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53

MINISTRIES
AND LITURGY
Today's Church is being led by the Spirit to return to the ways of Christ. Like Jesus, we are called to serve, not to be served. Those who are leaders or ministers in the Church are servants of God's people.

Since the Second Vatican Council, we can discern several movements of the Spirit:

• *The entire Church*, the people of God, is called to serve; we meditate on the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the suffering servant of God.

• *The present ministers* of the Church are called to a more devoted service of God's people, both in the liturgy and in other areas of life.

• *New areas of service and possible ministries* are waiting for serious, prayerful study and acceptance: we explore the ways the Church is being called to serve in the modern world and in the years to come.

In this issue of the Bulletin, we look at all these concerns of today's Church, and ask God's Spirit to guide us as we move forward with Christ.
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EDITORIAL

SERVING WITH THE SUFFERING SERVANT

In the past two decades the Spirit of Jesus has led his Church to a deeper understanding of ministry. A few short years have made triumphalism tumble. Now the gospel teaching of service has come forward in a fresh and clear way.

While we have seen the idea of leading by serving come to the fore in our time, a parallel consideration — basic to the Christian message — has also become evident. Those who serve God’s people are fellow servants with Christ, with Christ the suffering servant.

As the concept of ministry grows in the Church, we need to be careful not to give in to the age-old temptation of seeing only the rosy side. The Christian Church follows in the footsteps of a thorn-crowned, suffering Lord. His followers are those who carry the cross with him daily, who are with him in obeying the Father’s will, even to the point of suffering and death.1

Today the people of God are being asked to share more fully in ministry by serving others with Christ. The call to ministry is strong and appealing; many are being attracted by the Spirit to use their gifts for the good of all.

We must take care, however, that those who are invited to serve in ministry are also aware that they are being invited to share more fully in the cross with Christ and his Church. Serving with Christ means working with the suffering servant of God.

Only in this way of obedience and suffering can we come with Christ to the glory of his resurrection.

* * *

A prayer for light:

Lord Jesus,
open our hearts and minds to the guidance of your Spirit.
Help us to discern the Father’s will for your Church today.

Do not let our weaknesses or prejudices hinder your work,
and teach us to do all we can
to make the kingdom of the Father come on earth.
Bring us to the harmony and unity given by your Spirit,
and make us one in praising God with you.

Hear us, Lord,
for we are your beloved people. Amen!

1 The fortune cookie which states, No flowery roads lead to glory, is not far from the Christian message.
A CHURCH CALLED TO SERVE

Based on the opening paragraphs of the Constitution on the Church, this article reviews the Council's teaching on the nature of the Christian Church as a people who are called to serve with Christ.

The Church is a sacrament, a sign of God's love for all: this is its nature and mission (Constitution on the Church, no. 1). Our heavenly Father has gathered in his Church all who would come to believe in his Son. Begun in time, the Church will last until it is fulfilled by being gathered with all the elect in the glorious, universal Church (no. 2).

From all eternity we have been chosen individually in Christ to be his people. Through the paschal mystery, the saving death and rising of his Son, God has brought salvation to us (no. 3). After his resurrection and ascension, Jesus sent his Spirit to live in his Church, as his first gift to all who believe in Christ, so that we might carry on his work on earth, and receive the fullness of his grace (eucharistic prayer IV; see also 2 Cor. 5: 15). The Holy Spirit guides and unifies the people of God, and makes us holy (no. 4).

As a means of giving form and order to his Church, Jesus told Peter and his apostles to rule the Church and to work for its spread among all nations. Today, the Church continues to be ruled by Christ through the successors of the apostles. Like Jesus, the Church is to be poor and suffering: it is a servant Church, sent as a pilgrim people to bring the gospel to the poor, to sinners, to all who are weak and afflicted (no. 8).

People of God

God our Father has called us to be his messianic people, with Christ as our head. All members of his Church, from neophyte to pope, are called to be his holy people, wherever we may be in the world. As followers and members of Christ, we are called to reach glory through the obedience and suffering of the cross (no. 9).

Sharing in the work of Christ: As God's messianic people we are to share in the work and mission of Christ: we are here to offer glory to God and to work for the salvation of the world. This work is not limited to the clergy or religious: it is the responsibility of all members of the Church.

- We are a priestly people: Our heavenly Father has chosen us to be his people of praise, prayer, and worship. All Christians have been given the priesthood of the faithful. We use these gifts when we join in the Church's liturgy: participation in the eucharist, the other sacraments, and the Church's prayer of praise (liturgy of the hours) is both our privilege and our responsibility because of our Christian

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1 Some strong thoughts on the entire Church as <i>laos</i>, the people of God, were stated at the 1974 synod by the Canadian delegation. These were reprinted in Bulletin 48, pages 86-102; see also Bulletin 51, page 309. See also <i>This is the Church</i>, in no. 73, pages 51-52.
initiation (see Liturgy constitution, no. 14). Every prayer is offered to God through Christ: he is our mediator and high priest, and it is in his priesthood that we are sharing. We also exercise our priesthood when we praise God, when we pray to him for ourselves and others, when we show our love by our actions, and when we deny ourselves for Christ's sake.

In emphasizing the priesthood of all members of the Christian people, we must not go to the extreme of denying or forgetting the ministerial priesthood. Some believers are called by Christ to share in his priesthood in a particular way, for the benefit of his people. Bishops, presbyters, and deacons are chosen by God's call for a special form of service to his people: by the laying on of the bishop's hands in ordination, God gives them his Spirit and his power to guide and lead his priestly people; in the name of Jesus, bishops and priests preside over the celebration of the eucharist, in which all his people are invited to share in virtue of their baptismal powers (see Constitution on the Church, nos. 10-11).

* We are a prophetic people: In the footsteps of Jesus, the great witness (see Rev. 1: 5), we are called to give witness by lives of holiness (no. 10; see also Eph. 1: 4). Our faith, our love, our offering to him of the sacrifice of praise, the witness of our faith given by believing and by living our belief: these are given to us by God, and we are invited to co-operate with him in bringing his message to the world (no. 12). The whole Church is called to go out and make disciples, to build up the body of Christ in this world (no. 17).

Through the sacraments and through the various ministries to which he calls us, the Holy Spirit continues to make the Church holy; his gifts enrich us, and conform us to Christ, the beloved servant of God (no. 12).

Four Major Documents

Of the sixteen documents issued by the Second Vatican Council, four stand out as major milestones in the life of the Catholic Church. These are:

* Constitution on the liturgy (Dec. 4, 1963)
* Dogmatic constitution on the Church (Nov. 21, 1964)
* Dogmatic constitution on divine revelation (Nov. 18, 1965)
* Pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world (Dec. 7, 1965).

Church in the modern world: Though not the best known of the Council's decrees, this pastoral document deserves serious study, especially by all who want the Church's renewal and ministries to be relevant. Those who are working for a today Church need to steep themselves in the teaching of this conciliar text. Even a brief outline of this Council document shows how much we have to learn in the Christian art of serving God by serving others:

Preface: The document emphasizes the close link between the Church and human race (Church in the modern world, nos. 1-3).

* Introductory statement: The Council Fathers look at the situation of people in today's world (nos. 4-10).

Part I (nos. 11-45): What is the relationship between the Church and what the human family is called to be? The Church is listening to and obeying the call of the Holy Spirit (no. 11).

- The human person has dignity: The Church studies the human person and the way each of us relates to God in Christ (nos. 12-22).

- The human race is one community: We consider the relationships between God and humans, between one person and larger communities (nos. 23-32).


- The work of the Church in today's world: Christ and his people have work to do in the modern world (nos. 40-45).

Part II (nos. 46-90): Today the Church and society must face some urgent situations (no. 46):

- Promoting the dignity of marriage and the family (nos. 47-52)
- Cultural development in the light of the gospel (nos. 53-62)
- Balanced perspective on economy in today's society (nos. 63-72)
- Christians and the political community (nos. 73-76)
- Peace and the community of nations (nos. 77-90): This section looks at war, the arms race, and the international community.

In its conclusion (nos. 91-93), the Council looks at the role of Christians, both as individual persons and as members of the diocesan family, and suggests ways in which the Church can continue to build up the human city and thus lead all to the city of God.

* * *

To understand ministries in today's Church, we have to grasp the message of the Council's teaching on the role of the Church in the modern world.

Helpful reading:


Office and Ministry in the Church, edited by Bas van Iersel and Roland Murphy: Concilium, no. 80 (1972, Herder and Herder, 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10020).


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3 The Church has always been called to serve and save the world in which it lives. In the early centuries, various ministries were developed to meet current needs. By the early middle ages, most of these ministries were absorbed by the ministry of the presbyters. Now the Church is calling more people to share in the many areas of service needed in today's world. As a co-worker with the bishop, the presbyter is to encourage and co-ordinate these ministries.
PRESENT MINISTRIES

MINISTRY OF BISHOP

Today's Church reflects the traditions of twenty centuries of Christian faith and practice. When we read about the ministry of bishop in the ordination rite or in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, we know that these thoughts are based on traditions going back to the first years of the Christian era.

Order of Bishops

Suffering servant: The Father sent Jesus to be the servant and savior of all. He was to save us by his obedience, which led to his suffering and death for us. The Father raised him to glory, and made him Lord of all.

Some are apostles: Jesus chose his apostles and sent them with his power to proclaim his Good News to the world: God loves us, and makes salvation and reconciliation possible through Jesus Christ. After Pentecost, the apostles preached faith in Jesus in Jerusalem, Judaea, and around the known world.

Helpers and successors: Early in the Acts of the Apostles we read of their first helpers, chosen so that the apostles could concentrate on their primary work of prayer and preaching (see Acts 6:1-6). Later, in the pastoral epistles, a more organized system of Church government is evident. By imposing hands on others, the apostles passed on the Spirit of Christ, and shared their responsibility for the people of God with new leaders.

Source of unity: Each bishop holds a double role in the Church today. He is leader and head of the local Church, acting in the name of Christ, and maintaining unity of faith and love. At the same time, he acts with his fellow bishops at regional, national, and international levels. Down through history, the bishops have acted as successors to the college of the apostles: as a group, the bishops have exercised their responsibility for the whole Church by meeting in councils, or — through their elected representatives — in universal synods and other gatherings.

Teacher, Priest, Pastor

Bishops are teachers: Each bishop is a teacher of God's word. It is a custom in Canada to add the initials D.D. (Doctor of Divinity: a teacher of the truths and mysteries of God) to a bishop’s name. Far from being a mere honorific gesture, this practice indicates a profound insight into the bishop's primary role in the Church.

The ordination rite for a bishop emphasizes this role. Christ continues to preach his word and teach his mysteries to the people of God through his bishops. The bishop is sent to proclaim God's word at all times, even when it is unwelcome or rejected (see 2 Tim. 4:1-2). The bishop must study and read, especially the scriptures (see 1 Tim. 4:13); he cannot delegate or ignore this duty: its neglect will harm his people directly. His role as teacher is brought out in the instruction and examination in the ordination rite, and portrayed in action when the book of the gospels (bible or lectionary) is laid upon the head of the person to be ordained bishop.

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The bishop's role as teacher and witness is described further in the Council document on bishops,¹ and in more detail in the 1973 directory on the bishops' pastoral ministry.² The bishop carries out his role as teacher by preaching, by pastoral letters, by discussions and lectures, through his clergy, by consulting theologians, by promoting religious education in schools and in courses of religious instruction, by encouraging the use of scripture, by the adult catechumenate, by vigilance over publications, and by sound use of all the means of social communication.

As the bishop is appointed by the Lord to teach his flock, his people — clergy, religious, and laity — have a corresponding responsibility to listen in faith to their bishop's teaching, for he speaks in the name of the Lord Jesus.

**Bishops are high priests:** In the first centuries of the Church's life, the term "priest" was used to indicate only the bishop: in the name of Christ, he was the high priest of the flock. He was assisted in his ministry by presbyters and deacons.

The bishop is the high priest of the flock, the chief liturgist of God's people who form this diocese. He presides over the liturgy, and leads his people in worship and prayer. The best image we have of the Church of God is found in the eucharist celebrated by the bishop in the midst of his presbyters, ministers, and people (see Liturgy constitution, no. 41, and General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 74). The bishop is the ordinary minister of all the sacraments.

The ordination rite describes this part of the bishop's work in several ways. The rite is celebrated on a Sunday,³ during the eucharist, in the presence of a large number of the people of the diocese. The instruction tells the people that their bishop is the steward of God's mysteries, and reminds the new bishop that he is to pray and offer sacrifice for his people.

The bishop's role as liturgist is mentioned briefly in the Council decree on the ministry of bishops, no. 15, and in the Liturgy constitution, no. 41; it is described in greater detail in the *Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops* (nos. 75-91, pages 41-49). The bishop is to be a man of prayer, and is to form his people into a community of prayer. He celebrates the liturgy with his people, and directs and stimulates the liturgical life of the diocesan community. The diocesan liturgical commission is an important part of this work (see Liturgy constitution, nos. 45-46; *Directory*, no. 82). By encouraging the proper celebration of the Lord's day and of the liturgy of the sacraments, and by promoting sound devotional practices (see Liturgy constitution, no. 13), the bishop promotes the prayer life of the people that God has placed in his care.

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² *Directory on the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops*, Sacred Congregation for Bishops, February 22, 1973. The Canadian Catholic Conference has translated and published this document: copies are available in English or French for $2.00, plus postage, from CCCB Publications Service (90 Parent Ave., Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1). The bishop's role as teacher in the believing community is described in nos. 55-74, pages 32-41.

³ The emphasis on Sunday ordination continues the tradition described by Hippolytus in *Apostolic Tradition*, written around the year 215 in Rome.
Bishops are pastors: We are used to calling our presbyters by titles such as priest, pastor, father. In reality, these titles belong first of all to the bishop, who is the high priest, chief pastor, and spiritual father of the whole diocese. Because presbyters share in the bishop's role as his co-workers, they have come to share in some of his titles also (see Liturgy constitution, no. 42).

The bishop is called by Christ to be a shepherd to his people, and in a special way to reconcile sinners and seek out those who are lost. The bishop thus continues the work of the good shepherd — or put more simply, Christ continues to shepherd his people through his bishops (see preface 64 in the sacramentary).

The Vatican Council discusses the bishop's role as shepherd in the Decree on the ministry of bishops (nos. 16-19). In the ordination rite, the instruction refers to the bishop's role of adding new members to the body of Christ, especially by presiding over the process and sacraments of initiation. The examination during the ordination rite also emphasizes the bishop's duty as father to the people of God, especially to the poor and needy and straying.

The Directory speaks of the bishop as a father and shepherd within a community that is hierarchically arranged: see nos. 92-122, pages 49-63. The bishop continues the work of Christ the good shepherd by knowing his people, by meeting today's pastoral needs, by co-ordinating pastoral action, and by his relationships with laity, religious, and priests. The bishop is to be leader of his people in the works of charity and in the apostolate in his community.

