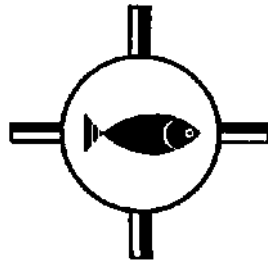


LIBERAL CATHOLIC INSTITUTE OF STUDIES



Unit 1

THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

Paper 2

PREPARATORY

PART II



THE PRIESTHOOD

Chapter 1 [Holy Orders in the Liberal Catholic Church](#)

By the Rev. A. J. Washington TH.L.

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By the Rt. Rev. E. J. Burton M.A.

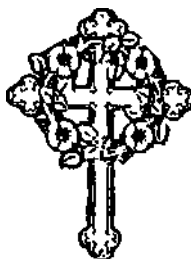
Set Reading:

Hodson, G.: The Priestly Ideal

Washington, A. J.: A Pastoral Primer

Recommended Reading:

Pitkin, W. H.: Qualifications for the Priesthood



THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

Preparatory, Part 2

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HOLY ORDERS IN THE LIBERAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

By the Rev. Tony Washington

The aim of this chapter is to give some general information to those who feel they may be called to the Priesthood of the Liberal Catholic Church.

Before it is possible to discuss qualifications for the priesthood or for other major, or minor orders, it is necessary to be clear about the Church's concepts regarding the privilege of serving her in any way at all, and also how she views authority and responsibility.

The Church exists to forward the work of her Master Christ, in the world. She therefore has a duty to ensure that those she asks to take over any sphere of activity, no matter how seemingly mundane or simple are the most suited and reliable persons she can find. It may be stated thus: Whoso is allowed to work receives a favour and confers none. In serving the Church one is serving her Master directly even though His orders or requests are mediated through the Church officers. It must also be quite clear that all work for the Church ipso facto requires the highest level of concern for its performance, whether by the Presiding Bishop himself, or the newest member of the laity.

One reason for this is that the hierarchy of the Liberal Catholic Church is non-authoritarian, and another that the laity are the royal people of God, The word "laity" generally (i.e., in secular life) means those with no special knowledge, the uninitiate, those who in the Army are sometimes called "cannon-fodder". *Nothing could be farther from the truth in this Church*, and if ordination is considered an honour it is precisely because it gives one an opportunity to serve the "Laos", the Master's people. The word "serve" is used here in the sense that a waiter in a cafe "serves" his customers. It should now be plain that the Liberal Catholic Priest cannot *tell* his people what they should or should not do. He waits on them and tries his best to act on behalf of the Christ, approaching them with the same life as His, for them, and he must be ever ready like the shepherd in the parable to risk dangers, and to be quite careless of himself on behalf of -not only the ninety and nine but- the one small lamb that got lost. It is urged that what has been said so far should now be carefully reread, because it is meant to be taken quite literally and very seriously. The Bishop as the ordaining authority can have no regard for personalities or desires. He must be guided solely by what is best for the Church.

It follows that from time to time keen volunteers for Holy Orders may not be accepted. The Bishop may well not give any reasons beyond the general and obvious one that he does not consider the candidate to be called to this function. Should this happen to you, you must understand that this is in no sense a slur on your character or your abilities. It is simply that that special avenue of service in the estimation of the Bishop is not for you. This will be a real test for you, but if you are activated by the right motives you will put aside the natural disappointment, and seek to find out how in one or the other many, many ways that exist you may find your true place. If you find you cannot so accept the Bishop's decision you should question your understanding of the Catholic concept of Orders: the lady who lovingly cleans the brassware every week may well be of greater importance in the eyes of the Christ than any number of Clergy. In this connection it is well to remember that in the whole history of the Christian church there has only

been one parish Priest canonized. Many Bishops, saintly women, and laymen, have been given the title saint, but only one solitary Vicar!

