

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“I thought I had an idea of what [the priesthood] would be like, but there’s something new every day. God has this plan for you, and if you put your vocation into his hands, he brings people into your life to help that teach you something, too. It’s definitely not boring!” — *Father Tom Wesdock*

“To be a priest is the highest calling one can receive. You must accept it in deep humility, because it is not only you who comes close to God, but God works in you to touch others.” — *Archpriest David M. Petras*

“The priest is called to love Jesus above all else, and to serve people with the selfless love Jesus showed when He washed the feet of the disciples.” — *Father James Hess, O. Carm.*

“Vocation Awareness involves, in my judgment, an ongoing evaluation of oneself ...What role remains for me to fulfill in my vocation from God as I serve the Mystical Body of Christ? ... How am I intervening in the nurturing of God’s Life between me and His people, called to be Residents of the Heavenly Kingdom?”  
— *Father James Ragan*

“The priesthood means for me a personal call from Jesus Christ and yet lived out in the community of the Church. I try to keep both of these in focus – the personal call of Christ to follow and serve, but also responding to this call in the context of our Byzantine Catholic Church of Pittsburgh.”  
— *Father James Spontak*

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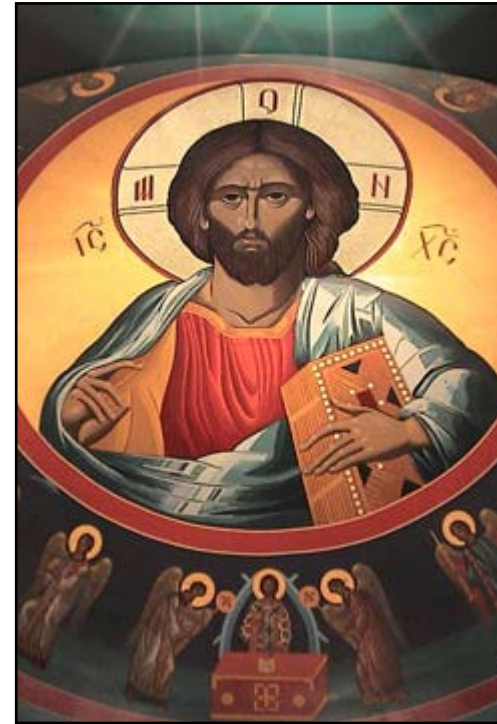


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Printed with Ecclesiastical Approval  
Interarchiepiscopal Commission for Vocations  
66 Riverview Avenue | Pittsburgh, PA | 15214

Vocations Awareness Series No.2 - Apr/May 2008

# BYZANTINE CATHOLIC HOLY ORDERS - THE PRIESTHOOD



CHRIST, THE PANTOCRATOR

## SHEPHERDING THE CHURCH

Ordained ministry in the Church is one with the ministry of Jesus Christ. Our Lord said: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. I am the Good Shepherd.” (John 10:10-11) By the power of the Holy Spirit, this shepherding continues today. It sustains for creation the hope of the second coming of our Lord and the fullness of the heavenly kingdom.

Through the laying on of hands, the ordained man becomes one who leads the faithful on their journey to God’s kingdom. His ministry in the Church has meaning because of the relationship between shepherd and flock. By the action of the Holy Spirit, ordination makes a man not into an individual to be viewed from the angle of his “limits” but rather into a related being seen as one overcoming his “selfhood.”

As one given to the service of others, the experience of God’s love and life is great in the ordained minister. Therefore a man who seeks to find if God is calling him to Holy Orders must realize that ministerial service is a vibrant and life-giving call if it truly comes from God. It is not something negative calling him out of the world and into hiding. Thus a primary discernment question is whether or not one desires to serve Christ and the Church by selflessly ministering to other people with a generous heart in the roles of sanctifier, leader, preacher, and teacher.

During the months of April and May, our bishops call us to a special awareness and increased understanding of Holy Orders - the Priesthood; prayer for those in ministry, and support and encouragement to those who may be called to this necessary and fruitful life.