- Universal: The bishop carries out these tasks in his own diocese. Also, in union with his fellow bishops, he continues to promote similar action throughout the country and around the world.

**Some Contemporary Situations**

Since the Vatican Council set out to make ecclesiastical practices more responsive to the needs to today (see Liturgy constitution, no. 1), the Church has been giving serious consideration to a number of areas of concern:

**How big should a diocese be?** “Acquaintance with each of the faithful (see Jn. 10: 4, 27) and his situation, even though very difficult to attain, is a desirable goal which the bishop should do his very best to attain” (see Directory, no. 100; also nos. 120, 173; Decree on the bishops' pastoral office, nos. 22-24). The Church has had varying practices: Hippolytus, writing of Rome around the year 215, seems to speak of it as we would of a one-parish town today; the middle ages had dioceses so large that the bishop did not get round to each parish every year; in some cases, decades went by without a visit from the bishop. Where is the happy medium?

Before we opt for ordaining every parish priest as a bishop, we need to take a serious look at the relationship that is and should be in existence between the bishop and each member of his diocesan Church. What is this relationship now? Is there need of improvement?

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4 Bulletin 52 studies the whole question of reconciliation and forgiveness in the Church, including the bishop's role as chief reconciler in the diocese.

5 Bulletin 51, Christian Initiation, studies this process and the role of the bishop in it. See also Christian Initiation of Adults: this study text is available from CCCB Publications Service. See also Bulletin 64, Christian Initiation: Into Full Communion.
Electing a bishop: The Latin word elect simply means to choose; it does not necessarily imply popular balloting. At present, the Holy See chooses ("elects") a new bishop for a diocese, usually from a list of names suggested by other bishops; sometimes other members of the local Church have been encouraged to suggest appropriate names. In the past two decades, some Canadian dioceses have been consulted about the type of person they felt was needed as bishop in their situation.

Before we start planning nominating conventions along the lines of current political leadership races, we need to give sensitive, prayerful consideration to the meaning and role of the bishop in the local, national, and universal Church today.

Triumphalism rejected: It has been a while, thank God, since bishops were considered to be princes who lived in palaces. Episcopal vesture and insignia have been simplified. In North America, the sound pastoral trend has been to call the chief shepherd "bishop," and to avoid the more florid Latin embellishments of another culture. One might still wonder, however, if personal coats of arms and mottoes would not also seem to be unnecessary leftovers from the feudal days of bishop-princes. By his example and style of life, each bishop is to lead his people closer to the ideals preached by Jesus.

Pastoral councils: One of the great insights of Pope John XXIII was that of subsidiarity: each person in the Church is to do his or her own job at his or her own level; those who lead others are not to usurp the functions of those they lead. The idea of pastoral councils to assist the bishop, and a similar council in each parish to work with the pastor, is hinted at in the Constitution on the Church, nos. 27 and 37. It is highly recommended by the Directory, no. 204.

A pastoral council in a diocese needs to have a firm foundation in the experience of parish councils: in your diocese, are there parishes where the parish council has not been established yet? or where it is defunct or faltering? Why? Until balanced parish councils are the norm, it is too soon to hope for a successful diocesan pastoral council. What about pastoral councils at a regional, provincial, or national level? Again, to be successful, these need to be founded by dioceses that have functioning pastoral councils.

This is not said as an excuse for delaying action, but as an encouragement to promote better councils at all levels.

Praying for the Bishop

While on the way to martyrdom in Rome around the year 110, Bishop Ignatius of Antioch continued to express the Church's tradition that the eucharist is to be celebrated by the bishop or by a presbyter in union with the bishop. The local bishop is the source of unity with the universal Church; to turn away from him or to go "underground" is to take the first practical step toward schism; and an underground church is already in its grave.

All members of the diocesan family pray for their bishop. During the eucharistic prayer of every Mass celebrated in the diocese, the bishop's name is mentioned as the chief shepherd of the community. This is more than a courtesy or an honor:

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6 This principle is also expressed in the Constitution on the liturgy, no. 28.
it is a strong profession of faith in his unifying role, and has been so down through the centuries. The Church's prayer for pope and bishop needs to be offered, understood, and meant by all.

In the prayer of the faithful, the first petition is normally for the people of God. When we prepare this prayer, we should not forget those whom the Spirit has appointed to lead the Church: we need to pray for our pope, and for our bishop and all his ministers.

On special occasions, such as the anniversary of the bishop's episcopal ordination or of the day he came to serve the people of this diocese, the people of every parish are invited to make a special remembrance of the bishop in its Masses and prayers.

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Helpful reading:


*A study in diocesan ministry*, in Bulletin 81, pages 211-225.


Prayer for the bishop: See *Sunday Mass Book* (described on the last page in this Bulletin): for the pope, page 1130; when bishop or pope dies, page 1170; see also pages 1302 and 1335.

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*Eternal Father,*

*look with love upon your people.*

*Guide the shepherds you have chosen to lead us,*

*and give them the grace and guidance of your Spirit so that they may bring us to you in the footsteps of Jesus our Lord.*

*Father of glory,*

*we praise you and give you thanks through Christ our savior in the love and unity of your Spirit, now and for ever. Amen!*
MINISTRY OF PRESBYTER

By the end of the first century, the Church had settled into a definitive pattern of local ministry. The bishop (or priest, as he was often called, even into the fourth century) was the president or local head of the believing community. He was seen to be chosen for this position by God, and was assisted by presbyters or elders; during his absence — for example, when he was attending a council or synod, or the ordination of a bishop — a presbyter could preside in his name. Deacons also helped the bishop, particularly in carrying out the works of charity toward the poor and in administering the Church's goods.

For some centuries the Church tended to be centered in cities and towns, and left the country people, the pagani, to themselves. As the Christian population grew, other churches would be established with a presbyter in charge; these churches had no baptismal font, and the bishop continued to preside in his cathedral church over the solemn rites of initiation at the Easter vigil.

The bishop presiding over the eucharist, surrounded by the presbyters and deacons and the people of the community, continues to be the best image of the Church: see Liturgy constitution, no. 41, and General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 74. But as the Liturgy constitution goes on to note, the bishop establishes smaller groupings of the Christian people. Parishes are particularly important, for they continue to present the Church to the world: the pastor presides in the name of the bishop and carries on the bishop's work — as teacher, leader in prayer, and shepherd — among this portion of the Lord's flock.

Teacher, Priest, and Shepherd

The bishop holds these offices (of teaching, leading in worship, and of being shepherd) directly from Christ through ordination as the leader of the local Church. The bishop delegates these duties and responsibilities to presbyters, who carry them out in the name of the bishop. They are his co-workers, his fellow laborers in the vineyard of Christ. As elders of the diocesan Church, they are sent by the bishop to continue his ministry throughout the local Church. While the presbyters' powers are given by God in ordination, their legitimate use always depends on the bishop: presbyters do not act in their own right, but in the name of the diocesan bishop who sends them. This is not downgrading of the role of presbyter, but rather the way the Church includes them in its work, for the bishop is the source of unity and guidance in the pastoral ministry. The presbyters extend the bishop's ministry to each parish and community in the diocese.1

Teacher: Presbyters share in the bishop's ministry of teaching the gospel. Proclaiming the Good News of our salvation in Jesus Christ is the primary duty of the presbyters as the bishop's fellow workers (Ministry and life of priests, no. 4). This section goes on to show how the presbyter is sent to bring the word to believers and unbelievers, sharing the gospel which he first of all lives himself. By his preaching and teaching, he continues the ministry of the word of God. In particular, he helps

1 The decree on the ministry and life of priests was issued on December 7, 1965, at the end of the final session of the Council. See The Documents of Vatican II: introduction by Most Rev. Guilford C. Young, pages 526-531; text, pages 532-576; a response by Dr. John Oliver Nelson, pages 577-579. See also Flannery, Vatican Council II, pages 863-902.
the Christian community to celebrate the sacraments of faith by nourishing God's people with God's word.

In the eucharist, the presbyter presides over the liturgy of the word, and listens and responds personally to all the readings with his people. Then he proclaims God's word in the homily. His Sunday celebration flows out of his pastoral work throughout the week. By his careful and prayerful preparation of the liturgy of the word, in co-operation with members of his liturgy committee, the presbyter is able to give his community the help and guidance they need at this particular moment in their salvation history. (See Bulletin 60, Liturgical Preaching.)

The ordination rite points out in the instruction that the presbyters work with the bishop to carry on the work of Christ the teacher. They are to share his word with all, after first meditating on God's will. They teach God's people by their word and especially by their daily living of the gospel. The public examination of the candidates notes that it is the gospel and the Catholic faith that they proclaim in their ministry of the word, and not any human ideology or faction (Ministry and life of priests, no. 6). The prayer of consecration notes that by their preaching as co-workers of their bishop, presbyters are continuing Christ's command to bring his message to all nations.

The bishop shares his right and duty of preaching with his presbyters. This is normally done by granting them the faculty (permission) to preach the word officially, in his name and in the name of the Church. Each bishop grants this faculty only for his own diocese, and unauthorized persons may not preach in the name of the bishop; persons who attempt to preach without the bishop's permission may be compared to the unknown voice in Jn. 10: 5, 8, or to the misleading voice in Mt. 24: 26.

Priest: Presbyters share in the bishop's ministry of leading God's people in worship and prayer. Despite the popular notion that the bishop is just a "big priest" or one with additional powers, the truth lies in the opposite direction. Christ the high priest calls bishops to share in his priesthood in a special way. Bishops in turn choose other men, persons who show clear signs of a vocation or call from God, to share in the second order of the Christian hierarchy, the presbyterate. They share in the priesthood of Christ and of the bishop to a limited degree, and have the ordinary power — under the bishop's direction and in co-operation with him — of presiding in his name at the celebration of the eucharist and most of the other sacraments.

For centuries, the Church reserved the title of priest for Christ and the bishop, and seems to be moving in this direction once more, while at the same time proclaiming that all Christians are a kingdom of priests, sharing in the priesthood of Jesus Christ.

Does this mean a downgrading of the presbyterate? Or a trend toward saying that everyone is a priest, and that presbyters are no longer necessary? No! But it is a move to see different forms and degrees of participation in the priesthood of Christ in clearer perspective and balance.

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2 Ideas for preparing the liturgy of the word in the Sunday eucharist are suggested in Bulletin 50, especially on pages 243-249; see also Bulletins 56, 71, and 83.
The presbyter shares in Christ's priesthood in a special way, in second place to the bishop's participation in the priesthood of Jesus. The presbyter presides at the eucharist in the name of the bishop. He absolves sinners and reconciles them to the Church and to God in the name of the bishop and with his permission. The presbyter preaches God's word and admits people to baptism in the name of the bishop; on occasion he confirms people with the bishop or in his name. He anoints the sick and brings viaticum to the dying in the name of the bishop. In the name of the bishop, he leads his people in prayer and worship, and encourages them to take a full and active part in the Church's liturgy, for this is the primary and indispensable source of the true spirit of Christ.

These truths are brought out in the Council documents (Ministry and life of priests, no. 5; Liturgy constitution, nos. 42, 11, 14, 18-19), and in the rite of ordination of presbyters in the instruction, examination, and prayer of consecration.

To do their priestly work well, presbyters must join with Christ and their bishop in the work of sanctifying the world. They cannot fulfill the office of priesthood in the rank of presbyter by human efforts and efficiency alone: their lives must reflect the holiness, self-denial, and obedience of Christ. Presbyters promise at ordination to obey their bishop: this obedience reflects Christ's total submission to the will of his Father — and this was the true price of our salvation.

*Holy Thursday:* The present liturgy of the chrism Mass, which is celebrated on Holy Thursday morning or on another occasion shortly before Easter, includes a renewal of commitment by presbyters. The preface for that day (no. 20) is also used in the ordination of presbyters.

**Shepherd and pastor:** Presbyters share in the bishop's ministry of being pastor and shepherd in the local community of faith. The pastoral role of the presbyterate is the one with which we are most familiar. This is the work that has fostered and nourished, protected and spread the faith down through the ages. As pastors and assistants, chaplains and advisors, presbyters have extended the bishop's apostolate among all his people, and have reached out to bring Christ to everyone who is willing to receive him. This pastoral ministry is the real sign of God's love for his people, for he has promised to be our shepherd by giving us shepherds according to his heart, ones who will nourish us with his truth and his teaching (see Jer. 3:15). By this pastoral care, bishops and presbyters carry on the work of Christ the good shepherd among his people.

*The Vatican Council* (see Ministry and life of priests, no. 6) notes that God has given the presbyters spiritual power to build up the body of Christ. In the name of the bishop, they continue the work of Christ the good shepherd. Presbyters have been sent to teach all in the faith, and to lead each individual person to listen to the Spirit, and to develop his or her personal call to love: presbyters seek to help each Christian to attain full maturity in Christ by knowing and following God's will in all things. In this way, presbyters work with their bishop in building up the body of Christ.

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3 See for example Chaucer's description of a good parish priest in *Liturgy of the Hours* (1975, Catholic Book, New York): vol. III, pages 1970-1972; vol. IV, pages 1982-1984. Taken from the prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*, the text portrays a good pastor in the final years of the fourteenth century. (Less edifying pictures of clergy and religious in England are found in other parts of the prologue and the *Tales*. See also the piece by William Langland in *Liturgy of the Hours*, one page before Chaucer's text.)
Like Christ, the presbyter seeks to bring the gospel message to all, especially to the poor and needy, to old and young, to individuals, families, and groups. He seeks to form his people into a true Christian community, centered around the eucharist, and extending through their bishop to full participation in the life of the diocesan and universal Church. The presbyter leads his community of believers to deeper prayer, Christian witness, and works of charity and penance, so that they may build up the body of Christ as it carries on the Lord's work of praise and salvation.

- The ordination rite (in the instruction, examination, and prayer of consecration) points out that the presbyter works among his people in the manner of Jesus the good shepherd: serving instead of being served, seeking out and reconciling those who have gone astray, building up the family of God, leading his people to the Father through Christ, in the Holy Spirit. This work is always done in union with the diocesan bishop, who is the chief pastor of the local Church.

Though the Council documents and ordination rites separate the role of the bishop and presbyter into teacher, priest, and pastor, it must be noted that these are normally combined in most of their activities with the people of God. These roles are distinguished in the documents and rites as a teaching aid, in order to present a fuller outline of their meaning and implication for the Church.

Areas of Concern in Today's Church

With the changes promoted by the Spirit through the Vatican Council,4 the Church is having to face a number of situations. Some of these are described here:

Presbyters and people: Recent years have seen moves from one extreme position to another. In place of the old tendency for Father to be the only one knowing anything about religion, theology, and morality, we observe a trend here and there toward the opposite extreme: We're all priests, so why do we need ordained presbyters? This latter tendency has been strengthened by presbyters who act as though they were no different from the laity, or who invite all members of the congregation to "concelebrate" by saying part or all of the eucharistic prayer together with the presbyter.

