

ASIAN
HORIZONS
Vol. 15, No. 1, March 2021
Pages: 91-103

CLERICALISM IN THE CHURCH

George Therukattil, MCBS[♦]
Emmaus Provincial House, Aluva

Abstract

The topic 'clericalism in the church' has received a lot of attention in the media in the wake of the explosion of the clergy abuse scandal. As Clericalism is the root-cause of many of these evils, the article studies in depth its meaning and rationally analyses the various forms of it. This is done in the background of a gospel-based, true image of the church as conceived by theologians, especially Yves M. Congar, best known for his influence in Vatican II for reviving theological interest in the laity in ecclesiology. The article then explores the key points on clericalism in the Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, *Christi Fideles Laici* and in the speeches of Pope Francis. Finally, it ends proposing some theoretical and practical solutions to eradicate clericalism from the life of the church.

Keywords: Authoritarianism; *Christi Fideles Laici*; Communion Ecclesiology; Hierarchology; Pope Francis; Priesthood; Seminary Formation; Yves M. Congar

Introduction

The church has received a remarkable amount of media attention regarding clerical perpetrated sexual abuses as well as other clerical

♦Fr **George Therukattil** is a moral theologian from India belonging to the Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament (MCBS). He has obtained two Doctorates, one in Philosophy, the other in Moral Theology from the prestigious Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium. He was the former Chairperson of the Department of Christianity in the state University of Mysore, where he was teaching ecclesiology for twenty two years until his retirement in 2004. He was Associate and Visiting Professor in various theological and philosophical faculties and seminaries in India, among which are the esteemed Jnana-Deepa, Pune and St Peter's Pontifical Institute, Bangalore. He has authored 21 books and around 200 articles published in different Journals and periodicals of philosophy and theology. At present he is residing in Emmaus Provincial House. Email: geotheroo@gmail.com

behavioural scandals in recent years. Much has been reported in the press about the various aspects of priestly formation and ministry that might contribute to the behavioural problems among clerics. Additionally, much has also been written and discussed about the challenging religious, spiritual, and behavioural struggles among clerics when clerical misbehaviour significantly contradicts their expected behaviour in terms of sexual, behavioural, and relational ethics.

True Meaning and Nature of the Church

French Dominican theologian, Yves Marie-Joseph Congar, best known for his influence in Vatican II and for reviving theological interest in ecclesiology, explored the theme of clericalism in works both published and unpublished from 1931 until his suspension from the Le Saulchoir theology faculty. According to Congar, the church is a people of God, the disciples of Christ and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.¹ Congar developed an ecclesiology, abandoning the then-predominant notions of the church as a perfect society with strong focus on a pyramid-like view of hierarchy over the laity.²

Congar's term for clericalism was "hierarchology," the lopsided understanding of the church, which focuses almost solely on the hierarchical structure. To remedy this lopsided understanding, he held that the church is both communion with God in Christ and the means of attaining that communion. In his opinion, faithfulness to Holy Scripture and sound theology requires that priesthood be defined as the quality which enables a man to come before God to gain his grace, and therefore fellowship with God, by offering up a sacrifice acceptable to Him.³ Hierarchical priests alone are able to celebrate the sacramental 'beginning anew' of Christ's worship, *in persona Christi*. This is extremely important, for it is the application of Christ's passion and the union with His sacrifice. Though the priesthood of the New Dispensation is spiritual, God nevertheless has explicitly provided a sacrament, the sacrament of Holy Orders, for humans to return to Him without leaving their spiritual reality. Anyhow, God appointed a means to its visible realization to which we are bound to have recourse. So, Congar maintains the

¹Rose M. Beal, *Mystery of the Church, People of God: Yves Congar's Total Ecclesiology as a Path to Vatican II*, Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2014.

²Yves Congar, *Lay people in the Church: A Study for a Theology of the Laity*, Philadelphia: Newman Westminster Press, 1967, xvi.

