

LESSON 38: HOLY ORDERS (PRIESTS)

Instruction for Faith Educators

For Basic Level / Age 9	:	Cover points 1 to 9
For Intermediate Level / Age 12	:	Cover points 1 to 9
For Advanced Level / Age 15	:	Cover points 1 to 10

Revision from previous lesson:

We have started learning about the Sacrament of Holy Orders. We have learned that the people received into the Holy Orders are men who are called to be a part of the ministerial priesthood in order to serve the people of God. We have also learned about the role of the deacon in the Church. In this lesson, we will be learning about the priest.

Current lesson:

1. The New Testament contains references to men who are called to become priests for the Church.

Titus 1:5-6: “Appoint presbyters (*presbyterois*) in every town, as I directed you, on condition that a man be blameless, married only once, with believing children...”

1 Timothy 5:17: “Presbyters who preside well deserve double honour, especially those who toil in preaching and teaching.”

2. *CCC 1562:* ““Christ, whom the Father hallowed and sent into the world, has, through his apostles, made their successors, the bishops namely, sharers in his consecration and mission; and these, in their turn, duly entrusted in varying degrees various members of the Church with the office of their ministry.’ ‘The function of the bishops’ ministry was handed over in a subordinate degree to priests so that they might be appointed in the order of the priesthood and be co-workers of the episcopal order for the proper fulfillment of the apostolic mission that had been entrusted to it by Christ.’”
3. *Lumen Gentium, 28:* “Priests, although they do not possess the highest degree of the priesthood, and although they are dependent on the bishops in the exercise of their power, nevertheless they are united with the bishops in sacerdotal dignity. By the power of the sacrament of Orders, in the image of Christ the eternal high Priest, they are consecrated to preach the Gospel and shepherd the faithful and to celebrate divine worship, so that they are true priests of the New Testament. Partakers of the function of Christ the sole Mediator, on their level of ministry, they announce the divine word to all. They exercise their sacred function especially in the Eucharistic worship or the celebration of the Mass by which acting in the person of Christ and proclaiming His Mystery they unite the prayers of the faithful with the sacrifice of their Head and renew and apply in the sacrifice of the Mass until the coming of the Lord the only sacrifice of the New Testament namely that of Christ offering Himself once for all a spotless Victim to the Father. For the sick and the sinners among the faithful, they exercise the ministry of alleviation and reconciliation and they

present the needs and the prayers of the faithful to God the Father. Exercising within the limits of their authority the function of Christ as Shepherd and Head, they gather together God's family as a brotherhood all of one mind, and lead them in the Spirit, through Christ, to God the Father. In the midst of the flock they adore Him in spirit and in truth. Finally, they labor in word and doctrine, believing what they have read and meditated upon in the law of God, teaching what they have believed, and putting in practice in their own lives what they have taught."

4. Priests in the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church must be celibate, although in some instances dispensation can be given by the Pope for a bishop to ordain a married man as priest for extraordinary reason.
5. A priest is usually addressed verbally as "Father", whereas more formal salutations apply in writing depending on local custom ("Reverend Father", "Reverend Mr", "Monsignor", or just "Reverend").
6. A priest is able to baptise, confirm (when delegated by the bishop), celebrate the Mass (including wedding and funeral Masses), hear confessions, and anoint the sick. He can also bless people, articles, and places except where the Rite of Blessing specifically reserves a particular blessing to the episcopal office.
7. In Malaysia, priests are usually in full-time service of the Church and most of them are serving in parishes. In some other countries, a priest may hold a different profession and may not receive an income from the local bishop.
8. At liturgical celebrations, a priest is dressed in an alb, a stole and a chasuble. He may use a cope at liturgical celebrations that do not involve the Mass.
9. Outside of liturgical contexts, Canon Law obliges clerics to be dressed in clerical attire at all times (Canon 284). It is both a right and an obligation. (The local custom in Malaysia has developed such that being dressed in clerical attire is not made compulsory.)
10. History shows many examples of priests who lived very holy lives. Consider, for example, St John Vianney, whose feast day we commemorate every 4 August. He is recognised by the Church as the patron saint of priests.

John Vianney, also known as the Holy Curé de Ars, was born on 8 May 1786 in Dardilly, near Lyon, France to a family of farmers. He was ordained a priest in 1815 and became curate in Ecully. He was then sent to the remote French community of Ars in 1818 to be a parish priest.

Upon his arrival, the priest immediately began praying and working for the conversion of his parishioners. Although he saw himself as unworthy of his mission as pastor, he allowed himself to be consumed by the love of God as he served the people.

Vianney slowly helped to revive the community's faith through both his prayers and the witness of his lifestyle. He gave powerful homilies on the mercy and love of God, and it is

said that even staunch sinners were converted upon hearing him. In addition, he restored his church, formed an orphanage, “La Providence”, and cared for the poor.

His reputation as a confessor grew rapidly, and pilgrims travelled from all over France to come to him in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Firmly committed to the conversion of the people, he would spend up to 16 hours a day in the confessional.

Plagued by many trials and besieged by the devil, St John Vianney remained firm in his faith and lived a life of devotion to God. Dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament, he spent much time in prayer and practiced much mortification. He lived on little food and sleep, while working without rest in unflinching humility, gentleness, patience, and cheerfulness, until he was well into his 70s.

John Vianney died on 4 August 1859. Over 1,000 people attended his funeral, including the bishop and priests of the diocese, who already viewed his life as a model of priestly holiness.

The Holy Curé of Ars was canonised by Pope Pius XI in 1925. He is the patron of priests. Over 450,000 pilgrims travel to Ars every year in remembrance of his holy life.

In 2009, Pope Benedict XVI, commemorating the 150th anniversary of St John Vianney’s death, declared the Year for Priests. The Pope wrote a Letter to Clergy, encouraging all priests to look to the Curé of Ars as an example of dedication to one’s priestly calling.

(Taken from <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/saint/st-john-mary-vianney-322>)



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