

Sacrament of Holy Orders

Session Focus

This session explores the Sacrament of Holy Orders. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains, “Holy Orders is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time: thus it is the sacrament of apostolic ministry” (1536). Holy Orders includes three degrees: the ordination of bishops, the ordination of priests, and the ordination of deacons.

Learning Objectives

The session on Holy Orders guides learners of all ages to...

- comprehend the meaning of common priesthood and ministerial priesthood; understand the function and purpose of the Sacrament of Holy Orders
- value and appreciate the rite of ordination and the significance of the priesthood in the Catholic Church and in their lives
- embrace their role as members of a priestly people; support ordained ministers in living out their call to be of service to the Church and the world

Session Overview

Part 1. (10 minutes)

Gathering and Opening Prayer Service

Part 2. (20 minutes)

All Ages Learning Experience: Interview with Pastor

Part 3. (80-90 minutes)

In Depth Learning Experience: Holy Orders

- Option 1. Whole Group Format: All participants remain in the same room.
- Option 2. Age Groups Format: Participants go to separate rooms for parallel learning: families with children, adolescents, adults.

Part 4. (20-25 minutes)

Sharing Learning Experiences

Part 5. (10 minutes)

Closing Prayer Service

Design Options for In-Depth Learning

Option 1. Whole Group Format

This format guides the entire assembly through each of the learning experiences. You might choose this format if you have:

- a large physical space with good acoustics/sound system and furniture to comfortably accommodate the learners

- a competent large group facilitator/master of ceremonies able to provide clear directions and to manage the dynamics and energy of a large group
- a group of catechists who feel comfortable moving through the assembly offering assistance, or a large enough team of table leader catechists to have one catechist work with each table group
- a learning topic that lends itself to everyone learning the same thing at the same time, but in different ways, in the same space

Facilitation Tips for This Format:

Guide small groups through each of the activities at the same time.

- Organize people into table groups based on age groupings: families with children (grades 1-5), middle school adolescents, high school adolescents, young adults, and adults.
- The lead facilitator guides the entire group through each of the learning experiences. All presentations and activity instructions are given to the whole group.
- The age-appropriate learning activities within each learning experience are conducted in table groups.
- Where needed, catechists and small group leaders facilitate the work of the table groups.

Option 2. Age Group Format

This format provides for three separate parallel learning programs. Though age groups are separated, each one is focusing on the same topic. You might choose this format if you have:

- an adequate number of meeting spaces for the various groups to gather
- an adequate number of competent facilitators and catechists to work with each group
- a topic that is best explored through age-specific learning

Facilitation Tips for This Format

- Organize participants into three or more parallel learning groups: families with children (grades 1-5), adolescents (grades 6-12), and adults.
- If there are a large number of adolescents, divide them into two groups: middle school and high school.

Organize separate groups for young adults, adults, and older adults. Or you can give the adults their own choice for forming small groups.

- Direct the adolescents and adults into small groups. Give them all the handouts and learning materials needed for the learning experiences
- Guide the families with children into table groups of two or more families. Give each table all the handouts and learning materials necessary for the learning experiences.
- A facilitator must guide all the of the families through each learning experience, while catechist move from table to table assisting.

Materials Needed

Gathering

- Name tags
- Community building activities
- Opening Prayer Service Handout

- Miter, ring, and staff of a bishop
- Book of the Gospels
- Chasuble and stole of a priest
- Chalice and paten
- Globe of the world
- Bible

All Ages Opening Learning Experience

- Interview questions

In-Depth Learning Experience

- Handouts
- Supplies for table group activities (see activity descriptions for required supplies):
 - Bibles
 - A pitcher of water, a basin, and a towel at each table
 - Poster paper and markers for each table
 - Blank paper (8 ½ x 11) at each table with families and adolescents
 - A pair of scissors at each table
 - A slip of paper for each table for the question for the pastor
 - A piece of note paper for each table for the thank you to the pastor
 - Pens or markers for each table (the kind which can be used to write on cloth)
 - A piece of white cloth (6" x 36") for each child to design a stole
 - Scented oil and small bowls for each table for the anointing of hands
 - Bishop's vestments: chalice and paten, chasuble and stole, oil for the people portraying the bishop and the candidate for ordination

Closing

- Bible

Session Plan

Part 1. Gathering and Opening Prayer (10 minutes)

Preparation

Prepare a newsprint sheet or handout that lists the order of the activities or create a PowerPoint presentation that guides people through the session.

