

“SHEPHERDS WITH THE ODOUR OF THE SHEEP”: THE ROLE OF PRIEST AS PASTOR IN THE CHURCH

Jesu Pudumai Doss*

“This I ask you: be shepherds, with the ‘odour of the sheep’, make it real, as shepherds among your flock, fishers of men,” exhorted Pope Francis. In the Church, this call to be shepherds of the people of God is renewed in every sacerdotal ordination. Based on the terms found in the (Latin & Oriental) Codes of canon law, such as *pascere*, *pastor* and *pastoralis/pastorale*, this article presents some canonical considerations on the identity, formation, and ministry of priests as “pastors” or “shepherds” in the Church.

Introduction

“This I ask you: be shepherds, with the ‘odour of the sheep’, make it real, as shepherds among your flock, fishers of men.”¹ So exhorted Pope Francis in his “first Chrism Mass as Bishop of Rome.” In the Church, this call to be shepherds of the people of God is renewed in

***Rev. Dr. Jesu Pudumai Doss** is a Salesian (SDB) Priest from Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India. He holds post-graduate degrees in English, education, civil law, canon law and oriental canon law, including and doctorate in canon law from Salesian Pontifical University, Rome, where he is dean and professor. He also serves as an external judge for marriage cases in the ecclesiastical tribunal of the vicariate of Rome; a special commissioner for *favor fidei* marriage cases at the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Vatican City; a defender of the bond for non-consummated marriage cases at the Roman Rota, Vatican; and a consultor of the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. He has published widely on canon law and has authored and edited many books. His most recent publication is *Child Protection Laws in India* (Don Bosco Youth Animation - South Asia: New Delhi, 2015).

¹Pope Francis, Homily during Chrism Mass *This morning*, 28 March 2013, in http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130328_messa-crismale.html (consulted 24 May 2015). The English version of all the ecclesial documents quoted in this article, except when specified otherwise, is taken from: <http://w2.vatican.va/content/vatican/en.html> (accessed 24 May 2015).

every sacerdotal ordination. The codes of canon law clearly outline the role of the priest as “pastor” or “shepherd” in the Church through various terms,² such as *pascere*, *pastor* and *pastoralis/ pastorale*. Based on these terms, this article wishes to present some canonical considerations on the identity, formation, and ministry of priests as “pastors” or “shepherds” in the Church.

1. Identity of the Priests: To Be Pastors

a) Who Are the “Pastors”?

In the code of canon law, “pastor” primarily refers to a bishop: “Bishops, who by divine institution succeed to the place of the Apostles through the Holy Spirit who has been given to them, are constituted pastors in the Church, so that they are teachers of doctrine, priests of sacred worship, and ministers of governance” (*CIC* c. 375 §1).³ This is confirmed by *CIC* c. 383 §1 (*CCEO* c. 192 §1)⁴ that speaks of “the function of a pastor” with reference to the diocesan bishop. Like a diocesan bishop (cf. *CIC* c. 369; *CCEO* c. 177), a territorial prelate or abbot (cf. *CIC* c. 370) is also a “proper pastor” for the “portion of the people of God” entrusted to his pastoral care. Similarly, because apostolic vicars/prefects (cf. *CIC* c. 371 §1) and apostolic administrators (cf. *CIC* c. 371 §2) exercise pastoral care for a portion of the people of God entrusted to them, they too can be considered “pastors.” The supreme pontiff, “the bishop of the Roman Church,” is “the pastor of the universal Church on earth” (*CIC* c. 331; *CCEO* c. 43). Therefore, he fulfils “the office of supreme pastor of the Church” (*CIC* cc. 333 §2, 353 §1; *CCEO* c. 45 §2).⁵

²Cf. X. Ochoa, *Index verborum ac locutionum Codicis Iuris Canonici*, Editio secunda et completa (Roma: Libreria Editrice Lateranense, 1984) 335-336. From these references, the corresponding *CCEO* canons are used.

³The English version of all the canons of the *Code of Canon Law*, quoted in this article, are taken from: http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_INDEX.HTM (consulted 24 May 2015). These canons are indicated with *CIC*.

⁴The English version of *Code of canons of Oriental Churches*, quoted in this article, are taken from: <http://www.intratext.com/X/ENG1199.HTM> (consulted 24 May 2015). These canons are indicated with *CCEO*.

⁵By virtue of this office as “the supreme pastor and teacher of all the Christian faithful”, he “possesses infallibility in teaching when ... he proclaims by definitive act that a doctrine of faith or morals is to be held” (*CIC* c. 749 §1; *CCEO* c. 597 §1).

The codes also extend the term "pastor" to others who are not bishops. Like a diocesan bishop, the pastor/parish priest is the "proper pastor" for the community of the Christian faithful entrusted to his pastoral care (cf. *CIC* cc. 515 §1, 519; *CCEO* c. 279, 282 §1). The pastor/parish priest must diligently fulfil this office for all the members of his community (cf. *CIC* c. 529 §1; *CCEO* c. 289 §3). Being "pastor" of the people of God, only those who have been constituted "in the sacred order of presbyterate" can validly be nominated to the office of pastor/parish priest (cf. *CIC* c. 521 §1, 150, 517 §2, 520 §1; *CCEO* c. 285 §1, 281 §1). The term "pastors of souls" has a more expansive list of possible subjects, as it includes "especially bishops and pastors/parish priests" (*CIC* c. 771 §1). This corresponds to those considered the "proper pastors" of an ecclesiastical community, such as a particular church, a parish, or those structures equivalent to them.

A still broader meaning includes others who devote themselves fully to pastoral care, such as the parochial vicar (cf. *CIC* cc. 545, 548 §3; *CCEO* cc. 301, 302), the chaplain (cf. *CIC* cc. 564, 566 §1, 571, 813; *CCEO* c. 645) and any priest who acts as the "proper pastor" to "a definite community of the Christian faithful in a particular church" entrusted to him (*CIC* c. 516 §1). This view is confirmed in the use of the expressions "pastors of souls" (cf. *CIC* cc. 773, 794 §2, 843 §1, 861 §2, 890, 898, 1001, 1063, 1072, 1128, 1252; *CCEO* cc. 655 §2, 738, 783 §1, §3, 785 §1, 816) and "pastors of the Church" (cf. *CIC* cc. 212 §2, 822 §§1-2, 823; *CCEO* cc. 15, 16, 604, 902). "An office which entails the full care of souls" is essentially connected to "the exercise of the priestly order" (*CIC* c. 150). One can see that only priests are intended, when the code speaks of "those who have the care of souls" (cf. *CIC* cc. 463 §1, 8°, 757, 771 §2, 922, 986 §1, 1003 §2; *CCEO* cc. 238 §1, 6°, 281 §1, 288, 611, 628 §1, 735 §1). Can it be concluded, therefore, that the term "pastors" refers also to priests, in addition to the bishops?

b) Are Priests Pastors?

By the sacrament of holy orders, *ex divine institutione*, "some of the Christian faithful are marked with an indelible character and constituted as sacred ministers" (*CIC* c. 1008; *CCEO* c. 323 §1, 743). Therefore, "the ordained ministries ... express and realise a participation in the priesthood of Jesus Christ that is different, not simply in degree but in essence, from the participation given to all the

lay faithful through Baptism and Confirmation” (CL⁶ 22).⁷ The “character” that marks the sacred minister expresses the ontological, perpetual, and definite change which takes place through the sacrament of holy orders, since it is a spiritual sign that configures him to Christ, the eternal high priest. This sort of specific participation in the priesthood of Christ transforms the sacred minister into the real, living, and transparent image of Christ, high priest and Good Shepherd (cf. DE⁸ 2, CL 23, EdM⁹ 2, PdV¹⁰ 12).¹¹

⁶Cf. Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Adhortatio Apostolica Post-Synodalis *Christifideles Laici*, De vocatione et missione laicorum in Ecclesia et in mundo, Ad Episcopos, Sacerdotes et Diaconos atque Religiosos Viros ac Mulieres omnesque christifideles laicos, 30 decembris 1988, in AAS 81 (1989) 393-521 (= CL).

