

1965

Decree

**Christus Dominus**

*Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church*

*Vatican Council II*

*(Excerpts)*

28 October 1965

6. As legitimate successors of the Apostles and members of the episcopal college, bishops should realize that they are bound together and should manifest a concern for all the churches. For by divine institution and the rule of the apostolic office each one together with all the other bishops is responsible for the Church.<sup>7</sup> They should especially be concerned about those parts of the world where the word of God has not yet been proclaimed or where the faithful, particularly because of the small number of priests, are in danger of departing from the precepts of the Christian life, and even of losing the faith itself. [229]

Let bishops, therefore, make every effort to have the faithful actively support and promote works of evangelization and the apostolate. Let them strive, moreover, to see to it that suitable sacred ministers as well as auxiliaries, both religious and lay, be prepared for the missions and other areas suffering from a lack of clergy. They should also see to it, as much as possible, that some of their own priests go to the above-mentioned missions or dioceses to exercise the sacred ministry there either permanently or for a set period of time. [230]

Bishops should also be mindful, in administering ecclesiastical property, of the needs not only of their own dioceses but also of the other particular churches, for they are also a part of the one Church of Christ. Finally, they should direct their attention, according to their means, to the relief of disasters by which other dioceses and regions are affected. [231]

16. In exercising their office of father and pastor, bishops should stand in the midst of their people as those who serve.<sup>12</sup> Let them be good shepherds who know their sheep and whose sheep know them. Let them be true fathers who excel in the spirit of love and solicitude for all and to whose divinely conferred authority all gratefully submit themselves. Let them so gather and mold the whole family of their flock that everyone, conscious of his own duties, may live and work in the communion of love. [232]

In order to be able to look more closely to the welfare of the faithful according to the condition of each one, bishops should strive to become duly acquainted with their needs in the social circumstances in which they live. Therefore, they ought to employ suitable methods, especially social research. They should manifest their [233]

concern for everyone, no matter what their age, condition, or nationality, be they natives, strangers, or foreigners. In exercising this pastoral care they should preserve for their faithful the share proper to them in Church affairs; they should also respect their duty and right of actively collaborating in the building up of the Mystical Body of Christ.

18. Special concern should be shown for those among the faithful who, on account of their way of life, cannot sufficiently make use of the common and ordinary pastoral care of parish priests or are quite cut off from it. Among this group are the majority of migrants, exiles and refugees, seafarers, air-travelers, gypsies, and others of this kind. Suitable pastoral methods should also be promoted to sustain the spiritual life of those who go to other lands for a time for the sake of recreation. [234]

Episcopal conferences, especially national ones, should pay special attention to the very pressing problems concerning the above-mentioned groups. Through voluntary agreement and united efforts, they should look to and promote their spiritual care by means of suitable methods and institutions. They should also bear in mind the special rules either already laid down or to be laid down by the Apostolic See<sup>15</sup> which can be wisely adapted to the circumstances of time, place, and persons. [235]

23. For this same purpose, where there are faithful of a different rite, the diocesan bishop should provide for their spiritual needs either through priests or parishes of that rite or through an episcopal vicar endowed with the necessary faculties. [236] Wherever it is fitting, the last named should also have episcopal rank. Otherwise the Ordinary himself may perform the office of an Ordinary of different rites. If for certain reasons, these prescriptions are not applicable in the judgment of the Apostolic See, then a proper hierarchy for the different rites is to be established.<sup>16</sup>

Also, where similar situations exist, provision should be made for the faithful of different language groups, either through priests or parishes of the same language, or through an episcopal vicar well versed in the language-and if needs be having the episcopal dignity-or at least in some other more appropriate way. [237]

## Chapter I

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Pius XII's encyclical letter, *Fidei Donum*, April 21, 1957: A.A.S. 49 (1957) p. 27 ff.; also cf. Benedict XV's apostolic letter, *Maximum Illud*, Nov. 30, 1919: A.A.S. 11 (1919) p. 440; Pius XI's encyclical letter, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, Feb. 28, 1926: A.A.S. 18 (1926) p.68.

## Chapter II

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Luke 22:26-27

<sup>15</sup> cf. St. Pius X's *motu proprio*, *Iampridem*, March 19, 1914: A.A.S. 6 (1914) p. 174 ff.; Pius XII's apostolic constitution, *Exul Familia*, Aug. 1, 1952: A.A.S. 54 (1952) p. 652 ff.; *Leges Operis Apostolatus Maris*, compiled under the authority of Pius XII Nov. 21, 1957: A.A.S. 50 (1958) p. 375 ff.

<sup>16</sup> cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches, Nov. 21, 1964, no. 4: A.A.S. 57 (1965) p. 77.

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[http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decree\\_19651028\\_christus-dominus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651028_christus-dominus_en.html).

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