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Priesthood Retreat Introduction

Vatican II LG 39

‘The holiness of the Church is constantly shown forth in the fruits of grace which the Spirit produces in the faithful. And so it must be. It is expressed in many ways by those who, each in his or her own state of life, **TEND TO THE PERFECTION OF LOVE.**’

Catholic Catechism 1992 n.25

(Roman Catechism, Council of Trent, 1545-1563, Preface 10).

‘The whole concern of doctrine and its teaching must be directed to the love that never ends. Whether something is proposed for belief, for hope or for action, the love of our Lord must always be made accessible, so that anyone can see that all the works of perfect Christian virtue spring from love and have no other objective than to arrive at love.’

The Being (Greek rendition of YHWH)
ho ôn Exodus 3:14

Jesus Christ



‘I will betroth you to myself in tenderness’ (Hosea 2:20)

Saint John

Vatican II Gaudium et Spes §1

‘The joys and the hopes,
the griefs and the anxieties
of the men and women of this age,
especially those who are in any way afflicted,
these are the joys and hopes,
the griefs and anxieties
of the followers of Christ.

Indeed nothing genuinely human
fails to raise an echo in their hearts,
for theirs is a community composed of men and women.

United in Christ,
they are led by the Holy Spirit
in their journey to the kingdom of their Father
and they have welcomed the news of salvation
which is meant for everyone.’

5

John O'Malley SJ has provided us with 'a simple litany' of the changes in church style indicated by the council's vocabulary:

'from commands to invitations,
from threats to persuasion,
from monologue to conversation,
from ruling to serving,
from withdrawn to integrated,
from vertical and top-down to horizontal,
from exclusion to inclusion,
from static to changing,
from passive acceptance to active engagement,
from prescriptive to principled,
from behaviour modification to conversion of heart,
from the dictates of law to the dictates of conscience,
from external conformity to the joyful pursuit of holiness.'

6

- Avery Dulles offers four models of the ordained ministerial priesthood. Each of the four is clearly relevant. You might find, however, that you instinctively relate to one of them more than to the others.
- How do you see the priesthood within the church's life and ministry? How do you see yourself, with your unique gifts and calling ('You have not chosen me, I have chosen you'), within the ministry of priests in the Church and in the world? How does your story fit into the long story of the priesthood?

7

The priest as

- 1. a minister of the Word
- 2. a cultic figure ordained to administer the Sacraments
- 3. a pastoral leader of a community of disciples
- 4. an icon of Christ

8

Note on the value of silence

- Because of the demands of our ministry a large portion of our waking hours is spent in activity and mostly with and for others. In retreat we have an opportunity to remind ourselves that only when activity is in accordance with God's will does it have value. Let us over these days allow God to draw us into silence. John O'Donohue sees the elimination of the rhythm created by silence and stillness as 'the most destructive force of alienation today ... The wells of our psyche have become silted.'
- Let us dare the darkness and the solitude to rediscover the spring from which alone the pure waters of inspired action flow.

9

- 'I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her'(Hosea 2:14).
- 'The Lord will fight for you. You have only to keep still'(Exodus 14:14).
- 'Be still and know that I am God'(Psalm 46:10).
- 'What I say is what I have seen in the Father's presence'(words of Jesus: John 8:38).

10

Teresa Foundations 5.17

'We must be careful, in doing good works, even those of obedience and charity, not to fail to have frequent inward recourse to our God. And, believe me, it is not length of time spent in prayer that brings a soul benefit: when we spend our time in good works, it is a great help to us and a better and quicker preparation for the enkindling of our love than many hours of meditation. Everything must come from the hand of God.'

11

Marie-Eugène, I want to see God, 420

'Activism takes cover under numerous and often noble excuses: necessities of life, urgent duties of one's state, fear lest a certain milieu win and dissipate people. joys to be had in generous action which opens up and enlarges one's power, the aridities and apparently useless abjection of prayer, and above all a great pity for those around us whose extreme material or spiritual misery is a constant appeal to our Christian charity.'

12

A Letter to John Dryden, James McAuley writes:

‘Incarnate Word, in whom all nature lives,
Cast flame upon the earth: raise up contemplatives
Among us, men who walk within the fire
Of ceaseless prayer, impetuous desire.
Set pools of silence in this thirsty land:
Distracted men that sow their hopes in sand
Will sometimes feel an evanescent sense
Of questioning, they do not know from whence.
Prayer has an influence we cannot mark,
It works unseen like radium in the dark.’

13

John Henry Newman page 1

‘Christian sympathy’ in Parochial and Plain Sermons V. Oxford: Rivington, 1876, pages 123 & 126.

‘I consider that Christians, certainly those who are in the same outward circumstances, are very much more like each other in their temptations, inward diseases, and methods of cure, than they all imagine.

We think ourselves isolated in the world; we think that no one ever felt as we feel. We do not dare to expose our feelings, lest we should find that no one understands us. And thus we suffer to wither and decay what was destined in God’s purpose to adorn the Church’s paradise with beauty and sweetness.

14

John Henry Newman page 2

We deny ourselves the means we possess of at once imparting instruction and gaining comfort ...

Perhaps the reason why the standard of holiness among us is so low, why our attainments are so poor, our view of the truth so dim, our belief so unreal, our general notions so artificial and external is this: that we dare not trust each other with the secret of our hearts.

We have each the same secret, and we keep it to ourselves, and we fear that as a cause of estrangement which really would be a bond of union.

15

John Henry Newman page 3

‘We do not probe the wounds of our nature thoroughly; we do not lay the foundations of our religious profession in the ground of our inner person; we make clean the outside of things; we are amiable and friendly to each other in words and deeds, but our love is not enlarged, our bowels of affection are straitened, and we fear to let the intercourse begin at the root; and in consequence our religion, viewed as a social system, is hollow, The presence of Christ is not in it.’

16