

tual-doctrinal side is overpoliced by the Vatican. Hardly any ecclesiastical authorities in the Catholic Church, it seems, are concerned about the mystical dimension of Catholicism, and yet many ordinary serious Catholics are longing for some leadership in that direction as their search for inspiring liturgies and for genuinely holy pastors and religious superiors seems to indicate. If von Hügel's ideas on the mystical dimension of ordinary balanced Catholicism bore fruit in the homilies heard from Catholic pulpits and in the devotional writings coming from the Catholic press, then the institutional and doctrinal dimensions of Catholicism might become properly limited by and integrated with the mystical dimension in a significant number of individual Catholics and in the church as a whole.

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What Does It Mean to Be a Priest?

Pope Benedict XVI inaugurated the Jubilee Year for Priests at Vespers on Friday, 19 June 2009, the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart. The 150th anniversary of the death of St. Jean-Baptiste Marie Vianney, the Curé of Ars, was 4 August 2009.¹ The jubilee year's theme was "Faithfulness of Christ, Faithfulness of Priests." The year will close with a three-day world meeting of priests at the Vatican ending with this year's Solemnity of the Sacred Heart, 11 June 2010. The pope has proclaimed the Curé the patron saint not only of parish priests but of all priests.

On 16 March 2009 the pope told the Congregation for the Clergy that the year was designed to encourage priests to strive for the "spiritual perfection" on which "the

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effectiveness of their ministry depends.” He directed the congregation to make “the importance of the priest’s role and mission in the church and in contemporary society ever more clearly perceived.”² In a letter sent in mid-June to the priests of the world, he said the year was “meant to deepen the commitment of all priests to interior renewal for the sake of a stronger and more incisive witness to the gospel in today’s world.”³ In his 19 June homily, he said the year was for priests an “opportunity to grow ever closer to Jesus, who counts on us, his ministers, to spread and build up his kingdom, and to radiate his love and his truth.”⁴

The Compassionate Love of God and Jesus

The heart of God burns with love and compassion for all humanity. Twenty-six times in the Old Testament, God speaks from his “heart.” The New Testament reveals “God’s boundless and passionate love for mankind.” With “infinite mercy,” God “sends his only-begotten Son into the world” to defeat “the power of evil and death” and “restore to human beings enslaved by sin their dignity as sons and daughters.” The “pierced heart of the Crucified One” is a symbol of the Son’s love. According to Benedict, the “very core of Christianity is expressed in the heart of Jesus.” It represents “the Love that saves us and even now makes us live in the eternity of God.”

In his homily Benedict recalls the saying associated with the Curé of Ars: “The priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus”⁵—the priesthood expresses Jesus’ love for the human race. The pope says, “The gift of our priestly ministry flows directly from this heart.” God’s plan is to make Christ “the heart of the world.” This plan is achieved in history “as Jesus gradually becomes the

Heart of human hearts,” starting with “those called to be closest to him: namely his priests.” “A ‘heart to heart’ encounter with Christ” occurs when priests “break the bread of his love,” “forgive sins,” and “guide the flock in his name.” Although for all baptized Christians “God’s heart calls to our hearts, inviting us to come out of ourselves, to forsake our human certainties, to trust in him, and by following his example to make ourselves a gift of unbounded love,” this is especially true for priests, for priests are “consecrated to serve, humbly yet authoritatively, the common priesthood of the faithful.” Benedict cites Vianney: “After God, the priest is everything! . . . Only in heaven will he fully realize what he is” (Homily).⁶

Vianney’s Self-Identity and Mission

According to Benedict, “all Christ’s saving activity was, and is, an expression of his ‘filial consciousness.’” Benedict sees in Vianney “the complete identification of the man with his ministry,” a filial consciousness conformed to God’s will and witnessing to Christ’s saving mercy (Letter). Benedict speaks of a “pairing of identity with mission,” or a “‘diptych’ of consecration and mission” that is appropriate to the priest. Every priest needs this if he is to arrive at “that gradual identification with Christ which will guarantee him fidelity and the fruitfulness of gospel witness.” The priest belongs totally to the Lord and totally to all people. This makes his “personal relationship with Christ” one with his vocation “to extend the kingdom of God to the ends of the earth.”⁷