⁷“The priestly ministry *pertinet ad structuram essentialem Ecclesiae*. It has its own specific character and performs a particular function within the ecclesial communion, which is radically different from that of the common priesthood. It is realised through an intensity and a modality that closely unites the episcopate and the priesthood in the exercise of the one ministerial priesthood, with a co-responsibility in the Church expressed in different forms, but in profound sacramental communion.” G. Sarzi Sartori, *Il sacramento dell'ordine nel diritto della Chiesa*, in *Quaderni di diritto ecclesiale* 12 (1999) 243 (= Sarzi Sartori, *Il sacramento dell'ordine*, 243). All translations from this article are original.

⁸Cf. Congregatio pro Clericis, Directorium *Dives Ecclesiae*, pro presbyterorum ministerio et vita, 31 martii 1994, in *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 14 (1994-1995) 376-529 (= DE).

⁹Cf. Congregatio pro Clericis et aliae, Instructio (interdicasterialis) *Ecclesiae de mysterio*, De quibusdam quaestionibus circa fidelium laicorum cooperationem sacerdotum ministerium spectantem, 15 augusti 1997, in AAS 89 (1997) 852-877 (= EdM).

¹⁰Cf. Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Adhortatio apostolica postsynodalis *Pastores dabo vobis*, De Sacerdotum formatione in aetatis nostrae rerum condicione, 25 martii 1992, in AAS 84 (1992) 657-804 (= PdV).

¹¹“*In the Church and on behalf of the Church, priests are a sacramental representation of Jesus Christ - the head and shepherd - authoritatively proclaiming his word, repeating his acts of forgiveness and his offer of salvation - particularly in baptism, penance and the Eucharist, showing his loving concern to the point of a total gift of self for the flock, which they gather into unity and lead to the Father through Christ and in the Spirit. In a word, priests exist and act in order to proclaim the Gospel to the world and to build up the Church in the name and person of Christ the head and shepherd. This is the ordinary and proper way in which ordained ministers share in the one priesthood of Christ*” (PdV 15) [emphasis added].

Through holy orders, the sacred minister receives the "sacramental grace which gives him a share not only in Jesus' saving 'power' and 'ministry' but also in his pastoral 'love'" and is assured of "all the actual graces he needs, whenever they are necessary and useful for the worthy and perfect exercise of the ministry he has received" (*PdV* 70). By virtue of this special consecration,¹² the sacred minister is "sent forth by the Father through the mediatorship of Jesus Christ," head,¹³ Shepherd¹⁴ and Spouse,¹⁵ "in order to live and work by the power of the Holy Spirit in service of the Church and for the salvation of the world" (*PdV* 12). This is the meaning of words that refer to a priest's pastoral ministry, which he fulfils "in the person of Christ the Head" (*CIC* c. 1008 *original version*; *CCEO* cc. 323 §1, 743). Thus, through his ministry, he personifies Christ as head of his mystical body, the Church, and he feeds Christ's people by teaching, sanctifying and governing them. In line with the Second Vatican Council, the code sees

¹²"In the words of the angel at the time of the Annunciation, the Holy Spirit's work will make the baby holy, i.e., consecrated from birth. The Holy Spirit realises in Jesus Christ - the Messiah, the anointed, the consecrated par excellence - the first priestly consecration, the source of all the others. Still He will, in every ordination, operate that consecration, which makes the whole human person conform fully to Christ and to engage him in the service of His Kingdom." Pope John Paul II, *Angelus*, 10 December 1989. Translation is mine.

¹³"The authority of Jesus Christ as head coincides then with his service, with his gift, with his total, humble and loving dedication on behalf of the Church. ... The spiritual existence of every priest receives its life and inspiration from exactly this type of authority, from service to the Church, precisely inasmuch as it is required by the priest's configuration to Jesus Christ Head and Servant of the Church" (*PdV* 21) [emphasis added].

¹⁴"Jesus presents himself as 'the good shepherd', not only of Israel but of all humanity. His whole life is a continual manifestation of his 'pastoral charity', or rather, a daily enactment of it. ... By virtue of their consecration, priests are configured to Jesus the good shepherd and are called to imitate and to live out his own pastoral charity" (*PdV* 22) [emphasis added].

¹⁵"Jesus is the true bridegroom who offers to the Church the wine of salvation. ... The priest is called to be the living image of Jesus Christ, the spouse of the Church. ... Therefore, the priest's life ought to radiate this spousal character, which demands that he be a witness to Christ's spousal love and thus be capable of loving people with a heart which is new, generous and pure - with genuine self-detachment, with full, constant and faithful dedication and at the same time with a kind of 'divine jealousy' and even with a kind of maternal tenderness, capable of bearing 'the pangs of birth' until 'Christ be formed' in the faithful" (*PdV* 22) [emphasis added].

the threefold ministerial function as an explanation, although not exhaustive, of the pastoral mission of Christ (cf. *LG*¹⁶ 21, 28, 29; *PO*¹⁷ 7).¹⁸ The sacred ministry consists in serving the people of God through the proclamation of the revealed Word, the celebration of the sacraments and the leadership of the community of the faithful (cf. *LG* 28).

Furthermore, can. 1008 (*original version*) seems to apply the formula “*in persona Christi capitis*” to all who have received the sacrament of orders “*pro gradu his quisque*,” and so not only to bishops and priests, but also to the deacons.¹⁹ This is based on the *CIC* c. 1009 §1 (*CCEO* c. 325) that specifies: “The Orders are the episcopate, the presbyterate and the diaconate.”²⁰ “The very name of the sacrament – the sacrament of Orders – in connection with these Orders of people raises certain difficulties precisely because of their different positions and mission in the Church,”²¹ because bishops and priests express the ministerial

¹⁶Cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Constitutio Dogmatica *Lumen gentium*, De Ecclesia, 21 novembris 1964, in *AAS* 57 (1965) 5-71 (= *LG*).

¹⁷Cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Decretum *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, De Presbyterorum ministerio et vita, 7 decembris 1965, in *AAS* 58 (1966) 991-1024 (= *PO*).

¹⁸“It is, in fact, applied not only in the sacramental forum, as has always been done in the doctrinal, liturgical and disciplinary tradition, but also in the entire range of the pastoral mission that includes teaching, sanctifying and governing functions of the People of God. Also the formula used by the can. 1008 (*original version*) ... wants to specify, with the addition of the ‘Head’, the fact and the manner in which Christ is represented by the sacred ministers.” Sarzi Sartori, *Il sacramento dell’ordine*, 249.

¹⁹“Once again emerges the question of the third degree of the Holy Order, that of deacon, which is not a sacerdotal degree, as has been reiterated by the conciliar magisterium, but is listed in the triad of the Holy Order together with the priesthood of the bishop and that of the priest. In fact can. 1009 §1, with a need for an authentic interpretation, only distinguishes the three degrees of the Holy Order without getting into theological and doctrinal questions still discussed about the sacramental nature of the three degrees and the real difference between them.” *Ibid.*, 243.

²⁰Although all the three degrees of Holy Order are clerical, each constitute a particular *status* of clerics (cf. *CIC* cc. 207 §1, 266 §1, 1008 *original version*; *CCEO* cc. 323, 358, 743). However, “the diaconate is not a sacerdotal ministerial degree.” *Ibid.*, 248.

