

Clergy Retreat

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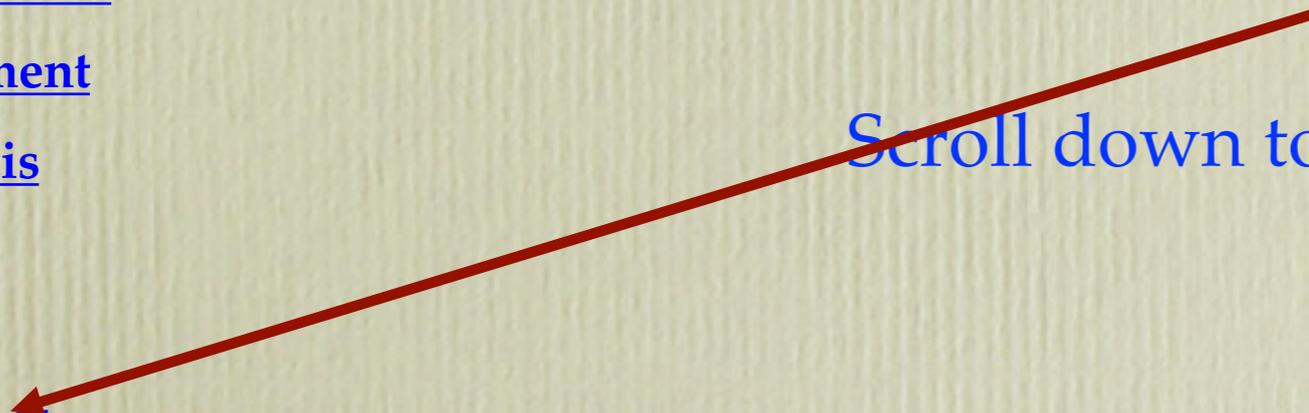
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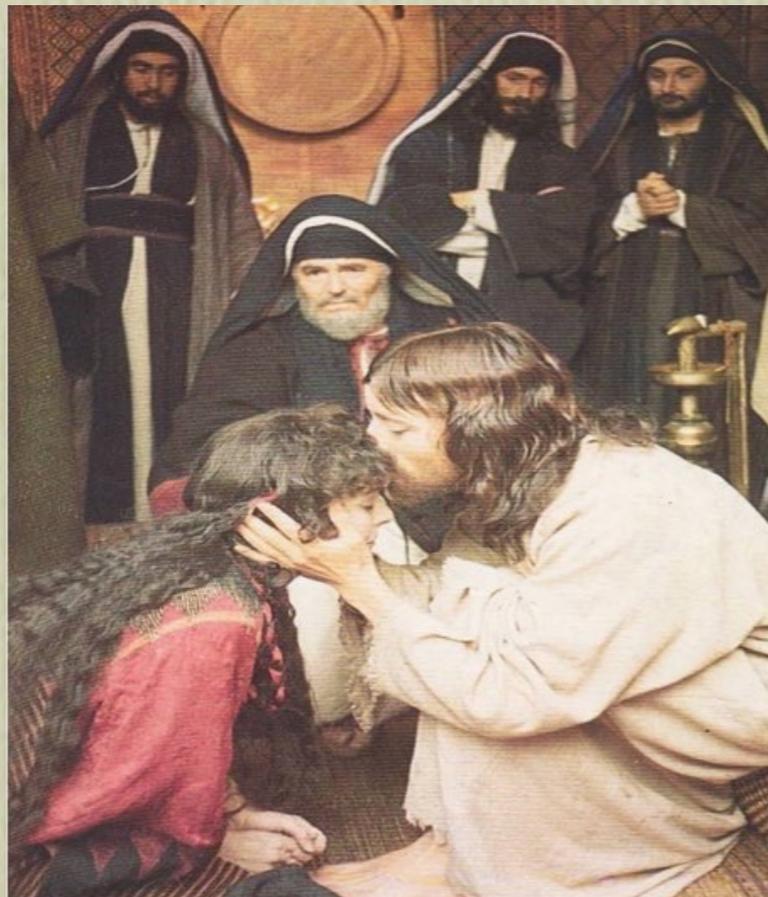
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Priest today : no pedestals

Church : the Body of Christ

Jesus is still eating with sinners



“She must have been forgiven
or she could not love so much”





The way we human being organise the Church community can also be sinful.

But : ‘I will be with you always to the end of time’.

‘The gates of the underworld will not be able to hold out against the Church on mission.’

