

# WHAT IS A PRIEST?

By WALTER BURGHARDT

I COME to you neither to upset nor to sedate.<sup>1</sup> I come neither as the bearer of fresh insecurities nor as the herald of easy answers. I come as a priest, to discuss priests' problems with fellow priests. I come as a theologian, to suggest where theology today may be of service to these problems. And I come as a man, with all the awareness any sensitive man has of his inadequacies, of his need to be taught by those he teaches, of his own perilous position as a pilgrim, a wayfarer, within the Church and the world.

For you and me, for any priest today, there must be deep concern over priesthood. There is indeed a crisis. Experts differ in characterizing that crisis, in pointing a finger at the heart of the crisis, in suggesting solutions. But few if any deny that a genuine crisis exists. Each year thousands of priests are leaving the priesthood. And they are not only, or even primarily, those of whom we might say in a fit of petulance 'good riddance!' I can name you, without much reflection, twenty or twenty-five priests whom I know personally, priests whose leaving has left me puzzled, or numb, or in tears. These are good men, holy men, zealous men, men who for one year or for thirty have shared my own hopes and dreams, my own vision of service, have been in a unique way my brothers.

This is not the place to analyse why they have gone; much serious research is going into that question, why? I can take up only one aspect of the problem, an aspect I feel is crucial. Intrinsic to the current crisis of priesthood is the quest for identity: who am I? what am I? I have been compelled to ask *myself* that question: what does it mean to be a priest? Oh yes, each of us had his own idea of what it means for *him* to be a priest. My task is to try to broaden that vision, by putting *your* experience of priesthood within a broader context: what is the *Church's* experience of priesthood, as the Church has lived its priestly existence through the ages? It is a formidable task, because it must weld together scripture and history and theology — yes, and the secular sciences.

I shall develop my theme in three stages. The first stage focuses on scripture; here is the earliest evidence of the Church's experience of a

<sup>1</sup> This paper was among those presented at the International Symposium on Apostolic Spirituality, held in July 1973 at the University of San Francisco (cf *Supplements to The Way*, 19 and 20).

specialized ministry. The second stage is a search into history; here is the Church's (post-apostolic) tradition of a specialized ministry. The third stage revolves around contemporary theology; here is the Church's experience today and her reflection thereon.

## I

My first stage, then, focuses on scripture, the earliest evidence of the Church's experience of a specialized ministry. Here my springboard is the working paper on the ministerial priesthood that was prepared for the 1971 Synod of Bishops (fortunately, the final draft did not contain these 'working' ideas). This schema ascribed the current crisis of priestly identity primarily to the effects of secularization. Secularization the schema defined as 'the process which gradually comes to take seriously the values of this world, its structures, its goals, and its norms'. On a radical level, secularization leaves no room for transcendent realities; 'a closed world is established, without any dependence upon a source or a goal, a world which . . . acknowledges no goods except those which it creates'. In line with this destructive secularization you have the seductive influence of the social sciences, which tend to cast doubt on the Church's mission and the priest's ministry.

The solution? Give history, psychology, sociology a pat on the head for their slight contributions and get back to God's revelation. And precisely here lies a defective methodology. The working paper assumed that there is a determinate essence of ministerial priesthood, a core idea of the Church's specialized ministry, that can be easily uncovered in scripture and in the authoritative documents of Church tradition, without recourse to human disciplines such as history.

The assumption is as astonishing as it is unexamined. Revelation does not give us a clearly articulated notion of ministerial priesthood; the bible does not offer a clearly defined view of the essence and forms of the christian priesthood, does not furnish a detailed and fixed concept of the ministry. Take, for example, the report, commissioned by the american bishops, on the biblical theology of the priesthood. This summary, based on the best available scriptural scholarship, should be sobering:

From what has been said it should be evident that we can expect to find in the scriptures an evolution in the concept of ministry that is eminently in keeping with the nature of a pilgrim people of God. . . . It will mean, first of all, that we cannot use the Old Testament as a primary referent for

our conception of christian ministry. . . . Acceptance of the concept of evolution will mean, secondly, that even in the New Testament we should not expect to find a clearly formulated definition of christian ministry from the beginning, or at any single point in the development of New Testament revelation. Christian ministry was never 'frozen' in any one mould but continued to develop and to be adapted in the succeeding moments of history. This does not mean that there is no normative character to the New Testament canon. But the normative character will not be seen in a definitive 'canonizing' of one exercise of ministry without regard for another, or of one historical manifestation at one time or place in isolation from other such manifestations. Development itself is canonical and therefore normative.<sup>2</sup>

