

Vatican II and the Theology of the Presbyterate

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INTRODUCTION

The Council of Trent is called the “Council of the Pope”. Likewise Second Vatican Council is known as the “Council of the Bishops.” The reason behind such labeling is that the Council of Trent and the Second Vatican Council gave importance to papacy and episcopacy respectively. It is an indirect way of saying that the life and ministry of the presbyters did not draw the attention of the Fathers in the Second Vatican Council at its initial stage. In the course of the Council, however, the Fathers felt that a separate document should be dedicated to the ministry and life of the presbyters. Hence in the last session of the council the document *Presbyterorum Ordinis* was approved.

To understand better the theology of the presbyterate as enunciated by the Second Vatican Council, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* should be read along with other conciliar and post-conciliar documents such as *Lumen Gentium*, *Christus Dominus*, *Optatam Totius* and *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. This article aims at explaining the salient themes of the theology of the presbyterate as presented in the conciliar and post-conciliar documents. These themes can be better understood and appreciated only in the light of the new perspectives which gave rise to the new understanding of the theology of the presbyterate in Vatican II. Hence in the first part we shall study the new perspectives

that shed light on and influence the various themes of the theology of the presbyterate. In the second part we shall present the important themes of the theology of the presbyterate.

PART I: NEW PERSPECTIVES

1. Retrieving Presbyterian - Local Church Relationship

A local Church and ministries exercised in it are inextricably interrelated. The moment a church comes into existence, ministries also take a shape, because ministries are essential for the building up of the Church. This is the ecclesial view of ministry. When the apostles and prophets formed a Church, they immediately appointed the pastoral leaders to build up the nascent churches further. They were chosen from the community to serve it. In one way it is the community together with its leaders that chose its leaders and asked the apostles to lay their hands over them and pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Thus ministries emerged from the needs of the community. Initially though there were various types of ministries, gradually diaconate, presbyterate and episcopate emerged as ordained ministries and stable forms of leadership in the Church.

The primary responsibility of these pastoral leaders is to form the community in the apostolic faith, ensuring the continuation of the apostolic faith. They carried out this formation ministry playing various roles and functions: to counsel, to encourage, to teach, to support, to discipline, to give sanctions, to guide, to lead and to offer the sacrifice. Liturgical presidency is one of the functions they performed, and that too, just because they were pastoral leaders of the community. Thus, pastoral leadership had precedence over liturgical presidency. In other words, liturgical presidency is one function of the pastoral leadership. Analysing the evolution of priesthood in the Bible, Soares-Prabhu says: "As pastors...the *presbyteroi*, *episkopoi* and *diakonoi*

would have had a role in the community. If they presided over the Eucharist (and it is not certain that they always did), they did so because they held a pastoral office in the community. They did not hold a pastoral office because they presided over the Eucharist. Pastoral office preceded any cultic function.”¹ Thus ministries in the early Church, including presbyterate and episcopate, emerged from and for a particular church. Therefore we cannot imagine a ministry without a bond with a local Church. Participation of the laity even today in an ordination ceremony is an attestation to such a healthy tradition. The Council of Chalcedon firmly affirmed this principle. Commenting on the text of Chalcedon, Schellebeeckx says;

“This text displays a clearly defined view of ministry in the Church. Only someone who has been called by a particular community (the people and its leaders) to be its pastor and leader authentically receives *ordination*. Ordination is an appointment or incorporation as minister to a community which calls a particular-fellow Christian and indicates him as its leader (or, above all in the earlier period, which accepts the actual charismatic emergence of one of its members and gives it official confirmation). And ‘absolute ordination’ i.e., one in which hands are laid on someone without his being asked by a community to be its leader, is null and void.”²