The graced and privileged role of the ordained priest

Joseph Bernardin speaks of priests as

‘bearers of the mystery’

‘doctors of the soul’

‘We are not dispensable “functionaries” in the church; we are bridges to the very mystery of God and healers of the soul. When we claim this identity unapologetically, we not only find ourselves; we also provide the church and our culture with the sustenance they require. This is the vocation, the reality, to which we are called. It is not dependent on numbers, or structures, or chancery offices, or any of the things we thought so essential, so important, but are now completely changed or are no more. Rather, it is dependent on the Lord Jesus, who never changes, and to whom we are irrevocably united through ordination – the Lord Jesus (who is the mystery of God and the healer of the soul) whom we make present in a tangible and inviting way each day to the countless people whom we serve. To him be honour and glory, now and always.’

I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline' (2 Timothy 1:6-7).

Sacraments

Visible signs that symbolise and realise the grace of encounter.

The priests role is to facilitate the meeting of hearts:

the heart of God and the heart of the persons

and the assembled community.

Once conferred the grace of priesthood cannot be taken away
(though the ministry may be).

There is a special intimacy between the Risen Jesus and the priest:
'I have chosen you.'

In accepting the call we have joined Jesus in saying 'Yes'
to be an instrument of God's love

'The Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you,
Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not "Yes and No";
In him it is always "Yes."

For in him every one of God's promises is a "Yes."

For this reason it is through him that we say the "Amen,"
to the glory of God' (2 Corinthians 1:19-20).

Hebrews 7:26 - 8:2

'It was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he has no need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for those of the people; this he did once for all when he offered himself. For the law appoints as high priests those who are subject to weakness, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect forever.

Now the main point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent that the Lord, and not any mortal, has set up.'

