

THEMES AND QUESTIONS FOR RE-EVALUATING OUR MISSION APOSTOLATE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose, function and characteristics of Maryknoll have been reformulated by this Chapter in the light of the Church's renewed understanding of her mission after Vatican II. This redefinition of our role must not remain in the realm of theory. It must become the real basis of our day to day mission work. If this is to take place, we must re-evaluate every aspect of our apostolate to see if we are truly doing what we exist for. Every member of the Society, every group of missionaries, every Regional Council, every missionary faculty, every department, should

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Chapter's statement of the Purpose, Function and Characteristics of Maryknoll and ask how all this applies to the concrete tasks to which we devote our lives.

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Part One: Some points of special consideration. The point to be addressed in this document is, above all, that Maryknollers

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose, function and characteristics of Maryknoll have been reformulated by this Chapter in the light of the Church's renewed understanding of her mission after Vatican II. This redefinition of our role must not remain in the realm of theory. It must become the real basis of our day to day mission work. If this is to take place, we must re-evaluate every aspect of our apostolate to see if we are truly doing what we exist for. Every member of the Society, every group of missionaries, every Regional Council, every seminary faculty, every department, should seriously examine the Chapter's statement of the Purpose, Function and Characteristics of Maryknoll and ask how all this applies to the concrete tasks to which we devote our lives.

Our statement on the Mission Apostolate does not presume to set down the answers as to how a Maryknoller is to pursue successfully his mission apostolate. Nor does this document wish to imply that mission work of the past has been ineffectual. We are grateful for the solid mission foundation which has existed up to the present time, and for the great missionary saints whom the Church holds up for our emulation. The point to be stressed in this document is, above all, that Maryknollers be convinced of the need to re-evaluate their apostolic methods. With this in mind, we shall set down some basic considerations which should guide Maryknollers in their holy task of proclaiming the mystery of Christ, and then ask some pertinent questions which will help Maryknollers to reflect on the apostolate. We do not intend to ask all the questions which need asking. Our purpose is simply to point out some of the main areas of investigation (Part One) and suggest what sort of questioning should be applied to other areas (Parts Two and Three). We presume that all evaluation and planning will be done in the context of Church structures and in accord with Vatican II.

Since the purpose of the mission apostolate is to establish the Church as sign or sacrament of salvation in Christ, our basic principles must be those evidenced in the life of Christ Himself. In general we must search out the implications of His Incarnation. His truly becoming man in all things save sin must be the example of our becoming all things to all men. His birth and growth in becoming one of His people and their culture and history must be the brake on our impatience for quick results. His delicate respect for the dignity and freedom of the persons He deals with must always be basic to our love of men. The directness of His "Come and see!" must be our humble and courageous reply to the Spirit's prompting in the hearts of those we go to. His forthright "Will you also leave?" must keep us wary of holding any man's allegiance except with honest "words of eternal life." His trust in the Spirit's continuing action in those with whom He seemed so unsuccessful, even in the face of almost total abandonment by them, must always make our disappointments less than unbearable and discouragement never quite possible.

Our lives must show no riches that might make it more difficult for men to know, sooner or later, where our treasure really lies. We may use no power that might lead us to offer men bread made from stones rather than from the living and dying wheat of our own lives in Christ. We have no right to say "Come and see!" to any person or group until, like Christ, we have truly come and truly seen. Men's hearts will never burn within them, unless we have been truly with them on the way as companions and friends. The Gospel requisites for any fruitful human contact are not less but more deeply demanded of the missionary.

Without this foundation the house of any mission apostolate of ours will be built upon sand.

## Part One: Some Points of Special Consideration

### 1. The Place of the Sacraments in the Work of the Apostolate

The formation and animation of an authentic witnessing community necessarily involves Christian sacraments. But the sacraments are signs of the faith-life of that community. They pre-suppose that the community is actively living its faith in the service of love. Baptism itself is a sign of the living active faith of the new member. The Eucharist is a sign of the community's charity in action. Baptism will not give faith where there is no faith, nor will the Eucharist put charity where there is no love. Both are signs which express and thereby deepen a faith and love that are already there.

