

Holy Orders Catechesis Outline.
Catechetical Institute, April 8, 2019

- I. Questions for discussion:
 - A. Why do we need a sacramental priesthood? What makes a priest different from any other person who does ministry and why is this important?
 - B. Why do we call them Father?
 - C. How does the laity participate in the one priesthood of Christ?
- II. Why do we need a sacramental priesthood?
 - A. Priesthood is a sacrament which makes Christ immediately present.
 - B. Jesus intended his apostles to be his living representatives:
 1. Luke 10:16: "He who hears you hears me, and he who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me"
 2. Luke 9:1-2 "And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, ² and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal."
 3. John 20:21: "Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.'"
 4. Raymond Brown adds that "in the Jewish notion of apostolate the one sent (*shalûah*, *shalîah*) represents the one who sends, carrying not only the sender's authority but even his presence to others" (*Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections* [New York: Paulist Press, 1970], 28).
 5. Mt 19:28: "Jesus said to them, 'Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.'"
 6. Luke 22:28-30 "You are those who have continued with me in my trials; ²⁹ and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, ³⁰ that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."
- III. What is the difference between OT and NT priesthood?
 - A. **CCC 1539** The chosen people was constituted by God as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."⁶ But within the people of Israel, God chose one of the twelve tribes, that of Levi, and set it apart for liturgical service; God himself is its inheritance.⁷ A special rite consecrated the beginnings of the priesthood of the Old Covenant. The priests are "appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins."⁸
 - B. **Hebrews 9:24-28** ²⁴ For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own; ²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.
 - C. How can a man stand at the altar and make present this one sacrifice of Christ?
 1. ST III, 82, a. 1, corpus: "Such is the dignity of this sacrament [Eucharist] that it is performed only as in the person of Christ. Whoever performs any act in another's stead (*in persona alterius*), must do so by the power bestowed by such a one. But as the power of receiving this sacrament is conceded by Christ to the baptized person, so

likewise the power of consecrating this sacrament on Christ's behalf is bestowed upon the priest at his ordination" (See also ST III, 83, a. 1, ad. 3).

2. Pope John Paul II explains this point clearly: "The priest offers the Holy Sacrifice *in persona Christi*; this means more than offering 'in the name of' or 'in the place of' Christ. *In persona* means specific sacramental identification with the eternal High Priest who is the Author and principal Subject of this sacrifice of his, a Sacrifice in which, in truth, nobody can take his place. Only he – only Christ – was able and is always able to be the true and effective 'expiation for our sins and ... for the sins of the whole world' (1 Jn 2:2; cf. 4:10)" (*Dominicae cenae*, in AAS 72 [1980], 8).
3. Vatican II *Sacrosanctum Concilium*: "the same now offering, through the ministry of priests, who formerly offered himself on the cross" (SC 7).
4. **CCC 1545** The redemptive sacrifice of Christ is unique, accomplished once for all; yet it is made present in the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Church. The same is true of the one priesthood of Christ; it is made present through the ministerial priesthood without diminishing the uniqueness of Christ's priesthood: "Only Christ is the true priest, the others being only his ministers."¹⁹

IV. Two participations in the one priesthood of Christ

- A. Lumen Gentium 10: "Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ. The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, teaches and rules the priestly people; acting in the person of Christ, he makes present the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people. But the faithful, in virtue of their royal priesthood, join in the offering of the Eucharist.(3*) They likewise exercise that priesthood in receiving the sacraments, in prayer and thanksgiving, in the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity.
- B. What is sacramental Character?
 1. **CCC 1582** As in the case of Baptism and Confirmation this share in Christ's office is granted once for all. The sacrament of Holy Orders, like the other two, confers an *indelible spiritual character* and cannot be repeated or conferred temporarily.⁷⁴
 2. This is what Vatican II means by active participation:
 - a. Lumen Gentium 11 – "Taking part in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, which is the source and summit of the whole Christian life, they offer the divine victim to God, and offer themselves along with it". (LG 11).
 - b. "By the sacrament of Baptism under a general title Christians are made members of Christ the Priest, and by the character which is as it were engraved in their souls, they are deputed to divine worship; and thus they participate according to their condition in the priesthood of Christ himself." (*Mediator Dei*, #110).
 - c. According to Pope Pius XII this is the highest duty of Christians. "It is necessary that all Christians consider their principal duty and highest dignity that of taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice... so profoundly and so actively as to be intimately united to the great High Priest... making this offering together with him and through him consecrating themselves." (*Mediator Dei*, 102.)
- C. The sacramental character of Holy Orders is distinct though from that of the baptized:
 1. **CCC 1548** In the ecclesial service of the ordained minister, it is Christ himself who is present to his Church as Head of his Body, Shepherd of his flock, high priest of the

redemptive sacrifice, Teacher of Truth. This is what the Church means by saying that the priest, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, acts *in persona Christi Capitis*:²³

It is the same priest, Christ Jesus, whose sacred person his minister truly represents. Now the minister, by reason of the sacerdotal consecration which he has received, is truly made like to the high priest and possesses the authority to act in the power and place of the person of Christ himself (*virtute ac persona ipsius Christi*).²⁴

Christ is the source of all priesthood: the priest of the old law was a figure of Christ, and the priest of the new law acts in the person of Christ (St. Thomas Aquinas, *ST III*, 22, 4)