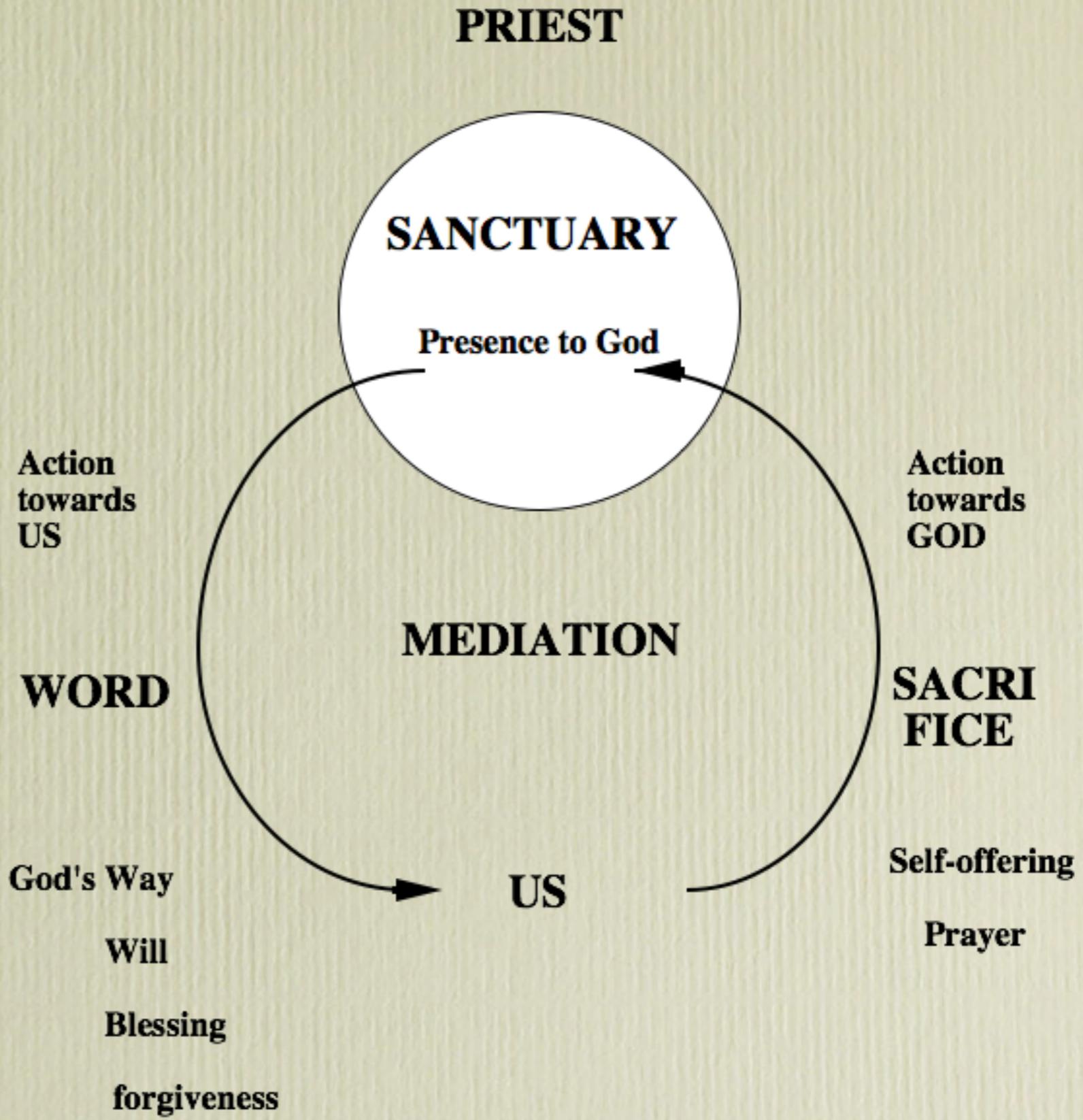
1Peter 2:4-5

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

In the Jewish cult, priests exercised their ministry from within the sanctuary. From God they mediated to the people the Torah (God's 'way'), God's will, God's blessing, and God's forgiveness.

They mediated back to God the people's response of sacrifice, essentially self-offering and prayer.

Priesthood is essentially about mediation.

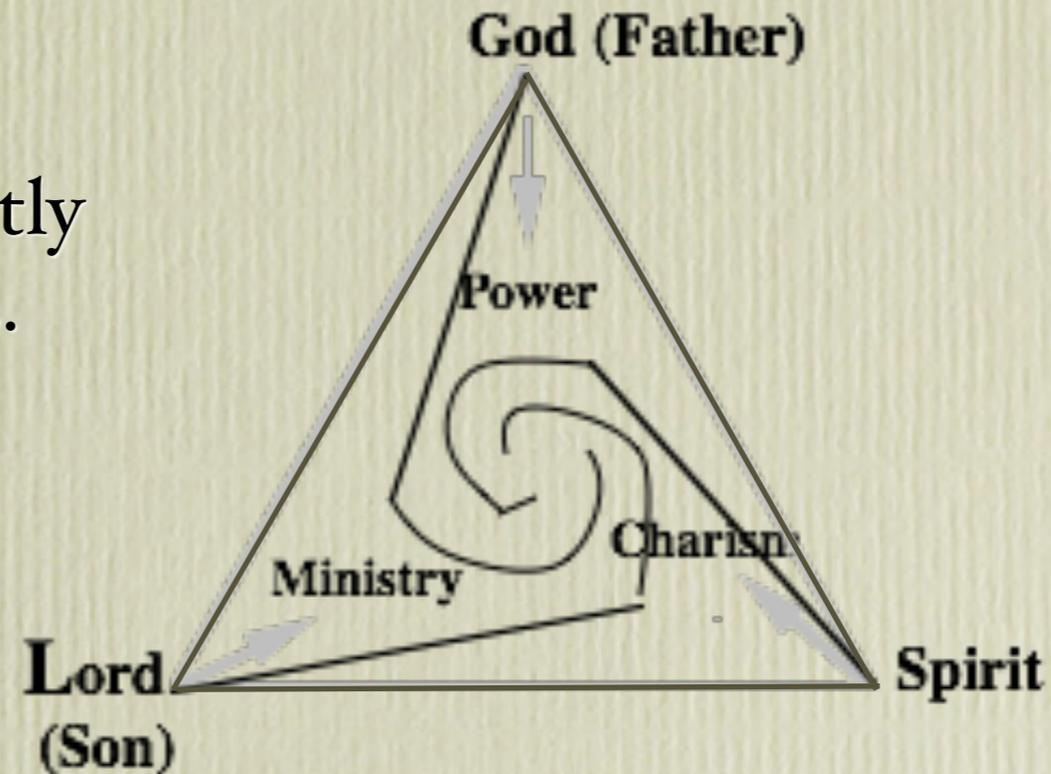


Various priestly ministries of the faithful

The Church exercises the priestly mediation of Christ by

1. being a sanctuary of God's presence in the world
2. faithfully carrying out Christ's mission of revealing God to the world
3. compassionately drawing the world into communion with God
= 'sanctifying/consecrating the world'.

Christians participate in the priestly mediation of Christ in various ways.



