

The Priest in Intimate Alliance with the Three Persons of the Trinity



As we proceed to the Holy Triduum of Holy Week and the institution of the hierarchical priesthood and the Most Holy Eucharist, we are impelled to reflect on the enormous dignity and special calling of the priesthood with its graces and obligations that beg for help from on high in order to fulfill its sacred duties. Later this month the Church will canonize two of Our Lady's beloved sons who have lived exemplary lives imitating Jesus and who have shown special devotion to the Mother of Jesus, who is also the Mother of Christ's Mystical Body, the Church. Our Lady addressed these words to her beloved sons saying they are of the utmost importance. The image above is from the Holy Card commemorating Most. Rev. Bishop Paul F. Leibold's Silver Jubilee of ordination to the priesthood, 1940-1965. He is another of Our Lady's beloved sons so dear to her heart and so vital to this message which is so urgent for the entire church.

“Beloved sons, so cherished and greatly blessed among the sons of men, be careful to uphold the sanctity and dignity of your calling. Let the faithful see in you the favored and especially loved imitators of the Son of God. Be modest in your dress and speech as becomes those of so exalted a vocation. The apparel and manners of a man of the world is not for you, who, though living in the world, must not take on its ways.

It is through you that the grace of the Sacraments is given to souls. Strive then to make yourselves more worthy receptacles to receive these graces and transmit them in turn to the souls under your care.

Dear sons, I ask you to practice self-denial and penance in a special manner, because it is you who must lead my children in the way of peace. Yet this peace will come only by way of the sword, the flaming sword of love. If, therefore, you love my Son and wish to honor me, heed my admonition and be the first to give the example of a life of penance and self-denial. Thus, by sanctification from within you, you will become a bright and burning light to the faithful, who look to you for help and guidance.

I am pleased, dearly beloved sons, by the honor and love you have until now accorded me. Will you now go further and honor me yet more by taking my words to your hearts and doing what I ask?”

(Sister Mildred Mary Neuzil, Diary, OUR LADY OF AMERICA©, Pg. 20, Sept. 26-27, 1957.)

The commission Jesus gave His apostles and extended throughout the generations to those ordained to the priesthood and to this special holiness conveys the same exhortation as Mary's to a life of simplicity and contradiction to the ways of the world.

Then having summoned his twelve disciples, he gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every kind of disease and infirmity. ... These twelve Jesus sent forth, having instructed them thus: "Do not go in the direction of the Gentiles, nor enter the towns of Samaritans; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach the message, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand! Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils. Freely you have received, freely give. Do not keep gold, or silver, or money in your girdles, no wallet for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staff; for the laborer deserves his living. (The Holy Bible, Catholic Action Edition, Matthew 10: 1-10.)

In Our Lady's own words the priest must preach first and foremost by example: **"Be the first to give the example of a life of penance and self-denial." "Let the faithful see in you the favored and especially loved imitators of the Son of God." "By sanctification from within you, you will become a bright and burning light to the faithful."** Not only does Our Lady exhort her priests to speak and dress modestly and not to take on the manners of a man of the world, but to be in the business of making saints for God's glory. The priest must be a bold spiritual leader in standing against the faulty wisdom of the world and its lusts of the flesh that suffocate the Indwelling Life of God in the soul. The word "sacrifice" means to make holy! On February 11, 1958, Our Lady said:

"I ask greater sacrifices of the most favored and beloved of my children. I ask in the Name and for the love of my Son, Who so desires this. If I ask for reform of life, it is first from the chosen that I look for it. They must by the example of a sacrificial life lead the way for souls to union with Christ, honoring the Father by putting on His Spirit and His likeness in all things." (Diary, Pg. 24.)

But, on July 18, 1959, Our Lord Himself spoke with sorrow of the pride of souls who resist His grace, especially that of His chosen ones, which caused Him so much sorrow in His Passion.

"O My priests, My religious, what would I not do for you if you would only let me! I come daily laden with graces, which you daily refuse. ... It is from you I expect everything, and you give Me but the husks of your affections. ...

My little white dove, [Jesus' name for Sister Mildred] it was this ingratitude on the part of My priests and My religious that caused Me so much sorrow in My passion. Oh, how they resist My grace! How they fight against My love! So fearful are they that I will deprive them of their tawdry trinkets that they turn their backs lest they see the reproach in My eyes." (Diary, Pg. 33.)

St. John Eudes, a French missionary and founder of the Eudists and of the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Refuge for women of ill fame who wished to do penance, was ordained to the priesthood in 1625. In 1643 he started the Society of Jesus and Mary for the education of priests and for missionary work. He died in 1680, was beatified April 25, 1909 and canonized in 1925. He authored a magnificent work on the dignity and obligations of the priesthood and lived well that of which he wrote. (Ref: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05596a.htm>)

He stated that bad priests are a sign of God's anger with the sin of His people. He likewise stated that good priests are a sign of God's mercy, the most precious grace God bestows on mankind and upon His Church, for good priests are men after God's own heart, seeking only His glory and the salvation of souls. St. John gives this beautiful description of a priest as a man after God's own heart. He portrays **the priest's intimate alliance with the Most Holy Trinity,**

for the priest is the primary instrument God uses to baptize His people into that sanctifying grace of the Divine Indwelling of the Most Holy Trinity and to deepen and restore it with every Holy Communion and forgiveness of sin.

