

3. The Spirit of the risen Lord, through whom the Christian community exists, continues to maintain the People of God in obedience to the will of the Father. Thus he safeguards their faithfulness to the revelation of Jesus Christ and equips them for their mission within the world. By this action of the Holy Spirit, the authority of the Lord is active in the church. Incorporation into Christ and obedience to Him opens Christians to one another and makes them responsible for each other. But since the Lordship of Christ is universal, the community also bears a responsibility towards all mankind. This involves a participation in whatever promotes the good of society and a responsiveness to every form of human need. The common life in the body of Christ gives to each of its members, and to the community as a whole, what is required to fulfil this responsibility. They are thereby enabled to act and speak in such a way that the authority of Christ is mediated through them. In this sense Christian authority means that Christians may so act and speak in the name of Christ that through them men may hear the authoritative word of Christ.

4. The Church is a community which consciously seeks to submit to the Lordship of Christ. Each member of this community by sharing in the life of the Spirit finds within the koinonia the means to be faithful to the revelation of Jesus Christ. Some respond more fully to the call of Christ. For this reason they win a respect within the community that qualifies them to speak

in the name of Christ with a certain kind of authority to their fellow members. But the Holy Spirit gives to some individuals or communities special gifts for the benefit of the church. This second kind of authority concerns the right to speak within the Christian community and to be heeded because of an inner quality of life or of some special endowment of the Spirit.

5. Among the special gifts of the Spirit for the edification of the church is that of the episcope of the ordained ministry. The Holy Spirit commissions some through ordination for this special service to the whole community. Because the church exists where there is adherence to "the apostles' doctrine, the fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Act 2:42), they exercise a particular authority in ministerial functions related to these constitutive elements of the church. This pastoral authority is primarily exercised by the bishop, who has the responsibility of preserving and promoting the integrity of the koinonia. It is a service to further the church's response to the Lordship of Christ and its commitment to mission. Since the bishop has the general oversight of the community, he can require the compliance necessary to maintain faith and charity in its daily life. However, he does not act in isolation; all those who exercise ministerial authority must do so in mutual responsibility and interdependence. This is a third form of authority: it means a service of the church, officially exercised only by the ordained ministers and intrinsic to the functions which structure the church, according to the mandate given by Christ and recognized by the community.

6. It is not solely the prerogative of the ordained ministry to perceive the will of God for the church. This requires the interaction of its members. By living faithfully the life of the koinonia, all may become sensitive to the way the Spirit is guiding the church. They are thereby led towards a deeper understanding of the Gospel and a recognition of its implications in the diverse cultures and changing situations of society. Those who are commissioned by ordination to discern these insights and give authoritative expression to their content are themselves involved in the community; they share its quest for understanding of the Gospel and obedience to Christ; they are receptive to the needs and concerns of all.

For its part, the community must respond to and can assess the discernment of the ordained ministers. In this way there takes place a continuing process of discernment and response in which the faith is expressed and the Gospel is pastorally applied. Through this interaction the Holy Spirit manifests the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ so that the faithful may live freely under the discipline of the Gospel.

7. By the convergence and complementarity of these various means the Holy Spirit keeps the church under the Lordship of Christ. In fulfilling his promise that he will never relinquish his people, Christ takes full account of human weakness. Because the limitations and sinfulness of human nature are still evident in all Christians, the several authorities in the church never adequately reflect Christ's authority. The awareness of this inadequacy involves a continual summons to reform.