diriment impediment to marriage, for it is considered to be a minor order. In spite of a few fluctuations, this has been the classical discipline of the East and its continuing practice for centuries. Actually, in the Byzantine Church ordination to the subdiaconate is carried out not at the altar but in choir with prayers that are practically as simple as those for the lector, whereas ordination to the diaconate, the priesthood, and the episcopacy is performed at the altar with almost identical prayers and ceremonies for all three.

Priesthood and Celibacy

There is a serious question that all the Fathers of the Council asked themselves, but which no one justifiably dared to discuss in the conciliar assembly: the question of ecclesiastical celibacy.

From all sides the patriarch received urgent requests to speak either to defend the Eastern Custom of the married priesthood, cavalierly dismissed in a few lines by the conciliar schema, or to open a new approach to the discipline of the Latin Church.

After careful consideration the patriarch decided to intervene. He reworked his discourse several times, constantly making modifications so as not to hurt anyone's feelings, but also in order to serve more courageously the spiritual interests of the Church.

In the end, the superior authority decided that a public debate on this delicate question should be avoided.

The patriarch limited himself to sending the text of his intervention to the Holy Father, accompanying it with an explanatory letter. We are publishing both documents here. In fact, even though at the time of the council it was considered dangerous to discuss publicly a question which an ill-informed press could seize upon to cause discord in the Church, it seemed to us that after the council it was necessary to explain clearly and soberly the discipline of the Eastern Church on this point which is misunderstood in the Western Church, as we ascertained from the many letters we received.

I. The Patriarch's Discourse (not delivered) "Priesthood, Celibacy and Marriage in the Eastern Church"

Venerable Fathers:

The text being proposed to us "On the ministry and life of priests" devotes one paragraph (No. 14 in the draft, No. 16 in the final text) to the "evangelical counsels in the life of the priest," namely, perfect chastity, poverty, and obedience.

Referring to the chastity of the priest, the text emphasizes the advantages of celibacy.

Stressing the importance of celibacy, its particular fittingness for the priesthood, and the ascetic and apostolic advantages for the priesthood that result from it is truly excellent, just, and most necessary, especially today when celibacy is the object of unjust attacks.

Indeed, virginity and celibacy for the Kingdom of God are two eminently priestly virtues which illumine the Church with an aura of distinguished glory and make its action more far-reaching and more redemptive. Christ and His Mother are perfect models.

While the Council in its schema "On the Church and the Modern World" has praised the nobility of families and of conjugal love, it is no less true that voluntary consecration to celibacy constitutes the loftiest mark of a life totally dedicated to God. On this, the entire ecclesiastical tradition of the East and the West is in accord.

And yet, while stressing the beauty of celibate priesthood, we must not ruin or depreciate the parallel and equally apostolic tradition of a priesthood living within the bonds of holy matrimony, as the East has lived it and continues to live it now.

When we speak of married priests, we mean men who are already married being able to accede to the priesthood. but not men who are already priests being able to accede to marriage. For, according to the tradition of the East as well as the West, ordination establishes a man permanently in his state of life.

When they read this paragraph No. 14, the married priests of the East, and those very few married priests of the West, who are as Catholic as the others, will inevitably feel that their priesthood is simply being tolerated, or at best an expedient.

Now, that is not the case at all. The conciliar text must rise to a high enough level of Catholicity to embrace all situations.

Permit me, therefore, venerable Fathers, to present briefly to you the spiritual and apostolic advantages of a married clergy, such as it exists in the East. In doing this, I am aware of fulfilling a duty, for here is a matter of a profoundly Catholic institution that it is not fitting to dispose of in an incidental clause consisting of two lines, as the schema does in No. 14. I do this by way of information. The Christian West is free to follow the evolution that best suits its temperament and which it believes to be in the best interests of the Church. But—as on many other points—the Christian East has also preserved, for the good of the universal Church, a parallel tradition that is founded quite as much on Scripture, the Apostles, and the Fathers. And this tradition, at the moment and in the countries where the Church deems it appropriate, can be invoked in order to support a turning point in history that will perhaps be made necessary by the changing circumstances of time, place, and persons.