²¹*Ibid.*, 235. “Such conclusions of can. 1009 §1 is made problematic when declaring that the *Holy Orders*, and not *degrees*, are three and they belong to

priesthood and deacons are considered ministers associated with a specific service of the bishop and the people of God.

To overcome these difficulties, the text of *CIC* c. 1008 (*original version*) has been radically changed and a new paragraph (§3) added to *CIC* c. 1009:²² "Can. 1008. By divine institution, some of the Christian faithful are marked with an indelible character and constituted as sacred ministers by the sacrament of holy orders. They are thus consecrated and deputed so that, each according to his own grade, may serve the People of God by a new and specific title;" and "Can. 1009 §3. Those who are constituted in the order of the episcopate or the presbyterate receive the mission and capacity to act in the person of Christ the Head, whereas deacons are empowered to serve the People of God in the ministries of the liturgy, the word and charity." Thus, the new can. 1008 applies to all the sacred ministers or clerics (cf. *CIC* cc. 207 §1, 266 §1; *CCEO* c. 323-327, 358, 743), since the sacrament of the orders becomes "a new and specific title" to serve the people of God.²³ The

the bishops, priests and deacons ("*Ordines sunt episcopatus, presbyteratus et diaconatus*"). Thus, the assertion of the previous canon (cf. 1008 *original version*) is probably related only to bishops and presbyters and so, deacons would not be empowered to fulfil their pastoral mission of teaching, sanctifying and governing *in persona Christi capitis*." *Ibid.*, 249.

²²Art. 1. Textus can. 1008 *Codicis Iuris Canonici* ita immutatur ut posthac absolute sic sonet: "Sacramento ordinis ex divina institutione inter christifideles quidam, caractere indelebili quo signantur, constituuntur sacri ministri, qui nempe consecrantur et deputantur ut, pro suo quisque gradu, novo et peculiari titulo Dei populo inserviant". Art. 2. Can. 1009 *Codicis Iuris Canonici* posthac tres paragraphos habebit, quarum prima et secunda constant textu vigentis canonis, tertiae vero novus textus ita sit redactus ut ipse can. 1009, §3 absolute sic sonet: "Qui constituti sunt in ordine episcopatus aut presbyteratus missionem et facultatem agendi in persona Christi Capitis accipiunt, diaconi vero vim populo Dei serviendi in diaconia liturgiae, verbi et caritatis." Benedictus PP. XVI, Litterae apostolicae motu proprio datae *Omnium in mentem*, quaedam in codice iuris canonici immutantur, 26 octobris 2009, in http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/la/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xvi-apl_20091026_codex-iuris-canonici.html (consulted 25 March 2015). The old version of c. 1008, as promulgated in *CIC* 1983, is denoted as "can. 1008 *original version*".

²³In this radical change, the word '*servire*' (cf. *CIC* cc. 1008, 1009 §3) is used instead of '*pascere*' (cf. *CIC* c. 1008 *original version*). The legislator's intention is to restrict the function of '*pascere*' only to the priests and to apply to all the sacred ministers the biblical concept of ministry, i.e., service. Thus, it avoids extending to the diaconate '*agere in persona Christi capitis*', which is reserved

new *CIC* c. 1009 §3 clearly distinguishes deacons from presbyters and bishops, and thereby from their respective ministries.

By virtue of the ministerial priesthood received with ordination, only priests – apart from bishops – can be considered pastors (cf. *DE* 19; *EdM Introduction*).²⁴ Priests, therefore, through “sharing in the priesthood of Christ” (c. 835 §2), are “shepherds/pastors” who “represent Christ” (*CIC* c. 212 §1; *CCEO* c. 15 §1) and preside and act “in the person of Christ” (*CIC* c. 899 §2, cf. *CIC* c. 1008 *original version*, 1009 §3; *CCEO* c. 323 §1, 698, 743).²⁵ John Paul II summarises the very identity of the priest as follows: “We derive our identity ultimately from the love of the Father, we turn our gaze to the Son, sent by the Father as high priest and good shepherd. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we are united sacramentally to him in the ministerial priesthood. Our priestly life and activity continue the life and activity of Christ himself. Here lies our identity, our true dignity, the source of our joy, the very basis of our life” (*PdV* 18). Thus, it is clear that, apart from bishops, also priests are to be considered “pastors” in true sense of the term.

2. Formation of the Future Priests: To Become Pastors

A priest’s identity consists in being a pastor. The formation of candidates for the priesthood should therefore be marked by this “pastoral” aspect in its overall goal and in various aspects of its individual components.

only to bishops and priests. Cf. Pontificio Consiglio per I Testi Legislativi, *Il Motu proprio “Omnium in mentem”. Le ragioni di due modifiche*, in http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/trptxt/documents/rc_pc_intrptxt_doc_20091215_omnium-in-mentem_it.html (accessed 25 March 2015). Not having incorporated the concept of ‘*pascere*’ in the new can. 1009 §3 (at least for bishops and priests), unfortunately the wealth of a long biblical, patristic and canonical tradition has been lost!

²⁴“The priest’s fundamental relationship is to Jesus Christ, head and shepherd. Indeed, the priest participates in a specific and authoritative way in the ‘consecration/anointing’ and in the ‘mission’ of Christ” (*PdV* 16). This is incorporated in the new can. 1009 §3, distinguishing the deacons and priests and attributing to the latter the mission and the power to act in the person of Christ the Head. Unfortunately, however, can. 1009 §3 does not specify “the functions of teaching, sanctifying and governing” (can. 1008 *original version*).

²⁵Cf. J. Pudumai Doss, *The Portrait of Youth in Church Law*, in J. Pudumai Doss et al. (Eds.), *Youth India. Situation, Challenges & Prospects*, Bangalore 2006, 301 (= Pudumai Doss, *The Portrait of Youth*, 301).

a) Pastoral Purpose of Formation

All formation of future priests "should have as its object to make them true shepherds of souls after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest and shepherd" (*PdV* 57; *OT*²⁶4; cf. *CIC* c. 255; *CCEO* c. 345). In fact, "To live in the seminary, which is a school of the Gospel, means to follow Christ as the apostles did. You are led by Christ into the service of God the Father and of all people, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Thus you become more like Christ the good shepherd in order better to serve the Church and the world as a priest. In preparing for the priesthood we learn how to respond from the heart to Christ's basic question: 'Do you love me?' (*Jn* 21:15). For the future priest the answer can only mean total self-giving" (*PdV* 42). On the ordination day, thus, the candidate to the priesthood will be ready to welcome Jesus' priestly invitation: "Feed my sheep" (*Jn* 21:15).

The formation, therefore, must ensure "a way of being in communion with the very sentiments and behaviour of Christ the good shepherd: 'Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus' (*Phil* 2:5)" (*PdV* 57).²⁷ To enable this Christ-like "total self-giving," the entirety of seminarians' formation should be coloured by their future pastoral ministry as priests (cf. *CIC* c. 245).

b) Pastoral Dimensions of Formation

The codes and other Church documents insist upon "the coordination of the different aspects of human, spiritual and intellectual formation" while also stressing their direction "to a specific pastoral end" (*PdV* 57; cf. *CIC* c. 245; *CCEO* cc. 330 §3, 345).

