

New Approaches to Pastoral Ministry Today

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Like the Master Christ Jesus, who came to serve and not be served (Mk 10:45), the Church has been aware from the beginning, that she is a serving community and her mission is to be the service of the words. She has expressed her leadership in terms of service. The Holy Spirit has constantly urged the Church to search for better and newer ways of explicating this mission.

After the Second Vatican Council, which called for a revitalization of the Church's Mission to the world, the Church is conscious all the more of the call to review her mission and the ministerial structures and methods. A renewed self-understanding of the Church since Vatican II, leads the Church to look for new forms of ministries which would today make her services more effective to mankind. The problem of ministry is crucial from the point of view of Ecumenical relationship and Interreligious dialogue. The new phenomena of Catholic Charismatic Renewal and Basic Christian Communities warrant us to reflect upon the new directions is Pastoral ministry.

The Church with its instruction of Extraordinary Ministries¹ provided for the extraordinary ministry of the distribution of Holy Communion. Pope Paul VI, with his two Apostolic Letters. *Ad Pascendum and Ministeria Quaedam*,² reformed the diaconate and instituted two lay ministries of Lector and Acolyte, Since Vat. II to our times the Universal Church and the Church at the Continental, National and Regional levels have spoken out on the need and the modalities of new ministries relevant to our times.

1. What is Pastoral Ministry?

There cannot be deep and effective renewal in the church except through the emergence of a vital and highly diversified ministry. For it is Ministry that make the church visible. It is through Ministry that the Holy Spirit animates the church. For in Ministry the Church Visible embodies its mission and proclaims its witness to the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus.³ It is usually said that anything done with a pastoral perspective is pastoral ministry. The term "pastoral" comes from the Latin, pastor meaning 'shepherd' and thus refers to the work and concern of the shepherd for his sheep. Jesus referred to himself as "the Good Shepherd" and to those who believe in him, as his "sheep" so the terminology is founded on the very words of Christ. Letters to Timothy and Titus are known as the "pastoral epistles" since they present a series of practical directives for the proper pastoral care of the Christian communities at Ephesus and Crete. Thus, the pastor, according to this understanding, is a practical man who instructs and helps his people leads fully Christian life, so that they can finally attain eternal salvation.⁴

The Mission of God (*Missio Dei*) is set forth in the words of St. John's gospel. "God sent His only Son into the world... so that the world might be saved by Him" (Jn 3:16-17). The same is the Mission of Christ (*Missio Christi*). I came, that they may have life and have it abundantly"

(Jn 10:10). Jesus is the supreme shepherd of the flock (Church) who has a threefold office prophet (teacher), priest (sanctifier) and leader (ruler). “*I will give you shepherds after my heart*” (Jer 3:15) has been the constant assurance given by God to his people throughout the history of Israel. We see this promise of God being fulfilled in our own times too. God is the Good Shepherd and he keeps on providing Good shepherds to shepherd his people in all ages. Pope John Paul II wrote quite extensively on the shepherds and their service to the flock of God in his Apostolic Exhortation, “*Pastores Dabo Vobis*”⁵ elaborating the context of our times and the type of pastoral ministry required for the world today. All the pastoral ministry of Jesus Christ and of all pastors till today, has a reference to and prolongation of that shepherding ministry of God the Father in favour of his people and for the salvation of the whole world. Jesus is the only and unique priest, Mediator and Pastor after the heart of the Father, as Jesus Christ is the perfect face of the Father (Heb 9:24-28).⁶ Christ is the Good Shepherd foretold by the prophets (Ez 34). He knows every sheep. He offers himself for their sake, so that they all may become one sheep with one shepherd (Jn 10:11-16). He is a shepherd who has come not to be served, but to serve (Mt 20:28). He leaves a model for all shepherding by himself washing the feet of his disciples during the last supper (Jn 13:1-20).