## WHO IS THE PRIEST?

The priest proclaims the “Good News” of salvation to the world and leads God’s people in worship. He touches peoples’ lives at their most intimate personal moments, both joyful and sorrowful.

The priest shows people how Christ’s life is relevant to their own. He answers the question, “How do I live out my faith today?”

Through the priest’s ministry, Jesus Christ meets his people in the sacred mysteries (sacraments). He gives new life in baptism; he invigorates life through chrismation (confirmation); he sustains life through the Eucharist; he sanctifies life through marriage; he restores life through holy repentance and holy anointing. The priest serves as an icon of Jesus Christ as he satisfies their daily needs.

Above all, the priest is a man of prayer. By his ordination, the priest’s most important role is in celebrating the Divine Liturgy.

His private prayer is essential. The priest must maintain and nourish an intimate relationship with the Christ about whom he speaks, teaches and preaches.

For a Christian, life’s meaning comes from serving God. The priest serves God’s people as a leader in liturgy and in ministry, as a brother Christian and as a spiritual father. A priest’s vocation is to accomplish his life’s work: to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and lead his spiritual family on the ultimate journey to salvation.

## QUALITIES OF A PRIEST IN THE SERVICE OF GOD AND HIS CHURCH

A vocation to ordained service in the Church is a gift from God. While the encouragement and support of a man’s family is a major factor in his response to God’s call, life and involvement in the parochial family is even more crucial. Parish involvement is key, for it is in this environment that a man can better know if this is where God is calling him to serve. Routine aspects of church life observed by fellow parishioners frequently serve as basic indicators to a man’s suitability for Byzantine Catholic ministerial life. Following are several of these God-inspired signs of a priestly vocation:

*Spirit of humility* – enables one to deny himself and to be sacrificial in his outlook and attitude toward clerical ministry; it is the basis of courageous leadership and integrity;

*Spirit of sacrifice* – enables one to give up lesser, seemingly appealing material goods and earthly cares for greater invisible ones; this gift is often manifested as patience and endurance;

*Spirit of detachment* – enables a person to be in this world yet not of this world;

*Spirit of zeal* – this special form of charity draws a person to serve God and humanity in a sacrificial manner; it brings about a genuine interest in people and their welfare;

*Spirit of hospitality* – this is an extremely important quality in a Christian leader; in the Greek language, to be “hospitable” means to be “a lover of strangers,” a common theme stressed in Scripture; and

*Ardent desire to serve the Church as a priest* – this desire may be long-standing or recently experienced, but it *must* be firm and perceived as life-long.



## THE ULTIMATE HERO

Perhaps one of the reasons that our Church is experiencing a shortage of priests – a “clergy crisis” – is that most people only see a priest for an hour or so a week, and can’t imagine the fullness of life that is lived *every* hour. Now, don’t get me wrong – of all the hours in a week, the ones spent celebrating the Divine Liturgy are any priest’s crowning moments, but there are so many other beautiful moments, too . . .

I wish more people could see through my eyes when I do something as ordinary as grocery shopping. An old woman sees my collar and smiles. A young man I have never met calls me “Father.” A businessman scowls; a teenager mocks me to make her friend laugh. For the first two, I thank God, and for the second two, I also thank God . . . through smiling, compassionate, yet gritted teeth.

I wish more people could feel the joy that I feel when an amazing young woman asks me to be her spiritual director. What possible help could I give to someone who has taught *me* so much about God and holiness? Then I remember that I am only the mouthpiece through which God will speak to her, and the heart through which He will love her. So I go and pray, because I need to pray if I’m going to be these things to her.

The life of a priest is an adventure. He feels moments of joy so fulfilling that only God could have gifted him with them. He feels moments of loneliness so stark that only God could rescue him from them. He is committed to shepherd his beloved parishioners in a way that is only possible if God’s Love is coursing through his veins.

**He strives to live just like Jesus lived; after all, doesn’t every boy want to be just like his hero?**

— Father Michael O’Loughlin, Eparchy of Van Nuys



“FOLLOW ME”