Registration and Hospitality

- Welcome people and ask them to sign in for the program.
- Provide name tags or invite people to make their own.
- Distribute the handouts participants will need for the session. You can also distribute handouts for the In-Depth Learning program at the beginning of the activity.
- Invite people to share a meal. Depending on time of day, the program may end with a meal.
- Have a blank strip of paper on each table. Invite participants to frame one question per table that they would like to ask the pastor about the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Collect these toward the end of the meal and organize them by categories for the interview.

Welcome the participants to the program and introduce the theme of the session in your own words, using the following text:

This session on the sacraments explores the meaning and the beauty of Holy Orders. “Holy Orders is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time: thus it is the sacrament of apostolic ministry” (CCC 1536). Holy Orders involves three specific forms of ordination: ordination of bishops to the episcopate, ordination of priests to the presbyterate, and ordination of deacons to the diaconate. We will focus particularly on the ordination of priests.

Holy Orders, along with Matrimony, is a sacrament at the service of communion, often called a sacrament at the service of vocation. We will look at what that means—not just for the clergy—but for all of us as well.

In this program we will immerse ourselves in the meaning and the rite of Holy Orders. We will look at what the Church teaches about this sacrament, what the deacon, priest, or bishop says Amen to in his ordination, and what we, as the common priesthood, say Amen to ourselves.

1. Group Formation

Organize people into intergenerational small groups. For the All-Ages Experience (Part 2) and Sharing Learning Experiences (Part 4) participants will be in the same intergenerational groups of approximately eight people, reflecting the age diversity of the participants. Each group should have as many of the following categories as possible: family (parents, children, teens), young adults, adults without children, and older adults. If members of the same family are intergenerational—children, teens, parents, and grandparents—keep them together in one group.

For the In-Depth Learning Experience (Part 3), organize the participants into three types of table groups: family clusters of two or more families, groups of adolescents, and groups of adults. See the session plan for adolescents and adults for more instructions on organizing groups.

2. Opening Prayer Service

Gather

God, our Creator and Shepherd, we come together in gratitude for the gifts of your Son Jesus, his Spirit, and our Church. We ask you to bless us with the courage to embrace your call to be a priestly people. We ask you to bless our bishops, priests, and deacons, those whom you have called in a special way to be the voice and grace of your Son in our lives. As we seek to understand better the Sacrament of Holy Orders, help us to be faithful to the vision of Jesus, the apostles, and the Church throughout the ages as we continue their work on earth. Bless us with the inspiration of St. John Vianney, the patron saint of parish priests, who called priesthood “the love of the Heart of Jesus.” We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus. Amen.

Listen

Have a pre-selected participant proclaim the following Scripture passage: Matthew 28:16-20

Respond

Give a brief reflection on priesthood, sharing the following in your own words:

By our baptism, all of us are called to share in the priestly mission of Jesus. But some of us are called in a special way to be Christ’s representatives in the world. They are called to be the love of the heart of Jesus. Let us pray for them as we offer symbols of their mission to God.

The symbols of each office—bishop, priest, and deacon, as well as the globe symbolizing the laity—are brought to the front of the room and placed on the prayer table as the following petitions are offered.

We pray for our bishop, _____, and for all bishops. We pray that they have the wisdom and courage to lead our Church in faith. We offer this ring as a symbol of the bishop’s special relationship and commitment to the community of faith. We offer the miter and staff as symbols of the bishop’s call to lead us as a shepherd leads his sheep. We offer the Book of the Gospels as a reminder that the bishop is called to teach the truth. Loving God, we lift up in prayer our bishops.

Response: Bless our bishops, O Lord.

We pray for our pastor, _____, our associate pastor(s), _____, and for all priests. We pray that they have the love of the Eucharist which they are called to share with us. We offer this vestment as a sign of the priest’s special place in our community. We offer this oil, a reminder of a priest’s hands being anointed for celebrating the Eucharist and serving the

community. And we offer a paten and chalice as symbols of the priest representing Christ here on earth. Loving God, we lift up in prayer our priests.

Response: Bless our priests, O Lord.

We pray for our deacon(s), _____, and for all deacons. We pray that they embrace their call to be of service to the faith community. We offer this vestment to symbolize their commitment, and this Book of the Gospels to represent their mission of preaching God's Word. Loving God, we pray for our deacons.

