

**Course outline**

- 1. General notion of Apostolic Vocation**
- 2. Nature of Apostolic Vocations**
- 3. Factors affecting Apostolic Vocations**
- 4. Priestly Vocations**
- 5. Nature of Priestly vocations**
- 6. Signs of Priestly Vocations**
- 7. Care of Priestly Vocations**
- 8. Religious consecration and societies of apostolic life**

**Care of Priestly Vocations a Baptismal Responsibility**

One of the tasks of the Christ faithful people is to care for the Priestly vocations. This is so because the sacrament of Baptism places the task of building up of the kingdom of God in history on the shoulders of all the baptized as sharers in the three offices of Christ: the King, the Priest, and the Prophet. The Christ faithful people by the virtue of their baptism have received the status of adoption as sons and daughters of God. Because of this gift of love in Christ, they become a saved community, but they are also called upon to communicate this love to their brethren and thus become a saving community. They achieve this through caring for their vocation as priestly people of God. This care can be made concrete in the care of the vocation to ministerial priesthood.

Being aware of this important task of the Christ faithful people, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council recommended the traditional aids towards the general cooperation of the people of God to the formation of candidates for the ministerial priesthood. These aids are 1. Unceasing prayer, 2. Christian penance, 3. Progressively more advanced instruction for the faithful on the nature and excellence of the priestly vocation by preaching, catechesis, and means of social communication. 4. Methodic and coherent planning

The sacred synod recommends first the traditional means of common effort such as urgent prayer, Christian penance and a constantly more intensive training of the faithful by preaching, by catechetical instructions or by the many media of social communication that will show forth the need, the nature and the importance of the priestly vocation. The synod moreover orders that the entire pastoral activity of fostering vocations be methodically and coherently planned, and with equal prudence and zeal, fostered by those organizations for promoting vocations which, in accord with the appropriate pontifical documents, have already been or will be set up in the territory of individual dioceses, regions or countries. In addition, no opportune aids are to be overlooked which modern psychological and sociological research has brought to light.

**The Bishop As An Agent of Priestly Formation**

The Congregation for the Clergy, in the publication of the congregation, *The Gift of the Priestly Vocation: Ratio Fundamentalis Institutionis Sacerdotalis*, stated that it is the Bishop who is primarily responsible for admission to the Seminary and formation for the priesthood. This responsibility is expressed in the choice the formators in the seminaries. The Congregation stated



that, keeping in mind what pastoral charity demands, for the good of the Church, the bishop should not admit whomever to the seminary and the priesthood. He should offer well thought out vocational guidance and a sound process of formation.

Part of this vocational guidance and sound process of formation, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council said is that the bishops are charged with the responsibility to determine the opportuneness of providing for a certain interruption in the studies or of establishing a suitable introduction to pastoral work, in order that they may more satisfactorily test the fitness of candidates for the priesthood. In accordance with the conditions of individual regions, it will also be the bishops' responsibility to make a decision about extending the age beyond that demanded at present by common law for the reception of sacred Orders, and of deliberating whether it be opportune to rule that students, at the end of their course in theology, exercise the order of deacon for a fitting period of time before being promoted to the priesthood.

### **The Church and Priestly Formation**

St. Pope John Paul II, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (I Will Give You Shepherds), states that the Church is by her very nature the 'memorial or sacrament' of the presence and action of Jesus Christ in our midst and on our behalf. Because of this, considering the task of care of vocation to the priesthood, he states that the formation to the priesthood is principally the action of Christ through his Spirit. Christ is the Head of His body the Church. The Church is by her very nature the memorial or sacrament of the presence and action of Jesus Christ in our midst and on our behalf. Hence, the call to the priesthood depends on his saving presence. It does not depend on the call, but also on the accompanying of the person called by Christ so that the candidate can recognize the Lord's grace and respond to it freely and lovingly. It is the Spirit of Jesus that gives the light on the journey and strength to vocational discernment. He does this throughout the journey to the priesthood. Therefore, we can say that there cannot exist any genuine formational work for the priesthood without the influence of the Spirit of Christ. The whole Church as the body of Christ is involved in the process of formation of the candidate to the priesthood of Christ.

### **The Vocation of all the Baptized**

All Christ's faithful people share a common vocation. The common vocation of all the Christians is the vocation to holiness and to the mission of evangelizing the world. This vocation is made possible through the sacraments of Christian initiation. A Christian is born anew into the life of Christ in the spirit; through the sacraments of Christian initiation.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that there are two other sacraments directed towards the salvation of others. These sacraments are: Holy Orders and the Holy Matrimony. These sacraments contribute as well to personal salvation of the recipients when they apply themselves faithfully to the service of others. The sacraments confer a particular mission in the church and serve to build up the People of God.