The future priest, called to become a living image of Jesus Christ, head and shepherd of the Church, must try to nurture the human virtues that characterised the relationship of the Son of God with the people of his time. Therefore, he should "cultivate those virtues which are found among most of humanity and enhance the ministry of Christ, among which are sincerity of heart, diligent concern for justice, the spirit of poverty, fidelity to promises, courtesy in acting, speaking modestly

²⁶*Sacrosanctum Concilium Oecumenicum Vaticanum II, Decretum Optatum totius, De institutione sacerdotali, 28 octobris 1965, in AAS 58 (1966) 713-727 (= OT).*

²⁷The seeds of pastoral charity and of service of charity should be sown during the seminary formation. Cf. M.H.C. Vergara, *Pastoral Charity: Goal of priestly formation in the light of Deus caritas est*, in *The ICST Journal* 9 (2007) 5-15.

joined with charity” (CCEO c. 346 §2,8°; CIC c. 245 §1).²⁸ They also “need to be educated to love the truth, to be loyal, to respect every person, to have a sense of justice, to be true to their word, to be genuinely compassionate, to be men of integrity and, especially, to be balanced in judgment and behaviour” (PdV 43; cf. DE 75).

The pastoral ministry is the first and principal aspect of his spiritual life (cf. CIC c. 245 §1; CCEO c. 368) through which the future priest will find his holiness (cf. CIC c. 276 §2,1°; CCEO 346 §1, 381 §1). For the spiritual life to become the beginning and the end of his pastoral ministry, the future priest must experience it in his daily concrete life as a pastor who intercedes for his people. Therefore, seminarians, “who are to take on the likeness of Christ the priest by sacred ordination, should form the habit of drawing close to him as friends in every detail of their lives” (PdV 45; OT 8). They learn to seek Christ through the active participation in the sacred mysteries of the Church, especially in the Eucharist, reconciliation, the divine office, the meditation on the word of God, Marian devotions, spiritual retreats, and other pious practices (cf. CIC c. 246, 276; CCEO cc. 346, 368, 369, 377, 378; DE 39, 76).

Even the formation to the spiritual aspects of poverty, obedience and celibacy should be marked by the “pastoral purpose.”²⁹ As for poverty, the seminarians should be prepared for a life of simplicity and a mentality of gratuitous dedication to their ministry (cf. CIC c. 282; CCEO cc. 355, 385 §1). Seminarians should also be trained for obedience animated by faith, recognizing the divine will in the decisions of their superiors and the fecundity of the priestly ministry in the sacrifices asked of them (cf. CIC c. 273; CCEO c. 370). Celibacy is the formation of the heart of Christ the shepherd in the seminarian who offers to others the gift of unconditional love received from God (cf. CIC c. 247, 277; CCEO cc. 346 §2,8°, 373, 374).

One cannot forget the pastoral reasons for intellectual formation: “The doctrinal instruction given is to be directed so that students ... are able to announce in a suitable way the teaching of the gospel to the people of their own time in a manner adapted to their understanding” (CIC c.

²⁸The seminary should be a tirocinium of charity, during which every human virtue is cultivated. Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Angelus*, 18 February 1990.

²⁹The themes of priestly poverty, obedience and chastity were presented by John Paul II in his messages during *Angelus*. Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Angelus*, 8 July 1990; *Angelus*, 22 July 1990; *Angelus*, 19 August 1990.

248; CCEO c. 347). The commitment to philosophical and theological study "is not in fact an external and secondary dimension of their human, Christian, spiritual and vocational growth" (*PdV* 51). By serious and scientific study, the seminarian learns to become a true shepherd of souls. His pastoral sensitivity, therefore, would help to make his own study more formative (cf. *PdV* 51, 55).

c) Pastoral Formation

To ensure a specific pastoral formation of future priests,³⁰ "strictly pastoral instruction is to be organised through which students learn the principles and skills which, attentive also to the needs of place and time, pertain to the exercise of the ministry of teaching, sanctifying, and governing the people of God" (*CIC* c. 255, cf. c. 242 §1; *CCEO* cc. 352 §1, 353; *PdV* 26).³¹ The pastoral preparation should be enabled through mature reflection and practical application. That is, it should have both theoretical instruction and its practice in suitable pastoral assignments (cf. *CIC* cc. 255, 245 §1; *CCEO* cc. 352, 353, 355).

Firstly, the theoretical preparation, according to *CIC* c. 252 §3 (*CCEO* c. 350), requires the study of "the true and genuine theological discipline

³⁰Through spiritual, liturgical, doctrinal and pastoral formation in the strict sense, the canonical legislation illustrates the notion of priestly ministry seen as a proclamation of the Word, sanctification and governance of the people of God entrusted to his shepherds (cf. *CIC* c. 255; *CCEO* c. 367). This mission is also called "pastoral ministry" (can. 249). Such a pastoral function is one of the prominent aspects that contribute to the definition of sacred ministers in the Church (*CIC* cc. 1008-1009; *CCEO* cc. 323 §1, 743). Cf. Sarzi Sartori, *Il sacramento dell'ordine*, 245-246.

³¹"The whole training of the students should have as its object to *make them true shepherds of souls* after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, teacher, priest and shepherd. Hence, they should be trained for the *ministry of the word* so that they may gain an ever-increasing understanding of the revealed word of God, making it their own by meditation and giving it expression in their speech and in their lives. They should be trained for the *ministry of worship and sanctification* so that by prayer and the celebration of the sacred liturgical functions they may carry on the work of salvation through the Eucharistic sacrifice and the sacraments. They should be trained to undertake the *ministry of the shepherd*, that they may know how to represent Christ to humanity, Christ who 'did not come to have service done to him but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for the lives of many' (*Mk* 10:45; *Jn* 13:12-17), and that they may win over many by becoming the servants of all (*1Cor* 9:19)" (*OT* 4) [emphasis added].

... *pastoral or practical theology*. It is a scientific reflection on the Church as she is built up daily, by the power of the Spirit, in history; on the Church as the 'universal sacrament of salvation', as a living sign and instrument of the salvation wrought by Christ through the word, the sacraments and the service of charity" (*PdV* 57).³²

Secondly, the pastoral preparation consists of cultivating the solicitude for the Church of Christ. Just as "Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her" (*Eph* 5:25), even the future priest in his formation learns to love the Church of Christ. Thus, charity becomes the "source, criterion, measure and impetus for the (future) priest's love and service to the Church, the body and spouse of Christ" (*PdV* 23). This pastoral solicitude should be lived *in* the Church, *with* the Church and *for* the Church, "which is essentially mystery, communion and mission" (*PdV* 59). The service of the future priest in the "Church-mystery" will be shaped by his concern towards the pastoral obligations of the "incardination" in a particular Church (cf. *CIC* c. 265-270; *CCEO* cc. 357-360, 364-366). The future priest should learn to live with the "Church-communion", i.e., be "imbued with love of the Church of Christ" (*CIC* c. 245 §1; *CCEO* c. 367) and all her members: clergy, religious and lay people (cf. *CIC* c. 275; *CCEO* cc. 379, 380, 381 §3). The future priests should live for the "Church-mission" by being open towards the needs of the universal Church³³ and by cultivating a true *sensus Ecclesiae* (cf. *CIC* cc. 245 §2, 256 §2, 257, 271; *CCEO* cc. 352 §3, 360 §1, 361, 367).

Thirdly, pastoral formation consists of practical instruction of seminarians regarding all aspects of their pastoral ministry: involving in catechetical activity and homiletics; being instructed about divine worship and particularly the celebration of the sacraments; learning necessary languages; building capacity of dialogue with people, even those who are not Catholic or Christian, parish administration and fulfilment of all other pastoral commitments, such as participation in

³²Pastoral theology is not just an art. Nor is it a set of exhortations, experiences and methods. It is theological in its own right, because it receives from the faith the principles and criteria for the pastoral action of the Church in history, a Church that each day 'begets' the Church herself" (*PdV* 57).