Response: Bless our deacons, O Lord.

We pray for all of us who are called to be part of the common priesthood of Christ. We offer this globe as a symbol of our call to be the body of Christ in the world. Help us to be faithful to your call to share in the mission of Jesus here on earth. Loving God, we pray for each member of this faith community.

Response: Bless us all, O Lord.

God of all, you have called us in baptism to be your disciples. And you have chosen certain men from among the faithful to lead us to your Son. Help them to be true to your mission and to live out their call to be the love of the heart of Jesus. Help us to listen to them and to support them in their vocation. We ask this through your Son, Jesus, our eternal priest. Amen.

Part 2. All Ages Learning Experience (20 minutes)

The All Ages Learning Experience is designed to help the participants understand the meaning of Holy Orders through a live interview with their own pastor. If the parish pastor is not able to be present, ask the ordained associate pastor to be interviewed. Both priests, or a priest and a deacon, can be interviewed together, if desired.

Other options, when the pastor and associate are unavailable, include:

- Invite a priest from a neighboring parish or religious community to be interviewed.
- Video- or audio-tape the interview in advance of your session (perhaps the adolescents could do this). If multiple sessions are held, videotaping the interview at the first session and showing it at succeeding sessions will work.

Preparation

Give the pastor the lead questions which have been prepared in advance and let him know that parishioners will be invited to add their own questions about Holy Orders during the meal.

Consider asking families to talk about Holy Orders before the session and to bring any questions they have to the session.

Have slips of paper and pens on each table before the meal so participants can add their questions. Collect these at the end of the meal and choose the ones which are most directly related to understanding the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

Pastor Interview

With the whole assembly gathered after prayer, interview the pastor or associate pastor (along with a deacon if desired) of your parish, using an interactive and informal style. Consider being an interviewer with a “larger than life” personality. Or pass out the questions to different members of the community, inviting them to ask the questions from their tables.

Add any questions you wish, but be sure to address the following:

- Why do you think God called you to the vocation of priesthood (diaconate)? To what did you say “Yes” when you became a priest (deacon)?
- What was it like the night before your ordination? What were your hopes and fears?
- Of all the movements in the Rite of Ordination, which do you remember most vividly and why?
- What do your chalice and paten mean to you?
- How has your understanding of priesthood (diaconate) evolved over the years since your ordination?
- What is the role of service in your vocation?
- What is your favorite part of being a priest (deacon)? What is the most challenging?

Add questions from participants that provide new insights into the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

After 20 minutes, promise the assembly that their unanswered questions will be addressed in future parish bulletins, but that for the sake of staying on time you need to move the program forward.

Part 3. In Depth Learning Experience: Holy Orders (80-90 minutes)

Learning Experience 1. All Are Called

1. God Calls All of Us (Everyone)
2. Saying Amen
 - Families with Children: We Say Amen to God's Call
 - Adolescents: Saying Amen to Our Baptismal Call
 - Adults: All of Us are Part of the Common Priesthood

Learning Experience 2. Some Are Called to Ordination

1. Immersion in the Rite (All Ages)
2. How Priests Serve (All Ages)

Learning Experience 1. All Are Called

Preparation

In advance, ask one child, one adolescent, and one adult to think of a time in their lives when God called them to do something, to a particular life vocation, to be for others. Ask them to be ready to share this call in a two-to-three-minute presentation. You may need to ask the child's parent to help the child share his or her thoughts. The child should be asked to simply tell a story about how he or she felt God calling.

Materials Needed

- Handouts #1, #2, and #3

1. God Calls All of Us

Introduce the concept of vocation, or call, by sharing the following information in your own words or the words below.

All of us are called by God. God has a purpose for each one of us. That is why God created us. Each one of us is unique; each one of us is uniquely called. Vocation means cooperating with God's work in the world, finding a purpose for being that is related to God's purpose. Vocation is a call to partnership with God on behalf of our neighbor. Sometimes our neighbor sleeps in the next room or even on the other side of the bed.

To get participants to think of the ways in which God calls them, share a story from your own life on how God called you. Then continue:

I invite all of you to think of ways in which God calls you into partnership on behalf of your neighbor. He first called you by creating you. But how does he call you today? Is it through other people, the way it was for St. Oscar Romero, the Archbishop of El Salvador, who heard God's call to speak out for the poor through the voices of his fellow priests and the cries of the poor? Is it through your parents or your children, your brothers and sisters, a friend, a teacher, or a colleague? Is it through

the sacraments or through a particular sacrament? Is it through God's Word in Scripture? Is it during prayer?

