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THE ORDAINED MINISTRY

7. The ultimate goal of all ministry is the glory of God. Nevertheless ministries assume various patterns which correspond to the varying needs of those whom the Church is seeking to serve. Whichever different forms survive may like the objectives of ministry remain always the same. They are concerned with those outside the Church: with proclaiming the Gospel and bringing men into the fellowship of Christ's people, and so under his rule of love; with showing God's compassion for all mankind and his concern for justice in the affairs of men. Within the Church's life these ministries are concerned with the worship of God and the spiritual health of the Christian community. The Church, like any human community, requires a focus of unity and leadership which God provides for it in the ordained ministry. It is the role of the ordained minister within the Church's fellowship to co-ordinate these varied activities, and to initiate and promote all that is necessary for the Church's life and mission.

8. In the New Testament a variety of images is used to describe the functions of this co-ordinating minister. He is servant, both of Christ and of the Church. As herald and ambassador he is an authoritative representative of Christ who proclaims his message of reconciliation. As a teacher he explains and applies the Word of God to the community. As a shepherd he exercises pastoral care and guides the flock. He is a steward who may only provide for the household of God what belongs to Christ. He is to be an example both in holiness and in compassion. The ordained minister co-ordinates and promotes the full divinity of the Church's life.

9. The Gospel assures us that Christ and his Spirit will never forsake the Church. The New Testament shows that, from the large variety of patterns existing at the beginning,

there soon emerged a special ministry of oversight within the Church, and we believe that the provision of a ministry of this kind is part of God's design for his people. There is no clear design for this oversight in the New Testament, though at least some main lineaments are traceable there. Bishops and presbyters were interchangeable terms but by the beginning of the second century the bishop is coming to be distinct from the presbyters, and since that time the ministry has retained three grades of bishops, presbyters and deacons. The internal needs of the community's continuing life brought about this development.

10. The historical diversification of its functions must not be allowed to obscure the fact that the one essential element in the ordained ministry is its responsibility for oversight (episcopate). This responsibility involves fidelity to the apostolic faith, its embodiment in the life of the Church today, and its transmission to the Church of tomorrow.

11. The continuing mission of the Church is to proclaim reconciliation in Christ and to manifest his reconciling love. The central act of worship, the Eucharist, is the memorial of that reconciliation and the nourishing of the Church's life for the fulfilment of its mission. Hence it is appropriate that he who has oversight in the Church and is the focus of its unity should preside at the celebration of the Eucharist. As early as Ignatius, at least in some Churches, the man exercising this oversight presided at the Eucharist as no other could do so without his consent. (Smyrn. 8:1). Because the Eucharist is the memorial of the sacrifice of Christ, its minister bears a special relation to the sacrificial act of Jesus our High Priest. Thus the Church saw the priestly role of Christ reflected in him and used priestly terms in describing him. Nevertheless in the faith of our Churches the priestly sacrifice of Jesus was unique, as is also his continuing High Priesthood. Moreover in the

New Testament ministers are never called 'priests'. The Christian ministers are necessarily members of the redeemed community. Not only do they share through baptism in the royal priesthood of the People of God. (1 Peter 2:9), but they are - particularly in the leading of worship - representative of the whole Church in the fulfilment of its priestly role.

Nevertheless their ministry does not derive from the common Christian priesthood. It exists to promote it, by helping the Church to be what it is called to be for the good of mankind and the glory of God.