

Ministry & Society: The Rhetorics of Expectations

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Abstract

When we examine ‘who ministers what to whom’ in the church we have to look at our expectations of what the church should do for those inside and out of the church, as well as the expectations of what society should offer. Such an examination of expectations has to consider the structure of this takes place in a relationship between agency and structure: who acts and in what context? This at a time when the place of the individual in the church has changed hugely since the beginning of the twentieth century, from passivity to participation. The article finally relates this theoretical analysis to the current crisis in the church.

Keywords

Church, Society, Expectations, Rhetoric, Participation

For our conference we will be talking about ministry and ministerial outreach: who ministers what to whom? I have been asked to speak about ‘the *actual* society in which we minister and its *expectations*’. As it is not such a snazzy title, I’ve dressed it up a bit and added ‘the rhetorics of expectations’. I take it that the idea is that ministry should be attuned to contemporary needs and expectations, and how these are socially and culturally framed.

Part 1: How ‘expectations’ work

We are awash with expectations today - as, of course, we have always been. Human beings live ‘expectantly’: in hope, with desires, with needs. Today we are fortunate that we can realistically expect our basic expectations to be met. We enjoy a remarkable measure of security; we can count on protection under the law, health care, education, a basic income, and housing. Of course, all this can still come under threat, especially in poorer sectors and places. But over

and above these basics, we are now geared up to expect lots more. We expect our living standards to get ever better, though austerity has put a dent in that. We expect equality of treatment, personal respect, not to be 'put down' or demeaned. We expect not to be subject to racism, ageism or sexism, to have equality of opportunity. We cherish freedom of choice above all, to be free to choose our own path, and not to be shackled by convention. And as society becomes ever more post-religious many expect to be free in the conduct of their personal lives from moral stricture, even from moral obligation.

We can say that there has been an explosion of expectation today. What younger generations expect as a matter of course often surprises their seniors, who knew more straitened times. At all the nexuses of human social life we find shifting, changing expectations; expectations rising, forming and re-forming; rising from and re-forming around a whole range of our concerns: education, health and social care, work and employment, social and political participation, children's rights, women's rights, civil rights, freedom of expression, the autonomy of the individual, non-discrimination on racial or ethnic or lifestyle or religious grounds.

Getting to this point has been a long process, going back beyond the industrial revolution, to the rise of modernity. We need not delay on those great structural transformations of modernisation and secularisation, but merely note how social expectations shift in the course of the historical process. Today the technological and communications revolutions are re-shaping expectations.

How does this 'culture of mobile expectation' affect ministry? Here, a little bit of theory will help to frame the question. I take it that ministry means church-based activities of care or of relationship and communication. This introduces the institutional context of church. Inevitably, as elsewhere, expectations of the church and its various bodies (parishes, schools, dioceses) and its activities (liturgy, education, pastoral care) are mobile and fast-changing.

The explosion of expectations works two ways. The emergent expectations people have *of* society or the church are met with emergent expectations *by* society and the church – by a society of citizens, by the church of the faithful. What individuals look for – from family and friends, from work and the community – changes over time. And what is expected of the individual – what the state, the family, the workplace and the church expect from members – also changes over time. There is an inherent mutuality between these two dimensions of expectation.

The nature of social expectation has an inherent mutuality between the individual/personal and the institutional/communal. For instance, people have come to expect an education; and society, equally, expects and needs people to be educated, and in quite specific ways, so as to be competent in the tasks of societal living. In the same

vein, what people expect of ministry and of the church, and what the church expects of people are interconnected. Catholics expect there to be a functioning parish to attend; the parish priest expects people (or enough of them) to turn up. Catholic parishes do not, as a rule, advertise or recruit (as Anglicans sometimes do do); there is a mutual expectation at work.

One way of theorising this mutuality is in terms of the classical sociological issue of structure and agency. In brief, the issue is: what is involved in effective human-social action? Is it ‘agency’ (individuals’ actions), or ‘structure’ (the influence society and culture exert on the individual)? Or some combination of the two?¹ Notice that that is a way of re-framing our conference theme: ‘who ministers what to whom?’ We could re-state it in agency/structure terms: what is involved in effective ministry? Is it ‘agency’ (individuals’ expectations), or ‘structure’ (institutional and ecclesial expectations)? Or some combination of the two?