Let's listen to how three people from our parish—a child, a teen, and an adult—have heard God calling them and how they are trying to cooperate with God's work in the world.

After the three people share their stories, continue:

At your table, share one way in which God has called you to do something special in the world, to be the hands and feet or head or heart or voice of Jesus to someone else.

Allow several minutes for table groups to share their stories.

2. Saying Amen

Families with Children: We Say Amen to God's Call

Materials Needed

- Handout #1
- Blank sheets of paper, one per participant, and pens or markers to trace the feet
- Meditative music
- Bowls of water and hand towels the table groups

Activity

Introduce the activity with the following words or your own:

We just heard stories of how people live out their calling from God. We are all called by virtue of our baptism. When we were baptized, we became God's children. That in itself is an awesome thing! But what does being God's children mean in our day-to-day lives?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission..." (1213). Another way of saying this is that God calls us to holiness, to be constantly aware of God's presence in our lives. God calls us to community, to be part of a family and a parish, and the entire human community around the world. God also calls us to service, to care for the poor and the vulnerable and to be a voice for the voiceless. Let's explore how we live holiness, community and especially service as we say Amen to God's call to us in baptism to be followers of Christ.

Holy people are in union with Christ. They follow the Scriptural challenge: "You have been told...what is good, and what the Lord requires of you. Only to do the right and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

Ask each person to trace one of their feet on a sheet of paper. Have each family discuss how they can walk with Jesus as a family. Cite examples such as praying, reading the Word of God in Scripture, or

having “God talks”—sharing with each other who Jesus is to them. Have them write these ideas on their footprints.

Then continue:

We don’t live out our baptismal call alone. God calls us to community! He wants us to love and to be loved, to support and be supported by others who share our journey to God. The Acts of the Apostles describes community in this way: “They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers...All who believed were together and had all things in common. They would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need. Every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exultation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42-47).

Instruct families to complete the Word Search on their handout. Tell them that there are twelve words hidden in the boxes which name things which faith communities do together. The words may be backwards or forwards, up or down, or on the diagonal. They are to circle each word they find. Once they find all twelve words, encourage them to talk about how their family does these actions as a community at home.

The words imbedded in the Word Search are: love, care, teach, learn, hope, hug, eat, grow, share, pray, help, and support.

O Y E W S A P
B A O H U G I
T R I C P L T
G P A T P O S
H R U E O V A
E S H A R E U
L P O C T V A
P U N H O P E
L E A R N E D

Then continue:

The third way we can live our baptismal call is service. Jesus really believed in serving others. He taught his followers: “Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger

and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me’” (Matt 25:34-40).

Direct families to talk about how they do service on behalf of the poor and vulnerable, and what they could do as a family to serve. Give suggestions like serving in a soup kitchen or giving up snacks one day a week and donating the money to Catholic Relief Service or another helping organization. Tell them to write at least one idea which they can commit to on their footprint.

Continue:

While we are all called to serve by virtue of our baptism, bishops, priests and deacons are called in a special way. We call the Sacrament of Holy Orders a sacrament at the service of communion to emphasize that ordained men are other-centered. Bishops serve as shepherds, as servant-leaders. Priests serve to unite the community, to stand in the place of Christ Jesus in celebrating the Eucharist, anointing the sick, and forgiving sins. And deacons live a ministry of service.

Jesus commissioned his apostles to be servant leaders on his last night on earth: “Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end...Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him...After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you’” (John 13:1, 3-5, 12-15).

Invite families to wash each other’s hands (or feet if you wish), as a symbolic gesture showing that they say Amen to God’s call to serve, and that they say Amen to supporting priests and deacons in their special call to follow Jesus. Have bowls of water and hand towels available at each table. Have each family member wash the hands (or feet) of the person to his or her right so each person participates. Play meditative music. Give other instructions as needed.

Adolescents: We Say Yes to Our Baptismal Call

Materials Needed

- Handout #2
- Blank sheets of paper
- Pens or markers
- Sheet of newsprint, one per table
- Hand towels and bowls of water for each table

- Meditative music

Activity

In table groups, share the following ideas using your own words or the words below.

