

## Vowed Religious Life

For many centuries, communities of men and woman have experienced God's call to a life consecrated to God's reign and the service of God's people, through vows of poverty, chastity (celibacy) and obedience. Religious sisters, brothers and some priests live and support each other in this prophetic way of life. Poverty, is a way of living free from attachment to the things of this world in order to focus on Jesus and service of Gospel. Chastity, enables freedom for service of God and people, and is a sign of belonging to God and people. Obedience, means listening and responding to what God is asking. It is a way of being liberated from self and available for service of others.

## Ministry and Mission for Ordained and Laity

The opportunity to rise to one's baptismal call, whether that be as a lay person or an ordained minister, has never been more important than today. The changing face of our parishes means we are all at the coalface not just the ordained. All the baptized are invited to collaborate with their priests and bishop in ministry and service. Both the General Instruction of the Roman Missal and the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy call us to work to our potential "Therefore liturgical services involve the whole body of the Church... they also concern the individual members of the Church in different ways, according to their different orders, offices, and actual participation." (CSL par 26). We are all baptised "Priest, Prophet and King", and the Sacrament of Holy Orders emphasises the importance of leadership within our community, a leadership called by God and raised by the people.

## For Reflection and Prayer:

God calls you to a particular way of living the Gospel in the world.

To gain deeper insight into God's call for you, it is essential to pray. It is good to talk it over with someone who is wise and committed to following Christ's call for their life. How do you know and discern God's call for you? How would you describe your 'personal vocation', God's particular call for your life? Is God calling you forward to something new? With whom might you talk, to gain greater insight into Christ's call for you?

## Prayer for Vocations

Shepherding God,

You show us the way that leads to everlasting life.

Through Baptism, you have called us to proclaim the Good News. Bless and strengthen those who have made a commitment to service in the Church.

Guide and give wisdom to those discerning their vocation.

Enrich our Church with dedicated married and single people, with deacons, priests and religious.

Filled with joy and your Holy Spirit may we follow Jesus, our Good Shepherd now and always.

Amen.

(Catholic Vocations Ministry Australia (CVMA) [www.catholicovocations.org.au](http://www.catholicovocations.org.au))

\*This brief summary is based on: Vatican II Council, Decree on the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, 1965 and Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, 1965 and the Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraphs 1533-1600)

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## Sacraments ~ Part 7

### Service & Ministry

#### Sacraments of Commitment

As baptised people, we are all called to ministry and service in Jesus' name. Those who are ordained to ministry, serve the whole community. They seek to enable all who are baptised to live out their Baptism every day, as followers of Jesus Christ.



### All are called to ministry and service in Jesus' name

Our word, 'ministry' comes from the Greek, diakonia, meaning 'to serve'. The second Vatican Council reminded us that we are all, priests and people, anointed through Baptism and Confirmation as 'priests, prophets and kings', sharing the priesthood and ministry of Jesus Christ. We all have a special vocation to share their gifts and talents in service of others, especially for the most vulnerable and the poor and for building up the community, with the help of the Spirit within (1 Cor 12:1-11; Gal 5:22).

*"The faithful exercise their baptismal priesthood through their participation, each according to his own vocation, in Christ's mission as priest, prophet and king."*

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, par 1546 and Vatican II Council, Lumen Gentium par 9)

The ministry of those who are ordained has meaning in the context of the people of God who share in the call to minister as Jesus did. Those ordained are servants of all who are servants in Jesus' name. They enable all baptised people to live all that their Baptism means.

*"While the common priesthood of the faithful is exercised by the unfolding of baptismal grace – a life of faith, hope and charity, a life according to the Spirit – the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians."*

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, par 1547)

### Leadership and Ordained Ministry in the Catholic Tradition

Jesus called and formed leaders, amongst whom Peter emerged as a spokesperson (John 6:60-69; Acts 2:14). As the Church grew and developed, new forms of leadership were established (1 Tim 3:1-13). Three groups began to emerge; 'elders' (episcopos or overseers) had overall responsibility for local churches (Acts 14:23). In time, diakonos, deacons and deaconesses, were appointed to assist them, particularly with the care of the poor and vulnerable (Acts 6:1-7; Romans 16:1-16). Presbyters were also 'elders' who looked after local communities. Sometimes the words for bishop and presbyter were used in similar ways.