What, then, about ‘the actual society in which we minister and its expectations’? What makes for effective ministerial-human-social action? It depends on the interaction between different levels of expectation:

- Agency:
 - Individual/personal expectations arising within:
 - society in general
 - the church community.
- Structure:
 - Institutional expectations by:
 - society at large, the state
 - the church institution.

We should note that using ‘expectations’ this way, referring to the agency-structure polarity, highlights the aspect of rhetoric within social action. Expectations are akin to wish lists - fluid, even fleeting. Institutions ‘manage expectations’. To name expectations is to name *experience* – individual personal experience and accumulated structural-cultural experience.

History can show expectations at work, although we are starting at the church rather than with society, and with the institutional rather than the personal. First, a well-known, not to say notorious, statement of what was once expected of Catholics:

¹ See: Margaret Archer, *Culture and Agency: the place of culture in social theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996; Anthony Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory, Action, Structure and Contradiction in Social Analysis*, Palgrave Macmillan, 1979.

The Church is essentially an unequal society comprising two categories of her sons, the Pastors and the flock, those who occupy a rank in the different degrees of the hierarchy and the multitude of the faithful. So distinct are these categories that with the pastors only rests the necessary right and authority for promoting the end of the society and directing all its members towards that end; the one duty of the multitude is to allow themselves to be led, and, like a docile flock, to follow the Pastors.

(Pope Pius X, Encyclical *Vehementer*, 1906, n. 8)

This is the institutional expectation of a ‘divine right of kings (popes)’ to rule. The expectation is that the people, the ‘multitude’, be passive and subservient, foregoing any capacity to determine their own action, lacking any agency of their own except the agency of putting into effect what the church hierarchy tells them to do.

By contrast, Pope Paul VI, in a memorable passage, wrote:

In the face of such widely varying situations it is difficult for us to utter a unified message and to put forward a solution which has universal validity. Such is not our ambition, nor is it our mission. It is up to the Christian communities to analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the Gospel’s unalterable words and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgment and directives for action from the social teaching of the Church. (*Octogesima adveniens*, 1971, n. 4)

Pope Paul disclaims the kind of hierarchical leadership asserted by Pope Pius. He actively encourages personal-communal agency as essential for the practical articulation of the gospel. It is interesting, however, that this passage from *Octogesima adveniens* went underground for a long time; it was hardly referenced at all in subsequent Vatican documents until Pope Francis resurrected it in *Evangelii gaudium* (2013, n. 184).

We might ask ourselves how these two different ecclesial-institutional expectations related *at the time* to individual-personal expectations and to societal expectations? How effective were these historical ecclesial-institutional expectations? Did they generate and support effective action and were those expectations fulfilled? And how might we account for the change in expectations between 1906 and 1971?

Part 2: The actual society . . . its expectations

We turn now to the expectations of today’s society vis-à-vis church and ministry. Charting this fully would be an immense exercise. On one view, our society and culture – the population at large – has little or no expectation of the church. But even ‘no expectation’ is a

sort of expectation! So, we have to differentiate among the various groupings of people with expectations.

There are (in ugly church-speak) the ‘unchurched’: ranging from those violently opposed, to the blankly uninterested, to the ‘seekers’ who, Athenian-like, ‘would like to hear you talk about this again’ (Acts 17:32). Then there are continuing church ‘adherents’: ranging from occasional attenders, to those who ‘cling’ to the institution for surety and clarity, or for power and control - including bitter venomous bloggers - to those who have true Catholic faith in the Church as the Body of Christ and dwell securely within the institution as the mystery of God among us.

These are all present with ‘expectations’: some specific to believers, some to people at large, many of them common to both. The expectations are fluid and carry across institutional boundaries, and they give rise to sharply clashing rhetorics. Three significant sets of expectations (at least) arise across the board: the demand for participation, the rights of conscience, and the search for spirituality. Each has important implications for ministry. So, some summary descriptions are in order, viewing them through the lens of our analytical schema.

Participation

The expectation of a right to participate – the demand for agency, in fact, which evidently took hold somewhere between Pius X and Paul VI – is a clear and obvious demand that is, for example, behind the transformation of women’s role in society and in the church. Participation is also a key criterion in education and how it might be delivered. And it underlies contemporary moral concerns, as we’ll see in the next section.