We just heard stories of how people live out their calling from God. We are all called by virtue of our baptism. When we were baptized, we became God's children. That in itself is an awesome thing! But what does being God's children mean in our day-to-day lives?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission..." (1213). Another way of saying this is that God calls us to holiness, to be constantly aware of God's presence in our lives. God calls us to community, to be part of a family and a parish, and the entire human community around the world. God also calls us to service, to care for the poor and the vulnerable and to be a voice for the voiceless. Let's explore how we live holiness, community, and especially service as we say Amen to God's call to us in baptism to be followers of Christ.

Holy people are in union with Christ. They follow the Scriptural challenge: "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

Instruct participants to trace one of their feet on a sheet of paper.

Ask them to write ways in which they can walk with Jesus on their footprints. Cite examples such as praying, reading the Word of God in Scripture, or having "God talks"—sharing with each other about who Jesus is to them.

Invite the adolescents to share one idea they wrote with the other youth at their table.

Then continue:

We don't live out our baptismal call alone. God calls us to community! God wants us to love and to be loved, to support and be supported by others who share our journey to God. The Acts of the Apostles describes community in this way:

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers...All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved" (Acts 2:42, 44-47).

Direct each table group to discuss the elements of a community which they hear in the reading from Acts. Then ask them to name other elements which are important in building community. Take the sheet

of newsprint at your table and have the participants draw an image, a symbol, or a slogan of what they, as a group, think the “perfect” community would look like.

Then continue:

The third way we can live our baptismal call is service. Jesus really believed in serving others. He taught his followers:

“Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me’” (Matt 25:34-40).

Invite the youth to talk about how they are serving the poor and vulnerable, and what they could do to serve (e.g., serving in a soup kitchen, tutoring little children at Boys and Girls Club, or giving up snacks one day a week and donating the money to Catholic Relief Service or another helping organization). Have them write at least one idea which they can commit to doing on their footprint.

Then continue:

While we are all called to serve by virtue of our baptism, bishops, priests and deacons are called in a special way. We call the Sacrament of Holy Orders a sacrament at the service of communion to emphasize that ordained men are other-centered. Bishops serve as shepherds, as servant-leaders. Priests serve to unite the community, to stand in the place of Christ Jesus in celebrating the Eucharist, anointing the sick, and forgiving sins. And deacons live a ministry of service.

Jesus commissioned his apostles to be servant leaders on his last night on earth:

“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him...After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you’” (John 13:3-5, 12-15).

Invite adolescents to wash each other’s hands (or feet if you wish), as a symbolic gesture showing that they say Amen to God’s call to serve, and that they say Amen to supporting priests and deacons in their special call to follow Jesus. Have bowls of water and hand towels available at each table. Have each person wash the hands (or feet) of the person to his or her right so each person participates. Play meditative music. Give other instructions as needed.

Adults: All of Us are Part of the Common Priesthood

Materials Needed

- Handout #3
- Blank sheets of paper
- Pens or markers
- Sheet of newsprint, one per table
- Hand towels and bowls of water for each table
- Meditative music

Activity

In table groups, share the following ideas using your own words or the words below.

We just heard stories of how people live out their calling from God. We are all called by virtue of our baptism. When we were baptized, we became God's children. That in itself is an awesome thing! But what does being God's children mean in our day-to-day lives?

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission..." (1213). Another way of saying this is that God calls us to holiness, to be constantly aware of God's presence in our lives. God calls us to community, to be part of a family and a parish, and the entire human community around the world. God also calls us to service, to care for the poor and the vulnerable and to be a voice for the voiceless. Let's explore how we live holiness, community, and especially service as we say Amen to God's call to us in baptism to be followers of Christ.

Holy people are in union with Christ. They follow the Scriptural challenge: "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

Invite adults to reflect upon and then discuss the following questions:

- Whom do you know, or have you known, who you believe is a holy person? What about that person do you admire?
- Is there anything you can do to emulate this person and essentially walk in the footsteps of Jesus?

We don't live out our baptismal call alone. God calls us to community! God wants us to love and to be loved, to support and be supported by others who share our journey to God.

The Acts of the Apostles describes community in this way: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers...All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and

having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42, 44-47).

Direct each table group to discuss the elements of a community which they hear in the reading from Acts. Then ask them to name other elements which are important in building community. Build a list together.