³Congar, *Lay people in the Church*, 35.

ministerial priesthood along with the royal priesthood of the faithful.⁴

Clericalism came into the church with her tension with the secular world which had led her to adopt very much the same attitudes as the temporal power itself, to conceive of itself as a society, as a power, when in reality it was a communion of humans with God. It was Congar's lifelong theological project to help restore to the church a more evangelical, gospel-based understanding of her life. Congar's vision ultimately demanded that our understanding of authority in the church must flow from our understanding of God as a Trinity of Persons and, therefore, be practiced in the mutuality of relationship and always be directed at growth in authentic relationship.⁵

Various Meanings of Clericalism

Clericalism is the application of the formal, church-based, leadership or opinion of ordained clergy in matters of either the church or broader political and socio-cultural import. It can be described as a "form of elitism" that is reinforced by the distinctive education and formation, dress and titles that Bishops and Priests receive. They are addressed as His Eminence, His Grace, His Excellency, My Lord, Very Reverend Father, Very Reverend Superior General, etc. Insistence on such titles and formality by them certainly *could* be a "mask for insecurity." Or, even worse, it could reflect what we might call "supernaturalism"—a belief that their position (confirmed by the use of religious clothing and language) somehow automatically renders them immune from the ambiguities and social and psychological pulls and pressures of ordinary life.

In fact, Jesus, whom they represent, was against power and titles (Mt 23:8-10). The community of Jesus was radically an egalitarian community—a community of equality. If all (Jew, gentile....) are truly "one in Christ" (Gal 3:28) they are basically equal before the Lord. Differences of, race, class, and sex do not affect their basic relationship with Jesus. Jesus community will not tolerate any form of pyramidal stratification or 'hierarchicalization.' All are members of one body—each dependent on the other, no part is superior to another. There is no room in a Christian community for any devise for domination, control or ambition for power (Mk 10:42-45) The only hierarchy is hierarchy of service and not power.

⁴Congar, *Lay people in the Church*, 39.

⁵Anthony Oelrich, *Church Fully Engaged: Yves Congar's Vision of Ecclesial Authority*, Baltimore, Maryland: Liturgical Press, 2011.

But the opposite has taken place in the church. The clerical class in the church arrogated to itself undue authority and power that made them to unwarranted claims to wisdom, even to having a monopoly on understanding the mind and will of God. The consequence was the great weakening of the church by denigrating or excluding the many gifts of the Spirit present in the lay people to be used in service to others in every walk of life. The problem of clericalism arises when the clergy acts in indifference, or even contempt, toward the lay people. In a church governed by clericalism, a hierarchy is established in which the clergy is viewed as church's highest authority and placed on a higher pedestal than those of the laity who form the vast majority in the church. Without the laity, as Cardinal Newman's response to a bishop who spoke slightly of the laity, the "Church would look foolish without them; something like a football team with only coaches and no players."

A distorted sense of entitlement, power and domination comes to the priests and bishops because they think that ordination confers a superior dignity upon them than is available to the layperson. But the real picture is as Augustine put it centuries ago: "I am a Christian with you. I am a priest for you." The office of the priest does not indicate superior dignity or superior sanctity. Nor does the lay office deprive one of anything, because the priesthood (and, indeed, the lay office) are both gifts given by God and undeserved by us. The distorted sense of entitlement, control, power and domination is based on the assumption that they are not bound by the rules that govern everyone else, and that other people exist to serve their needs. Thus clericalism has become today a sort of 'structural sin.' The harm done by this sin is of several kinds. By far the worst occurs on the spiritual level, where relatively little is either asked or expected of lay people beyond a legalistic mediocrity – spiritual excellence is equated with keeping rules (go to church, say some prayers, avoid the grosser kinds of sin). At the deepest level, the damage done by clericalism is the injury inflicted upon the self-understanding of the Church as a perfect society with an 'institutional-hierarchical' model. This model was rejected and replaced by Second Vatican Council's preferred model of the Church as 'People of God,' wherein we have some form of egalitarianism.

Clericalism might refer also to a clerical contempt for laypeople whose lives seem to be spiritually undemanding, or, in the case of "nominal" Catholics, possibly unintelligible. The priestly training in seminaries tended to impart a 'clerical difference,' a sense of specialness that leads the seminarians to see themselves as not only

separate but also superior to laypeople. This clericalism may or may not be distinguishable from the sort of contempt towards Church's more mediocre laity.

Clericalism can also mean certain forms of narcissism where leaders of the Church have often been flattered and sickeningly excited by these flatterers. This seems to flourish in the clerical state. Priests who constantly remind the parishioners of everything they have given up for the laity and internalizing a dangerous sense of entitlement. Sadly, we are all aware of the consequences of arrested sexual development in them. Finally, clericalism can refer to a clerical "culture of secrecy" in which misbehaviour or illegal activities of the clergy are kept hidden or defended when exposed by the media.