Having said all this by way of introduction, and having (it is hoped) made it clear that a vocation to the Priesthood is something given from God, a "calling" is what vocation means, the level at which this is initially tested is in the parish. No one (except in certain circumstances not necessary to detail here) who has not shared the fullness of parish life can begin to understand what the Priesthood is. No one who has not taken part in serving at the altar has any experience against which he can estimate what could be asked of himself in minor orders, let alone in the major ones. The man with a true vocation has no need to advertise it, since his Vicar will very quickly notice anyone showing the qualities that might be expected in such a person.

Here are some of them:

- A courteous attitude to all irrespective of age or sex.
- A well turned out very clean appearance, especially in regard to nails, hands, hair, shoes, etc.
- A studious disposition, though not necessarily scholastic.
- Regularity at Church, especially when NOT rostered to serve.
- If married, church attendance will be a family affair. If a wife does not fully back a candidate for Orders, this is a clear and certain indication that he does NOT have a vocation, or at least at present.
- Attendance at seminars, retreats, congresses and conventions, so far as funds and business commitments will allow.
- A spotless reputation in the community.

NOTE: It is not stated that all of the above are *necessary*. They are indicators. A candidate for the Priesthood must also be patient, as his rate of progress from the time he is made Cleric to the day of his ordination to the Priesthood, cannot, except in very exceptional circumstances of overwhelming need, take less than 5 years.

Please note also that anyone coming to this Church from the ministry, of another cannot necessarily be assured of conditional ordination, since acceptability in another communion does not *of itself* stand as proof of acceptability or even desirability in this. However, beyond the requirements of Canon 60, which must be scrupulously adhered to, each case will be decided on by the Bishop in the light of its own peculiar circumstances. To sum up so far:

1. The desire to be a Priest is a laudable one, if it is seen that admission to the Order affords an opportunity of lifelong sacrifice and service.
2. The arbiter as to all vocations is the Church herself speaking and acting through the Bishop, who will seek the advice of the candidate's Vicar or Priest in charge.
3. Signs of a vocation include highly satisfactory service for a considerable period as a confirmed layman in a parish, plus certain obvious marks of character and behavior in one who is offering himself as a potential spiritual leader and shepherd.

Having assumed that all the signs exist, the Bishop will indicate his acceptance of a candidate as a recognized ordinand. From that moment he is under surveillance and his whole way of life will be kept under review. It must be stressed that in accepting someone

as an ordinand the Bishop is making no promises whatsoever. He is simply saying in effect: "Right. You think you'd like to be a Priest. Let's try you out". Nothing more.

The candidate should give special attention to the charges in the Minor and Major Orders in the Liturgy. During his training in the sanctuary he will be able to practice those virtues to be developed in the service of our Lord.

He will now be expected to be of ever-deepening value to his Vicar or Priest. It will be assumed that he will make himself available at rehearsals of ceremonial, whether or not, he is one of the sanctuary party. He will seek out all Clergy in major orders, and whilst not becoming a nuisance he will steadily learn from them all aspects of the clerical life. He should purchase "The Science of the Sacraments", and "Ceremonies of the Liberal Catholic Rite" (the Blue Book so called), at the very least, and own a Liturgy, and a St. Alban's Hymnal.

At first his progress in both ceremonial and devotional matters will rest solely with the Parish Clergy, and especially his Vicar. The Vicar is his Elder Brother in a sense, and bonds of mutual affection and respect should quite naturally develop between them. Any friction on either side should freely and fully be made known to the Bishop.

Later, at a time to be advised he will be required to become a student of the Liberal Catholic Institute of Studies, the official body that attends to the training of candidates. He will undergo a course. Please be quite sure that:

1. Failure to complete the Course does not necessarily stop anyone from being ordained.
2. On the other hand a successful, even brilliant, passing no way assures ordination.

Though naturally pass or failure must be indicators to a Bishop.