Invite adults to individually reflect on this list. Ask each person to draw an image, a symbol, or a slogan of what they think the “perfect” community would look like.

Ask them to share their drawings with others at their table.

Then continue:

The third way we can live our baptismal call is service. Jesus really believed in serving others. He taught his followers:

“Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me’” (Matt 25:34-40).

Invite the adults to talk about how they are serving the poor and vulnerable, and what they can do to serve (e.g., serving in a soup kitchen, volunteering their time and expertise to parish activities and events, donating money to Catholic Relief Service or another helping organization). Have them write at least one idea which they can commit to.

Continue:

While we are all called to serve by virtue of our baptism, bishops, priests and deacons are called in a special way. We call the Sacrament of Holy Orders a sacrament at the service of communion to emphasize that ordained men are other-centered. Bishops serve as shepherds, as servant-leaders. Priests serve to unite the community, to stand in the place of Christ Jesus in celebrating the Eucharist, anointing the sick, and forgiving sins. And deacons live a ministry of service.

Jesus commissioned his apostles to be servant leaders on his last night on earth:

“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him...After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you?’

You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you” (John 13:3-5, 12-15).

Invite adults to wash each other’s hands (or feet if you wish) as a symbolic gesture showing that they say Amen to God’s call to serve, and that they say Amen to supporting priests and deacons in their special call to follow Jesus. Have bowls of water and hand towels available at each table. Have each person wash the hands (or feet) of the person to his or her right so each person participates. Play meditative music. Give other instructions as needed.

Learning Experience 2. Some Are Called to Ordination

Preparation

Review the presentation and prepare PowerPoint slides or a large poster with the following information. If possible, develop a PowerPoint presentation using actual photos from an ordination. This will make the Rite come alive for all participants. (If you choose to draw a poster, use the outline of a stole to track the 13 steps of ordination.)

Rite of Ordination of a Priest

Following are the Steps of Ordination (after the Liturgy of the Word and preceding the Liturgy of the Eucharist):

1. Calling of the Candidates
2. Presentation of the Candidates (after inquiry among the people of Christ and upon recommendation by those concerned with the training of the candidates)
3. Election by the Bishop and Consent of the People
4. Homily
5. Examination of the Candidate
6. Promise of Obedience (to the bishop and his successors)
7. Invitation to Prayer (Litany of Saints while candidates lie prostrate)
8. Laying on of Hands
9. Prayer of Consecration
10. Investiture with Stole and Chasuble
11. Anointing of Hands
12. Presentation of the Gifts
13. Kiss of Peace

Ask one person to take the role of bishop as the rite of ordination is “played out” in the following activities. Ask several people of varying ages to play the role of candidate for ordination at different stages along the way. Have the bishop act out the movements and words of the rite, with the candidate—and in some instances all the participants—playing the role of the candidate for ordination.

Organize participants into family clusters of two or more families, and small groups of adolescents and small groups of adults.

Materials Needed

- White strips of cloth, one for each child
- Permanent markers
- Vestments for the volunteer bishop and candidate for ordination
- Handouts #4, #5, and #6
- Small bowls of oil for the table groups

1. Immersion in the Rite

Use the following information to introduce the concept of ministerial priesthood. Make your presentation appropriate to the ages of the participants.

To look deeper into what Holy Orders as a Sacrament of Service means, I invite you to discuss at your tables what you know about ordination. If any of you have witnessed this sacrament, share the sights and sounds you experienced.

Allow about five minutes for the table discussions. Then continue:

When the Bishop lays his hands on those called to priesthood, they are ordained to a special ministry in the Church. They act in the “power and the place of the person of Christ himself.” As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states, “Through the ordained ministry, especially that of bishops and priests, the presence of Christ as head of the Church is made visible in the midst of the community of believers” (1549).

While the priest represents Christ to the Church, he also represents the Church. The *Catechism* describes it this way: “The ministerial priesthood has the task not only of representing Christ – Head of the Church – before the assembly of the faithful, but also of acting in the name of the whole Church when presenting to God the prayer of the Church, and above all when offering the Eucharistic sacrifice” (1552).

To appreciate and understand the sacrament, let’s look at the Rite of Holy Orders. As we move through the rite, adults and teens at each table can track the movements by looking at what the priest is saying Amen to at particular stages of the rite. These “Amens” can be found on Handout #4. Handout #5 gives the actual words and movements of key stages of the rite.