It is vital for the renewal of mission work that we re-examine our understanding of the sacraments and how they work. Priorities in time and personnel, policies of establishing parishes, and decisions about staffing them must not be guided by the assumption that our primary duty is to make the sacraments available as often as possible to as many people as possible. Great generosity and availability toward those who request the sacraments and ingenuity in making them more accessible have been the glory of the American priesthood. It is not a question of replacing this generosity with an attitude of refusal. But it is time to establish new priorities by which the formation of a truly Christian community of service that will be a leaven and a light in the world is our primary task. Sacraments will be seen as a necessary part of this task being both the summit of the community's life of service and the source of deeper involvement in the life of the world after the example of Christ. But they normally presuppose a life of faith already engaged in service, an embryo community already trying to put the charity of Christ into action.

We must examine our preaching to be sure that it does not unwittingly encourage an understanding of the sacraments as automatic means of grace rather than as pledges of the Christian's vocation to serve and give his life as Christ did. Likewise, we must be careful to present the mystery of grace as a developing personal relationship with Jesus Christ, lest it be thought of as quantity of impersonal supernatural power.

## 2. The Relationship Between Clergy and Laity in the Christian Community

A priest or group of priests in isolation does not mirror a complete image of the Church. Only a community of Christians composed mostly of laymen, including and served by a priest (and religious where possible) can offer integral Christian witness, for they alone can adequately portray the full life of God's people, and therefore be a true sign of the Kingdom of God. Such a community will be authentic only if it is animated by the spirit of the Gospel, and it is the priest's job especially to insure formation in that spirit. The priest must be steeped in the Word of God so that he can build up the witnessing community, and constantly test the spirit which animates it to see if it is the spirit of Christ. He must form the laity to maturity and responsibility in the apostolate. He must be careful not to make clerics out of laymen by estranging them from the secular fields in which their witness is to be effective. But when he encourages the laity to assume responsibility, he must be ready to accept its full implications and not restrict the areas of lay competence to things like finance, administration, fund raising, care and maintenance of buildings, membership in parish societies and the like. In other words: he should be concerned more with assisting the laity to do their job than with having them assist him in his job.

We must free people from the idea that the clergy constitute some kind of privileged class within the Church because this idea is totally contrary to the Gospel. The privileges accorded us in countries of traditional Christian culture are often a positive hindrance to Christian witness because they give a false notion of the community of Christ. We should strive to avoid anything in our standard of living, our dress, our attitudes and comportment, our associations, which might foster the image of the Church as a hierarchy of privilege. Nor should there be anything in our training system which might foster such attitudes.

A mature, responsible laity must not become a class apart either, but it is a laity which participates in the decision-making of the community. It is a laity whose opinions and criticisms are heard and taken into account, whose consent is sought. In areas where illiteracy is high and individual responsibility is not a highly prized cultural value, local leadership may be difficult to find. In such places the missionary must be sure that any structures created are designed to develop mature leadership as soon as possible, and not perpetuate an unwitting paternalism.

3. Our Attitude Toward Non-Christians (CMW-22)

Catholics have often referred to the charity of non-Christians as "humanitarianism," seeming to consider it as good, well-intentioned, but essentially second-rate as compared to Christian charity. This attitude may have its source in a vague presumption, never consciously accepted in the Church, that non-Christians live in a world of pure nature and that Christians live in a world of super-nature. In fact, we have no good reason to presuppose that any man is doing good in the absence of God's grace. We really should assume that any man who is selflessly and consistently devoted to the service of mankind is exercising supernatural charity. It is in many ways more awe-inspiring than that of Christians, because it is being lived "in the dark." Of course, we must realistically admit the possibility of self-seeking in many apparently charitable enterprises, but this possibility is just as great within the Church as outside of it.

Men of all kinds are quick to sense an attitude of superiority. To all their contacts with persons of good will, be they government personnel, leaders of non-Christian religions, development agents, community leaders, or simple everyday people, missionaries must bring a humble respect and esteem for other men and their values and a wise spirit of collaboration.

