

# Michael J. Himes

## MAKING PRIESTHOOD POSSIBLE

### Who Does What and Why

Two issues must concern anyone who looks at ministry in the church in the United States today. The first is the need to encourage the emerging ministries of the laity. The second is the morale of ordained ministers, especially priests. The ministries of all the baptized are, in many instances, fledgling ministries. They do not have the clear definition of responsibilities that comes from canonical description and long-standing familiarity. All too often lay ministries are treated as useful and necessary stopgaps to which the church must resort because of insufficient ordinations to the priesthood. This implies that, were seminaries suddenly to find themselves deluged with applicants, lay ministries would fade away as no-longer-needed, extraordinary measures. The problem of morale among ordained ministers, on the other hand, recently received a great deal of attention because of the report by the committee on priestly life and ministry of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.<sup>1</sup> According to this report, many priests feel exhausted and discouraged because of the multiplicity of demands placed upon them.

#### Relationship Between Ministries

These two issues, the fostering of lay ministries and the reinvigoration of ordained ministry, raise two questions that must be examined: first, what is the relationship between ministries in general within the church and the specifically ordained ministries; and second, what are the relationships among the various ordained ministries, episcopacy, presbyterate, and diaconate? The answers to both questions hinge on an appreciation of the characteristic mark of the Catholic tradition within Christianity, the principle of sacramentality.

A sacrament cannot signify, cannot point at something, if the something is not there. But it only becomes *there* for you when it is pointed out. That is the peculiar sacramental causality that Thomas knew did not fit the usual meanings of "cause." Sacraments presuppose the

presence of grace in creation. They are the occasions for recognizing and celebrating what is always present but not always received. They make grace present for us by pointing to the grace that is omnipresent in creation. They make present and real for us what is always already there.

#### Ordained Ministry Sacramental

In light of this sacramental principle, I maintain that all ordained ministry is sacramental. I do not mean that all ordained ministry consists in celebration or administration of the seven sacraments. That is obviously far too narrow a notion of ordained ministry. I mean that ordained ministry functions in accord with the sacramental principle. It makes effectively present for the community what is already there in the community, but which requires expression for it to be fully received and celebrated.

A fundamental shift is now under way in the understanding of the sacrament of baptism. Not very many years ago, were one to have asked the average Catholic in this country what the primary effect of baptism is, the reply almost certainly would have been that it removed original sin. That baptism is our admission into the community of believers would have been noted, but probably in the more individualistic imagery of the baptized person's having become a "child of God and heir of the kingdom of heaven." In recent decades much more attention has been given to baptism as a sacrament of initiation. But all too often this initiation into the church is still envisioned as entitlement to benefits. The idea that by baptism we are commissioned to ministry receives far less attention. If mentioned at all, it may be connected with confirmation, a sacrament the theological understanding of which is far less developed than that of baptism. Baptism must be seen as the acceptance of a responsibility as much as the reception of a blessing. Like all the sacraments, it is received for the good of the community, not for the good of the recipient alone. One is baptized for the good of the others. That is why it is a public celebration of the church: it is for the church's good that this person be received as a new member. In all the

---

Reverend Michael J. Himes is an associate professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame.



sacraments, the common good is served equally with the individual's good. To be baptized is to be called into service.

As the introduction into a community in which all are called to service, baptism is the primary sacrament of ministry. All subsequent sacraments further specify the fundamental call to ministry extended in baptism. It is in this context that we can understand the claim that the ordained ministry sacramentalizes the ministry already present in the church. This is the background against which the relationship between ordained and nonordained ministries in the church is correctly addressed.

Not every action of a believer for others is describable as ministry. Thomas O'Meara has helpfully defined ministry as "the public activity of a baptized follower of Jesus Christ flowing from the Spirit's charism and an individual personality on behalf of a Christian community to witness to, serve, and realize the Kingdom of God."<sup>3</sup> The public acts that witness to, serve, and realize the kingdom of God have differed and will differ from age to age and from place to place. The church is a multi-dimensional reality. As such, the tasks to which it is called and to which it calls its members vary with the historical and cultural conditions in which it lives. A ministry vital in one circumstance may legitimately disappear as unnecessary in another time and place. At any given moment in the community's life there is a multitude of ministries to which one or another is called by baptism and, in O'Meara's words, individual personality.