We shall end with a quote from Bishop Pitkin's "Qualifications for the Priesthood":

"Priesthood in The Liberal Catholic Church is, we feel, a great spiritual privilege. The Lord, we have reason to believe, is trying through this new movement to bring about a reformation in His Christian Religion. Those who are found worthy to be entrusted with a part in this His work for a New Age are, we feel, highly honoured. The Liberal Catholic Church avowedly exists "to further the work of its Master, the Christ, in the world" and that work, we feel, is to help lead humanity from the unreality of transitory pleasure-seeking to the reality of the divine life, the Christ life, the undying spark of which is implanted in every human being to be fanned into the full flame of a shining Sun, another Son of God, through this process of evolution in which we are all engaged.

The teaching, the example and the Sacraments of Christ our Lord are given to us to help us in our evolution, and it is the work of the Priest to minister to his people by teaching, by example, by acting as Christ's agent in bringing to all who want them the Sacraments of His Love, without price, without the usual restrictions of creed or church membership with which others have surrounded these His priceless gifts.

It is the work of the Priest to help, to encourage, to comfort and to inspire people as they toil along their upward way, to renew their courage when they falter, to link them ever closer to the Lord of Love and Compassion whose ordained agent the Priest is chosen to be.

Such is the work of the Priest, the 'sweet but heavy burden' which he undertakes for life because he loves the Lord and his fellow men."



THE TRAINING OF ORDINANDS

By the Rt. Rev. E. J. Burton M.A. (Abridged)

PRE-REQUISITES

Candidates must have normal health; this includes physical, mental, dexterity, efficiency and coordination. While we do not insist on the possession of a University Entrance Qualification, it is desirable that candidates should be able to adduce evidence of satisfactory study beyond the age of 16, if possible involving professional training appropriate not only in their particular employment field, but also relevant to general cultural and social studies. A suitable example is that of the three year course at a recognized college of teacher training or examinations leading to the associateship of a recognized professional body. Attendances at evening classes or at lecture courses organized by responsible bodies (as distinct from occasional and detached meetings) are also useful here.

Under "normal" health or physical, mental, efficiency, one includes oral ability and basic speech skills. These matters may be improved with training, but obviously a serious or psychological speech impediment, inability to communicate, constitutes a *prima facie* (even if not insurmountable) problem. Adequate ability and experience in written communication is essential; this is not always the case, even with University graduates if their course has been mainly "scientific".

Where candidates desire to be considered for the ministry in the fuller sense (i.e., proceeding beyond Minor Orders) advice and help will be given, to those young enough, to assist them to qualify themselves with tutorial guidance.

It is by working within the Eucharist and actively appreciating the centrality of the Mass that the candidate will gradually be able to relate various aspects of study and discipline. What are these aspects?

To meet needs of contemporary society, and seekers in many walks of life, the student must be familiar with the general scientific concepts *of today*. This entails some strain; for there is constant "progress" and readjustment; there can be no finality. Attitudes in astro-physics, human biology, sociology and psychology, must be known as such; concepts of forty years ago are irrelevant. No one can hope to "understand", but the import of such attitudes, or discoveries, their relevance or otherwise for the seeker after spiritual strength and health must be in some measure familiar to the Priest for purposes of communication and sympathetic awareness.

The Priest should also acquire the habit of a discriminating use of book reviews, ability to assess one study against another. The acceptance of the views of one writer exclusively can be dangerous. Some books should, however, be studied *in depth*. A perusal of reviews elsewhere, critical appraisal by experts of other books, will enable him to see through the maze. He must, however, always recognize that his own studies as set out below have *their own validity*, and should never claim scientific authority, unless he has such by virtue of his own professional work, in itself.

