

small

of return

May I now be allowed, in my own name to ~~make~~ two rather disconnected comments on the Report on the practical problems concerning the ministerial priesthood.

Number one is in connection with the "pastoral planning" in chapter II of the Report. In making decisions, the collaboration of our priests, religious, and laity should be real and not merely nominal. They should really ^{have their say in proposing what they think should} be done for the pastoral ministry, and the "dialogue" with our priests and others should make a difference in the decisions ~~with~~ ^{which} the bishop ~~takes~~ ^{takes}; no doubt it is up to him to take the decision, but he should take into account what the dialogue proposed. If the priests, or other members of the pastoral council, get the impression or learn from experience that their consultation by the bishop is a sheer formality, that they are not really trusted, that the bishop has a pre-settled programme of action, then the implementation of the directives of Vatican II in this regard is a farce, and the priests and laity do not fail to see through it. As a consequence, they give up proposing useless advice or suggestions or plans; and as often happens, resign from the council or senate.

Such is specially the case when the bishop and his counsellors are of opinion that all is well in the diocese and that there is no need of any change; what the council of priests and the pastoral council propose is already provided for by the current "administration". Such things are not imaginary, they ^{are} ~~are~~ real facts.

The point is that real dialogue and responsible collaboration of our priests and laity are not easily available, often perhaps because the bishop does not give them a real chance.

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Number 2 = refers to the problem of priestly celibacy (pag. 24 of the Report). In addition to the view on celibacy of the Episcopal Conference of India already clearly expressed, I wish to make this point. We are all aware that a certain number of priests have expressed their desire that the present law of celibacy be changed. It is very necessary that the Synod before coming to a decision one way or the other, should openly and freely consider the reasons, doctrinal or practical given for the proposed change. The reason for suggesting this—even though personally we may not hope or wish that a change should come—, is that the decision of the Synod will not be acceptable for lack of credibility of the Synod, if the question has not been examined freely and without prejudice as though the decision was already settled beforehand. The point is important not only in itself but also for its implications regarding the credibility of the Synod as a whole and the acceptability of all decisions and orientations.

Dixi. Gratias.