**Lumen Gentium Chapter III, continued**

**The Papacy, Episcopacy, and Collegiality**

The Council reaffirms Catholic convictions regarding Apostolic and Petrine Succession (see *Lumen Gentium* #18).

However, note how the Council *enunciates clearly the doctrine concerning bishops, successors to the apostles, who together with Peter’s successor, the Vicar of Christ, the visible head of the whole Church, direct the house of the living God* (*Lumen Gentium* #18).

Such a clear enunciation was necessary due to the abbreviated First Vatican Council which resulted in the nature and mission of the episcopacy at large not being adequately addressed.

Bishops are identified as being entrusted with the perpetuation of the apostolic mission (successors to the apostles).

*See Lumen Gentium* #’s 18, 20, 22, and 24, *Christus Dominus* #’s 2, 4, and 6, and *The Church*, 287-290.

Vatican I’s articulations regarding the papacy are reaffirmed (see *Lumen Gentium* #’s 18, 19, 22, 23, and 25); the papacy is the perpetual source/foundation of visible ecclesial unity; the head of the Episcopal college (see *Lumen Gentium* #’s 18, 22, and 25) yet contextualized vis-à-vis the wider episcopacy which collectively is to shepherd the Church.

*See The Church*, 298-303 and *Pneumatic Correctives*, Chapters 5 and 6.

The papacy is to serve the unity and communion of the wider episcopacy and Church.

**Together**, the bishops and the pope form a permanent **college** instituted by Christ with the pope serving as its head (see *Lumen Gentium* #19 and 22, *Christus Dominus* #’s 3, 4, and 6, and *The Church*, 314-315). The power of this College is said to come from Jesus for the purpose of evangelization, sanctification, and governing in a manner that serves to spread the Church and administer it according to the guidance of Jesus (see *Lumen Gentium* #19).

As the Council interprets apostolic succession, it views the bishop as the one who manifested and preserved the apostolic tradition and who presided over ecclesial communities of which they served as shepherds (see *Lumen Gentium* #18) and teachers of doctrine (see *Christus Dominus* #12), ministers, and governors (see *Lumen Gentium* #’s 19-22 and 25-26).

Consequently, the Council forcefully acknowledges the bishop as one who acts *en persona de christe* (see *Lumen Gentium* #’s 20-21 and 25 and *Christus Dominus* #’s 12-14 and 16).

When bishops conduct themselves via service, preaching, and administration of the sacraments (see *Christus Dominus* #15) in a manner marked by paternal care, they serve to make Jesus present within the community, as evidenced by the incorporation of new members into the community and their guidance toward beatitude. Such a privileged role within the community is the result of the outpouring of the Spirit upon them (see *Lumen Gentium* #21).
Episcopal Consecration is interpreted as conferring the fullness of the sacrament of Orders, conferring the duties of teaching and ruling along with sanctifying (see Lumen Gentium #’s 21 and 26 and Christus Dominus #15). It is via ordination that a bishop receives the power to teach and rule, not via ecclesial delegation, but from the grace/charism of Jesus.

Sacramental custodianship is said to be a central hallmark of the Episcopal ministry (see Lumen Gentium #26 and Christus Dominus #15), while their juridical privileges differentiate their charism of orders from that of the presbyterate. Clarification of the charism of orders vis-à-vis the episcopacy was a central concern the Council fathers wished to address.

However, the efficacy of the consecration derives from its union/communion with the entire college of bishops and its head, the pope (see Lumen Gentium #’s 21-22).

The Collegial nature of the episcopacy is what the Council accentuates (see Lumen Gentium #22).

As noted above, papal primacy is reaffirmed (see Lumen Gentium #’s 18, 19, 22, 23, and 25), but it must be recalled that the Pope, too, is a bishop...Does this mean that his supreme authority is also rooted in his membership of the episcopal college, even if we concede certain privileges, powers, and initiatives which apply solely to him?

