



The Sacrament of Holy Orders transforms the candidate for priesthood into a sacred person, imprinting upon his soul a sacred character which can never be cancelled. He will be a priest forever! If a priest abandons his cassock because he chooses another vocation, the power of the Church remains with him (*Canon 882*) to absolve from sin those in the agony of death. This he can do only in the absence of another priest being present. Possessing this special charism, the priest is unlike other people. Through the Sacrament of Holy Orders, he is confirmed a servant of God, who brings Christ to humanity and directs us to Heaven.

The first duty of a priest is entirely spiritual - that souls may have eternal life. His work is not for a day, a week or a year; it is taken on for an entire lifetime until his dying breath. A priest never has a day off. His duties are great and manifold. Every priest is a victim soul with Christ; his freedom and his life are sacrificed in union with Christ Crucified for the salvation of souls. We call him, **Father**, for truly he is.

WHO IS THE CATHOLIC PRIEST?

The priest is a son of humanity given the power to make us the sons of God! The priest is a servant of God. He must face death; all the while he has the keys of salvation. The priest is another Christ and there is none so beloved and hated as him. The priest is often at the center of controversy.

Great initiatives, generous works and superior sacrifices have been his contribution to society. The priest is a person of integrity and silence. When a man falls down because of human weakness, he is forgiven, but for the priest there is no forgiveness, only criticism and judgment. Who are they who judge and condemn the priest? They are often those he has served faithfully and well.

At the dawn of our lives, the priest is there to baptize us. Through his office and by his hands, the stain of Original Sin is washed from our souls and we are admitted into the Family of the Living. *"I baptize thee in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost."* Sanctifying Grace fills the soul and the infant becomes a child of God. At this point, the devil surely cries out, **"O priest, you have beaten me!"**

At the dawn of adolescent, the young adult will emerge into puberty and many times be challenged by the world, the flesh and the devil. The graces of Baptism will not be enough. The Sacrament of Confirmation is needed. By this Sacrament, he becomes a soldier of Jesus Christ and is given new strength to live and defend his Catholic Faith against the enemies of the soul. The Bishop (who is a priest) anoints the youth and asks the Holy Ghost to come and fill him with His Seven Gifts and Twelve Fruits. The confirmed is then given the strength of a soldier and the power to resist temptation and do good.

The priest gives us, every day, the Holy Eucharist for our spiritual nourishment. While our lives are filled with dangers, temptations and uncertainty, we have great need of Heavenly Bread to nourish and strengthen our soul. The youngest and the oldest, the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate are all invited to receive Our Blessed Lord, daily, at the Holy Altar in humble village hamlets and great Cathedrals.