The holy priest is one of the treasures of the Great King, having in his keeping the infinite abundance of God's mercy to enrich worthy souls. He is an inexhaustible fountain of living water, open and accessible to all those who long to come to drink the waters of salvation. ... He is an ever burning and shining light set in the candelabra of Mother Church, burning before God and shining before men: burning in his own love for God, shining by his charity for his fellow man; burning with the perfection of his inner life, shining by the perfection of his exterior deportment; burning in fervent prayer for his people, shining by his preaching of the word of God. ... He dispels the ignorance and darkness of error and radiates on every side bright beams of celestial light. He extinguishes sin and gives life and grace to the multitudes. ... He is a seraph sent by God to teach men the science of salvation which is concerned only with knowing and loving Almighty God and His Divine Son, Jesus Christ. ... He is a captain in the mighty army of God, always ready to battle for the glory of God and the defense of Holy Mother Church. ... For him the conquest of kingdoms means only the salvation of souls for each soul is a kingdom more precious than all the empires of the world.

(Ref: [http://www.liberius.net/livres/The Priest: his dignity and obligations 000000375.pdf](http://www.liberius.net/livres/The_Priest:_his_dignity_and_obligations_000000375.pdf))

What a sacred calling is that of the priesthood! Without an intimate relation to the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, who could begin to live up to its holy demands? Pray that God will purify, strengthen and preserve our priests against His enemies and theirs, for the attacks of Satan against Christ and His Church are endless and vehement, and the leaders of the Church will be Satan's first targets. Satan is more brilliant than any man and knows that if you strike the shepherd the sheep will scatter and many will be lost. Not even Our Lady, greatest of all human persons, shared in the ordained priesthood of Christ, though none could have shared in His redemptive sacrifice as profoundly as she. She has a special love for her beloved sons who extend Jesus into the world. Let us ask her to protect them against all the assaults of the devil and his cohorts in seeking to destroy them and the souls entrusted to them. Like Jesus, the priest has the power to cast out demons, to exorcise them from the souls of God's people. Let us hold fast to the truth that the God within is always greater than the one without. St. John Eudes, in the work noted above, elaborates on the intimate alliance of the priest with the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, an alliance which speaks to our own call to live in the Divine Indwelling Presence of the Most Holy Trinity and the shared priesthood of the laity through our Baptism.

Did God say to any of the angels: "Thou art a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech?" Did He ever pronounce to the Archangels, the Principalities or the Powers what His Son said to you: "Whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven?" (Matt. 16, 19). To which of the Cherubim or Seraphim did He ever give the power to forgive sin, to bestow grace, to close hell and open the gates of heaven, to bring God into the hearts of men in the Blessed Sacrament? To whom in the universe did He grant the power of offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar, to immolate Him and give His Body and Soul to the faithful?

To which of the heavenly spirits did God ever speak the words He says to every priest, "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you?" (John 20, 21). ... I send you to establish the reign of God and to exercise on earth the very functions which I exercised, to continue My work of redemption, to lead the same life that I led and to practice the same virtues that I practiced. Thus, it is clear that you are not only the visible angels of the God of Armies; you are far greater than angels in power and authority. Hence, you must live a life more perfect in purity and sanctity than that of the angels. ...

You are the most noble part of the Mystical Body of Christ. You are the eyes, the mouth, the tongue, the heart of the Church, in other words, of Jesus Christ Himself. You are His eyes for through you the Good Shepherd watches over His flock. Through you He enlightens and guides His sheep. Through you He weeps over the transgressions of those who fall by the wayside, or become prey of the wolves. Through you He weeps over the death of His dear Lazarus, that is, of the souls of those who are dead through sin. ... What marvels, what favors, what greatness in the sacerdotal dignity! Yet there is still more!

You are the associates of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, in most sublime and mysterious intimacy. ... God the Father associates you with Himself in the highest of all functions, the generation of His Divine Son. He embraces you in His divine paternity, making you fathers of that very Son since yours is the power to form and generate Him in the souls of the faithful. He has chosen you to be fathers of His people, real fathers in word and action. You bear within you the living image of the divine paternity. "O Priest," cries St. Augustine, "thou are the vicar and father of Christ."

God the Son associates you with Himself in His noble perfections and His divine operations. He makes you participants in His role as mediator between God and man, in the dignity of judge of the universe, in His name and office as Saviour of the world. He gives you power to offer with Him to His Eternal Father the sacrifice of Redemption which He renews daily on the altars of the world, the most sublime action that He ever performed and ever will perform.

God, the Holy Ghost associates you with Him in His divine actions. Why did the Holy Spirit come into the world? Was it not to dispel the darkness of ignorance and sin? Was it not to enlighten men's minds with a celestial light, to fire their hearts with divine love, to reconcile sinners to God, to destroy sin, to communicate grace, to sanctify souls, and to establish the Church? Was it not to apply to mankind the fruits of the passion and death of the Redeemer, to destroy the old man and bring to life within us Jesus Christ Our Lord? ... Is it not true that all the offices of the priesthood are designed for the sole purpose of forming and causing God to live in the souls of His people?

Truly you have an intimate alliance with the Three Eternal Persons of the Blessed Trinity!

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