Unfortunately, over the centuries, due to various factors ministries were detached from the local communities. Ministers were ordained without reference to the pastoral leadership of a community. In the 12th century “absolute ordinations” (ordination detached from the local community) came into existence. One of the chief factors that facilitated this process was an exclusive identification of the priesthood with the power to offer sacrifice. This process reached its climax in the 13th century with a decree issued by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215). Accordingly, only a validly and legitimately ordained priest can celebrate the Eucharist. This close association between

ordination to priesthood and the celebration of the Eucharist had a negative bearing on the theology of the presbyterate. That is, soon it came to be understood that priests were ordained only to celebrate Eucharist without pastoral leadership in a community. In addition, in the following years, ordination to priesthood was understood as conferral of “sacred power” to consecrate Eucharist and to remit and retain sins. Reacting to the Reformers, the Council of Trent only reinforced this view of theology of ministry:

“Sacrifice and priesthood are by the ordinance of God so united that both have existed under every law...Moreover, the Sacred Scriptures make it clear and the Tradition of the Catholic Church has always taught that this priesthood was instituted by the same Lord our Saviour, and that the power of consecrating, offering and administering His body and blood, and likewise of remitting and retaining sins was given to the apostles and to their successors in the priesthood.”³

This narrow and one-sided understanding of the ministry had an adverse consequence on the ministry of presbyterate. First, because priesthood was exclusively identified with power to celebrate the Eucharist, the other two functions of a presbyter – prophetic and pastoral governance – were completely ignored. Dunn calls the identification of priesthood exclusively with the Eucharist as “Holy Thursday origin of the priesthood,” because it is our faith that Jesus Christ instituted priesthood and Eucharist on that day. “The consequences of this ‘Holy Thursday’ origin of the priesthood” according to him “were a narrow (and exclusively Eucharistic) ecclesiology, an absence of an organic link between presbyterate and episcopate, a static rather than a mission-oriented notion of presbyterate, and an inability to explain the other ‘associated powers’ of the presbyterate.”⁴In particular, the exclusive identification of the priesthood with the Eucharist made a strong inroad in the prophetic ministry of the priests. According to Gerald O’Collins, “this resulted in a one-sided stress on priesthood as cultic and hierarchical – with, for

instance, preaching the Word of God as a priestly function left out of the picture.”⁵This is why priests were trained to say Mass, not to preach the gospel in the pre-Vatican II era. Second, since priesthood as a ministry was detached from a community and ‘absolute ordinations’ came into practice, the function of pastoral governance, that is, giving pastoral care to a community went into oblivion.

Second Vatican Council took a few measures to offset this one-sided and narrow view of the theology of the presbyterate. First, it did not use the term ‘priest’ or ‘clergy’. Instead it used only ‘presbyter’ and ‘presbyterate’. By doing so, it freed priesthood from its narrow and exclusive identification with the Eucharist; it sent a message that a priest is not a cultic person though celebration of the Eucharist plays a vital and indispensable role in his life and ministry; it struck a balance between the three functions of the presbyter and thus affirmed the unity of the three functions. Commenting on *Presbyterum Ordinis*, Schillebeeckx points out this shift from cultic to ministerial view of presbyterate: “This decree transcends the traditional image of the priest, which was defined by his liturgical relations to the eucharist. It draws a pastoral image of him which does not deny his function in religious worship, but incorporates it in a larger entity; the prophetic service of the word and the pastoral leadership and guidance of the church community are thus reappraised.”⁶Moreover, the term ‘presbyterate’ is a relational term. It signifies the type of relationship the leader has to his community. It has an ecclesial connotation, that is, a presbyter is related to a community. Second, while affirming the unity of the three functions of the bishop, the Council gave primacy to the prophetic function: “Among the more important duties of bishops that of preaching Gospel has pride of place” (LG25). Since presbyters share in the ministerial role of the bishop, they also have the same priority. Dunn says:

“Given the strongly cultic bias which the priesthood had had in recent history, one might have expected that precedence would be given to the ‘priestly’ function of bishops. But the Fathers realized that unless the Gospel is first preached, the sacraments remain meaningless rituals. Then, because the Order of Presbyters is derived from the episcopate and shares in a limited way the fullness of that sacrament possessed by the Bishop, presbyters have the same priority of functions: ‘presbyters, as co-workers with their bishop, have as *their primary duty the proclamation of the Gospel of God to all*’ (PO 4).⁷

Commenting on the *Presbyterorum Ordinis* Gerald O’Collins says that “it insisted that preaching of the word is essential and, indeed, primary obligation of ministerial priests.”⁸ The sacramental origin of the relationship between the presbyter and the community he serves may not find a very explicit articulation in the documents of the Vatican II. But this is the spirit that forms the newness of the theology of the presbyterate. The Post-Vatican II documents bring out this dimension of the theology of the presbyterate more and more.

