

Community Leader

God's plan for the world is ambitious; it involves nothing less than the complete transformation of human society. The building blocks for this massive plan are our local communities. As part of these communities, the church works in partnership with civic leaders, community organisations, other Christian churches and other religions.

One of the most satisfying things about being a priest is being part of a faith community and being a pastoral leader. This involves presiding at communal worship. It also involves being among smaller communities, such as families at big moments like weddings and baptisms. Priests are called upon to enter the lives of people when life is darkened with sadness and difficulty. Even through these difficult moments, a priest can experience a profound satisfaction that they have been an instrument of God.

Messenger of Hope

Jesus Christ has an incredible impact on the world. The teachings of Christ have shaped the values of many societies and continue to shape those values today. A critical part of a priest's mission is to tell Christ's story of hope. That story brings comfort to those who are weak and without a voice. The story is intended to disturb and activate those who have the power to make the world a better place. Jesus' message of hope is not always popular; many people have been killed for preaching the Gospel, but it is a powerful message that must be told.



Spiritual Guide

Today there is a strong awareness that people everywhere long to have spiritual nourishment. The Catholic community itself also needs to be fed with the body and blood of Christ. The priest of the future will continue that tradition of assisting people to develop their spirituality. The future priest will also need to explore ways of helping people make spiritual sense of their lives in a dynamic and changing world. Before doing these things, priests are students of prayer themselves. A priest develops his personal relationship with God, to learn the ways of God and to lead others on those paths.

Priesthood



The Priest

*The Priest is not an angel sent from heaven;
he is a man chosen from among men, and a member of the Church, a Christian.
Remaining human 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.
But he believes;
and despite his fears, he knows that he must communicate God's Word to you.
For must not some of us say something about God, about eternal life....must not
some of us speak of sin and the love and mercy of God?
So, dear friends, pray for him. Carry him, so that he might be able to sustain
others by bringing them the mystery of God's love, revealed in Jesus Christ.*

Karl Rahner

What is the role of a Priest?

The priest's first priority is to **proclaim the Good News**. That is what Jesus sent his disciples out to do. This proclaiming of the Gospel has historically been done in and through the **Sacraments**. The Good News is forgiveness, healing, feeding, loving and knowing God. But even after the preparation and celebration of the sacraments of Mass, Marriage, Reconciliation and so on, the priest is left with time on his hands (unless he spends all his time ironing the vestments, polishing the brass and training the altar servers).

So what next? **Pastoral care** must come next. With the proclaiming of the Good News must come the practice. To care for the sick, comfort the lonely and bereaved, visit prisoners, to be available to listen to those with problems. Rarely can we solve their problems, but we can show them that God and his Church really do care for them.

Another priority must be the preparation of children and adults for the Sacraments - **Catechesis**. The meetings that we have each week are an example. There is also a course for parents whose children are making their first Holy Communion. The other Sacraments too, especially Baptism and Confirmation, require people to be instructed for them to fully appreciate how special the Sacraments are. These are occasions when a priest will often come across "lost sheep". They are under his pastoral care as well and it is always a great moment when someone decides to return to the fold.

There are also thousands of people living within parish boundaries who are also part of a priest's 'flock' and the parish must also bear witness to them too.

Finally, the priest has a special responsibility towards himself. To be a priest means more than "doing things". It means being a man of prayer, being a man set aside for God, being for others.

Vows

It is for this reason that a priest takes vows. He promises to obey his bishop, which shows his willingness to do things which are not for

himself, but that he will do for the good of the Church; even if he does not want to do them.

He also promises to remain celibate. This means he will never marry. Again it is part of being for others. It does not mean it is a better or holier vocation than marriage. It just means that a priest seeks to fulfil and be fulfilled by channelling all the love he would have in a marriage, into the community he works with and to God. All of this must, of course, be linked to prayer. Prayer brings us nearer to the God we seek, to truth, goodness and peace. In prayer, God encourages, teaches, calms and maybe humbles us when we need it.

Although a Diocesan priest does not take a vow of poverty, it is very closely linked to celibacy (strangely enough!). To be for others means to make available not only our time and our love but all that we have for those in need. This will inevitably mean our possessions too. To be poor, not so that we have nothing, but so that others have a bit more.

The ceremony at which a man becomes a priest is called **Ordination** and is one of the seven sacraments.

We all share in the Priesthood



We are all called to proclaim the Good News, care for the sick and those in need. So we all have some share in the priesthood of Christ. This is vitally important since an ordained priest can only be effective if he helps all his people to live out their priesthood. In a sense the priest presides over the priesthood of the laity as they in their thousands minister to the sick, lonely, the sinners, the hungry & poor. This is not a way of managing while number of priests dwindle, it is actually being the sort of Church God wants us to be where every person is called to holiness and to spreading the Good News. Some argue that the shortage of priests may even be a blessing because it will enable the Holy Spirit to work through the laity.