Vianney understood himself as deeply identified with the sacrifice of the Mass and the cross. He was accustomed when celebrating the Mass “to offer his own life



in sacrifice,” which he saw completed with the “dialogue of salvation” and the “flood of divine mercy” that took place in the confessional. It is said that, “by the end of his life, he [would] spend sixteen to eighteen hours a day

in the confessional, and he was mobbed whenever he appeared. He heard twenty thousand confessions a year, up to three hundred a day.”⁸ To those who came to him in confession seeking a deeper spiritual life, Vianney “flung open the abyss of God’s love.” According to Benedict, “the core of [Vianney’s] teaching remains valid for

According to Benedict, the priest today must be, as Vianney was, a “forceful witness to the gospel” and not simply a teacher.

each of us: souls have been won at the price of Jesus’ own blood, and a priest cannot devote himself to their salvation if he refuses to share personally in the ‘precious cost’ of redemption” (Letter).

According to Benedict, the priest today must be, as Vianney was, a “forceful witness to the gospel” and not simply a teacher. Benedict provides some questions a priest should ask himself: “Are we truly pervaded by the Word of God? Is that Word truly the nourishment we live by, even more than bread and the things of this world? Do we really know that Word? Do we love it? Are we deeply engaged with this Word to the point that it really leaves a mark on our lives and shapes our thinking?” (Letter).

Definition of Priest

The World Synod of Bishops held in Rome 30 September–28 October 1990 was devoted to “The

Formation of Priests in the Circumstances of the Present Day.” At that synod Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk of Cincinnati, then president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, felt that, because of Vatican II’s slight of the role of priests, the priesthood had begun “to lose a sense of its own distinctiveness.” He hoped the following definition “would distinguish priesthood from other roles in the church and . . . enunciate its distinctive reality”:

The priest is a member of the Christian faithful who has been permanently configured by Christ through holy orders to serve the church, in collaboration with the local bishop, as representative and agent of Christ, the head of the church, and therefore as representative and agent of the church community before God and the world.⁹

By “permanently configured” to Christ, Pilarczyk means that the sacrament of holy orders marks the priest with an indelible character¹⁰ that operates in his unique threefold relationship as mediator: (1) He “represents and acts in the person of Christ” as “head and leader of the church” (Christ’s Mystical Body). (2) He acts as “agent of Christ in representing the people before God,” and (3) he represents “the church community to the world.” Saying that the priest is *alter Christus* (another Christ) along with all the faithful by reason of baptism, Pilarczyk suggests he is also *aliter Christus* (Christ in another way)¹¹—in fact, in those three ways.

In his discussion of Pilarczyk’s definition, Avery Dulles SJ said the terms “representative” and “agent” do not mean “substitutes” but organic embodiments of Christ either as Head or Mystical Body,¹² that is, in Christological and ecclesial aspects of the mystery. The priest becomes Christ himself “visibly and sacramentally



present” and also “one who embodies in a public way the existence of the church itself.”¹³ When the priest baptizes, “the church acts in and through him.”¹⁴ Priests are “organs through which it [the Church] prays and professes its faith.”¹⁵ According to Dulles,

No sharp distinction can be made between the activities of Christ and of the church. Because the church remains at the service of Christ, who must act visibly through his representatives, the priest must have, on occasion, a capacity to act in the person of Christ as head of the church. Such activity may fall into the categories of teaching, worship, or pastoral rule. . . . When the priest acts as a pure instrument, he is not using his own power but simply allowing the power of Christ or the Holy Spirit to work through him. . . .