This is perhaps the key change of our times: that we expect to determine our own action, to be agents in the construction of our own lives and in the shaping of society, to live *effectively* and *fully* as persons, in *act* as well as transcendently. It is the opposite of passive belonging. This is now a standard expectation and it has been absorbed by society at large, even if not without conflict and controversy, and even if not universally. The workplace, for example, remains mostly top-down and a command arena.

But at a fundamental level, participation on the basis of individual agency, as well being what we expect for ourselves individually, is what society expects *of* us individually. An information-rich and knowledge-laden society needs citizens skilled in navigating the complexities of the societal system. It needs ‘individualised’ persons equipped with a broad range of social and technical skills (e.g., an

ability to handle political choice and, most obviously today, some computer skills).

Societal expectations, however, are not straightforwardly benign. Participation may simply mean ‘fitting in’ or ‘keeping the economic system going’. And we risk being swamped by what is expected of us – as well as by our own expectations. So, living well in the prevailing culture calls for imaginative insight and the skill to ‘surf’ its swirling, breaking waves as they bear down upon us – tsunami-like - in the communications media (especially its ever-proliferating internet sites) and the consumerist economy (and its ever-proliferating consumer outlets). This is ‘structure’: forces that shape and discipline our lives and instil everyday practices by which we live – whether that is in shopping or inhabiting Facebook. Structure generates expectations in unobserved and hidden ways, much of it counterfeit and inauthentic.

Participation features a lot in the rhetoric of the church. But when it’s translated as ‘agency’ or capacity for action, who has it and who should have it is *the* hot topic today. The obvious example again is the regular declaration of the need to give voice and role to women, but with little or nothing happening on the ground. Institutional power remains concentrated in the hands of a specialist group - the clergy, especially the bishops - and there is little room for wider participation in decision-making. Here, it seems that what the institution expects as participation mostly collides rather than coheres with individual-personal and societal expectations.

Conscience

When it comes to morality and values, participation once again comes to the fore. People now expect to be part of the process of articulating the beliefs they hold and formulating the moral norms they live by. This is revolutionary. Once upon a time, people would ask: ‘what does the church teach ... about ...?’ Now they’re more likely to say: ‘This is what I think. Here’s my opinion ...’! Now granted, mere opinion is no guide. But there is a more fundamental issue here.

In a free, democratic polity social values are generated – produced – within the dynamics of the social process. Think of public awareness campaigns: on the environment, anti-smoking, the social outlawing of drink-driving, safeguarding children from sexual abuse, the ‘me too’ movement. All this is the emergence of new awareness, new beliefs, new norms, new practices – all the product of socio-cultural processes, in which both institutional agencies and individual persons and groups together are the agents.

Beliefs and values may be *justified* theologically and philosophically, but that is not how they are produced. Beliefs and moral

norms may be, and no doubt, are ontologically grounded, but they are articulated and enshrined sociologically. An open, pluralist society; a varied, diverse culture; a complex, differentiated social structure *produces* beliefs and social values and moral norms in its own way. This is central to the dynamics of a secularising society.² All our social institutions are in the value-producing business – education and schools, science and research, medicine and the NHS, the media and popular entertainment.

Such value products do, of course, need a stringent philosophical and theological critique. But at the popular level quite specific expectations come into play. Moral values are not easily taken as inscribed in the nature of things, or adopted on the say-so of some ‘higher’ institution or authority. Parents and teachers – even priests – know that the younger generation no longer imbibes handed-down values. The contemporary experience of family – diverse, blended, straight and gay, even the traditional family – now resembles a laboratory where social values are experimented with and new forms created.

Talking about the social production of values invites the rebuttal that, just as with rights, we acknowledge them, but we don’t create them. And this brings us to conscience. Is conscience simply the capacity to recognise values and judge how to apply general moral principles and church teaching to concrete situations? That doesn’t allow for any creative, value-generating role for individuals or communities as they engage with the issues arising in their lives.