As with most situations, the truth lies in the middle. The Council has emphasized that bishops and presbyters are fellow Christians with religious and laity, and that all share a common vocation to holiness and a common baptismal spirituality. But there is still a difference: the clergy have been chosen by God from among their fellows in order to serve them as teachers of the things of God, as leaders in worship and prayer, and as shepherds and fathers in Christ. They have this role by God's free call, not by popular vote or by their own choice alone; yet the Church has always been careful to see that the people they will serve are consulted during their ordination.

It is beneficial to review occasionally the stated purposes of the Second Vatican Council, given in the Constitution on the liturgy, no. 1:

- To help Catholics to live a more intense Christian life;
- To adapt Church practices to the needs of our time;
- To foster whatever builds up Christian unity;
- To make the Church more attractive to all people.

These goals should be seen as governing and influencing all the statements and declarations of the Council, and also the subsequent actions taken by Rome and by episcopal conferences.
Confrontation, group dynamics, or power plays are not the answer to different positions. It is more important for each member of the Church to serve God and others by carrying out the tasks God has given him or her, and by doing them as well as possible. As St. Paul reminds us, we have a variety of gifts, but one Spirit. We are to use the gifts he has showered on us for working together in harmony and for building up the body of Christ, not for weakening it by petty squabbles over who gets the first place in the kingdom.

Presbyteries and ministries: From the early years of the Church, the presbyters and other ministers fulfilled their specific roles. By the early middle ages, however, the presbyters had gradually taken over the tasks of many other ministries, which soon fell into disuse. Today the Church is restoring a variety of ministries, to be filled by many members of the laity. The role of the presbyter is not to do all their work, but to preserve order and unity in the life of the community. By calling forth and co-ordinating the work of many ministries, the presbyter enables the whole Church to benefit from the service rendered by the people in each parish. In this way, the gifts the Spirit has given to all his people are used for building up the body of Christ, the Church.

Presbyterate in other Churches or ecclesial bodies? Several distinct questions are involved here:

Eastern Churches: The Catholic Church accepts that the ministers of the Orthodox Churches are true bishops, presbyters, and deacons (see Decree on ecumenism, nos. 14-18).

Anglican Church: The Council notes that the Anglican Church has “a special place” among the Churches which continue some Catholic traditions and institutions (no. 13). Today a fresh and honest look — one free of politics and face-saving — is needed at the question of Anglican orders. Official studies and consultations are already going ahead in several countries. All need to pray that we will arrive at a truly Christian solution. What does Jesus want?

Other Churches: With Pope John XXIII, the Council emphasized the many things that the Christian Churches hold in common (see nos. 19-24). Several official studies are under way at present between our Church and others. All Christians should continue to ask the Spirit to guide all involved in these meetings, so that true unity will eventually result.

Important statements on mutual recognition of ministries are being produced by responsible representatives of our various Churches: these statements need to be studied and prayed about as important signs of our times. While we can hope and pray, we cannot anticipate the Church’s decision on the validity of others’ orders: but we can ask the Spirit to move all those involved to get the job done well and soon. In the meantime, the Council points out the many things we can do together along the road to unity in Christ (see nos. 5-12). Lord Jesus, make us one! (See Bulletin 78, Ecumenism and Liturgy, for further ideas and discussions.)

We already recognize baptism celebrated by all with proper intentions. Recent ritual books seem to imply that confirmation is celebrated validly in other Churches. Are we now ready to move toward recognition of the orders in other Churches?

5 See Rite of Reception of Baptized Christians into Full Communion with the Catholic Church, no. 8. The text of this rite is included in Bulletin 64, pages 178-183.
Women in the ministry: This serious question for today's Church is discussed in *Women in ministries*, pages 99-100, below.

**Prayer Is Necessary**

Since presbyters are carrying out the work of God among his people, it goes without saying that they need to pray constantly for his help, strength, and guidance to do his will fully, and to avoid the ever-present temptation of accepting or imposing human reactions and feelings as the infallible will of God.

At this point, however, it is also important to stress the responsibility of the entire Church to pray for bishops and presbyters. This is particularly true of the people they are serving. Families and parishes, who are called as members of the Church to be people of prayer,⁶ should continue to pray for their bishops, priests, and other ministers, and ask God to call more young people to serve his people in these ministries. (Suggestions for this type of prayer are contained in *Sunday Mass Book*, pages 1130-1135.)

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**Helpful reading:**


⁶ See Bulletin 44, *People of Prayer*, for a fuller discussion of our common call to prayer. Further suggestions for prayer of praise are offered in Bulletin 49, *Blessed Be God and His Creation*.

**QUESTIONS**

"Stop asking what the sex of a minister ought to be; the question is what is Christian ministry, where has it gone, and why. Stop asking how the Church might better serve the world; the question is how the Church might better serve the imperative of the Gospel, and consequently aid this world in discovering itself made new in the Church itself."

MINISTRY OF DEACON

This ministry, in the Church from the earliest years, has had an up-and-down history. Now that the Church is moving to restore the ministry of deacon to its full vigor, we need to become aware of its tremendous potential for God's people and for the work of the Lord.

In the Early Church

The forerunners of the deacons are seen in Acts 6: 1-6 [please reread this passage now, before continuing this paragraph]. All too human, the Church in Jerusalem — the only Church at that stage — is finding that ideals can soon be shattered. The total sharing of Acts 2: 44-47 begins to founder on the shoals of nationalism and language groups: those who speak Greek complain that the others are neglecting the Greek-speaking widows in the daily passing out of food.

Meeting the need of the moment, the apostles responded in the way that the Church has answered the needs of the times throughout the following generations: We have to pray about this and then choose people to do the job. It is very important to notice how the apostles point out their own priorities: first prayer and the ministry of the word — the task to which they had been appointed — and only then the service of the tables (see Acts 6: 2, 4). While both are important, for them the ministry of the word comes before that of the tables. They take care of the Church's responsibility toward the needy by having the community choose seven men, filled with the Spirit and with wisdom: the apostles appoint them in a time of prayer, and lay their hands on them as a sign of conferring the Spirit and the responsibility of carrying out their task in the community.

In the light of current needs, it is interesting to see how Today's English Version has translated these passages. In Acts 6: 2, the apostles state: “It is not right for us to neglect the preaching of God's word in order to handle finances.” Helped by these new ministers, the apostles can dedicate themselves to their primary task, “prayer and the work of preaching” (Acts 6: 4).

It is important to note, however, that the new helpers do not limit themselves to the ministry of charitable distribution; in Acts 6: 9 — 7: 60, we read of Stephen’s staunch defence of the faith; in Acts 8: 26-40, Philip is sharing the Good News with the Ethiopian official, and after adequate teaching, baptizes him in the name of the Lord Jesus. It is evident that the new helpers, soon to evolve into the ministry of deacons, are not to be limited to the distribution of box lunches; yet concern for the poor has remained part of the work of the deacon down through the centuries and into the present.

Within two decades of our Lord's death and resurrection, we read of deacons (“servants”) active in the ministry of the Church. They are mentioned in the New Testament in Phil. 1: 1, in 1 Tim. 3: 8-13, and in Rom. 16: 1. In the last reference, the word is applied to a woman, Phoebe.

In the Church's History

Deacons are called to serve by close association with the bishop in his ministry to God and his people. From the earliest centuries in the Church, deacons were the ones who visited the sick and supervised the charity of Christian community for the poor and needy. As well, deacons took part in the liturgy of the local Church, assisting the bishop by proclaiming the gospel, by announcing the intentions for community prayer, by collecting the gifts for the poor and for the Church, by bringing communion to the sick, and by making necessary invitations and announcements. Deacons assisted during the Easter sacraments of initiation (see Bulletin 51). Women also served as deacons in the early Church's ministry (see pages 99-100, below).

St. Justin describes the deacons' role in the eucharist at Rome, around 150 AD. After the eucharistic prayer over the bread and wine (mixed with water), the deacons distribute this holy food to all who are present, and bring it to those members of the community who are absent.

Around the year 215, Hippolytus speaks of deacons active in the care of the sick as well as in the liturgical ministry. He also describes the ordination of a deacon. A generation later, in 258, Lawrence the deacon is in charge of the Church's goods for the welfare of the poor of the city of Rome.

Deacons had the care of the sacred books and vessels. Early Christian art portrayed angels vested as deacons: strong, youthful, and vibrant messengers from God were shown in the diaconal robes of service — a far cry from the sweet and weak images of angels we so often find today. (Perhaps as the role of deacon grows in the Church once more, we might find a similar improvement in the portrayal of angels in Christian art.)

After the Roman persecutions ceased and the Church grew, the ministry of deacon gradually became less important. Though history records instances of anointing of the sick celebrated by deacons, the presbyterate gradually absorbed the pastoral and liturgical roles of the deacon and the other ministers. Even today, we find places where the term archdeacon is used by a presbyter of importance in the local Church. Eventually the diaconate became the final stepping stone on the way to presbyteral ordination, and the permanent diaconate disappeared from the life of the Western or Latin Church.

Restored by Vatican II

The Council made the first move toward bringing back the permanent diaconate as a ministry of service (see Church constitution, no. 29). In 1967 and 1972, Pope Paul issued further documents to bring the Council's desire into the Church's daily life.

In the restoration of the permanent diaconate today, the Church is moving back to its early vision of the ministry of deacon — a balanced combination of service to God and his people in the fields of charity, God's word, and liturgy.

The Church is seen clearly only when we acknowledge this combination of worship and service, of liturgy and life: if one were without the other, we would not be following in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus.

Role of the Deacon in the Diocese

As the permanent diaconate is being restored, we must be careful not to limit our vision of its important role in today’s Church.

**Diocesan office:** The deacon is appointed and ordained for the service of God and his people. His primary task is to serve as the bishop directs, and thus build the body of Christ. While he may be appointed to serve in a parish, somewhat in the same way as a presbyter is appointed, the deacon’s responsibility is frequently on a broader, diocesan basis. Some examples may describe the work a deacon may carry out on a diocesan or interparochial basis:

- **Works of charity:** The bishop may appoint a deacon to co-ordinate the Church’s charitable works; to promote the work of the St. Vincent de Paul Society; to organize clothing drives and campaigns to help all in need; to assist in the adoption of children or the provision of foster homes; in times of disaster, he may help to organize programs of relief and the collection of funds. The vision of Mt. 25: 31-46 shows him the vast possibilities in this area of concern.

- **Working with the sick and aged:** A deacon may continue the traditional practice of visiting and praying with the sick, the aged, the shut-ins. He may organize groups to assist the sick and aged, and co-ordinate diocesan works for them. He may instruct and guide lay ministers from various parishes in their program of assisting the sick and bringing them communion. Some theologians speak of the possibility of allowing deacons to celebrate the sacrament of the anointing of the sick, as at times in the past; more discussion and research are needed here.

- **Youth work:** A deacon may promote various forms of youth organizations in the parishes and schools of the diocese; he may assist those already active in these movements by specialized training and resources. Deacons may assist in leading retreats, in developing apostolic groups of young people, and in bringing them more fully into the life and prayer of the diocesan Church.

The deacon may also help others to benefit from the witness given by the sick and by young persons (see *Many possibilities of service*, pages 115-119, below).

- **Sacramental preparation:** The bishop could ask some deacons to assist parishes in preparing people for the sacraments, and in deepening their sacramental life. Deacons can organize marriage preparation courses, work with parents and parish teams in preparing for the sacraments of initiation. Similar work needs to be done in helping people to live the sacraments they have already received.

- **Counselling:** Especially when professionally trained for the task, the deacon may serve as a counsellor to individuals and families in need of guidance. People in distress need someone to listen to them, to help them along the road to balance and peace once more. Deacons serving in such a role could be of assistance to people from all parts of the diocese or deanery.

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• Liturgy: For every Christian, the Sunday liturgy summarizes the praise offered by a week lived in the service and love of the Lord. Liturgy and life reflect and affect each other. The deacon's concern is the care of the poor and the administration of the Church's goods. This is reflected in his role of announcing the intentions in the general intercessions, and as he accepts the gifts and prepares them for the altar. Other tasks performed by the deacon are the proclamation of the gospel, and sometimes the giving of the homily, and the invitations and announcements to the assembled people. In these ways, the deacon assists the bishop (or the presbyter who stands in for the bishop — see Liturgy constitution, no. 42).

The deacon may also celebrate baptism solemnly and preside at weddings and funerals. He distributes communion and brings viaticum to the dying, and may lead the community in liturgical prayer (Constitution on the Church, no. 29).

There is no dichotomy between the varying roles of the deacon. He is ordained for community service, both in its daily life and in its worship. Whether working in the ministry full or part time, whether in a special ministry or in a parish, the deacon is called by the bishop to work with him for the people of God in the diocese.

The restoration of the diaconate is part of the Church's restoration of the ministries to their full value. The full image of the Church is described in the Constitution on the liturgy (no. 41): the bishop, surrounded by his presbyters, assisted by his deacons and other ministers, in the midst of the people of God, celebrating the eucharist together.

* * *

A prayer that may be said for deacons:

Blessed are you, Lord God, Master of the universe:
you have made us to be your holy people,
serving you in holiness and love.
We praise you for raising up many persons
to serve you and your Church in the diaconal ministry.

Bless your deacons and guide them in their work of service.
Teach them to follow the footsteps of your Son,
the suffering servant of God and his people,
so that they may lead us all closer to you.

All praise and glory is yours, Father,
through your Son and servant, Jesus our Lord,
in the love and unity of your Holy Spirit,
now, always and for ever. Amen!

PRESENCE

In all places where there are people who suffer, the Church means to be present. (Pope Paul VI)
MINISTRIES OF READER AND ACOLYTE

On August 15, 1972, Pope Paul VI followed up the Vatican Council reforms by making important and far-reaching changes in the ministries of the Latin Church. Among these changes:

- The subdiaconate, the minor orders (porter, lector, exorcist, and acolyte), and first tonsure are abolished.

- New ministries of reader and acolyte are established; they are open to lay persons, but are restricted at this time to men (see Women in ministries, on pages 99-100, below).

- Bishops and major religious superiors may institute people in these ministries.

- These ministries require the firm intention of serving God and his people.

- Entrance into the clerical state replaces tonsure, and takes place in relationship to candidacy for the diaconate; those going on to diaconate or presbyterate are to be instituted as readers and acolytes along the way.

- Episcopal conferences may ask the Holy See to let them establish new ministries, such as porter, exorcist, catechist, and others for people devoted to works of charity.

Ministry of Reader

Readers are an ancient ministry in the Church. Justin the Martyr mentions them in his description of the Sunday liturgy in Rome about 150 AD. In the Latin Church, readers were one of the minor orders until 1972, when the new lay ministry of reader replaced them.