Likewise, Episcopal authority is to be understood in relation to and subject to the pope (see Christus Dominus #’s 2, 4, and 8) and in relation to the college (see Lumen Gentium #’s 23 and 25 and Christus Dominus #’s 3-4, 18, 24, and 37-38), yet supreme in one’s own diocese (see Lumen Gentium #’s 22-23, and 27 and Christus Dominus # 3). What, then, does this practically mean vis-à-vis the de facto exercise of Episcopal authority?

Note how Lumen Gentium #22 oscillates between affirmation of papal privileges: authority over the college, singular full/supreme power over the universal Church, privilege to convene and affirm ecumenical councils (see Lumen Gentium #22), and immediate affirmation of episcopal collegiality/privileges. Both the pope and bishops are said to be members of the episcopal college; both share the divinely appointed office of loosing and binding; both serve to bespeak of the Church’s unity and catholicity; both share supreme authority over the whole Church (see Lumen Gentium #22).

Also note how bishops enjoy their own power and privileges regarding the good of their own churches,[the visible sources of unity in their own particular church, representative of their own church, and set over their particular church for the exercise of pastoral office over the portion of the People of God assigned to them (see Lumen Gentium #’s 23 and 27)], are admonished to regularly utilize episcopal conferences and how an ecumenical council is identified as the supreme authority over the Church (see Lumen Gentium #’s 22-23, 25, and 27 and Christus Dominus #’s 3, 5, 8, and 37).

A tension seemingly remains in the Conciliar teachings whereby bishops are said to govern the particular churches assigned to them in a manner that is proper, ordinary and immediate; i.e., a pastoral responsibility which is said to be permanent and entrusted to them fully—a power they are said to possess in their own right—while it is simultaneously posited that episcopal power is ultimately controlled by the supreme authority of the Church (see Lumen Gentium #27). Is this supreme authority to be understood as the papacy? The Gospel? Jesus?
The Council also suggests that the collegial nature of the episcopacy more readily reveals the Church’s true catholicity (see *Lumen Gentium* #’s 22-23).

Furthermore, bishops are said to receive their mission (a mission of *diakonia*) from Jesus (see *Lumen Gentium* #24). Preaching and teaching are said to be the primary duties of bishops (see *Lumen Gentium* #25).


Early Christian authorities perpetuated this emphasis on service and communal transformation. *Diakonia* (service) is the New Testament’s preferred term for ministry.

Early Christian ministry strove to imitate Jesus and respond to His Spirit and the charisms the Spirit bequeathed unto the communities. Paul asserts that ministerial authority is for building up the Body via the promotion of the common good (see Romans 12:4, Ephesians 4:13, and I Corinthians 12:7).

Early Christian ministry was not focused on sacral offices, rather it was focused on preaching about Jesus and enacting His example of justice and compassion; i.e., praxis unto the service of the Kingdom.

As a college, bishops share the charism of infallibility when they teach on matters of faith and morals and consistent with the deposit of revelation united as a college in union with the pope, especially within the context of an ecumenical council (see *Lumen Gentium* #25).

*Jesus is to be the model for Episcopal leadership—a model of *diakonia* and *kenosis*, which listens to the faithful, collaborates with them, and that promotes their welfare* (see *Lumen Gentium* #27).

*In short, Vatican II reaffirms the papal privileges/prerogatives articulated by Vatican I, but does so within the context of and vis-à-vis the college of bishops.*

Ponder the implications that these observations have for both hierarchal authority within the Church and the relationships between local churches and the universal church...

**Collegiality and Limits**

As suggested earlier, Vatican II does not deprive the papacy of any of its traditional privileges and prerogatives, but places them within a collegial context.