By contrast, the familiar teaching of *Gaudium et spes* says:

Conscience is man’s [sic] most secret core, his sanctuary ... alone with God whose voice echoes in his depths ... that law is made known which is fulfilled in the love of God and one’s neighbour ... Christians are joined to other men [sic] in the search for truth and for the right solution to so many moral problems which arise both in the lives of individuals and from social relationships. (n. 16)

This does not cut conscience loose from church teaching, but it is clear that while magisterial teaching is necessary it is not sufficient for uncovering ‘truth’ or the ‘right solution to moral problems’, otherwise the reference to Christians joining in the search for truth with ‘other men’ makes no sense. Pope Francis makes the point concretely in *Amoris Laetitia*:

We have long thought that simply by stressing doctrinal, bioethical and moral issues, without encouraging openness to grace, we were providing sufficient support to families, strengthening the marriage bond and

² See James Sweeney, ‘Authority in the Church – Authentic and Effective?’ in Anthony J. Carroll, Marthe Kerkwijk, James Sweeney and Michael Kirwan (eds) *Towards a Kenotic Vision of Authority in the Catholic Church: Christian Philosophical Studies VIII*, Washington DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2015, pp. 105-117.

giving meaning to marital life. We find it difficult to present marriage more as a dynamic path to personal development and fulfilment than as a lifelong burden. We also find it hard to make room for the consciences of the faithful, who very often respond as best they can to the Gospel amid their limitations, and are capable of carrying out their own discernment in complex situations. We have been called to form consciences, not to replace them. (n. 37)

Strong tensions are evident at this point not only between personal and institutional-ecclesial expectations, but also between different expectations within the ecclesial institution itself. Here is an example of a different perspective, close to our craft as theologians:

The Catholic theologian . . . knows and has to bear in mind that Jesus has appointed a particular class of baptised persons who are endowed with a special supernatural charism to be the teachers and leaders of the Christian people, of all believers. He also knows that this universal magisterium of the Episcopal body or of the Roman pontiff rightly has the office and authority to transmit the faith integrally and to guard it from error and to pronounce the final word in the name of Christ in matters of faith and morals.

Giovanni Colombo, 'Obedience to the Ordinary Magisterium' (1967)³

This is really at odds with *Gaudium et Spes* and *Amoris Laetitia*. It portrays the magisterium as a kind of spiritual 'aristocracy' – a 'class of persons' that 'transmits the faith *integrally*' and 'pronounces the *final* word'. Agency is reserved to those 'endowed with a special supernatural charism', and there is no reference to their dependence on anyone outside their 'particular class'.

Spirituality

The expectations of our current society around spirituality ought to be the easiest fit for the church. But even here there is a fraught relationship. We are well aware of the 'spiritual but not religious' trope, and how people explicitly distance themselves from organized religion even as they espouse values and look for the meaning of their lives.

The irony is that the same secularized culture that dispenses with religion today begins, paradoxically, to gravitate towards something like it with 'spirituality' or 'mysticism'. This is the most recent product of the symbiotic relationship of culture and faith. The search is on for what can refresh the human spirit now that we inhabit a secularized culture. At the same time, 'spirituality' exhibits one

³ Quoted in Gerard Mannion *et al*, *Readings in Church Authority*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003, p. 103.

key facet of secularization: that the church has lost control of the sacred. Traditionally, one of its societal functions was to discipline and order humanity's engagement with the sacred, to tame its wilder expressions. But now even the sacred has 'cut loose'!

In all this explosion of expectations, the church is no longer in a position to orchestrate expectations, as it once did when the gospel narrative was relatively uncontested and the church was the only show in town. In a uniformly religious culture, our purpose in life, what we might hope for and our destiny were laid out for us, and we absorbed it as part of the church's own cultural world. Peoples' deeper expectations were strictly religiously framed. Not any more. Now, humanist marriage and funeral celebrants compete for business with the clergy. Secular Sunday assemblies draw erstwhile churchgoers. Counselling and psychotherapy replace the confessional.

Even more, the church is only marginally in control of its own internal spirituality. A new devotionism has burgeoned, much of it spurred on by the cultural variety that is available. Retreat centres depend on alternative therapies and exotic spiritualities to sustain their bed occupancy and pay the bills.

And yet, this phenomenon – popular spirituality – is also a sign of the times to be carefully discerned; it can be a point of contact between the gospel and culture. The risk is that embattled Christians may choose to stand apart from this culture as irredeemably unbelieving. Benedict XVI, however, insisted on the importance of the 'Courtyard of the Gentiles', the Temple space where Jew and Gentile could meet, an image of open ecclesial places where believers can converse with those seeking 'something' but not ready or able for the step of faith. John Paul II's image was the 'new areopagi', situations of encounter between Christians and non-believers when the 'hidden God' could be spoken of, in the manner of St Paul in Athens. Pope Francis speaks of 'going to the peripheries' in a church that is always ready to go out of itself, refusing to be sequestered in the sacristy, seeking life-giving contact with those most distant from it, the most neglected materially or spiritually. In such places, the Christian believer and the agnostic 'seeker' can find some unity of purpose, where even the antagonistic atheist might be enticed to join in.

