
Parish: Holy See, reform is neither “self-referential conception” nor “clericalisation of pastoral activity”

“The conversion of structures, which the Church must undertake, requires a significant change in mentality and an interior renewal, especially among those entrusted with the responsibility of pastoral leadership”. This recommendation is contained in the Instruction “The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church” released by the Congregation for the Clergy today. The document specifically calls on parish priests, who are “co-workers of the bishop”, to carry out a “missionary reform of pastoral action”. “In order to avoid trauma and hurt in the process of restructuring a Parish or, at times, diocesan communities, it is imperative that it be carried out with flexibility and gradualism”, the document suggests, in line with the reform of the Roman Curia carried out by Pope Francis. For this reason, it is important not to “act hastily” and not to obey a “rational decision”, “to the detriment of those who actually live within the territory”. Every plan must therefore “be situated within the lived experience of a community and implanted in it without causing harm, with a necessary phase of prior consultation, and of progressive implementation and verification”. Also, the renewal of a parish should neither be the sole responsibility of the parish priest nor “be imposed from above in such a way as to exclude the People of God”. Hence the need to overcome a “self-referential conception of the Parish or the clericalisation of pastoral activity”. Indeed, it is the whole community, and “not simply the hierarchy”, who is the “responsible agent of mission, since the Church is identified as the entire People of God”. “As a member and servant of the People of God entrusted to his care, the Priest cannot supplant this discernment”: “The Parish community has the ability to propose forms of ministry, to proclaim the faith and to bear witness to charity”.

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