Damage Done by Clericalism to the Church

It is now worth rationally discussing these forms of clericalism, which has *theological* error that can afflict both the clergy and laypeople. Though some clericalism comes from narcissism, the testimony of our professional laity tends to suggest a theological [*liturgical*] origin. If we reduce the significance of the liturgy to the priest's consecration and distribution of an unquestionably valid sacrament, make the laity dispensable and passive. In the reduction of the laity to passive bystanders where they should be active participants, we have what might be called the paradigm manifestation of clericalism. By 'active participation' what we mean is not merely a generic 'doing things' or paying attention to the prayers in the Holy Mass, but being conscious that the laity is "offering the Immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also *with* him." ⁶ The lay persons are concelebrants. When this role of the laity is obscured, Sunday Mass often becomes a place where people assemble for private devotions. The laity ceases to be a *people* with a collective and active role. The problem is that in spite of admonition of proactive participation by the laity as described in 1 Cor 14:26, the laity has been relegated to a passive role even in the very best of any active participation in liturgy. Obviously, then, we have a situation in which there is a very large gap between the clergy, whose role is emphasized, and the laity, whose role is merely passive. This corresponds to a very large gap between the church and the world. The laity is supposed to be "the link between the Church and the world." (At the Liturgy, this presumably would happen through the offering up of praise, laypeople presenting the bread and wine, and the voicing of petitions.) But the laity simply cannot serve as a

⁶Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 48.

link between Church and world if it is not a community of people, but merely a collection of anonymous individuals who cultivate hidden private devotions during the Mass. Consequently, the church is estranged from the world.

The dangers of clericalism continue to exist; the clericalist attitudes and assumptions remain still embedded in the minds of many lay people and, though probably unrecognized, still harm and go on doing great harm to the faithful. The harm is of several kinds. By far the worst occurs on the spiritual level, where relatively little is either asked or expected of lay people beyond a legalistic mediocrity. The idea that, as Vatican II taught, the lay people are called to holiness quite as much as the clergy and religious simply does not enter this clericalist picture. It is a miracle that so many lay people achieve holiness or are saints.

One of the identified causes for clericalism—associated with the sex abuse crisis currently plaguing the church—is the closed seminary formation model that prevails in many parts of the world: all four pillars of formation of seminarians occur in the seminary. This model, which has prevailed since the Council of Trent, encourages future priests to view themselves as separate and different to the laity, indeed, even superior to the laity. Since the Second Vatican Council, there has been a change of emphasis in the language used to describe the character of the priest; his is a role of service. The priest, according to Pope Francis, needs to acquire the ‘smell of the sheep.’ Continued support for the seminary model of priestly formation limits contact between the future priest and his future flock. While three of the four pillars of formation might continue within a seminary, intellectual and academic formation should occur within an institution that includes clergy and lay, men and women, Catholic and non-Catholic.⁷

The final statement of the 32nd Plenary Meeting of the CBCI lists “Shunning excessive institutionalization, clericalism and extravaganza” among its proposals. Clericalism allows clergy to distract from, and cover up for, rampant criminal activity and child abuse. Contemporary Post-Modern thinkers have drawn our attention to the authoritarian and oppressive character even of theological truths. This is not difficult to see when we keep in mind that the vast volume of theology, spirituality, liturgy and canon law

⁷Abraham Garth, “Clericalism and the Need for Reform of the Post-Tridentine Model for the Formation of Seminarians,” *The International Studies in Catholic Education* 12, 2 (2020).

has been designed almost totally by a small group of clerics who claim to be celibates. The discourse shaping the church—theology, spirituality, liturgy and canon law—is of the clergy, by the clergy, for the clergy, and answerable to the clergy. Hence, if we earnestly desire to free the church from the cancer of clericalism, we need an alternative discourse. If some of us, priests and bishops, are guilty of serious misbehaviour and still get away easily, it is because our lay people have accepted the awe and aura with which we have cunningly, subtly and successfully surrounded ourselves. It is time that lay people come in contact with contemporary Biblical scholarship, wherein most of the scholars who are concerned about Jesus and his community are presenting some very profound new insights about Christian origins and subsequent developments of the church.