There is nothing to prevent the laity from being used for certain functions by Christ or the church as instruments, but when this happens they do not act by virtue of a sacramental character that gives them a public status in the church. The priest alone is the minister radically empowered to be a public representative of the church and of Christ when he acts as Lord of the church.¹⁶

This conception of the priest’s role has traditionally been expressed in theological and magisterial teaching by the phrase *in persona Christi* and sometimes also by the phrase *in persona Ecclesiae*. In reference to both the Eucharistic consecration and the sacraments of reconciliation and baptism, Thomas Aquinas used *in persona Christi* to mean that one had “power from Christ to act in such a way that one’s acts are the acts of Christ.”¹⁷ Actions performed *in persona Ecclesiae* are “cultic” and express “the church’s devotion and spiritual sacrifice.” Both actions “require the mediation of the ordained minister acting either in the person of Christ or in the person of the church.”¹⁸

Using the former expression in a comprehensive way, Dulles succinctly expresses what it means for the priest to act in the person of Christ: “When the priest is said to act ‘in the person of Christ,’ emphasis is placed on the specifically divine quality of the effect that is produced thanks to the principal causality of Christ as head of the church. In this capacity the priest is set ‘over against’ the rest of the body of Christ.”¹⁹

The expression *in persona Christi* is most often used in reference to the words of consecration in the Eucharist. Deliberately in the first person singular, the words indicate that “Christ is the principal speaker and actor”—the priest “can be no more than an instrumental cause.”²⁰ Thus, the Eucharist is “identically the same sacrifice that was offered on Calvary. As the Council of Trent [1545-1563] clearly taught, the priest and the victim are the same; only the manner of offering is different.”²¹

Dulles stresses, as many liturgists do today, how important it is that the priest be clearly seen and understood as representing the person of Christ in liturgical actions, rather than letting the focus of attention be drawn to himself:

The ministerial priesthood involves a public representational function rather than a personal giftedness. . . . The priest at the altar is not supposed to attempt a vivid depiction or imitation of the action of Christ, or to embellish Christ’s words through dramatization. Such behavior can actually distract the congregation from the true meaning and content of the sacrifice. . . . The less the congregation are distracted by the priest’s personal style, the more likely they are to observe that the self-effacement of Christ himself serves as a model for the priest’s *persona*.²²



The Faithful and the Ministerial Priesthood

Pilarczyk, in defining the priesthood, made use of the teaching revived in Vatican II's *Lumen gentium* (LG) of two types of priesthood, "the common priesthood of the faithful" in which all the faithful, both laity and priests, share by reason of their baptism, and "the ministerial priesthood" belonging only to the ordained clergy. The distinction between the two priesthoods is not one of "degree" (as it is with priests participating only to a degree in the bishop's full priesthood), but one of "essence" (with a discontinuity between the clergy's priesthood and that of the faithful):

Though they differ from one another in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated. Each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ. The ministerial priest, by the sacred power he enjoys, molds and rules the priestly people. Acting in the person of Christ, he brings about the Eucharistic sacrifice, and offers it to God in the name of all the people. For their part, the faithful join in the offering of the Eucharist by virtue of their royal priesthood. They likewise exercise that priesthood by receiving the sacraments, by prayer and thanksgiving, by the witness of a holy life, and by self-denial and active charity. (LG §10)²³

Vatican II understands the church to include the entire People of God sharing in "the triple office of Christ as priest, prophet, and king. This the Church does by its threefold function of worship (ministry), witness, and communal life" (LG §§10-13).²⁴ But the distinctive way in which priests share in these three offices is clarified at length in LG §28. While not possessing the "highest degree of the priesthood" and being "depen-

dent on the bishops in the exercise of their power," they are consecrated to preach the gospel, shepherd the faithful, and celebrate divine worship as true priests of the New Testament. Partakers of the function of Christ the sole Mediator on their level of ministry, they announce the divine word to all. They exercise this sacred function of Christ most of all in the Eucharistic liturgy or synaxis. There, acting in the person of Christ and proclaiming his mystery, they join the offering of the faithful to the sacrifice of their Head. Until the coming of the Lord, they re-present and apply in the Sacrifice of the Mass the one sacrifice of the New Testament, namely the sacrifice of Christ offering himself once and for all to his Father as a spotless victim. (LG §28)

Priest, Prophet, and King: Which Is Primary?