*‘No, anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant, and anyone who wants to be first among you must be slave to all. For the Son of Man himself did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’*  
(Mark 10:42-45).

In the early Church, there were married and single people among these leaders (1 Cor 7:32-35; Mark 1:29-31; 1 Cor 9:5). When someone marries, their spouse and family must be ‘number one’ in their life. In recent centuries, celibacy for priests and vowed religious has been understood as a way of freedom, enabling availability for community service. Celibacy, for the love of God’s Kingdom and the service of all, lived with joy and mature love by someone whose life is truly modelled on that of Jesus, is a hopeful and joyful sign. It is a powerful sign of what we are all to be in eternity.

## The Sacrament of ‘Orders’

In the Roman world, in which Christianity first developed, ‘orders’ was a term applied to certain roles of responsibility. In the Church, ‘Holy Orders’ denoted consecration to positions of leadership, service and responsibility. Those appointed were blessed and commissioned for public service by the laying on of hands accompanied by prayer to the Holy Spirit – the sacramental sign of ordination.

**THE BISHOP, EPISCOPOS\*** is a successor, in an unbroken line, from the apostles, consecrated with the fullness of ordination, in the presence of several bishops with the authority of the Bishop of Rome (the Pope).

The Bishop is called to be: visible as a man of faith and prayer chief pastor of the local Church, in close relationship with fellow priests in union with the Pope, the Bishop of Rome and other bishops, a sign of unity in the Church:

*“By the grace of the Holy Spirit... Bishops take the place of Christ himself, teacher, shepherd, and priest and act as his representative... By virtue of the Holy Spirit given to them, bishops have been constituted true and authentic teachers of the faith”*  
(Catechism of the Catholic Church, par 1558)

**PRIESTS, PRESBYTEROI\*** are pastoral leaders serving the local Church, celebrating weekly Eucharist in local communities. Priesthood is a service... modelled on Jesus Christ, ‘in the name of the whole Church’ (Catechism of the Catholic Church, par 1551).

### The priest is called to be:

- a prayerful man of God
- one who draws strength from the Eucharist
- one who knows his people, prays with them and for them and shares
- their hopes, joys and sufferings.

### Responsibilities include:

- to preside at Eucharist
- celebrate the Sacraments
- to forgive sin and preach Jesus’ Gospel
- to be active as a community builder
- speak as representatives of God’s Word

*“The ministerial priesthood has the task not only of representing Christ – Head of the Church – before the assembly of the faithful, but also of acting in the name of the whole church when presenting to God the prayer of the church, and above all when offering the Eucharistic sacrifice”*  
(Catechism of the Catholic Church, par 1552)

## DEACONS (servers), DIAKONOI\*

After disappearing for centuries, the role of the permanent diaconate was restored by the Vatican II Council. It is open to single or married men who are called by God and have full support of their families.

Deacons:

are assistants to bishops ordained by a bishop to ministry, not to priesthood co-workers with priests and people

## Celebration of Ordination

The rite of ordination is always celebrated in the context of Eucharist. The essential sacramental sign for the ordination of a priest, deacon or bishop is the laying on of hands accompanied by prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and for the Spirit’s gifts of ministry to be given. If you attend an ordination, you will notice that the ritual has these parts:



### THE RITE TODAY

- Opening Rite
- Word of God

### RITE OF ORDINATION

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| • Calling and Presentation of Candidate        | • Laying of Hands                     |
| • Election by Bishop and Consent of the People | • Consecration                        |
| • Homily                                       | • Investiture with Stole and Chasuble |
| • Examination                                  | • Anointing                           |
| • Promise of Obedience                         | • Presentation of Gifts               |
| • Litany of the Saints                         | • Kiss of Peace                       |
|  | • iturgy of Eucharist                 |

## For Reflection and Prayer:

**How often do you pray for your parish priest?**

**You may like to repeat the following prayer for a priest who is known to you:**

### Prayer of Consecration at an Ordination

*‘Almighty Father, grant to this servant of yours the dignity of the priesthood. Renew within him the spirit of holiness. As a co-worker with the order of bishops may he be faithful to the ministry that he receives from you, Lord God, and be to others a model of right conduct.’*