2. Priority to the Mission

The mission of the Father is “to gather up all things in him [Jesus], things in heaven and things on earth” (Eph. 1:10). This is to reconcile everything in Jesus Christ. The Son, through his words and deeds, did the ministry of reconciliation as his Father wished. Paul succinctly summarises Jesus’ ministry of reconciliation thus: “For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both the groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in the place of two, and might reconcile both the groups to God in one body, through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it”

(Eph. 2:14-16). This is the mission Jesus entrusted to his Church. The Church is called to be the sign and instrument of reconciliation and unity. "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us" (1 Cor 5:18). Jesus also prayed to his Father that the Church may be a community of reconciliation as he is in communion with his Father (Jn. 17:21).

Hence the Council Fathers affirm that the Church exists for promoting "communion with God and unity of all men," because this is the deepest nature of the Church (LG 1, GS. 42). This is a mandate given to all members of the Church. Yet, as the leaders of a community, it is a bounden duty of the ordained ministers to promote unity among all men and women and finally communion of the humanity with God. *Lumen Gentium* expressly states this mandate:

"Since the human race today is tending more and more towards civil, economic and social unity, it is all the more necessary that priests should unite their efforts and combine their resources under the leadership of bishops and the Supreme Pontiff and thus eliminate division and dissension in every shape or form, so that all mankind may be led into the unity of the family of God." (28)

The roles and functions of a presbyter should be understood and interpreted in the context of this broader mission. His primary mission is to form the local Church (the parish) as a community of communion and to promote communion with other local Churches (other parishes) in a particular Church (diocese). Wood says, "Perhaps the most important role of ordained ministry is to assure the communion of a local community both with the apostolic tradition and with other Eucharistic communities so that the local church is a communion of communion with other communions."⁹ Thus the presbyter is to ensure that the local church he represents is in synchronic

communion – a communion with all other churches in the universal Church and in diachronic communion – a communion with the apostolic faith. Hence Wood emphatically affirms that “ordination is more than a sacred power to confect the Eucharist; it is also the authorization through the election of the community, prayer to the Holy Spirit, and the laying on of hands to represent the community within the communion of the Churches.”¹⁰ In fact an ordained ministry authorizes a person to foster a network of relationships among the local churches enriching the communion of the Churches in the universal Church. “This communion is accomplished through the personal relationship of ordained presbyters to their bishops and of bishops to other bishops within the college of bishops. Ordination constitutes this network of relationships by authorizing a person to represent ecclesial communities in these relationships.”¹¹

As mentioned above, the development of the theology of priesthood in the Middle Ages in close connection with the power to celebrate the Eucharist eclipsed the missionary obligations of the presbyters, particularly the preaching of the Gospel and governance of the people of God. But Vatican II offered a balanced theology of the presbyterate and retrieved its veiled missionary dimension. Describing the contribution of Second Vatican Council in this regard, O’Mera says: “The specificity of the priesthood included not only the power of the Eucharist but action in the name of Christ, head of his Body, the Church, and so the priesthood as service was not only cultic (Trent) but apostolic (Vatican II).”¹² Emphasising the prophetic mission of the Church, L. Legrand says that the presbyters ministry is mission and it should be primarily at the service of the Word of God: “In agreement with the prophetic mission of the Church, the priest is not just a care taker, a ‘clerk of God’ (Drewermann), an administrator of God’s people. He is engaged for a mission, as one entrusted with the vigor of God’ Word. Viewed in the perspective of the service to the Word of God, his ministry is mission.”¹³

Therefore, the theology of the presbyter as presented in the Vatican II documents should be understood in the light of these two basic perspectives: the sacramental origin of the relationship between a community and the presbyter and the priority of the mission in the life of the presbyter. Now let us study the salient features of the theology of the presbyterate as articulated in the Vatican II documents.