### Three Responsibilities

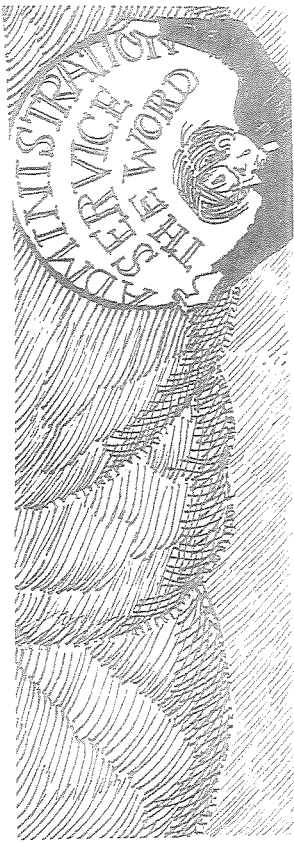
But there are some responsibilities that confront the church always and everywhere because they are intrinsic to the baptized community. Corresponding to these responsibilities are forms of ministries whose relevance is never exhausted. The styles of these ministries may vary with time and place, but their fundamental natures remain. I suggest that there are at least three responsibilities

### Sacramental Causality

The key to the sacramental principle is found in its classic form in a phrase that has its origin in Augustine's writings on sacramentality, and that was cited repeatedly by Thomas Aquinas whenever he turned his attention to questions about sacraments, namely, that "a sacrament effects what it signifies."<sup>2</sup> A sacrament causes something by designating it, by pointing to it. This can be understood only when an even deeper claim regarding grace is understood.

Grace is the self-gift of God outside the Trinity. If we accept that creation is a purely gratuitous and free act of God, that God does not need to create, then the only reason for anything other than God to exist at all is that God communicates God's self to it. To say that creation is a free divine act means that God needs to receive nothing from creation. The reason to create, then, is so that God may give something to creation. But anything other than God is creation. So the only gift that can be given to creation is God's self. The divine gift of self to creatures is what is meant by grace. Thus, the very ground of creation is the divine will to communicate the divine self. Creation is in light of grace. Everything that exists does so in order that God may enhance it. In a fine phrase of Karl Rahner's, grace is "at the roots of the world."

To say that a sacrament "causes grace" is, therefore, to speak of "causing" in a very particular sense. Thomas Aquinas recognized this clearly when he observed that sacramental causality fit none of the traditional meanings of "cause" that Aristotle had listed. This was why Thomas found the Augustinian tag that sacraments cause by signifying to be so useful. Grace, after all, has only one origin: the *agape* of God, the divine self-gift.



sacraments, the common good is served equally with the individual's good. To be baptized is to be called into service.

As the introduction into a community in which all are called to service, baptism is the primary sacrament of ministry. All subsequent sacraments further specify the fundamental call to ministry extended in baptism. It is in this context that we can understand the claim that the ordained ministry sacramentalizes the ministry already present in the church. This is the background against which the relationship between ordained and nonordained ministries in the church is correctly addressed.

Not every action of a believer for others is describable as ministry. Thomas O'Meara has helpfully defined as ministry "the public activity of a baptized follower of Jesus Christ flowing from the Spirit's charism and an individual personality on behalf of a Christian community to witness to, serve, and realize the Kingdom of God."<sup>1</sup> The public acts that witness to, serve, and realize the Kingdom of God have differed and will differ from age to age and from place to place. The church is a multidimensional reality. As such, the tasks to which it is called and to which it calls its members vary with the historical and cultural conditions in which it lives. A ministry vital in one circumstance may legitimately disappear as unnecessary in another time and place. At any given moment in the community's life there is a multitude of ministries to which one or another is called by baptism and, in O'Meara's words, individual personality.