D. What this means is that the priest continues the very presence of Christ in the Church.

1. **CCC 1549** Through the ordained ministry, especially that of bishops and priests, the presence of Christ as head of the Church is made visible in the midst of the community of believers.²⁶ In the beautiful expression of St. Ignatius of Antioch, the bishop is *typos tou Patros*: he is like the living image of God the Father.²⁷
2. As the *Directory on the Ministry and Life of Priests* states, the priest “renders tangible the actual work of Christ, the Head, and gives witness to the fact that Christ has not separated Himself from his Church; rather He continues to vivify her through his everlasting priesthood.”¹

E. Sometimes stands in the person of the Church.

1. **CCC 1552** The ministerial priesthood has the task not only of representing Christ - Head of the Church - before the assembly of the faithful, but also of acting in the name of the whole Church when presenting to God the prayer of the Church, and above all when offering the Eucharistic sacrifice.³¹

F. Two primary relations – Christ and Church.

- a. **CCC 1551** This priesthood is ministerial. "That office . . . which the Lord committed to the pastors of his people, is in the strict sense of the term a *service*."²⁸ It is entirely related to Christ and to men. It depends entirely on Christ and on his unique priesthood; it has been instituted for the good of men and the communion of the Church. The sacrament of Holy Orders communicates a "sacred power" which is none other than that of Christ. The exercise of this authority must therefore be measured against the model of Christ, who by love made himself the least and the servant of all.²⁹ "The Lord said clearly that concern for his flock was proof of love for him."³⁰
- b. **CCC 1553** "In the name of the *whole* Church" does not mean that priests are the delegates of the community. The prayer and offering of the Church are inseparable from the prayer and offering of Christ, her head; it is always the case that Christ worships in and through his Church. The whole Church, the Body of Christ, prays and offers herself "through him, with him, in him," in the unity of the Holy Spirit, to God the Father. The whole Body, *caput et membra*, prays and offers itself, and therefore those who in the Body are especially his ministers are called ministers not only of Christ, but also of the Church. It is because the ministerial priesthood represents Christ that it can represent the Church.

V. Pope John Paul II loved the phrase *Living Image*.

A. Two primary images –

1. *In persona Christi capitis* – Church as body.
2. *In persona Christi sponsi* – Church as bride.

¹ *Directory* 1; see also PO 9.

- B. Configuration of the being of the man.
 - 1. Ex opere operato
 - 2. Ex opere operantis.
- VI. Three degrees of the sacrament of Holy Orders.
 - A. Bishops (1555-1561)
 - B. Priests (1562-68)
 - C. Deacons (1569-71)
- VII. Controversial questions (1577-1580).
 - A. Why celibate?
 - 1. **CCC 1579** All the ordained ministers of the Latin Church, with the exception of permanent deacons, are normally chosen from among men of faith who live a celibate life and who intend to remain *celibate* "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven."⁷⁰ Called to consecrate themselves with undivided heart to the Lord and to "the affairs of the Lord,"⁷¹ they give themselves entirely to God and to men. Celibacy is a sign of this new life to the service of which the Church's minister is consecrated; accepted with a joyous heart celibacy radiantly proclaims the Reign of God.⁷²
 - 2. **CCC 1580** In the Eastern Churches a different discipline has been in force for many centuries: while bishops are chosen solely from among celibates, married men can be ordained as deacons and priests. This practice has long been considered legitimate; these priests exercise a fruitful ministry within their communities.⁷³ Moreover, priestly celibacy is held in great honor in the Eastern Churches and many priests have freely chosen it for the sake of the Kingdom of God. In the East as in the West a man who has already received the sacrament of Holy Orders can no longer marry.
 - B. Why all male?
 - 1. **CCC 1577** "Only a baptized man (*vir*) validly receives sacred ordination."⁶⁶ The Lord Jesus chose men (*viri*) to form the college of the twelve apostles, and the apostles did the same when they chose collaborators to succeed them in their ministry.⁶⁷ The college of bishops, with whom the priests are united in the priesthood, makes the college of the twelve an ever-present and ever-active reality until Christ's return. The Church recognizes herself to be bound by this choice made by the Lord himself. For this reason the ordination of women is not possible.⁶⁸
 - a. Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Mulieris dignitatem*: "Since Christ, in instituting the Eucharist, linked it in such an explicit way to the priestly service of the Apostles, it is legitimate to conclude that he thereby wished to express the relationship between man and woman, between what is "feminine" and what is "masculine." It is a relationship willed by God both in the mystery of creation and in the mystery of Redemption. It is *the Eucharist* above all that expresses *the redemptive act of Christ the Bridegroom towards the Church the Bride*. This is clear and unambiguous when the sacramental ministry of the Eucharist, in which the priest acts "in *persona Christi*," is performed by a man" (*Mulieris dignitatem*, 26, emphasis original).
 - 2. **CCC 1578** No one has a *right* to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders. Indeed no one claims this office for himself; he is called to it by God.⁶⁹ Anyone who thinks he recognizes the signs of God's call to the ordained ministry must humbly submit his desire to the authority of the Church, who has the responsibility and right to call someone to receive orders. Like every grace this sacrament can be *received* only as an unmerited gift.