Theologians have asked which of the three offices or functions is primary for the priest: the prophetic (to proclaim the gospel), the priestly (to celebrate the Eucharist), or the royal (to govern). The Scriptures show that the Twelve did all three. They were commissioned to evangelize, to baptize, to forgive sins, to celebrate the Eucharist, and to govern the community.²⁵ In the late New Testament period, "the authoritative ministry of the word and the rule of the churches were gradually entrusted to bishops and presbyters." Who presided at the liturgy at this time is not clear, but "Catholic tradition has generally assumed that the apostles designated bishops, presbyters, or their equivalents to perform this function."²⁶

In the post-New Testament period, different emphases prevail. The *Didache* (late 1st to early 2nd century) speaks of prophets as "high priests." The *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus in the early 3rd century speaks of the presbyters' tasks only in reference to "the govern-



ment of the people of God. There is no indication that presbyters are expected either to preach or to celebrate the Eucharist.” By the end of the 4th century, however, presbyters were taking on “a leadership role in the celebration of the liturgy and in preaching.”²⁷ Among the

Aquinas sees the priesthood to be primarily in “the offering of the Eucharist.”

later Fathers, the “dominant functions of bishops and presbyters” were those of a priest: “prayer, worship, and sacramental ministry.”²⁸

In the Middle Ages, “presbyters were increasingly seen as

the normal presiders at the Eucharist.” Aquinas sees the priesthood to be primarily in “the offering of the Eucharist.”²⁹

The Council of Trent, in its Decree on the Sacrament of Order, defined the priesthood in terms of priestly power: instituted by our Lord and Savior and endowed with “the power of consecrating, offering, and administering his body and blood, and likewise the power of remitting and of retaining sins” (*DS* §1764, *Church Teaches* §840).³⁰ Elsewhere, however, when discussing teaching and preaching, the Council of Trent indicated that “preaching . . . is the chief task of the bishops,” and that they may also appoint “ordinary priests . . . to feed with the words of salvation the people committed to their charge.”³¹ Canon 4 of Session 24 states: “It is the desire of the council that the office of preaching, which particularly belongs to bishops, should be exercised as often as possible for the salvation of the people.”³²

Vatican II, as we saw above, mentions only the

priestly function of the ordained priest in *LG* §10, but in §28 seems to give equal prominence to all three roles. However, in *LG* §25 the council indicates that, “among the principal duties of bishops, the preaching of the gospel occupies an eminent place,” and in *Presbyterorum ordinis* (*PO*), the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, the proclamation of the gospel is indicated as the “primary duty” of priests:

The People of God finds its unity first of all through the word of the living God, which is quite properly sought from the lips of priests. Since no one can be saved who has not first believed, priests, as co-workers with their bishops, have as their primary duty the proclamation of the gospel of God to all. In this way they fulfill the Lord’s command: “Go into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk 16:15). Thus they establish and build up the People of God. (*PO* §4, and see §13)³³

Regarding the post-Vatican II period, Dulles argues that John Paul II “seems to give priority to the sacerdotal function of the ordained” and thereby remains closer to Aquinas and Trent. In his 1980 Holy Thursday Letter, he writes that “the priest fulfills his principal mission and is manifested in all his fullness when he celebrates the Eucharist.”³⁴

Jean Galot SJ goes beyond this discussion of what is primary in his famous study of the priesthood where he argues that Jesus came as Shepherd that combines all three offices:

Jesus expands the reality of the priesthood. Whereas in the Old Testament the priestly function was almost entirely confined to the domain of worship, the shepherd takes on the functions of the prophet, of the priest in the cultic sense, and of the king, all at the same time.³⁵



For Galot, “the office of shepherd is not to be defined in opposition to the ministry of word and sacrament, but rather as including them. . . . The three functions of preaching, worship, and community leadership become for Galot so many expressions of the shepherd’s love.”³⁶

Most theologians, however, seem to focus on whether the office of priest or prophet is primary. Benedict seeks to overcome division over this issue in his own distinctive way. He fears that too much emphasis on proclamation could lead to “a social and functional concept” of the priesthood in service to the community, to the detriment of the “sacramental-ontological concept” of the priest related to sacrifice.