Now that this has been said, we offer the following considerations:

1. Neither Scripture nor Tradition, especially the Tradition of the first centuries, considers celibacy as an indispensable condition for the priesthood, a condition *sine qua non*. The early text of the schema affirmed that “even among the first Apostles, a few were married.” The new text preferred to omit this mention, as if by omitting it we could change the truth of history. It is unnecessary to recall that Saint Peter and most of the Apostles and the first disciples were married. Those who today in the Eastern Church are likewise married deserve all our support.

2. The East clearly distinguishes between priesthood and monasticism. A man can be called to the one without being called to the other. This distinction opens up new perspectives. Celibacy is the specific vocation of the monk-religious, but it is not necessarily the specific vocation of the priest, in his capacity as a minister of the Church. The priesthood is a function before being a state of life. It is linked not to a personal striving toward perfection such as celibacy for the sake of God, but to the usefulness to the Church. Therefore celibacy can disappear if the usefulness for the ministry of the Church requires it. The mystery of the redemption, perpetuated in the priesthood, is not

subject by obligation to any accidental form. In case of need, it is not the priesthood that must be sacrificed to celibacy, but celibacy to the priesthood.

3. This distinction between the priestly vocation and the monastic or religious vocation was from the earliest centuries of Christianity subjected to the influences of an idealistic rigorism. At the First Council of Nicea in AD 325 we see certain Fathers seeking to impose perfect continence on the married clergy. According to Socrates (*Hist. Eccl.*, Book I, Chapter 2, P. G. Vol. 67, Col. 103), Saint Paphnutius, Bishop of upper Thebaid, a confessor of the faith and a miracle worker, universally renowned for his chastity and his austerities, defended with much common sense and with a realistic spirit the traditional discipline of the married priesthood. And, the historian tells, all the Fathers of the Council were won over to his view. Since then, the Church of the East has remained faithful to this tradition that favors celibacy of priests but does not impose it. The Western Church has followed a different tradition which gradually brought it to impose, definitively and universally, ecclesiastical celibacy at the First Lateran Council of AD 1123. This is a tradition that, after all, was established at a more recent date.

4. Be this as it may, it is certain that the Eastern tradition maintains and favors more numerous priestly vocations, which the Church needs so much, especially today. In fact, the lack of priests, felt in our modern times in an agonizing way especially in certain countries, cannot be resolved by palliatives that are not sufficiently effective even if excellent, such as the lending of priests by the more favored dioceses, because the urgent needs are disproportionate to the help offered. The Church is in danger of being submerged by this rising human tide, and the danger is growing with each passing day. In this state of urgency, the Christian East counsels that more should not be imposed on priests than Christ himself has imposed.

5. In addition, there are many individuals who experience an immense desire to serve the Church and souls, but who are incapable of maintaining perfect chastity. This is particularly true in certain areas where physical and moral isolation constitutes a serious danger for an average celibate priest.

6. Finally, I shall add that there is no need to fear that the freedom provided by Eastern discipline to choose between celibacy and marriage may gradually cause ecclesiastical celibacy to disappear. There are now and there always will be in the Church many souls called in a special way, to whom flesh and blood are foreign, and who, while they are free to marry, will remain virgins in order to give themselves more totally to God. We have proofs of this in the Eastern Churches, whether Catholic or Orthodox, in which the two categories of priests have rubbed elbows for centuries, each developing fully according to his state and in his own special perfection. With this freedom of choice and of consecration, we have on the contrary fewer downfalls to deplore and more virtues to admire.

Another very serious consideration is this: In our capacity as heads of Churches we cannot fail to consider with anxiety that Christianity is declining in terms of the conversion of the world to Christ, and that this is due to the dearth of priests. The growth of Christianity in the world, through births and conversions, is far from corresponding to the staggering increase in world population. Consequently, Christianity is in a continuous

relative decline, and this relative and continuous decline is accelerating each year at a more rapid rate, something that gives us much cause for thought.

Venerable Fathers, that is the tradition of the East on the married priesthood. This is certainly a very delicate subject. And yet it seems to me it must not always remain a subject that is taboo, absolutely closed.

While justifying the Eastern tradition, I cannot but admire the lofty morality of the parallel tradition of the West. But perhaps the time has come when, through the will of the Church, and wherever it may chose, the Eastern tradition might be useful to the universal Church.