Role: The reader is to proclaim God's word in the midst of his people when they assemble for liturgy (eucharist, sacraments, liturgy of the hours, other rites). The reader reads the first two lessons, from the Old and New Testaments: the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 71, notes that where there are two readers present, each should read one lesson; where others of higher rank are present, they are not to usurp the reader's role of proclaiming the word (GI, no. 66). The reader does not read the gospel, which is reserved for the deacon. (Other references are given in GI, nos. 148-152.)

Other duties of the reader include:

- When there is no cantor to lead in the singing of the psalm, the reader sings or says it, and the people answer with the refrain.

- When there is no deacon or cantor to do it, the reader states the community intentions in the prayer of the faithful.

1 GI: See General Instruction of the Roman Missal. This is a pastoral instruction and explanation of the rites of the Mass, and is contained in the beginning of the sacramentary (pages 11-54 in the 1974 Canadian edition). See also New Introductions to the Sacramentary and Lectionary (1982, CCCB, Ottawa K1N 7B1).
• Directing the community in singing and other forms of participation.

• Preparing the people by instruction to receive the sacraments well.

• When necessary, preparing other members of the community who are temporarily appointed to read the scripture lessons at Mass and in other liturgical functions.

In order to carry out this work well, the reader is to pray and reflect carefully on God’s word, and so develop a warm and living love for the scriptures (see Liturgy constitution, no. 24).

Assessment of the reader’s role: Several criticisms may be made of this ministry as it is presently described:

• The role seems to be a grab bag for leftovers, especially for communities that have not organized their liturgies very well.

• This ministry certainly confuses the role of the lay readers who serve in almost every parish in the land; to state that instituted readers prepare “temporary readers” does not clear up the issue — firm action is needed in each country if we are to spell out these matters more clearly. (See Bulletin 76, pages 220-222.)

• A further and more serious criticism is the restriction of the ministry to men alone; the fact that some hierarchies are simply boycotting this ministry until the restriction is lifted is noted on page 99, below.

• On the positive side, however, it may be said that the Church is giving us an ideal toward which we are to aim. People who commit themselves to serving God by serving his people gathered in liturgy are needed in every believing community.

Readers in our parishés: The rest of this section speaks of the readers who serve at present in our parishes. Their present form of service needs conscious guidance if it is to develop into the fully recognized ministry of reader.

In the past decade, most parishes and communities have had people “doing” the readings, especially at the Masses on Sundays. Now we need to take a further look at the service they are carrying out in the Church’s liturgy.

• Important role: These persons carry out an important ministry in the liturgy. When they proclaim one of the first two readings, it is God who is speaking to his people.

• Responsibility: By their manner of reading and by their life, readers are obliged to proclaim the word of God in such a way that God can be heard: they must be careful that nothing they do causes people to reject or neglect the Lord’s message. Put in a more positive way, readers should reinforce the word of God by their life as well as by their proclamation.

• Careful preparation of the readings is always necessary. Suggestions for this are outlined in Bulletin 50, Reading God’s Word: The Lectionary, especially on pages 243-249. See also the Introduction to Lectionary for Mass — Sundays and Solemnities — Study Edition (1978, CCCB, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1): pages xi-xviii.
Dignity: In discussing various liturgical ministries (Liturgy constitution, no. 29), the Council Fathers ask ministers to carry out their office with piety and dignity; these qualities are required both by the nature of their work and by the expectations of the people of God.

Spirit and training: To do their ministry in this way, readers need to be filled with the spirit of the liturgy. They are also to be given adequate training2 so that they may serve as well as possible.

Ceremony: Worthy celebration expresses and deepens faith; poor celebration weakens faith. When carried out in a spirit of faith and in accord with the principles of liturgy, good ceremonial can add to the spirit of celebration. The reader’s ceremonies include carrying the book in the opening and closing processions (see Bulletin 46, pages 310-312), and moving to and from the lectern.

Voice: The reader should read in a way that is suitable to the text, the audience, and the place of celebration [see Bulletin 40, pages 201 (no. 17), 239-242; also GI, no. 18].

No confusion of roles: Care needs to be taken so that the reader does not submerge his or her primary ministry in a welter of other activities, including announcer, song leader, psalmist, traffic director, and other miscellaneous diversions. The reader’s main task is to read one reading, and to do this as well as possible. Everything else should be left to other ministers.

A work of faith: The readers’ task is to share the word of God by their faith, by their reading, and by their life. To do this, they need the help of all the members of the faith community, who listen to them; they require guidance from the presbyter who serves as pastor of this part of the flock; the readers should be assisted by the parish liturgy committee; they need the support and recognition of the bishop who presides over all liturgical activity in the diocese.

An outline of a rite for publicly naming adults to act as readers in community worship is given at the end of this article.

*   *   *

What is your parish doing to help readers carry out their important role? What has been done in the past year to recruit new readers, especially women in places where they have not read before? to retire ones who have done their duty or who cannot do it well? to deepen the faith and the ability of the present group of readers? What are your plans for this year and next? Now is the time to be making them!

Ministry of Acolyte

Role: The primary role of the acolyte is to serve at the altar and to assist the deacon and presbyter, particularly during Mass. Acolytes also distribute communion when necessary. (See G1, nos. 65, 142-147.)

Other duties include:

• Public exposition and reposition of the blessed sacrament, when no bishop, presbyter, or deacon is available. Acolytes may not give benediction. (See Bulletin 69, Eucharistic Devotions.)

• Instructing those who are “temporarily appointed” to carry the sacramentary, processional cross, candles, or to do other similar duties.

In order to carry out this work well, acolytes must try to learn more about liturgy and especially seek to be filled with its spirit. They are to offer themselves daily to God, and to take part in the Mass with growing piety. Their decorum in church and during liturgical celebrations is to be a model for all. Acolytes are to deepen their love for all God’s people, but especially those who are poor, weak, or sickly.

Assessment of the acolyte’s role: Several observations may be offered:

• The role is more clearly unified than that of reader. The acolyte’s functions center around preparation for and participation in the eucharist, and in helping others to take part more fully.

• The acolyte’s responsibility toward the sick and the weak needs further development. Certainly this includes communion for the sick — a role shared already by bishop, presbyter, deacon, and lay minister of communion. Instead of finding this confusing, however, we should see this as the Church’s traditional strong emphasis on total care for the sick and weak: see Ministering to the sick and aged, pages 111-114, below.

• The vague reference to others who are temporarily appointed for specific tasks in the liturgy does not really clarify the position of servers. This is discussed in the following paragraphs.

What about young servers? The apostolic letter requires episcopal conferences to determine the age and other qualities of candidates for the ministry of acolytes. From some of the duties (giving communion, exposition of the blessed sacrament, teaching others), it is evident that the ministry is not intended for children or youths in high school. Two questions need to be discussed:

• What is the Church aiming at? It is evident that the Church is leading us toward an adult ministry. In many civic jurisdictions, the age of majority is 18; perhaps this could be a good minimum age to consider as a norm. Lay adults who are ready to commit themselves in a stable way to the service of God and his people through this liturgical ministry can offer much to the Church. By this ministry the Church is seeking to add dignity and decorum to its liturgy (see Liturgy constitution, no. 29).
What about our present servers? It is not evident what the Church is suggesting here. Are we to phase out our present altar girls and altar boys? Many will defend the value of having children and youths acting as servers, at least at some Masses and celebrations. This opportunity helps them to develop their devotion, their spirit of generous service, and has led many to answer the call to further service in the Church and the community. No one can deny these values.

On the other hand, we see servers in many parishes tending to "quit the altar" as they finish elementary school, as though serving Mass did not go together with their new status as high school students. And other communities have invited children to serve before they have made their first communion.

While we are working toward having more adults take on the serious role of acolyte, what are we to do about present and future servers? There seems to be no simple or quick answer to this. It is a point for serious and frequent discussion by parish liturgy committees and diocesan commissions. Perhaps gradually we can arrive at an acceptable solution: hasty action is certainly not an answer.

An outline of a rite for publicly inviting adults to act as servers in community worship is given below. A simpler form for installing adult servers is given in *A Book of Blessings* (1981, CCCB, Ottawa K1N 7B1), pages 80, 85, and 90.

An Interim Rite

Until the Church has opened the ministries of acolyte and reader to adult women, our bishops recommend that the official ritual for installing these ministers should not be used. Instead, the following procedure is suggested as a good preparation and gradual move toward the use of the official rites:

**Preparation:** A period of preparation, involving training and spiritual formation is necessary. An understanding of the Church and its mission, of worship and liturgy, needs to be developed, and candidates have to deepen their prayer life over a period of time. Several lectures or brief courses cannot impart this: it needs personal guidance and gradual growth, which take time. Practice in practical Christian service is desirable for future ministers.

**Celebration:** Normally, the rite would be celebrated during the eucharist, in order to emphasize the close relationship of these ministries and all Christian service with the eucharist.4

**Day:** Our Church in North America has a tendency to overload Sunday, as though it were the only possible time to do anything ecclesiastical. It might be better to celebrate these interim rites during the week, perhaps at an evening Mass; in this way, it may be possible to use appropriate readings. On the Lord's day, the assigned Sunday texts are better used, in accord with the general principles of liturgy.5

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3 It seems anomalous to question the idea of girls as Mass servers at the same time that we are working to open greater ministries to women: see Bulletin 76, pages 226-227.

4 See Liturgy constitution, no. 10; Ministry and life of priests, no. 5. These two sections should be read together.

5 See Liturgy constitution, no. 106; *Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy — Liturgical Calendar*, pastoral note 1.
• **Homily:** At Mass, the rite follows the liturgy of the word. At the end of the homily, the presiding bishop or presbyter speaks for a moment or two to the congregation about the role of readers (or acolytes) in the community's life and worship. Then he speaks briefly to the candidates about the responsibilities they are taking on.

• **Prayer:** The president invites the members of the community to pray with him in silence for the candidates. After some moments of silent prayer, he says a suitable prayer in these or similar words:

**For readers:**

*Blessed are you, Lord God,*
*creator of the universe and Father of all:*  
you have called us to serve you and praise you  
in the family of your Church.

*Look with mercy on these men and women*  
who are prepared to proclaim your word  
and to lead your people closer to your teaching.  
*Bless + them,* and purify their hearts this day  
so that they may always live what they proclaim.  
Through their words and example,  
deepen the faith and love of your Church,  
and bring us to share in your unending joy in heaven.

*We praise you and thank you, Father,*  
in the name of Jesus your Son  
and in the love of your Holy Spirit,  
*God of glory for ever and ever.*

*All answer:*  
*Amen!*

**For adult servers:**

*All praise and glory are yours, almighty Father:*  
you have sent your Son to be your suffering servant,  
and through him you call us to serve you in your Church.

*Look with love upon these men and women,*  
and *bless + them* with the Spirit of reverent service.  
Guide them in their tasks about your altar,  
so that they may lead your people to worship  
in a spirit of faith and love.

*Father,*  
we give you our praise and thanks  
through Jesus Christ, your Son and our Lord,  
in the unity of your Spirit of truth,  
*now and always, for ever and ever.*

*All answer:*  
*Amen!*

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○ Conferring the office: The president gives each candidate an appropriate symbol of his or her new role in the worship of the community. The formulas and symbols may be adapted as required. These symbols may be explained to the community at an appropriate moment.

— For readers: The pastor or bishop presents the lectionary used in Sunday worship to each of the candidates:

    *John Smith,*  
    *this is the word of God.*  
    *Be worthy of the message you proclaim*  
    *among the people that God has called his own,*  
    *and build up the body of Christ.*  

The reader may answer: *Amen!*

Then other members of the parish may present individual symbols in silence. For example, a representative of the parish council may present a scroll or certificate; one of the liturgy committee members may give a personal copy of a bible, New Testament, concordance, or commentary to the new reader.

— For adult servers: The president presents a lighted acolyte’s candle, processional cross, or bread and wine to each candidate:

    *Mary Jones,*  
    *this is a sign of your service at the altar.*  
    *Be worthy of the task you carry out*  
    *in the assembly of God’s people of prayer,*  
    *and build up the body of Christ.*  

The adult server may answer: *Amen!*

At this point, a member of the parish council may present a scroll or certificate. A representative of the liturgy committee may present a copy of *Sunday Mass Book,* a commentary on the Mass, or another book about the liturgy and prayer. These presentations are best made in silence.

○ *Mass continues* with the preparation of the gifts. Some of the newly recognized servers may assist the president. All members of the community are invited to receive communion under both forms. A suitable form of the solemn blessing may be developed.

○ *After Mass,* it is fitting to invite the community to continue the spirit of the occasion by an informal gathering for coffee and donuts in the parish hall.

○ *Outside Mass:* If the celebration has to take place outside the eucharist, it consists of an opening hymn and prayer; liturgy of the word, with sung responsorial psalm and gospel acclamation; the rite, as described above; the Lord’s prayer, preferably sung; blessing of the new ministers and of the community; informal gathering in the parish hall after the service.
Other Notes

Time limit: Service to God and the Church in one of these ministries should be seen as a firm and stable commitment. It is not for life, however. Many persons today are recommending that after a suitable time of training, the period of service be specified as two or three years. At the end of this period, a person could take a brief period of retraining and rededication, and renew his or her commitment for another similar period. A minister who feels unable to carry on with this work could retire gracefully with the prayers and thanks of the worshipping community. (See also Bulletin 81, page 213; ideas for a retirement ceremony are given in A Book of Blessings, pages 94-95.)

The time limit should be clearly noted in the certificate presented at the ceremony: John Smith is called on to serve in this community of St. John’s parish for a period of two years, from this date until March 15, 1988.

Persons who later turn out to be unsuitable (in talents or in witness) are to be retired firmly but with thanks: it is not right to inflict a poor reader on a community for years just to avoid hurting his or her feelings.

Limitation of place: The Church has always insisted that the bishop be in charge of authentic eucharistic worship; pastors are sent by the bishop to extend his pastoral care and leadership in prayer to each of the parishes in the diocesan family (see Liturgy constitution, nos. 41-42).

Readers and acolytes who are set up by the rites described above are called to service in their own parish. If they move to another parish in the same diocese, their new pastor could accept them in the same role. If they move to another diocese, their pastor or bishop could request that their training and experience in ministry be accepted, but the decision is left to their new bishop and pastor.

Similar conditions would exist for officially instituted ministers. It is to be hoped, however, that by that time conditions for transfers would be worked out by the episcopal conference so that all may benefit. In a country where the average family moves once in every three to four years, some thought needs to be given to the effect of such moves on those who undertake ministry in the Church. (See Bulletin 81, page 213.)

Suitable readings for use during the period of preparation, for services of the word, and for times of rededication are suggested in the pontifical.⁶ These texts may also be used profitably by anyone who wishes to pray or study about these ministries in the Church of God.

