

# Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests

## PRESBYTERORUM ORDINIS

### General Index

[PREFACE](#)

[CHAPTER I. THE PRIESTHOOD IN THE MINISTRY OF  
THE CHURCH](#)

[CHAPTER II. THE MINISTRY OF PRIESTS](#)

[CHAPTER III. THE LIFE OF PRIESTS](#)

[CONCLUSION AND EXHORTATION](#)

[NOTES](#)



# Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests

## PRESBYTERORUM ORDINIS

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### *PREFACE*

1. The excellence of the order of priests in the Church has already been recalled to the minds of all by this sacred synod.<sup>[1]</sup> Since, however, in the renewal of Christ's Church tasks of the greatest importance and of ever increasing difficulty are being given to this order, it was deemed most useful to treat of the subject of priests at greater length and with more depth. What is said here applies to all priests, especially those devoted to the care of souls, with suitable adaptations being made for priests who are religious. Priests by sacred ordination and mission which they receive from the bishops are promoted to the service of Christ the Teacher, Priest and King. They share in his ministry, a ministry whereby the Church here on earth is unceasingly built up into the People of God, the Body of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in order that their ministry be carried on more effectively and their lives be better provided for, in pastoral and human circumstances which very often change so profoundly, this sacred synod declares and decrees as follows.



## **CHAPTER I. THE PRIESTHOOD IN THE MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH**

2. The Lord Jesus, "whom the Father has sent into the world" (Jn 10:36) has made his whole Mystical Body a sharer in the anointing of the Spirit with which he himself is anointed.[2] In him all the faithful are made a holy and royal priesthood; they offer spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ, and they proclaim the perfections of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light.[3] Therefore, there is no member who does not have a part in the mission of the whole Body; but each one ought to hallow Jesus in his heart,[4] and in the spirit of prophecy bear witness to Jesus.[5]

The same Lord, however, has established ministers among his faithful to unite them together in one body in which, "not all the members have the same function" (Rom 12:4). These ministers in the society of the faithful are able by the sacred power of orders to offer sacrifice and to forgive sins,[6] and they perform their priestly office publicly for men in the name of Christ. Therefore, having sent the apostles just as he himself been sent by the Father,[7] Christ, through the apostles themselves, made their successors, the bishops,[8] sharers in his consecration and mission. The office of their ministry has been handed down, in a lesser degree indeed, to the priests.[9] Established in the order of the priesthood they can be co-workers of the episcopal order for the proper fulfillment of the apostolic mission entrusted to priests by Christ.[10]

The office of priests, since it is connected with the episcopal order, also, in its own degree, shares the authority by which Christ builds up, sanctifies and rules his Body. Wherefore the priesthood, while indeed it presupposes the sacraments of Christian initiation, is conferred by that special sacrament; through it priests, by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are signed with a special character and are conformed to Christ the Priest in such a way that they can act in the person of Christ the Head.[11]

In the measure in which they participate in the office of the apostles, God gives priests a special grace to be ministers of Christ among the people. They perform the sacred duty of preaching the Gospel, so that the offering of the people can be made acceptable and

sanctified by the Holy Spirit.<sup>[12]</sup> Through the apostolic proclamation of the Gospel, the People of God are called together and assembled. All belonging to this people, since they have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit, can offer themselves as "a sacrifice, living, holy, pleasing to God" (Rom 12:1). Through the ministry of the priests, the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful is made perfect in union with the sacrifice of Christ. He is the only mediator who in the name of the whole Church is offered sacramentally in the Eucharist and in an unbloody manner until the Lord himself comes.<sup>[13]</sup> The ministry of priests is directed to this goal and is perfected in it. Their ministry, which begins with the evangelical proclamation, derives its power and force from the sacrifice of Christ. Its aim is that "the entire commonwealth of the redeemed and the society of the saints be offered to God through the High Priest who offered himself also for us in his passion that we might be the body of so great a Head."<sup>[14]</sup>

The purpose, therefore, which priests pursue in their ministry and by their life is to procure the glory of God the Father in Christ. That glory consists in this—that men working freely and with a grateful spirit receive the work of God made perfect in Christ and then manifest it in their whole lives. Hence, priests, while engaging in prayer and adoration, or preaching the word, or offering the Eucharistic Sacrifice and administering the other sacraments, or performing other works of the ministry for men, devote all this energy to the increase of the glory of God and to man's progress in the divine life. All of this, since it comes from the Pasch of Christ, will be crowned by the glorious coming of the same Lord, when he hands over the Kingdom to God the Father.<sup>[15]</sup>

3. Priests, who are taken from among men and ordained for men in the things that belong to God in order to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins,<sup>[16]</sup> nevertheless live on earth with other men as brothers. The Lord Jesus, the Son of God, a Man sent by the Father to men, dwelt among us and willed to become like his brethren in all things except sin.<sup>[17]</sup> The holy apostles imitated him. Blessed Paul, the doctor of the Gentiles, "set apart for the Gospel of God" (Rom 1:1) declares that he became all things to all men that he might save all.<sup>[18]</sup> Priests of the New Testament, by their vocation and ordination, are in a certain sense set apart in the bosom of the People of God. However, they are not to be separated from the People of God or from any person; but they are to be totally dedicated to the work for which the Lord has chosen them.<sup>[19]</sup> They cannot be ministers of

**Christ unless they be witnesses and dispensers of a life other than earthly life. But they cannot be of service to men if they remain strangers to the life and conditions of men.[20] Their ministry itself, by a special title, forbids that they be conformed to this world;[21] yet at the same time it requires that they live in this world among men. They are to live as good shepherds that know their sheep, and they are to seek to lead those who are not of this sheepfold that they, too, may hear the voice of Christ, so that there might be one fold and one shepherd.[22] To achieve this aim, certain virtues, which in human affairs are deservedly esteemed, contribute a great deal: such as goodness of heart, sincerity, strength and constancy of mind, zealous pursuit of justice, affability, and others. The Apostle Paul commends them saying: "Whatever things are true, whatever honorable, whatever just, whatever holy, whatever loving, whatever of good repute, if there be any virtue, if anything is worthy of praise, think upon these things" (Phil 4:8).[23]**



## CHAPTER II. THE MINISTRY OF PRIESTS

### SECTION I. PRIESTS' FUNCTIONS

4. The People of God are joined together primarily by the word of the living God.[24] And rightfully they expect this from their priests.[25] Since no one can be saved who does not first believe,[26] priests, as co-workers with their bishops, have the primary duty of proclaiming the Gospel of God to all.[27] In this way they fulfill the command of the Lord: "Going therefore into the whole world preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mk 16:15),[28] and they establish and build up the People of God. Through the saving word the spark of faith is lit in the hearts of unbelievers, and fed in the hearts of the faithful. This is the way that the congregation of faithful is started and grows, just as the Apostle describes: "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Rom 10:17).

To all men, therefore, priests are debtors that the truth of the Gospel [29] which they have may be given to others. And so, whether by entering into profitable dialogue they bring people to the worship of God,[30] whether by openly preaching they proclaim the mystery of Christ, or whether in the light of Christ they treat contemporary problems, they are relying not on their own wisdom for it is the word of Christ they teach, and it is to conversion and holiness that they exhort all men.[31] But priestly preaching is often very difficult in the circumstances of the modern world. In order that it might more effectively move men's minds, the word of God ought not to be explained in a general and abstract way, but rather by applying the lasting truth of the Gospel to the particular circumstances of life.

The ministry of the word is carried out in many ways, according to the various needs of those who hear and the special gifts of those who preach. In areas or communities of non-Christians, the proclaiming of the Gospel draws men to faith and to the sacraments of salvation.[32] In the Christian community, especially among those who seem to understand and believe little of what they practice, the preaching of the word is needed for the very ministering of the

sacraments. They are precisely sacraments of faith, a faith which is born of and nourished by the word.[33] This is especially true of the Liturgy of the Word in the celebration of Mass, in which the proclaiming of the death and resurrection of Christ is inseparably joined to the response of the people who hear, and to the very offering whereby Christ ratified the New Testament in his blood. In this offering the faithful are united both by their dispositions and by their discernment of the sacrament.[34]

5. God, who alone is holy and who alone bestows holiness, willed to take as his companions and helpers men who would humbly dedicate themselves to the work of sanctification. Hence, through the ministry of the bishop, God consecrates priests, that being made sharers by special title in the priesthood of Christ, they might act as his ministers in performing sacred functions. In the liturgy they continue to carry on his priestly office by the action of his Spirit.[35] By Baptism men are truly brought into the People of God; by the sacrament of Penance sinners are reconciled to God and his Church; by the Anointing of the Sick, the ill are given solace; and especially by the celebration of Mass they offer sacramentally the Sacrifice of Christ. In administering all sacraments, as St. Ignatius Martyr[36] has borne witness from the early days of the Church, priests by various titles are bound together hierarchically with the bishop. And so in a certain way they make him present in every congregation.[37]

The other sacraments, as well as with every ministry of the Church and every work of the apostolate, are tied together with the Eucharist and are directed toward it.[38] The Most Blessed Eucharist contains the entire spiritual boon of the Church,[39] that is, Christ himself, our Pasch and Living Bread, by the action of the Holy Spirit through his very flesh vital and vitalizing, giving life to men who are thus invited and encouraged to offer themselves, their labors and all created things, together with him. In this light, the Eucharist shows itself as the source and the apex of the whole work of preaching the Gospel. Those under instruction are introduced by stages to a sharing in the Eucharist, and the faithful, already marked with the seal of Baptism and Confirmation, are through the reception of the Eucharist fully joined to the Body of Christ.

