

Chapter 21 – Holy Orders

Jesus Christ is our high priest, the one who mediates between God and people.

In the Sacrament of Holy Orders, there are three degrees, or orders: bishop, priest, deacon.

By Baptism, all the members of the Church share in Christ's holy priesthood.

By ordination to the episcopacy, bishops receive the fullness of the Sacrament of Holy Orders and become successors of the Apostles.

By ordination, priests are united with the bishops in priestly dignity and at the same time depend on them in the exercise of their pastoral functions.

Deacons are ordained not to the ministerial priesthood but to the ministry of service.

The priest is an icon of Christ, a real means by which a person can be touched by Christ. Because Christ is a man, it is fitting that a priest as the icon of Christ should also be a man. The priest's responsibility is to reflect Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church.

The sacrament configures the priest to Christ as priest, prophet and king. It configures the deacon to Christ as servant. The sacrament confers an indelible character.

Bishop: teaches in the name of Christ
Sanctifies the Church through the celebration of sacraments
Guides, governs, and defends the Church
Is a sign of the unity of the Church

Priest: proclaims the Gospel and preaches
Celebrates the sacraments
Shepherds his people

Deacon: proclaims the Gospel and preaches
Baptizes and assists the celebration of Eucharist
Assists at and blesses marriages
Presides at funerals
Serves the community through works of charity

Questions:

- What qualities of a priest serve to draw people to them?

- How can faith be strengthened by the effective preaching of priests and deacons?
- What could you do to foster vocations to the priesthood?