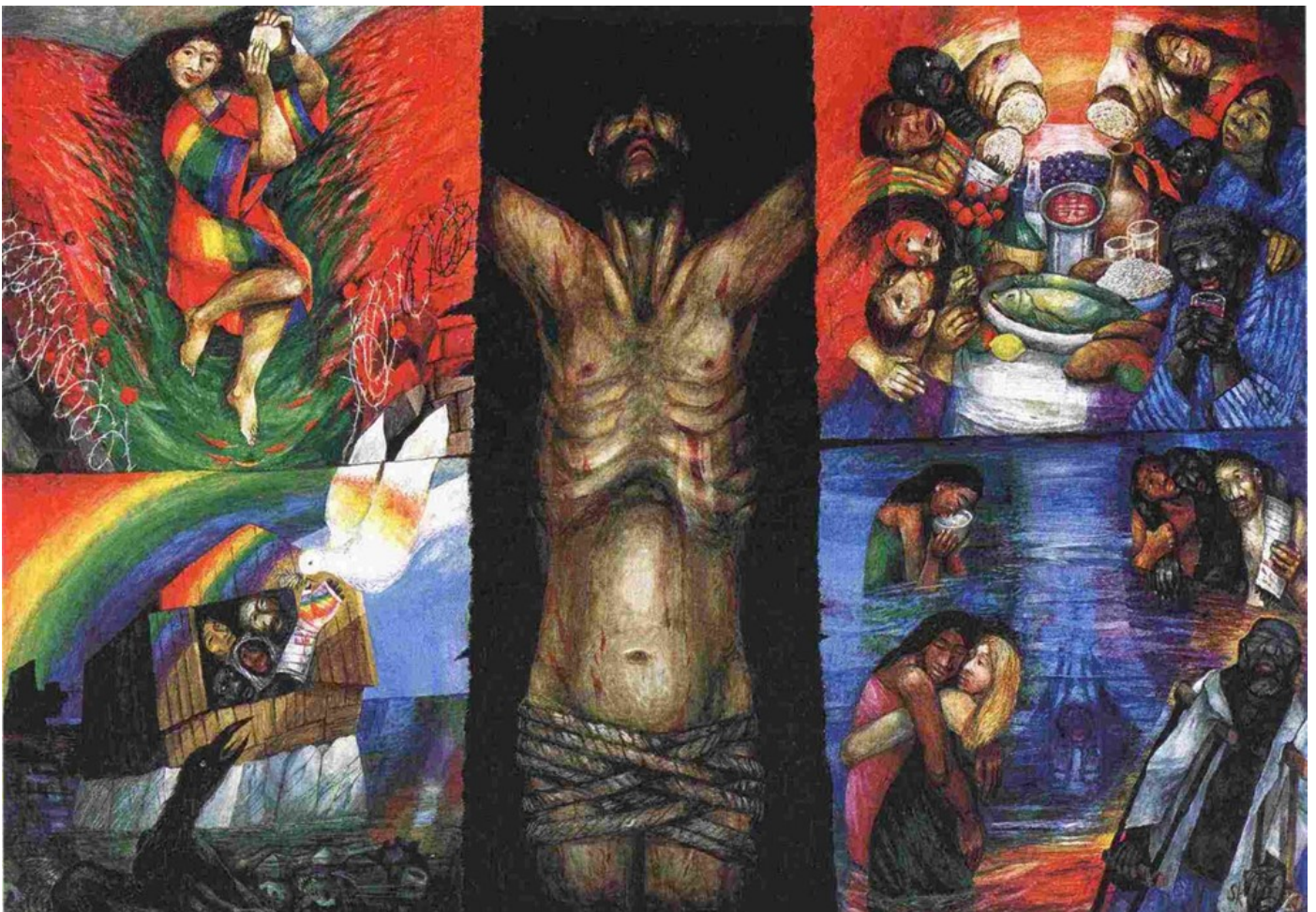


COMBONI MISSIONARIES

GENERAL SECRETARIAT OF MISSION
ROME

2020 — YEAR OF MINISTERIALITY

WORKBOOK FOR COMMUNITY ANIMATION



FOR A FRUITFUL USE OF THIS WORKBOOK

The Question of Ministeriality

This workbook for ongoing formation is a proposal that the General Secretariat of Mission makes to each confrere and community. As we all know, the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium* noted the epochal change of our time and the need for a profound renewal in the Church in order to live the Gospel joyfully and be faithful to our vocation as missionary disciples of Jesus. With this renewed vision of the Church, emerges ever more a Church that “goes forth, in which mission is the paradigm of her being and doing, as She listens to the Spirit through the cry of suffering humanity, the poor and Creation. The teaching of Pope Francis insists on the vision of a ministerial Church, that is, fraternal, imbued “with the smell of the sheep”, synodal, collaborative and witnessing to the joy of the Gospel through proclamation, lifestyle and service. A Church that undertakes a journey of conversion and that goes beyond clericalism and the convenient pastoral criterion of “we have always done it this way”. (EG 33).

The 18th General Chapter welcomed this orientation of the universal Church and made it its own, wishing for a path of regeneration and requalification of our missionary commitment in the line of ministries (AC'15, 21-26; 44-46). The Spirit calls us to dream and to conversion, as missionaries “going forth” who live the Gospel through sharing joy and mercy; called to cooperate in the growth of the Kingdom, beginning with listening to God, Comboni and humanity. A dream that is

God's dream, which leads us to dare, despite our smallness, aware that we are not isolated, but members of a ministerial Church. We are called to evangelize as a community, in communion and collaboration with the whole Church, to promote together with the poor the globalization of fraternity and tenderness. All this means making choices to reduce and re-qualify our commitments, to develop specific pastoral services, to reach out to marginalized human groups or in frontier situations.

To help us grow on this path, the Guide for the Implementation of the 18th General Chapter reserved the year 2020 for reflection on the theme of ministries. We wish to propose an action-reflection process, that is, an approach that starts from experience, reflecting critically on its transformative potential and its critical points, to discern renewed courses of action.

This is what Comboni himself did: he arrived at the *Plan for the Regeneration of Africa with Africa* thanks to a direct experience of the mission, to his detailed study of other experiences, finding in the ministerial style the answer to the apparently “impossible” challenge of the evangelization of Africa. His Plan reflects a systemic understanding of the ministerial approach: a collective and “universal” work that creates networks of collaboration that bring together all ecclesial forces, and recognizing each one's specificity and originality. A work that gives life to a plurality of services, in response to human and social needs, for which he scientifically prepares *ad hoc* ministers. Com-