Thus the Eucharistic Action, over which the priest presides, is the very heart of the congregation. So priests must instruct their people to offer to God the Father the Divine Victim in the Sacrifice of the

**Mass, and to join to it the offering of their own lives. In the spirit of Christ the Shepherd, they must prompt their people to confess their sins with a contrite heart in the sacrament of Penance, so that, mindful of his words "Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mt 4:17), they are drawn closer to the Lord more and more each day. Priests likewise must instruct their people to participate in the celebrations of the sacred liturgy in such a way that they become proficient in genuine prayer. They must coax their people on to an ever more perfect and constant spirit of prayer for every grace and need. They must gently persuade everyone to the fulfillment of the duties of his state of life, and to greater progress in responding in a sensible way to the evangelical counsels. Finally, they must train the faithful to sing hymns and spiritual songs in their hearts to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.[40]**

**Priests themselves extend to the other hours of the day the praise and thanksgiving of the Eucharistic celebration in praying the Divine Office, offered in the name of the Church for all the people entrusted to their care, and indeed for the whole world.**

**The house of prayer in which the Most Holy Eucharist is celebrated and reserved, where the faithful gather and where the presence of the Son of God, our Savior, offered for us on the altar of sacrifice bestows strength and blessings on the faithful, must be spotless and suitable for prayer and sacred functions.[41] There pastors and the faithful are called to acknowledge with grateful heart the gift of him, Who through his humanity constantly pours divine life into the members of his Body.[42] Let priests take care so to foster a knowledge of and facility in the liturgy, that by their own liturgical ministry Christian communities entrusted to their care may ever more perfectly give praise to God, the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit.**

**6. Exercising the office of Christ, the Shepherd and Head, and according to their share of his authority, priests, in the name of the bishop, gather the family of God together as a brotherhood enlivened by one spirit. Through Christ they lead them in the Holy Spirit to God the Father.[43] For the exercise of this ministry, as for the other priestly duties, spiritual power is conferred upon them for the building up of the Church.[44] In building up of the Church, priests must treat all with exceptional kindness in imitation of the**

**Lord. They should act toward men, not as seeking to please them, [45] but in accord with the demands of Christian doctrine and life. They should teach them and admonish them as beloved sons,[46] according to the words of the Apostle: "Be urgent in season, out of season, reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine" (2 Tim 4:2).[47]**

**Priests therefore, as educators in the faith, must see to it either by themselves or through others that the faithful are led individually in the Holy Spirit to a development of their own vocation according to the Gospel, to a sincere and practical charity, and to that freedom with which Christ has made us free.[48] Ceremonies however beautiful, or associations however flourishing, will be of little value if they are not directed toward the education of men to Christian maturity.[49] In furthering this, priests should help men to see what is required and what is God's will in the important and unimportant events of life. Also, Christians should be taught that they live not only for themselves, but, according to the demands of the new law of charity; as every man has received grace, he must administer the same to others.[50] In this way, all will discharge in a Christian manner their duties in the community of men.**

**Although they have obligations toward all men, priests have a special obligation to the poor and weak entrusted to them, for our Lord himself showed that he was united to them,[51] and their evangelization is mentioned as a sign of messianic activity.[52] With special diligence, attention should be given to youth and also to married people and parents. It is desirable that these join together in friendly meetings for mutual aid in leading more easily and fully and in a Christian manner a life that is often difficult. Priests should remember that all religious, both men and women, who certainly have a distinguished place in the house of the Lord, deserve special care in their spiritual progress for the good of the whole Church. Finally, and above all, priests must be solicitous for the sick and the dying, visiting them and strengthening them in the Lord.[53]**

**The office of pastor is not confined to the care of the faithful as individuals, but also in a true sense is extended to the formation of a genuine Christian community. Yet the spirit of the community should be so fostered as to embrace not only the local church, but also the universal Church. The local community should promote not only the care of its own faithful, but, filled with a missionary zeal, it should**

**prepare also the way to Christ for all men. In a special way, catechumens and the newly-baptized who must be educated gradually to know and to live the Christian life are entrusted to his care.**

**No Christian community, however, is built up unless it has its basis and center in the celebration of the most Holy Eucharist; from this, therefore, all education to the spirit of community must take its origin.[54] This celebration, if it is to be genuine and complete, should lead to various works of charity and mutual help, as well as to missionary activity and to different forms of Christian witness.**

**The ecclesial community by prayer, example, and works of penance, exercise a true motherhood toward souls who are to be led to Christ. The Christian community forms an effective instrument by which the path to Christ and his Church is pointed out and made smooth for non-believers. It is an effective instrument also for arousing, nourishing and strengthening the faithful for their spiritual combat.**

**In building the Christian community, priests are never to put themselves at the service of some human faction of ideology, but, as heralds of the Gospel and shepherds of the Church, they are to spend themselves for the spiritual growth of the Body of Christ.**

## **SECTION 2. PRIESTS' RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS**

**7. All priests, in union with bishops, so share in one and the same priesthood and ministry of Christ that the very unity of their consecration and mission requires their hierarchical communion with the order of bishops.[55] At times in an excellent manner they manifest this communion in liturgical concelebration as joined with the bishop when they celebrate the Eucharistic Sacrifice.[56]**

**Therefore, by reason of the gift of the Holy Spirit which is given to priests in Holy Orders, bishops regard them as necessary helpers and counselors in the ministry and in their role of teaching, sanctifying and nourishing the People of God.[57] Already in the ancient ages of the Church we find liturgical texts proclaiming this**

with insistence, as when they solemnly call upon God to pour out upon the candidate for priestly ordination "the spirit of grace and counsel, so that with a pure heart he may help and govern the People of God,"<sup>[58]</sup> just as in the desert the spirit of Moses was spread abroad in the minds of the seventy prudent men,<sup>[59]</sup> "and using them as helpers among the people, he easily governed countless multitudes."<sup>[60]</sup>

Therefore, on account of this communion in the same priesthood and ministry, bishops should regard priests as their brothers and friends<sup>[61]</sup> and be concerned as far as they are able for their material and especially for their spiritual well-being. For above all upon the bishops rests the heavy responsibility for the sanctity of their priests.<sup>[62]</sup> Therefore, they should exercise the greatest care in the continual formation of their priests.<sup>[63]</sup> They should gladly listen to their priests, indeed consult them and engage in dialogue with them in those matters which concern the necessities of pastoral work and welfare of the diocese. In order to put this into effect, there should be in a manner suited to today's conditions and necessities,<sup>[64]</sup> and with a structure and norms to be determined by law—a body or senate<sup>[65]</sup> of priests representing all the priests. This representative body by its advice will be able to give the bishop effective assistance in the administration of the diocese.

Priests, never losing sight of the fullness of the priesthood which the bishops enjoy, must respect in them the authority of Christ, the Supreme Shepherd. They must therefore stand by their bishops in sincere charity and obedience.<sup>[66]</sup> This priestly obedience, imbued with a spirit of cooperation is based on the very sharing in the episcopal ministry which is conferred on priests both through the Sacrament of Orders and the canonical mission.<sup>[67]</sup>

This union of priests with their bishops is all the more necessary today since in our present age, for various reasons, apostolic undertakings must necessarily not only take on many forms but frequently extend even beyond the boundaries of one parish or diocese. No priest, therefore, can on his own accomplish his mission in a satisfactory way. He can do so only by joining forces with other priests under the direction of the Church authorities.

