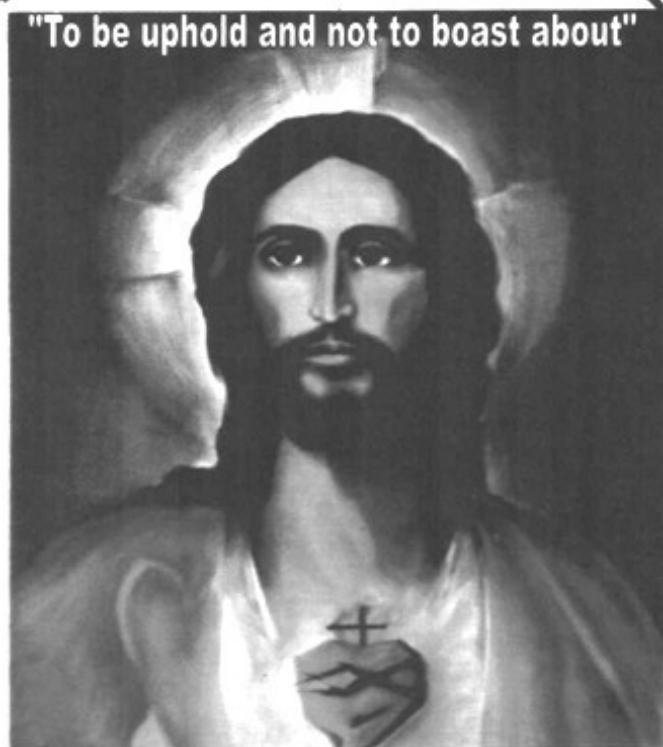


SPIRITUALITY OF THE DIOCESAN PRESBYTER



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1. Introduction

Prefectae Caristatis, one of the lesser documents of the Second Vatican Council, has had a profound and enduring influence on the renewal efforts of vowed religious in our church. The council Fathers charges Religious with discovering the vision and Charisma of their Founder and Foundresses and to renew their constitution in the light and energy of Vatican II.

Therefore it is a unique privilege to immerse in the wonderful riches and diversity of our church's religious congregations. Each Religious congregation, while often sharing mission, origins or spiritual roots in common, also has a definitive flavor and specialness of its own.

2. Brief Spirituality and Charisma of some Religious Congregations

Dominicans orient their whole lives to the Word of God and committing to preach, study, catechize, teach and be immersed in the Word. Dominican Tradition of taking only one vow - that of Obedience - which reflects the centrality of listening to the word in their lives of service to the Church.

Franciscans find a common home in the Charisma of Unity, served by the radical poverty and consuming mission to their sister Poverty.

Carmelites strive for interior silence in their closeness to God.

Marists focus on the imitation of Mary's presence at the birth of the church, serves God and neighbor hidden and unknown in the world -

Missionaries of the Sacred Heart root their Spirituality and Charisma in the Heart of Jesus pieces on the Cross should be shared and loved everywhere.

Missionaries, thrive on Mobility while Monastic rely on stability.

All the above Spirituality and Charisma of Religious resonates in a wonderfully orchestrated chorus of loving service in the Church.

3. And what about Diocesan Presbyters?

The document of the Vatican II, are rather silent in that regard - The Council addressed the nature and roles of Bishop and Deacon, but said precious little in regard to the presbyter.

For long time Diocesan Presbyters found themselves grouped with Religious and expected to somehow share their "call to Holiness". As well, Diocesan presbyters, like orphans, received a pseudo Habit (cassock), lived in a pseudo Monastic house (rectories) with unintentional Community and lived with requirements approximating vows requirements of Celibacy, a promise of Obedience, and a low though taxable wages or allowance - in other words Poverty.

4. Definitions

Spirituality is the inner moon, which governs the tides of relationship with God, neighbor, self and environment. [Fr. Raymond Carey, Diocesan Priest, USA]

Charisma, favor, grace. A special charm or allure that inspires allegiance or devotion.

5. Icons of Priesthood

Let us address and further develop the issue of Diocesan Spirituality under the Rubric of eight Icons Can Image, figure, a sacred image or picture of Jesus that contains lots of information in one) or Images representing key components of Diocesan Spirituality.