boni also envisaged the foundation of missionary communities that are sustainable from the ministerial, socio-economic and social significance points of view. As Benedict XVI and Francis remind us, the church grows out of attraction, not proselytism.

The methodology

This booklet is designed for community and participatory use. The basic idea is that the community and the mission in which we find ourselves is the privileged context of our ongoing formation. A journey of growth enriched by the cultural and generational differences of the members of the community. It follows Pope Francis' idea of a communion built according to the model of the polyhedron - instead of the sphere, cf. EG 236 - which means the conviviality of differences. In this sense, the proposed path is in continuity with the theme of intercultural relations, on which we worked in 2019.

Moreover, the path is designed to integrate the experiential dimension with disciplinary studies; the cognitive dimension with the affective one; action with reflection. We have therefore chosen the methodology of the pastoral cycle, which starts from reality and experience, with insertion; it then develops an analytical understanding of reality, through socio-cultural analysis. Then comes the moment of theological reflection, for a personal and community discernment, which leads to the choice of the interventions to be implemented. The process of action is in turn articulated in various phases, which include a verification and celebration of life that emerges along the way.

The material in this booklet is organized in worksheets and proposes 6 themes, which we consider crucial for our ministerial growth. We propose to develop each theme in a day set aside for the community, for

example a monthly retreat, or a day that the community wants to dedicate to ongoing formation. It is advisable to appoint an animator for these days, who will lead the community through 4 steps. There is a worksheet that facilitates the work at each step:

- = **Worksheet 1** proposes a case study to introduce and familiarize oneself with the theme; the community is called to reflect on the message arising from the story and share on the topic from each one's experience.
- = **Worksheet 2** presents an in-depth analysis, for a more analytical reading of the experience, so as to grasp the underlying dynamics and to understand their rationale. Further readings are suggested for a personal in-depth study of the theme at a later time.
- = **Worksheet 3** introduces the step of theological reflection, starting with the Word of God that helps interpreting experience in the light of faith and to listen to the Spirit. It includes an hour of personal prayer, with guiding questions.
- = **Worksheet 4** provides a space for sharing and community discernment, guided by a proposed outline. Typically, this phase ends with a community decision. It is suggested to conclude the day with the celebration of the Eucharist, for which some suggestions for liturgical animation are given.