**8. Priests by virtue of their ordination to the priesthood are united**

among themselves in an intimate sacramental brotherhood. In individual dioceses, priests form one priesthood under their own bishop. Even though priests are assigned to different duties, nevertheless they carry on one priestly ministry for men. All priests are sent as co-workers in the same apostolate, whether they engage in parochial or extra-parochial ministry. This is true whether they devote their efforts to scientific research or teaching, or whether by manual labor they share in the lot of the workers themselves-if there is need for this and competent authority approves-or finally whether they fulfill some other apostolic tasks or labor designed for the apostolate. All, indeed, are united in the building up of the Body of Christ which, especially in our times, requires manifold duties and new methods. It is very important that all priests, whether diocesan or religious, help one another always to be fellow workers in the truth.[68] Each one, therefore, is united in special bonds of apostolic charity, ministry and brotherhood with the other members of this priesthood. This has been manifested from ancient times in the liturgy when the priests present at an ordination are invited to impose hands together with the ordaining bishop on the new candidate, and with united hearts concelebrate the Sacred Eucharist. Each and every priest, therefore, is united with his fellow priests in a bond of charity, prayer and total cooperation. In this manner, they manifest that unity which Christ willed, namely, that his own be perfected in one so that the world might know that the Son was sent by the Father.[69]

Older priests, therefore, should receive younger priests as true brothers and help them in their first undertakings and priestly duties. The older ones should likewise endeavor to understand the mentality of younger priests, even though it be different from their own, and follow their projects with good will. By the same token, young priests should respect the age and experience of their seniors; they should seek their advice and willingly cooperate with them in everything that pertains to the care of souls. In a fraternal spirit, priests should extend hospitality,[70] cultivate kindness and share their goods in common.[71] They should be particularly solicitous for the sick, the afflicted, those overburdened with work, the lonely, those exiled from their homeland, and those who suffer persecution.[72] They should gladly and joyfully gather together for recreation, remembering Christ's invitation to the weary apostles: "Come aside to a desert place, and rest awhile" (Mk 6:31). And further, in order that priests may find mutual assistance in the development of their

spiritual and intellectual life, that they may be able to cooperate more effectively in their ministry and be saved from the dangers of loneliness which may arise, it is necessary that some kind of common life or some sharing of common life be encouraged among priests. This, however, may take many forms, according to different personal or pastoral needs, such as living together where this is possible, or having a common table, or at least by frequent and periodic meetings. One should hold also in high regard and eagerly promote those associations which, having been recognized by competent ecclesiastical authority, encourage priestly holiness in the ministry by the use of an appropriate and duly approved rule of life and by fraternal aid, intending thus to do service to the whole order of priests.

Finally, by reason of the same communion in the priesthood, priests should realize that they are obliged in a special manner toward those priests who labor under certain difficulties. They should give them timely help, and also, if necessary, admonish them discreetly. Moreover, they should always treat with fraternal charity and magnanimity those who have failed in some matters, offer urgent prayers to God for them, and continually show themselves as true brothers and friends.

9. Though priests of the New Testament, in virtue of the sacrament of Orders, exercise the most outstanding and necessary office of father and teacher among and for the People of God, they are nevertheless, together with all Christ's faithful, disciples of the Lord, made sharers in his Kingdom by the grace of God's call.<sup>[73]</sup> For priests are brothers among brothers<sup>[74]</sup> with all those who have been reborn at the baptismal font. They are all members of one and the same Body of Christ, the building up of which is required of everyone.<sup>[75]</sup>

Priests, therefore, must take the lead in seeking the things of Jesus Christ, not the things that are their own.<sup>[76]</sup> They must work together with the lay faithful, and conduct themselves in their midst after the example of their Master, who among men "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life as redemption for many" (Mt 20:28). Priests must sincerely acknowledge and promote the dignity of the laity and the part proper to them in the mission of the Church. And they should hold in high honor that just freedom which is due to everyone in the earthly city. They must willingly listen to the laity, consider their wants in a fraternal spirit, recognize their experience

and competence in the different areas of human activity, so that together with them they will be able to recognize the signs of the times. While trying the spirits to see if they be of God,[77] priests should uncover with a sense of faith, acknowledge with joy and foster with diligence the various humble and exalted charisms of the laity. Among the other gifts of God, which are found in abundance among the laity, those are worthy of special mention by which not a few of the laity are attracted to a higher spiritual life. Likewise, they should confidently entrust to the laity duties in the service of the Church, allowing them freedom and room for action; in fact, they should invite them on suitable occasions to undertake works on their own initiative.[78]

Finally priests have been placed in the midst of the laity to lead them to the unity of charity, "loving one another with fraternal love, eager to give one another precedence" (Rom 12:10). It is their task, therefore, to reconcile differences of mentality in such a way that no one need feel himself a stranger in the community of the faithful. They are defenders of the common good, with which they are charged in the name of the bishop. At the same time, they are strenuous assertors of the truth, lest the faithful be carried about by every wind of doctrine.[79] They are united by a special solicitude with those who have fallen away from the use of the sacraments, or perhaps even from the faith. Indeed, as good shepherds, they should not cease from going out to them.

Mindful of the prescriptions on ecumenism,[80] let them not forget their brothers who do not enjoy full ecclesiastical communion with us.

Finally, they have entrusted to them all those who do not recognize Christ as their Savior.

The Christian faithful, for their part, should realize their obligations to their priests, and with filial love they should follow them as their pastors and fathers. In like manner, sharing their cares, they should help their priests by prayer and work insofar as possible so that their priests might more readily overcome difficulties and be able to fulfill their duties more fruitfully.[81]

**SECTION 3.  
THE  
DISTRIBUTION  
OF PRIESTS,  
AND  
VOCATIONS  
TO THE  
PRIESTHOOD**

**10. The spiritual gift which priests receive at their ordination prepared them not for a sort of limited and narrow mission but for the widest possible and universal mission of salvation "even to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8), for every priestly ministry shares in the universality of the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles. The priesthood of Christ, in which all priests really share, is necessarily intended for all peoples and all times, and it knows no limits of blood, nationality or time, since it is already mysteriously prefigured in the person of Melchisedech.[82] Let priests remember, therefore, that the care of all churches must be their intimate concern. Hence, priests of such dioceses as are rich in vocations should show themselves willing and ready, with the permission of their own ordinaries (bishops), to volunteer for work in other regions, missions or endeavors which are poor in numbers of clergy.**

**Present norms of incardination and excardination should be so revised that, while this ancient institution still remains intact, they will better correspond to today's pastoral needs. Where a real apostolic spirit requires it, not only should a better distribution of priests be brought about but there should also be favored such particular pastoral works as are necessary in any region or nation anywhere on earth. To accomplish this purpose there should be set up international seminaries, special personal dioceses or prelatures (vicariates), and so forth, by means of which, according to their particular statutes and always saving the right of bishops, priests may be trained and incardinated for the good of the whole Church.**

**Priests should not be sent singly to a new field of labor, especially to one where they are not completely familiar with the language and customs; rather, after the example of the disciples of Christ,[83] they should be sent two or three together so that they may be mutually helpful to one another. Likewise, thoughtful care should be given to**

their spiritual life as well as their mental and bodily welfare; and, so far as is possible, the circumstances and conditions of labor should be adapted to individual needs and capabilities. At the same time it will be quite advantageous if those priests who go to work in a nation new to them not only know well the language of that place but also the psychological and social milieu peculiar to the people they go to serve, so that they may communicate with them easily, thus following the example of Paul the Apostle who could say of himself: "For when I was free of all I made myself the servant of all, that I might win over many. Among Jews I was a Jew that I might win over the Jews" (1 Cor 9:19-20).

11. The Shepherd and Bishop of our souls<sup>[84]</sup> so constituted his Church that the people whom he chose and acquired by his blood<sup>[85]</sup> would have its priests to the end of time, and that Christians would never be like sheep without a shepherd.<sup>[86]</sup> Recognizing Christ's desire, and at the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the apostles considered it their duty to select men "who will be capable of teaching others" (2 Tim 2:2). This duty, then, is a part of the priestly mission by which every priest becomes a sharer in the care of the whole Church, lest ministers be ever lacking for the People of God on earth. Since, however, there is common cause between the captain of a ship and the sailors,<sup>[87]</sup> let all Christian people be taught that it is their duty to cooperate in one way or another, by constant prayer and other means at their disposal,<sup>[88]</sup> that the Church will always have a sufficient number of priests to carry out her divine mission. In the first place, therefore, it is the duty of priests, by the ministry of the word and by the example of their own lives, showing forth the spirit of service and the paschal joy to demonstrate to the faithful the excellence and necessity of the priesthood; then they should see to it that young men and adults whom they judge worthy of such ministry should be called by their bishops to ordination, sparing no effort or inconvenience in helping them to prepare for this call, always saving their internal and external freedom of action. In this effort, diligent and prudent spiritual direction is of the greatest value. Parents and teachers and all who are engaged in any way in the education of boys and young men should so prepare them that they will recognize the solicitude of our Lord for his flock, will consider the needs of the Church, and will be prepared to respond generously to our Lord when he calls, saying: "Here I am Lord, send me" (Is 6:8). This voice of the Lord calling, however, is never to be expected as something which in an

**extraordinary manner will be heard by the ears of the future priest. It is rather to be known and understood in the manner in which the will of God is daily made known to prudent Christians. These indications should be carefully noted by priests.[89]**

**Works favoring vocations, therefore, whether diocesan or national, are highly recommended to the consideration of priests.[90] In sermons, in catechetical instructions, and written articles, priests should set forth the needs of the Church both locally and universally, putting into vivid light the nature and excellence of the priestly ministry, which consoles heavy burdens with great joys, and in which in a special way, as the Fathers of the Church point out, the greatest love of Christ can be shown.[91]**



