



## Profile of the Priest of the New Millennium

*by Edson Damian*

It is true that there is an essential aspect of the priest which does not change. The priest of tomorrow, no less than the priest of today, must resemble Christ. But it is no less important the life and ministry of the priest should be adapted to every age and circumstance of life (Pastores dabo Vobis, 5). The theological paradigm of the Good Shepherd together with our experience of the challenges and the signs of the times, bring us as a group in the Third Course for Formators to underline, especially in Latin America, some traces that seem to us to define the profile of the priest as new evangelizer as this Third Millennium begins.

The priest of the New Millennium should be...

1. A man identified with Jesus Christ the Shepherd in his pastoral charity. In virtue of his ordination, the priest is sacrament, Epiphany and icon of Christ the Good Shepherd. Pastoral charity is a share in the same pastoral charity of Jesus, and places him in an intimate relation of communion and friendship with Jesus. It shows itself in the mercy, tenderness and love for his flock, his willingness to give his life for the flock (Jn 15,13) as the servant of those sisters and brothers whom Jesus confides to his ministry.

2. A man who is mystic and mystagogue. In order to respond to his theological-ontological identity, the priest is called to be a *iman* of God<sup>i</sup> (1Tim 6,11), a man of prayer and contemplation who lives immersed in the mystery of the Trinity: totally committed and available to the Father's will; radically committed to the following of Jesus Christ; totally led by the freedom of the Spirit which blows where it wills (Jn 3,8). Because he is a mystic, he becomes in turn a mystagogue, the one who introduces others to the mystery, who facilitates an encounter with God (PdV,47).

3. A man with his heart centered in Jesus Christ, the Servant, exercising the ministry of pastor as a servant (*ministerio / minus-stare*) of all, like the Master. The priest is a disciple and witness of the Lord who emptied himself (*kenosis*, Phil 2) and became poor, a servant obedient even to death on the cross. In order to serve with the same sentiments as Jesus he renounces power and privileges, the quest for goods and pleasure, and assumes in a radical way the evangelical counsels of poverty - despoiling, obedience - availability for the mission, and in a fully self-sacrificing love.

4. A disciple and listener to the Word of God, he needs a continuous conversion to become an authentic witness and a faithful apostle of the Gospel. Conscious that he is a servant, and not the owner of the Word, he passionately assumes the new evangelization with a missionary and ecumenical accent.

5. A man of relationship and dialogue, a man of communion and participation as part of the Church (Puebla). He lives and exercises his ministry collegially, co-responsibly, and



fraternally with the Bishop, and with his brother priests, deacons and laity. He works as part of a team, values the charisms and coordinates the services and ministries of others from the perspective of the Church as the People of God, both evangelizing and ministerial. Inserted in a conflictive and excluding society, he struggles for justice, reconciliation and peace with all men and women of goodwill.

6. A person immersed, inculturated and contextualized in the midst of his people, valuing the good and authentic elements of individual cultures, sharing the history or life experience of the particular church in which he is incardinated, "in its riches and in its weaknesses, in its difficulties and its hopes, working in it for its growth" (PdV, 74). A man aware and close to the men and women of today, in order to be able to "understand more clearly their needs, respond to their demands, perceive their unvoiced questions and share the hopes and expectations, the joys and burdens which are part of life" (PdV, 72). Committed to the struggles and conflicts of his people, "making his own the human experience of suffering in its many different manifestations" (PdV, 72), and at the same time in an on going critical dialogue with society.

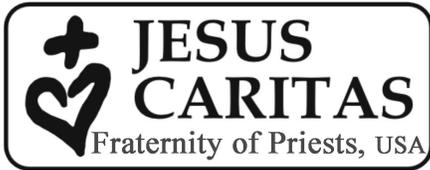
7. A fraternal man, a brother among brothers -- above all with all the members of his presbyterate, with whom he constitutes a true family (PdV, 74) but also with all people, without considering himself superior to any of them, a shepherd for all, without prejudice or favoritism (cf. PdV, 59).

A man with a solid integral formation, mature in his humanity. Since he is called to be a living image of Jesus Christ, Head and Shepherd, he "should seek to reflect in himself, as far as possible, the human perfection which shines forth in the incarnate Son of God and which is reflected with particular liveliness in his attitude toward others as we see narrated in the Gospels" (PdV, 43). Emotionally balanced, steady and tenacious, adaptable - flexible, he lives and approaches conflicts with maturity. For this, he needs to know how to rest and care for himself without giving himself so much to his work and to others that he forgets himself" (PdV, 72).

9. A man of the Kingdom, free in himself and able to free other, attentive to the signs of the times that manifest its presence in history, and full of hope in the power of that Kingdom which guarantees its full realization, who knows how to creatively hasten its coming and quicken its fulfillment in this world.

References: Pastores dabo Vobis (PdV): Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day (Origins Vol 21: No. 45; April 16, 1992). Translated from the Spanish by Donald F. Hanchon

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the priest of God (1Tim 6,11), a man of action who lives immersed in the mystery of God, led by the freedom of the Gospel, the mystagogue, the evangelist. A man centered in Jesus Christ, the servant of all, like the Master. The witness of the Lord who emptied became poor, a servant obedient to the cross. In order to serve the Church, I say the evangelical counsels are a necessity for the priest, he needs to become an authentic witness conscious that he is the owner of the Word, he has a new evangelization with a mission, a man of communion and participation as part of the Church, in communion with the Bishop, priests, deacons and laity. He values the charisms and ministries of others from the People of God -- all in communion with all men and women of good will, valuing the good and diverse cultures, sharing the life of the particular church in its riches and in its weaknesses, working in it for its mission. A man aware and close to the day, in order to be able to respond to their needs, respond to their voiced questions and share the joys and burdens which are a part of his. Committed to the struggles of the people, making his own the human condition of his presbyterate, with whom he identifies himself and does not consider himself superior to any of them. Mature in his life, called to be a living image of the Good Shepherd, he should seek to reflect the face of God and particular liveliness in his attitudes. Conscious of his vocation, he needs to know how to rest without giving himself so much to himself, free in himself and able to meet the needs of the people, and full of hope in the Lord who guarantees its full realization. To creatively hasten its coming and quicken its mission in this - vocation of Priests in the Circumlocutionary Vol 21: No. 45; April the Spanish by Donald F. Hanchon 1.