But if we do not get from the New Testament, from the deposit of revealed truth, some unchangeable specific essence of priesthood, where does this leave us? Is there anything we can uncover from Christ's own tenting among men, from the early christian experience of ministry? Yes, indeed. The New Testament furnishes four facets of christian ministry which the Church sees as basic in her priests. Not all were present from the very beginning in one and the same person; but the Church has gradually brought them together to help fashion her notion of what a priest is.<sup>3</sup>

First, the priest is a *disciple* — always a disciple. To be a disciple means to be 'called', as the first companions of Jesus were called, as Peter and James and John were called — to have a vocation that stems from Jesus: 'Follow me'. For the priest, as for the original disciples, there can be only one master: Jesus. And the response to him must be total: 'Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead'.<sup>4</sup> Not just for today: 'No one who has put his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God'.<sup>5</sup> Not part time: discipleship is his whole life; there is nothing else, there is no one else. You have that harsh sentence of Jesus: 'If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple'.<sup>6</sup> Exaggeration, yes; deliberate exaggeration to make an unmistakable point: you are not a disciple of Jesus if Jesus is not your whole life.

And to be a disciple is to be called to hardships too cruel for most men: to leave everything and embrace a cross, to have nothing as your own save Jesus. To be a disciple is to pattern yourself after the one

<sup>2</sup> *The Priest and Sacred Scripture*, ed. Eugene Maly (Washington D.C., 1971), pp 4-6.

<sup>3</sup> Cf Brown, Raymond E.: *Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections* (New York, 1970), pp 21-43.

<sup>4</sup> Mt 8, 21-22.

<sup>5</sup> Lk 9, 62.

<sup>6</sup> Lk 14, 26.

master — and this master is a bloodstained, crucified master who came not to be served but to serve, who warned his disciples against honours and first places, who turned savagely on Peter when he rebelled against the passion of his Lord.

Second, the priest is an *apostle* — always an apostle. If to be a disciple means to be ‘called’, called to follow Jesus, to be an apostle means to be ‘sent’, as the original apostles were sent, to serve others. The keynote is service. Remember St Paul: ‘I will most gladly spend and be spent for you’.<sup>7</sup> And what the priest carries to others is always Jesus — not only his message but his presence. ‘We preach’, St Paul declared, ‘not ourselves but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’s sake’.<sup>8</sup>

It is always Jesus who is preached. By word and work, by sacraments and sacrifice. But in a special way, by prayer and suffering. A priest who has forgotten how to pray is a priest who cannot preach Jesus — whatever else he may preach. And a priest, like St Paul, will present Jesus to others effectively only if he bears the death pangs of Jesus in his own body. Only if he is constantly restless because, like Paul, he is ‘afflicted at every turn, from struggles without and anxieties within’.<sup>9</sup> Anxieties within: I mean a loneliness that is in itself no reason for forsaking the priestly life; a lack of appreciation, especially today when priesthood has no special status; an anguish that tears his heart because he is so weak and the forces of evil are so strong, because his words are wasted on the wind, because so few seem to care.

Third, a priest is what the New Testament calls a *presbyter*. The New Testament presbyters were a group responsible for the pastoral care of the churches. And the qualities the New Testament prescribes for the presbyter are sober indeed, even stuffy. He must be above reproach, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher, gentle, not quarrelsome. His task is to organize, to stabilize, to prevent dangerous innovation. ‘He must hold firm to the sure word he was taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and confute those who contradict it’.<sup>10</sup> His task calls for authority that does not dominate, that is softened by being wonderfully warm and human.

The point is, the priest does represent an institution. No matter how charismatic, how prophetic, even if called to protest the sins and corruption of institutions, of the Church itself, the priest must

<sup>7</sup> 2 Cor 12, 15.

<sup>8</sup> 2 Cor 4, 5.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Cor 7, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Tit 1, 9.

represent more than his personal insights. Like it or not, I am a churchman. I cannot, as a priest, stand outside my institution; I am an official part of it. Not that the institution is always right, is beyond criticism or censure. Rather that this institution is the setting where faith is born and grows; this institution is the locus and focus of worship; this institution is the community of love. This is what the priest represents.