## **CHAPTER III. THE LIFE OF PRIESTS**

### **SECTION 1. THE VOCATION OF PRIESTS TO THE LIFE OF PERFECTION**

**12. Priests are made in the likeness of Christ the Priest by the Sacrament of Orders, so that they may, in collaboration with their bishops, work for the building up and care of the Church which is the whole Body of Christ, acting as ministers of him who is the Head. Like all other Christians they have received in the sacrament of Baptism the symbol and gift of such a calling and such grace that even in human weakness<sup>[92]</sup> they can and must seek for perfection, according to the exhortation of Christ: "Be you therefore perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). Priests are bound, however, to acquire that perfection in special fashion. They have been consecrated by God in a new manner at their ordination and made living instruments of Christ the Eternal Priest that they may be able to carry on in time his marvelous work whereby the entire family of man is again made whole by power from above.<sup>[93]</sup> Since, therefore, every priest in his own fashion acts in place of Christ himself, he is enriched by a special grace, so that, as he serves the flock committed to him and the entire People of God, he may the better grow in the grace of him whose tasks he performs, because to the weakness of our flesh there is brought the holiness of him who for us was made a High Priest "holy, guiltless, undefiled not reckoned among us sinners" (Heb 7:26).**

**Christ, whom the Father sanctified, consecrated and sent into the world,<sup>[94]</sup> "gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and cleanse for himself an acceptable people, pursuing good works" (Tt 2:14), and thus through suffering entered into his glory. <sup>[95]</sup> In like fashion, priests consecrated by the anointing of the Holy Spirit and sent by Christ must mortify the works of the flesh in themselves and give themselves entirely to the service of men. It is**

**in this way that they can go forward in that holiness with which Christ endows them to perfect man.[96]**

**Hence, those who exercise the ministry of the spirit and of justice [97] will be confirmed in the life of the spirit, so long as they are open to the Spirit of Christ, who gives them life and direction. By the sacred actions which are theirs daily as well as by their entire ministry which they share with the bishop and their fellow priests, they are directed to perfection in their lives. Holiness does much for priests in carrying on a fruitful ministry. Although divine grace could use unworthy ministers to effect the work of salvation, yet for the most part God chooses, to show forth his wonders, those who are more open to the power and direction of the Holy Spirit, and who can by reason of their close union with Christ and their holiness of life say with St. Paul: "And yet I am alive; or rather, not I; it is Christ that lives in me" (Gal 2:20).**

**Hence, this holy council, to fulfill its pastoral desires of an internal renewal of the Church, of the spread of the Gospel in every land and of a dialogue with the world of today, strongly urges all priests that they strive always for that growth in holiness by which they will become consistently better instruments in the service of the whole People of God, using for this purpose those means which the Church has approved.[98]**

**13. Priests who perform their duties sincerely and indefatigably in the Spirit of Christ arrive at holiness by this very fact.**

**Since they are ministers of God's word, each day they read and hear the word of God, which it is their task to teach others. If at the same time they are ready to receive the word themselves they will grow daily into more perfect followers of the Lord. As St. Paul wrote to Timothy, "Let this be thy study, these thy employments, so that all may see how well thou doest. Two things claim thy attention, thyself and the teaching of the faith, spend thy care on them; so wilt thou and those who listen to thee achieve salvation" (1 Tim 4:15-16). As they seek how they may better teach others what they have learned, [99] they will better understand "the unfathomable riches of Christ" (Eph 3:8) and the manifold wisdom of God.[100] If they keep in mind that it is God who opens hearts,[101] and that power comes not from themselves but from the might of God,[102] in the very fact of teaching God's word they will be brought closer to Christ the**

**Teacher and led by his Spirit. Thus those who commune with Christ share in God's love, the mystery of which, kept hidden from the beginning of time,[103] is revealed in Christ.**

**Priests act especially in the person of Christ as ministers of holy things, particularly in the Sacrifice of the Mass, the sacrifice of Christ who gave himself for the sanctification of men. Hence, they are asked to take example from that with which they deal, and inasmuch as they celebrate the mystery of the Lord's death they should keep their bodies free of wantonness and lusts.[104] In the mystery of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, in which priests fulfill their greatest task, the work of our redemption is being constantly carried on;[105] and hence the daily celebration of Mass is strongly urged, since even if there cannot be present a number of the faithful, it is still an act of Christ and of the Church.[106] Thus when priests join in the act of Christ the Priest, they offer themselves entirely to God, and when they are nourished with the body of Christ they profoundly share in the love of him who gives himself as food to the faithful. In like fashion they are united with the intention and love of Christ when they administer the sacraments. This is true in a special way when in the performance of their duty in the sacrament of Penance they show themselves altogether and always ready whenever the sacrament is reasonably sought by the faithful. In the recitation of the Divine Office, they offer the voice of the Church which perseveres in prayer in the name of the whole human race, together with Christ who "lives on still to make intercession on our behalf."**

**As they direct and nourish the People of God, may they be aroused by the example of the Good Shepherd that they may give their life for their sheep,[107] ready for the supreme sacrifice following the example of priests who, even in our own day, have not shrunk from giving their lives. As they are leaders in the faith and as they "enter the sanctuary with confidence, through the blood of Christ" (Heb 10:19) they approach God "with sincere hearts in the full assurance of the faith" (Heb 10:22) they set up a sure hope for their faithful, [108] that they may comfort those who are depressed by the same consolation wherewith God consoles them.[109] As leaders of the community they cultivate an asceticism becoming to a shepherd of souls, renouncing their personal convenience, seeking not what is useful to themselves but to many, for their salvation,[110] always making further progress to do their pastoral work better and, where needful, prepared to enter into new pastoral ways under the direction**

**of the Spirit of Love, which breathes where it will.[111]**

**14. In the world of today, when people are so burdened with duties and their problems, which oftentimes have to be solved with great haste, range through so many fields, there is considerable danger of dissipating their energy. Priests, too, involved and constrained by so many obligations of their office, certainly have reason to wonder how they can coordinate and balance their interior life with feverish outward activity. Neither the mere external performance of the works of the ministry, nor the exclusive engagement in pious devotion, although very helpful, can bring about this necessary coordination. Priests can arrive at this only by following the example of Christ our Lord in their ministry. His food was to follow the will of him who had sent him to accomplish his work.[112]**

**In order to continue doing the will of his Father in the world, Christ works unceasingly through the Church. He operates through his ministers, and hence he remains always the source and wellspring of the unity of their lives. Priests, then, can achieve this coordination and unity of life by joining themselves with Christ to acknowledge the will of the Father. For them this means a complete gift of themselves to the flock committed to them.[113] Hence, as they fulfill the role of the Good Shepherd, in the very exercise of their pastoral charity they will discover a bond of priestly perfection which draws their life and activity to unity and coordination. This pastoral charity [114] flows out in a very special way from the Eucharistic sacrifice. This stands as the root and center of the whole life of a priest. What takes place on the altar of sacrifice, the priestly heart must make his own. This cannot be done unless priests through prayer continue to penetrate more deeply into the mystery of Christ.**

**In order to measure and verify this coordination of life in a concrete way, let priests examine all their works and projects to see what is the will of God[115]-namely, to see how their endeavors compare with the goals of the Gospel mission of the Church. Fidelity to Christ cannot be separated from faithfulness to his Church. Pastoral charity requires that priests avoid operating in a vacuum[116] and that they work in a strong bond of union with their bishops and brother priests. If this be their program, priests will find the coordination and unity of their own life in the oneness of the Church's mission. They will be joined with the Lord and through him with the Father in the Holy Spirit. This will bring them great satisfaction and a full measure**

of happiness.[117]

**SECTION 2.  
SPECIAL  
SPIRITUAL  
REQUIREMENTS  
IN THE LIFE OF  
A PRIEST**

**15. Among the virtues that priests must possess for their sacred ministry none is so important as a frame of mind and soul whereby they are always ready to know and do the will of him who sent them and not their own will.[118] The divine task that they are called by the Holy Spirit to fulfill[119] surpasses all human wisdom and human ability. "God chooses the weak things of the world to confound the strong" (1 Cor 1:27). Aware of his own weakness, the true minister of Christ works in humility trying to do what is pleasing to God.[120] Filled with the Holy Spirit,[121] he is guided by him who desires the salvation of all men. He understands this desire of God and follows it in the ordinary circumstances of his everyday life. With humble disposition he waits upon all whom God has sent him to serve in the work assigned to him and in the multiple experiences of his life.**

**However, the priestly ministry, since it is the ministry of the Church itself, can only function in the hierarchical union of the whole body. Pastoral charity, therefore, urges priests, as they operate in the framework of this union, to dedicate their own will by obedience to the service of God and their fellow men. In a great spirit of faith, let them receive and execute whatever orders the holy father, their own bishop, or other superiors give or recommend.**

**With a willing heart let them spend and even exhaust themselves [122] in whatever task they are given, even though it be menial and unrecognized. They must preserve and strengthen a necessary oneness with their brothers in the ministry, especially with those whom God has selected as visible rulers of his Church. For in this way they are laboring to build the Body of Christ which grows "through every gesture of service." [123] This obedience is designed to promote the mature freedom of the children of God; by its very nature it postulates that in the carrying out of their work, spurred on**

by charity, they develop new approaches and methods for the greater good of the Church. With enthusiasm and courage, let priests propose new projects and strive to satisfy the needs of their flocks. Of course, they must be ready to submit to the decisions of those who rule the Church of God.

By this humility and by willing responsible obedience, priests conform themselves to Christ. They make their own the sentiments of Jesus Christ who "emptied himself, taking on the form of a servant," becoming obedient even to death (Phil 2:7-9). By this obedience he conquered and made up for the disobedience of Adam, as the Apostle testifies, "for as by the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners, so also by the obedience of one, many shall be made just"(Rom 5:19).