INDIVIDUAL QUALITIES

It has often been said that no-one is worthy to be a Priest. The complete dedication necessary is difficult for many, especially those who allow family responsibilities to interfere unnecessarily with their work in the ministry. Wives and children are often the Priest's greatest helpers and co-workers; it is not always so. Each candidate is judged on his merits as a man of integrity, resolve, *and potential, as a future "father in God"*. His situations in life, his existing commitments, are part of this "individual assessment. Often, for example, a businessman is able to bring the qualities and opportunities of his profession as part of his contribution to the ministry, similarly a teacher has through his contact with pupils experience and awareness of human needs, the opportunity to develop his own powers of communication, as well as mediating (without any specific verbal declaration) the grace of the Christ to all whom he meets and with whom he works. To analyse the qualities and personal gifts desirable would take many books. One can say only that many worthy and excellent Christians are not, as yet, suitable for ordination, and to advance them in the ministry would be to place an intolerable burden on them, however willing they may be to serve. There are other ways of service than the Priesthood, a heavy burden even when the Priest seems to possess all necessary endowments for his task.

More ascertainable, and to be considered by each who would enter the ministry, is his *vocation*.

VOCATION

Vocation or "calling" is an awareness of a summons; a duty, an imperative *beyond* oneself in the lesser senses of the word "self". One has a vocation not only to the Priesthood; one has a vocation to teach, to heal, to be a good farmer. This "calling", this imperative, is not something which can finally be analyzed. Although one must examine motives, seek to discover, by all means, what particular reasons there may be, in the last resort there remains simply the consciousness, if one is honest, that the call has come, is authoritative, and cannot be disobeyed. If you find that self-advertisement, the possession a lovely speaking voice, the desire simply to lead others, is (in candid analysis) a motivating factor, then the ministry (or whatever profession one desires to enter on such a basis) is not for you. Spurgeon's advice, "If you can possibly avoid being ordained, do so," is excellent. Duty must outweigh personal pleasure or self gratification. One must have the necessary abilities and talents *to be used* in the ministry; but abilities and talents (such as efficient ceremonial behaviour and aptitude) should not entice one into the ministry. All must be means to the greater end.

Vocation, then, is "interior"; a deep spiritual conviction, within one's innermost and real life, that there is a summons from the greater life in which one has one's being. Writers have spent much time on this inner grade, or divine awareness, which seems to indicate that a man is to be entrusted with the Priesthood. Ultimately, in human terms of here and now, it is doubtful whether in any specific case the vocation can be "explained". The nature of the man's own spiritual state, his awareness of the spiritual powers, his guidance by the "messengers" of the spiritual kingdom, may be given as influences, "flowing in" of divine will and guidance. But this inner summons there must be. An old Catholic manual treats of the "vocation to the Priesthood considered as a divine gift". And perhaps it is best to leave the matter there, at least for the present purposes.

The test, however, of this inner vocation will be that of an accompanying "outer vocation", when the time is ready. There must be a particular task indicated for the would-be minister to undertake. The church does not ordain a minister merely for the sake of changing his status, or giving him power as an end in itself. There must be a clear indication in the outward world of a "call". A parish, a task, a need, within the church, *for which he is specifically ordained*'. After a year or two, within the divine scheme, he may find himself working elsewhere. But the clear outward indication, of the divine working through all things, will be found in this undeniably evidenced plan, a vital and god-granted educational process. Sometimes a man may have to wait thirty years until the call, the outward vocation or task, is furnished; all that time he may have felt an inner vocation; but until the divine will and scheme manifests he must "possess his soul in patience". On the other hand, he may be faced early with a challenge and need even before his inner vocation has really evidenced. It may need the outer call of duty to awaken and evoke the inner awareness of his real task and path of service.

TRAINING

It is assumed that all candidates (unless they are seeking to enter the ministry from another church, in which they have already undergone some form of preparation) will have served in the sanctuary of their parish, or have travelled to the nearest oratory where they may so serve, for some years. Minor Orders, whether or not formally conferred, indicate (in the service". provided) the kind of individual approach desired, and the general study of the way of the church which steins from the catechumenate schools (on which western culture was founded) of the early centuries. This Christian concept of education is now universal.