Fourth, a priest *presides at the Eucharist*. It is not his total task, but it is a central preoccupation of priesthood. For here the priest does what St Paul insisted must be done: 'proclaim the Lord's death until he comes'.<sup>11</sup> He has a sacramental ministry that revolves around the bread of life and the cup of the new covenant. Around this liturgy the Church has built man's access to the life that is Christ, from the water of baptism through the ashes of penance to the oil of the last anointing. And in this process of life the priest plays a unique role — a role that comes to focus each time he proclaims 'This is my body, which will be given up for you. . . . This is the cup of my blood'.

Here, in a very real sense, is the heart of a man's priesthood. Even if he works at much else besides — in school or slum, in collective bargaining or the halls of Congress — at some point the priest gathers his people around an altar, around a table, to share with them a thanksgiving where the work of redemption is accomplished and in unparalleled fashion man is made one with his God.

## II

My second stage focuses on history: here is the Church's tradition of a specialized ministry. As with scripture, so with tradition, many an approach operates out of a defective methodology. It assumes that, to uncover what a priest is, to distinguish his priesthood from the priesthood of all christians, all you have to do is read roman documents; the index to Denzinger will tell you all. Out of the Church's history will come a core concept of priest that focuses his function and isolates it from all that is not priest.

The joker here is history itself. If you are thinking of priesthood in terms of unique powers and unique functions, the Church's experience of ministry is chock-full (perhaps even shock-full) of change, of diversity, of adaptation. Take, for openers, the ordination ritual that spelled out my specific 'priestness' in 1941, and set it side by side with the ritual for the ordination of presbyters in third-century Rome. If anything

<sup>11</sup> 1 COR 11, 26.

specified my christian ministry in 1941, it was a twin power: the power to offer sacrifice for the living and the dead, and the power to forgive sin in the name of Christ. In third-century Rome these powers were specifically episcopal. The crucial sentence on the power of a presbyter runs like this: 'O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . look upon this thy servant and impart to him the spirit of grace and the gift of presbyterate, that he may be able to direct thy people with a pure heart'.<sup>12</sup> In this connection the remarks of Gregory Dix are highly pertinent:

The primitive christian presbytery, like the jewish presbytery from which it derived, was a corporate judicial and administrative body, and the bishop as *ruler* of his church was simply its president, a presbyter among his fellow-presbyters. The primitive christian presbyter, like his jewish prototype, *had as such no liturgical functions*. . . . But the *episkope*, the bishop's own office as bishop, was from the first *primarily liturgical*. . . . The history of the episcopate is in one sense the history of the steady breaking down of its primitive liturgical monopoly. It was inevitable that as the Church grew this should be so by the mere necessity of numbers. By the fourth century only the power of ordaining remains a strictly episcopal preserve, and attempts were even being made . . . to extend that to presbyters. In the end the presbyters did break down the episcopal monopoly so far as minor orders were concerned. But all this is something *new*, not contemplated by ancient documents like the *Apostolic Tradition* or the *Didascalia*. So far as I can see there is nothing in the *Apostolic Tradition* which directly suggests that there is any liturgical function a presbyter can perform which a deacon cannot, except for the one privilege of joining in the imposition of hands in the ordination of a presbyter, a natural right of the presbyter since by derivation the *ruling* presbyterate was a corporate body. But in return for this parcelling out of his liturgical functions among the presbyters, the bishop had by the fourth century practically monopolized the whole governmental power of the old corporate presbytery. The two offices had by then become in appearance assimilated to a large extent, though not in fact because the bishop has gained very largely in practical power by the exchange. . . .<sup>13</sup>

The point I am making is this: in different periods of the Church's history different theologies of ministry, different models of priesthood, have come into prominence.<sup>14</sup> Of such theologies and models, at least five merit mention here.

<sup>12</sup> Cf Crehan, J.: 'Ministerial Priesthood', in *Theological Studies* 32 (1971), p 491.

<sup>13</sup> *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St Hippolytus of Rome* (New York, 1937), pp lxxix-lxxx.

<sup>14</sup> Cf Dulles, Avery: *What is a priest?* (unpublished paper, 1971).

1. *The jurisdictional model.* For several centuries after the Council of Trent, in the context of a predominantly juridical view of the Church and a hierarchical doctrine of social order, the priest was seen as the one who holds the plenitude of authority in a 'perfect society'. (This vision is still strong in certain segments of the catholic population.) The pope and bishops, and after them the pastors, are the chief priests who habitually possess that fulness of authority known as jurisdiction. The preaching and teaching offices of the clergy are assimilated to their jurisdictional role: to teach is to impose authoritative doctrine as a matter of obedience. Even admission to and denial of sacraments comes to be seen through quasi-judicial glasses.