I conclude: granted that our thinking is not yet sufficiently mature for definitive decisions, we propose the creation of a post-conciliar commission for the study of this serious problem that concerns in the highest degree the very life of the Church. We believe that a pure and simple return to the ancient and authentic tradition of the Church would be welcomed both by informed lay Christians and by the clergy open to the realities of life. This will bring peace of soul and freedom of conscience.

II. Letter to the Pope (Rome. October 13 1965)

To His Holiness, Pope Paul VI
Vatican City

Most Holy Father:

In conformity with the desire of Your Holiness, I hasten to transmit to You, through the intermediary of the council of the presidency, the text of the intervention that I had the intention of delivering before the council on "Priesthood, Marriage, and Celibacy in the Eastern Church."

My sole intention was to set forth and explain the Eastern practice of the married clergy. Actually, the text of the schema that is proposed to us disposes in three lines of this venerable institution which goes back to the Apostles, as if it were a practice that is just barely tolerated. It seems to me that on this point the text of the schema must be significantly amended. If it is not, it would be an insult to the married clergy of the entire Eastern Church, both Catholic and Orthodox.

As for the Latin clergy, all that I take the liberty of submitting to Your Holiness is that you set up a special commission to study this problem and face it squarely. Most Holy Father, this problem exists and is becoming more difficult from one day to the next. It demands a solution. It serves no purpose to hide it from ourselves or to make it a taboo subject. Your Holiness knows very well that truths that are silenced become envenomed.

I fully agree that a public debate in the council chamber would have produced more scandal than concrete results, especially when the press and passions are involved. Yet I am absolutely convinced that in spite of the applause that welcomed the directives on this

subject, the problem troubles the conscience of more than one bishop. We are constantly receiving confidences from priests who are indeed known for their piety and their zeal, begging us to raise our voice, to break the silence. Alarming statistics are offered. Too many candidates for the priesthood are turned away because of the increasing difficulties of celibacy. Others are pushed into the celibacy of the priesthood and accepted thoughtlessly. A host of married men could serve the Church in the priesthood.

Celibacy will always remain the ideal of an elite that God chooses for Himself, and it will never die out. But celibacy should not therefore be imposed as an indispensable condition for the priesthood. Considering that secular priests are not forced to assume monk-like poverty, which is easier to practice, why impose on them celibacy, which certainly requires a very special vocation, and very special aptitudes?

The Catholic West does not yet seem disposed to make such a radical change in discipline, but one will go slowly with all the necessary prudence, after the experience of the married deacons authorized by the Council.

All that I ask of Your Holiness, in order to obey a serious imperative of my conscience, is that the door not be systematically and irreversibly closed.

With this trust, I humbly kiss Your hands, imploring Your paternal and apostolic blessing.

Fair Remuneration for Priests

During the discussion of the schema "On the ministry and life of priests," Kyr Philip Naba, Metropolitan of Beirut, made the following intervention:

The equitable remuneration of priests, dealt with in No. 16 of the schema, is a very serious and very urgent question. It must hold the attention of the Second Vatican Council and find a sure and comforting answer for priests who are poor and discouraged and disappointed in their ministry. There are many such priests, and they are to be found in all dioceses and in all countries. A few of them even live in a state of material poverty that places them below the poor laborers of society. Given such great poverty, the poor priest has no access to any social life, and he is unable to provide any charity to the poor.

A solution based on social equity and justice is immediately in order. Priests responsible for souls and those who no longer have this responsibility expect this from our council. Aspirants to the priesthood also expect it, for they would not want to be priests with means of livelihood that are so precarious, ineffective, and discouraging. In order to help find the desired solution and to show our feelings of justice and gratitude for the priests who are our beloved associates and collaborators in the service of the people of God, may I be permitted to make the following comments:

1. It is certain—and the schema makes it very clear—that priests who serve the Church are deserving of a fair remuneration. Indeed, Christ has said: "The laborer deserves his wages" (Luke 10:7). And St. Paul added: The Lord has so ordained. "The Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14).

2. But how much will this fair remuneration be, and who is to pay it? These are the two points that the council must establish, at least in a general way. In order to help it to do this, we must first of all affirm that fair remuneration must never allow priests or bishops or any other minister of the Church to give up the evangelical poverty, in which they must live, in order to conform more closely to Christ and to be more ready to serve Him, for Christ became poor for our sakes, even though He was rich: "Although He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor" (2 Corinthians 8:9). The remuneration of priests must not, therefore, become a means of getting rich, even less of living like prosperous capitalists, but a means of living in a dignified way and of working effectively.

