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BOOK REVIEWS

S. Joseph Lionel, *My Beloved. Theological and Sacramental Reflections on the Christian Priesthood*, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation. Pages: xvii+155. ISBN: 81-7086-590-5

The inspiring book, titled, *My Beloved: The Theological and Sacramental Reflections on the Christian Priesthood*, is an awesome gift to the Church at the conclusion of the “Year for Priests”. The author Joseph Lionel has tried to view the concept of priesthood in the Church from all its possible perspectives.

The book has been structured progressively into nine chapters of different perspectives, namely, the biblical, historical, theological, liturgical, pastoral, ecclesial and spiritual. The author has made a sincere effort to explore systematically the scriptural basis of priesthood and the historical evolution of the theology of priesthood, beginning from the apostolic era.

In the first chapter, the author explores the Old Testament and New Testament understanding of the priesthood and in the second chapter he explains the development of the theology of priesthood with the support of the important documents of Church. Chapter three is dedicated not only to explain the role of the common priesthood and ministerial priesthood, but also to introduce the ‘threefold power’ attached to the

priesthood. Highlights of the imageries of the sacred ordinations mark the fourth chapter which examines the rituals for ordination in the past and the future. The fifth chapter sees the actualization of the biblical and theological reflections in the pastoral context. The sixth chapter is dedicated to explain conciliar and post-conciliar documents on priesthood and the focus of the seventh chapter is the spirituality of priests consisting of holiness, prayer, sacrifice, celibacy, obedience, and poverty. The following chapter draws our attention to the life of St. John Marie Vianney, an exemplary priest and the ninth chapter is the outcome of the author's personal reflection on the issues related to the priests in the contemporary life situation.

He gives an exclusive input in narrating his testimony resulting from the reflection on his own priestly identity and the ministries. The theological explanation drawn from the rituals and imageries of the ordination is a unique contribution. In short, this work is a very comprehensive articulation on the theology of priesthood.

Though there are a number of works that have been published to mark the "Year for Priests," Joseph Lionel's contribution stands as a unique and valuable work because of its multi dimensional reflections and practical applications. It supplies to the escalation of the unique role of the ministerial priesthood with respect to his call and ministry in the Church. The author invites every priest to recognize this unique role of priestly life.

Besides the theological reflections, the author has successfully brought out the challenges of the current life situation of a priest. Hence, "My Beloved" has the potential to trigger not only the priests but also the

seminarians and the lay faithful to learn more about Jesus, the eternal priest, so as to continue his mission in the world through the ministry of the Church.

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