

5. Among the special gifts of the Spirit for the edification of the church is that of the episcopate 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 devotion to "the apostles' doctrine, the fellowship, the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42), they exercise a particular authority in ministerial functions related to these matters. This pastoral authority is primarily exercised by the bishop, who has the responsibility to preserve and promote 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 level 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. Nevertheless the discovery of the will of God that the church must obey is not solely the prerogative of the ordained ministry. It requires the interaction of all the members of the church. By living faithfully the life of the koinonia, all 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 and changing situations of

life. 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 an on-going process of discernment and response in which the faith is formulated 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 human authorities in the Church never adequately reflect Christ's authority. The awareness of this inadequacy involves a continual summons to reform.