Mission of the Church (Missio Ecclesiae) is to continue Jesus’ shepherding ministry after him, Jesus selected the disciples “to be with him and he might send them forth to peace and to have authority to drive out demons” (Mk 3:14-15). During his public life (Mt 16:18) and after his resurrection (Mt 28:16-20 & 20:21), Jesus conferred on Peter and the twelve the office of being the shepherds to look after the sheep and to evangelize all the people of the world over. To carry out this mission of being shepherds and missionaries, Jesus gave them a special power from above, the Holy Spirit (Mt 20:18-20). The ministry of the twelve is nothing other than the

authoritative prolongation of the ministry of Jesus himself and that of the Father.⁷ The connection between the ministry entrusted to the apostles and the ministry of Jesus has been established and defined by Jesus himself, as he himself forcefully and clearly declares, “*whoever listens to you listens to me..., Whoever rejects you rejects me. Whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me*” (Lk 10:16). The same has been asserted by the fourth gospel when it says, “*As the Father sent me I send you*” (Jn 20:21); “*Whoever receives the one I send and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me*”(Jn 13:20). As Jesus has a mission that comes to him directly from the Father with all authority, the disciples too have a mission that comes from Jesus. As Jesus himself “cannot do anything on his own” (Jn 5:19), he says to the disciples. “without me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5). Hence their mission is not theirs, but is that of Jesus himself. Hence the Pope says “The source and the power of the ministry does not come from human sources, but from the gift, “Holy Spirit” which Jesus gives voluntarily to those whom he has chosen (Jn 20:22-23).

What a pastor needs is a perspective that enables the pastor to understand his or her ministry as nothing less than participation in the story of God.⁸ Pastoral work is not something separate from spirituality.⁹ Pastoral work is “participation in God’s work of transforming the community of faith until it is ‘blameless’ at the coming of Christ” and a perpetually “unfinished business.”¹⁰ A pastoral worker lives out his spirituality IN and THROUGH his pastoral ministry.¹¹

2. Why New Perspectives in Pastoral Ministry?

From the time of Pope John Paul II we live an era a **NEW EVANGELIZATION**.¹² New Evangelization is **NEW in its Ordour: NEW in its Methods: and NEW in its Expressions**. It points out to responding

to the new situations of our day in a new way. It is the courage to find new ways of sharing of our faith in new circumstances of our day. It is a spiritual awakening and reanimation of a process of conversion of all in the Church. It is to make the Church the place where God can be experienced even now; where we are transformed by the gift of our faith; where the Gospel is lived to the full and proclaimed to all. It is a giant step forward to proclaim to the world of today the person and message of Jesus Christ leading everyone to the salvation he offers. It is to bring Christ to those who do not know him and do not believe in him (*missio ad gentes*). It is the new way of being Church in the face of new situations of today. Today the world is facing changes in all walks of life that profoundly affect the person's perception of self and world and God. Consequently there is disorientation leading to distrust and loss of meaning of life.

Tangible changes are taking place in the following sectors in our society today:

Sector of Culture: Profane secularism and secularized way of looking at human life.

Sector of Social life: Migration, mixing up of cultures, rampant corruption, erosion of fundamental values of life, unstable social structures and institutions and Globalization and its negative effects.

Sector of Economic life: Rampant disparity of distribution of wealth, economic crisis.

Sector of Scientific and Technological Research: Science and Technology becoming new idols.

Sector of Civic and Political Life: New temptation of domination.

Sector of Social Communication: Communication Media becoming the new god.

Sector of Religion: Naive and emotional character of religion, bereft of liberative and salvific experience, a religion promising prosperity and success in life, often ending up in fundamentalism and not promoting the spirit of sacrifice.