These four steps are sequential, the next one presupposes the previous one. It is suggested to the animators to:

- = Create a climate of respect, mutual listening, and appreciation even when there are different points of view. The dynamics proposed are geared at enrichment, not at discussion to prove one has a better point.

- = Help the confrères to share from the heart, their feelings, their experiences, and not just their ideas. The sharing on the case study (worksheet 1) is also an opportunity to recall similar or complementary personal experiences.
- = Give everyone the opportunity to express themselves and share.
- = Take at heart the listening: of the proposed texts, of confreres, of the Word, and of the Spirit. An attitude of openness and receptivity helps us to discover new things, to look at reality from other points of view, to let ourselves be questioned and to be docile to the invitations of the Spirit.
- = Manage the 4 sessions through the worksheets, distributing each one at the time when it is to be used, to avoid distractions and "running ahead".
- = Make sure there is a secretary who takes note of the contributions and decisions of the community.
- = In the case of large communities, consider sharing in small groups so that everyone can find space to express himself and make a contribution.
- = Encourage doing the recommended readings to further explore the issues. Space for further sharing based on such readings can become another community activity.

Work Plan

- = **Introduction:** Clarifies the ministerial vision of the Church and facilitates a shared understanding of what ministries are.
- = **Theme 1:** The ministerial role of the presbyter
- = **Theme 2:** Ministerial collaboration
- = **Theme 3:** Evangelization and Ministries
- = **Theme 4:** The ministerial contribution of

the laity

- = **Theme 5:** Social and ecological ministry
- = **Theme 6 =** Synodality

Evaluation

The path proposed by this booklet is intended to be simple and to offer the possibility of personal, ministerial and community growth. It fits easily into the rhythm of community and apostolic life and bears fruit to the extent that the community, each time, makes small, concrete and realistic decisions and implements them. To help us do this, it is important to plan for an evaluation from the very beginning. This is why we propose:

- = **At the community level:** to evaluate regularly the implementation of the decisions taken by the community as part of this process at each Community Council.
- = **At the provincial level:** to collect and share the actions implemented by each community. This is an exchange that appreciates the growth of each community, their good practices, and it avails them to all, so that others may also adopt them if they find them relevant to their own situation.

We then ask the Circumscriptions to send this material to the **General Secretariat of Mission**, in order to follow up the whole journey we are making as an Institute.

THE VISION OF THE MINISTERIAL CHURCH

The teaching of Pope Francis takes up and relaunches the vision of Vatican Council II on the Church and her relationship with the world. He insists much on a fraternal Church, "going forth" to be with the last, the excluded; a missionary disciple Church who puts herself at the service of the needy. In brief, a "ministerial Church". We are invited to rediscover the authentic meaning of ministry, namely, "service". But it should not be taken for granted: etymologically, ministry can also mean "office", therefore it can assume an administrative and power overtones. Thus, before Vatican II, a decidedly clerical perspective prevailed, in which the real ministers were the priests and bishops, on whom coadjutors depend. The minister had to be different, put aside, separate. Ministry was first of all a service to a religion centered on the rite, the laws and the rubrics. All that led to emphasize external aspects, such as vestments and symbols, while holiness was often associated with the observance of tradition. It was a service of the religious structure rather than of people and was unilaterally focused on individual sin and individual conversion. The community was the object of the minister's zeal, therefore fundamentally passive and dependent on the minister.

A "New" Ecclesiology

The ecclesiology of the Council clearly goes beyond this perspective. It envisages that every baptized person is called to a ministerial service, inasmuch as the subject is the

Church as the "people of God", which as a Christian community confers on each one a mandate to minister by virtue of baptism and confirmation. All ministries are a participation in the ministry of Christ, and thus every ministry and every minister have equal dignity. The ministry presupposes closeness and insertion among the people, sharing, collaboration. At the centre there is not so much the ecclesiastical structure, but the people with their "joys and hopes", their "griefs and anxieties" (*Gaudium et spes* 1), with their human and social needs and aspirations. It therefore requires a church "that goes forth", as Pope Francis insists, which is capable of reaching out to the existential peripheries of our time.