PART II: SALIENT FEATURES OF THE THEOLOGY OF PRESBYTERATE

1. A Servant of the Priesthood of the People

As seen already, the Father's mission is to "to gather up all things in him [Jesus], things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:10). He consecrated his Son and sent him into the world to fulfill His mission (Jn 10:36). The Son shares his anointing of the Spirit with his Mystical Body called Church and shares his mission with it. This way he made the entire Church as a priestly community and shared his mission with the entire Church. This royal/common priesthood bestows "a true equality between all with regard to the dignity and to the activity which is common to all the faithful in building up of the body of Christ" (LG 32). "Therefore there is no such thing as a member that has not a share in the mission of the whole body" (PO 2). A presbyter is the one who is chosen from this community of faithful, who are equal in dignity and who have a equal share in the mission, to make it become more effective in its mission. The Council says: "The pastor's task is not limited to individual care of the faithful. It extends by right also to the formation of a genuine Christian community" (PO 6). He forms the Christian community through his three-fold ministry by enhancing and awakening, nurturing and activating the priesthood of the people; by empowering them to become effective prophets, engaged priests and servant leaders. His priesthood consists in serving the priesthood of the faithful. His priesthood does not exist in isolation

from or independent of the priesthood of the people. It exists for the sake of and at the service of the priesthood of the people.

To serve the community better he should live in the midst of the people and share their joys and sorrows, anxieties and concerns, aspirations and apprehensions. Pastors cannot meaningfully serve the people if they do not pitch their tent among the people. Hence the Council says that “they would be powerless to serve men if they remained aloof from their life and circumstances...they should live among men in this world and that as good shepherds they should know their sheep” (PO 3). Thus a pastor is fundamentally and organically linked to a community. In this way the Council has reestablished the fundamental relationship between the pastor and the community. As we have already seen much of the distortion of the theology of priesthood in the Middle Ages was due to delinking the organic relationship between the community and the pastor.

Before Vatican II, the laity were considered merely as beneficiaries in the Church and not as stake holders. They were mere audience not participants. They had no share in the mission of the Church. This is because in the pre-Vatican II era, it was understood that one received ministry in the Church only through the Holy Orders. Consequently only the deacons, priests and bishops monopolized the ministries in the Church. But according to the new developments in the sacramental theology, the sacrament of baptism is the first and primary ordination in the Church. All baptized are priests, possessing the baptismal priesthood or common priesthood. By virtue of this baptismal priesthood, they become share holders in the mission of the Church. Everybody should engage himself/herself in the mission of the Church. In ordering the people of God, the non-ordained also has special ministries. Hence it is said that “sacramental ordination does not exhaust the ministerial ordering of the people of God. There are other ministries or orders, entrance into which also constitutes a new ecclesial relationship subject to ecclesial

discernment, formation, authorization, and ritualisation.”¹⁴ Pastors should respect, promote and encourage such ministries of the people.

Moreover, in the baptismal priesthood, everybody, including the pastors, is a disciple of the Lord. Pastors are in no way superior to the others. Despite their ordination to priesthood, “still they are disciples of the Lord along with all faithful ... are brothers among brothers as members of the same Body of Christ which all are commanded to build up” (PO 9). This spirit of basic equality should govern the relationship between the faithful and the pastor. They should treat them with respect and brotherly affection. They should recognize and promote their charisms. They should inspire the laity “to take initiative in undertaking projects of their own” (PO 9). Respecting their charisms and expertise, the pastors should involve the faithful in the governance of the Church.