2. *The cultic model.* In much patristic and medieval theology the Church was seen primarily as a worshipping or sacramental community. In terms of this model the priest came to be regarded as the hierophant, the performer of sacred mysteries. He offered to God, in the name of the community, the totally pleasing sacrifice of Christ. On some theories, the priest was seen as cultic leader; on others, as the mediator or substitute who offered sacrifice in place of the community.

3. *The pastoral model.* According to certain New Testament insights, recovered in large measure by Vatican II, the Church is seen as an interpersonal communion, an intercommunion of persons, effected through divine love poured out by Christ and the Spirit. In this type of theology the priest comes to be viewed primarily as pastor or community leader. He brings people together and seeks to activate in them the graces and charisms which the holy Spirit bestows upon each for the benefit of all. In this vision the attributes of the pastor are analysed in terms of the doctrine of John 10, Acts 20, and 1 Peter.

4. *The prophetic model.* In modern protestant theology, especially the kind typified by Barth, the ordained minister is seen predominantly as proclaimer of the word of God. To believers and unbelievers he issues a resounding call to repentance and conversion. While some proponents of this theology would shun the term 'priest', as excessively freighted with cultic overtones, they still accept a high doctrine of ordained ministry, based on the conceptions of prophet and apostle found in the Old and New Testaments.

5. *The monastic model.* In some christian traditions the priest is viewed primarily as the holy man, the guru, the spiritual director. In this perspective the religious priest is often considered to be the normal case; monastic spirituality is in great part transferred to diocesan seminaries and diocesan priests. Thus practices such as meditation, recitation of breviary, community life and celibacy are extended to

all priests without exception. The priest is expected to be withdrawn from the world and its vanities and to live in a manner that anticipates the blessings of the life to come.

Now these models are not necessarily in conflict; but the choice of one model will overshadow aspects of priesthood that seem central in another model. More importantly for us here, this quick foray into history should suggest how difficult, how impossible, it is to isolate some function, something a priest and only a priest can do, and proclaim that this is priesthood, here is the ordained ministry, utterly changeless, unaffected by history, unconditioned by culture. You know, you might end up with a function that takes a half hour of your time, once a week, exclusive of vacation!

But precisely here lies the priestly peril; for precisely here lies the unexamined assumption: there *is* this eternal role, this immutable essence, discoverable in God's revelation, and it is in harmony with this role and essence that a priest's life is organized for him — where he lives and what he wears, how he works and with whom he relaxes, the obligations he has taken on and the rights he has given up, the whole gamut of relationships from pope through pastor to people. It is because of these unexamined assumptions that the Synod schema of 1971 could assert so confidently: 'Priestly ministry is a mystery . . . which the people of God clearly grasped from the beginning. . . . Or: 'From this gospel picture of priestly ministry, it is clear that a priest's involvement in political problems, even though they are serious, cannot be ordered to his goal'. Or: 'Because of celibacy, priests can dedicate themselves more freely and more easily to the work of proclaiming the word of God, since they have firm control of themselves'. To the credit of the bishops in synod, these affirmations are toned down in the ultimate document.

### III

This brings me to my third stage, contemporary theology: here is the Church's experience today and her reflection thereon. Not that today's experience dispenses with yesterday's; it does not. Ideally, it gathers up the best of the past and enriches that with the insights of the present, with a view to an even more christian tomorrow. What, then, does today's theology (not all, but some) say about ministerial priesthood?

First, a priest has a fresh relationship to Christ. This is suggested by the New Testament itself. And in the vision of Vatican II, Christ is the heart and soul of the priesthood. It is his service I enter; it is his



ministry I share; it is in his name I act, in his person.<sup>15</sup> For one purpose: to build up the Body of Christ, until the full measure of his manhood is achieved.

And so, secondly, a priest has a special relationship to the Church. Precisely here, in our understanding of the Church, we learn (or do not learn) what it means for a human being to be ordained a priest. For this Church has a mission, this Church *is* mission, and only in view of this mission can you define her ministry — the ministry of *all* christians and the ministry of *some* christians.