Again it may be helpful to define operationally what I contemporarily meant by Spirituality: as I cjupte Raymond Carey a Diocesan Priest from USA in his presentation to me (Cus) in Class in which he says "Spirituality is the inner moon which governs the tides of relationship with God,

neighbor, self and environment."

a) First Icon: Presbyter as a believer in Jesus

- At the very heart of the Diocesan Spirituality lies a priest Commitment to the person of Jesus Christ- risen and anointed by God as the Savior.
- Priest show radical Faith in Jesus sent by the living God is the source of all vibrancy, meaning and efficacy in his ministry.
- By his Faith in Jesus, the Priest shares the one Baptismal call to holiness that unites all others in the assembly.
- Priest must make a fundamental decision to risk it all on Jesus through prayer, service and the life of believing community.
- Priest must nurture (feed) a personal relationship with Jesus through prayer, service and the life of the believing community.
- Priest must unite with inclusive (include) heart of Jesus for whom the reign of God was open to all.
- Priest must Love without limit.
- Priest tender mercy without measure and he must find the fundamental moral imperative (command) of his life.
- Must have living Faith in Jesus, which give meaning to his role as a sign of unity in the local community and one who provided the ministry the church has entrusted to him.
- Must accompanies, the people of God in their most vulnerable moment and his own vibrant faith in something of the catalytic agent in people he serves.
- That interdependence seems to evidence in kind of the efficacy (desire, effect) of Jesus own prayer of unity.

b) Second Icon: Presbyter as the proclaimer of the Word

- In the Revised Rite of ordination, the ordaining bishop asks a candidate for the office of presbyter if he is willing to accept as his first ministerial charge to a preacher of the word of God.
- For a diocesan priest, being a preacher becomes part of his DNA (genetic code) – essentially linked to his spirituality.
- As called by the church to take some responsibility for the ministry of preaching.
- Immerse himself in the word of God as a preacher.
- Diocesan presbyter becomes a man of the lectionary (library of readings) prayerfully pondering God's word and opening of God's word for the assembly in its here and now extraordinary experience.
- Aware of the Joy, Sorrow, the challenge and struggles, the stress and issue impacting on the lives of the people assembled.
- The word of God, has to come alive in his powerful pondering and proclamation of the word to the people.
- PREACHING BECOMES THE JOY OF ALL DIOCESAN PRIESTS.

c) Third Icon: Presbyter as Reverencer of persons

- Diocesan Spirituality has its roots in the PRAXIS OF SERVICE (preaching, with action, service seen in action).

- Deep respect and reverence for persons guides prayer, daily activity, pastoral planning, visits the sick, rituals of burial and grieving and rituals for joy and celebration.
- The Spirituality of the Diocesan Priests begins with and is filtered through the loving service of people.
- The prayer of the priest is frequently supported by the needs of the people with whom he share his life and ministry.
- Diocesan Presbyter's energies root in the needs of the people in a local community- as well as in the global village-service on hospital board, school boards, pastoral councils, ecumenical committees and the countless other activities.
- Presbyter's life begins and ends with the needs of others.
- Presbyter's voice on behalf of the poor, the displaced, the discarded, and the disrespected gives concrete expression to the compassion of Christ and the teaching of the church.
- A presbyter's Spirituality, then, is bound to influence by the daily efforts to reverence persons in the name of Jesus.
- SPIRITUALITY OF A PRESBYTER IS ULTIMATELY ROOTED IN JESUS OWN MINISTRY OF HOSPITALITY.

d) **Forth Icon: Presbyter as a person of Theological Reflection**

- The Spirituality of a diocesan presbyter demands a rich reflective diet. Each day activities and events bring an invitatory challenge to a presbyter's reflective efforts.
- What needs to happen in this parish that is not helping now?
- What may be taking place that is not happening now?
- What may be taking place that is not helpful to the church's mission?
- Whom are we missing?
- Who is not being served by the outreach of this Local Community?
- Good pastoring is both a course of and a product of some measure of sound theological reflection affects one's spirituality.
- Without contemplation there is no growth.
- A presbyter engaged in contemplative reflection inevitably marks changes in his own person, in his own experience of God and in his commitment to loving service in Jesus name.
- A presbyter's theological reflection is drawn by a common vision with one's bishop, and with others charge with public ministry in the church.

e) **Fifth Icon: Presbyter as a Receiver of Ministries**

Jesus modeled being a receiver of ministries as well as one who does ministry it seemed a very hard lesson for the disciple to learn. Jesus instruction to Peter about the absolute necessity of being able to receive foot washing is powerful message to all who claim the name Christian. Being a presbyter, it seems, does not guarantee easy learning.