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LAY MINISTERS OF COMMUNION

In the early centuries of the Church’s life, it was common to entrust the eucharist to lay persons. Hippolytus describes the practice, current in his time, of reserving the eucharist in one’s home, so that a person could take communion daily. With the development of minor orders and the gradual falling off from frequent communion, these practices fell into disuse. Since the ninth century, the priest has been the only minister of communion in most cases.

The reforms of Vatican II led to the development of new ministries. On June 7, 1969, the Holy See granted the bishops of Canada the faculty to permit lay persons to act as ministers of communion in certain circumstances. This permission was modified in 1973, and extended to the whole Roman Church.¹

Three Situations

There are three sets of circumstances where the Church uses auxiliary or extraordinary ministers to distribute communion:

Communion in large assemblies: As people have grown in their participation in the Mass, the number of communions has increased greatly. Rather than having a prolonged period of communion, the Church is encouraging the use of lay ministers to distribute communion under either form during Mass.

Communion for the sick: When only priests and deacons could bring communion to the sick, it was difficult for them to come often; it was rare indeed that they could come on Sundays and feast days. Now the Church desires that the sick be given communion frequently, even daily, especially during the Easter season. Now other ministers may help the priest by bringing communion to the sick, and free the priest for his other responsibilities toward them: visiting, celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation, and anointing of the sick are also part of the priest’s ministry toward the sick. By bringing communion to the sick and shut-in members of the parish on Sunday, lay ministers make it possible for these people to take a closer part in the community’s worship.

Communities without priests: In communities where the eucharist is reserved and where no priest is available, a lay minister may be appointed to give communion. This situation may happen when the priest is away, or is prevented from carrying out his ministry because of sickness, old age or other pastoral duties.

Full background information, rites, and model prayers for use by lay leaders in these cases are given in Bulletin 79, Sunday Liturgy: When Lay People Preside.

Choosing and Training Ministers

Responsibility: The bishop, who is chief liturgist and high priest of the diocese, is responsible for choosing and designating individuals as ministers of communion. He may permit a priest to appoint a suitable person to act as a minister on a particular occasion.

Who may be chosen? The Roman document of 1973 states that suitable persons are to be chosen in this order: reader, seminarian, male religious, woman religious, catechist, Catholic man or woman; the local ordinary may change this order.

Worthy ministers: These ministers are to be carefully chosen and prepared for this service. The Christian community which they are to serve must also be instructed, so that their ministry may be fully appreciated and lead God's people to great devotion toward the eucharist.

To proclaim God's word in the midst of his people and to minister the eucharist to one's fellow pilgrims are honored offices in the believing community. In choosing and preparing these ministers, the priest should work with and consult the parish council and the liturgy committee. Their goal should be to enlist Christians who have the respect of the worshipping community. They should look for persons of faith whose lives conform to the meaning of the service they are asked to undertake. It is most important to choose adults only; children should not be asked to carry out this ministry of giving communion, even among their schoolmates.

The persons appointed as ministers should never be ones whose selection may cause scandal among the faithful. They should be properly instructed, and should distinguish themselves by their Christian life. They should deepen their devotion to the eucharist, and by their piety and reverence for this sacrament, be examples for others.

Preparation: In preparing persons for this ministry, it would be good to help them to grow in a number of areas of Christian living: in their understanding of the eucharist, of ministry and service in the Church. It is important for them to realize the need of good celebration as a sign and occasion of faith. The candidates should also be instructed in the ways of giving communion, and in the manner of celebrating when they bring communion to the sick. Personal prayer, scripture reading and witness are necessary in anyone who seeks to be a worthy minister of the Church.

Installation: Rites for commissioning or installing ministers of communion are given in Bulletin 66, pages 301-308; and in A Book of Blessings, pages 80 and 86-88.

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By making it possible for lay persons to serve as ministers of communion, the Church is providing an opportunity for many individuals to take a more active role in the ministry to others.

All parishioners should be encouraged to pray for all who serve them in any way, and to ask God to strengthen them and guide them in their ministry.

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Christ has called all people to be holy, to be as perfect and compassionate as our Father in heaven. When a young man who kept the commandments said he wanted to be perfect, Jesus invited him to sell all his possessions, give the money to the poor, and follow him (Lk. 18: 18-30).

Through all the ages, Christians have sought to follow Christ in this way. As early as the third and fourth centuries, individuals went to the desert to be hermits; then communities formed around holy men such as Anthony (Jan. 17). Though at first some went to the desert to flee from the world, gradually a more balanced perspective emerged. Monasticism developed first in the East under saints like Basil (Jan. 2), and gradually spread to the West. Augustine (Aug. 28) gathered religious around his cathedral in Hippo. St. Benedict (July 21) developed his rule, which has influenced monasticism and religious life since the sixth century.

The Benedictine rule gives an important place to the liturgy of the hours in the life of the community. During the early middle ages, the Benedictines spread the Christian faith and Western culture throughout Europe. St. Augustine of Canterbury (May 27) was sent by Pope Gregory the Great to England. St. Boniface (June 5), the apostle of Germany, was a Benedictine, as were Bede (May 25) and Anselm (Apr. 21). A reform movement among Benedictines led to the establishment of the Cistercians; Bernard of Clairvaux (Aug. 20) was a member of this order in the early twelfth century.

During the past 1,000 years, new religious orders were established to go out and bring the gospel to people in their own communities. Mendicant orders — men whose labors were not confined to specific monasteries — were developed in the thirteenth century by Dominic (Aug. 8) and Francis of Assisi (Oct. 4); Carmelites and Augustinians were also founded at this time. Among ardent reformers of the Church's life were Teresa of Avila (Oct. 15) and Catherine of Siena (Apr. 29). In the sixteenth century, Ignatius of Loyola (July 31) founded the Jesuits.

The past four centuries have seen many developments and adaptations. St. Vincent de Paul (Sept. 27) founded the first of the modern orders of sisters, able to move about more freely in their apostolic works. St. John the Baptist de la Salle (Apr. 7) established the Christian Brothers to teach the poor. St. Alphonsus Liguori (Aug. 1) was the founder of the Redemptorists, and led many people to a renewed use of the sacrament of penance or reconciliation.

Among religious communities of men, some have all their members ordained as presbyters; others prefer to be brothers; some communities have both.

Several new religious communities have been founded in Canada: the Notre Dame sisters by Blessed Marguerite Bourgeoys (Jan. 12); the Grey Nuns (Sisters of the Holy Cross) by Blessed Marguerite d'Youville (Oct. 16); others include the Precious Blood Sisters, Sisters of Service, Our Lady's Missionaries, Scarborough Foreign Missionaries, and a number of secular institutes.
Active Ministries

Religious are members of the Church who have responded to a particular call or vocation from God. They are chosen by him to give special witness of holiness, prayer, and apostolic works. (See Constitution on the Church, nos. 43-47; also Decree on the adaptation and renewal of religious life.)

Holiness: The people of God are called to be as holy as God is holy. Led by the Spirit, religious strive to respond to this call more fully. Their vows of obedience, poverty, and chastity free them to become more holy in God's sight, and to deepen their love for his people by greater freedom to serve others.

Prayer: We are all called to share in Christ's priesthood and to be people of prayer. By taking this as an official part of their life's work, religious pray for the world, and give example and guidance to others who want to grow in their prayer life. Some communities make public prayer one of their main works: Benedictines ("Pray and work" was St. Benedict's motto), and Trappists, contemplative orders and congregations. Others concentrate on more active apostolates, but keep prayer as an important aspect of their lives.

Apostolic works: Most religious communities share in the Church's work by teaching, by caring for children in orphanages or day nurseries, by looking after the sick and the aged, or by pastoral work. Some look after specific groups, such as immigrants.

Many congregations carry out missionary work. In Canada, the faith was planted by Jesuit missioners, including St. Jean de Brébeuf and the other martyrs (Oct. 19); by Oblates [their founder, Bishop Eugène de Mazenod (May 21), was beatified in 1975]; and by members of many other communities. Early in the days of Spanish America, Franciscans such as Junipero Serra preached the gospel in present-day California.

Their widespread membership and variety of works often provide religious communities with insights into new needs and apostolates in today's Church; in this way, they are able to react early to changes, and to help the Church move in new and necessary directions.

Under the Bishop's Leadership

Though most religious communities extend far beyond the boundaries of a single diocese — indeed, many are worldwide in their scope — their particular apostolates are exercised under the leadership of a particular bishop in a specific diocese. Each religious house, school, hospital, or mission is established within a diocese, and with the permission or invitation of the local bishop. Without restricting their zeal or charisms, the bishop co-ordinates their work with that of the local Church.

In this way, the Church is able to harmonize the work of all its members, and thus ensure that all within each diocese are able to work together for the building up of the body of Christ. Over the centuries, canon law has developed many checks and balances to make sure that the rights of all are preserved, while at the same time making certain that the work of God continues as the primary purpose of both diocesan and religious structures.
Witnesses of Holiness

The Second Vatican Council has reminded us all that the Church, as God's people, is called to holiness. Religious are part of the Church, and have a special role as witnesses of holiness among us. Even their habit or garb is to be seen as a public witness of their following in the footsteps of Christ. Religious are Christians who are living out the commitment of their baptism in the fullest way. They are not called to a new way of life as much as they are to the fullness of their Christian initiation.

By their prayer, their lives, and their works, religious are called to show forth the holiness of Christ, so that others may see their good deeds and be drawn to give praise to our Father in heaven (see Mt. 5: 13-16).

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Vocations: Every member of the Church shares in a common Christian vocation, to be a follower of Christ. More specific vocations — to be a parent, a single person, a priest, brother, or sister — also come from God. He has given each of us special gifts and charisms for use in building up his Church; by our vocation, he invites us to take up his work in the way he knows we can best serve him and his people. Rather than “competing for vocations” in this field or that, we should all be praying to God to call many people to his service in the harvest.

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By centuries of working for the glory of God and the salvation of his people, religious communities have continued the ideals of Christ in a constant and evident way, and have drawn many blessings on the entire Church by their dedication to ministry.

Helpful reading:


Many other helpful publications are available in English or French from the Canadian Religious Conference, 324 Laurier Ave. East, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6P6.

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TOWARD NEW MINISTRIES

WOMEN IN MINISTRIES

St. Paul stated very clearly that baptism makes us members of the Church, where differences of nationality, gender, or social status do not count: we are one in Christ (see Gal. 3: 26-28). The Second Vatican Council brought this truth back into modern Church life by stating that discrimination based on sex, color, race, language, religious belief, or social condition is against God’s will. A woman, it states, is not to be denied the right to enter a state of life equal to those which are recognized for men (Pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world, no. 29; see also no. 9; Constitution on the Church, no. 32).

A growing personalism in civil society is reflected in the Church today, much more since the Vatican Council opened the way to a Church ready to acknowledge the signs of our times. One of these current trends has been to a fresh awareness of the important role of women within the people of God. In international synods and other arenas, the Canadian Church has taken a strong and forward-looking approach to the role of women in the Church. A moderate look at the question could move in this manner:

General work of the Church: Both men and women have been active in the work of the Church in North America. This is true of parish organizations and wider groupings. Reflecting our society in general, however, these organizations have often tended to be for men only or for women only. Mixed groupings do exist, especially in parish councils and their committees — a relatively new level of organization that is trying to reflect today’s needs and insights in the life of the Church.

Ministries to youth, and to the sick and aged: While more women than men are active in these areas of service, few restrictions or limitations seem to arise from narrow attitudes toward gender.

Ministries of acolyte and reader: Despite other general statements, official Roman documents limit the institution of readers and acolytes — new ministries set up in 1972 — to men. It is rather interesting and refreshing to note that the hierarchies of several countries have declined to implement these ministries until this restriction is removed, and they have indicated this to Rome. Canada is one of these countries. One may hazard a guess that some time will be needed to save face in this matter, but that eventual change cannot fail to take place. One might ask, however: Why do we have to waste years? Doesn’t anyone consider the higher needs of the people of God?

North American practice, it is interesting to note, has moved strongly toward equality for women as readers, and — at least in some places — as servers. These are first steps on the way to understanding the fact that we become full members of the Church by the sacraments of initiation, without specific reference to the way our parents’ genes, under the providence of God, determined our genitalia, or to the way society and education have shaped our personal psychology. We need to respect the real differences between men and women, and the varying gifts the Spirit gives them, but we do not need to canonize these differences in our ecclesiology.
Auxiliary ministers of communion: Though official documents put lay women in the last possible place after every category of men and religious women, we have to admit that women are able to give communion, and to be recognized officially as ministers of the Church: alleluia! Perhaps the biggest breakthrough in the past 1500 years, this fact makes the restrictions on the ministries of acolyte and reader all the more futile, unnecessary, and meaningless; indeed, such restrictions would seem only to undermine the good sense and the good will of the people of God, and serve to lessen their respect for authority.

Diaconal ministry: In the early centuries of the Church’s life, deacons assisted the bishop in looking after the sick and the poor, and in administering the Church’s goods so that they would be used for the poor and for the support of the clergy; in liturgical functions, deacons served at the bishop’s side, and proclaimed the gospel. Women deacons assisted in the baptism of women, and in other areas of pastoral ministry. As the public baptism of adults declined in the early middle ages, the role of women deacons vanished; in many ways, however, a similar role has been fulfilled for centuries by active orders of religious women.

In today’s Church, we need to study and pray about the ministry of women. Is there a call to women to serve as deacons? Is this limited to helping people in physical need? Should it be extended to spiritual needs? How is such a ministry to be related to that of religious women or of members of secular institutes? How is the ministry of women deacons to be recognized and celebrated in the liturgy of the local Church? These are some questions that the Church needs to study with an open mind.

Women as presbyters? Twenty-five years ago, theology manuals could dismiss this question easily with the comment that it was theologically and traditionally out of the question. While few doubt the fact of the Church’s past practice of using only men in the presbyteral and episcopal ministries,¹ many wonder if past socio-logical situations and structures should limit the present and future ministries of the Church. Uneasy resort to jokes or innuendoes should be dismissed for what they are, and not taken as serious arguments against the possibility of opening the presbyterate to competent women who are called by God to serve in this order. It is a question that the Church needs to study in prayerful seriousness.

Human logic suggests that there is no reason why we should stop this study at the presbyterate. Human emotion and the weight of twenty centuries, however, as well as the need for full study of the above questions first, lead us to hesitate before we go further in this article. Perhaps when we prepare Bulletin 153 in 1996, the people of God will be mature enough to look openly at further developments . . .

Helpful reading:

The Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood/L’admission des femmes au sacerdoce ministériel: Théologie, vol. 9, no. 1 (January 1978, St. Paul University, 223 Main St., Ottawa, Ontario K1S 1C4): see review in Bulletin 64, page 187.


