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ARCIG 230/Petrine Texts/2

Venice 24(a) (Revd.J.Charley/Fr.J.Tillard)

DRAFT

There has been an unfortunate tendency in seeking to define the ministry of the Bishop of Rome to look at the Petrine texts as if everything said of Peter was automatically applicable to the Bishop of Rome. For instance, Roman Catholic apologetics have often given the impression that, when Jesus Christ was speaking about Peter, he also had in mind what was to become the office of the Bishop of Rome. Our traditions agree that not everything said of the apostles as the prime witnesses of Jesus Christ and foundations of the Church of God is transmitted to those chosen to continue their mission. They are the foundations precisely because they are the unique <sup>committed</sup> witnesses to the once-for-all saving work of Christ. Peter's role is never isolated from that of the apostolic group. Therefore what is true of the transmissibility of the mission of the apostolic group as such is also true of Peter. If the sentence, "On this rock I will build my church", is spoken to Peter, that does not imply that the same words can necessarily be said of the Bishop of Rome or, if they do apply to him, with exactly the same meaning. [Many things said of Peter cannot be said of any other minister in the Church. In confessing that Jesus was the Christ and in preaching the good news of Christ to the gathering of the people of God at Pentecost, Peter was the first to proclaim the truth which every subsequent minister has to continue to proclaim.] <sup>The distinctive character</sup> This does not exclude the possibility of a ministry of unity endowed by the Spirit at the centre of those who continue the apostolic mission.

The position of Peter among the apostles has often been discussed in relation to the importance of the bishop of Rome among the bishops. This fact makes it incumbent upon us to look at the data of the New Testament and its so-called Petrine Texts. Even though Peter exercised a certain leadership among the apostles, pastoral

responsibility was not restricted exclusively to him. Many of the words addressed to Peter by Jesus are also addressed to the rest of the apostles through him. His mission has to be exercised always as a part of the whole apostolic mission. The expression "binding and loosing", which is used for the explicit commission to Peter in Mt.16:19, appears again in Mt. 18:18 in a wider, though direct, promise to the ministers of the Church. Similarly the apostolic foundation upon which the church is built is related to Peter in Mt. 16:18 and to the whole apostolic body elsewhere in the New Testament (e.g. Eph. 2:20). Even though Peter was the spokesman at Pentecost, already the charge to proclaim the gospel to all the world had been given by the risen Christ to the Eleven (Acts 1:2-8). Paul also, although he was not among the Twelve, was conspicuous for the leadership which he exercised with an authority received from the Lord himself, claiming to share with Peter and others parallel responsibility and apostolic authority (Gal.2:7, 8: 1 Cor.9:1).