

The Priesthood in Crisis

Part III

What is a Priest?

A priest is one who is called by the Holy Spirit. Any understanding of priesthood, therefore, must begin with an understanding of vocation. Vocation means always a divine initiative gradually recognized in a man's life and freely responded to. It is not primarily a call to personal sanctity (though obviously this is included); it is a call to service — to the building up of the Body of Christ. It is, in other words, what in the technical language of theology is called a charism, i.e., a grace given to a person for the service of others and especially of a community.



This call involves a radical reorientation of a person's life: the finding of a new center for his life — the service of the Body of Christ.

It is not a call that is given or responded to once and for all; but a continuous process going on in a man's life.

This is the core of priestly vocation: it is a man in his total person responding to God; as such it is unapproachable by any one else. It is the mystery of divine grace at work in a man's life.

Guest Columnist

In our age, we seldom hear of kings. Except for a few figureheads, they have passed from the stage of history into oblivion.



Divine rights of kings, power through heredity, political power through generation, majesty as an inborn right—all these have disappeared.

Unfortunately, along with the concept of earthly kings, the idea of a "King of Kings", a king Who is truly divine, has also faded from the consciousness of humans. And so very few people acknowledge the power, the majesty, the very existence of a Christ, Who is King of all nations. Pilate, the quintessence of skepticism and cynicism, once asked a God-man "Are you a king?" And it was, in his opinion, only a man, a prisoner at that, who answered: "You have

The vocation-event by itself is incomplete. To be a priest a man must also be called by the Church. The minister who acts in the name of the community must be commissioned by the community: its people, its priests, and especially its bishop, who is the preeminent sign of the unity of the community.

The vocation-event, therefore, is completed by ordination — which is the community's solemn celebration of the reality of a person's being called by and responding to the Holy Spirit. The community speaks over him an efficacious prayer — a Sacrament — which confers grace on him and a claim on the Spirit.

Ordination confers on the one ordained a public office in the Church. Because it is a public office it involves accountability. He is accountable to God and to the Church.

What a Priest Does:

The public office in the Church to which the priest is called determines the nature of his mission. His mission is to share in the mission of the Church. And what is the Church's mission? The Church's mission is, above all else, to be the Sign and Instrument of the unity of God's people. The Church's mission is to reconcile all men in Christ. The purpose of all ministry in the Church, therefore, is to be the sign and instrument of saving unity, of the reconciliation of men in Christ. Just as the bishop is the sign of the

unity of the local church and of its unity with other local churches, so the priest is to be the sign of the unity of the local congregation — so that this congregation may be in vital union with the larger unit, the diocese. It is precisely as the sign and center of unity that the priest presides at the Eucharist in the local congregation.

All other ministries exercised by the priest find their meaning and integration in the one basic ministry: the ministry of reconciliation, of building the Body of Christ.

a) Ministry of the Word:

The priest as public office holder in the Church is responsible for the Word — for the preaching of the Gospel. This includes especially the proclamation of the Gospel in the liturgy, but also the extension of that proclamation in all sorts of instructional work. His task is to bring people in all possible ways to confront the Word of God in the circumstances of their lives: to help them see the Word of God as a Word that calls and invites, that heals and reconciles, that saves and judges.

b) Ministry of the Sacrament:

The priest as public office holder in the Church is responsible for Sacrament as well as for the Word. He is responsible for the whole prayer life of the Church, especially its public prayer, the Liturgy.

—to be continued—

By Father William J. Schifferli

Christ . . . the King For all Ages

Father Schifferli is pastor of Christ the King Church, Irondequoit.

said it; I am a King. I was born for this; I came into the world for this: to bear witness to the truth, and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice."

Pilate, speaking for so many in his day, and in ours, said: "Truth? What is that?" He did not believe, nor do the vast majority of men believe today, that Christ is and was a king.

But we believe, and that belief is the truth and that truth shall make us free. For acknowledging Christ as King of Heaven and Earth, does not place us in bondage, does not shackle us, does not degrade us, but rather gives us the true freedom of the spirit, for in that kingship of Christ we share, through Baptism and all of God's wonderful sacra-

ments, in the Kingdom of God.

Many people are loyalty-conscious today: loyalty to democratic principles, loyalty to communism, loyalty to militant racism, both black and white.

Most of these loyalties are divisive, splitting people into violently opposed factions. There is one loyalty, however, which is unitive, and that is loyalty to Christ, the King. Under His single and singular banner, all peoples can be united in a common loyalty, a common brotherhood, a most uncommon common love.

That day when "the banners of the King go forth" need not necessarily be an un-reached Utopia. It lies within the reach and grasp of all peoples. But to achieve this goal, to make this dream a reality, to establish a veritable kingdom of peace, love, and harmony on earth, men must learn to recognize Christ as King, Christ as Victor, Christ as Ruler.

Editorial

Baseball's Major League Peons

Although it may not seem to have the moral implications of such matters as abortion or the religious relevancy of aid to nonpublic schools, the issue of baseball's reserve clause which the Supreme Court is considering this term has sociological significance.

The reserve clause has been in effect for about a half-century and prohibits players from leaving one team to accept a better-paying or more desirable job with another team. Baseball legally has been established as a "sport" and not a business, a special position not afforded other professional athletics.

The challenge has been made by Curt Flood, formerly of the St. Louis Cardinals, who was traded in 1970 to Philadelphia—owners are not prohibited from such bartering. Flood, a long-time player with St. Louis, did not want to leave the team for Philadelphia and refused to join the new team.

After a year's banishment, baseball re-

lented somewhat and allowed him to sign with Washington. The fact that the layoff left the player unable to perform to his personal standards and he retired is secondary. His suit began before that.

Those who support baseball say the reserve clause is necessary to keep the organization from crumbling, that it is a sport and not a business, and that players get paid higher in baseball than they could elsewhere.

The first contention holds water but anyone using any logic at all must say that baseball is indeed a business and as such must cope with problems on the same basis that every other money-making enterprise does.

As to salaries, that is still the individual's concern. If he feels he is chafed despite being paid \$100,000 a year, that is his business. If he feels he could do better by himself and his family by dickering with other teams, then he should be

allowed to do so, all within limits of contractual obligations, of course.

Baseball somewhere along the line established itself as the "national pastime" and thus mysteriously seemed above the structures imposed on other parallel businesses. But as many another institution has found, times have changed. Unfortunately baseball has not kept up.

As its own renegade, Bill Veeck, pointed out recently in Buffalo, baseball is trying to present the same product in 1971 that it did in 1901.

Now that the powers-that-be have shifted the Senators out of the nation's capital and in light of its decreasing popularity in national opinion polls, it is ludicrous to think of baseball as any sort of official "national pastime."

It should be treated for what it is — a going business. And its professionals should be treated as businessmen not as modern-day peons.