When however, a man offers himself for the sub-diaconate, there must be the will to study and train more fully and with purpose. Such study and training, which (as with some Anglican and Roman schemes) is combined with work in the field, i.e., actual parish experiences, should extend over a minimum of five years. It is usually longer. No one can be made a deacon until the canonical age of twenty-three. Obviously, ceremonial training involves explanation of principles involved in rituals for which the ceremonial is used. At the same time, the use of the voice in reading lessons, in preparing short addresses, in talks with parishioners, will gradually develop, or indicate the need for help with the speech skills of the church work.

Each priest must cover the following areas of study:

1. Human culture; the emergence of "civilization", primitive organization and life patterns; drama, dance, primitive art; the emergence of technology; myths and legends; the development of the "temple"; the centrality of liturgy; liturgy as creative impulse; the emergence from the temple of theatre, arts, music, science, architecture. One culture (at least) should be studied *in detail* as an example of the universal developmental life process.
2. Comparative religion (stemming from Section 1). Simpler and more recent primers should be read, and the student should be able to use (though not necessarily read fully) such a storehouse as Frazor's *Golden Bough*.

3. A general knowledge of the teachings and practice of the greater world "religions", and the relevance of these to Christianity and to the Mass itself. Again, the student should read some books in detail and know the larger works of reference to be utilized.
4. A history of philosophy and thought, eastern and western, Greek, Roman, Dark Age, Mediaeval, and post-Renaissance. Earlier philosophers, such as Plotinus and Erigena, will now be found more contemporary than the "great" men of Victorian days. The student should be able to recognize the main themes and terms of Vedanta, Buddhist, Taoist, and Islamic philosophy. Obviously here there will be fruitful interplay with Section 3 above. The creative life and thought of mankind is a unity.
5. The development of liturgy within the Christian church. A detailed study of the Mass in its various forms, to include the Coptic and other eastern Rites. Here, also, the relevance of the "mystery" working must be included. The student must have a general knowledge of Eleusinian or Orphic working in so far as these are ascertainable *in accepted works of reference*. There must be special concern for the results of liturgical study as reflected in new liturgical movements within the church today, as well as the intimacy of liturgy as the completion of human work, thought, and being, "divinization" of the whole manifestation, the final Real Presence into which all things are subsumed.
6. Healing and the Sacraments.
7. Worship (from the above) as evidenced in human society. Contemporary problems of community. The individual and society. Education. Welfare. Pollution. The attitude of the church and its members to, and within, such environmental and human problems. "Christian ethics".
8. The Arts as part of "religion" and liturgy. (This is so generally involved in our practice that little more need be added).
9. Sacred writings and their relevance to liturgy. The existing literature of the early church, specifically the books of the "New Testament". St. Paul's Letters. Other letters. Apocalypses. Relevance to liturgy and Eucharistic practice. The Gospels as "later" works communicating the Christian experience of the "word made flesh". Why we read the Old Testament. The value of sacred writings beyond the Christian tradition.
10. Mystical theology. Mysticism of all faiths. Approach to the individuated "inner" life of reality as a necessary complement, to "outer" liturgical work in community. Christian "mystics" from St. John to de Chardin. The work of meditation and yoga disciplines.
11. Pastoral Theology. Studied in practical relationship with (a) church members, (b) seekers, (c) other groups (d) uncommitted and the everyday acquaintances. Administration of the Sacraments. House services. Visiting.

12. Church history — development of church organization.

13. Theology as basic "scientific" assessment of the Christian religious experience. A general study of historical theology; the development processes of Christian thinking. The disciplines of statement. The Creeds. Eastern and western Catholic theology. Contemporary trends and emphasis.

Although this study is broken up into apparently separate fields one must stress there is an overall unity, just as the mass unifies the whole of man's activities (the word "activities" is used here as synonymous with "life") within one cosmic process and being. The way of wisdom is whole, yet infinite, unity in diversity.

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