¹ See however The Lady Was a Bishop, by Joan Morris (1973, Macmillan, New York; Collier-Macmillan, Toronto), xii, 192 pages. The author has researched many examples of “The hidden history of women with clerical ordination and the jurisdiction of bishops.” Unfortunately her conclusions often seem to go too far: some of her therefore seem to reflect wishful thinking.
MINISTRY OF LITURGICAL MUSIC

For many centuries the Church has used music and the other arts to enhance and beautify its worship of God. The past eighty years, under the influence of St. Pius X and his successors, have been marked by a gradual return to fuller participation by the people in liturgical singing.

Musicians

The gift of music is one of the many benefits God has showered on human-kind. Music can bring greater joy into life, and may be used to express our feelings as well as to lift them. When used in worship, music increases the dignity and beauty of our community prayer, and helps us to become more involved in what we are doing. The traditional expression, that those who sing are praying twice, continues to be true where music and singing are part of our worship (see GI, no. 19).

Musicians — be they singers, choir leaders, organists, players of other instruments, or composers — have been given a talent to be used for God's glory and for building up his Church. Freely endowed with this special gift, musicians have a responsibility to thank God for it, and to show their gratitude and appreciation for this talent by using it well and often. We can be thankful that so many people do use their God-given gifts in this way for his glory and for the sake of his people.

Some years ago, in the period during and immediately after the Second Vatican Council, there was some confusion in the minds of many. As the members of the congregation were encouraged to take their rightful part in the singing, some choirs and clergymen presumed that there was no longer a role for choirs. In the ensuing decade, however, a more balanced view prevailed. Now musicians and choir members are seen as part of the worshipping community, members of the congregation who help the rest to sing well, and who also provide singing and music in other parts of the celebration. Because they lead the congregation of which they are part, it is preferable for the choir members to be seated in the congregation, near the sanctuary.

Music

Not every song or type of music is fitting in Christian worship. Today, musicians know that music for the liturgy is to be chosen carefully. It must be good music and religious, not secular or trashy or amateur. The music must be played or sung well: anything less it not enough. It must be in accord with liturgical principles, so that it carries out the purpose of the liturgy and does not impede the progress of the rite or distract the worshippers.

Good music: Beginning with the liturgical reforms of the late 1950s and the 1960s, Catholics faced a growing need for music in the vernacular. Many solutions

1 References to music in the decrees and documents of Vatican II are found in the Constitution on liturgy, nos. 112-121, 24, 30, 36; 2; 46, 54, 93.

Other Church documents include the instruction on sacred music and liturgy (Congregation of Rites, Sept. 3, 1958); Instruction on the liturgy (Congregation of Rites, Oct. 16, 1964, nos. 15, 42); Instruction on music in the liturgy (Congregation of Rites, March 5, 1967 — see Bulletin 11); Minimum repertoire of plainchant, (Congregation of Divine Worship, April 1974); Music in Catholic Worship (Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, 1312 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20005).
were tried in those years, some good and some not so good. Some parishes borrowed
dine hymns from other Christian traditions, perhaps with some minor adaptation of
the words. Others took secular tunes and tried to christen them by providing new
words; still others used stage music without attempting to make any changes.

Out of the chaos, however, a new awareness is growing: only good music is
fitting for use in worship. Modern composers are gradually developing music that
can be used well in our liturgy. Once again people are looking back at our Gregorian
heritage, and are realizing that it takes many years to evolve a musical tradition.
Today's good efforts are but a first step along a lengthy road.

In Canada, through the National Council for Liturgy we have a sound basic
collection of suitable music in Catholic Book of Worship II. Across the land, a good
repertoire and treasury of music for worship is gradually being built up.

**Good execution:** To be worthy of use in Christian liturgy, good music needs to
be played and sung well. This demands high standards of training and excellence:
slipshod, easy-going methods are not acceptable. Parishes need to look carefully
at what they allow at present, and ask themselves how much — instead of how
little — they should be spending on training, on the purchase of good hymn books
and sheet music, and on adequate instruments for use in the liturgy. The parish
liturgy is no place for amateurs with good intentions.

**In accord with liturgical principles:** Music cannot be independent of the
liturgy it serves. The pieces chosen aid the people and ministers to carry out their
full roles, and should in no way go counter to good liturgy.

Certain moments of the Mass are more important than others, and should be
celebrated with singing wherever possible. These certainly include the responsorial
psalm and the gospel acclamation, and the three acclamations during the eucharistic
prayer: the Holy, holy, holy Lord, the memorial acclamation, and the great Amen.
It is definitely contrary to the principles of good liturgy for a parish to spend all its
musical efforts on four hymns, or to replace the responsorial psalm constantly with
a hymn, or to neglect to help its people to sing the main moments of acclamation.
Good planning is needed by the liturgy committee to make sure that the parish is
moving in the right direction.

Further guidance on the role of music in the various sacramental rites is being
provided in various ritual books issued since the Council reforms.

**Variety** is also important. In the Sunday Mass, for example, different parts of
the celebration may be handled in different ways. Choir and people may sing the
entrance hymn or Glory to God in unison, or may alternate verses; on occasion the
choir may sing this while the people listen. A cantor may sing the psalm verses
while the people sing the refrain. The choir or cantor may sing the gospel accla-
mation, and the people join in the alleluia. During the preparation of the gifts,
a moment for quiet reflection, the choir may sing while the congregation remains
silent, or all may join together in song; or the organ may play softly; or all may
remain in silent reflection.

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2 We are happy to report that in most parishes, Michael has reached the shore and beached the boat.
Importance of Music in Liturgical Planning

Music plays an important role in the liturgy today. In the Sunday Mass, in celebration of the sacraments, in the liturgy of the hours, in penance celebrations, funerals, special occasions, blessings, and anniversaries, music and singing help to bring out the meaning of various parts of the rite.

In order for the music to carry out its role well, it must be carefully planned. The liturgy committee has the responsibility of working with the musicians of the parish, and of helping them to get adequate training in liturgical principles. In co-operation with the diocesan commission and with other liturgy committees, each parish should be working to provide various training events and workshops during the year. A time for retreat and prayer should also be made available for musicians and choir members each year.

Further guidance in planning the music within the Sunday celebration is offered in the General Instruction at the beginning of the sacramentary, and in Guidelines for music in the Mass, in CBW II, choir edition, nos. 80-103. See also Bulletin 50, pages 246-248, and Bulletin 72, Music in Our Liturgy.

Toward a Ministry of Sacred Music

The ministry of liturgical music is one which is being discussed more frequently in today’s Church. Many people are willingly sharing their God-given talents, honed by years of training and arduous practice.

Benefits: What would a ministry of music mean in today’s Church?

- It would recognize the gifts that God has given to his people, and would help all to appreciate more fully how these gifts contribute to the building up of the body of Christ.

- It would encourage better programs of training and of formation for musicians. Not only would their musical aptitude gain training in liturgical principles, but they would also receive guidance in living a more Christian life. God is not praised by beautiful music if it arises from sin-filled hearts.

- Smaller parishes could benefit from diocesan programs of training and formation.

- A good program of formation would help to deepen the spirit of community service among all ministers of the Church.

First steps: On the way toward the possible development of a ministry of liturgical music, the first steps have to be taken at the diocesan and parish levels. Local programs of training and formation can develop ways of assisting musicians in the community to a fuller appreciation of their important role in the liturgy. Resources can be developed and needs assessed. Parishes can be assisted in judging which aids are worth obtaining, and which should be left aside.

Spiritual guidance can be provided for people involved in the ministry of music. Guidance in prayer life, times for recollection, an understanding of their sharing in the saving mission of the Church — these are some areas where action is needed now.
Musicians make a great contribution to the worship that God's people offer to their heavenly Father. We join with Christ in singing our praise and thanks to God. As high priests of creation, we continue to glorify God in the name of every creature, and to join our voices to those of the angelic choirs. As long as our worship flows from lives dedicated to God's service, our praise is pleasing to him.

* * *

Should there be a specially designated ministry of sacred music in our Church? Before we may answer that question in the affirmative, we must all work harder at helping our musicians to appreciate and develop their role in the liturgy, until music is a normal part of each gathering of God's people for worship and praise.

Helpful reading:

Guidelines for Music in the Mass, in Catholic Book of Worship II, choir edition, nos. 80-103; introductions on the spirit and music of each season are also contained in the choir edition.

* No. 72, Music in Our Liturgy
* Help for diocesan commissions is given in Bulletins 35 and 66. See also A study in diocesan ministry, in Bulletin 81, pages 211-225.
* No. 67, Planning Our Year of Worship
* Nos. 71 and 77, Sunday Eucharist
* No. 83, Steps to Better Liturgy.

Guidelines for Pastoral Liturgy: The annual liturgical calendar issued by the CCCB offers pastoral notes on music and other aspects of the celebrations for the entire liturgical year.

A MORNING PRAYER

_Blessed are you, Lord God, king of all creation: you have made this day and have given it to us so that we might live in your service._

Father, we thank you for your loving care.

Look with love and mercy on your Church around the world. Help your people to be a servant community, walking in the footsteps of Jesus our brother, filled with love for you and for one another. Let our faith and action bring you glory today, and lead other people closer to you.

All praise and glory are yours, Father, through Jesus your servant and your Son, in the communion and love of your Spirit, now and always and for ever more. Amen!
MINISTRY OF CATECHIST

*Catechist. Religion teacher. Teacher of catechism. Professor of religious knowledge, CCD worker.*

Today: There are many titles used in the Church for persons who teach the faith to those who believe. The title of *catechist* covers them all:

- **Parents:** As the first teachers of the faith to their children, parents lead them by personal example, family practice, and by their words to a full, living, joyful grasp of the Christian faith as the following of Christ in love. This task does not cease when children reach a specific age or grade in school. Family celebrations at regular intervals, as suggested by the Canadian catechetical program, will help parents to carry out their responsibility more fully.

- **Pastors:** (used here to include all priests and deacons serving in the parish ministry, full time or part time) catechize the people entrusted to them by the bishop, the chief catechist or teacher of God's word. Catechesis is one aspect of the homily, when the presiding presbyter expounds the mysteries of our faith and helps the community to grasp the principles which guide our Christian life (see Liturgy constitution, no. 52). Basing his teaching on the scriptures and other prayers from the liturgy, the homilist proclaims the wonderful works of our Father in saving his people: he brings out the way in which Jesus Christ redeems us through his saving death and resurrection, and continues to save us today through our participation in the liturgy and through our grace-led efforts to obey his command of love (see Liturgy constitution, no. 35: 3).

Pastors help their people to deepen their faith when they teach them about the Mass, the sacraments, and prayer; when, for example, they help them to grow in their understanding and celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation (see Bulletin 52, *Reconciliation and Forgiveness*). Pastors catechize by their formal teaching (homily, instructions, words of introduction in the liturgy, parish bulletin, school classes, parish and group meetings), and by their informal teaching (actions, words, life style, manner of celebration, priorities) — in short, by the way the Spirit of Christ penetrates their liturgies and their lives.

- **Teachers:** The Church in North America has been blessed by many catechists chosen by the Lord to teach his people. Many religious sisters and brothers, and more lay persons, men and women, have been teaching the faith to children and young people in elementary and high schools, and in weekly CCD or religion classes. Some, such as the Sisters of Service in Western Canada, have carried on catechesis by correspondence courses. Others have used other media to bring Christ's message to life for those who have been baptized.

- **Catechists:** Several current liturgical documents mention the ministry or office of catechist: both the rite for adult initiation and the rite of baptism for children describe the parts played by catechists in the preparation and celebration of Christian initiation.¹

¹ See *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, and *Rite of Baptism of Children*; also Bulletin 73, *Baptizing Children*, and no. 64, *Christian Initiation — Into Full Communion*. These are available from CCCB Publications Service, 90 Parent Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1.
Other ministries: As noted above (Ministries of reader and acolyte), the Council has moved us toward a fuller relationship between liturgy and present-day local customs.

Parents, priests, catechists, and bishops are working individually and together to build the Church community and to teach by their actions as well as by their words.

History: The history of catechesis and catechists in the Christian Church is indeed fascinating. A good treatment of the subject is given in The New Catholic Encyclopedia.² The time spent reading these articles will be profitable, since they help us see that new needs have always demanded new ministries, and new persons to undertake them for Christ and his people.

Role in the Church Today

Role: The work of the catechist is needed more than ever in today's Church. In the catechumenate, catechists help the candidates to move through the stages of their journey toward Christ and the people of God. In other areas of the Church's life, catechists continue to help baptized persons grow in their knowledge and love of Jesus and his Church, encouraging their students to live out their baptismal promises.

What catechists teach is the faith of the Church. The faith has not changed, though our perspectives have. Catechists teach the faith as seen by the Church today, with the values and vision pointed out by Vatican II and by the subsequent teaching of the pope and bishops. This also means the way of life based on the teaching and example of the Lord Jesus — not just a set of noble tenets seen in a vacuum.

Whom do they teach? Catechists teach both children and adults. Though catechesis in North America has been strongly centered on children in school years, today a wider outlook is developing, and adult education is more prominent.

How: Teaching means much more than instructing or the passing on of information. A good teacher or catechist is one who teaches by sharing his or her personal insights and enthusiasm for the subject, as well as by positive attitudes. In catechetics, the faith is more caught than taught. A catechist teaches by example — by words and methodology, by prayer and personal faith, by life style and worship — more than by classroom techniques. As Socrates reminds us, knowledge is not virtue. (See Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, no. 19.)

Relationship to liturgy: After the flurry of the past few years catechists and pastors are beginning to see one of their tasks as leading children to fuller participation in the Church's liturgy. Under the guidance of the Directory on Masses with Children and taking advantage of the special eucharistic prayers,³ catechists are following the rhythm of the Church's liturgical year more closely. Today most


people realize that the Church's liturgy is far superior to anything we can compose on our own.

**Mandate:** Catechists do not teach in their own name alone, but in the name of the Church and the local bishop. Though in many cases the mandate has been presumed by their integration into the local parish, in other cases pastors and bishops are using a public occasion to hand on the mandate.

One Canadian bishop meets with the teachers of his diocese at workshops early in the school year. After helping them to see how they share his role as teacher of God's word, he commissions them to teach in his name during the coming year. He also presents a bible to new teachers, since it is from the word of God that they will be teaching.

Catechists have the personal responsibility of carrying out this task as well as possible, sharing their personal acceptance of Christ with those they teach. As baptized Christians, under the leadership of the bishop and the pastors, catechists share in the work of Christ the teacher. By their witness to the faith in word and deed, catechists teach us to live as the people of God.

**Serious Training and Formation**

We must always take care not to think that techniques and teaching methods can replace faith and Christian living. Only a faith-filled person who lives and prays in Christ can be a true catechist.

Many dioceses and school boards put on courses for catechists to enable them to grow in their understanding of the faith. This is a continuing need in our Church today.