The missionary's goal is not the same as that of the county agent, the UNESCO representative, the Peace Corps volunteer, the social service worker, etc. But he is concerned with exactly the same human beings, and he is concerned for them as men, not just as souls. The Christian missionary's view of man, his dignity, his vocation to love, his call to eternal life with Christ here and now, his alienation from God through sin, may lead him to approach men differently than these other people. It may lead at times to real conflict over questions of means. But it should also lead to frequent collaboration and mutual respect, for wherever earthly progress "can contribute to the better ordering of human society, it is of vital concern to the Kingdom of God." (CMW 39)

This does not mean that we must become politically or socially naive. Christians always run the danger of being manipulated by other groups when they try to cooperate with them, and for this reason it must be clear to all that the Church has "no proper mission in the political, economic, or social order...for the force which the Church can inject into the modern society of man consists in that faith and charity put into vital practice, not in any external dominion exercised by merely human means." (CMW 42)

#### 4. The Notion of Dialogue

Ultimately, men will not feel that we are treating them as equals unless we come to them to learn as much as we intend to teach. This demands not just a readiness to learn about the people, the language, the culture, but more deeply a readiness to be changed and to grow ourselves. We come not just to give Christ but also to discover Christ. Our discovery of a foreign culture is a new discovery of Christ, and even those who do not recognize the Spirit of Christ in their midst can help us to know him, and our faith, better.

In the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, the principle of dialogue is clearly set forth. The Church admits she has much to learn from the world and from human culture. It is this climate of dialogue that makes Christian witness acceptable and frees it from any suspicion of superiority. In dealing with inquirers on an individual basis, this same attitude of dialogue and mutual discovery must be engendered. This does not imply any weakening of our conviction; it does imply an awareness that the Spirit breathes where he will.

The sign which the Church presents to the world through Christian witness must follow the law of incarnation if it is to be truly effective. Only when the Christian community is truly a part of the larger community, sharing its interests and concerns, its language, customs, its way of thinking and acting, only then will the Christian community know where its services can best be used, only then will it be able to communicate its love in a manner understandable and acceptable to men. At times, the desire for quick, visible results works against a truly effective presence in the wider community, for the means we use to obtain results may help to estrange us from the people and their real problems.

## 5. Practical Considerations in Starting New Missionary Activity

Missionary areas today have undergone a veritable revolution, one that is best dramatized by the changeover from colonialization to nation building in Africa. Hardly anywhere in the world is the missionary received as the only man with a new message of hope. His words and his deeds take on meaning only where they help to build the new society which men are seeking to establish, with or without the aid of the Church.

The missionary today realistically sees that he is sent to men as they are and as they hope to be. Like Christ, he comes not to be served but to serve and to have others who would call themselves Christians also serve. He is not trying to build something entirely new so much as to renew in the Spirit something perhaps quite old.

This is why the missionary of today has to become once more a prophet in starting new missionary activity. His concern is not so much to bring every individual into the Church as to bring the Church to all men. Rather than launching into his own programs he should determine what already exists and what is needed in the community of men that can be effectively served by the Christian community. In every society and in every area there are points of cultural change. These are the factors which are creating the world of tomorrow for better or for worse. They include those human concerns, moral, cultural, psychic, socio-economic and political, which are currently most urgent in the community and which need the healing power of the Gospel. It is here where men seek help, where they want to develop and where they look to the future. It is here where many possibilities open to missionary activity. The missionary has to choose from the various possibilities and pick key points where a Christian community can enter into the culture and identify with a people in meaningful collaboration.

This is not to make of missionary activity a method or technique. It is simply the way to learn where the presence of the missionary community is truly needed, where Christian witness can begin. It is only by investigation and inquiry that the missionary can learn what his preoccupations should be.

We must begin new missionary activity with something of the patience displayed by God Himself in the history of salvation. We are concerned with the salvation of nations as communities, trying to preserve that same respect for the uniqueness of each people which God manifests toward the children of Israel. We may have to question whether in some cases individual conversions may not run the risk of estranging the convert from his culture. The result may be Christians who are deprived of cultural roots, excessively dependent upon a Church their neighbors see as foreign.

In such a case, they could become a positive obstacle to the effectiveness of Christian witness upon the community or nation as a whole.