2. A Servant of Christ

Vatican II has given a strong Christological foundation to the priesthood of the presbyter. It has two implications. First, the priesthood of the presbyter comes from the priesthood of Christ, not from that of the bishop. A presbyter shares in the anointing and the mission of Christ and therefore he also shares in the priesthood of Christ. While talking about the purpose for which a presbyter is ordained, PO makes it very clear that “they should be made sharers in a special way in Christ’s priesthood” (PO 5). Second, by virtue of ordination, the presbyters “act as his [Jesus’] ministers’ (PO 5). They are not acting as his ministers in his absence, because through them “Christ himself builds up and sanctifies and rules his Body” (PO 2). Describing the ministry of the presbyters as sharing in the ministerial role of the bishops, LG makes it very clear that in the exercise of such ministry Christ is present in the midst of the faithful.

“In the person of the bishops, then, to whom the priests render assistance, the Lord Jesus Christ, supreme high priest, is present in the midst of the faithful. Though seated at the right hand of God the Father, he is not absent from the assembly of his pontiffs, on the contrary, indeed, it is above all through their signal service that he preaches the Word of God to all peoples and administers without cease to the faithful the sacraments of faith” (LG 21).

In today's globalised world, dialogue with the marginalized and excluded communities and identities is a part of the essential mission of the Church.¹⁵ This dialogue should take place within and outside the Church as well.

When the presbyters act on behalf of Christ as his ambassadors, they “mediate his word and work not by standing between the community and Christ, but by making his saving message and action present in and available to the community.¹⁶” Hence PDV says that “priests are called to prolong the presence of Christ, the one high priest, embodying his way of life and making him visible in the midst of the flock entrusted to their care” (PDV 15). Therefore Christian priests are not priests in their own name. They are priests in the name of Christ or on behalf of Christ. They act on behalf of Christ making his words and deeds present to the community. Therefore they are no longer *alter Christus* understood as acting on behalf of Christ in his absence.

3. A Filial Collaborator with the Bishop

Up until Vatican II, fundamentally there was no difference between presbyterate and episcopate. Episcopate was understood as an office which had more jurisdictional power than the presbyter. But Vatican II developed an understanding of episcopate as a sacrament: “It is abundantly clear that by the imposition of hands and through the words of the consecration, the

grace of the Holy Spirit is given, and a sacred character is impressed in such a way that bishops, in a resplendent and visible manner, take the place of Christ himself, teacher, shepherd and priest and act as his representatives” (LG 21). Accordingly the mission of Christ is entrusted to the bishops as his representatives. He alone cannot fulfill the mission entrusted to him. He needs helpers. On behalf of the community he can choose worthy candidates and ordain them as presbyters to help him to carry out his mission. When a person is ordained a priest he shares in the priesthood and the mission of Christ. He is authorized to act on his behalf (PO 5). Thus he acts on behalf of Christ, not on behalf of the bishop. Therefore he does not depend on the bishop for his priesthood. Hence the Council says, “All priests share with the bishops the one identical priesthood and ministry of Christ” (PO 7).

Sharing in the one identical priesthood and ministry of Christ has two important consequences in the relationship between the bishops and presbyters. First, “the very unity of their consecration and mission requires their hierarchical union with the order of bishops.” The words “with the order of bishops” suggest that the presbyter does not enter into union merely with a bishop, but with the college of bishops. Elsewhere the Council calls them as “prudent cooperators of the college of bishops” (LG 28). It means that a presbyter does not enter into communion with the a particular bishop, but with all bishops in the entire world. Thus his mission assumes a universal character, though he is ordained for a particular local Church. Second, the sharing in the one identical priesthood and ministry of Christ redefines the nature of relationship between the bishops and presbyters. The bishops should consider the presbyters as their indispensable helpers, counselors, prudent cooperators, sons, brothers and friends (PO 2,7; CD 16, LG 28). On the part of the presbyters, they should relate with the bishops as their fathers and obey them (PO7 CD 16).

