

ENCOURAGEMENT *ENCOURAGEMENT*



March 2024 – Issue 152

Priesthood



THE HOST APOSTOLATE
WWW.THEHOSTAPOSTOLATE.ORG
14, GOATBECK TERRACE,
LANGLEY MOOR,
COUNTY DURHAM DH7 8JJ
thehostapostolate@gmail.com

It is not an easy subject to write about and you may think that it is more appropriate for a priest to write about his vocation. However, that is like saying that a priest cannot comment on the importance of marriage because he has not experienced it. Yet it is essential to remember that in Baptism we *all* become ***Priests, Prophets and Kings.***

Jesus, of course, is the Great High Priest. Why, therefore should we write about priesthood in lent? This year Lent spans the whole of the month, ending with the Resurrection of Jesus... the journey in Lent indicates to us the purpose of why Jesus was born, grew in maturity and died for us. The essential elements of His purpose was in the end, a Sacrificial one, He offered himself to the Father on our behalf to free us from slavery and sin.

So what do we consider priesthood to be? Every priest is another Christ. He stands at the altar before us as an '*Alter Christus,*' another Christ. Now there are thousands of priests, and each one is called by God to priesthood. Each calling is unique and – and I am sure most people will have heard the life story from a priest convicted by that call and will have heard how different and fascinating and different they are. There are those who have a call very early, even in childhood, to those in latter life, even after marriage and the death of a spouse. Some are Diocesan, some to Religious Orders and some become Missionaries. But all are called, they are then affirmed by the Church in this by appointment and agreement, usually by a Bishop and then undergo 'training' so to speak to prepare and instruct them for the task.

Their calling is not a career. It is not to become social worker, or campaigners. They are not called to be environmental champions but simply to become another Christ – leading people to follow the Gospel and to be a servant.

Now they are not called because they are perfect or exceptionally holy (though they might become so) but they are chosen according to God's providence to serve His purpose to bring people to Himself. Today that is a tough order for we live in increasingly secular society. In parts of the world, too many to mention, they experience daily a risk to life, not therefore a calling to be taken lightly.

So, what are the particular things that the priest is called to do? Probably most people when asked would say to 'Say Mass' or 'do the Sacraments' or even to tell the people about the Gospel... but while this is true it can become a 'catch phrase' which does not truly reflect the depth of that service which has to be lived out on a daily basis.

The key, in the first instance, is to pray and pray - especially for their charges, parishioners, congregations or religious communities and the whole world! No priest can do anything well without this and would be audacious if he tried. We in turn have to remember this and not distract him from this by other things. And we must encourage him to do so, allowing space for this, in turn he calls us to pray and become 'Holy'.

Secondly, they are called to witness to the death and rising of Jesus. He stands between us and the Father. Jesus in the offering of himself as sacrifice to the Father, freely stands between us and the Father. ..He intercedes for us. Before us, at the foot of the altar, so does the priest.

This is an awesome statement that the priest stands as another Christ. This mystery is fathomless, and each priest has to live this out at Mass and at the Eucharist. He makes alive the mystery of redemption and the living reality of a God who is alive and present.

**"How sweet and full of comfort are the moments spent before the Blessed Sacrament!
Are you in trouble ? Come and throw yourself at his feet." St. Jean Vianney, Patron of Parish Priests.**

St John Paul II put it this way to priests: *'live this mystery that has been placed into your hands'* Indeed at ordination the priest is told to 'imitate the mystery you celebrate, model your life on the mystery of the Lord's cross'. This epitomises who they are and how we should view them and their vocation.

It is by no mistake that the Apostles became priests at the Last Supper. They not only 'sat' at the table of the Eucharist, being taught about the breaking of bread, but that the Bread of Life would be broken the next day by being nailed to the cross. They had also been taught that he would rise again on the third day. They were reminded that they had to wash each other's feet, as Jesus washed theirs as a servant, in humility, reminding them that they had to do the same.

A priest is therefore a 'victim' not a word that is used today with the same meaning. He is a servant, an intercessor and a healer. Paramountly, he is called to heal his people in the Sacrament of Confession, reconciling them to God through the Holy Trinity forgiving the many sins of people.

In today's environment this is often ignored and so we not only do harm to ourselves but we deny our priests a role that is crucial to their priesthood. As one priest once said to me - after hearing many confessions, 'this is so good for me, I feel alive and Joyful. This role is also extended to the Sacrament of the Sick, and especially at the point of death (Extreme Unction) – that final anointing and reconciliation of the soul with his or her Maker.

Finally, a priest is a teacher or rather a proclaimer of the Gospel. He is therefore to lead his people to live out the Gospel message and grow in the knowledge of what it proclaims so that it become a reality in their lives. When Jesus taught, he was often referred to as Rabbi or teacher...

Each priest has to find a way to live out their holy vocation. They are human beings who fail and who have to start again every day. Some may not be able to live out their vocation and have fallen very short of being other Christs.

Others battle with their call and deserve our respect and encouragement. What we must never forget the thousands who try daily to do this, often heartbroken at their failure, or disillusioned, and sometime by us,

many carrying crosses which we know nothing about. Many become Holy whether canonised or not. We are called to pray for our priests. They in turn are called to make us holy. We in turn can enable them to become holy. Grace is sufficient.

This Lent let us reflect on this and help us participate in the mystery and make use of the sacraments that help us to do so.

Halina Holman ©

Pope Francis Lenten message

"To the extent that this Lent becomes a time of conversion, an anxious humanity will notice a burst of creativity, a flash of new hope. Be ready to take risks, to find the courage to see our world, not as in its death throes, but in a process of giving birth; not at the end, but at the beginning of a great new chapter of history." Rome 2024

Prayer Petition

'I wish that I could tell every priest that I share his pain and joy, whatever it may be, because I love the priesthood passionately. No one is more relevant today than a priest who understands his role as the servant of the Lord; as one who gives us God under the form of bread and who we long to hear, your voices echoing the call of the one Shepherd who you represent so tangibly for us. We need to hear your voices clearly and we need to hear them now. You are the most important people in the church today'. Servant of God, Catherine Doherty.. 'Dear Father'



Feast Days in March

1st St. David, Patron of Wales

3rd **Third Sunday of Lent**

4th St. Casimir, 6th St. Colette

7th Ss. Perpetua & Felicity

8th St. John of God 9th St. Frances of Rome

10th **Fourth Sunday of Lent**

17th **Fifth Sunday of Lent** **St. Patrick's Day**

18th St. Cyril of Jerusalem

19th **St. Joseph, Husband of Mary**

20th St. Cuthbert

24th **Palm/Passion Sunday** 25th **Annun. Bl. Vir. Mary**

28th **Maundy Thursday (The Lord's Supper)**

29th **Good Friday (Fasting & Abstinence)**

30th **Easter Vigil**

31st **Easter Sunday**

Please feel free to copy and distribute unaltered

Blessings for Easter to all... Alleluia, He is Risen!