Too much emphasis upon the latter office, however, can lead to deemphasizing mission. He therefore links the two offices to Christ, and argues that there is both a primacy of the Eucharistic sacrifice and a primacy of proclamation, and that making both offices primary is

not “contradictory” because they coincide in the “very person of Christ,” who is in himself both priest-sacrifice and Word, “ontologically open to the relationship with the Father” and obedient to his will.³⁷

In Benedict’s understanding of the priest, “ontological-sacramental identity and evangelizing mission must never be separated” and, again, “missionary preaching and worship can never be separated.” This unity allows Benedict to correlate the two offices: “The priestly min-

istry and identity” is “essentially missionary,” and the “purpose of every priest’s mission is one of worship.” Benedict thus seems to understand worship and mission as related to each other in such a way that neither is complete without the other. “All people offer themselves to God as a living sacrifice” in “praise of the Creator,” through whom they receive “that love which they in turn are called to offer to each other in abundance.” Thus there are

two essential elements of the priestly ministry. Jesus sends the Apostles out to proclaim the gospel and gives them the power to expel evil spirits. “Proclamation” and “power,” that is, “word” and “sacrament,” are therefore the two basic pillars of priestly service, over and above its possible multiple circumstances. (Audience)

As John Chrysostom says, “the sacrament of the altar” and the “sacrament of the poor man” are “two aspects of the same mystery.” For Benedict, “Love for one’s neighbor, attention to justice and to the poor, are not so much themes of a moral society as they are an expression of a sacramental conception of Christian morality,” because “the spiritual sacrifice of all the faithful is fulfilled in union with that of Christ, the one Mediator . . . through the ministry of priests.” The “sacrifice that priests offer in an unbloody and sacramental way” allows the faithful to “combine their sacrifice with Christ’s through love of God and of one’s neighbor” (Audience).

The Ontological Distinctiveness of the Priest

The priest’s ministry of proclamation is *apostolic*. The mandate “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole of creation” (Mk 16:15) is given only to the “Eleven” (Mk 16:14) as a function of their priesthood

Benedict seems to understand worship and mission as related to each other in such a way that neither is complete without the other.



established at the Last Supper.³⁸ But the priest's ministry is also *sacramental*, for it is rooted in the priest's "sacramental configuration to Christ" (Address, 16 March).

For Benedict, although "the whole Church is missionary" and "every Christian, by virtue of baptism and confirmation quasi ex officio, receives the mandate to profess the faith publicly," the "ministerial priesthood" is "ontologically distinct" from "the baptismal priesthood that is also known as the 'common priesthood'" (Address, 16 March). He is here reaffirming Vatican II's note at the end of *Lumen gentium* that, in episcopal consecration, "an *ontological* participation in *sacred* functions" is given."³⁹ Here configuration and ontology come together, denoting the sacramental character given to the priest (Address, 16 March).

The "true newness of the New Testament" is found in "a person: God, who becomes a human being and draws humans to himself."⁴⁰ Benedict understands the ministerial priest as one who is distinctively assimilated into the life of this person, into a "new style of life" that was inaugurated by Jesus' intimate union with the Twelve before they went out to preach for him (Letter). This intimate union coupled with mission is evidenced in Mk 16:14-15, where Jesus is "revealed to the Eleven" and then tells them to "go into the whole world and proclaim the good news to all creation." See also Mt 28:16-20, where Jesus addresses himself to the "eleven disciples," and, after declaring the "full authority" he has from on high, tells them to "go . . . and make disciples of all nations." Jesus himself, who was "sent," passes on the mission that his Father entrusted to him: "As the Father has sent me, I also send you" (Jn 20:21).