In the face of these changes in our world today the following reaction are visible: Weakening in Faith; Lack of personal involvement and experience; Reduction in dynamism; Falling into routine and formal liturgy; Decline in Christian practice; Counter witness of some members; all leading to "silent apostasy". Christians within these sectors are earnestly called to make self-examination and discern new ways of being believers, witnesses and proclaimers of Christian faith. The phenomena of these new situation and new challenges call for a new way of doing pastoral work and new way of evangelization. Already way back in 1976 the All India Research Seminary and Pastoral Consultation¹³ pointed out the need for New Ministries and elaborated upon Lay ministries, permanent Diaconate, Women in Ministry and Diversification. Re-vitalization of Presbyteral ministry and team ministry.¹⁴ Ministry for Social Concern, Family Ministries, Ministry of Reconciliation, and Ministry of lay evangelists, Catechists, Animators of Prayer, Minister of Liturgical Animation, Ministry of Healing were added as new areas of ministries for modern times.

New Perspective and new approach is very much required today in the **Pastoral Methodology**, the way of doing pastoral ministry than in quantum of activities. Pastoral Action includes several important and consistent steps:

1. Experience of the Reality of the situation.
2. Analysis of Reality and Life.
3. Correlation of Analysis with Scripture and Tradition.

4. Theological Reflection and Discernment.
5. Committed Action in Partnership and Dialogue,
6. Evaluate and improve the outcome in the light experience and correlation.

Pastoral Methodology begins with the Kairological dimension, the study of the pastoral situation in all its aspect. It is entering into the pastoral situation Here and Now and study it in its aspects: Geographical, Phenomenological, Anthropological, Historical, Sociological, Economical, Political, Cultural, Spiritual (Religious) and Psychological aspects of the reality around are to be studied with available scientific and modern tools.

The Criteriological dimension consists in the analysis of the situation in the light of faith. It is intuitive study on how does God see this situation, what does the Word of God, the Teachings of the Church, the Christian Spirituality say on this situation. It is an effort to discern the presence and action of God in the given situation and know clearly what God wants the pastoral worker to do in a given situation.

The Operative dimension begins in the projecting a plan for action of what is to be done. It is to determine concretely who will do what; who are responsible; where to begin and where to end; what means or methods to use; with whom or which organization to collaborate; and where to begin and where to end. All these are to ensure the orthopraxis.

The Evaluative dimension. It is a scientific Reflection on the action done to assess the pastoral outcome in the context; the changes taken place; the wellbeing achieved; the human, social and religious enhancement taken place; God's Salvation is meted out in what form and to what extent. Without such rigorous evaluation pastoral action will be arbitrary and will not bring

forth the desired effect of the change of the society and the establishment of the Kingdom of God.

The Scriptures and the Teachings of the Church have classified pastoral Ministry in terms of *tria munera*, the ministry of the Word, ministry of sanctification and ministry of shepherding or governing. Apart from these traditional ones, our times require new areas new ways of doing pastoral ministry. I enumerate a few without going into details.¹⁵

1. Pastoral Ministry of Counseling, praying, visiting, crisis ministry, and more.
2. Pastoral ministry of Overseeing and Management in all the activities of the Church.
3. Ministries (programs), management (church facilities) and money (finances).
4. Equipping the people for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ., (Eph 4:12).
5. Works of Charity – Church of the poor an Church for the poor.
6. Prophetic Ministry of Interpreting the message of God (will of God) for the daily lives of the people.
7. Pastoral care of Children & Education.
8. Pastoral care of the Sick and Health care
9. Pastoral care of the Youth and Students
10. Pastoral care of Priests, Religious and other Pastoral workers
11. Pastoral care of Catechists and Church personnel.
12. Pastoral care of Married couples and families
13. Pastoral care of the Separated and Divorced couples
14. Pastoral care of the members of Pious Associations.

15. Pastoral care of Professional: Professors, Teachers, Doctors, Nurse, Engineers, Lawyers, Bankers, Auditors, etc...
16. Pastoral care of employees in Christian Institutions
17. Pastoral care of Evangelizers and Missionaries
18. Pastoral care of vocation promotion of Priesthood and Religious life.
19. Pastoral care of the Emigrants and Refugees
20. Pastoral care of the Suicidals
21. Pastoral care of the Grieving
22. Pastoral care of the Dying
23. Pastoral care of the Terminally ill
24. Pastoral care of Victims of Domestic Violence
25. Pastoral care of Women and upholding Gender justice
26. Pastoral care of the Transgender or people of third sex.
27. Pastoral care of Domestic Workers
28. Pastoral care of the Childless
29. Pastoral care of the Elderly
30. Pastoral care of Prisoners
31. Pastoral care of Children of Divorced and Separated Parents
32. Pastoral care of the children of Single Parents and of the children with No Parents alive.
33. Pastoral care of the Alcoholics and Substance abusers
34. Pastoral care of sexually abused minors
35. Pastoral care of the Differently abled
36. Pastoral care of Unorganized Labourers
37. Pastoral care of the Emigrants, Refugees and displaced people.