6. The Ultimate Criterion According to Which We May Judge Whether or Not We are Doing Our Job

Long standing priorities in mission policy and procedure must be weighed again in the light of the Church's own deeper understanding of herself as sign or sacrament of salvation. The ultimate criterion of a valid missionary enterprise is the amount of time, energy and resources which the Christian community devotes to Christian witness, that is, to the genuine love and service of their fellow men. Where this criterion is lacking, the sign of salvation is lacking, the very core of missionary activity is lacking, the Church is not authentically present. The total structure of a missionary program should grow organically out of the requirements of Christian witness.

Thus it would be a mistake to look upon any or all of the following as valid criteria of the success of missionary efforts where they exist in isolation from the demands of Christian witness: Pastoral statistics such as large number of converts, catechumens, communions, infant baptisms, etc., along with sizeable attendance at Mass and parish devotions; mission personnel statistics such as substantial numbers of clergy and religious devoted to mission work; parish activities, societies and institutions with numerous active members; an abundance of buildings to accommodate diocesan and parochial activities along with ample real estate holdings to provide for future expansion; financial solvency based on the generosity and responsibility of a laity trained to support the Church, the attainment by the local Church of a high degree of respectability and influence in social and political life; amicable relationships between clergy, religious and laity in the conduct of parish life.

The aforementioned may well be part of a truly vital, witnessing community. But they could also apply to a situation where Christians are self-centered, and unconcerned with presenting the sign of salvation to the world through their service of their fellow men. Some of them may even prove contrary to the Church's role as sign, and to her effective presence in the community, as, for example material acquisitions which, though understandable in the past, have now become signs of wealth or political power rather than of service.

7. Sign and Witness: Some Practical Implications

To call the Church a sign or sacrament of salvation means that she is sent to the world to reveal and communicate the saving love of God through the active witness of Christian charity. Christians who genuinely love each other and their fellow men manifest that holiness and unity to which the whole family of mankind is called by the subtle promptings of the Spirit. They mediate the power through which men can recognize their own vague, tormented longings for salvation and proceed gradually toward the realization of their true and proper destiny in Christ.

The Church is fulfilling the highest priority in missionary activity simply by raising the sign of salvation in the world through Christian witness. This must be kept in mind as a guide to the selection and planning of mission work. Making or making-over Christian communities into true signs of salvation should have priority in time over the administration of the sacraments and the celebration of the Eucharist. The sacramental life of the community should grow out of its practical commitment to the service of men.

The quality of the sign which it produces is much more important than the size of the Christian community. This does not mean that the Church is a community of the pure or elite; She is a community of forgiven sinners, ever in need of forgiveness and growth. It does mean that the Church is essentially a witnessing community responsible for mediating salvation by force of charity rather than by pure force of numbers. Accordingly, the witness given by the Christian community must be continually evaluated and purified.

Part Two: Cooperation, Research, Planning

The Christian community should be a sign of the unity to which the human race is called. Christians cannot be content with striving individually to deepen their faith and personal commitment to Christ. Especially today their task is no simple one. Working alone, independently of others, they cannot be effective instruments of salvation. Working together, however, their diversity of talents and gifts enables them to complement and reinforce one another and prevents them from acting at cross purposes. In this way the distinctive gifts of many will contribute to the perfection of the whole and constitute the sign of unity that Christ prayed for. The same applies to collaboration among missionary institutes and mission dioceses and even extends to cooperation with those of other faiths with whom we share common goals.

Missionary activity can no longer be considered a matter of static techniques which, once learned, need but be applied to the situation at hand, as was the case in the slower-changing, slower-moving world of the past. Today we live in a world of rapid change. Opportunities to increase our knowledge and communicate ideas with one another have greatly increased. Even our understanding of Revelation has been greatly enriched in recent years. Such things as reassessment, consultation, planning, cooperation, specialization, research, experimentation and evaluation are indispensable realities of life today and therefore vital to successful mission work. We must be willing to look at the past and admit our mistakes. We must be eager to talk to one another, and to outsiders, and to pool our ideas so as to formulate plans for our missionary activity. We must be ready to divide the work among us so as to capitalize on the diversity of our talents.