Some Possible Solutions

If we earnestly desire to free the Church of Jesus from the cancer of clericalism, we need an alternative discourse examining the fundamental issue and the abuse of power that clericalism generates. Only this will make sense of the crisis of clericalism and help to overcome it. For this, first of all, we need a strong and committed laity to push back against clericalism and to demand accountability. We should return to the liturgical problem we saw above. The worshipping community is not merely the priest and accidental spectators: it is one community both priest and the faithful, actively offering the “sacrifice of Jesus.”

Second thing to do is to *declericalise* the church. To the extent the church creates room for both clergy and the laity, freedom and participation, respect and dialogue, committed love and shared forgiveness, the defense and care of life, would give birth to a new people—“people of God.” This would act as the leaven that is placed in the world and cause the new creation to come into being. But this birth is not a painless one. To the extent that the ecclesial community begets new persons thanks to a different kind of interrelationship—it creates a new style of human community marked by radically different ways of experiencing and understanding power.

Basic Ecclesial Communities would be the result, where there is no domination and the church becomes ‘People of God.’ True basic communities of the church is the hope for the church universal, for communion ecclesiology means that there cannot be active members on the one side, and passive ones on the other. This ecclesiology tends to be the active responsibility of not only the priests but of all

lay persons who belong to it. In the light of this responsibility for laity on all levels of church's life, we have now parish councils, diocesan councils, diocesan synods, Episcopal synods, wherein we have lay interest, and the preparedness of lay people to take a share of responsibility.

From the part of the clergy, the answer for the perennial problem of clericalism is daily conversion by priests and bishops to our servant Lord. This is somewhat vague, but the problems of narcissism and contempt do require conversion. One way in concrete is to overhaul the formation of the clergy. Here we face two basic problems: First, the problem of clericalism cannot be reduced to individual behaviour. It is a structural sin. The structural aspect of clericalism is in the formation of seminarians and in raising individual clerics onto inappropriate pedestals. The hierarchy of the church has been using the protected style of formation [seminary=nursery], which makes the seminarians virtually invulnerable to attack, while they hide behind their shields of secrecy, silence, hypocrisy, cruelty and abuse of power. For many generations earnest, young seminarians have been taught that they are aspiring to a higher level not available to the laity, a level at which they will have the authority to teach, sanctify and govern those below. For such privileges they are ready to become eunuchs for the kingdom and they pledge to defer their own judgments to the authoritative pronouncements of those on still higher levels, be it pastor, bishop or pope. Clericalism is contagious; it is breeding a kind of mentality or sub-culture that revels in ecclesiastical ambition, status and power.

To counteract this, to be a good priest, in addition to having passed all the exams, a demonstrated human, spiritual and pastoral maturation is necessary. Seminarians should be so formed that they do not become prey to 'clericalism,' nor yield to the temptation of modelling their lives after worldly leaders. Priestly ordination, while making its recipient 'a leader of the people,' should not lead him to 'lord it over' the flock. The Church document *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, gives the four pillars of integral priestly formation: human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. So, beside the traditional division of formation into the stages of philosophical and theological studies, there has to be added a threefold division of discipleship, configuration, and pastoral stages. To each of these new stages there "corresponds an itinerary and a formative content, orientated toward an assimilation with the image of the Good Shepherd." Only through such formation we will have Priests who

are disciples in love with the Lord with humane, compassionate and friendly traits, who are authentic, loyal, interiorly free, affectively stable, capable of weaving together peaceful interpersonal relationships and living the evangelical counsels without rigidity, hypocrisy or loopholes. This can surpass the bureaucratic views of ministry, so that we will have Priests, capable of 'feeling with the Church' and being, like Jesus, compassionate and merciful Samaritans [Shepherds].

Finally, clericalism diminishes the 'Royal Priesthood of the Laity' [I Pet 2:9] and an over-valuing of ordained ministry. So, the answer to clericalism is not in 'clericalization of the laity.' Without diminishing the ordained (ministerial) priesthood, we must take a higher view and spirituality of the Royal Priesthood of all the Baptized and live out this spirituality. This would render clericalism obsolete. Sharing actively in Christ's priesthood, as well as his royal anointing and prophetic office, laypersons would feel no need for special, quasi-clerical tasks within their parishes.