38. Pastoral care of the socially, economically and legally Discriminated.
39. Pastoral care of the Destitute, Outcasts and Beggars
40. Pastoral care of those who suffer from gender injustice
41. Pastoral care of the Unemployed
42. Pastoral care of victims of Religious Fundamentalism and Fanaticism
43. Pastoral care of the Social Workers – NGOs
44. Pastoral care of those affected and infected with HIV / AIDS
45. Pastoral care of those in Financial Debts
46. Pastoral care of the Lonely, Depressed and Burnt-outs, Psychotics and Neurotics
47. Pastoral care of the victims of Bribery, Corruption and Violence
48. Pastoral care of the people of Other Christian Denominations (Ecumenical work)
49. Pastoral care of people of Other Religions (Interreligious Dialogue).
50. Pastoral care of Atheists and Secularists.

These new situations place before us the new avenues and newer vistas for pastoral ministry. But this demands a new mindset and some essential characteristics. Here are 12 characteristics of an effective 21st century pastor.¹⁶

1. The ability to maintain personal, professional, and spiritual balance. Ministry in the postmodern world is hard, and a pastor must keep emotionally and spiritually balance and fit.

2. The ability to guide a transformational faith experience (conversion). Pastors who are effective in the 21st century will be those who know how to introduce a person to Jesus, not just to the church. It is often, however, the pastor's task to walk with individuals through a conversion experience and to help them become grounded in the faith.

3. The ability to motive and develop a congregation to be on mission. The postmodern world requires that the pastor identify and equip all members to be evangelists.

4. The ability to develop and communicate a vision. Compelling vision means believing that our best days are ahead, and that God can perform remarkable acts in our midst. The process of discovering this destiny is often led by the pastor. The pastor must talk, act, and lead as if the vision can and will be made real in their midst.

5. The ability to interpret and lead change. A pastor's ability to create an environment ready for change, to lead the change process successfully, and to anchor the change in the congregation's culture is one of the most important skill sets needed for the 21st century.

6. The ability to promote and lead spiritual formation for church members. The effective 21st century pastor understands the longing of parishioners to know God in a deeper and more meaningful way and reintroduces such traditional practices as prayer, Bible study, small groups, and discernment of spiritual gifts to give them new meaning in the postmodern era.

7. The ability to provide leadership for high-quality. Relevant liturgical experiences. In the postmodern era liturgy focuses on experiencing God. Postmoderns see worship as a matter of the heart, not the head.

8. The ability to identify, develop, and support lay leaders. Effective postmodern pastors remember that the ancient church was a movement fed mainly by the laity and know that each member of today's congregation also has a ministry in his or her own right.

9. The ability to build, inspire, and lead a "team" of both staff and volunteers. The future belongs not so much to movers and shakers but to leaders who can work in teams. The successful pastor will encourage the

use of teams and will model healthy team leadership by how he or she recruits, trusts, and supports the team.

10. The ability to manage conflict. Conflicts in the church is not new, but 21st century pastors have an even greater challenge than before as they respond to conflict that emerges from the difficult transition from a modern-era church to that of a postmodern Christian community.

11. The ability to navigate successfully the world of technology. Effective pastors in today's world must be technologically literate and know how to encourage their congregations to use technology for the building up of Christ's kingdom. Being techno-savvy involves not only being able to use a computer but also seeing e-mail, Web sites, Power Point, Video clips, and other media tools as additional resources for communication, pastoral care, evangelization, teaching and worship. Twenty first century pastors and churches must walk into the new marketplace bravely and with confidence that God can use even these secular tools in creative and life-giving ways.