This passage is the natural consequence of the fact that the Church "is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race" (*Lumen gentium* 1)¹. The Church is therefore a "mystery", that is, a reality permeated by the presence of God. The union with God and the unity of the whole human race are two sides of the same coin: it is because of her union with God that the Church participates in God's initiative to bring about the Kingdom of God² for all humanity. In the ministerial vision, the minister is the facilitator of the activity of the community which must be a sacrament of salvation for all people, Christians and non-Christians, for the cosmos and the environment.

The Christian community is a sacrament of social transformation in view of the King-

dom, subject of transformation and in transformation. Passiveness for the community is a state of mortal sin, in the sense that it endorses the processes that are leading to the destruction of peoples and the environment. Today social conversion and social sin are forcefully entering into the new ministerial vision. Therefore, ministers are at the service of making the community active and dynamic in order to transform today's world according to God's plan³, helping themselves with the indications of the Church's social teaching for human rights, the common good, social justice, and the safeguarding of creation.

Ministeriality as a Style, as a Way of Being Church

As a "sacrament", the Church is not only an instrument, but also a sign of communion with God and the unity of the whole human family. She bears witness to this with her life of faith and in her relationships, within herself and with the world. The ministerial approach is not only about "services", but also about a "style" of being a missionary Church. The paradigm of this style is found in the Acts of the Apostles. At the beginning, in Acts 1:8, we see the formation of the Christian community, receiving the Spirit and being called to witness to Jesus to the ends of the earth: a missionary community! But with what style does the community live this mandate? We see it in Acts 2:42-47:

⁴²They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³As we came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. ⁴⁴All who believed were together and had all things in

common; ⁴⁵they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

This passage presents the community of Jerusalem, a "paradigm"⁴ to be inspired by, not an ideal community, but a real community that is then idealised, building on the characteristics that define or qualify it:

- = all believers were together, persevering in communion, in fraternity (koinonia),
- = persevering in breaking bread together and prayer (leitourgia),
- = and taking care of those in need (diakonia),
- = while wonders and signs were happening through the work of the apostles, a testimony of the resurrection of Jesus and of the life in fullness that he granted (martyria).

These are 4 characteristics that define the ministerial style. They are 4 intertwined dimensions that are interdependent and are the meeting place of two realities: a charismatic aspect from above, Spirit and Word, and, from below, the reality of humanity, commitment and competence.

In regard to the community, the role of the apostles - who have been with Jesus from the beginning and who are witnesses of his resurrection - is to teach the Word of Jesus' preaching, transmitted, preserved and then put in writing to be proclaimed as the living Word. So much so that when the community becomes larger and more complex, there arises the need to have deacons to serve the needy so that they can dedicate themse-

lives to the Word and prayer (Acts 6:1-7).

As a result, everyday those who were saved joined "those who were together" (ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ), that is, the community: the church grows out of attraction, not out of proselytizing.

The same paradigm appears in another description of the community of Jerusalem (Acts 4:32-35), which stresses on *koinonia*, meaning union (one heart and one soul), both as synodality and solidarity (*diakonia*) at the service of those in need. The apostles gave with great strength witness to the resurrection (*martyria*): it is the image of a community determined to announce with gestures and words the resurrection of Jesus. The third summary depicting the face of the Christian community (Acts 5:12-16), underscores once again the transformative character (wonders, liberation from impure spirits and healings) of the Kingdom present among them.

"Already and not yet"

Basically, there is an eschatological element in the Church's mission, since it will be fully achieved in the future world. However, as *Gaudium et spes* (GS) explains, here and now the Church, "which is both a visible society and a spiritual community", walks together with all humanity and experiences the same earthly destiny with the world; she is like "the leaven and almost the soul of human society, destined to be renewed in Christ and to become the family of God" (GS 40). In a condition of reciprocity and exchange with human society, the Church contributes to the humanization of the world, with active involvement in promoting human dignity, social justice, the common good and integral ecology.

What does all this show us? A ministerial Church, which means: having an evangelical style of life, a style of communion; living relationships that generate life, with a spirit of service, which is expressed in a plurality of services, according to the needs that emerge, and which presuppose participation, shared responsibilities in a synodal spirit. It is a community that experiences the Kingdom and bears witness to it. A community that bears fruit and celebrates new life.