‘There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit;
there are varieties of ministries, but the same Lord;
there are varieties of ways of exercising power, but it is the same God
who inspires them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation
of the Spirit for the common good’(1Corinthians 12:4-7).

Ministerial Priesthood of the Ordained

One way of exercising baptismal priesthood is through the ministerial priesthood into which bishops and priests are ordained.

‘Though they differ essentially and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are none the less ordered one to another. Each in its own way shares in the one priesthood of Christ’ (Vatican II LG 10).

The leadership exercised by the ordained priest is a leadership of order: organisational leadership, responsibility for unifying and coordinating the various gifts, ministries and power of the members of the community for the better functioning of the Body, and to ensure that the various ministries are exercised in such a way as to be faithful to Christ’s will as expressed through the apostles and the prophets, for the continuing of Christ’s mission to the world.

Through ordination the priest is in a sacramental consecration to Christ.

‘Through the sacrament presbyters, by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are signed with a special character and so are configured to Christ the priest in such a way that they are able to act in the person of Christ the head’(Vatican II PO 2).

‘Priests are a sacramental representation of Jesus Christ, the head and shepherd’(John-Paul II I will give you shepherds n.15).

- The ordained priest is to be in God’s sanctuary, living a holy life in God’s presence. Only from within the sanctuary can a priest mediate
- He is to be faithful / trustworthy, witnessing that it is indeed God’s word that he is mediating to the community
- He is to be compassionate, witnessing that he is indeed in communion with the people whose self-offering he is mediating to God

Karl Rahner

‘The priest ... can bring life to the preaching of the Gospel only if he is a mystagogue of that ultimate, internal, religious experience of God and God’s grace, without which no one can in the long run resist the pressure of a secularised environment and remain a Christian. The priest is to do this only as well as and as far as it is granted to him. Without this the pastor will be little more than a cultic and ecclesiastical official celebrating ceremonies that are no longer credible ... The ability to pray ought not to be seen as one among a number of occupations in his life, but as the basic structure of his existence.

His acceptance of the presence of the absolute mystery facing everyone is dependent on his praying, as is his truly living the mystery in freedom. The priest today is primarily the servant of others' faith.'

'The priest is not an angel sent from heaven. He is a man, a member of the Church, a Christian. Remaining man and Christian, he begins to speak to you the word of God. This word is not his own. No, he comes to you because God has told him to proclaim God's word. Perhaps he has not entirely understood it himself.'

Perhaps he adulterates it. Perhaps he falters and stammers. How else could he speak God's word, ordinary man that he is? But must not some of us say something about God, about eternal life, about the majesty of grace in our sanctified being; must not some of us speak of sin, the judgment and mercy of God?

Mark 3:14

And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles,
to be with him,
and to be sent out on mission.'

John 15:15

'I call you friends.'

Baptism of Jesus : Mark 1:9-11

"Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee
and was baptised in the Jordan by John.

No sooner had he come up out of the water than

*He saw the heavens torn apart and

*the Spirit descending upon him

*like a dove and

*a voice came from heaven,

"You are my Son,

the Beloved, my favour rests on you"



Clement of Alexandria (150-215)

‘Sick, we truly stand in need of the Saviour; having wandered, of One to guide us; blind, of One to lead us to the light; thirsty, of the fountain of life of which whoever partakes shall no longer thirst (John 4:13-14); dead, we need life; sheep, we need a shepherd; children, we need a tutor. All humanity stands in need of Jesus. The Word says through Ezekiel: “That which is lame I will bind up, and that which is sick I will heal; and that which has wandered I will turn back, and I will feed them on my holy mountain” (Ezekiel 34:14, 16). Yes, O Tutor, feed us on your holy mountain, the Church, which towers aloft, which touches heaven’ (Stromata I.9.83-84).

2 Corinthians 3:17 - 4:1

The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit. Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart.



A Trusting Psalm

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Lord let your mercy be on us
as we place our trust in you.

The word of the Lord
is faithfulness and love.
His love can never be measured.

His beauty is like
nothing we have ever seen,
so let us place our trust in him.



Lord let your mercy be on us
as we place our trust in you.

The word of the Lord
means a patient, gentle God.
His love can never grow weary.
His mercy is as though our sins
have never been,
if we can place our trust in him.



Lord let your mercy be on us
as we place our trust in you.

The word of the Lord
is fire burning strong
His love can never grow weary.
He will seek and save the lost
until we all return,
so let us place our trust in him.