- Vatican II insists that not only does baptism depute one to worship: Baptism also deposes one to ministry.
- Ministry is not a prerogative of the ordained nor a proprietary right of the ordained all the Baptized are called to share in the mission of loving service.
- Priests have to understand and enjoy authentic collaborative ministry.
- Collaboration is not about abdication of responsibility it is about the radical giving and

receiving of ministry that nourishes the church mission to be leaven of grace in the world-

- Let people teach you, compassion, faith, mercy and so many other treasured gifts because the presbyter's heart needs to be nourished and changed by others.

f) **Sixth Icon: Presbyter as a Reconciler in the Assembly**

- A most sacred function of a presbyter is to gather with the people of God around the Eucharistic table of the Lord.
- In Jesus name the presbyter offers the sacrifice of the mass with fullest Faith and confidence in Jesus own words "your sins are forgiven", experience once again the tender mercy of Christ.
- Reconciling ministry of Jesus of the Presbyter extends as to his role as presider at the sacrament of reconciliation and the anointing of the sick.
- In each sacramental event, the presbyter represents the presence of Christ in the name of the community, celebrating the healing, reconciling grace, of the risen Christ.
- Presbyter is a reconciler in the Christian community- an extraordinary privilege—It cannot help but an important component of a presbyter's life if he wants to be an effective reconciler in the assembly.
- The pastor task is to be an inclusive sign of unity for the whole community.

g) **Seventh Icon: Presbyter as a Person of Ethics**

„Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect“ (Mt 5,48)

- In the same spirit, presbyters have a fundamental ethical mandate to strive for the highest quality of loving service possible.
- The modeling of Jesus owns Servant leadership compels a presbyter to use authority and power to serve, never to dominate.
- Presbyter should be a man of Faith filled trust-Firstly He must give highest quality of service possible, Secondly he must not do any harm to those whom he serves or supervises.
- He should be acting for the good of those he serves, not for personal gain, sexual gratification or any other abuse of power.
- N/B it is always a violation of presbyter's ethical mandate of fiduciary trust to reduce another person to an object of sexual, economic, racial, social gender or any other kind of control.
- Presbyter committed to the highest quality of ethical service keeps confidences well, protects the privacy of those whose information he manages and exercises the greatest care" to do no harm".
- A presbyter who thinks and acts ethically is a presbyter likely to pray ethically as well.
- Ethical sensitivity can help shape one's prayer in such a way that a presbyter asks God's guidance that he may "do the right thing "ministerially".
- Finally, it is precisely the ethical behavior- of presbyters committed to the highest quality of service that will, in the end, restore something of the respect for priesthood lost by the unethical acts of others.

h) **Eight Icon: Presbyter as Celibate lover**

Have you heard two rules for being Priest?

First rule is keeping your pants on: that's "celibacy"

Second rule is if you keep rule one; you have a right to Christian burial.
Have a nice priesthood... (Such view of celibacy is seen as minimalism)

- Presbyter who finds his life engaged by becoming a more efficacious lover has a great deal more likelihood of enjoying loving service in the church.
- Being a more efficacious lover, in turn, requires the ongoing development of intimacy skills both intra-personal and inter-personal.

Intra-personal intimacy skills include being able to reverence one's own person, learning to enjoy one's own company, fostering internal locus control, developing an ongoing awareness of gratitude, understanding one's own psychosexual development and orientation, and learning to manage anger, resentment and fantasy respectfully and well.

Inter-personal intimacy skills include skills for compassion, for caring presence, for generosity, for being other-centered, for appropriate confiding, for inter-personal trust, for loyalty, for appreciation of affection, for developing inclusive relationships, for fidelity and commitment.

- Presbyter's Celibate loving has the extraordinary potential to facilitate joy in one's life, and thereby, a more meaningful anchor for one's Spirituality.

6. Conclusion

When Diocesan Presbyters touch that place in their hearts where they are most aware of God's abiding presence, it seems to matter little if one is from Ireland, England, America, China, Germany, Africa and PNG. The same themes seem to play in the seasons of the presbyter's life.

I am confident to know that Diocesan Priests do have a Spirituality, something to uphold and not to be proud off of or boast about but to shine for with the grace from the Holy Spirit.