That is why the schema requires only what is necessary for an honorable standard of living. It declares that the bishops of a diocese or of a region must establish norms that assure priests who serve or who have served the people of God a remuneration that provides them with a suitable livelihood and also enough to share a little with the poor.

The amount necessary for the suitable subsistence of a priest on a monthly or yearly basis is difficult to determine exactly. And yet we can say in general that a priest needs what a man of the middle class needs to live suitably. It is up to the bishop of the place to specify the required sum, the method of collecting and distributing it, taking into account all the appropriate circumstances.

This sum must be basic and equal for all priests. Social inequality, which is often very great, among priests who are members of the same family, is a scandal. It must be stopped. Equity, the dignity of priests, and the welfare of souls require it imperatively.

3. Who is to pay the fair remuneration of priests? The schema does not state it explicitly. And yet it is obvious that it must be paid by the people of God, that is to say, the faithful who are served by the priests, or better by the parishes and dioceses where they provide their services and their lives. For while the bishop has the obligation to determine the fair level of payment due to priests, it is up to the faithful, all the faithful of all the parishes and all the dioceses, to pay these suitable salaries of their priests and of other sacred ministers.

In this council we must lay great stress on this obligation of the faithful to support their priests and their churches. The reason that many of our churches are poor and deserted is that the faithful are not fulfilling their duties of piety and charity. And the reason many of our priests in the country or in small parishes live in great poverty and insecurity is that the faithful do not fulfill their duties in justice toward them, but depend on the bishop to do so.

An explanation is in order here, to reassure our priests and enlighten our faithful. We shall never allow our priests to live in penury while we live in opulence. On the contrary, we shall always share our life and our substance with them, striving to assure them a fair and dignified livelihood. And if God wills that we serve Him in great poverty, our hearts will remain joyful, as we repeat with Saint Paul: if we have something to eat and if we have clothes to wear, that suffices.

As for our faithful, we must enlighten them. The obligation to assure their priests a fair livelihood devolves on them in the first place, and not on the bishop. Indeed, the priests are not the servants of the bishop in the Church, or his paid employees, engaged in an enterprise that belongs to him, but are collaborators in the same priesthood and the same ministry. They are also shepherds together with him of the same flock, the people of God, which, for its part, must provide for all an honorable and dignified life. They are the ones who are served first, and not the bishop.

In conclusion, I therefore propose two additions to No. 16 of the schema (No. 18 in the final text):

- a. We must explicitly affirm that the obligation to assure an honorable livelihood to the priests and the sacred ministers devolves first of all on the faithful.
- b. The just remuneration of priests must be equal, or nearly so, to the amount required for the ordinary life of a man of the middle class in their respective regions.

Metropolitan Naba'a likewise presented the following proposition for a common discipline to regulate the honorable sustenance of the clergy.

I. In order to provide greater equity in the distribution of the ecclesiastical resources, and in order to help and encourage priestly vocations, a general fund for priests should be set up in each diocese or ecclesiastical province. This general fund must support all priests who devote themselves to pastoral work and assure them at least the minimum income for their upkeep, since those who serve the altar have the right to live by the altar in like manner and in dignity. In any case, no one should live in indigence.

II. The general fund for priests must come from:

1. all the revenues of the churches;
2. all the honoraria or gifts received by the priests;
3. all the gifts of the faithful offered for the upkeep of the priests.

III. The salaries of the priestly ministry must be diocesan rather than parochial, so that all priests may be equally remunerated. Thus a pension fund should be instituted, to which all priests will have access after a certain number of years of age or service.

IV. The amount of the pension to be provided a priest for his honorable support must be determined by the bishop, or by the episcopal conference, for the entire diocese, or by the entire ecclesiastical province, according to the needs of time and place.

V. Priests who have provided for the spiritual needs of the faithful but who are no longer able to provide these services because of age or infirmity must be assured a fair and sufficient pension for their honorable sustenance until they die.

VI. Each diocese or ecclesiastical province should have a priests' residence for elderly priests and for the care of those who are invalids or in poor health.

VII. All priests are required to pay a premium to an insurance company providing for illness or disability. This insurance will not only benefit them but will also benefit all their brother priests in the diocese who are poor, sick, disabled, or elderly.