16. (Celibacy is to be embraced and esteemed as a gift). Perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven, commended by Christ the Lord<sup>[124]</sup> and through the course of time as well as in our own days freely accepted and observed in a praiseworthy manner by many of the faithful, is held by the Church to be of great value in a special manner for the priestly life. It is at the same time a sign and a stimulus for pastoral charity and a special source of spiritual fecundity in the world.<sup>[125]</sup> Indeed, it is not demanded by the very nature of the priesthood, as is apparent from the practice of the early Church<sup>[126]</sup> and from the traditions of the Eastern Churches. where, besides those who with all the bishops, by a gift of grace, choose to observe celibacy, there are also married priests of highest merit. This holy synod, while it commends ecclesiastical celibacy, in no way intends to alter that different discipline which legitimately flourishes in the Eastern Churches. It permanently exhorts all those who have received the priesthood and marriage to persevere in their holy vocation so that they may fully and generously continue to expend themselves for the sake of the flock commended to them.<sup>[127]</sup>

Indeed, celibacy has a many-faceted suitability for the priesthood. For the whole priestly mission is dedicated to the service of a new humanity which Christ, the victor over death, has aroused through his Spirit in the world and which has its origin "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man but of God (Jn 1:13). Through virginity, then, or celibacy observed for the Kingdom of Heaven,<sup>[128]</sup> priests are consecrated to Christ by a new and

exceptional reason. They adhere to him more easily with an undivided heart,<sup>[129]</sup> they dedicate themselves more freely in him and through him to the service of God and men, and they more expeditiously minister to his Kingdom and the work of heavenly regeneration, and thus they are apt to accept, in a broad sense, paternity in Christ. In this way they profess themselves before men as willing to be dedicated to the office committed to them—namely, to commit themselves faithfully to one man and to show themselves as a chaste virgin for Christ<sup>[130]</sup> and thus to evoke the mysterious marriage established by Christ, and fully to be manifested in the future, in which the Church has Christ as her only Spouse.<sup>[131]</sup> They give, moreover, a living sign of the world to come, by a faith and charity already made present, in which the children of the resurrection neither marry nor take wives.<sup>[132]</sup>

For these reasons, based on the mystery of Christ and his mission, celibacy, which first was recommended to priests, later in the Latin Church was imposed upon all who were to be promoted to sacred orders. This legislation, pertaining to those who are destined for the priesthood, this holy synod again approves and confirms, fully trusting this gift of the Spirit so fitting for the priesthood of the New Testament, freely given by the Father, provided that those who participate in the priesthood of Christ through the sacrament of Orders—and also the whole Church—humbly and fervently pray for it. This sacred synod also exhorts all priests who, in following the example of Christ, freely receive sacred celibacy as a grace of God, that they magnanimously and wholeheartedly adhere to it, and that persevering faithfully in it, they may acknowledge this outstanding gift of the Father which is so openly praised and extolled by the Lord.<sup>[133]</sup> Let them keep before their eyes the great mysteries signified by it and fulfilled in it. Insofar as perfect continence is thought by many men to be impossible in our times, to that extent priests should all the more humbly and steadfastly pray with the Church for that grace of fidelity, which is never denied those who seek it, and use all the supernatural and natural aids available. They should especially seek, lest they omit them, the ascetical norms which have been proved by the experience of the Church and which are scarcely less necessary in the contemporary world. This holy synod asks not only priests but all the faithful that they might receive this precious gift of priestly celibacy in their hearts and ask of God that he will always bestow this gift upon his Church.

**17. (Relationship to the world and temporal goods, and voluntary poverty.) In their friendly and brotherly dealings with one another and with other men, priests are able to learn and appreciate human values and esteem created goods as gifts of God. By living in the world, let priests know how not to be of the world, according to the word of our Lord and Master.[134] By using the world as those who do not use it,[135] let them achieve that freedom whereby they are free from every inordinate concern and become docile to the voice of God in their daily life. From this freedom and docility grows spiritual discretion in which is found the right relationship to the world and earthly goods. Such a right relationship is of great importance to priests, because the mission of the Church is fulfilled in the midst of the world and because created goods are altogether necessary for the personal development of man. Let them be grateful, therefore, for all that the heavenly Father has given them to lead a full life rightly, but let them see all that comes to them in the light of faith, so that they might correctly use goods in response to the will of God and reject those which are harmful to their mission.**

**For priests who have the Lord as their "portion and heritage," (Num 18:20) temporal goods should be used only toward ends which are licit according to the doctrine of Christ and the direction of the Church.**

**Ecclesiastical goods, properly so called, according to their nature and ecclesiastical law, should be administered by priests with the help of capable laymen as far as possible and should always be employed for those purposes in the pursuit of which it is licit for the Church to possess temporal goods-namely, for the carrying out of divine worship, for the procuring of honest sustenance for the clergy, and for the exercise of the works of the holy apostolate or works of charity, especially in behalf of the needy.[136] Those goods which priests and bishops receive for the exercise of their ecclesiastical office should be used for adequate support and the fulfillment of their office and status, excepting those governed by particular laws.[137] That which is in excess they should be willing to set aside for the good of the Church or for works of charity. Thus they are not to seek ecclesiastical office or the benefits of it for the increase of their own family wealth.[138] Therefore, in no way placing their heart in treasures,[139] they should avoid all greediness and carefully abstain from every appearance of business.**

Priests, moreover, are invited to embrace voluntary poverty by which they are more manifestly conformed to Christ and become eager in the sacred ministry. For Christ, though he was rich, became poor on account of us, that by his need we might become rich.[140] And by their example the apostles witnessed that a free gift of God is to be freely given,[141] with the knowledge of how to sustain both abundance and need.[142] A certain common use of goods, similar to the common possession of goods in the history of the primitive Church,[143] furnishes an excellent means of pastoral charity. By living this form of life, priests can laudably reduce to practice that spirit of poverty commended by Christ.

Led by the Spirit of the Lord, who anointed the Savior and sent him to evangelize the poor,[144] priests, therefore, and also bishops, should avoid everything which in any way could turn the poor away. Before the other followers of Christ, let priests set aside every appearance of vanity in their possessions. Let them arrange their homes so that they might not appear unapproachable to anyone, lest anyone, even the most humble, fear to visit them.

### SECTION THREE. AIDS TO THE LIFE OF PRIESTS

18. (Aids to encourage the spiritual life.) In order that, in all conditions of life, they may be able to grow in union with Christ, priests, besides the exercise of their conscious ministry, enjoy the common and particular means, old and new, which the Spirit never ceases to arouse in the People of God and which the Church commends, and sometimes commands,[145] for the sanctification of her members. Outstanding among all these spiritual aids are those acts by which the faithful are nourished in the Word of God at the double table of the Sacred Scripture and the Eucharist.[146] The importance of frequent use of these for the sanctification of priests is obvious to all. The ministers of sacramental grace are intimately united to Christ our Savior and Pastor through the fruitful reception of the sacraments, especially sacramental Penance, in which,

prepared by the daily examination of conscience, the necessary conversion of heart and love for the Father of Mercy is greatly deepened. Nourished by spiritual reading, under the light of faith, they can more diligently seek signs of God's will and impulses of his grace in the various events of life, and so from day to day become more docile to the mission they have assumed in the Holy Spirit. They will always find a wonderful example of such docility in the Blessed Virgin Mary, who was led by the Holy Spirit to dedicate herself totally to the mystery of man's redemption.<sup>[147]</sup> Let priests love and venerate with filial devotion and veneration this mother of the Eternal Highpriest, Queen of Apostles and Protector of their own ministry.

In the fulfillment of their ministry with fidelity to the daily colloquy with Christ, a visit to and veneration of the Most Holy Eucharist, spiritual retreats and spiritual direction are of great worth. In many ways, but especially through mental prayer and the vocal prayers which they freely choose, priests seek and fervently pray that God will grant them the spirit of true adoration whereby they themselves, along with the people committed to them, may intimately unite themselves with Christ the Mediator of the New Testament, and so as adopted children of God may be able to call out "Abba, Father" (Rom 8:15).

19. (Study and pastoral knowledge.) Priests are admonished by their bishop in the sacred rite of ordination that they "be mature in knowledge" and that their doctrine be "spiritual medicine for the People of God."<sup>[148]</sup> The knowledge of the sacred minister ought to be sacred because it is drawn from the sacred source and directed to a sacred goal. Especially is it drawn from reading and meditating on the Sacred Scriptures,<sup>[149]</sup> and it is equally nourished by the study of the Holy Fathers and other Doctors and monuments or tradition. In order, moreover, that they may give apt answers to questions posed by men of this age, it is necessary for priests to know well the doctrines of the magisterium and the councils and documents of the Roman pontiffs and to consult the best of prudent writers of theological science.