From this Christological center, the "ministry of the apostles" is born:

Jesus created a new figure of twelve chosen men,

which after his resurrection is continued in the ministry of those who are apostles, that is, "sent." . . . Jesus gave his power to the apostles in such a way that he established their ministry as a continuation of his own mission. "Whoever receives you receives me," he says to the Twelve (Mt 10:1&40).

The Apostles, according to Benedict, are drawn "into a community of mission with Jesus" that is sacramental because it transcends human powers:

Of themselves, on their own resources, they can do nothing that apostles ought to do. How on their own could they say, "Your sins are forgiven you"? How could they say, "This is my body"? How could they impose hands and say, "Receive the Holy Spirit"? . . . Their "total inability" draws them into a community of mission with Jesus. A ministry of such a sort, in which the human being on the basis of divine communication acts and gives what can never be given or done on the basis of human resources, is in the church's tradition called a *sacrament*. If in its usage the church calls priestly ordination a *sacrament*, this is the meaning that is intended: This human being is in no way performing works which issue from natural ability or talent. . . . The power Christ gave to reconcile, shepherd, and teach is continued unchanged in successors, but they are true successors only if "they persevere in the teaching of the apostles" (Ac 2:42).⁴¹

According to Dulles, the ordained "receive their gifts through apostolic succession in office, which confers upon them the sacred character of order, empowering them to act in the name of the church and in the name of Christ as head of the church. This double empowerment . . . comes to clearest expression in worship."⁴²

Notes

¹ John Vianney's anniversary was "an inspiration" for Benedict to



inaugurate the Year for Priests (Address at Castel Gandolfo, 5 August 2009, <www.zenith.org>, 17 August 2009. Vianney was born in 1786, became curé of Ars in 1818, died at Ars in 1859, and was canonized in 1925.

² Address to the Congregation for the Clergy, 16 March 2009, <www.vatican.va> (hereafter, Address, and noted in text).

³ Letter proclaiming a Year for Priests on the 150th anniversary of the “dies natalis” of the Curé of Ars, 16 June 2009, <www.vatican.va> (hereafter, Letter, and noted in text).

⁴ Homily, 19 June 2009, <www.vatican.va>, (hereafter, Homily, and noted in text).

⁵ Benedict is citing Vianney from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, §1589.

⁶ For Vianney, without priests there would be no church, for through their proclamation of the Word and administration of the sacraments priests produce the church. Vatican II says, “Priests . . . establish and build up the People of God,” *Presbyterorum ordinis (PO)* §4.

⁷ Benedict XVI, General Audience, 1 July 2009, www.vatican.va (hereafter, Audience, and noted in text).

⁸ Catherine Fournier, “Saint John Vianney,” <www.domestic-church.com> downloaded 9/30/2009.

⁹ Synod 1990/Archbishop Pilarczyk, “Defining the Priesthood,” *Origins* 20/19 (18 October 1990): 299 (italics in original).

¹⁰ “Indelible character” goes back to St. Augustine, but became church teaching with the Council of Trent (1545-1563): “In the sacrament of orders, . . . a character is imprinted which can neither be blotted out nor taken away” (*DS* §§1767 & 1774, *The Church Teaches* §§843 & 847).

¹¹ *Origins* 20/19, pp. 299-300.

¹² Avery Dulles SJ, *The Priestly Office: A Theological Reflection* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), p. 14 (hereafter, Dulles).

¹³ Dulles, pp. 14-15.

¹⁴ Dulles, p. 36.

¹⁵ Dulles, p. 14.

¹⁶ Dulles, pp. 14-15.

¹⁷ David N. Power OMI, “Representing Christ in Community and Sacrament,” in *Being a Priest Today*, ed. Donald J. Goergen OP (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992), pp. 97-123, at 99 and 101. According to Power, in Thomas “the accent is on the power that the priest receives from Christ, and on the words that he pronounces, rather

than on any personal likeness of the priest to Christ” (p. 122 n. 5).