### Three Responsibilities

But there are some responsibilities that confront the church always and everywhere because they are intrinsic to the baptized community. Corresponding to these responsibilities are forms of ministries whose relevance is never exhausted. The styles of these ministries may vary with time and place, but their fundamental natures remain. I suggest that there are at least three responsibilities

### Sacramental Causality

The key to the sacramental principle is found in its classic form in a phrase that has its origin in Augustine's writings on sacramentality, and that was cited repeatedly by Thomas Aquinas whenever he turned his attention to questions about sacraments, namely, that "a sacrament causes what it signifies."<sup>2</sup> A sacrament causes something by designating it by pointing to it. This can be understood only when an even deeper claim regarding grace is understood.

Grace is the self-gift of God outside the Trinity. If we accept that creation is a purely gratuitous and free act of God, that God does not need to create, then the only reason for anything other than God to exist at all is that God communicates God's self to it. To say that creation is a free divine act means that God needs to receive nothing from creation. The reason to create, then, is so that God may give something to creation. But anything other than God is creation. So the only gift that can be given to creation is God's self. The divine gift of self to creatures is what is meant by grace. Thus, the very ground of creation is the divine will to communicate the divine self. Creation is in light of grace. Everything that exists does so in order that God may enhance it. In a fine phrase of Karl Rahner's, grace is "at the roots of the world."<sup>3</sup>

To say that a sacrament "causes grace" is, therefore, to speak of "causing" in a very particular sense. Thomas Aquinas recognized this clearly when he observed that sacramental causality fit none of the traditional meanings of "cause" that Aristotle had listed. This was why Thomas found the Augustinian tag that sacraments cause by signifying to be so useful. Grace, after all, has only one origin: the *esse* of God, the divine self-gift.

And grace is already given with existence, for existence is the first step in the process of the divine self-communication. Everything that comes into existence does so to be the recipient of the divine self-gift. What then does a sacrament do? It points us to the reality that is already present but not yet fully received. For there is in creation a point at which creation becomes conscious of the ground of its own existence and is free to accept or reject that ground, the human person. Those occasions—persons, actions, objects, events, places, times— which make us aware of the grace that is communicated in creation and in which we accept the divine self-giving are sacraments. The sacrament points to what is always there but not always attended to or received—grace.

All analogies limp, but perhaps a rather odd example may prove helpful. Imagine yourself in a dentist's waiting room. You are alone, waiting to be summoned to the dentist's chair in the high-room. From that room next door comes the high-pitched whine of the dentist's drill, sending shivers down one's spine. There is nothing in the waiting room to occupy your attention except the 1971 issues of *Better Homes and Gardens*, which seem to be *de rigueur* in all dentists' offices. In the background, Muzak is run-tun-tumming mindlessly along. You pay no attention to the Muzak. Indeed, were you to leave the waiting room and were someone to ask you whether any music had been playing, you would reply with perfect candor: "No. I didn't hear anything." Shortly, another prospective patient enters, sits down near you, and after a moment inquires of you, "What is the name of that tune?" At that instant, for the first time, the music goes on *for you*. That is how a sacrament causes by signifying.

that are present in the church in every age and on every level, whether in the church universal or the most local church, the family and household. They are, first, the responsibility to maintain communion within the church, the holding together of the community. The second is the responsibility to and for the word of God. The third responsibility is that of direct service both to those within the community and those outside the community. The three forms of ministry that correspond to these responsibilities have traditionally been designated respectively as episcopate, presbyterate, and diaconate. By baptism every Christian is charged with all three of these responsibilities and so is called to all three of these ministries.

Catholics have long been accustomed to speak of a universal priesthood in the church, a priesthood of all the faithful. I am suggesting that, as there is a universal presbyterate, so too there are a universal episcopate and a universal diaconate in the church, an episcopate and diaconate of all the faithful. All are called to the episcopal function of maintaining the unity of the community. All are called to the presbyteral function of responsibility to and for the word. All are called to the diaconal function of direct service to those within and outside the community. The vocation to these universal ministries is given in baptism, which is the principal sacrament of ministry.