Since human culture and also sacred science has progressed in our times, priests are urged to suitably and without interruption perfect their knowledge of divine things and human affairs and so prepare themselves to enter more opportunely into conversation with their

## **contemporaries.**

Therefore, let priests more readily study and effectively learn the methods of evangelization and the apostolate. Let opportune aids be prepared with all care, such as the institution of courses and meetings according to territorial conditions, the erection of centers of pastoral studies, the establishment of libraries, and the qualified supervision of studies by suitable persons. Moreover, let bishops, either individually or united in groups, see to it that all their priests at established intervals, especially a few years after their ordination, **[150]** may be able to frequent courses in which they will be given the opportunity to acquire a fuller knowledge of pastoral methods and theological science, both in order that they may strengthen their spiritual life and mutually communicate their apostolic experiences with their brothers.**[151]** New pastors and those who have newly begun pastoral work, as well as those who are sent to other dioceses or nations, should be helped by these and other suitable means with special care.

Finally, the bishops will be solicitous that there will be some who dedicate themselves to a deeper study of theology, that there will not be lacking suitable teachers for the formation of clerics, that the rest of the priests and the faithful will be helped to acquire the doctrine they need, and that healthy progress will be encouraged in the sacred disciplines, so necessary for the Church.

20. (Providing equitable remuneration for priests.) As those dedicated to the service of God and the fulfillment of the office entrusted to them, priests deserve to receive an equitable remuneration, because "the laborer is worthy of his hire," (Lk 10:7) **[152]** and "the Lord directed that those who preach the Gospel should have their living from the Gospel" (1 Cor 9:14). Wherefore, insofar as an equitable remuneration of the priests would not be provided otherwise, the faithful themselves-that is, those in whose behalf the priest labors-are truly obliged to see to it that they can provide what help is necessary for the honorable and worthy life of the priests. The bishops, however, should admonish the faithful concerning this obligation of theirs. And they should see to it whether each individual for his own diocese or, more aptly, several together for their common territory-that norms are established according to which suitable support is rightly provided for those who do fulfill or have fulfilled a special office in the service of the

**People of God. The remuneration received by each one, in accord with his office and the conditions of time and place, should be fundamentally the same for all in the same circumstances and befitting his station. Moreover, those who have dedicated themselves to the service of the priesthood, by reason of the remuneration they receive, should not only be able to honorably provide for themselves but also themselves be provided with some means of helping the needy. For the ministry to the poor has always been held in great honor in the Church from its beginnings. Furthermore, this remuneration should be such that it will permit priests each year to take a suitable and sufficient vacation, something which indeed the bishops should see that their priests are able to have.**

**Special importance ought to be given to the office fulfilled by sacred ministers. Therefore the so-called system of benefices should be relinquished or at least so reformed that the place of the benefits, or the right to revenue from the endowment attached to an office, would be held as secondary, and the first place in law would be given to the ecclesiastical office itself. From this it should be understood that whatever office is conferred in a stable manner is to be exercised for a spiritual purpose.**

**21. (On setting up common funds and establishing a system of social assistance for priests.) We should always keep before our eyes the example of the faithful of the early Church in Jerusalem, who "held all things in common" (Acts 4:32) "and distribution was made to each according to each one's need" (Acts 4:35). So it is supremely fitting, at least in regions where the support of the clergy completely or largely depends on the offerings of the faithful, that their offerings for this purpose be collected by a particular diocesan institution, which the bishop administers with the help of priests and, when useful, of laymen who are expert in financial matters. Further it is hoped that insofar as is possible in individual dioceses or regions there be established a common fund enabling bishops to satisfy obligations to other deserving persons and meet the needs of various dioceses. This would also enable wealthier dioceses to help the poorer, that the need of the latter might be supplemented by the abundance of the former.<sup>[153]</sup> These common funds, even though they should be principally made up of the offerings of the faithful, also should be provided for by other duly established sources.**

**Moreover, in nations where social security for the clergy is not yet**

aptly established, let the episcopal conferences see to it that-in accord with ecclesiastical and civil laws-there may be either diocesan institutes, whether federated with one another or established for various dioceses together, or territorial associations, which under the vigilance of the hierarchy would make sufficient and suitable provision for a program of preventive medicine, and the necessary support of priests who suffer from sickness, invalid conditions or old age. Let priests share in this established institute, prompted by a spirit of solidarity with their brothers to take part in their tribulations<sup>[154]</sup> while at the same time being freed from an anxious concern for their own future so that they can cultivate evangelical poverty more readily and give themselves fully to the salvation of souls. Let those in charge of this act to bring together the institutes of various nations in order that their strength be more firmly achieved and more broadly based.





## **CONCLUSION AND EXHORTATION**

**22. Having before our eyes the joys of the priestly life, this holy synod cannot at the same time overlook the difficulties which priests experience in the circumstances of contemporary life. For we know how much economic and social conditions are transformed, and even more how much the customs of men are changed, how much the scale of values is changed in the estimation of men. As a result, the ministers of the Church and sometimes the faithful themselves feel like strangers in this world, anxiously looking for the ways and words with which to communicate with it. For there are new obstacles which have arisen to the faith: the seeming unproductivity of work done, and also the bitter loneliness which men experience can lead them to the danger of becoming spiritually depressed.**

**The world which today is entrusted to the loving ministry of the pastors of the Church is that which God so loved that he would give his only Son for it.<sup>[155]</sup> Truly this world, indeed weighed down with many sins but also endowed with many talents, provides the Church with the living stones<sup>[156]</sup> which are built up into the dwelling place of God in the Spirit.<sup>[157]</sup> This same Holy Spirit, while impelling the Church to open new ways to go to the world of today, suggests and favors the growth of fitting adaptations in the ministry of priests.**

**Priests should remember that in performing their office they are never alone, but strengthened by the power of Almighty God, and believing in Christ who called them to share in his Priesthood, they should devote themselves to their ministry with complete trust, knowing that God can cause charity to grow in them.<sup>[158]</sup> Let them be mindful of their brothers in the priesthood as well, and also of the faithful of the entire world who are associated with them. For all priests cooperate in carrying out the saving plan of God,<sup>[159]</sup> that is, the Mystery of Christ, the sacrament hidden from the ages in God, which is only brought to fulfillment little by little through the collaboration of many ministries in building up the Body of Christ until it grows to the fullness of time. All this, hidden with Christ in God,<sup>[160]</sup> can be uniquely perceived by faith. For the leaders of the People of God must walk by faith, following the example of faithful Abraham, who in faith "obeyed by going out into a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out not knowing where he was going" (Heb 11:8). Indeed, the dispenser of the**

**mysteries of God can see himself in the man who sowed his field, of whom the Lord said: "then sleep and rise, night and day, and the seed should sprout without his knowing" (Mk 4:27). As for the rest, the Lord Jesus, who said: "Take courage, I have overcome the world," (Jn 16:33) did not by these words promise his Church a perfect victory in this world. Certainly this holy synod rejoices that the earth has been sown with the seed of the Gospel which now bears fruit in many places, under the direction of the Holy Spirit who fills the whole earth and who has stirred up a missionary spirit in the hearts of many priests and faithful. Concerning all this, this holy synod gives fervent thanks to the priests of the entire world. "Now to him who is able to accomplish all things in a measure far beyond what we ask or conceive in keeping with the power that is at work in us-to him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus" (Eph 3:20-21).**



## NOTES

### Preface

**[1]** Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Dec. 4, 1963; AAS 56 (1964) pp 7ff; Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium Nov. 21, 1964: AAS 57 (1965) p 5ff; Decree Christus Dominus on Pastoral Duties of Bishops, Oct. 28, 1965; Decree on Priestly Training, Oct. 28, 1965.

### Chapter 1

**[2]** Cf. Mt 3:16; Lk 4:18; Acts 4:27, 10:38.

**[3]** Cf. 1 Pt 2:5,9.

**[4]** Cf. 1 Pt 3:15.

**[5]** Cf. Rev 19:10; Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, Nov. 21, 1964, n 35: AAS 57 (1965) p 40-41.

**[6]** Council of Trent, 23rd session, chapter 1, canon 1: Denzinger 957 and 961 (1764 and 1771).

**[7]** Cf. Jn 20:21; Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, Nov. 21, 1964, n 22: AAS 57 (1965) pp 21-28.

**[8]** Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, Nov. 21, 1964, n 22: AAS 57 (1965) pp 33-36.

**[9]** Cf. *ibid*

**[10]** Cf. Roman Pontifical Ordination of a Priest, preface. These words are already found in the Verona Sacramentary (ed. L.C. Moehlberg, Rome 1956, p 122); also in Frankish Missal (ed. L.C. Moehlberg, Rome 1957, p 9) and in the Book of Sacramentaries of the Roman Church (ed. L.C. Moehlberg, Rome 1960, p 25) and Roman German Pontificals (ed. Vogel-Elze, Vatican City 1963, vol. I, p 34).