¹⁸ Power, pp. 101-102.

¹⁹ Dulles, p. 37.

²⁰ Dulles, pp. 39-40 & 36.

²¹ Dulles, p. 40. “For it is one and the same victim: he who now makes the offering through the ministry of priests and he who then offered himself on the cross; the only difference is the manner of the offering” (*DS* §1743, *Church Teaches* §749).

²² Dulles, pp. 11, 40.

²³ Quotations are from Walter M. Abbott, *Documents of Vatican II*.

²⁴ Abbott, *Documents*, p. 27 n. 30.

²⁵ Dulles, p. 8.

²⁶ Dulles, pp. 8-9.

²⁷ Dulles, pp. 9-10.

²⁸ Dulles, p. 32.

²⁹ Dulles, pp. 9-11.

³⁰ See also Dulles, pp. 1 & 32-33.

³¹ See the Latin and English in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman P. Tanner SJ, vol. 2, p. 669 (hereafter, Tanner).

³² Tanner 2:763; see Dulles, p. 16.

³³ See Dulles, 16-17.

³⁴ *Dominicae Cena*e (On the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist), 24 February 1980, §2; Dulles, p. 33.

³⁵ Jean Galot SJ, *Theology of the Priesthood*, trans. Roger Balducelli OSFS (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984), p. 49.

³⁶ Dulles, p. 48. *LG* uses the concept of the Shepherd both in the all-inclusive way (bishops preside “over the flock whose shepherds they are, as teachers of doctrine, priests of sacred worship, and officers of good order” §20) and in the limited way (as rulers of their flock): see *LG* §28 above, and “bishops . . . undertake Christ’s own role as Teacher, Shepherd, and High Priest” (*LG* §21).

³⁷ Benedict XVI, “General Audience,” 24 June 2009, <www.vatican.va>, 1-2.

³⁸ In Mt, the mandate “to make disciples of all the nations” is also not given to everyone but only to the “eleven disciples” (28:16), who at the Last Supper, before the departure of Judas, were called “the Twelve” (26:20). On other occasions, they were also singled out as the “twelve disciples” or the “twelve apostles” (10:1&2).

³⁹ Prefatory Note of Explanation, no. 2; Abbott, *Documents*, p. 99.

⁴⁰ Synod 1990/Cardinal Ratzinger, "Biblical Foundations of Priesthood," *Origins* 20/19 (18 October 1990): 310-314, at 311 (hereafter, Ratzinger).

⁴¹ Ratzinger, pp. 311-313. Ratzinger also shows how "the principle of apostolic succession is persuasively established" by Paul in his discourse to the presbyters at Miletus, where Paul states that the Holy Spirit has called them "as overseers to rule the church of God which he won by his blood" (Ac 20:28). According to Ratzinger, if the Holy Spirit, and not the community, established the overseers (*episcopoi*) as "the gift of the Lord," the ministry has "the dignity of *sacrament*," and the "apostolic office of shepherding Christ's flock is thereby continued"; see also 1 P 5:1-4, where the apostle calls himself a co-presbyter (*sympresbyteros*) and thus "connects theologically the ministry of apostles and presbyters," and thus "manifestly establishes the principle of apostolic succession."

⁴² Dulles, p. 35.

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Questions for Personal and Group Reflection

1. When has a particular priest been a "conduit" of grace for me? When have you been placed in being a "conduit" of grace for another?
2. How would I want to say what it means to be priest?

Early Church Models of Some Elderly Ministries

For the past decade I have been facilitating reminiscence groups with women religious who are retired from their primary ministries. Reminiscing leads them to take responsibility for their life stories while taking note of those stories' historical and cultural contexts. It also alerts them to anticipate their needs and choose the best ways to meet them.

The sisters enhanced their memories and discussion by integrating scriptural themes into them. They improved their ability to manage their lives and respond creatively to the needs of others by infusing their memories with informed religious imagination. This article

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**past and
present**