There are, of course, lots of strong positive currents of practical spirituality around as well: *lectio divina*, centring prayer (akin to 'mindfulness'), theological reflection on practice, structured processes of discernment. But within the church, expectations are often still beset with institutional concerns, above all about 'church-going' as the primary (only) form of practice that counts. The practice of love of neighbour remains secondary. Persuading people to 'go to church on Sunday' takes precedence, but it's a hard 'sell'; it doesn't chime with their wish list, or their dreams, or their incipient intimations of the spiritual. Inviting them into the great liturgical celebration of

the Christian mysteries, however, does appeal to what glimmers of spirituality may be around (if the liturgy actually lives up to it). These come down to the same thing, but the rhetorics are different.

Part 3: Meeting expectations

‘Blessed are those who expect little, for they shall not be disappointed’. There used to be a poster of that. We are programmed to couple expectation with disappointment. Expectations ‘set us up’; we spy lurking disappointment, as inevitable, whenever our hopes are raised. Vatican II raised hopes. So did the National Pastoral Congress. The election of Tony Blair. The Arab Spring. Expectant hopes followed by disillusionment. Pope Francis . . . ? What goes wrong?

Let me frame it the way I have re-defined our conference theme, that is as an issue of agency and structure and the challenge of crafting effective human-social-ministerial action. The pessimist would say that things go wrong because bad-old structure re-asserts itself and dashes the hopes of agency. The forces of conservatism are always ready to smother anything fresh or new. Revolutions breed their own resistance. But then we buy into a narrative of disappointed hope and a nostalgia of ‘what could have been’. And it becomes self-fulfilling. We condemn ourselves to the life of Sisyphus, always rolling our stones uphill for them to roll back down.

I suggest, however, that things collapse, possibilities fail, our expectations are frustrated usually because of failures of alignment between different expectations, between agency and structure. Personal and institutional expectations clash, divergent institutional expectations cancel out each other. Bringing divergent expectations into alignment is a precondition of effective action.

Failure, of course, can be put down to poor planning, but more is needed. As Rabbin Burns said: ‘the best laid schemes o’ mice and men gang aft agley’. Why? It takes converging expectations to ensure successful action – and effective ministry. Agency and structure can be, and often are, at cross purposes, but they do not inevitably counteract each other; they are not positive and negative charges. But crafting effective action, bringing the personal and the institutional into alignment, is often only fleeting. It is always work in progress.

Crisis in the Church

How can we understand the current crisis in the church. The *mêlée* of critical voices, inadequate responses, frustrated officials, confused groups, competing expectations has reached alarming proportions. It

feels like an existential crisis. But this is not its first appearance; I think a similar feeling was brewing in the last days of Pope Benedict.

It is obvious that, while it has been sparked by the endless sexual abuse revelations, the heart of the crisis is around the ecclesial institution. The sexual abuse is horrific in itself, and bewildering, but the crisis is not that this happened, that individual priests and religious and others have done such dreadful acts. Rather, it is about two things: first, the underlying causes of the abuse and how they could have taken such a hold in the institution? and, secondly, how the institution has dealt with it, or failed to do so. These are at the crux of what is a severe institutional crisis.

No-one can really explain it, at least not well. We are too bewildered, it's too raw, and the polemics are too strong. I certainly don't have any full-blown theory to offer, much less a remedy. In the terms I have used, the issue is that the institutional structure and expectations are, or have become, dysfunctional. Something at that level has gone seriously awry. We can all have views on the how and why of it. I would highlight just one factor: a pervasive self-referentiality in institutional Catholicism. 'Such a thing can't/couldn't happen to us! At least, not to us as the church; maybe a few bad apples. We are the church, for heaven's sake! Christ and the gospel define who we are.' This explains, partially at least, the institutional vulnerability to abuse and the inadequate handling of it.

Self-referentiality has deep historical and systemic roots. The Pius X model we saw earlier was the church as a 'perfect society', not in the sense of being without sinful members, but as complete within itself – so, it was institutionally self-referential. This model was bolstered for a time by societal expectations of the church and by widespread personal expectations too. But it could not, and did not, survive the societal differentiation of late-modernity, which is at the root of secularization. The church had to re-define its relationship to society.

