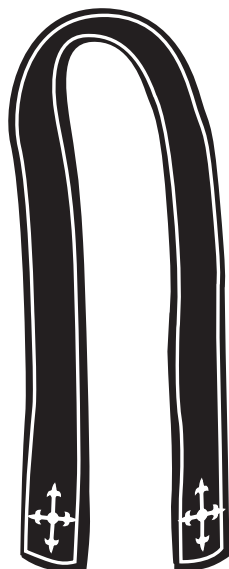


Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time • Year B • October 25, 2015



*Father of all,
you sent your Son
to live among us
and show us the way to you.
Send us shepherds
who, in our day,
will care for us
and lead us along
the path of Christ.
We ask this,
and all things, in your name.*

Sunday Word

Jeremiah 31:7–9

Psalm 126:1–6

Hebrews 5:1–6

Mark 10:46–52

The Scattered Will Be Gathered

God's people, who had lost their way and had been scattered in exile, hear God's promise through the prophet Jeremiah: "I have become a father to Israel" (Jeremiah 31:9).

When a group of people or a community starts falling apart or fails, it requires leadership to bring it together. What was once a disorganized and disoriented group becomes focused with good leadership. Consolation will be provided, and stumbles will be minimized.

Called by God

The priests of the Old Covenant, who were representatives of God for the people, received this honor not of their own accord but from the divine hand. So too, God chose Christ, saying, "You are my son, today I have begotten you" (Hebrews 5:5). Named and begotten as the only Son of God the Father, Christ is the eternal priest of the New Covenant.

Following the Lord Along the Way

Blind Bartimaeus sees in ways that the disciples cannot. He calls out to the Lord, recognizing the power of God in Jesus. Jesus, in turn, calls him. By faith the blind Bartimaeus is restored to physical sight. By faith he is enabled to follow Jesus on the way to Jerusalem and the cross. The true gift is that Bartimaeus has been called and chosen to pursue this way.

Catholic Doctrine: Holy Orders

All members of the Church are given a share in the priesthood of Jesus Christ through the Sacrament of Baptism, exercised through a life of faith, hope, and love. The ministerial, or ordained, priesthood of bishops and priests, while related to the common priesthood of all the baptized, is uniquely different from it. The purpose of the ordained priesthood is to assist, guide, and lead the unfolding of the baptismal call of all believers.

In other words, there are two types of participation in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. One derives from our Baptism. The other derives from the Sacrament of Holy Orders, through which the Church confers ordination. This second type of participation in the priesthood of Christ has three degrees: the episcopate (bishops), the presbyterate (priests), and the diaconate (deacons). These three degrees of Holy Order promote and serve the interests of all members of the Church in attaining Salvation.

Only baptized men can receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders from a validly ordained bishop. Priests are chosen to live a celibate and chaste life, remaining celibate—giving themselves completely in service to others—as a sign of the imminent coming of God’s kingdom.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

Bishops receive the fullness of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. They are consecrated for the tasks of sanctifying, teaching, and governing. They act as Christ’s representatives, successors of the Apostles, shepherds and pastors of souls, commissioned to perpetuate the work of Christ, the eternal Pastor and Shepherd.

Priests are the coworkers and subordinates of the bishops. They assist bishops by preaching, celebrating Sacraments, presiding at liturgy, and guiding the faithful. Their ministry can only be exercised in dependence on the bishop and in communion with him.

While deacons do not share in the ministerial priesthood, by ordination they are specially attached to the bishop for particular service in the Church. They assist bishops and priests in the celebration of the Eucharist, proclaim and preach the Gospel, preside at funerals, weddings, and Baptisms, and organize charitable outreach to those in need.



Key Terms

ORDINATION

The liturgical rite by which the Sacrament of Holy Orders is conveyed. The bishop, through a laying on of hands and a prayer of consecration, confers the order of bishop, priest, or deacon. These offices exercise a holy power which comes from Christ for the good of the Church (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1555–1556).

HOLY ORDERS

The Sacrament of apostolic ministry by which the mission of Christ is continued in the Church. This mission, first entrusted to the Apostles, is carried on today by three distinct degrees (hence, *orders*): deacon, priest, and bishop. All three orders confer a permanent, sacramental character on the recipient (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1554).

SACRAMENTAL CHARACTER

An indelible spiritual mark (hence, *character*) upon the soul, permanently effected by Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders. This character reconfigures the recipient to Christ in a special way, giving them specific standing within the Church. Thus these three Sacraments are never repeated (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1121).

Voices of Faith

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. —Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*

For all Christians without exception, the radicalism of the Gospel represents a fundamental, undeniable flowing from the call of Christ to follow and imitate him. . . . This same demand is made anew to priests, not only because they are “in” the Church, but because they are in “in the forefront” of the Church, inasmuch as they are configured to Christ, the Head and Shepherd . . . —John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1547 (essential difference between ministerial priesthood and common priesthood of all the faithful), 1550 (how those called to act in the person of Christ are not preserved from weakness), 1554 (the three degrees of ecclesiastical ministry)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults

Chapter 20 (Holy Orders), especially the section entitled “Holy Orders: Bishop, Priest, Deacon,” pages 264–265

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church

323 (why this Sacrament is called Holy Orders), 334 (celibacy as a requirement), 336 (authority exercised by ministerial priesthood)