**[11]** Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, Nov. 21, 1964, n 10: AAS 57 (1965) pp 14-15.

**[12]** Cf. Rom 15:16 (Greek).

**[13]** Cf. 1 Cor 11:26.

**[14]** St. Augustine, *De Civitate Dei* 10, 6: PL 41, 284.

**[15]** Cf. 1 Cor 15:24.

**[16]** Cf. Heb 5:1.

**[17]** Cf. Heb 2:17; 4:15.

**[18]** Cf. 1 Cor 9:19-23 (Vg.).

**[19]** Cf. Acts 13:2.

**[20]** Paul VI, encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, Aug.6, 1964: AAS 56 (1964), pp 627 and 638.

**[21]** Cf. Rom 12:2.

**[22]** Cf. Jn 10:14-16.

**[23]** Cf. St. Polycarp, *Epist. ad Philippenses*, 6, 1 (ed. F.X. Funk, *Apostolic Fathers*, I, p 303).

## Chapter 2

**[24]** Cf. 1 Pt 1:23; Acts 6:7; 12:24. "(The apostles) preached the word of truth and founded Churches." (St. Augustine, *On Psalms*, 44, 23; PL 36, 508).

**[25]** Cf. Mal 2:7; 1 Tim 4:11-13; 1 Tim 1:9.

**[26]** Cf. Mk 16:16.

**[27]** Cf. 2 Cor 11:7. All that has been said regarding bishops also applies to priests inasmuch as they are cooperators of the bishops. Cf. *Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua*, c. 3 (ed. Ch. Munier, Paris 1960, p 79); Decree of Gracian, c. 6, D.88 (ed. Friedberg, 1, 307); Council of Trent, Decree De Reform., Session 5, c. 2, n 9 (Ecumenical Council Decrees, ed. Herder, Rome 1963, p 645); Session 24, c. 4 (p 739); Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, Nov. 21, 1964, n 25: AAS 57 (1965), pp 29-31.

**[28]** Cf. *Constitutiones Apostolorum* II, 26, 7: "(Priests) are teachers of sacred science as the Lord himself commanded when he said: 'Going, therefore, teach, etc.'" (ed. F.X. Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum*, I, Paderborn 1905, p 105); Leonine Sacramentary and other sacramentaries up to the Roman Pontifical, preface of the ordination of priests: "By this providence, Lord, you have added to the apostles of your Son fellow teachers of the faith through whom the apostles have filled the whole world with their teaching." *Ordo Book of the Mozarabic Liturgy*, preface to the ordination of priests: "Teacher of peoples and ruler of subjects, he keeps intact the Catholic faith and announces true salvation to all." (ed. M. Ferotin, Paris, 1904, col. 55).

**[29]** Cf. Gal 2:5.

**[30]** Cf. 1 Pt 2:12.

**[31]** Cf. Rite of priestly ordination in the Alexandrian Jacobite Church: "...Gather your people to the word of doctrine like a foster-mother who nourishes her children" (H. Denzinger, *Oriental Rites*, Book II, Wurzburg 1863, p 14).

**[32]** Cf. Mt 28:19; Mk 16:16; Tertullian, *On Baptism*, 14, 2 (The Body of Christians, Latin Series, I p 289, 11-13); St. Athanasius, *Against the Arians*, 2, 42 (PG 26, 237); St. Jerome, *On Matthew*, 28, 19 (PL 26, 218 BC): "First let them teach all nations, and then pour water on those who have learned. It cannot be that the body receive the sacrament of baptism unless the soul first has received the truth of faith;" St. Thomas, "Exposition of the first decretal," n 1: "Sending his disciples to preach, our Savior enjoined on them three things: first, that they teach the faith; second, that they confer the sacraments on believers.... (ed. Marietti, *Opuscula Theologica*,

**Taurini-Rome 1954, 1138).**

**[33] Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Dec. 4, 1963, n 35, 2: AAS 56 (1964), p 109.**

**[34] Cf. ibid, nn 33, 35, 48, 52 (pp 108-109, 113, 114).**

**[35] Cf. ibid, n 7 (pp 100-101); Pius XII, encyclical letter, *Mystici Corporis*, June 29, 1943: AAS 35 (1943), p 230.**

**[36] St. Ignatius Martyr, Smyrn., 8, 1-2 (ed. F.X. Funk, p 282, 6-15); Constitutions of the Apostles, VIII, 12, 3 (ed. F.X. Funk, p 496); VIII,29, 2 (p 532).**

**[37] Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, Nov. 21, 1964, n 28: AAS 57 (1965), pp 33-36.**

**[38] "The Eucharist indeed is a quasi consummation of the spiritual life, and the goal of all the sacraments" (St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* III, q.73, a.3 c); cf. *Summa Theol.* III, q. 65, a. 3.**

**[39] Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* III, q. 65, a. 3, ad 1; q. 79, a.1, c. and ad 1.**

**[40] Cf. Eph 5:19-20.**

**[41] Cf. St. Jerome, *Epistles*, 114, 2 (PL 22, 934), See Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Dec. 4, 1963, nn 122-127: AAS 56 (1964), pp 130-132.**

**[42] Paul VI, encyclical letter *Mysterium Fidei*, Sept. 3, 1965: AAS 57 (1965), p 771.**

**[43] Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, Nov. 21, 1964, n 28: AAS 57 (1965), pp 33-36.**

**[44] Cf. 2 Cor 10:8; 13:10.**

**[45] Cf. Gal 1:10.**

**[46]** Cf. 1 Cor 4:14.

**[47]** Cf. Didascalia, II, 34, 3; II, 46, 6; II,47, 1; Constitutions of the Apostles, II, 47, 1 (ed. F.X. Funk, Didascalia and Constitutions, I, pp 116, 142 and 143).

**[48]** Cf. Gal 4:3; 5:1 and 13.

**[49]** Cf. St. Jerome, Epistles, 58, 7 (PL 22, 584).

**[50]** Cf. 1 Pt 4:10 ff.

**[51]** Cf. Mt 25:34-45.

**[52]** Cf. Lk 4:18.

**[53]** Other categories could be named, e.g. migrants, nomads, etc. The Decree on the Pastoral Duties of Bishops, Oct. 28, 1965, treats of these.

**[54]** Cf. Didascalia, II, 59, 1-3 (ed. F.X. Funk, I, p 170); Paul VI, allocution to Italian clergy present at the 13th week-long congress at Orvieto on pastoral aggiornamento, Sept. 6, 1963: AAS 55 (1963) pp 750ff.

**[55]** Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, Nov. 21, 1964, n 28: AAS 57 (1965), p 35.

**[56]** Cf. cited Ecclesiastical Constitution of the Apostles, XVIII: (ed. Th. Schermann, Die allgemeine Kirchenordnung, I, Paderborn 1914, p 26; A. Harnack, T. u. U., II, 4, p 13, nn 18 and 19); Pseudo-Jerome, The Seven Orders of the Church (ed. A.W. Kalff, Wurzburg 1937, p 45); St. Isidore of Hispali, Ecclesiastical Offices, c. VII (PL 83, 787).

**[57]** Cf. Didascalia, II, 28, 4 (ed. F.X. Funk, p 108); Constitutions of the Apostles, II, 28, 4;II, 34, 3 (ibid., pp 109 and 117).

**[58]** Constitutions of the Apostles, VIII, 16, 4 (ed. F.X. Funk, 1, p 522, 13); cf. Epitome of the Constitutions of the Apostles, VI (ibid., II, p 80, 3-4); Testamentum Domini, (transl. I.E. Rahmani, Moguntiae 1899, p

**69). Also in Trad. Apost. (ed. B. Botte, La Tradition Apostolique, Munster, i. W. 1963, p 20).**

**[59] Cf. Nm 11:16-25.**

**[60] Roman Pontifical on the ordination of a priest, preface: these words are also found in the Leonine Sacramentary, the Gelasian Sacramentary and the Gregorian Sacramentary. Similar words can be found in the Oriental Liturgies: cf. Trad Apost.: (ancient Latin version of Verona, ed. B. Botte, La Tradition Apostolique de St. Hippolyte. Essai de reconstruction, Munster i. W. 1963, p 20); Constitutions of the Apostles, VIII, 16, 4 (ed. F.X. Funk, I, p 522, 16-17); Epitome on the Constitutions of the Apostles, 6 (ed. F.X. Funk, II, p 20, 5-7); Testamentum Domini (transl. I.E. Rahmani, Moguntiae 1899, p 69); Euchologium Serapionis, XXVII (ed. F.X. Funk, Didascalia and Constitutions, II, p 190, lines 1-7); Maronite Rite of Ordination (transl. H. Denzinger, Rites of the Orientals, II, Wurzburg 1863, p. 161). Among the Fathers can be cited: Theodore of Mopsuestia, On First Timothy, 3, 8 (ed. Swete, II, pp 119-121); Theodoretus, Questions on Numbers, XVIII (PG 80, 372 b).**

**[61] Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, Nov. 21, 1964, n 28: AAS 57 (1965), p 35.**

**[62] Cf. John XXIII, encyclical letter Sacerdotii Nostri Primordia, Aug. 1, 1959: AAS 51 (1959), p 576; St. Pius X, Exhortation to the Clergy Haerent Animo, Aug. 4, 1908: Acts of St. Pius X, vol. IV (1908), pp 237 ff.**

**[63] Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Pastoral Duties of Bishops, Oct. 28, 1965 nn 15 and 16.**

**[64] The Cathedral Chapter is already found in established law, as the "senate and assembly" of the bishop (Code of Canon Law, c.391), or if there is not one, an assembly of diocesan consultors (cf. Code of Canon Law, cc. 423-428). It is our desire to give recognition to such institutions so that modern circumstances and necessities might better be provided for. As is evident, this synod of priests forms the pastoral consilium spoken of in the Decree on the Pastoral Duties of Bishops of Oct. 28, 1965 (n.27), of which the laity can also be members, and whose function is mainly to map out a plan of action for pastoral work. Concerning priests as counselors of the**

bishops, one might refer to the Didascalia, II, 28, 4 (ed. F.X. Funk, II, p 108); also Constitutions of the Apostles, II 28,4 (ed. F.X. Funk, I, p 109); St. Ignatius Martyr, Magn. 6, 1 (ed. F.X. Funk, p 234, 10-16); Trall. 3, 1 (ed. F.X. Funk, p 244, 10-12); Origen, Against Celsus, 3, 30: "Priests are counselors or 'bouleytai'" (PG 11, 957 d-960 a).