**Formed in Christ:** Some elements need to be included if catechists are to grow in their personal faith and be able to help their students to grow to their full stature in Christ:

- **A vision:** Catechists have to understand the sweep of God's plan for his people (see Eph. 1: 3-10), the all-important place of Christ, his love for us as shown by his saving death and resurrection. They must also realize their part in God's plan for building up the kingdom in the world today.

- **Based on the word:** Catechesis should be founded in the scriptures, interpreted and understood with the guidance of the Church's teaching authority. Catechists should look to their bishop for such help, since they are sharing in his work of teaching God's people.

- **Knowledge and experience:** Catechists need to be helped to become aware of their own experience in the Christian faith as well as learning about the truths of faith. Their task will be to share both their personal experience and their knowledge with their students.

- **People of prayer:** Each catechist is to be a person of prayer, one who lives by God's word. Catechists are to be faithful sons or daughters of God, absorbed in the Church's spirituality. No amount of technique or training can replace this, since the work of teaching, of sharing Christ, must spring from a life filled with his Holy Spirit.
Liturgical insights: Sincere catechists will continue their efforts to grow in their understanding of the Mass, sacraments, liturgy of the hours, liturgical year, blessings, and other aspects of the liturgy. They will seek to live these realities, and to share them with the children in their care. They will pass on the Church’s teaching as it is enshrined in its prayer and worship.

The Canadian catechetical program is designed so that celebrations of the word, including significant gestures and reflective prayer, may conclude each part of the catechesis, and thus lead the children into the liturgy. These celebrations enable the catechist to train the class for participation in the full liturgical life of the Church.

Liturgical resources: Catechists will be aided in their training and in their teaching if they are familiar with liturgical books and have them at hand. Each of the liturgical books provides an introduction and rich rites which a catechist and a class can explore as they study or prepare for each sacrament or for its renewal. These books also provide many aids for celebration with children and with adults. Sunday Mass Book and Catholic Book of Worship II provide other resources for prayer and worship.

An Interim Rite

Until the Church sets up a formal ministry of catechists, dioceses and parishes may wish to use a rite based on the following notes. These apply both to persons presently teaching catechetics and to those who are in training.

Preparation: A period of preparation is necessary, involving both training and spiritual growth. The candidates need to understand the Church and its mission, its life of prayer and worship, and have to grow over a period of time in their own prayer life. A few lectures or a brief course cannot achieve this: personal guidance and gradual growth take time. As well, those preparing to be catechists in the spirit of Christ need to exercise practical Christian service in their community. These points take time, and need to be accompanied by spiritual growth. Every person presently teaching catechetics could also benefit from such a program of formation.

Celebration: To emphasize the close relationship of every ministry of Christian service with the eucharist, this rite may be celebrated during Mass. As noted above in Ministries of reader and acolyte, a weekday Mass might be better. If celebrated on Sunday, a simple rite is desirable.

Another outline with suggested prayers is given in A Book of Blessings (1981, CCCB, Ottawa), pages 79-80 and 83-84.

Homily: At the end of the homily, the presiding bishop or priest speaks to the people briefly on the role of the catechist in the life of the believing community. Then he addresses the candidates for a moment on the responsibilities they are undertaking in the name of the Church.

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4 A free catalogue of current publications, including liturgical books, educational material about liturgy, and booklets on families and faith, may be obtained by writing CCCB Publications, 90 Parent Ave., Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1.

5 The Canadian catechetical program includes a celebration for handing on the books (catechism or New Testament) to children at the beginning of each school year.
Blessed are you, Lord God,
king and ruler of heaven and earth:
through your Son you have brought us salvation,
and in his Holy Spirit,
you lead us to all truth.

In your mercy and love,
help these men and women
who are prepared to help your people to grow in faith.
Give them your + blessing, and cleanse their hearts,
so that they may proclaim your word in their daily lives.
Help them to be men and women of faith and prayer,
guided by your Spirit and filled with your love.
Let them share their faith and love
with their families, their friends, their students,
at home, in the classroom, and in our community.

May their words and their lives
lead your people to stronger faith and love.
Through their work
may your kingdom come among us,
and lead us to serve you each day.

Loving Father,
listen to our prayer,
which we offer through Christ our Lord,
in your Holy Spirit:
all glory to you, one God, for ever and ever.

All answer Amen!

Conferring the office: The president gives each candidate an appropriate symbol of his or her new role in the faith life of the community. The formulas and symbols may be adapted as required. The symbols may be explained briefly to the community at an appropriate moment, or in the parish bulletin.

The president presents a personal copy of the bible to each of the candidates:

John Jones,
this is the word of God.
Be worthy of the message you teach
to the people of God,
and build up the faith and love of his children.

The catechist may answer Amen!

Other members of the parish community may present individual symbols in silence. Thus, a representative of the school board may present a catechism or teacher's guide; a member of the parish council or its education committee may give a scroll or certificate.
○ *Mass continues* with the preparation of the gifts. Some of the catechists may present the gifts. All members of the community are invited to receive communion under both forms, as instituted by Christ. A suitable form of the solemn blessing may be developed.

○ *After Mass*, the community may continue the spirit of the celebration by an informal celebration with coffee and donuts on the lawn or in the parish hall.

○ *Further notes*: See *The ministries of reader and acolyte* (pages 86-93) for ideas on celebrating this event outside Mass; on time limits for this ministry; on limitation of place.

**A Fully Recognized Ministry?**

Should the catechist be officially recognized and instituted as a minister in today's Church? Who should be chosen — every teacher, or just certain ones? Which ones? Why? These are some of the questions being asked seriously in our Church today.

Before we can answer, we need to study and pray about a number of other questions: training and formation; methods of selecting and recognizing catechists; who chooses them and presents them to the bishop; what is the role of the bishop and pastor in their formation and selection? The varying and interrelated roles of the diocesan Church and of area school boards need to be looked at carefully.

In the meantime, as we pray and move toward the fuller recognition of the ministry of catechist, we should work together as a Church for God's greater glory. If needed for the building up of Christ's body, new structures will be discerned more clearly by God's people when we act in a spirit of faith and prayer.

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**A Prayer for Sunday**

*Blessed are you, Lord God,*

*king of all creation:*

*you have made us for your honor and glory.*

*Teach us by your word to walk in your paths,*

*so that we may praise you this week*

*by our thoughts, words, and actions.*

*All glory, praise, and honor to you, Father,*

*through Christ your Son*

*in union with your Holy Spirit.*

*Glory to you! Amen! Alleluia!*

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MINISTERING TO THE SICK AND AGED

When we are healthy and strong, we tend to forget what it means to be sick, feeble, and helpless. At times there can be a tinge of contempt: sometimes a person tends to despise or ignore those who are less able, or those who are in need of his or her help and love. As followers of Jesus, we seek to have true sympathy and understanding for the sick.

The rite of anointing, in its introduction, points out the place of sickness in God's plan, and the importance of working to overcome illness.

A Christian Response

Jesus came to help us, all of us. As humans, we are noble creatures of God, called to be his beloved sons and daughters, to be holy and blameless, to be prophets, priests, and kings. But we are weak: we fall, we fail, we falter. Often we need to cry: Lord, help us! God has listened to our human cry. His greatest response is his Word, his Son, Jesus our Lord and our brother.

Sincere compassion, honest concern, tender sympathy, personal interest: Words like these may be used to describe the way Jesus approached the sick, the crippled, the outcasts of society in his day. True involvement in the burdens and troubles of others marked the life of the suffering servant, who willingly bore the sufferings of others and invited them to come to him for rest and comfort (see Mt. 11: 28-30). When the Lord is our light and the source of our salvation, what need have we to be fearful? This is his message to us: see Ps. 27.

Heartfelt and active concern for the sick, the suffering, the needy: this attitude marks the true followers of Jesus. Unless we are ready to serve him in the concrete needs of these people, we are refusing to come to his help. The way we treat others now is the criterion on which Jesus judges us: see Mt. 25: 31-46.

In its long history, the Church has continued to show Christ's concern for the sick and needy. The apostles cured sick persons; ministers or helpers, filled with the Spirit of wisdom, were appointed to look after widows (see Acts 6: 1-6). Records of the third century show that in Rome the deacons and the bishop looked after the sick and the poor, who were truly the Church's treasure: indications of this are given in the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus (around 215) and in the account of the martyrdom of Lawrence the deacon (in August 258).

Monasteries looked after the sick in the spirit of the gospel. The middle ages and the modern era saw many orders and institutions founded to look after the sick, foundlings, and orphans. These concerns have remained part of the Church's work to our day.

These past few years have seen some notable differences in the apostolate to the sick and the aged. The last decade has been a time when more and more government agencies and departments have taken over the administration of hospitals and care of the sick and aged: what many devoted religious did for minimal wages is now being covered by high salaries and grants, and restricted or rearranged by official decrees. While at first this takeover may have seemed a disaster, now it can be viewed as an opportunity for Church communities to move into new areas of greater need in today's world.
Since the new rites for the pastoral care of the sick were promulgated in 1972, Christians have begun moving toward a fuller awareness of the need and the varieties in the ministry to the sick and aged. Such ministries or service are not limited to those in religious vows or to persons with degrees in medicine or nursing. Now we begin to see them as the responsibility of the whole Christian community.

Every Christian is to carry on the Lord's concern for the sick in today's world. By personal involvement — working with the sick; praying with them and for them; supporting drives to study and eliminate or control various diseases; co-operating with efforts to promote better medicine and health care for all; working for safety in homes, industry, and on the highways; preparing to cope with natural disasters — each of us shares in this work of Jesus. But we must take care not to let our participation in these general ways lull us into thinking that we are thus dispensed from becoming personally involved with individual sick persons and their particular illness and problems. Jesus had little time for those who talked of good deeds without doing what God commanded (see Mt. 7: 21-27).

People in the medical field: All who are active in the field of medicine — including doctors, nurses, researchers, scientists, technicians, hospital workers — are working to overcome disease and sickness. Because the human person is one, physical and spiritual sickness affect each other. By striving to help the sick both physically and spiritually, medical people are working for their recovery, and are thus carrying out our Lord's command to help the sick (see Introduction to the rite of anointing).

Pastoral Rites

In the liturgy, the people of God celebrate all the realities that are involved in their daily lives, and all aspects of their relationships with God. The Christian people's concern for the sick is reflected in the rites for the sick:

Communion for the sick: It is the desire of the Church that the sick should be able to receive communion frequently, even daily, especially in the Easter season. Parishes which are aware of their responsibilities toward sick and shut-in members are making sure that auxiliary ministers of communion visit the sick often, and bring them communion — at least on the Lord's day, and preferably more often; this responsibility need no longer be left to the priest alone. What is your parish doing about bringing communion to the sick on a regular basis?

Mass for the sick: The sacramentary (no. 542) and lectionary (nos. 871-875) provide suitable texts for a Mass for the sick. This may be celebrated in the church, in a hospital or home for the aged, or in a family home. What has your parish been doing about this?

Anointing of the sick: This sacrament is intended for those who are seriously ill because of sickness or old age. It is a sacrament for the sick, not only for the dying. Adequate catechesis needs to be given in every parish so that the sick and the aged may be helped to welcome this form of help from the Lord. What is being done about this sacrament in your parish?

Prayers for the sick should be included in the general intercessions each Sunday. Members of the parish should be encouraged to pray with the sick. Some of the ways in which this can be done include reading a gospel passage, praying a
psalm, saying a litany or a decade of the rosary, sharing a moment of silent prayer. Are there other ways in which your parish can help people to pray with the sick and for them?

Blessing of the sick: Some suggestions for blessings for sick adults and children are offered in A Book of Blessings, and in Bulletin 49, pages 173-176. What use has your parish made of these?

Visiting the sick: This is the responsibility of every member of the Christian community, and is not just limited to the Church's ministers. What is your parish doing to help all its members become aware of this responsibility and of the ways of carrying it out well?

The questions asked in the preceding paragraphs show some of the areas where your parish can expand its ministry to the sick.

Help for the aged: Similar pastoral help can be offered to the aged and to the shut-ins by the parish community. What efforts are being made to help them to come to Sunday Mass? Are they invited to take part in parish activities? The contributions that the sick and the aged can make to parish life are described below, under the heading, “Help from the sick and the aged.”

Ministry to the dying: Viaticum is the sacrament for the dying. As well, the Church has other prayers and rites for the dying. A Mass for the dying is given in the sacramentary (no. 543) and in the lectionary (nos. 871-875). Instead of shunning death or ignoring it, the Christian community should be helping its members prepare for it as the final entering into the paschal mystery of Christ. What has your parish done to form its members in Christian attitudes toward death?

Help from the Sick and the Aged

The ministry of the parish community to the sick, the aged, the shut-ins, and to the dying is not one-sided. As well as helping these people in their time of need, the parish can benefit from their help and witness as well:

Prayer: These people can become “powerhouses of prayer.” A parish active in the service of the Lord will invite its sick and shut-in members to be men and women of prayer. They can offer prayers of praise and thanksgiving. They can pray for particular causes and groups (such as those who are preparing for baptism, or for marriage), for general intentions (for the youth of the community, for the conversion of sinners, for an increase in vocations), or for the needs of the Church and the world (for the pope and bishops around the globe, for peace among nations). The intentions are unlimited. While the entire body of Christ is called to the vocation of prayer, certain members can be encouraged and helped to spend more time in prayer in the name of all.

1 Based on Sunday Mass Book, page 1137. The sacraments and prayers for the sick and for the dying are outlined on pages 1137-1159.

2 See Pastoral Care of the Sick and Rite of Anointing, chapters 3-6, nos. 93-151; Sunday Mass Book, pages 1146-1159.

3 See Men and women of prayer, in Bulletin 65, pages 234-238; also Bulletin 33, pages 72-73; no. 35, pages 222-223.

4 Some of these intentions are listed in Sunday Mass Book, pages 1300-1302, 1335; Bulletin 58, page 128; A Book of Blessings, pages 282-283.
Vicarious suffering: A further benefit that the sick and elderly can offer to their parish and to the world is their suffering and the limitations on their activities (see Redemptive value, Bulletin 42, pages 9-10). By offering these crosses in union with the suffering of Jesus our savior, they are able to share with him in the work of salvation. Others members of the parish can learn from their patient acceptance of God’s will, and can be encouraged to take a more positive approach to penance and suffering. In this way also they can learn to make their suffering a part of their offering to God in the eucharistic prayer (see General Instruction of the Roman Missal, no. 55f). In faith we see this as an important way of living within the body of Christ.

Ministries to the Sick

We can minister to the sick members of the community in many ways:

○ Visiting: We can visit the sick and elderly, pray with them, bring them news (not gossip) about parish community affairs. We can pray with them, and read passages from the scriptures. We can discuss last Sunday’s readings and homily. We can read for them, or write letters for those unable to do so.

○ Communion: Auxiliary ministers of communion can bring the consolation of this sacrament to the sick frequently, even daily, and can spend some time with them in prayer and bible reading.