³³Priestly formation should inculcate the missionary spirit. The formators in seminaries should encourage in the young the missionary apostolate of the Church, so that the candidates for priesthood have before their eyes not only the need of their dioceses, but the wider horizon of the universal Church." Pope John Paul II, *Angelus*, 3 June 1990.

the meetings about the pastoral plan of the diocese or the parish (cf. *CIC* c. 249, 256 §1, 257 §2; *CCEO* cc. 352 §2, 355; *DE* 78; *PdV* 59).

Lastly, the seminarian must practically learn the method of apostolic action with an internship or pastoral experience, done with gradualness and in harmony with the other formative commitments (cf. *CIC* c. 258; *CCEO* c. 353; *PdV* 57). Therefore, according to the judgment of the ordinary, seminarians could engage in some pastoral activities during studies or vacations in order to mature their vocation, character, spirituality, and their capacity for various fields of ministry.³⁴ The pastoral experience should be done under the guidance of an expert priest, who coordinates pastoral activities to ensure the personal accompaniment of the candidates and the evaluation of their experience. The exercise of the ministries of lector, acolyte, and deacon can also concretely express a seminarian's pastoral preparation for the priesthood (cf. *CIC* c. 1032 §2; *CCEO* cc. 354, 760; *PdV* 58).

3. Ministry of the Priests: To Act as Pastors

"The priest participates in a specific and authoritative way in the 'consecration/anointing' and in the 'mission' of Christ" (*PdV* 16), because - as already seen - the sacrament of orders configures his being to Jesus Christ, head and shepherd, and gives him a share in the mission of evangelizing and building up the Church in the name and person of Christ himself (*PdV* 15, 16, 18).³⁵ Indeed, "the priest minister is the servant of Christ present in the Church as mystery, communion and mission. ... the priest is a servant of the *Church as mystery* because

³⁴"When it comes to choosing places and services in which candidates can obtain their pastoral experience, the parish should be given particular importance for it is a living cell of local and specialized pastoral work in which they will find themselves faced with the kind of problems they will meet in their future ministry. The synod fathers have proposed a number of concrete examples such as visits to the sick; caring for immigrants, refugees and nomads; and various social works which can be expressions of charitable zeal" (*PdV* 58).

³⁵"Jesus thus established a close relationship between the ministry entrusted to the apostles and his own mission... Their mission is not theirs but *is the same mission of Jesus*. All this is possible not as a result of human abilities, but only with the 'gift' of Christ and his Spirit, with the 'sacrament' ... And so the apostles, not by any special merit of their own, but only through a gratuitous participation in the grace of Christ, *prolong throughout history* to the end of time *the same mission of Jesus* on behalf of humanity" (*PdV* 14) [emphasis added].

he actuates the Church's sacramental signs of the presence of the risen Christ. He is a servant of the *Church as communion* because – in union with the bishop and closely related to the presbyterate – he builds up the unity of the Church community in the harmony of diverse vocations, charisms and services. Finally, the priest is a servant to the *Church as mission* because he makes the community a herald and witness of the Gospel" (*PdV* 16).

In other words, the priest is called specifically to act as pastor by fulfilling his ministry as a teacher of the Word, minister of the sacraments and leader of the Christian community (cf. *CIC* cc. 519, 528, 529; *CCEO* cc. 289, 367; *LG* 10, 28; *PO* 2, 5; *PTM*³⁶ *Introduction*; *DE* 19). Thus, the ministry of priests can essentially be seen as proclaiming Christ, perpetuating Christ and shepherding like Christ.

3.1. Proclaiming Christ

The priests are "teachers of the Word" *in nomine Christi et in nomine Ecclesiae* (cf. *PTM* II/1).³⁷ Therefore, they are called to proclaim Christ, the Word of God: "It is proper for presbyters, who are co-workers of the bishops, to proclaim the gospel of God" (*CIC* c. 757, cf. c. 528 §1; *CCEO* cc. 608, 289 §1; *DE* 41).³⁸ "Proclaiming Christ" is the essential

³⁶Cf. Congregation for the Clergy, Circular Letter *Catholic doctrinal tradition, on "The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium, Teacher of the Word, Minister of the Sacraments and Leader of the Community,"* 19 March 1999, in http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_cclergy_doc_19031999_pretres_en.html (accessed 25 March 2015) (= *PTM*).

³⁷The bishop reminds priests of this important duty on the day of their ordination: "You must apply your energies to the duty of teaching in the name of Christ, the chief Teacher. Share with all mankind the word of God you have received with joy. Meditate on the law of God, believe what you read, teach what you believe, and put into practice what you teach. Let the doctrine you teach be true nourishment for the people of God. Let the example of your life attract the followers of Christ, so that by word and action you may build up the house which is God's Church". *Pontificale Romanum - De ordinatione Episcopi, presbyterorum et Diaconorum*, n.151, Editio typica altera, (Vatican City: Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis 1990) 87-88.

³⁸To this duty of the pastors corresponds the right of the faithful towards the word of God (cf. *CIC* c. 213; *CCEO* c. 16) and to various rights towards the ministry of the divine word (cf. *CIC* cc. 211, 213, 214, 216, 217, 218; *CCEO* cc. 14, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21). Cf. Pudumai Doss, *Parola di Dio: un diritto dei fedeli?*, in J. Pudumai Doss, (ed.), *Parola di Dio e legislazione ecclesiastica*, Roma 2008, 68.

trait of priestly identity and ministry: "We pastors are therefore invited to take note of this duty, more than any other members of the Church. *What identifies our priestly service*, gives a profound unity to the thousand and one tasks which claim our attention day by day and throughout our lives, and confers a distinct character on our activities, *is this aim*, ever present in all our action: *to proclaim the Gospel of God. A mark of our identity* which no doubts ought to encroach upon and no objection eclipse *is this*: as pastors, we have been chosen by the mercy of the Supreme Pastor, in spite of our inadequacy, *to proclaim with authority the Word of God*" (EN³⁹ 68). The various ways in which priests proclaim Christ are discussed here below, knowing fully well that "proclaiming Christ means showing that to believe in and to follow him is not only something right and true, but also something beautiful, capable of filling life with new splendour and profound joy, even in the midst of difficulties" (EG 167).⁴⁰

a) Preaching of the Word of God

The Word of God is a gift to the Church, which "has the duty and innate right, independent of any human power whatsoever, to preach the gospel to all peoples" (CIC c. 747 §1; CCEO c. 595 §1). Preaching the good news is one of the main duties of pastors: "Sacred ministers, among whose principal duties is the proclamation of the gospel of God to all, are to hold the function of preaching in esteem" (CIC c. 762; cf. EN 68). To this duty corresponds a right of all the faithful (cf. CIC c. 213; CCEO c. 16), "since the people of God are first brought together by the word of the living God, ... it is certainly right to" hear it "from the mouth of priests" (can. 762).

"The function of proclaiming the gospel" "to the universal Church" (CIC cc. 747 §1, 756 §1; CCEO cc. 595 §1, 608) is principally entrusted to bishops, "the moderators of the entire ministry of the word" (CIC c. 756 §2, cf. CIC c. 212 §1, 386 §1, 392 §2, 753, 763; CCEO cc. 608, 15 §1, 196 §1, 201 §2, 600, 610 §1). It is "proper for presbyters" to proclaim the word of God (CIC c. 757; CCEO c. 608), especially if they are the "pastors of souls," such as parish priests and chaplains (cf. CIC cc. 528

³⁹Cf. Paulus PP. VI, *Adhortatio Apostolica Evangelii Nuntiandi*, De Evangelizatione in mundo huius temporis, 8 decembris 1975, in AAS 68 (1976) 5-76 (= EN) [emphasis added].

⁴⁰Pope Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation Evangelii Gaudium*, on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World, 24 November 2013, n.167 (= EG 167).