[65] St. Ignatius Martyr, Magn. 6, 1: (ed. F.X. Funk, p 234, 10-13); St. Ignatius Martyr, Trall., 3, 1: (ibid., p 244, 10-12); St. Jerome, On Isaiah, II, 3 (PL 24, 61 A).

[66] Cf. Paul VI, allocution to the family heads of Rome and Lenten speakers, March 1, 1965, in the Sistine Hall: AAS 57 (1965), p 326.

[67] Cf. Constitutions of the Apostles, VIII 47, 39: (ed. F.X. Funk, p 577).

[68] Cf. 3 Jn 8.

[69] Cf. Jn. 17:23.

[70] Cf. Heb 13:1-2.

[71] Cf. Heb 13:16.

[72] Cf. Mt 5:10.

[73] Cf. 1 Thes 2:12; Col 1:13.

[74] Cf. Mt 23:8. Also Paul VI, encyclical letter *Ecclesiam Suam*, Aug. 6, 1964: AAS 58 (1964) p 647.

[75] Cf. Eph 4:7 and 16; Constitutions of the Apostles, VIII, 1, 20: (ed. F.X. Funk, I, p 467).

[76] Cf. Phil 2:21.

[77] Cf. 1 Jn 4:1.

[78] Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, Nov. 21, 1964, n 37: AAS 57 (1965), pp 42-43.

**[79]** Cf. Eph 4:14.

**[80]** Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism, Nov. 21, 1964: AAS 57 (1965), pp 90ff.

**[81]** Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, Nov 21, 1964, n 37: AAS 57 (1965), pp 42-43.

**[82]** Cf. Heb 7:3.

**[83]** Cf. Lk 10:1.

**[84]** Cf. 1 Pt 2:25.

**[85]** Cf. Acts 20:28.

**[86]** Cf. Mt 9:36.

**[87]** Roman Pontifical, on the ordination of a priest.

**[88]** Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on Priestly Training, Oct. 28, 1965, n 2.

**[89]** Paul VI, allocution of May 5, 1965: L'Osservatore Romano, 5-6-65, p 1.

**[90]** Cf. Second Vatican Council, Decree on Priestly Training, Oct. 28, 1965, n 2.

**[91]** The Fathers teach this in their explanations of Christ's words to Peter: "Do you love me? ...Feed my sheep." (Jn 21:17); This St. John Chrysostom, On the Priesthood, II, 1-2 (PG 47-48, 633); St. Gregory the Great, Reg. Past. Liber, P I c. 5 (PL 77, 19 a).

### Chapter 3

**[92]** Cf. 2 Cor 12:9.

**[93]** Cf. Pius XI, encyclical letter *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii*, Dec. 20, 1935: AAS 28 (1936) n 10.

**[94]** Cf. Jn 10:36.

**[95]** Lk 24:26.

**[96]** Cf. Eph 4:13.

**[97]** Cf. 2 Cor 3:8-9.

**[98]** Cf. among others: St. Pius X, exhortation to the clergy *Haerent Animo*, Aug. 4, 1908: St. Pius X, AAS 4 (1908), pp 237ff. Pius XI, encyclical letter *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii*, Dec. 20, 1935; AAS 28 (1936). Pius XII apostolic exhortation *Menti nostrae*, Sept. 23, 1950: AAS (1950) 657ff. John XXIII, encyclical letter *Sacerdoti Nostri Primordia*, Aug. 1, 1959: AAS 51 (1959) 545ff.

**[99]** Cf. St. Thomas, *Summa Theol.* II-II, q. 188, a. 7.

**[100]** Cf. Heb 3:9-10.

**[101]** Acts 16:14.

**[102]** Cf. 2 Cor 4:7.

**[103]** Cf. Eph 3:9.

**[104]** Cf. Roman Pontifical on the ordination of priests.

**[105]** Cf. Roman Missal, Prayer over the Offerings of the Ninth Sunday after Pentecost.

**[106]** Paul VI, encyclical letter *Mysterium Fidei*, Sept. 3, 1965: AAS 57 (1965), pp 761-762. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, Dec. 4, 1963, nn 26 and 27; AAS 56 (1964), p 107.

**[107]** Cf. Jn 10:11.

**[108]** Cf. 2 Cor 1:7.

**[109]** Cf. 2 Cor 1:4.

**[110]** Cf. 1 Cor 10:33.

**[111]** Cf. Jn 3:8.

**[112]** Cf. Jn 4:34.

**[113]** Cf. 1 Jn 3:16.

**[114]** "May it be a duty of love to feed the Lord's flock" (St. Augustine, Tract on John, 123, 5: PL 35, 1967).

**[115]** Cf. Rom 12:2.

**[116]** Cf. Gal 2:2.

**[117]** Cf. 2 Cor 7:4.

**[118]** Cf. Jn 4:34; 5:30; 6:38.

**[119]** Cf. Acts 13:2.

**[120]** Cf. Eph 5:10.

**[121]** Cf. Acts 20:22.

**[122]** Cf. 2 Cor 12:15.

**[123]** Cf. Eph 4:11-16.

**[124]** Cf. Mt 19:22.

**[125]** Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, Nov. 21, 1964 n 42: AAS 57 (1965) pp 47-49.

**[126]** Cf. 1 Tim 3:2-5: Tt 1:6.

**[127]** Cf. Pius XI, encyclical letter *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii* Dec. 30, 1935: AAS 28 (1936) p 28.

**[128]** Cf. Mt 19:12.

**[129]** Cf. 1 Cor 7:32-34.

**[130]** Cf. 2 Cor 11:2.

**[131]** Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*, Nov. 21, 1964, n 42 and 44: AAS 57 (1965), pp 47-49 and 50-51; Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life, Oct. 18, 1965, n 12.

**[132]** Cf. Lk 20:35-36; Pius XI, encyclical letter *Ad Catholici Sacerdotii* Dec.20, 1935, AAS 28 (1936) pp 24-28; Pius XII, encyclical letter *Sacra Virginitas*, March 25, 1954, AAS 46 (1954) nn 169-172.

**[133]** Cf. Mt 19:11.

**[134]** Cf. Jn 17:14-16.

**[135]** Cf. 1 Cor 7:31.

**[136]** Council of Antioch, canon 25: Mansi 2, 1328; Decree of Gratian, c. 23, C. 12 q. 1. (ed. Friedberg, 1, pp 684-685).

**[137]** This is to be understood especially with regard to the laws and customs prevailing in the Eastern Churches.

**[138]** Council of Paris a, 829, can 15: M.G.H. Sect. III, *Concilia*, t. 2, para 6 622; Council of Trent, Session XXV, *De Reform.*, chapter 1.

**[139]** Ps 62:11 (Vulgate 61).

**[140]** Cf. 2 Cor 8:9.

**[141]** Cf. Acts 8:18-25.

**[142]** Cf. Phil 4:12.

**[143]** Cf. Acts 2:42-47.

**[144]** Cf. Lk 4:18.

**[145]** Cf. Code of Canon Law, 125 ff.

**[146]** Cf. Second Vatican Council Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life, Oct. 28, 1965, n 6; Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Nov. 18, 1965, n 21.

**[147]** Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution Lumen Gentium, Nov. 21, 1964, n 65: AAS 57 (1965) pp 64-65.

**[148]** Roman Pontifical On the Ordination of Priests.

**[149]** Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, Nov. 18, n 25.

**[150]** This course is not the same as the pastoral course which is to be undertaken immediately after ordination, spoken of in the Decree on Priestly Training, Oct.28, 1965, n 22.

**[151]** Second Vatican Council, Decree on the Pastoral Duties of Bishops. Oct.28, 1965, n 16.

**[152]** Cf. Mt 10:10; 1 Cor 9:7; 1 Tim 5:18.

**[153]** Cf. 2 Cor 8:14.

**[154]** Cf. Phil 4:14.

**Conclusion and exhortation**

**[155]** Cf. Jn 3:16.

**[156]** Cf. 1 Pt 2:5.

**[157]** Cf. Eph 2:22.

**[158]** Cf. Roman Pontifical, on the ordination of priests.

**[159]** Cf. Eph 3:9.

**[160]** Cf. Col 3:3.