Specialization is essential to efficient cooperation. This does not mean that we are to become a society of ivory-tower technicians. The good pastor is a true specialist, for he is called on to combine a rare assortment of talents. But his is not the only speciality in the modern apostolate. He needs the cooperation of theologians, social scientists, communications experts, and other priests or laymen who serve men in various professional groupings. These other specialists, in their turn, have need of the pastor.

We must not be reluctant to search out new ways, for experimentation is indispensable. Experimentation, however, must not become a source of division. It is often necessary to carry out experiments quietly and unobtrusively, but they must sooner or later be subjected to the critical evaluation of many.

In any given geographical area, nation, diocese, deanery, or parish, pastoral activity must be closely coordinated. Regular meetings are necessary to assure consensus on policy and avoid situations such as, for example, the prerequisites for baptism differing from parish to parish. The task of bishops will be greatly simplified if prior agreement on proposed policies and plans is achieved on the deanery or area level. This will avoid needless discussions of policy with each individual.

Openness to the present promptings of the Spirit wherever they may lead is a necessity for the individual, the Society, and the whole Church. Though this does not mean precipitous abandonment of any and all commitments judged to be outmoded, it does mean a willingness for planned phasing-out where necessary and as soon as possible.

Some questions we may ask ourselves:

1. Is the Christian community in the regions where Maryknoll is at work recognizable as a true sign of unity, manifesting honest cooperation and mutual respect among persons of different nationalities, cultures, ages, and functions within the Church? Specifically: Are there divisions between ourselves and the national clergy, between clergy and laity, between ourselves and other mission organizations? If so, what are we doing to heal them?
2. Do we meet regularly with other priests of our area in order to discuss our work, re-evaluate and plan together? Do we divide up areas of interest and competence so that the reading and study of each may benefit everyone?
3. Do we plan realistically for the future in terms of personnel, finance, expansion, vocations, research and language study? When programs or institutions that require aid from outside the mission area are established, are there definite plans to gradually phase-out this aid over a period of years? Are the geographical boundaries within which we work: Diocesan, regional, parochial, realistic ones? If not, are we willing to sacrifice to make them realistic? Are we open to the possibility of structures that may be more effective than those of the classical parish?
4. Are we convinced enough of the spiritual nature and power of our mission to be willing to divert money that might be spent on buildings to a project such as the continuing education of missionaries? Or are we reluctant to see money spent on, or personnel committed to, pastoral centers, workshops, research and libraries? Are we open enough to encourage researchers to use their tools and talents in examining the effectiveness of our apostolic methods? Are we happy to share whatever we have with those of other institutes and the local clergy? With other dioceses? Are we open to and eager for the advice of qualified persons outside Maryknoll in planning and policy making?

If it is authentic charity it can never pass for a holier-than-thou attitude, for a truly disinterested witness is aware as much of what is un-Christian in each of us as in persons outside the visible Church. It is not only in countries that are largely non-Christian that witness has a priority in missionary activity. The mission in countries of traditionally Catholic culture must also seek first of all to set up the sign of service after the example of Christ.

The following questions call attention to certain situations and practices which are incompatible with the demands of Christian witness:

1. What are we doing to make the members of the Christian community aware of their responsibility to give witness. Is the Christian community more committed to the love and service of men in theory than in practice? Does the community contain any structures designed to lead to a direct involvement in the cares and concerns of their fellow men? Does the Christian community have any way of keeping informed about the real problems and needs of the larger community? Are the members of the Christian community as aware of the opportunities for service in the world as they are of the truths of the catechism and the commandments?
2. Does the Christian community give echo to the longings of the more responsible, concerned, unselfish and honest members of the larger community, to those who are deeply engaged in the search for justice, peace, progress, culture, brotherhood and freedom? Or does the Christian community appeal principally to those who want to escape involvement in the pain and struggle of their brothers?
3. Can the Christian community be easily identified as the helper and defender of all oppressed and underprivileged groups? Is the Christian community identifiable as the Church of the poor? Is it willing to incur the displeasure of established powers and the loss of financial support, if necessary, to defend the poor?
4. Do we cancel social programs that are needed in the community on the grounds that they do not produce converts, or bring the baptized to greater sacramental practice, or increase our 'influence'?

