

Doctrinal Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA Holy Orders

“. . . I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline . . . [He] saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. . .” (2 Timothy 1:6–7, 9)

Insight

Have you ever coached a team or directed a project so that the gifts of each individual contributed to the good of all? How did you achieve that common purpose?

The house lights dimmed, and the symphony conductor stepped to the podium. Jodi held her breath without realizing it. She waited, expectant, like everyone else as the maestro raised his baton.

Silence gave way to a beautiful piece of music. Every member of the orchestra had a part to play. But the conductor was the key in achieving the harmony Jodi was both creating and hearing. She marveled at how much practice must have been required to get to this point, with the conductor encouraging and teaching so that everyone—orchestra and audience—might enjoy a lovely performance.

For Reflection . . .

Jesus Christ, the eternal High Priest, fashions a priestly people for God, his heavenly Father.

Describe a time when, as a member of a team or group, you “coached” or helped another member even though you were not the actual coach or leader.

How can someone be a fine teacher, coach, supervisor, therapist, or priest and yet make mistakes?

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1536–1600

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 261–275

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 322–336

Church Teaching

Jesus Christ, Eternal High Priest

There is only the one priesthood of Jesus Christ, but there are two types of participation in the one priesthood of Jesus: the common priesthood of all believers conveyed by the Sacrament of Baptism and the ministerial priesthood conveyed by the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

To guide and build up the common priesthood of all believers, Christ instituted the Sacrament of Holy Orders. There are three degrees, or “orders,” of this sacrament in descending rank: bishop, priest, and deacon. Conferred through its own liturgical rite called “ordination,” each degree carries out specific work in the Church called an “office.”

Bishops, Priests and Deacons

Bishops, by ordination, receive the grace to teach through preaching and explaining, to sanctify through the celebration of the sacraments, and to lead through the governance of a diocese. Priests, by ordination, receive the grace to proclaim the Gospel and preach, to celebrate the sacraments (except Holy Orders), and to lead the people entrusted to them by the bishop. Deacons, by ordination, receive the grace to proclaim the Gospel and preach, to baptize, assist bishops and priests at the Eucharist, bless marriages, preside at (non-eucharistic) funerals, and serve through charitable outreach.

Recipients of Ordination

Only baptized men may be ordained in the Sacrament of Holy Orders. This practice originates with Christ’s choice of men as the Twelve Apostles and the Apostles’ own designation of men as their successors.