When the presbyters represent Christ in the liturgical celebrations, they act in the name of Christ. When they represent the Church, in a sense

they act in the name of the bishop and therefore they represent the bishop. Hence the Council says that as members of the sacerdotal college called presbyterium, the presbyters also “represent in a certain sense the bishop, with whom they are associated in all trust and generosity; in part they take upon themselves his duties and solicitude and in their daily toils discharge them” (LG 28). Agnelo Gracias vividly demonstrates this representative role of the presbyters thus:

“When, for example he presides at the liturgy, he does so as a member of the presbyterium, as one representing the bishop. When he absolves, it is not in his own name that he heals and gives life, he is a representative standing for the bishop and as he stands for the bishop, he stands for the Church. The priest represents and even more actualizes the presence of the bishop, the chief pastor, in the ‘local gatherings’ of the faithful. Karl Rahner well observes: ‘The dignity of the parish priest is not diminished, but elevated, if he is seen as a member of the Episcopal presbyterium, as the representative on the spot of the bishop’s Church’”.¹⁷

When the presbyters are in full communion with their bishops and represent him in their respective Eucharistic communities (parishes), they promote communion with other Eucharistic communities in a local Church (diocese). Since the bishop is a member of the episcopal college by virtue his episcopal ordination, the Eucharistic communities of a particular diocese are in communion with the Eucharistic communities all over the world. Thus by representing a bishop, presbyters “render the universal church visible in their locality and contribute efficaciously towards the building up of the whole body of Christ” (LG 28).

4. A Solicitous Brother to Fellow Pastors

The Council also makes an earnest appeal to all the presbyters to cultivate a brotherly bond among themselves and to help each other in their

life and ministry. This brotherly bond is not extraneous to the order of priesthood. Rather it is a constitutive dimension of their ordination to priesthood, because they share in the same priesthood of Christ and are entrusted with the same mission of Christ. Hence the Council says, "Each is joined to the rest of the members of this priestly body by special ties of apostolic charity of ministry and of brotherhood." It is a gift received from God by virtue of ordination to priesthood. It entails a responsibility to nourish and strengthen this fraternal bond through various ways and means.

The united presbyterium is already a symbol of the unity willed by God of the people who believe in him. "In this way is shown forth that unity with which Christ willed his own to be perfected in one, that the world might know that the Son had been sent by the Father" (PO 8). Though community life is not the way of the life of the diocesan priests, the Council recommends some sort of community life among them "to find mutual help in cultivating intellectual and spiritual life, to promote better cooperation amongst them in the ministry, to safeguard them from possible dangers arising from loneliness" (PO 8). To foster such a community life the presbyters should also grow in the interpersonal relationship. Therefore the Council fondly admonishes them to grow in hospitality, to cultivate kindness, to share the goods with one another, to show a special solidarity with the sick, the afflicted, the overworked, the lonely, the exiled and the persecuted. It also encourages them to come together at times for relaxation. It also reminds them to show a special care, concern and compassion to "those who have failed in certain ways" and to be friends and brothers to them by continuously praying for them.

5. A Loving Brother of All

The primary goal of the Church's mission is to transform the entire humanity as a kingdom community. While transforming itself as symbol of

the kingdom community, as an instrument of the kingdom it should simultaneously engage in transforming the entire humanity. It should become salt of the earth and light to the nation. Insulating itself away from the rest of the world, it cannot achieve this mission. As Pope Francis says, "A Church that stays in the sacristy too long gets sick."¹⁸ Therefore it should cross its boundaries and relate with the brothers and sisters of the sister Churches, other religions and ideologies. Otherwise the mission of the Church will ever remain a dream. Hence in order to realize the mission of the Church, a presbyter should help the community he leads to develop a fraternal relationship with other churches, religions and ideologies. He should be not only a builder of a genuine Christian community but also a promoter of a genuine human community. He should never forget that he is basically a man of communion in the Church. This communion should be extended to embrace all in the world. While talking about the mission of the presbyter, PDV clearly brings out his communion-facilitator-role:

"Furthermore, precisely because within the Church's life the priest is a man of communion, in his relations with all people he must be a man of mission and dialogue ... the priest is called to witness in all his relationships to fraternity, service and a common quest for the truth, as well as a concern for the promotion of justice and peace. This is the case above all with the brethren of other churches and Christian denominations, but it also extends to the followers of other religions, to people of good will and in particular to the poor and the defenseless, and to all who yearn - even if they do not know it or cannot express it - for the truth and the salvation of Christ" (PDV 18).