The Subjectivity of the people of God"

Through baptism and confirmation, the faithful gain access to God's presence in their lives and in the world. As sons and daughters of God, they gain access to God Abba, Father, and are regenerated into a new, transforming relationship with God and the human community. But the moment of full enabling is confirmation, the sacrament that confers a mission, the mandate to fulfill God's plan, through communion, prayer, witness and service. Through these sacraments the faithful become part of the Body of Christ, the Church, and therefore participate in its priestly, prophetic and kingly mission:

= *Participation in the priestly dimension*⁵: the faithful have direct access to God, the Father, and can make his presence felt. They can also mediate God's regenerating presence in all situations of life, especially among the poor or where human dignity is degraded, where there is exploitation and suffering. The faithful are at the service of an encounter that generates life, of dialogue with humanity: life in its fullness is a gift from God, but their collaboration is also required to experience and recognize God's presence in their situation and to access it.

= *Participation in the prophetic dimension* ⁶: this aspect concerns the reading and interpretation of trends, attitudes, facts of life according to God's vision or plan, reading the signs of the times and places. It is about the relationship between faith and social life, the awakening of consciences, socio-cultural awareness, the growth of a sense of civic responsibility. Today, this also requires skills in the humanities and social sciences, but then there is the need for the ability to make discernment in a perspective of faith, listening to the Word, enlightened by the Spirit and consciously aware also through the social teaching of the Church.

= *Participation in the kingly dimension* ⁷: through baptism, the faithful are delivered from sin and the Kingdom comes to them like a growing seed. The kingly ministry has to do with the growth of God's Kingdom in the world, which is visible in the emergence of truth and life, justice and peace, in the liberation of all creation. All the baptized and baptized are called to this task of liberation, of promoting human and peoples' dignity and integral ecology, beginning with:

- their professional competence, human and technical formation, civic responsibility;
- the grace of Christ, light of the world, the Creator's plan;
- social and economic justice
- permeate cultures and human activities with authentic human values;
- exercise authority as a service, not as domination over others.

What are "ministries"?

The Church's mission derives from her identity and the ministries - or pastoral services - in the Church are practical tools to carry it

forward. But what activities or works can be called ministries and what cannot?

O'Meara (1999, 139-149) argues that every time we give a precise, detailed definition, we end up excluding aspects that deserve to be included in the concept we are trying to clarify. However, because of the need for a shared understanding, we have to accept this limitation. So O'Meara proposes six characteristics that help us to recognise a truly ministerial action, which are:

= *Doing something*

A ministry is a concrete doing.

= *For the coming of the Kingdom*

A deed that is ordered to communion with God and to the unity of the human race. "The ministry - explains O'Meara (1999, 142) - makes the Kingdom explicit, turning its ambiguous presence into sacrament, word or action".

= *In public*

It is a deed that communicates its message clearly, that is visible and explicit in words and deeds. There is a difference between the loving care of a person of good will and the same action taken by religious women. In the first case, we see a fundamental gesture of charity, in the second an expression of Christian ministry because the motivation of the nuns' faith is explicit and therefore it is a public action, not a private one. On the other hand, an honest, welcoming, gentle bank clerk can also show Christian values with his attitudes. But unless he is asked to give reasons for his way of being and behaving, Christian life in itself is not an explicit witness to the faith that motivates it. Although Christian life provides the energy,

motivation and foundation of ministry, it is not exactly "ministry" in itself. So going back to the previous case, if the banker worked as an accountant in a team engaged in a Christian community project to promote, for example, human rights, or peace and reconciliation, he would participate fully in the team's ministerial activity, even without being involved in the field work, because his work is an integral part of rebuilding a reconciled community. As O'Meara further explains (1999, 145)

Christian life is not the same as ministry. It is certainly the backdrop to ministry, but it is wider than church ministry. If aspects of evangelical life such as justice, courage, and temperance flow from commitment to faith in the Gospel and are requirements for being a true Christian, they do not inevitably comprise ministry. Ministry brings something specific: namely, public voice and action directly for the kingdom.