Children are invited to keep track of the key ordination steps by drawing symbols on their stoles (white strip of cloth) for steps on the candidate’s journey toward ordination.

Bishop’s Address and Candidate’s Promise of Obedience

Share the following:

Let’s look in at an ordination. We’ll pick up after the Homily, when the bishop is speaking to the candidates for ordination and asks their response. The role of the bishop will be played by (name), and all of you will act in the place of the candidate for ordination. (Name) will serve as your model. Use Handout #5 for your responses.

Have the persons playing the parts of the bishop and the candidate come forward and act out the following:

Bishop says: Meditate on the law of God, believe what you read, teach what you believe, and put into practice what you teach.

Let the doctrine you teach be true nourishment for the people of God. Let the example of your life attract the followers of Christ, so that by word and action you may build up the house which is God's Church... When you baptize, you will bring men and women into the people of God. In the sacrament of penance, you will forgive sins in the name of Christ and the Church. With holy oil you will relieve and console the sick. You will celebrate the liturgy, and offer thanks and praise to God throughout the day, praying not only for the people of God but for the whole world . . . Always remember the example of the Good Shepherd who came not to be served but to serve, and to seek out and rescue those who were lost.

The candidate kneels.

Bishop: Are you resolved, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to discharge without fail the office of priesthood?

Candidate: I am.

Bishop: Are you resolved to celebrate the mysteries of Christ faithfully and religiously as the Church has handed them down to us?

Candidate: I am.

Bishop: Are you resolved to exercise the ministry of the word worthily and wisely, preaching the Gospel and explaining the Catholic faith?

Candidate: I am.

Bishop: Are you resolved to consecrate your life to God for the salvation of his people?

Candidate: I am, with the help of God.

Bishop: Please kneel. (The candidate and all participants kneel. The bishop holds the candidate's hands.) Do you promise respect and obedience to me and my successors?

Candidate: I do.

Prayer

Bishop: My dear people, let us pray that the all-powerful Father may pour out the gifts of heaven on this servant of his, whom he has chosen to be a priest.

Bishop:	Lord, have mercy.	Lord, have mercy.
	Christ, have mercy.	Christ, have mercy.
	Lord, have mercy.	Lord, have mercy.
	Holy Mary, Mother of God	pray for us.
	Saint Michael	pray for us.
	Holy angels of God	pray for us.
	Saint John the Baptist	pray for us.

Saint Joseph	pray for us.
Saint Peter and Saint Paul	pray for us.
Saint Andrew	pray for us.
Saint John	pray for us.
Saint Mary Magdalene	pray for us.
Saint Stephen	pray for us.
Saint Ignatius of Antioch	pray for us.
Saint Lawrence	pray for us.
Saint Perpetua and Saint Felicity	pray for us.
Saint Agnes	pray for us.
Saint Gregory	pray for us.
Saint Augustine	pray for us.
Saint Athanasius	pray for us.
Saint Basil	pray for us.
Saint Martin	pray for us.
Saint Benedict	pray for us.
Saint Francis and Saint Dominic	pray for us.
Saint Francis Xavier	pray for us.
Saint John Vianney	pray for us.
Saint Catherine	pray for us.
Saint Theresa	pray for us.
All holy men and women	pray for us.

Laying on of Hands

Share the following:

The laying on of the bishop's hands is the central action at which time a man is ordained a priest (or deacon). The laying on of hands symbolizes the empowering gift of the Holy Spirit which comes from God through the community and the ordaining bishop.

Then the bishop prays the prayer of consecration, reminding us that God calls ministers to service in the Church and asking that God bestow the dignity of priesthood (or diaconate) on the newly ordained.

The person acting as candidate kneels before the bishop and the bishop lays his hands on the candidate's head in silence, invoking the Holy Spirit.

Bishop: Almighty Father, grant to this servant of yours the dignity of the priesthood. Renew within him the Spirit of holiness. As a co-worker with the order of Bishops may he be faithful to the ministry that he receives from you, Lord God, and be to others a model of right conduct.

Ask for two volunteer to help dress the priest candidate in the stole and chasuble.

At the same time, ask the person playing the role of Bishop to share the following:

Bishop: The vestments can be traced back to Roman times when officials were dressed in the symbols of their offices. The stole and chasuble are the symbols of priesthood worn at liturgy.