Because these needs and the ministries that respond to them are present at all times and on every level in the church and all are called to them, it is necessary that there be some who are asked by the community to sacramentalize these ministries. In accord with the sacramental principle that what is always and everywhere present must be embodied *somewhere* in order to be made effectively present, the universal episcopal, presbyteral, and diaconal ministries need sacramental expression. This is the role of ordained ministries.

When one is baptized, one does not receive a sacrament, one becomes a sacrament. Baptism makes us sacraments to the world, signifying and therefore making

the sacrament is a sign of the grace that is already present and available for every person who is in the world. The sacrament is a sign of the grace that is already present and available for every person who is in the world. The sacrament is a sign of the grace that is already present and available for every person who is in the world.

And grace is already given with existence, for existence is the first step in the process of the divine self-communication. Everything that comes into existence does so to be the recipient of the divine self-gift. What then does a sacrament do? It points us to the reality that is already present but not yet fully received. For there is in creation a point at which creation becomes conscious of the ground of its own existence and is free to accept or reject that ground: the human person. Those occasions—persons, actions, objects, events, places, times—which make us aware of the grace that is omnipresent in creation and in which we accept the divine self-giving are sacraments. The sacrament points to what is always there but not always attended to or received—grace.

All analogies limp, but perhaps a rather odd example may prove helpful. Imagine yourself in a dentist's waiting room. You are alone, waiting to be summoned to the dentist's chair in the next room. From that room next door comes the high-pitched whine of the dentist's drill, sending shivers down one's spine. There is nothing in the waiting room to occupy your attention except the 1971 issues of *Better Homes and Gardens*, which seem to be *de rigueur* in all dentists' offices. In the background, Muzak is rum-tum-tumming mindlessly along. You pay no attention to the Muzak. Indeed, were you to leave the waiting room and were someone to ask you whether any music had been playing, you would reply with perfect candor, "No, I didn't hear anything." Shortly, another prospective patient enters, sits down near you, and after a moment inquires of you, "What is the name of that tune?" At that instant, for the first time, the music goes on for you. That is how a sacrament causes by signifying.

that are present in the church in every age and on every level, whether in the church universal or the most local church, the family and household. They are, first, the responsibility to maintain communion within the church, the holding together of the community. The second is responsibility to and for the word of God. The third responsibility is that of direct service both to those within the community and those outside the community. The three forms of ministry that correspond to these responsibilities have traditionally been designated respectively as episcopate, presbyterate, and diaconate. By baptism every Christian is charged with all three of these responsibilities and so is called to all three of these ministries.

Catholics have long been accustomed to speak of a universal priesthood in the church, a priesthood of all the faithful. I am suggesting that, as there is a universal presbyterate, so too there are a universal episcopate and a universal diaconate in the church, an episcopate and diaconate of all the faithful. All are called to the episcopal function of maintaining the unity of the community. All are called to the presbyteral function of responsibility to and for the word. All are called to the diaconal function of direct service to those within and outside the community. The vocation to these universal ministries is given in baptism, which is the principal sacrament of ministry.

Because these needs and the ministries that respond to them are present at all times and on every level in the church and all are called to them, it is necessary that there be some who are asked by the community to sacramentalize these ministries. In accord with the sacramental principle that what is always and everywhere present must be embodied somewhere in order to be made effectively present, the universal episcopal, presbyteral, and diaconal ministries need sacramental expression. This is the role of ordained ministries.

When one is baptized, one does not receive a sacrament, one becomes a sacrament. Baptism makes us sacraments to the world, signifying and therefore making





real the grace that lies at the roots of the world. Our baptismal second birth as Christians in the church is the sacramentalization of the divine self-gift, which is the reason for our first birth as human beings in the world. So too orders makes those members of the community called to ordination sacraments pointing to a reality already present throughout the whole church, and so rendering that reality effective. As sacraments, ordained ministers effect what they signify: the ministry of all the faithful.