This it did in principle in *Gaudium et Spes* and *Lumen Gentium*. Today the church claims and seeks to be:

in Christ, like a sacrament . . . the sign and instrument both of a very close knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race.
(LG 1)

It is a quite different image: from 'perfect society' to 'sacrament, sign and instrument'; and not only of spiritual union with God but of the unity of humankind (previously the sphere of the other 'perfect society', i.e., the state). The term 'instrument' is especially significant. The church now understands itself as an *agent*, located and acting within humanity and within history. Self-referentiality has been overcome – in principle at least!

Yet a marked difference still persists between the mindset of the church institution and modern secular agencies, and this comes to light over safeguarding and morality and tackling wrongdoing. The secular expectation is that issues are identified through proper surveillance and investigative processes and are dealt with speedily through developing codes of conduct and decisive action to produce culture change and sanction wrongdoers. The ecclesial expectation, on the other hand, puts its primary insistence on the moral values themselves, grasped theologically, and the wrongfulness of deviant actions, and the call to conversion. This can blind church responses to the urgency of institutional culture change (there's nothing wrong, after all, with the moral values themselves), while the instinct of forgiveness can blunt effective remedial action.

All these institutional dysphorias were on display during Pope Francis's visit to Ireland. The rhetoric in the media was 'action, not just words'. Action already taken was largely discounted (safeguarding procedures in place, offenders removed from ministry (and jailed), bishops resigned, counselling and victim support in place, financial settlements reached). The expectations of citizens and many church members alike went beyond all that, expecting 'something more'. The 'something' was frankly a bit confused, to the irritation of many devoted Catholics. Nevertheless, I believe something positive was struggling to find voice, a new public consensus, a new expectation of the church and how it must present itself. This was in play as the (not so) sub-text of commentary on the event - even if there was also a whiff of moral panic (constant rehearsing of the abuse narrative; demand for wholesale resignation of bishops - even of the Pope; wholesale naming and shaming of offenders).

No raft of new measures was unveiled, despite naïve calls for it; and considerable confusion and discontent still reigns, especially in the media. But, again in my personal view, there were the beginnings of a real shift in mutual expectations, an incipient re-alignment. Two moments struck me as especially significant. The speech of the Taoiseach at the state reception rose above the noise and controversy; it was statesmanlike and generous to the Church, while also noting the institutional failures, and he foresaw a new partnership - a 'covenant' was his word - developing between church and state. For the church, Pope Francis made a full and comprehensive act of penitence. There was a detailed and extremely blunt penitential rite at the start of the Mass using handwritten notes and referring directly to what abuse victims had told him at their meeting.

Of course, he was criticized for 'just more of sorry', but this was an *act*, not just words. There was an element of ritual humiliation from the Pope and the church. Such ritual humiliation, following Victor Turner, comes with liminal times when structure breaks down and an undifferentiated 'communio' reigns momentarily, leading to a

new social order.⁴ I was reminded of Francis at his first appearance bowing low for the people to pray over him before he would bless them.

Conclusion

Society and its expectations was an intriguing title to be given. It can be read in different ways: society's expectations of church ministers, or, alternatively, society's expectations of itself. Both have implications for 'who ministers what to whom'. To avoid a dead-end narrative of 'expectations inevitably disappointed', I have focused on how divergent expectations must cohere and align themselves so as to deliver effective action – or ministry – and I've discussed this with a select number of practical examples. Teasing out detailed applications to church ministry is beyond my scope. But perhaps one overarching lesson can be derived.

The current crisis of the church still has a long way to run. It will not be resolved simply by new policies or even structural changes. It is more than a crisis in the institution; it is the crisis *of* the institution, and such crises resolve mysteriously by a re-alignment of the fundamental forces at play – what I have called 'expectations'. Here, rhetoric comes into play. Marshalling expectations, managing expectations, shaping, aligning and re-aligning expectations is largely a matter of rhetoric. There is nothing that inspires good action more than the right words that grasp the need for it.

Ministry is serving people to take their part in the Body of Christ, in conscientious discipleship and mature spiritual living. Amid today's divergent expectations, ministry must work to gather people together – the whole human family – to re-align expectations towards the coming of God's Kingdom. The deep Catholic instinct is for 'communion' as the *rhetoric* of the gospel.

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⁴ Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, Chicago: Aldine, 1969.