§1, 566 §1, 757, 771 §1; CCEO cc. 289 §1, 608, 611). Therefore “presbyters and deacons possess the faculty of preaching everywhere” within the limits set by CIC cc. 764-765 (CCEO cc. 610 §§2-3, 611-612): possible restrictions set by the competent authority, at least presumed consent of the rector of the Church, permission required by particular law, and consent of the religious superior, if the preaching is done in their oratory. The homily, however, being “part of the liturgy itself,” “is reserved to a priest or deacon” (CIC c. 767 §1; CCEO c. 614 §4).

The pastors should know how to proclaim Christ in a positive and stimulating manner: “Positive preaching always offers hope, points to the future, does not leave us trapped in negativity” (EG 159, cf. PTM II/2). The pastors should proclaim Christ not only to the faithful who attend regularly, but also to the ones “who because of the condition of their life do not have sufficient common and ordinary pastoral care or lack it completely” (CIC c. 771 §1; cf. c. 383 §1; CCEO c. 192 §1). Even “non-believers living in the territory” should be subjects of these efforts (CIC c. 771 §2; cf. cc. 383 §4, 787; CCEO cc. 192 §3, 293).

b) Catechetical Instruction

Catechesis principally aims “to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ: only He can lead us to the love of the Father in the Spirit and make us share in the life of the Holy Trinity” (CT⁴¹ 5). Catechesis also aims “at developing understanding of the mystery of Christ in the light of God’s word, so that the whole of a person’s humanity is impregnated by that word” (CT 20). One cannot deny that “it is a proper and grave duty especially of pastors of souls to take care of the catechesis of the Christian people” (CIC c. 773; CCEO c. 617), since it belongs to their priestly function⁴² as “instructors in the faith” (CT 64; cf. CIC c. 775 §1; CCEO c. 624 §1).

Although the bishops, “the catechists par excellence,” are “beyond all others the ones primarily responsible for catechesis” (CT 63; cf. CIC c. 775 §1; CCEO c. 617), other pastors, who are the collaborators of the bishop, also must encourage, coordinate, and direct the catechetical activity of the community entrusted to their care (cf. CIC cc. 773, 774

⁴¹Cf. Ioannes Paulus PP. II, Adhortatio apostolica *Catechesi Tradendae*, De catechesi nostro tempore tradenda, 16 octobris 1979, in AAS 71 (1979) 1277-1340 (= CT).

⁴²Cf. R. J. Barrett, *The Right to Integral Catechesis as a Fundamental Right of the Christian Faithful*, in *Apollinaris* 67 (1-2/1994) 190-192.

§1, 777; CCEO c. 624 §§1-2; DE 47). Therefore, priests, especially parish priests and others who have the care of souls (cf. CIC c. 776; CCEO cc. 619, 624 §1),⁴³ must catechise in such a way "that the living faith of the faithful becomes manifest and active through doctrinal instruction and the experience of Christian life" (CIC c. 773; CCEO c. 617).

Pastors should also ensure that catechesis becomes an integral part of Christian education in the family, especially of religious education in schools, of formation of the apostolic movements (cf. CIC cc. 528 §1, 777; CCEO cc. 289 §1, 619-620; CT 64-67; DE 47). With the help of lay, religious, and ordained collaborators, pastors of souls must ensure that all categories of the faithful receive suitable catechesis adapted to their age and capacity: children, teenagers and young people, adults and elderly, and the physically or mentally impeded (cf. CIC cc. 776-777; CCEO cc. 624 §1, 619; CT 35-45).

c) Missionary Action

The whole Church is missionary by its very nature. Therefore, all the Christian faithful have the fundamental right and obligation "to work so that the divine message of salvation more and more reaches all people in every age and in every land" (can. 211, cf. CIC cc. 747 §1, 781; CCEO c. 14, 584, 595 §1; EN 59; EG 237). Missionary activity is and should be the centre of unity of the sacerdotal ministry of the pastors: with their very being and acting, in accordance with their ordination, priests become missionaries.⁴⁴

The pastors, especially bishops, are called "to have special solicitude for missionary work," and to initiate, foster and sustain missionary efforts and cooperation in their own particular churches (cf. CIC c. 782 §2, 791; CCEO c. 585 §3, 593, §1). The diocesan bishop in the "mission territories" is to coordinate all the initiatives of this first proclamation of the word by promoting, directing and coordinating every effort and work of missionary action (cf. CIC c. 790; EN 67-68). It is the duty of pastors to bring the Gospel message to those living in their territory who do not profess the true faith (cf. CIC cc. 383 §4, 528 §1, 771 §2, 787; CCEO cc. 192 §3, 289 §1, 293).

⁴³Cf. Pudumai Doss, *The Portrait of Youth*, 290-291. Cf. A.G. Urru, *La funzione di insegnare della Chiesa nella legislazione attuale*, Roma 2001, 94-96 (= Urru, *La funzione di insegnare*, 94-96).

⁴⁴Cf. D. Tettamanzi, *Il sacerdote. Ministero e vita* (Cristianesimo e cultura 9), Siena 2009, 24.

Priests as well as seminarians can also be sent wherever evangelization and missionary activity require their service (cf. *CIC* cc. 256 §2, 257, 271, 784-785; *CCEO* cc. 352 §3, 360-362, 367, 381 §1; *PdV* 26). Priests can also participate in the missionary effort of the Church by promoting missionary initiatives and missionary vocations (cf. *CIC* c. 791; *CCEO* cc. 585 §3, 591,1°). They can foster missionary cooperation by informing the faithful about the situation of the churches in mission territories, and by inviting their prayers for and concrete contributions to missionary efforts.⁴⁵

d) Education

True education “must strive for complete formation of the human person” so as to develop harmoniously his/her “physical, moral, and intellectual talents,” to “acquire a more perfect sense of responsibility and right use of freedom,” and to prepare them “to participate actively in social life” (*CIC* c. 795; *CCEO* c. 629; cf. *CL* 57, 59). This sort of education to become “Christian” must offer “a clear educational project of which Christ is the foundation.”⁴⁶

“The duty and right of educating belongs in a special way to the Church” (*CIC* c. 794 §1; *CCEO* c. 628 §1), especially to the pastors (cf. *CIC* c. 794 §2; *CCEO* c. 628 §2). This fundamental right is translated into various rights of the Church, such as “the right to establish and direct schools of any discipline, type, and level” (*CIC* c. 800 §1; *CCEO* cc. 631 §2, 635) and the right to erect and direct universities (cf. *CIC* cc. 807, 816, 821; *CCEO* cc. 640 §1, 642, 649-650).

Pastors must ensure the availability of Catholic education (cf. *CIC* c. 794 §2; *CCEO* c. 628 §2), the transmission of an education imbued with the Christian spirit (cf. *CIC* c. 802 §1; *CCEO* c. 633 §1) and of Catholic religious education (cf. *CIC* c. 804-805; *CCEO* c. 637), the pastoral care of students at even non-Catholic universities (cf. *CIC* c. 813; *CCEO* c. 645), and the promotion of the university studies of promising youngsters (cf. *CIC* c. 819).⁴⁷

⁴⁵Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Angelus*, 3 June 1990.

⁴⁶Congregation for Catholic Education (For Seminaries and Educational Institutions), *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*, 28 December 1997, n. 4. Cf. Congregation for Catholic Education (For Seminaries and Educational Institutions), *Educating Together in Catholic Schools. A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful*, 8 September 2007, n. 13.

⁴⁷Cf. Pudumai Doss, *The Portrait of Youth*, 291.

e) Use of the Media

Pastors can proclaim Christ also by means of social communication (cf. *CIC* cc. 747 §1, 761; *CCEO* c. 595 §1). In the fulfilment of their pastoral office, pastors are urged to use instruments of social communication to bring the good news of Christ to the whole world (cf. *CIC* c. 822 §1; *CCEO* c. 651 §1). They are also called to "teach the faithful that they are bound by the duty of cooperating so that a human and Christian spirit enlivens the use of instruments of social communication" (*CIC* c. 822 §2; *CCEO* c. 651 §2).