12. The ability to be a lifelong learner. Twenty-first-century pastors need to run smarter, not faster. The sky to working smarter may lie in how they approach learning. Learning "smart" means using every experience as a potential tool for ministry.

To conclude, pastoral care is *"to bow down before the wounds of the human person, to understand, cure and heal them is the task of the Church that trusts in the light and strength of the risen Christ"* says Pope Francis. The new generation of people today cannot be served effectively with the older methods. Hence all of us are invited to seek, discover and formulate new perspectives and new methodology in our pastoral work.

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Endnotes

- ¹ Cf Instruction of the Holy See, *Fidei Custos*, 30.04.1969
- ² Cf. PAUL VI, *Motu Proprio*, 15.08.1972
- ³ D.S. AMALORPAVADASS, Ed. *Ministries in the Church in India*, New Delhi, 1976, 511
- ⁴ KENNETH BAKER SJ, in *Homiletics and Pastoral Review*, Nov. 2012.
- ⁵ JOHN PAUL II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*. On the Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day. Vatican, 25 March 1992. (Abbreviated as PDV). Cf. also CONGREGATION FOR THE CLERGY, the *Directory on the Life and Ministry of Priest*, Vatican, 31 01.1994.
- ⁶ CF. PDV 13.
- ⁷ FRANCESCO MARINELLI, *I Ministero Pastorale*, Dehoniane, Bologna, 1993, 15.
- ⁸ THOMAS C. ODEN, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1983), 163. and Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1989), 142.
- ⁹ HENRI J. M. NOUWEN, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 24, and Cf. also (EUGENE H. PETERSON, *Working the Angles: The shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1987), 3.
- ¹⁰ JAMES W. THOMPSON, *Pastoral Ministry According to Paul: A Biblical Vision* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006) 150. "One major difference between the church and other . . . organizations hinges on Christianity's eschatological perspective. . . Business organizations. . . wish to accomplish objectives that are visible within this temporal sphere, often those that fit within a five-year plan, a fiscal year, or a three-week sales blitz. . . . Christian congregations also try to get things done, organize themselves decently, and achieve objectives, but the Christian community has a larger historical perspective on all of these activities —larger in fact than this fiscal year, this political regime, or even this civilization.

Universal history, amazingly, is the horizon of Christianity's perspective," Oden, Pastoral Theology, 162.

¹¹ Cf. PDV nos.19-33.

¹² The Term New Evangelization is the favorite slogan of Pope John Paul II. He used this expression in the following Documents. 1983 – Pope John Paul II – at CELAM on 09.03.1983; 1988 – Pope John Paul II – in *Christifideles Laici*. 35; 1990 – John Paul II – Pope John Paul II – *Redemptoris Missio*, 30; 1995 – Pope John Paul II – *Ecclesia in Africa*, 57; 1999 – Pope John Paul II – *Ecclesia in America*, 6, 66; 1999 – Pope John Paul II – *Ecclesia in Asia* 2; 2001 – Pope John Paul II – *Ecclesia in Oceania*, 18; 2003 – Pope John Paul II – *Ecclesia in Europa*, 2; Pope Benedict XVI – from the beginning of his pontificate. 1. Instituted a Council for New Evangelization in Vatican in 2010. 2. He called for a General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on NE in 2012. Pope Francis uses this expression profusely in his magisterium.

¹³ Cf. D.S. AMALORPAVADASS, Ed. Ministries in the Church in India, CBCI Center, New Delhi, 1976.

¹⁴ Ibid. 493-510.

¹⁵ For new avenues of pastoral ministry in India today with a appropriate spirituality, read, Fr. A. ALBERT, Call to Serve, Anal Publications, Nagercoil, 2017.

¹⁶ Cf. <http://alban.org>. posted by Alban, Duke Divinity School, Surfed on 17.05.2018.