Fortunately, the Church has within it the resources to overcome the scourge of clericalism. For not only is hierarchical structure part of her essential constitution, so is her nature as a *communio* [*koinonia*], a community of faith. Communion is clearly a rich and complicated term. As J. Hamer has pointed out, it can be applied to the church, if this richness is respected. Communion designates a way of life, a network of relationships among local churches and also among Individual Christians.⁸

"Communion should not only belong to the quality of the Church but should be *esse* itself, very necessary condition for the life of the Church as intended by God, founded in Word and life of Christ and held together by the Holy Spirit" (J. Zizioulas). Eucharist is first of all an assembly, a community, a network of relations in which human transcends every exclusiveness of biological or social kind. "The Eucharist is the only historical context of a human existence where the terms 'father,' 'brother,' etc. lose their biological exclusiveness and reveal, as we have, relationships of free and universal love."⁹ From this notion of communion emerges an ecclesial spirituality that transcends clericalism and authoritarianism.¹⁰

Pope John Paul II, in his Apostolic Exhortation *Christifideles Laici* uses often the image of the vine:

⁸Jerome Hamer, *Church is Communion*, New York, 1964.

⁹John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, New York, 1985, 60.

¹⁰Roger Haight, *Spirituality Seeking Theology*, New York, 2014, 168.

‘I am the true vine and my Father is the vinedresser... Abide in me and I in you’ (Jn 15:1, 4). These simple words reveal the mystery of communion that serves as the unifying bond between the Lord and his disciples, between Christ and the baptized: a living and life-giving communion ... From the communion that Christians experience in Christ there immediately flows the communion which they experience with one another (§ 24).

This “*koinonia*-communion” is the union with God brought about by Jesus Christ, in the Holy Spirit. The opportunity for such communion is made present in the Word of God and in the Sacraments. Baptism is the door and the foundation of communion in the Church. The Eucharist is the source and summit of the whole Christian life (cf. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11). Following the teaching of the first number of the Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, the exhortation *Christifideles Laici* states: “The reality of the Church as Communion is, then, the integrating aspect, indeed the central content of the “mystery”, or rather, the divine plan for the salvation of humanity” (§ 26). Church-Communion is an “organic” communion, characterized by a diversity and a complementarity of vocations and states in life, of ministries, of charisms and responsibilities (§ 28). “Because of this diversity and complementarity every member of the lay faithful is seen in relation to the whole body and offers a totally unique contribution on behalf of the whole body” (§ 29).¹¹

Pope Francis has vowed to change the mindset of the Church, declaring that the institution “must return to being a community of the people of God” and rethink the relationship between its leaders and the laity. By his words and his humble example Pope Francis is preaching almost daily a powerful, silent sermon denouncing the scourge of clericalism. It’s the simple way he lives; his decision to move into the visitors’ quarters and eat his meals with them; his lack of interest in pomp and pageantry; his decision to wash the feet of prison inmates (including women) on Holy Thursday; his insistent concern for the poor and the state of planet Earth. He hasn’t yet addressed any of the hot button items, including birth control, the aspirations of women, the collegiality of bishops or the Vatican’s failure to address the priest abuse scandal in a meaningful way. The Church could be involved in finding solutions to these nagging, peripheral issues, which deafen us from hearing the radical gospel message. So, Pope Francis begins to overcome the scourge of clericalism by building by example a case against the arrogance and self-satisfaction that provides the foundation for a multi-tiered, class-

¹¹Pope John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* (Christ’s Faithful People), 1988.

conscious society of those who make the decisions and those who do not, those who have given up earthly rewards in favour of honorific titles, fancy liturgical attire and, above all, power. It did not take him long to recognize the extent of clericalism rampant in the Curia and to realize how it corrupts the church and strangles the Holy Spirit. Even before he arrived for the election, he was undoubtedly aware of clericalism and its effects in other countries. He is laying down a kind of platform to reconnect the church of this era to the Spirit that inspired the early Christians and authentic leaders, like Francis of Assisi, to both proclaim the gospel and live it.

One of the strongest criticisms Pope Francis has made of members of the clergy and religious life is what he calls the “complex of the elect,” which he claims is the source of the “pathology of clerical power.” Pope Francis frequently criticizes those who understand the call to the priesthood or to the consecrated life in terms of a warped theology of “election.” Such a theology holds that God separates a person from the world in order to make the person superior to other members of the church.