2. Verbal Proclamation of the Gospel and Initiation Into The Christian Community

Men cannot remain indifferent to the force of genuine charity. If they simply reject it, they are closing themselves off from others and condemning themselves to infernal loneliness. If they accept it, they will be opened by it to encounter the personal source of that charity. Unfortunately, they can often be deprived of a real confrontation with charity wherever there is reason, real or imagined, to suspect the motives out of which charity is displayed. Hence the paradox of disinterested charity: The less of a convert-making technique our Christian witness becomes, the less it looks for "gain or gratitude," the better its chance of provoking the question: Why do Christians show such self-sacrificing concern for the needs of men?

The answer to this question can only be a very personal one on the part of every Christian. To the extent that his love for man is a share in that "same affection with which God sought out man," his inquirer will be drawn to search for the true source of Christian charity, namely, Christ Himself.

Thus it is that the Gospel must be proclaimed in deed before it is proclaimed in word; and when it is proclaimed in word it must be presented more as a way of life than as a body of truths.

Verbal proclamation of the Gospel is a dialogue in which one who lives his faith communicates that faith to the inquirer. It does not presume the absence of all grace, but rather seeks to build on the foundation already supplied by the Spirit, on the "seeds of the Word" which lie hidden in men's national and religious tradition. These seeds of the Word are embedded in the psychology, the aspirations, the hopes, fears, doubts, loves of the inquirer, and any dialogue of evangelization is a discovery for the Christian as well as for the Christian-to-be. The evangelizer must proceed with the greatest patience and respect for the liberty of the inquirer, and at the same time not hesitate to confront him, in due time, with Christ's call and its responsibilities.

The Catechumenate properly so called presupposes that the catechumen has undergone an initial period of inquiry and introduction to the meaning of Christianity as described above, and has undergone an initial conversion to a personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Only at this point is he truly ready to enter the Catechumenate through the appropriate liturgical rite. The Catechumenate is a formation of persons "already sharing through faith in the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection."

The gradual growth in Christ of the catechumen should be signified by a series of liturgical celebrations involving the whole community and should "manifest itself through its social effects."

There has been a great development in recent years in the science of Catechetics. It is important that this renewal touch every Catechumenate and that the advice of persons specially trained in this field be sought.

While not rejecting them as necessarily evil, missionaries should be aware of the social, political, and economic factors which influence movements toward conversion. "A convert's motives should be looked into, and, if necessary, purified." We must take very seriously the Church's strict prohibition against "alluring or enticing people by unworthy techniques."

For persons born into traditionally Catholic cultures, catechesis and conversion are also necessary, even if they were baptized soon after birth. Normally, the Christian family and the Christian community are expected to provide the Catechumenate necessary. Where the family and community do not assume their responsibility in this regard, there is a serious failure for which CCD and Catholic schools are not a complete substitute. The priest who is called upon frequently to baptize infants whose parents show little evidence of active Christian life must search for ways to confront parents with their responsibility and enable them to fulfill their task. This means, among other things, that catechetical programs for children which do not at the same time reach their parents are inadequate.

(All quotations in this section are from the Decree Ad Gentes, Nos. 11-13.)

Some of the questions we may ask ourselves in this regard are:

1. Has preaching the Gospel led us to understand Christ more deeply ourselves? Has our preaching led others to a deeper personal relationship with Jesus Christ? Have we sometimes been afraid to expose the difficult side of Christianity for fear of losing a candidate?
2. Do we preach baptism as a personal privilege or as a pledge to assume responsibility for the world? Do we wait too long, teach too much, before asking catechumens to express their faith in charity?

3. Do we teach our catechumens to pray by praying with them?
4. What role does the whole community play in the Catechumenate? Are the stages of advancement marked by liturgical celebrations in which the community participates? What role do the sponsors play prior to baptism? Does the average neophyte feel that he has been received into a community or into an impersonal organization?
5. How do we judge whether or not a candidate is ready for baptism: By his ability to repeat the catechism, by his attendance at Mass and doctrine classes, or by the degree of charity he has shown? Is the advice of the community sought before admitting a candidate for baptism?
6. Do we ask ourselves how much such factors as medical and nutritional programs, the excellence of our schools, the social advantage of identification with Americans, the hope of financial help in time of distress, etc., influence people to join the Church? Are we sufficiently careful to discover a truly spiritual dimension to the motivation of our candidates above and beyond these social, political, and economic factors?
7. What efforts have we made to re-examine together pastoral practices concerning infant baptism? What initial steps have we taken to confront parents with the responsibility involved for them and their children when a child is baptized? What instructions are given to the catechists on this subject?