Similarly, to preserve "the integrity of the truths of faith and morals, the pastors of the Church have the duty and right to be watchful so that no harm is done to the faith or morals of the Christian faithful through writings or the use of instruments of social communication" (*CIC* c. 823 §1; *CCEO* c. 652).⁴⁸ Pastors who participate in radio and television programs dealing with Catholic doctrine or morality should follow the rules established by their episcopal conference (cf. *CIC* c. 831 §2; *CCEO* c. 653).

Pastors should not be satisfied with only passive protection of the "tenets of faith," but rather must be able to proclaim life in Christ by condemning every unjust situation: "We should not be concerned simply about falling into doctrinal error, but about remaining faithful to this light-filled path of life and wisdom. For defenders of orthodoxy are sometimes accused of passivity, indulgence, or culpable complicity regarding the intolerable situations of injustice and the political regimes which prolong them" (*EG* 194).

3.2. Perpetuating Christ

Priests are "a sacramental representation of Jesus Christ, the head and shepherd," acting in his name by "repeating his acts of forgiveness and his offer of salvation" (*PdV* 15; cf. *CIC* c. 899 §2, 1008 *original version*, 1009 §3; *CCEO* c. 323 §1, 743). Participating in the ministerial priesthood of Christ, priests perpetuate for the Church, "in different times and places, the permanent guarantee of the sacramental presence of Christ, the Redeemer" (*CL* 55). Therefore, "the priest is the man of God; he belongs to God and makes us think of God." He is also "in-charge of mankind's relationship with God" and "constitutionally"

⁴⁸On permissions needed for publishing Christian books, cf. Pudumai Doss, *Freedom of Enquiry and Expression in the Catholic Church. A Canonico-Theological Study*, Bangalore 2007, 169-174, 174-181.

tends toward God, so as to make the human offerings to reach God and to lead all the believers to pay homage to God.”⁴⁹ The priest-pastor is an intermediary, who presents God to humanity and humanity to God.

a) Preparation for the Sacraments

Priests must seize every opportunity to help the faithful better understand the *mysterium* of the sacraments,⁵⁰ to celebrate and receive them with greater spiritual efficacy. They should also ensure that “those who seek the sacraments are prepared to receive them by proper evangelization and catechetical instruction” (CIC c. 843 §2; cf. CT 23). A proper preparation is needed for all the sacraments (cf. CIC cc. 777,1°, 840, 843 §2; CCEO cc. 619, 667), especially baptism (cf. CIC c. 851, 861 §2; CCEO c. 686 §2), penance (cf. CIC cc. 777,2°, 987; CCEO cc. 718, 721 §1), Holy Eucharist (cf. CIC cc. 777,2°, 898; CCEO cc. 699 §3, 713 §2), confirmation or chrismation (cf. CIC cc. 777-2°, 889 §2, 890), and anointing of the sick (cf. CIC c. 1002; CCEO c. 740).

Those receiving the sacrament of marriage must receive adequate preparation through proper instruction on the meaning of Christian marriage and on the role of Christian spouses and parents. Such preparation can be accomplished by “preaching, catechesis adapted to minors, youth, and adults, and even the use of instruments of social communication” (CIC c. 1063,1°; CCEO c. 783 §1). This is primarily the duty of pastors of souls, who are called to illustrate the doctrine of the sacraments (cf. CIC cc. 777, 836, 840, 843 §2, 851, 861 §2, 890, 898, 1063; CCEO cc. 619, 667, 686 §2, 718, 739, 783 §1).

b) Ministers of the Sacraments

The sacraments, in which priests act as ministers of Christ,⁵¹ are privileged moments in which the divine life is communicated to man. Conscious that they are instruments of Christ the high priest, priests must act as men marked by the sacramental character of orders to fulfil the sanctifying work of God (cf. PTM III/1, can. 899 §2). Therefore, priests, especially pastors of souls (cf. CIC cc. 528 §2, 530; CCEO cc. 289 §2, 290 §2), are the ordinary ministers of various sacraments. The ordinary minister of baptism, “the gateway to the

⁴⁹Pope John Paul II, *Angelus*, 4 March 1990. Translation is mine.

⁵⁰Cf. Urru, *La funzione di insegnare*, 95.

⁵¹Cf. Pope John Paul II, Letter *Iesu, Sacerdos*, to Priests for Holy Thursday 1997, 16 March 1997.

sacraments," is also a priest (cf. *CIC* c. 861 §1; *CCEO* c. 677 §1). The ordinary minister of confirmation can be "a presbyter provided with this faculty in virtue of universal law or the special grant of the competent authority" (*CIC* c. 882, cf. cc. 530, 883, 884, 885 §2, 887; *CCEO* cc. 290 §2, 696).⁵² Priests are also ministers of the sacrament of reconciliation (cf. *CIC* cc. 969-971; *CCEO* cc. 722-725). Moreover, "every priest and a priest alone validly administers the anointing of the sick" (*CIC* c. 1003 §1, cf. *CIC* cc. 999, 1001, 1003 §2; *CCEO* cc. 737 §2, 739, 741).

"The Eucharistic celebration is the action of Christ himself and the Church. In it, Christ the Lord, through the ministry of the priest, offers himself, substantially present under the species of bread and wine, to God the Father and gives himself as spiritual food to the faithful united with his offering" (*CIC* c. 899 §1; *CCEO* c. 698). In this "most August sacrament" and "the summit and source of all worship and Christian life" (can. 897), the centrality and necessity of the priest, who acts "in the person of Christ" (*CIC* cc. 899 §2, cf. c. 910 §1; *CCEO* c. 699 §1), cannot be denied. Pope John Paul emphasized it thus: "The essential importance of the Eucharist for the life of the Church makes us understand the unique role of the priestly ministry. *Without a priest there can be no Eucharistic sacrifice.* This is why the Second Vatican Council states that in the celebration of the Eucharist priests exercise their principal function. They, as ministers of sacred things, are especially ministers of the sacrifice of the Mass."⁵³ Through sacramental action and ministry, therefore, priests perpetuate the presence of Christ in the world, especially in the hearts of those who receive the sacraments devoutly.

3.3. *Shepherding Like Christ*

Jesus Christ, "the great shepherd of the sheep, entrusted to the apostles and their successors the ministry of shepherding God's flock" (*PdV* 1). Priests, therefore, are called to shepherd like Christ by becoming men of service, pastoral charity, holiness, and communion.

a) *Man of Service*

"The mission of the Apostles, which the Lord Jesus continues to entrust to the Pastors of his people, is a true service." Therefore,

⁵²As far as the Oriental Churches are concerned, priests are ordinary ministers of Chrismation.

⁵³Pope John Paul II, *Angelus*, 1 July 1990. Translation is mine.

“Pastors must always acknowledge that their ministry is fundamentally ordered to the service of the entire People of God” (CL 22; cf. PTM IV/ 2-3; EdM 1; CIC c. 529 §1; CCEO c. 289 §3).⁵⁴ This is clearly explained in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “Intrinsically linked to the sacramental nature of ecclesial ministry is its character as service. Entirely dependent on Christ who gives mission and authority, ministers are truly ‘slaves of Christ,’ in the image of him who freely took ‘the form of a slave’ for us. Because the word and grace of which they are ministers are not their own, but are given to them by Christ for the sake of others, they must freely become the slaves of all” (CCC 876).