Understanding ordained ministry sacramentally reverses a familiar but inadequate notion of the universal priesthood of all believers, namely, that the priesthood of the laity is a participation in the priesthood of the hierarchy. It is far truer, and far more coherent with our sacramental theology, to understand the priesthood of the ordained as the sacramentalization of the priesthood of the whole church. The priesthood of the church is primary. Its sacramental expression, ordained ministry, is built upon it, not the other way around. An important corollary of this should be noted. Central to any sacrament is the reinforcement of the reality that is sacramentalized. Thus it follows that crucial to a renewal of ordained priesthood in our time is a renewal of the priesthood of the whole church. Unless the priesthood of the laity is fostered, the priesthood of the ordained must languish.

~~~~~

Ordained ministers are designated by the community to embody a specific ministry, whether episcopacy, that is, the maintenance of communion, or of presbyterate, that is, responsibility to and for the word of God, or of diaconate, the direct service to those within and outside the community. Anyone who is ordained to sacramentalize one of those ministries is still called by baptism to the other two. When someone is ordained to the presbyterate, it does not mean he no longer has diaconal or episcopal responsibilities. Each member of the church has all three responsibilities by baptism. But now the one ordained is required to incarnate, to embody, to sacramentalize the presbyteral function specifically.

It is essential that the various responsibilities of these three sacramental ministries be sorted out. This raises the second question that needs to be addressed at the present moment, a question that has been largely unnoticed but that has extremely important consequences for ordained priestly ministry: what is the relationship among the three ordained ministries? The thesis I advance is that, for a very long time, the church has ordained people to the presbyterate but then charged them with the responsibilities of the episcopacy and the diaconate.

#### Presbyterate Overextended

The presbyterate has been a jack-of-all-trades ministry. A familiar phrase from Saint Paul has been wrenched out of context and badly misused, his claim to have become all things to all people (1 Cor 9:22). As a goal of service, that is admirable. As a job description, it is impossible. If one sets out to be everything to everyone,

As there is a universal  
presbyterate, so there is  
an episcopate and diaconate  
of all the faithful.

one will very quickly be nothing to anyone. The report of the NCCB committee on priestly life and ministry states: "For some recently ordained priests, the sense of professionalism and planning which they bring to ministry clashes with administration and service which they perceive as haphazard and without priorities. They find job descriptions such as 'all things to all people' or the priest is 'always on duty' as inept rather than impressive."<sup>4</sup> The problem is by no means limited to those who have been recently ordained. The report testifies to what was no secret: "burnout" among priests is a real and present problem.

Role expectations among the clergy leave many feeling trapped, overworked, frustrated and with a sense of little or no time for themselves. The continuing shortage of clergy casts its shadow on both present ministry and future hopes. Official directives which focus on duties "only the priest can do" tend to increase the workload and make for less effective ministry. The lack of a unified, coherent vision of what we are all about is an additional burden for others. Perhaps underlying all of this is a bone weariness of the spirit that has to do with the times in which we live. It is a weariness that comes from standing in the breach during a time of profound transition in our culture and in the history of the church.<sup>5</sup>

- USCC Reflection

I suggest that many of the most talented and zealous priests burn out, or, at least, feel themselves constantly under intense pressure because the job description is so enormous and so amorphous that it is clearly unrealizable. Many good priests go to bed every night feeling guilty because they recognize that once again that day they have failed to meet all the responsibilities which they assume and the community tells them are theirs. That is frightfully demoralizing. Failure is inevitable because the task is unperformable. Something is radically wrong with the job description. What is wrong is that the episcopal, presbyteral, and diaconal ministries have become confused.

What is the properly presbyteral role? Reference has several times been made to "the ministry of responsibility to and for the word of God." The word of God here does not only mean Scripture, although Scripture is its

