

# The Priesthood in Crisis

Consequences of the Ministries of the Word and the Sacrament

## PART IV

The priest is also responsible for all that Word and Sacrament imply in human life: for the building of charity in the community of

men — a task which may often mean the immediate alleviation of human suffering; also for the building of justice in the world — a task which many times will mean social involvement and the work of reforming the structures of society.



Thus all the various ministries of the priest find their unity in his service of Word and Sacrament. The notion of the hyphenated priest has actually had a long history in the life of the Church. It is not really new, though its implications may be broadened today. Yet all these varied ministries are concrete ways of carrying on the ministry of word and Sacrament in today's world. All find their unity in and are subordinated to the configuration of the priest to

Christ as Reconciler, to Christ who, though He was Lord, made Himself the Servant of all. Indeed, it might well be said that involvement in the building and humanizing of the social order is presupposed by the ministry of Word and Sacrament, for there can be no true celebration of Word and Sacrament unless true community has been formed.

The priest, then, is witness to the reconciling activity of Christ going on in the world. Yet his witness is not only to the present reality of reconciliation as a process going on now in the world; he is also a witness to its future consummation. That is why his witness is eschatological: it works in the present, but points to the future Kingdom of God, when all men will be reconciled to God in Christ.

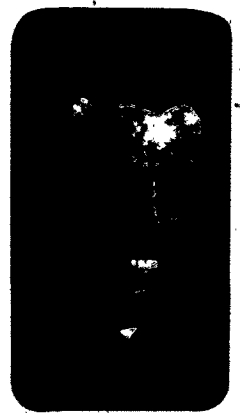
Because the priest's witness is eschatological, it was seen, very early in the life of the Church, that it was fitting that it be a celibate witness. For celibacy, a radical commitment to the Kingdom of God, points not only to the present reality of the Kingdom, but also to the "Not Yet" of the Kingdom, to that final consummation when the Son will hand over the Kingdom to the Father and God will be all in all.

It can be readily admitted that the charism of ministry and the charism of celibacy are not the same. Theologically, the Church has the prerogative of linking these two charisms together or she is free to separate them. The question is essentially a pastoral and prudential one. Is it good for the Church that these charisms be linked together or today would it be better for the Church to separate them? Is it good for individual priests that priestly ministry and celibacy be connected or would it be good for some that they be separated? These, I say, are prudential questions which ultimately must be answered in terms of the needs of the times. There certainly are situations in the Church today where it would seem that the ordination of married men to the priesthood would serve the good of the Church. And it may well be that married clergy will become an important aspect of priestly ministry in the future—supplementing, not supplanting, the celibate clergy.

—to be continued—

## Guest Columnist

In a meeting of a Parish Council a priest was apologizing to the members for his lack of knowledge, especially in the fields of sociology and psychology.



A doctor serving on the council spoke up: Father, I don't care how much you know about these things. As a priest in the parish, I don't expect you to be skilled in these departments. My prime concern is that you offer Mass for our people, hear our confessions, visit our sick and instruct our children. If I need help in these other departments, I can always

find the experts."

This incident took me back to a meeting of priests in this area where the question was

proposed by one who has since been laicized: "What is the role of a priest?"

It seemed to me that after eight years of training in the seminary he should have known what was expected of him. Certainly a young doctor or lawyer has a pretty good idea of what will be expected of him the day he receives his degree and certification.

I realize that we must educate certain priests to be specialists in given areas. The church has always sent some priests on for graduate studies.

My concern is about the great cross section of these who will be working as parish priests. While we must continue to increase our knowledge of modern day problems, it would seem that we should never lose sight of our prime privilege and responsibility to be "Another Christ"; i.e., to teach His doctrine by our word and example; to rule our flocks

as Good Shepherds and endeavour to make them holy with the Holiness of Christ.

As one of many priests who have been involved in many meetings about many things during the past few years, I am convinced that we can't run the Church like the United States Government or General Motors. While we must be involved in many projects, prime time must be given to the care of souls.

In the minds of many who will read this article, this will be considered an over-simplification of our roles as priests. It is my opinion that Christ intended that the goal should be simple to avoid the confusion that today seems to surround us. I also feel that, like the doctor on the Parish Council, this is what our people expect and have a right to demand.

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## Role of the Priest

By Father Joseph F. Hogan

## Editorial

# Is U.S. Church, Press Racist?

In a talk to members of the Catholic Press Association in Boston recently, Dr. Patricia Goler, chairman of the Boston Archdiocesan Commission, laid it on the line saying that the U.S. Catholic press "in general" is "racist, cowardly and hypocritical."

She described the black person as an "invisible man" in the Catholic press, adding that this "invisibility" reflects the status of black people in policy-forming and decision-making in Church structures.

She further stated that the Church and its press have not challenged "racism and injustice generally in our society."

She said one of the possible reasons for this is that the "Catholic press has become so permeated with racism that it cannot see them as issues that should be considered."

That Dr. Goler was guilty of "overkill" was made evident when in answer to a question she admitted that she didn't read

many of the papers represented at the meeting.

But regardless of that and contrapuntal to the personal hurt rendered by her remarks were the shame of hearing of black Catholics being refused Communion in a New Orleans church.

She cited other examples of the Church or members thereof ignoring black Catholics which are un-Christian, whether caused by racism or by a system of priorities belittling the issue comparatively to other Church problems.

The role of the black in the Church constitutes an issue which is not going to fade, nor should it. At a meeting of the executive board of the National Black Lay Catholic Caucus in Rochester recently, another convention was scheduled for Cleveland to "map strategy and plans for the role of the Black Catholic in nation building and to continue its move towards a greater participation of Black Catholics in the policy-making and decisions of the

Catholic Church as they affect the lives of black people."

Father Lawrence Lucas, a leading black spokesman, says in "Black Priest, White Church" that Catholicism in this country is white. He adds that the Church treats the problems of black people in a context of white superiority-black inferiority but that "human distortion cannot destroy the Divine reality" and he will "stay and fight."

In these days of defections and religious apathy, it should gladden the heart of all Catholics that there are those trying to break down the doors to get "in."

Blacks don't want platitudes, rationale, sympathy. They want constructive roles and responsibilities in the Church. Their actions prove they want the Church. If white Catholics in the U.S. do indeed hold the Keys to the Kingdom then they had better start opening the doors for their black brethren. If for no other reason, to save their being battered down.