Paul VI continued/implemented this trend with his establishment of Episcopal Synods.
Collegiality:

**Theological Concept:** Collegiality rests upon communion; Vatican II emphasized cooperation between the pope and bishops; the two offices are related, are divinely instituted, are in continuity with apostolicity, and are essential for the Church. Although they have different functions, they form a single communion; we must see the pope within the college of bishops as a member and its head, working together with them (see *Lumen Gentium* #’s 18 and 22). A bishop does not receive his episcopal authority from the pope, but from God via ordination (see *Lumen Gentium* #27); apostolic succession is not a personal prerogative of the pope who dispenses it to others, rather it belongs to the college of bishops in their entirety.

See *The Church*, 314-315.

**Dependent Upon the Papacy:** On the theoretical level, the college of bishops cannot exist without the pope who is its head (see *Lumen Gentium* #22). Although the Council and Canon Law affirm that the pope can exercise his supreme authority freely, papal primacy ought not to be understood as being in opposition to collegiality, for the pope is to exercise his authority in a manner at the service of the Church and to its edification, fostering communion of faith and love. Practically, collegiality depends upon the pope for he alone is capable of convening a council or synod of bishops. If he chose to ignore collegiality, it would be powerless. Furthermore, collegiality cannot be utilized so as to reject papal primacy.

See *The Church*, 313-314.

**Dialogic:** Dialogue is indispensable to collegiality. Communication is key. The Economic Trinity is to the model of collegial communion. Paul VI stated: "Before speaking it is necessary to listen. The Spirit of dialogue is friendship and, even more, service." Like any other dialogue, collegiality is a process as persons strive to reach consensus; i.e., a mutual search for truth.

See *The Church*, 313-314 and *Pneumatic Correctives*, Chapters 5 and 6.

**Episcopal Synods** were formally established by Paul VI in 1965 for a three-fold purpose (see McBrien. 315):
- To foster relations between bishops of the world and the pope
- To ensure that firsthand, accurate, and reliable information concerning problems which the Church throughout the world is experiencing so as to determine appropriate courses of action to take
- To foster agreement in essential doctrines and ecclesial procedures...
- of the consolation of their assistance, the help of their prudence and experience, the support of their counsel, and the benefit of their authority

**Episcopal Conferences:** See *Christus Dominus* #’s 36, 37, and 38 and *The Church*, 316.

**Limits of Hierarchical Authority**

Tradition bespeaks of limits upon the exercise of authority, limits meant to ensure collegiality and, thus, preserve both the catholicity and unity of the Church:

Paul serves as a corrective to Peter at the first Jerusalem Conference.
Autonomy of the Western churches throughout the first two centuries.

The autonomy of the Eastern churches and the Pentarchy of the early Church.

Lay investiture controversies of the Middle Ages whereby both hierarchy and laity intervened in ecclesial appointments.

Avignon papacy and the Babylonian Captivity of the Church resolved via Conciliarism (Constance and Pisa).

Gallicanism and the early Americans experience the indigenous churches of France and America, respectively, assuming ultimate ecclesial authority over affairs of the Church within their respective regions.

Febronianism: 18th century German expression of Gallicanism

Josephinism: 18th century Austrian expression of Gallicanism

Ecclesial Purpose: The perpetual principle which is to mark the exercise of ecclesial authority is service unto the visible foundation of unity in the Church with the mission to preserve believers in communion of faith, the perpetual wellbeing and edification of the Church, and to ensure that the episcopate is one and undivided:

Revelation/Divine Law: Ecclesial authority must be exercised in a manner that respects.

The fundamental structure of the Church: Ecclesial authority ought not to evolve/develop in a manner inconsistent with the founding impetus of Jesus and the apostles.

The Sacraments: Ecclesial authority is to be at the service of the instruments of grace instituted by Jesus.

Prior Councils are to serve as benchmarks and sources which inform subsequent developments.

Natural Law: Ecclesial authority is bound to respect.