6. A Continuous Learner

As a leader and animator of a community, the presbyter should be a knowledgeable person. He should be able to read the signs of the time and

interpret them in the light of the gospel. For this, he should be able to comprehend the problems and issues of the people on the one hand and the teachings of the Church on the other hand. This lays a demand on the presbyters to continuously update and deepen their knowledge both in the sacred science and in the secular science. In other words, the ongoing formation should be interdisciplinary. Reading the enormous changes taking place both in the sacred and secular sciences, the Council says: "The priests are therefore urged to adequate and continuous perfection of their knowledge of things divine and human. In this way they will prepare themselves to enter with greater advantage into dialogue with their contemporaries" (PO 19).

CONCLUSION

According to the understanding of the theology of the presbyterate the roles and functions of the presbyters has changed over the history. At times thanks to the undesirable influence both from within and without has affected the roles and functions of the presbyters adversely. Yielding to the attractions of the pomp and power of the Roman political system, the presbyters also have fallen prey to the status and privileges offered by the Roman Empire. Ordination to priesthood was almost equated with the power to offer sacrifice. Their claim to possess special "divine power" also alienated them from the ordinary people. Consequently they were also gradually detaching themselves from the local communities. The theology of the presbyterate as envisioned in the Second Vatican Council documents retrieves the original link between the ministries and the local community and recast the ministries as primarily oriented towards mission.

(Endnotes)

- ¹George M. Soares-Prabhu, *A Biblical Theology for India*, ed., Scaria Kuthirakkattel, (Pune: Jnan-Deepa Vidyapeeth, 1999) 231.
- ²Edward Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: A Case for Change* (London: SCM Press, 1982) 38-39.
- ³Neuner J. & Jacques Dupuis, *The Christian Faith*, Seventh Revised and Enlarged Edition (Bangalore: ATC, 2004) 724.
- ⁴Patrick J. Dunn, *Priesthood: A Re-examination of the Roman Catholic Theology of the Presbyterate*, (New York: Alba House, 1990) 114.
- ⁵Gerald O'Collins, *Jesus Our Priest: A Christian Approach to the Priesthood of Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
- ⁶Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Real Achievement of Vatican II* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1967) 42.
- ⁷Patrick J. Dunn, *Priesthood*, 107.
- ⁸Gerald O'Collins, *Jesus Our Priest*, 164.
- ⁹Susan K. Wood, "Presbyteral Identity with Parish Identity," in *Ordering Baptismal Priesthood* ed. Susan K. Wood (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2003), 187.
- ¹⁰Susan K. Wood, "Presbyteral Identity within Parish Identity" 187.
- ¹¹Susan K. Wood, "Presbyteral Identity within Parish Identity" 188.
- ¹²Thomas F. O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, a completely revised edition, (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 134.
- ¹³Lucien Legrand, "The Word of God in the Life and Ministry of Priests in India" in John Kulandai, *Revisioning Catholic Priesthood* (Bengaluru: CCBI Commission for Clergy, 2009) 115.
- ¹⁴Richard R. Gaillardetz, "The Ecclesiological Foundation of Ministry within an Ordered Communion," in Susan K. Wood, ed., *Ordering the Baptismal Priesthood*.
- ¹⁵Kenan B. Osborne, *Orders and Ministry* (New York: Orbis, 2006) 81-84.
- ¹⁶John J. Hughes, "Christian Priesthood" in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed., Mircea Etrud, Vol. II, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 536.
- ¹⁷Agnelo Gracias, "The Identity of the Ministerial Priest in Communion with the Bishop," *Vaiharai* 14 (2009) 33.
- ¹⁸Paul Vallely, *Pope Francis: Untying the Knots*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2013) 106.