○ Volunteer services: In connection with other community agencies, Churches, and groups, parishioners can become more involved in helping the sick and elderly by meals-on-wheels plans, driving the sick for medical appointments and treatment, taking them shopping or to concerts. People can learn or teach first aid and basic home nursing; blood donor clinics can be encouraged. Younger members of the community can also act as volunteers to bring books and other reading material — including bibles, psalm books, New Testaments — to the sick at home and in the hospital, nursing homes, and in other institutions. Others may serve on phone committees, dial-for-help lines, fund raising, providing books for hospitals, and similar projects.

There are many ways in which members of the Church can continue the compassion of Christ for the sick and the suffering. It is the responsibility of each diocese and parish to prepare its members for this work in the spirit of Jesus.

Helpful reading:


Bulletin 57, Rites for the Sick and the Dying.

A Book of Blessings (1981, CCCB, 90 Parent Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1):

* Installing ministers for the sick: pages 80-81
* Prayers for the sick: pages 305-308; litany, pages 115-116
* Oil for the sick: pages 361-362
* Prayers for the dying: pages 309-314
* Blessing of a hospital or clinic: pages 114-116
* Blessing of a home for the aged: pages 112-113; for special care: pages 117-119
* Further references are in the index under “sick,” page 373.

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MANY POSSIBILITIES OF SERVICE

There are many areas of service or ministry where the Christian people may be of help in today's world. As believers move in to meet these needs, it may become desirable to institute some new ministries. What is more important at the present, however, is that we begin to see these many ways of following Jesus, the one who came to serve.

Works of Mercy

One traditional way of meeting such areas of ministry and service has been the performance of the works of mercy.¹ The corporal and spiritual works of mercy summarize the ways Christians may show love to their neighbors. These works are also signs of the Church's apostolic life, means by which we spread the message of the gospel and build up the body of the Church (see the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, no. 19: 4). We would do well to remember the description of true religion in James 1: 27.

Corporal works of mercy: Derived from the gospel story of Mt. 25: 31-46, these are the criteria by which Christ will judge the sincerity of our love. Some modern ways of expressing these works are suggested here. Some of these will involve organizing with others, but many can be done by individuals and families.

• Giving food to the hungry, drink to the thirsty: Working for better standards of food preparation, storage, handling, labelling, marketing, advertising; promoting sound guidance on nutrition to parents and students; working against gimmicks and contests that raise food prices for consumers; discouraging junk foods in schools; working to prevent food wastage; working with others to increase crops and agricultural know-how in other countries.

• Clothing the naked: Most people in North America have more clothes than they need, and spend large amounts on fashionable items and on recreational clothing and equipment while others have to scrimp. Read James 2: 14-17. Parishes and community groups could found centers where clothing can be made available — without embarrassment — to those in need. Individuals and families can try to cut their clothing costs by making things last longer, by repairing instead of throwing things away; the money saved can be used for alms. Parishes and communities can help to educate their members to recognize and reject the seductions of modern advertising, so that they can reject the foolishness of our throwaway way of life.

• Visiting those in prison: Individuals can work with organizations such as the John Howard or Elizabeth Fry Societies. They can write to the government to urge and support sensible reforms of our penal and court systems. Parishes can work with other community groups to visit prisoners, to work with parolees and persons who have completed their term. Catholic groups can study the statements of the Canadian bishops against capital punishment.

• Shelter to the homeless: What efforts are we making as a parish or community to work for just laws on land use, on rent and price controls, on building

¹ The works of mercy are described in some detail in Bulletin 42, pages 23-25, and some new ones are suggested for our day. These works of mercy are positive ways of expressing our love for our neighbor, and are also a traditional form of penance.
standards? Individual families can become involved in neighborhood groups working in this direction, and can also take a second look at the way they purchase and maintain furnishings and appliances. Have they room to take in another person, a university student, a person from out of town? What about a foster child? Can they adopt a child here or overseas? What are their attitudes on immigration, native land rights, land development? Have they read the bishops’ statements on these matters?

- **Visiting the sick**: See *Ministering to the sick and aged*, pages 111-114, above.

- **Burying the dead**: Instead of waiting for someone to die, and then scurrying around to arrange for parish participation in the funeral celebration, a parish community could consider general plans for better funeral liturgies as well as more co-operation in various ways with the bereaved family. Better care for cemeteries in the parish, some study of local funeral customs, an awareness of provincial laws concerning death and burial — these are some areas for further ministry. See Bulletin 84, *Funeral Liturgies*, pages 134-136.

**Spiritual works of mercy**: These works of love are generally listed in this way:

- admonishing the sinner
- instructing the ignorant
- counselling the doubtful
- comforting the sorrowful
- bearing wrongs patiently
- forgiving all injuries
- praying for the living and the dead.

The parish council could take this list and begin to outline ways in which the parish could begin to deepen its practice of these acts of Christian love. Some thoughts on these are given in Bulletin 42, pages 23-25.

Further works of love are suggested in Bulletin 42, pages 24-25:

- leading the leaderless
- reassuring the confused
- widening horizons
- inspiring the young
- pioneering in deep waters.

**Liturical Ministries**

While every ministry affects our worship, some ways of service are more closely related to the community’s liturgical celebration. As well as those already described in this issue, we could add:

**Preparation for sacramental celebrations**: Individuals and couples can help families preparing to celebrate the sacraments:

- **Baptism of children**: Preparation for baptism is described in Bulletin 48, pages 134-137, and in no. 73, *Baptizing Children*.

Marriage: Young couples preparing for marriage need counselling about the Church's way of celebrating this sacrament; the parish liturgy committee could work with the priests and with married couples to help those who plan to marry. See Bulletin 59, Celebrating Marriage.

Anointing of the sick: See Bulletin 57, Rites for the Sick and the Dying, and pages 111-114, above.

Other sacraments: The parish council or liturgy committee should look at the other sacraments, and see what help is needed for those preparing to celebrate the sacraments. Some help is now provided in Sunday Mass Book, in its section on the sacramental celebrations, pages 1065-1159.

Other people who help in liturgical celebrations: Ushers and altar servers come to mind first. What help do they receive in carrying out their roles? What of people who prepare parish bulletins, banners, other decorations? Does anyone help them to understand their part in the Church's liturgy?

Who helps members of the parish liturgy committee and the diocesan commission to understand the liturgy and their part in its preparation and celebration? They need guidance and training if they are to do their work well.

Other people include those working as individuals or teams to prepare the prayer of the faithful, introductions to the Mass, and other elements necessary for a good celebration.

Before we worry about installing people in official ministries, it is important to see that we train and form those presently at work; in areas where these services are not being done, or are concentrated in the hands of a few, some thought needs to be given to helping other people to prepare themselves for this type of work. Rites for installing various ministers are given in A Book of Blessings, pages 79-95.

Still Other Areas of Service

There are many areas in which Christians can help others, applying gospel principles in daily life. These may or may not develop into official forms of ministry, but they can be ways of serving with Christ the servant.

Ecumenism: Working and praying with individuals and groups from other Churches for the benefit of the community; organizing ecumenical gatherings; the Vatican Council Decree on ecumenism, as well as later directories from Rome, suggest other ways of co-operation. See Bulletin 78, Ecumenism and Liturgy, for many positive and practical suggestions.

Promoting family life: Some areas for work include helping parents to become the first teachers of the faith to their children; promoting adoptions and foster homes for children; working with delinquent children; helping abandoned spouses and single-parent families; co-operating with agencies such as Big Brothers

2 The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCB) provides a major resource for training and formation in the National Bulletin on Liturgy. Each issue is devoted to particular aspects of parish liturgy, and is written primarily for people working at the parish level. Bulletins 35 and 66 are on the work of the parish liturgy committee.
Leadership training: Helping lay leaders, members of councils, liturgy committees and other groups in the parish or community to grow in leadership skills, including organizing, public speaking, writing, decision making. Organizations such as The Christophers have been working constructively in this field for years. Training in leadership skills is also available through volunteer and community agencies and government programs.

Working with youth: There are many ways of working with young people during their formative years: serving as a leader or committee member in movements such as Scouting and Guiding; developing and assisting day care centers; working with young people who have handicaps; promoting individual and team sports, as long as they are not conducted on a “win by any means” philosophy; assisting as a resource person with schools or youth groups.

Ministry of children to the community: Qualities of simplicity, eagerness, wonder, joy and docility indicate that children have a unique ministry in the Church. Their questions bring to the adult Christians an awareness of gospel values, and a need to pass on these values of Jesus in a simple and direct way. With their receptive listening, and their simple participation in the liturgy and life of the adult community, children may minister to the Church’s needs of candor, honesty, and simple witness to Jesus’ presence and action in our world. Their initiation into the Church challenges adult members to remember and renew again the childlike qualities that are essential to the life of the Church.

Education for media: People need help in learning how to interpret newspapers, newsmagazines, radio and TV, movies. They have to learn how to insulate themselves against blitzkrieg advertising tactics. Parishes and communities should stand up for better broadcasting codes, and bombard advertisers, politicians, media owners, and theaters for more wholesome fare. What are the Churches doing to help guide people who are working in the various media?

Needs of particular groups: Many areas of service can help particular groups: ethnic minorities, immigrants, migrant workers, native peoples; people with particular medical needs; working with persons with handicaps, physical or mental.

Spiritual development: Promoting retreats, days of recollection, sessions on growth in prayer, scripture days, workshops on liturgy or sacred music; helping individuals, professionals, groups to be penetrated with the spirit of the gospel (especially the beatitudes and Mt. 25: 31-46).

Art and beauty: Encouraging people with talent to work in the apostolate of beauty: learning dramatics, singing, music, writing, painting, sculpture, and sharing these with others; development and encouragement of beauty through local

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3 Further information is available from The Christophers, 12 East 48th St., New York, NY 10017, U.S.A.
artisans; promotion of good handicrafts; teaching handicrafts to young and old, through schools, youth groups, neighborhood centers; working to make the world more beautiful in every way, and thus reflect God's beauty more effectively.

- **Creativity:** Many people share their talents for creativity and inventiveness with others. Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone and many other important devices, wrote: "The inventor is a man who looks around the world and is not contented with things as they are. He wants to improve whatever he sees, he wants to benefit the world; he is haunted by an idea, the spirit of invention possesses him, seeking materialization."

- **People with serious problems:** Jesus frequently helped the outcasts of his time, persons ignored or even despised by the "better classes" of society. Today's outcasts are many. What are we doing to work with alcoholics, drug addicts, prostitutes, prisoners, juvenile delinquents, people on welfare, those without jobs; people who are alienated from society? Are Christians as concerned about them as Christ is? Do these people with problems see the Church as concerned people or as a disinterested institution?

- **Culture:** Much needs to be done to deepen our understanding of our own culture and that of the many groups and nations who have formed our country; their spirit and spirituality could be shared with the people of today. What of the culture of the native peoples, Indian and Inuit? What do we know of the historical sites and background of our own area? In most communities there are people who speak, read and write another language. Papers, books, and broadcasts are available in other languages, including bibles and prayer books: these can be a means of opening and broadening one's approach to life. A good understanding of our own culture is necessary if we are ever to adapt the liturgy to it more fully.

- **Christian witness:** The greatest ministry is that of giving witness by one's daily life that Jesus is Lord. Being the light and salt of the earth, doing our good deeds before the world in order to lead all to give glory to the Father (see Mt. 5: 13-16). Living the beatitudes and the other ideals of the sermon on the mount (Mt. 5-6-7). Embracing the kind of poverty recommended in Lk. 12. Carrying our cross daily in the footsteps of Christ. Not going along with every whim that rejects Christ's standards of morality. Reminding the world that God loves us, that Jesus died and was raised to raise us from sin to new life, that his Spirit can help us to renew the face of the earth. Proclaiming that Christ is alive and in our midst — in his word, his sacraments, his ministers, his brothers and sisters, in the weak and needy. Aligning ourselves with the weak, the poor, the powerless, the outcasts of our society, as Christ did in his day. The ministry needed by today's world is to have Christians stand up for Christ, contradict the smooth ideas of our present generation, suffer persecution for the sake of justice — and lead the world to God by our suffering in union with his suffering servant.

* * *

There are many forms of ministry that a servant Church can carry out. A few of these possibilities are outlined in this issue of the Bulletin. It is up to us as the brothers and sisters of the one who serves (see Lk. 22: 27) to see these ways of serving and to begin to do them.
SOME USEFUL RESOURCES

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops provides many publications that will be useful to people preparing for and working in various ministries:

Ministries of the Laity, by Dr. J. Frank Henderson: This comprehensive background paper, written for the National Council for Liturgy, takes a hard look at various aspects of this important area in the Church’s life: What are ministries? Who recognizes them, and how? What programs of training should be used? How does one become aware of local needs? What attitudes toward ministry do we show, and what theology of Church lies behind them? 36 pages.

A Book of Blessings: This book provides texts, models, and ideas for planning and celebrating blessings, and may be used by priests, deacons, parish ministers, lay leaders, liturgy planners, catechists. Reverent prayers and celebrations in the spirit of Vatican II. Hard cover, 376 pages.

Sunday Mass Book: Much more than a Sunday missal, this book is a means of helping Catholics to prepare for the celebration of Sunday Mass and the sacraments. Includes instruction on the meaning of the eucharist, sacraments, and liturgical year, 51 pages of help for growing in prayer, and a unique four-color collection of Canadian art (see Art Collection, below). 1344 pages.

Jesus Christ, Centre of the Christian Life: Reflections on the meaning of Jesus’ life and ministry in his time and in ours, for individual reflection or for in-depth group study. Illustrated. 40 pages.

Prayer: Some issues of the National Bulletin of Liturgy:
* No. 44: People of Prayer
* No. 58: Day by Day We Give Him Praise
* No. 62: Liturgy and Devotion
* No. 75: Praying the Psalms
* No. 80: Helping Families to Pray

Liturgical year: Helpful issues of the Bulletin include:
* No. 36, 41, 55: Advent and Christmas seasons
* No. 37, 42: Lent and Easter seasons
* No. 47: History of the seasons of the liturgical year
* No. 67: Planning Our Year of Worship
* No. 70: Liturgical Year and Spirituality

Liturgical leaflets: Practical and inexpensive leaflets, valuable for wide distribution and for discussion groups:
* Celebrating Sunday Mass
* Sunday Is the Lord’s Day
* Advent: Joy and Hope
* Living Lent
* Holy Week
* Easter Season
* The Eucharistic Prayer
* Worship Without Words
* Mother of Our Lord
* Meal Prayers

Resources for Sunday Homilies: Books for years A, B, and C: 96-100 pages each.

Art Collection: Descriptions, personal statements by artists, full color reproductions of the 26 pieces of art commissioned by the Canadian bishops for Sunday Mass Book. 64 pages.

Catalogue: A catalogue, Publications in English, lists these and many more books; also a list of Publications en français. For a copy of the English or French catalogue, write to CCCB Publications Service, 90 Parent Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1.