Dogma: Declarations posited by authority must be consonant with revelation and apostolic tradition; be devoid of fear, violence, or coercion; proffered with mental fortitude intact; rendered while acting in the capacity as supreme pastors/in virtue of offices; address matters of faith and morals; intended to propose doctrines to be held by the universal Church.
Practical: Resonate with the *sensus fidelium*, tradition and lived experience of the faithful (reception). Cardinal Suenens, so influential at Vatican II, spoke of co-responsibility and organic collaboration between the hierarchy and laity vis-à-vis the exercise of ecclesial authority. Cardinal John Henry Newman, in his seminal essay *On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine*, cites the case of Arianism within the early Church as an example whereby the orthodox faith was preserved by the *sensus fidelium*, not the hierarchy—Open, sustained dissent against an overwhelming preponderance of Church authority was the very instrument by which an erroneous doctrine had been eradicated and the true tradition vindicated...

Collective Good of the Church: Teachings must serve this rather than personal theologies.

Respect for local churches: Authority is to be exercised in a manner that brings to realization the catholicity/universality of the Church.

Subsidiarity is to characterize the exercise of authority.

**Additional Reflections Regarding Vatican II on Hierarchical Ministry: The Presbyterate and Diaconate**

Vatican II situates all ministries within its wider ecclesiology and makes as its over-arching framework the *three-fold office of Christ*—priest, prophet, and king—as its structure/underlying basis for the theology of ministry.

In short, Vatican II proffered a Christological basis for ministry; the very ministry of Jesus is to be the foundation for any/all definitions, descriptions, and spirituality for each and every ecclesial ministry. Jesus is the basis of ministry and all other ministries must be understood vis-à-vis Christ’s ministry.

As just noted, the ministry of Jesus was a three-fold ministry:
- Prophet—by His words and life Jesus gave witness to the Gospel
- Priest—Jesus sanctified others by bringing them to holiness/relationship with God; as the Risen Lord He exercises a heavenly priesthood which perpetuates His salvific and redemptive and atoning act of sacrifice (see Hebrews).
- King—Jesus was a leader and pastor; i.e., the Good Shepherd who cared for His sheep (see John 10).

**Presbyterate**

The Council affirmed the traditional connection of the priesthood to Eucharistic presidency (see *Presbyterorum Ordo*inis #2) but greatly expanded beyond this traditional view via prolifically situating priestly ministry vis-à-vis the three-fold ministry of Jesus. Vatican II proffered a consistent portrait of priestly ministry which went beyond solely viewing such ministry in primarily sacerdotal terms.

Priests share in the tri-fold ministry of Jesus and exercise their ministry in a collaborative manner (see *Lumen Gentium* #28):

*Priests represent Christ and are collaborators of the order of bishops in that three-fold sacred duty which, of its nature, pertains to the mission of the Church (Ad Gentes #39).*
As with the episcopacy, Vatican II also spoke of the college of the presbytery and also maintained that the ministerial power of priests are derived from the sacrament of Orders, not delegated by the episcopacy (See *Presbyterorum Ordinis* #’s 7-8). Subsequent to Vatican II, Canon Law introduced regulations regarding the existence of presbyteral councils in every diocese.

Priests are to be configured to Jesus (See *Presbyterorum Ordinis* #12) with a spirituality marked by:

- Emulation of Scriptural Models: Imitation of Jesus and openness to the Spirit (see *Presbyterorum Ordinis* #13) devoted to the teaching/preaching of the Word (see *Presbyterorum Ordinis* #’s 4, 13), characterized by an openness to inculturation and diversity (see *Presbyterorum Ordinis* #10), a preferential option for the poor and sick (see *Presbyterorum Ordinis* #’s 6, 17), and an openness to the laity (see *Presbyterorum Ordinis* #’s 9, 11).

**Diaconate**

Deacons also share in the three-fold ministry of Christ and exercise their ministry in communion with bishops and priests:

*In the lower grades of the hierarchy are deacons...Strengthened by sacramental grace they serve the people of God in the diakonia of the liturgy, word and charity, in communion with the bishop and his presbyterium (Lumen Gentium #29).*

Vatican II’s restoration of the permanent diaconate has had, and will continue to have, significant impact upon the ecclesial experience, especially in the United States where permanent deacons will soon outnumber priests.