I have no room here for a rounded ecclesiology. But this much must be said. The Church, in Vatican II's favourite image, is not so much a pyramid as a people, primarily a people, the people of God. This people is a community, a community of persons who accept and confess God's revelation in Jesus as Lord, a community united to the Father and to one another through Christ in the Spirit. This community is more than a casual encounter of free-wheeling, like-minded individuals: it is a visible society, and so it has a structure of authority, a juridical order, and a common mission. That mission is a service to all humanity; for this interpersonal community has for function to reach out, through the love that is its inner form, so as to draw all men into the communion of love, so that all men will respond in faith and love to the love whereby the Father loves his own people. This people, therefore, is essentially a missionary people, with a catholic mission of love. Here I find stimulating the summary given in the Report of the Subcommittee on the Systematic Theology of the Priesthood:

The Church, as a people, witnesses to the Word by proclaiming faith in the Lordship of Jesus (*kerygma*), manifests itself to the world as a community of unity and charity (*koinonia*), positively relates to the world in terms of service (*diakonia*), and worships God by offering the sacrifice of praise and thanks (*eucharistia*).<sup>16</sup>

Only in terms of this mission can you define the Church's ministry; for ministry relates to mission as means to end. But first note this: the Church's ministry is one common enterprise, where all christians continue the work of Christ, each with his or her calling, his or her charism, his or her competence. Christian ministry is a shared responsibility. There is no christian who is not a minister of the gospel.

But within this general ministry there is a specialized ministry, the ordained ministry. Within the universal priesthood of all christians

<sup>15</sup> Cf *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 1 and 2.

<sup>16</sup> 15 September 1971, p 29.

there is an ordained priesthood. But what does it mean to be ordained a priest? As I grew up, the emphasis was on functions, on roles. We defined an ordained priest in terms of what he could *do* which an unordained person could *not* do. And here the crisis of identity has torn the guts of uncounted priests. They search for priesthood in terms of something specific to themselves, powers proper to priests, functions which distinguish them from laymen. These powers and functions become narrower and narrower, so that they wonder if there *is* anything like this. And if they do find what they alone can do ('This is my body', 'I absolve you'), it seems so narrow in scope that it takes little time, little of their life. The rest of their existence (preaching, teaching, building, organizing, counselling . . . ) is lived in the suspicion that some man or woman in the pews could do it better. 'Of all social roles', B. R. Wilson noted acutely, 'the priest's calls for the widest use of his untrained capacities, and calls into play, more than any profession, his personality dispositions'.<sup>17</sup>

At this point contemporary theologians break in. For a viable theology of priesthood, they insist, you must get behind the functions. Don't disregard them; get behind them! Get behind Church function to Church office. Not office in the sense of bureaucratic structure; not a mere division of jurisdictional authority. No, Church office here is a relationship of responsibility. The essence of presbyteral priesthood is a new relationship to the mission of the Church. 'The ordination of a priest is that solemn sacramental celebration by which a person is received into the order of presbyters, assumes public office in the Church and is enabled to act in the name of Christ and of the christian community with the promised assistance of the holy Spirit'.<sup>18</sup>

The point is, priesthood is a social reality, an institutional reality, an ecclesiastical reality. Its heart is a stable relationship, a ratified relationship, between the Church and the individual. By the act of ordination the christian community at large commits itself to the ordinand and he commits himself to it. Through its responsible officers, in some approved fashion, the community declares that, having observed in him the basic competences and spiritual gifts desirable for the Church's mission at a given moment in history, it trusts him as its representative leader in its official actions. And he engages himself publicly to a life of dedicated service in an official capacity, professes his willingness to shape his life to the needs of the gospel as the Church

<sup>17</sup> 'The Paul Report Examined', in *Theology* 68 (1965), pp 89-103.

<sup>18</sup> Report . . . p 37.

sees them. He is now a *public* servant, in a sense in which the layman can never be.

Understand me: when I say 'officeholder', when I say 'representative' I am not saying 'one who parrots the party line'. The priest may have to stand *over against* the community, over against bishop or pope. Not *outside* the community, not outside bishop or pope, but conceivably over against them, even as public servant, precisely as public servant.

But what is it that office demands of the priest? What public service does it qualify him for? One service, one responsibility, before all else. Since the mission of the Church is to reconcile all men with God and with one another through the one mediator Christ, the priest's primary office is to be a personal, living, effective sign, witness, agent of the reconciling Christ who works through him. Once again the Report of the Subcommittee on the Systematic Theology of the Priesthood offers a splendid vision:

Unity in Christ is not only a personal, but above all, a communal achievement. The people of God is made up of many interlocking and interdependent communities. If one were to visualize the scope of the priest's responsibility for reconciliation in Christ, the image of concentric, ever-widening circles might serve the purpose. At the centre is Christ. The first circle is that of the particular community which the priest serves; he is to be the point of rest for the union of the congregation with one another in Christ. The next circle broadens out to the larger christian grouping which is the diocese. By his union with the bishop as head of the presbyterate, the priest witnesses to the communion of his congregation with a cluster of similar congregations, thus overcoming the danger of sectarianism or exclusivism. The third circle widens to that of the universal church, for the presbyteral order as a whole is called to assist the episcopal order in the latter's collegial care for the universal Church. The priest represents the bishop in his collegial responsibility for the whole Church as well as in his pastoral guidance of the particular church. Finally, the last circle expands to include all mankind, and here the priest, by his concern for peace and justice in the world, points to the hope that some day all men will be brothers and sisters in the same Kingdom. In a word, the priest is a public, sacramentally designated witness to the unifying presence of Christ in all these communities. This is his office: to be a sign and agent of the reconciling work of Christ.

Because this is not simply his christian calling but his public office, the priest can be called to account, in a way the lay person rarely can, for the clarity, the authenticity, the wholeness of his witness. The community can demand of him a certain level of performance, a ceaseless reaching for heights of holiness, a way of life that reflects him who was

so utterly human and yet more than human. Because much is given to him, by Christ and the community, much can be expected of him.

All well and good: the priest is the Church's officeholder, and his primary office is to represent, to re-present, the reconciling Christ. But this office is not static; it must express itself in, flow into, functions. Even if we dare not identify priesthood with some single function or several, in isolation from history and historical evolution, still the Church has come to a point in development where certain functions are regarded as special responsibilities of the ordained priest. I shall mention four in generic terms, to distinguish them from a much more arguable area: the specific means which different priests may take to implement these roles.

First, a priest is ordained to proclaim the word of God. Not simply — in a pluralistic society, perhaps not primarily — by formal preaching. The model of proclamation may be dialogue; it may be priestly presence; it may be prophetic speech and action in the tradition of Isaiah and Jesus.

Second, a priest is ordained to build up the christian community. Here lies his responsibility for leadership. But a leader in our time is not one who commands; a leader is one who can move the hearts and minds of men. It is his to co-ordinate the charisms of the community as found in the individual members. He is accountable because his is the office which looks not merely to the care of individuals but primarily, as Vatican II put it, to 'the formation of a genuine christian community'.<sup>19</sup>

Third, a priest is ordained to serve mankind. Here Vatican II opened up new vistas: 'Because the human race today is joining more and more into a civic, economic, and social unity, it is that much more necessary that priests . . . wipe out every kind of division, so that the whole human race may be brought into the unity of the family of God'.<sup>20</sup> This vision harmonizes splendidly with the fourth aim of the Council: 'the Church will build a bridge to the contemporary world'. It ties in with Paul VI's address opening the second session in 1963: 'Let the world know this: the Church looks at the world with profound understanding, with sincere admiration, and with the sincere intention not of conquering it, but of serving it; not of despising it, but of appreciating it; not of condemning it, but of strengthening and saving it'. A priest's parish is indeed the world; for the Church's mission is simply . . . man.

<sup>19</sup> *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 6.

<sup>20</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 8.

Fourth, a priest is ordained to preside at worship, especially the Eucharist. Here is the cultic role of the priest at its most proper. Here he effects the Church's most powerful expression of unity — the unity of the worshipping congregation within itself, with the diocese, with the universal Church, and with all mankind. Here is foreshadowed and promised the christian hope: that the earth and all who bleed and joy thereon will be transformed into the kingdom of God and his Christ,

To proclaim God's word, to build up the christian community, to serve mankind, to preside at community worship — these four generic functions of a priest are based on ceaseless, universal needs of God's people; they flow from the gospel dynamic. Not to be involved somehow in these functions is to be a less than responsible representative of Christ and the community. The gut issue, however, is not generic but specific: how do you implement these roles concretely, and in such fashion that the implementation is 'priestly'?

Here I leave you with no more than principles and cautions. It is impossible to devise an objective definition or draw up a descriptive list of specifically priestly works. In the perspectives of my presentation, within the theology of priesthood I have outlined, there is no such person as a 'hyphenated priest'; he is a priest in a specialized ministry, serving God and man in an age of specialization. A 'part-time priest' calls for clarification. Either the secular job is integrated with his ministry or it is not. If it is, for example because it provides financial support unobtainable from the christian community — then I see nothing but a vehicle for his ministry. If it is not, if he is living two lives in two airtight compartments, there could be a problem — not so much theological as psychological. How each priest is to specify his generic functions can only come from awareness of a community's needs, dialogue with priests and laity, guidance from superiors, prayerful reflection, and God's grace.