= *On behalf of a Christian community*

The Christian community has a mandate to live according to the vision of the Kingdom and to promote it. This calls for a commitment to build a more humane society and to denounce and oppose social evils. This is why O'Meara (1999, 146) says that ministry begins with the Christian community, comes from the community and nourishes and expands the community. The complexity of society and the different situations that need to be redressed inevitably require a plurality of ministries. Some of these will animate and support the Christian community; others will reach out to the society as a whole, in dialogue with other institutions, groups and people. A plurality of ministries requires a plurality of ministers, who will not work in their own name. The service they render is an expression of the faith and commitment of the Christian community as a whole. That is why the community invites its members, recognizes them and gives

them a mandate. *Evangelii gaudium* (EG 24) reminds us of the vocation of this community: it is to be missionary, an outgoing church that takes the initiative to meet the geographical and existential peripheries, and is involved in the life of the excluded, marginalized; it accompanies them along the path of regeneration, a witness that announces the Kingdom. It bears fruit, because it is the Spirit who is the protagonist of the mission, the community discerns its signs and action in history, and it follows it, collaborates with what the Lord is already doing and therefore can celebrate, give thanks for the Kingdom that is already present.

= *A gift of the Spirit*

A gift received in faith through baptism and confirmation. The Spirit of the Risen Christ is the soul of ministerial action: his presence invites us to serve for the Kingdom, inspires discernment and enables us to act with different spiritual gifts (1Cor 12, 4 and 11). According to Paul, these special abilities are in themselves an expression of the Spirit and are given for the common good, for service, and not for the benefit of those who receive them.

= *Diverse services*

These are the result of different gifts that meet different needs in the Church and in society. From a ministerial perspective, there are both human talents and spiritual gifts which are placed at the service of the common good and which are an expression of the union of the faithful with God in Christ. Paul used the analogy of the Body of Christ, in which different people are united in different functions. This image rejects the idea that some charisms and ministries are essentially superior to others because all are

necessary for the body to be functional and to work harmoniously.

In conclusion, O'Meara (1999, 150) tries to give a definition of Christian ministry, which sounds like this:

Ministry is the public activity of a baptised follower of Jesus Christ flowing from the Spirit's charisma and an individual personality on behalf of a Christian community to proclaim, serve, and realize the kingdom of God.

Another definition - very similar in content and perspective - is given by McBrien (1989, 848) who states:

Ministry is a service publicly or at least explicitly designated by the Church to assist in the fulfillment of its mission.

This involves a call from the church, a public or explicit mandate (not necessarily sacramental or liturgical) and the continuation of Christ's mission in the church and the world.

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END NOTES

¹ God is present in the Church and also works through it in history. He takes the initiative to transform the world by sending the Word and the Spirit and the Church participates as an instrument in this movement. The Word, which presents the vision of God, reaches the world through the Christian community, which proclaims the Word of the Father and makes it alive, relevant and understandable. The Spirit helps the faithful to understand the Word and to put into practice what they have understood. And the Church, through the sacraments, is an important channel for the coming of the Spirit in the faithful. Another way in which the Spirit works in the world is through the various services rendered by the com-

munity in the community and in the world. The Spirit is present, sustains and works through the faithful who respond to people's needs, so that the result of their service does not depend only on what they do.

John Paul II in *Redemptoris missio* (14-15) presents the characteristics and needs of the Kingdom of God, stressing that "the nature of the kingdom is the communion of all human beings among themselves and with God. The kingdom concerns everyone: people, society, the whole world. Working for the Kingdom means recognizing and fostering divine dynamism, which is present in human history and transforms it. Building the kingdom means working for the liberation from evil in all its forms. In short, the kingdom of God is the manifestation and implementation of his plan of salvation in all its fullness".

Lumen gentium la Chiesa is a mission of proclamation and evocation of the Kingdom of God among all peoples. Indeed, the Dogmatic Constitution presents the Church as "the people of God", consecrated with a messianic task: she is sustained and enabled by the Spirit for a mission of liberation (cf. Lk 4:16-22), to serve the Kingdom of God, guiding people towards salvation.

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³ According to *Lumen Gentium* the Church is a mission of proclamation and evocation of the Kingdom of God among all peoples. Indeed, the Dogmatic Constitution presents the Church as "the people of God", consecrated with a messianic task: she is sustained and enabled by the Spirit for a mission of liberation (cf. Lk 4:16-22), to serve the Kingdom of God, guiding people towards salvation.

⁴ The summary is not a photograph of real life in the Church of Jerusalem, but neither is it a pure fantasy of the author. Luca generalizes concrete episodes from tradition. Generalizing individual cases, he wants to make a reality for all.

⁵ Cf. LG 10.34; GS 34.

⁶ Cf. LG 35; GS 35.

⁷ Cf. LG 36; GS 36.