preeminent instance. By the word of God I intend the whole of the church's reflection upon and living out of God's self-communication. Thus what was classically called tradition in Catholic theology, as well as Scripture, is included in the word of God. This means the church's praxis, not its intellectual life alone. The presbyteral ministry is that of responsibility to the word of God—reflecting on the church's experience and action in light of the transition—and responsibility for the word of God—reflecting on the tradition in view of contemporary experience and practice. It is a ministry of interpretation that allows the tradition to illumine our experience and our experience to yield new insight into the tradition.

### Roots of Presbyterate

The presbyterate has its roots historically in the elders who governed the synagogue. This connection between the presbyteral office and the rabbinate helps to focus the priestly role today. As the rabbi's role is above all to be the guardian and interpreter of the Jewish tradition, so too the priest is the one who brings to bear the riches of the Christian community's tradition on the present life of the church, in order both to shape that life and to enrich and expand the tradition.

This rabbinic role of interpretation of tradition and experience is carried on in many ways. Preaching, catechesis, counseling, spiritual direction, and liturgical celebration (since the word of God is proclaimed and interpreted not only in words) are all forms of presbyteral ministry. And it is precisely these activities that are often described as being in crisis at the present. Again and again complaints are heard about the sorry state of preaching in the church, about the need for more creative and authentic catechesis, about the lack of serious spiritual direction, about the dearth of effective celebrants of the liturgy. Certainly many in the church exercise these functions besides those ordained as priests. The presbyteral ministry is given to all the baptized. But the sacramental principle holds that a reality must be publicly expressed, that is, sacramentalized, if it is to be effective. Thus it is not surprising that the principal forms of presbyteral ministry are neglected or ineffective, when,

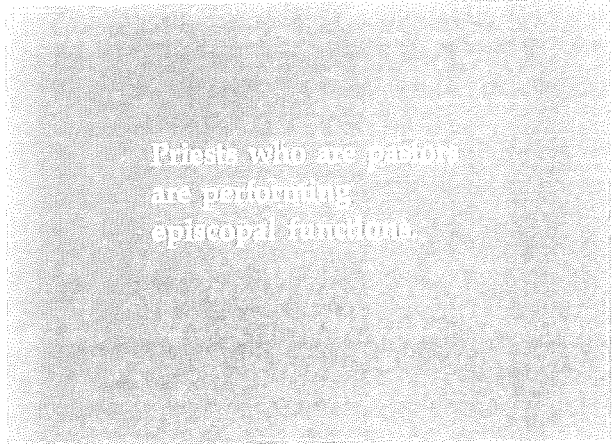
...of the Holy Spirit, and the...  
...of the Holy Spirit, and the...  
...of the Holy Spirit, and the...  
...of the Holy Spirit, and the...  
...of the Holy Spirit, and the...  
...of the Holy Spirit, and the...  
...of the Holy Spirit, and the...  
...of the Holy Spirit, and the...  
...of the Holy Spirit, and the...  
...of the Holy Spirit, and the...

at the same time, those ordained to sacramentalize the presbyteral ministry are frustrated by the confused state of their job description.

riests who are pastors are performing episcopal functions. They are living out the classic episcopal model far more than bishops are or can today, because of the enormous size of dioceses in the United States and the complexity of their administration. Ambrose and Augustine, Basil and Gregory the Great would have been thunderstruck by the number of Christians included in a single one of our dioceses. By any realistic historical measurement, the pastor of a good-sized parish is far more directly the successor of the bishops of the patristic era than are those ordained to the episcopal office today. Further, most priests are engaged in diaconal functions. Historically, the priesthood became a kind of generalized service: whatever needed to be done for the community or by the community for those outside it, the priest did. As bishops could no longer fulfill the episcopal role of maintaining the communion of believers one with another in the local church, and the unity of one local community with another and with the universal church, the priest as the local pastor began to do so. When the ordained diaconate was reduced in practice to a step toward ordination to the presbyterate, it fell to the priest to perform the functions formerly given to the ordained deacon. The episcopal, presbyteral, and diaconal offices are always and everywhere part of the church's life, and for that very reason, require sacramentalization. When those ordained to sacramentalize the episcopal and diaconal offices effectively disappeared from the local church, the offices still required sacramental expression, and in practice, if not in theory, they have been transferred to the remaining ordained minister, the priest.

What has suffered is the sacramentalization of the specifically presbyteral function, responsibility to and for the word of God in worship and praxis, in counseling

and spiritual direction, in preaching and teaching. Priests who are generous with time and energy, and who can truly say that they have been constructively busy all week long, may find that they have not been able to give ten minutes consideration to how the Sunday Eucharist should be celebrated or what they will preach from the Scripture texts of the day. And this is not because they lack zeal or are unconcerned about their pastoral responsibilities. The problem is not that they have not worked, but that quite probably what they have been working at are episcopal and diaconal tasks. They have not been engaged in the presbyterate, the office to which the church has ordained them.