In line with this theology, Pope Francis has been proposing a new way of being church, “a church which is bruised, hurting, and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.” According to him, authentic pastoral action happens when the pastors are truly inserted in the reality of poor people, when they feel pain in the face of the needs and the deprivations of the poor and when they experience “power as service” and when they become truly human and servant leaders by self-emptying love.

To combat clericalism, Dr Sebastian Athappally, CMI proposes that the present Western Latin Church should consider herself as “a communion of churches: a communion of 23 Eastern/Oriental Catholic Churches together with the Western Latin Church. The pope will be in this body both as the supreme pontiff, as well as patriarch or the head of the Western (Latin) Church.”¹² For, he refers to the lived practice of the communion of churches found in numerous texts: 1 Cor 10:16ff: ‘The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing.... of the one bread?’ “The full meaning of Pauline concept of *koinonia* is communion through participation. Its most important instance of application is in the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, where the Eucharist as well as the ecclesiological

¹²Sebastian Athappilly, CMI, “Reform in the Church, a Utopia?” *Third millennium* 19, 4 (2016) 87.

understanding of the body of Christ are combined together. Patristics regarded the deviation from faith not merely as an abstract issue of interpretation, but as basic violation of love (agape) of the *koinonia* which embraces faith and praxis equally. Church as *koinonia* happens above all in baptism and Eucharist, the decisive sign and bond of communion.¹³

Pope Francis would hence demand from them humanity, humility and accountability. A theology of the cross that demonstrates God's weakness and foolishness (I Cor 1:25) has something to say to the church with regard to the exercise of power and governance. Collegiality, humility, dialogue and service are the compatible forms arising out of a spirituality of kenosis and the cross. This would, of course, affect also the structure of the church for better. We are not pleading for a Church without hierarchy or structure; we need them all, for Jesus has willed this for his Church, his visible body. We are appealing, however, for a life-style and work-style from the part of every Christian leader corresponding to the way of God, who made himself weak for the sake of love, retaining his power of persuasion.¹⁴

The Church should be a model and instrument for authentic communities based on the Kingdom values, such as love, justice, service, equality, etc. Accordingly, the bishop as the leader has to be a person of God and His kingly reign. His duty is "not merely to do things rightly, fairly and justly but more importantly to do the right thing, the fair thing and just thing." He must be simple and humble; his lifestyle choices will and should reflect this. This is all the more true of the situation in Asia. The secret of the great success of Mother Teresa of Kolkata is precisely this. She won the hearts of millions of Indians because of her life of witness. She lived Christ. Her spiritual energy was visible in her deeds of charity. She is remembered not for her administrative power or huge institutions, rather for her spirituality that was translated into love of the poor and the needy.¹⁵

Dr Athappally, CMI concludes his article by suggesting the model of St Thomas Christians as a solution to the problem. Until the 16th century when the Western missionaries entered the Indian soil, the bishops were mainly spiritual guides and teachers; they were less 'governors' or administrators. The local clergy with the parish assembly (*palliyogam*) used to manage the local affairs.¹⁶

¹³Athappilly, "Reform in the Church, a Utopia?" 87-88.

¹⁴Athappilly, "Reform in the Church, a Utopia?" 93

¹⁵Rose M, Beal, *Mystery of the Church, People of God*, 281

¹⁶Athappilly, "Reform in the Church, a Utopia?" 96.

Conclusion

We have gone through various meanings of clericalism, the possible challenges it makes to the church and some practical solutions to remove it from her. Basically, the church leaders have to be liberated from every form of temptation to power. They must become shepherds performing pastoral ministry (service). They must follow the lofty example of their Leader who became weak and powerless by emptying himself and taking the form of a slave (servant) and retaining his power of persuading love and of lived example.¹⁷ Then we will have a church as envisioned by Congar:

Church is a maternal hearth, mystic reality and a spiritual hearth. When we are lonely, cut off from our human roots, during these periods of captivity, we realize what a profound place is held in our lives by an affectionate bond with a familiar setting which, by its real name, is called Church, our maternal and spiritual hearth. We human beings also experience a vital need not to be alone. For this Jesus promised us that he would not leave us orphans, without a hearth. Jesus gave up his last breath – *emisit spiritum* – his Holy Spirit and his bride, the Paraclete and the Church.¹⁸

¹⁷Athappilly, "Reform in the Church, a Utopia?" 98.

¹⁸Yves Congar, as quoted by Gabriel Flynn, in *New Blackfriar* 83, 977/978 (July/August 2002) 347.