

Chapter 9

The Ministry and Life of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons

Getting Started

Assign the students to read Chapter 9, “The Ministry and Life of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.” Use the following questions from the Student Text to guide a discussion of the chapter:

- What are some of the best things about being a priest?
- How would you define a “desirable parish”?
- What are some pluses and minuses of diocesan priesthood? Religious priesthood?
- What are some service opportunities in your community that you have done or to which you are attracted?
- Imagine that your father was a deacon. What kinds of responsibilities would that bring for you?
- Is there someone you know who has chosen a radical or countercultural lifestyle?

(See the Student Text for additional questions.) Then ask the students to read the following article.

Application Reading

<http://www.godspy.com/faith/The-Joy-of-Priesthood-by-Fr-Stephen-J-Rossetti.cfm>

THE JOY OF PRIESTHOOD

By Fr. Stephen J. Rossetti

"My Beloved son . . . be strong lest prosperity lift you up too much or adversity cast you down."
—St. Stephen of Hungary

Just as priesthood is more difficult than most of us thought it would be, it is also a lot better. In the end, there can be no mediocrity in this life, no room for a half-hearted priesthood. It demands a personal, total, and radical commitment. I believe that one of the many things learned from the 2002 church crisis in the U.S. is that we are called to a life of full integrity and to a level of holiness that we might not have thought possible. In fact, it is the laity who has challenged us to these heights of sanctity. The people expect us to be chaste, humble, and totally dedicated servants of God. In our hearts, I suspect this is what we want for ourselves too.

Discussion

Lead the students in a discussion of the following questions:

1. Why, according to the author, should priests serving as hospital chaplains not view themselves as secondary and inferior to the doctors? (“Health care professionals’ work is of great concern; it has life and death consequences. But the priest’s role touches issues of ultimate concern; its consequences are now and forever.”)
2. According to the author, what are some indications that most priests are very satisfied with their ministry? (Nearly 90 percent of all priests said they were happy with their ministry, compared to about 63 percent of Americans who said they were happy with their jobs. Some 73 percent of priests said they actively encourage others to enter the priesthood—a sign that they probably like the priesthood themselves.)
3. What are some of the sources of satisfaction that priests experience in their ministry, according to the author? (Some examples include: the joy of administering the sacraments and presiding over liturgy; the satisfaction of preaching the Word; and the opportunity to work with many people and be a part of their lives.)
4. What is necessary to live the priest’s life with integrity and peace, according to the author? (To live this life with integrity and peace, he must develop the eyes to see God’s work and a heart deep enough and open enough to take in these daily graces.)
5. The author offers advice and encouragement to those who participate in the ministerial priesthood. What parts of his message might also apply to the common priesthood of all believers?
6. What did you find to be the most surprising or interesting aspect of what the author had to say about the priesthood?

Activity

A vocations advertising campaign

- In this activity, students consider the positive aspects of a vocation to the priesthood by creating an advertising campaign to recruit young men to the priesthood. For this activity, the students will need several large sheets of poster paper or newsprint, as well as drawing or painting materials. Optionally, you can enhance this activity by providing the students with additional art materials (old magazines, scissors, glue, stencils, etc.), a tape recorder, a video camera, and a television for playing back the students' video recording.
- Begin by having the students list some of the positive aspects of a vocation to the ministerial priesthood, drawing on their reading in the textbook and in the supplemental article "The Joy of Priesthood" to do so.
- Tell the students that they will have the opportunity to reflect further on the positive aspects of the ministerial priesthood by creating an advertising campaign aimed at convincing men to seriously consider becoming a priest or deacon. The students will have the opportunity to develop one of four aspects of the campaign: help wanted ads, "billboards," a radio advertisement, or a television advertisement.
- Begin by having the students divide into four groups, each focused on one aspect of the advertising campaign. Provide each group with the materials necessary to create their advertisement, and allow them sufficient time to create one or more advertisements. The groups working on the radio and television ads should develop skits to present to the whole group. If recording equipment is available, they may record their radio or television advertisement to play back to the whole group.
- When the students have finished working on their advertisements, gather them together to present their finished work to the whole group.
- Conclude the activity with a discussion of the advertising campaign. Ask questions such as the following: Which ad do you believe was most effective, and why? What common themes did you notice in the advertisements? What positive aspects of the priesthood did you choose to highlight, and why? Do you believe such an advertising campaign would be successful in convincing more men to consider a vocation to the priesthood?

Additional Activities

- Have the students write a letter to a bishop as described in assignment #6 in the Assignments and Applications section of the Student Textbook (page 279).
- Lead the students in the "Prayer for Priests" as described under the heading "Extending the Lesson" on page 272 of the Teacher's Wraparound Edition.
- Lead the students in the prayer service described in step #5 under the Teaching Approaches heading in the "Chapter 9 Review" section of the Teacher's Wraparound Edition.
- Have the students complete the "Bishops" handout (Handout 52) found in the Teacher's Wraparound Edition.
- Have the students complete the "Threefold Ministry of the Permanent Diaconate" handout (Handout 54) found in the Teacher's Wraparound Edition.

Additional Resources

For Internet resources, see the Teacher's Wraparound Edition.

The following videos are appropriate for use with this chapter:

- "Deacons: Ministers of Justice and Charity" (USCCB Publishing)
- "Wives of Deacons: Ordinary Women, Extraordinary Lives" (USCCB Publishing)