Through these sacraments, those already consecrated by Baptism and Confirmation for the common priesthood of all the faithful can receive particular consecrations. Those who receive the sacrament of Holy Orders are consecrated in Christ's name to feed the Church by the word and



grace of God. On their part, Christian spouses are fortified and, as it were, consecrated for the duties and dignity of their state by a special sacrament.

### **The Ministerial Priesthood a configuration into the life of the Trinity through Christ**

The ministerial priesthood is the office Christ the eternal High Priest committed to the pastors of his people. This office is by its very nature for service. It relates to Christ and to men. According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, this office depends entirely on Christ and on his unique priesthood. It was instituted for the good of men and the communion of the Church. The sacrament through which this office is conferred is the Holy Orders. This sacrament of Holy Orders communicates a sacred power which is none other than that of Christ. Hence, the exercise of this authority must therefore be measured against the model of Christ, who by love made himself the least and the servant of all.

To this end, therefore, all priests, who are constituted in the order of priesthood by the sacrament of Holy Orders, are bound together by an intimate sacramental brotherhood, but in a special way they form one priestly body in the diocese to which they are attached under their own bishop. The unity of the presbyterium finds liturgical expression in the custom of the presbyters' imposing hands, after the bishop, during the rite of ordination. New Testament priesthood is a participation in the priesthood of Christ who is the second person in the Trinity. The life of the Trinity is communion. The life of Christ is communion. The priesthood of Christ is lived in communion. Division is contrary to the priesthood of Christ.

### **Religious Consecration and Societies of Apostolic Life( canon 573-731)**

#### **Institute of Consecrated life**

This could be an order, congregation, society, group or gathering of Christ's faithful, who assume the form of living, of consecrated life, through the profession of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience in a stable manner which is recognized by the Church, in the institute, which is canonically erected by a competent ecclesiastical authority. Universal, special and particular laws of the Church guide institutes of consecrated life. they are also guided by each institutes' own proper constitution.

The aim of institute of consecrated life is to help the consecrated people to follow Christ more faithfully and closely, under the action of the Holy Spirit, and to be totally dedicated to God by a new and special title to his honour, to the building of the Church and to the salvation of the world, including of course, the religious himself or herself. These faithful, within the institute, strive for perfection of charity in the service of the kingdom of God, and having been made outstanding in the Church, they foretell the heavenly glory. An institute of consecrated life acquires juridical personality in the Church through its canonical erection and consequently it can be a subject of rights and privileges as well as duties and obligations. It can as well acquire temporal goods and alienate the same according to law. The institute of consecrated life is religious, if the Church recognizes it as such and when members consecrate their whole person. This type of life manifests in the Church wonderful marriage brought about by God, a sign of the life in a future age. It could be pontifical or diocesan. It could be secular CCC928



**Religious life** is a state of life in the church where a person who belongs to this institute professes the public vows of poverty, obedience and chastity, popularly referred to as the evangelical counsels, and lives in fraternal life with other members.

**Religious life, as a consecration** of the whole person, manifests in the Church the marvelous marriage, established by God as a sign of the world to come. Religious in this way consummate a full gift of themselves as a sacrifice offered to God, so that their whole existence becomes a continuous worship of God in charity. A religious institute is a society in which, in accordance with their own law, the members pronounce public vows and live a fraternal life in common. The vows are either perpetual or temporary. If the latter, they are to be renewed when the time elapses. The public witness which religious are to give to Christ and the Church involves that separation from the world which is proper to the character and purpose of each institute.

### **Societies of Apostolic Life**

Society of apostolic life is a form of consecrated life, whose members without actually professing religious vows, pursue the particular apostolic purpose of their society and lead a life as brothers or sisters in common, according to a particular manner of life, and strive for the perfection of charity through the observance of the constitutions. It is a group whose members live together in common fraternal life in their own special manner to pursue some apostolic purpose proper to each society but who do not take religious vows. It may be very similar or approximate to a religious institute of consecrated life and may be subject to many of the norms of religious communities. They are not strictly religious, however, they strive for perfection of charity through the observance of their constitution. Nonetheless, some members through a bond defined in the constitution undertake to live the evangelical council.

Society of apostolic life can be clerical, if only clerics are members and it has clerical missionary purpose, otherwise, it is lay. It could be of diocesan or pontifical right. (CCC 930 CC 103,104, 266,268, 731-746m 778,1019,)

approximate to institutes of consecrated life. Their members, without taking religious vows, pursue the apostolic purpose proper to each society. Living a fraternal life in common in their own special manner, they strive for the perfection of charity through the observance of the constitutions. Among these societies are some in which the members, through a bond defined in the constitutions, undertake to live the evangelical counsels.

### **Description of the difference between the Religious Institutes and Societies of Apostolic Life.**

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**Societies of Apostolic Life:** Their members, without taking religious vows, pursue the apostolic purpose proper to each society. Living a fraternal life in common in their own special manner, they strive for the perfection of charity through the observance of the constitutions. Among these societies are some in which the members, through a bond defined in the constitutions, undertake to live the evangelical counsels.