

The Spirituality of Diocesan Priesthood

PRIESTHOOD: A CHALLENGE OF LOVE

“To sail when the wind is favorable is no great thing, but when the wind is unfavorable, it becomes a real challenge. In a society that pursues success, a career, [excessive pleasure], financial standing, the young man who responds to the priestly call tries to orient his life another way, seeking not what is [passing] but enduring values. And this is the challenge that young men love: to go against the current.”¹³ Priests face many joys and challenges in living out their vocation to bring Christ to the world. A priest receives his strength from his spiritual life and his relationship with Jesus Christ.

“Do not be afraid.”

A LIFE OF PRAYER AND SERVICE

A priest's life is essentially one of prayer and service. These two parts make up a priest's **spirituality**. He prays so that he can serve with the strength and inspiration he needs. He serves so that God may work through him to assist His people. The spirituality of a diocesan priest is centered on his personal relationship with Jesus Christ and the call to bring Him to the members of the local faith community, his parish. The diocesan priest is called to be in and among the people of his parish, for his own fulfillment and the benefit and **sanctification** of his parishioners. His life is marked by the characteristics of love, generosity and self-sacrifice.

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

A priest must be a spiritual man, whose trust and hope are solely in the Lord. They give a witness of how we should trust in God above all things. A priest must be a man whose faith rests firmly in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His joy in the risen Lord comes from his experience of Jesus working in his own life. This allows him to stand firm and strong as he leads the Christians under his care.

A priest receives great joy from serving others, but he must remember that at the root of his vocation is his relationship with God. To nourish it and keep it strong he has to pray every day. Here are some of the many ways a priest prays each day:

Features of a priest's life:
Love
Generosity
Self-sacrifice



Celebrating the Eucharist.

During the Mass, a priest offers up his prayers and our own prayers to God through His Son Jesus in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Praying the Liturgy of the Hours. Priests pray the **Liturgy of the Hours**. This is a series of prayers made up of psalms, scripture passages, and intercessions that help a priest to lift his eyes towards God at certain times throughout the day.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Adoration is a way to spend time with Jesus, who is present in the Eucharist, listening and praying without the distractions of everyday life. Every day of the sixty years of his priesthood, Archbishop Fulton Sheen prayed for one hour in front of a tabernacle.

Praying the Rosary. The rosary is a **meditation** on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The rosary is also a way to ask the Blessed Virgin Mary to pray for our needs and for the Church.

In addition to daily prayer, a priest reads religious or spiritual books. He goes on an annual spiritual retreat to renew himself and his ministry. A priest should also have a spiritual director with whom he can talk about his faith and about spiritual matters. Priests also go to confession on a regular basis.

AT THE SERVICE OF OTHERS

A diocesan priest must be a man at the service of others, “For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). As Jesus taught us, the greatest gift we can give is to lay down our life for a friend. Priests lay down their lives for their people every day. In little ways, they give their time, energy, and lives to those who need help, thus being like Christ here on earth.

Diocesan priests live their unique spirituality in and among the people they serve. All people are called to a relationship with Jesus Christ, to a life of prayer and service, and so the priest is an example and a guide for others to follow. A priest is with his parishioners in all the moments of joy and sadness that come throughout their lives. He is there, in the role of a shepherd, like Jesus, to lead and accompany God’s people on their journey of faith. The priest strives to increase the holiness of the people of God so they may in turn sanctify the world. In growing in his own spiritual life, he becomes more like Christ, and is a visible sign to other people of happiness in this life and of our final goal: eternal life.

Meditation: *A way of prayer in which we focus our minds on a religious image, idea or scripture passage.*

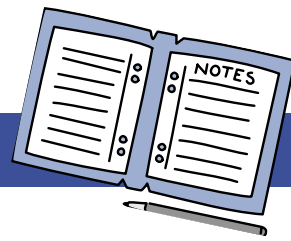
LET’S TALK ABOUT IT!

1. Why is it important for every Christian disciple to pray daily? Why is it especially important for a priest to pray daily?
2. What benefits does the priest get out of prayer? What would happen if a priest stopped praying?
3. How does a priest’s prayer life affect his ability to serve? What are some ways that your parish priest serves your community?

VOCABULARY

Spirituality
Sanctification
Consecration
Liturgy of the Hours
Meditation

Write about it!



Journal options:

- Write this bible passage in your journal and memorize it:
“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” (Jn 15:13).
What are some small ways that you can give your life to serve others everyday?
- Write how this bible passage applies to the priesthood. How does it apply to the vocation of marriage? What about the single life?

Can You Solve This?

If Archbishop Fulton Sheen prayed in front of a tabernacle for one hour every day of his priesthood, and his priesthood was 60 years, how many hours did he spend adoring Jesus Christ in the Eucharist? (Hint: there are 365 days in every year. Also, there is no need to calculate for leap years unless you want to.)