The episcopal and diaconal responsibilities are as important to the church as the presbyteral. The ministries that correspond to them are as vital in the community's life as the presbyteral ministry. And it should not be forgotten that everyone ordained to sacramentalize the presbyteral ministry of the whole church has also been called to the universal episcopacy and diaconate by baptism, vocations in no way voided by the specific office to which he has been ordained. But the specific role the ordained priest has been charged with sacramentalizing is the presbyterate, the ministry of responsibility to and for the word of God. And it is that role and the duties connected with it that are most often slighted.

### Diaconate Too Presbyteral

The ordained diaconal ministry, a revival of which has been attempted in the last quarter of a century, has suffered greatly from the fact that most formation programs and many of the candidates for diaconal ordination have been unable to imagine any model for ordained ministry in the church other than priesthood. Thus many deacons devote much if not most of their time and energy to liturgical functions, preaching, catechesis for baptism or marriage, counseling, and so on, all of which are presbyteral functions. One can, of course, argue that these activities are part of the task of the universal presbyterate to which we are all called by being baptized. But the point is that often the person ordained to the diaconate performs them. (The ministry of service, including administration, which the deacon should sacramentalize, is far too often not part of the ordained deacon's job description at all.

An even more serious danger is that those priests who still try to hold to the "jack-of-all-trades" notion of priestly ministry will become frightened and embittered as they see others in the church taking on responsibilities that were previously the domain of the priest. And since virtually everything was the domain of the priest, they can scarcely avoid seeing such an "encroachment" all about them. This can too easily lead to the defensive posture that somberly warns of a denigration of the ordained priesthood whenever the ministries of the baptized are mentioned. As so often happens, a seriously flawed and thoroughly inadequate theological position attempts to portray itself as "traditional."

The most visible ordained ministry in the church, the priesthood, cannot be reorganized at one sudden blow. The community has been led to expect that various tasks will be performed by its ordained priests, and it would be more than pastorally ineffective, it would be unjust,

for priests to abruptly redefine their role in such a way as to disappoint those expectations. But the gradual shifting of expectations must begin. This will require priests, first, to reappraise their call to sacramentalize the priesthood of all the members of their congregations so that ordained ministry builds up universal ministry, and second, to distinguish presbyteral responsibilities from those that are properly episcopal and diaconal.

Theologically, such redefinition of the priesthood makes sense; practically, it is unavoidable. Whatever one may think of the church's ministries as we have known them, they cannot continue to function as they have. Church organization as it has developed in this country in this century (it has been quite different elsewhere and was quite different here in an earlier time) has required large numbers of celibate men and women who simply are not available any longer. Reorganization is not only devoutly to be wished, it is inevitable. It is essential both for the growth of "lay ministries" to which all are called by baptism and for the health of the ordained priesthood which sacramentalizes the universal presbyterate of the church. The church has usually made the right decisions in its history, but more often than not it has made them kicking and screaming when it was pressed to do so by circumstances. That is what is meant by the statement that the Holy Spirit guides the church. Certainly it would be very pleasant if the community were to advance with courage and imagination. But one way or another, the Spirit still guides us, and our circumstances are pressing.

### NOTES

1. Committee on Priestly Life and Ministry, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Reflections on the Morale of Priests," *Origins* 18, #31 (January 12, 1989), 497-505.
2. *Inter multa alia, Summa theologiae* III, q. 62, a. 1, where he refers to the phrase as a "common expression."
3. Thomas Franklin O'Meara, O.P., *Theology of Ministry* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 142.
4. "Reflections on the Morale of Priests," *Origins* 18, #3 (January 12, 1989), 500.
5. *Ibid.*, 500.