### 3. Continuing Formation of the Christian Community

It is the Holy Spirit who forms the Christian community, but he does it through the members of that community, bringing them together by their common efforts to experience the charity of Christ in active service, nourishing them through faith and confidence in the Word of God and Sacramental life, enabling them to discover themselves and each other by presenting their own selves together with Christ as servants for the life of the world.  
(Cf. Rom. 12, 1)

This same Holy Spirit is already at work in the world, in the hearts of men who do not know Christ, but who strive to live a good life thanks to his grace (De Ecclesia 16). Such men have created their own institutions for the welfare of mankind.

The Christian community does not exist in order to run competition with such men and institutions; it exists in order to help them discover the deepest source of their own drive for progress, justice, peace, happiness, culture, freedom and human dignity. She exists in order to help them discover what is not geared to the true welfare of the whole man and the entire human community in their society. Her task is to help them discover in themselves what is not of the Holy spirit, but of an evil spirit, and to challenge them to respond according to the Truth.

Such a challenge is offered only when Christians themselves display the same preoccupations and concerns as their brothers and respond to them with greater realism, greater understanding, greater love. If they are to do this, the community itself must be a source of truth, understanding, and love.

All forms of service within the Christian community, the service of the priesthood and the service of Christian institutions, must be geared to this, and the community must be of such a size, and so indigenous to the secular environment that its members may truly experience inside of it the same love and understanding they are to exercise outside of it.

Consequently, we should ask ourselves:

1. What values are primary in our preaching, teaching, catechesis and personal counseling? Do we emphasize what people receive in the sacraments or what they are called to give? Does obeying the law receive more emphasis than serving the world? Does knowledge of doctrine receive more emphasis than effective charity? Do we mistakenly assume that all who have been baptized have been properly evangelized?
2. Are we willing to accept that some people find our insistence on the need for Christian witness a hard saying and walk with us no longer?
3. Are the communities we serve of such a size that Christians effectively experience inside of them the love and concern they are supposed to show outside? Is the obstacle to smaller communities a feeling that priests are indispensable to all forms of Christian community? Do priests reserve to themselves many functions that well-formed Christians can perform, e.g., catechetical instructions for baptism, first communion and marriage; decision-making as to buildings and services, forms of apostolate, acceptance of new candidates for baptism; or, even, Sunday worship and Christian burial where the priest cannot assist.

4. Do we cultivate in the community an effective effort toward unity, between social classes, between racial groups, between hostile secular communities, between Christian churches?
5. In seeking to make our community truly indigenous do we ask ourselves such questions as: Does my concern for efficiency and speed sometimes discourage initiative and responsibility? Do our programs aimed at forming leaders tend to estrange these leaders from their environment? Might this also be true of our seminaries? If foreign personnel were hastily removed, could our institutions be supported by the local community? Is the problem of local support for national clergy a primary consideration in our plans for building, in our establishment of catechist systems, in our medical, educational and socio-economic projects?
6. Which comes first, the building or the community it houses? Who should be responsible for building when buildings are necessary? Who should decide what buildings are needed and how they are to be built? Do we build just because money has been offered to us for that purpose?
7. How do our institutions such as catechetical centers, schools, dispensaries, clinics, hospitals, social service centers, youth centers, credit unions and cooperatives relate to the institutions of the secular community? Are they in competition? If they are needed by the whole community do they need to be labeled 'Catholic' or 'Maryknoll'? Do they need to be administered by priests, Brothers, Sisters? If our institutions are run more efficiently and have better standards than the corresponding secular institutions, do they serve in the long run to promote the quality and number of secular institutions, or rather to discourage and impede their development? Are our institutions regarded by local governments as obstacles to political unification? If so, why?