

PONTIFICAL MISSIONARY UNION
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(Priests)

It is the essence of the priesthood to mediate between God and human beings
(Blessed Paolo Manna)

The fundamental task of the priest: to make Jesus Christ known

From the Gospel of Luke

“After this the Lord appointed seventy[-two] others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, ‘The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest. Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way. Into whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this household.’ If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you.’”

(Lk 10:1-6)

From the Magisterium of the Catholic Church

“Priests [...] are consecrated to preach the Gospel and shepherd the faithful and to celebrate divine worship, so that they are true priests of the New Testament. [...] Exercising [...] the function of Christ as Shepherd and Head, they gather together God’s family as a brotherhood all of one mind, and lead them in the Spirit, through Christ, to God the Father.”

(SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, 28)

“The purpose, therefore, which priests pursue in their ministry and by their life is to procure the glory of God the Father in Christ. That glory consists in this—that men working freely and with a grateful spirit receive the work of God

made perfect in Christ and then manifest it in their whole lives. Hence, priests, while engaging in prayer and adoration, or preaching the word, or offering the Eucharistic Sacrifice and administering the other sacraments, or performing other works of the ministry for men, devote all this energy to the increase of the glory of God and to man's progress in the divine life.”

(SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL, Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests,
Presbyterorum Ordinis, 2)

“Since Jesus Christ has proclaimed that the special sign of discipleship with Him is that we ‘have love one for another’ (John xiii, 35; xv, 12) can we give a mark of greater love for our neighbors than to assist them in putting behind themselves the darkness of error by instructing them in the true faith of Christ? As a matter of fact, this type of charity surpasses all other kinds of good works inspired by love just as the mind surpasses the body, heaven surpasses earth, eternity surpasses time. [...] If none of the faithful is exempt from the obligation of charity, can the clergy who, by their truly marvelous election and holy vocation, participate in the very priesthood and apostolate of Jesus Christ, claim such exemption? Or can you, Venerable Brothers, you who possess the plenitude of the priesthood and are, each in his own diocese, the divinely constituted pastors of the clergy and Christian people, claim to be exempt from the same law of love?

(PIO XI, Encyclical Letter, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, 6)

From the writings of Blessed Father Paolo Manna

“We are apostles! The Apostles did not have anything in mind other than to serve, but they always served Jesus Christ, only and uniquely. We are apostles, and we wander far and wide, we work generously, only for the sake of souls, only for the Church, only for heaven!”

(P. MANNA, *Apostolic Virtues*, translated from Italian by Fr. Steve Baumbusch, PIME, New York 2009, 18)

“I remember the bitter feelings I had during my frequent journeys to missions. [...] I did not say anything, I was one of many Europeans... But those men, those women, those children told me so many things; they said they were creatures of God, with an immortal soul like mine... redeemed like me... even in them the Son of God had become man. And they ignored everything. But they said much more that concerned us personally as priests. They were precisely those souls who had directed our life... they were the reason for our priesthood, our vocation. There were no strangers to us, but God had entrusted them to us to save them...”

(P. MANNA, *Chiamati alla santità*, Napoli 1977, p. 65)

“It is frightening to think... we will be called to account for so many souls, for whom we care little.”

(P. MANNA, *Chiamati alla santità*, Napoli 1977, p. 66)

“In the world there are those who are more learned, more powerful, more skilled than the clergy; indeed, ever greater initiatives are done in the area of social welfare than we can accomplish. But in and of themselves they are not enough for eternal life. Our task is to *save souls*.”

(P. MANNA, *Chiamati alla santità*, Napoli 1977, p. 73)

“The task of the priest: to give Jesus Christ, to give him to everyone, to the bad, to the good, to the perfect, to children and adults, learned and ignorant. [...] We are chalices of Jesus, destined to pour out Jesus into souls. We must be full of Jesus to be able to pour Him out [into others]; we must imbue ourselves with the spirit of grace, with the love of Jesus Christ, in order to give it to others.”

(P. MANNA, *Chiamati alla santità*, Napoli 1977, p. 76)

“The priest is a *soldier* who must never stop fighting for the conquest of souls. He is a *fisher* of people who must go out on the high seas: [...] to catch in his net those who drown in the sea of the world. He is a *harvester* and, in order to bring in the harvest, he has to be able to bear the scorching heat and the burden

of the day. He is a *bursar* who must give a rigorous account of his administration. He is a *shepherd* who has to go forth over mountain and valley in search of the lost sheep. The priest cannot save himself; his health is linked to that of many others.”

(P. MANNA, *Chiamati alla santità*, Napoli 1977, p. 145-146)

Questions for reflection

- How many times do I pray for those entrusted to my pastoral care?
- What am I most engaged in of the following activities: building a Church, managing and leading a pastoral center, office work, talking and meeting people, praying for them?
- Do I feel more like a builder, a teacher, a lecturer, a clerk, than a priest mediating between people and God?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus,
Sacrificial Lamb on God's altar,
Our servant and High Priest.
My hands were anointed with Holy Chrism
On the day of my ordination.
I place my hands now in your hands
As Mary, your mother, did in Nazareth.
I entrust myself to God the Father,
Who confirmed your ministry beside the Jordan River.
Through my priestly ministry,
Let me be a sign of the gathering of the church,
Which comes together to celebrate your deeds among us.
Let me know and be able to show others
The beauty of Your Bride who is the Church.
Let her light shine with all her splendor in the Eucharist
And may she illuminate the path of your disciples.
O Divine Savior, today I ask you:
- may I renew my priesthood with the power of the Holy Spirit,

- may I always be humble and strong in my vocation and mission,
- may a willingness for sacred service increase in me daily,
- may I ardently desire to strive for holiness.

Jesus, High Priest, make every person see through me, and my saving ministry,
The love of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,
One true God who lives and reigns forever and ever.
Amen.