The ministry of the true pastor is service, prompted not by any personal gain, but by love similar to that of Jesus:⁵⁵ “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (Jn 10:11). Therefore, to shepherd means to serve and to serve means to shepherd (cf. DE 16; CIC c. 1008, 1009 §3; CCEO cc. 323 §1, 743).

b) Man of Pastoral Charity

Priests should live their ministry with pastoral charity (cf. CIC c. 247, 276 §1, 277, 383, 519, 528-529; CCEO c. 192-193, 289, 368, 373-374, 381 §1; PdV 22), “the gift of self, the total gift of self to the Church, following the example of Christ,” imitating him “in his self-giving and service” (PdV 23; cf. DE 43). Therefore, pastoral charity lived as gratuitous self-donation should influence how the priest thinks, acts, and relates to the people of God: “Pastor of the community - in the likeness of Christ, the Good Shepherd, who offers his whole life for the Church - the priest exists and lives for it; prays, studies, works and sacrifices himself for it; is prepared to give his life for it, loving it like Christ, pouring out upon it all his love and consideration, lavishing it with all his strength and unlimited time to render it, in the image of the Church, the Bride of Christ, ever more beautiful and worthy of the benevolence of the Father and the love of the Holy Spirit” (DE 55).

⁵⁴Bishop, during the priestly Ordination, exhorts the deacons who are about to receive the ordination with the following words: “Always remember the example of the Good Shepherd who came not to be served but to serve, and to seek out and rescue those who were lost.” *Pontificale Romanum - De ordinatione Episcopi, presbyterorum et Diaconorum*, Editio typica altera, n. 151, (Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis 1990) 87-88. Translation is mine.

⁵⁵Cf. E. Dal Covolo, *Sacerdoti come i nostri padri. I Padri della Chiesa maestri di formazione sacerdotale* (Roma, 1998) 6.

The pastoral charity of the priests towards the people of God must be based on the priest's love for Christ himself: "The apostle Paul had a clear and sure understanding of this point. Writing to the Christians of the church in Corinth, he refers to 'ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake' (2Cor 4:5). Above all, this was the explicit and programmatic teaching of Jesus when he entrusted to Peter the ministry of shepherding the flock only after his threefold affirmation of love; indeed, only after he had expressed a preferential love: 'He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Peter ... said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep' (Jn 21:17)" (PdV 23). Thus, in profoundly loving Christ the good shepherd and his spouse, the Church, the priest can fulfil his ministry with pastoral charity.

c) *Man of Holiness*

Called to shepherd the people of God, the priest in his pastoral ministry should offer himself totally for God's flock as his principal way to holiness: "In leading their lives, clerics are bound in a special way to pursue holiness since, having been consecrated to God by a new title in the reception of orders, they are dispensers of the mysteries of God in the service of His people." "In order to be able to pursue this perfection: they are first of all to fulfil faithfully and tirelessly the duties of the pastoral ministry" (CIC c. 276 §§1-2; CCEO c. 368, 381,1°; cf. PTM III/1; DE 16; EG 104, 149).

Apart from living a holy and self-sacrificing life, the priest "is not to teach his own wisdom but the Word of God, and urgently invite all men to conversion and holiness" (PO 4). To promote holiness in others, the priest must truly be a man of faith, hope and charity.⁵⁶ Every priest should be an animator of faith for the Christian community. Those who turn to him do not expect a simple answer of common sense but words of faith. As a man of hope, the priest must know how to encourage the efforts of good will and be able to look at the world with optimism based on Christ's victory. Called to serve in the name of Christ, the priest will have to fulfil his ministry with the same love of Jesus for the people to God. Only in this way does the priest fulfil his special duty towards holiness and become a perfect reflection of the good shepherd.

⁵⁶Pope John Paul II addressed such themes in various *Angelus* addresses: 17 December 1989; 24 December 1989; and 18 February 1990.

d) Man of Communion

Out of love for Christ and his Church, the priest becomes a man of communion and unity: “Exercising the office of Christ, the Shepherd and Head, and according to their share of his authority, priests, in the name of the bishop, gather the family of God together as a brotherhood enlivened by one spirit. Through Christ they lead them in the Holy Spirit to God the Father” (*PO* 6; cf. *CL* 22, *CIC* c. 369; *CCEO* c. 177).

Just as the ministry of the Church is not a private work, neither is that of the priest. Therefore, a priest can exercise his ministry only in hierarchical communion with the whole body of Christ: pope, bishops, other priests, religious and lay people (cf. *DE* 56; *CIC* cc. 205, 209, 519; *CCEO* cc. 8, 12, 201 §1, 281 §1, 324). Priests, first of all, are the “co-workers of the bishops” (*CIC* c. 757, cf. cc. 369, 495 §1, 529 §2; *CCEO* cc. 177, 289 §3, 608; *PdV* 74; *DE* 56) and their “assistants and counsellors” (*CIC* c. 384; *CCEO* c. 192 §4) in the pastoral service to the people of God. The priests should know that they can accomplish the work of Christ only in communion with their brothers in priesthood. They are also called to live among themselves the bonds of brotherhood, of prayer, and of ministry (cf. *CIC* cc. 275 §1, 280, 369, 495 §1, 519, 529 §2, 545; *CCEO* cc. 177, 289 §3, 302 §1, 376, 379; *PdV* 74; *DE* 56).

Pastors must also “acknowledge and foster the ministries, the offices and roles of the lay faithful that find their foundation in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, indeed, for a good many of them, in the Sacrament of Matrimony” (*CL* 23; cf. *CIC* cc. 129 §2, 228, 275 §2, 280, 519, 529 §2, 536 §1; *CCEO* cc. 381 §3, 401, 403 §2, 408, 979 §2). It is through these efforts that priests fulfil our Lord’s prayer: “that they be one as we are one” (*Jn* 17:22).

4. Concluding Remarks

The “identity, formation and ministry of the priest” as presented by the codes of canon law (*CIC* and *CCEO*) clearly illustrate that being “shepherds *with* Him, *for* Him and *in* Him” is at the heart of a priest-pastor’s sacramental identity and ministry. Indeed, “Jesus is the Good Shepherd who seeks us, brings us together and guides us on the journey that goes from selfishness to love, from darkness to light, from death to life, from the heart of stone to the heart that beats to the rhythm of the heart of God. ... But – here is the fact that fills us with wonder – Jesus does not want to act alone: He wants someone to make visible His face, His voice, His hands, His tireless feet and His heart

burning with love. So Jesus called some men, who would be shepherds/pastors *with Him, for Him and in Him.*"⁵⁷ Moreover, only pastors *like Him* can be worthy of fulfilling God's promise to His people through the prophet Jeremiah: "I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding" (*Jer 3:15*).⁵⁸

"To be shepherds with the odour of the sheep," therefore, the priests are called to live their identity, formation and ministry by following Christ Jesus, the good shepherd, and by becoming "shepherds *with Him, for Him, in Him and like Him.*"

⁵⁷A. Comastri, *Prefazione*, in L. Sapienza (ed.), *Spiritualità sacerdotale* (Città del Vaticano, 2009) 4. Translation is mine.

⁵⁸"God promises the Church not just any sort of shepherds, but shepherds 'after his own heart'. And God's 'heart' has revealed itself to us fully in the heart of Christ the good shepherd. Christ's heart continues today to have compassion for the multitudes and to give them the bread of truth, the bread of love, the bread of life, and it pleads to be allowed to beat in other hearts - priests' hearts: 'You give them something to eat' (*Mk 6:37*). People need to come out of their anonymity and fear. They need to be known and called by name, to walk in safety, along the paths of life, to be found again if they have become lost, to be loved, to receive salvation as the supreme gift of God's love. All this is done by Jesus, the good shepherd - by himself and by his priests with him" (*PdV 82*).