Continue when the candidate is fully vested.

Some of you may already have experienced the power of the laying on of hands. Tonight all of us are going to use this special gesture in prayer for each other.

Invite the oldest person at each table to turn to the person on his/her right and lay on hands, silently praying for the Spirit to be with the person. Then that person turns to the person on his/her right, laying on hands and silently praying, continuing until everyone at the table has been blessed.

Anointing

Share:

The anointing of hands is the next step in ordination. The priest's hands are anointed for the holy work he will perform, especially when changing bread and wine into the body and blood of Jesus at Eucharist.

Bishop: "The Father anointed our Lord Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. May Jesus preserve you to sanctify the Christian people and to offer sacrifice to God.

Anoint each other's hands at your table, using this prayer: *Use your hands to serve God and others.*

Wrap Up Discussion

At tables, encourage the children to take their stoles and draw symbols of what they've heard about priesthood in the rite. Make suggestions like drawing what happens to the candidate during the Rite or something a priest does with his hands, such as changing bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus. They may choose to draw something a priest uses, like a chalice and paten. Then ask them to share their completed stoles with the rest of the group.

Invite adolescents and adults to use their experience of the Rite and Handouts#4 and #5 to share insights into the following questions:

- What do you think the movements of the rite (e.g., kneeling, prostrating, extending open hands to be anointed, laying on of hands) teach us about the Sacrament of Holy Orders?
- What are the charisms of priesthood—particular spiritual gifts—named in the Rite?
- Why do you think the laying on of hands is the actual moment of ordination?
- What do you think is the most important "Amen" the priest (or deacon) says during his ordination?

Conclude with the following:

We have just experienced part of the Rite of Ordination of a Priest. This sacrament ends with the Sign of Peace. So I invite you to give the people around you a sign of peace and of solidarity with our own priest(s).

2 How Priests Serve

Introduce this activity with the following:

We've just heard the promise of service from the candidates for ordination. Even their posture—kneeling, then lying prostrate, opening their hands—reveals their openness to God's will and their acceptance of his call to service. So much of the service which priests do for the community is identified in Scripture.

Direct participants to read the first part of Handout #6 at their tables. It contains a list of ministerial activities that a parish priest typically performs in any given week. Parents can read the handout with their children.

Have them discuss the items on the list, and perhaps name other tasks that are not included.

- Pray the Liturgy of the Hours
- Review notes for homily for daily Mass
- Celebrate Eucharistic liturgy
- Meet with an engaged couple for Marriage Preparation
- Visit parishioners at one or more nearby hospitals
- Have a lunch meeting with fellow priests in the deanery
- Work on Sunday's bulletin; write paragraph on the Gospel's connection to daily life.
- Celebrate Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Meet with St. Vincent de Paul workers to restock the parish food pantry or with any number of other parish groups.
- Start thinking about Sunday's homily
- Conduct a Scripture Study class with interested parishioners, or participate in Pastoral Council meeting, or . . .
- Respond to emergency call to give Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick to a parishioner
- Visit classes in the grade school
- Celebrate a funeral and burial rites
- Participate in community affairs such as town meetings and community organizing activities
- Conduct RCIA sessions
- Pray the rosary
- Visit shut-ins
- Other

Ask for volunteers to read each of the following Scripture passages aloud. After each passage, ask table groups to match the passage with one or more of the activities listed in the handout. Families with children should work together.

"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples: 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.' Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness" (Matthew 9:36 – 10:1).

Pause to match the passage with a priest's activity.

"And he said to them, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation'" (Mark 16:15).

Pause to match the passage with a priest's activity.

"Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood'" (Luke 22:19-20).

Pause to match the passage with a priest's activity.

"Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him...After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you'" (John 13:3-5, 12-15).

Pause to match the passage with a priest's activity.

"Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained'" (John 20:20-23).

Pause to match the passage with a priest's activity.

"He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of the disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.' He said to them, 'When you pray, say:
Father, hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive everyone
indebted to us.
And do not bring us to the time of trial'" (Luke 11:1-4).

Pause to match the passage with a priest's activity.

"He also said, 'With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large

branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.' With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it..." (Mark 4:30-33).

Pause to match the passage with a priest's activity.

"As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the side of the roadside begging...he shouted, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' He said, 'Lord, let me see again.' Jesus said to him, 'Receive your sight; your faith has saved you.' Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, praised God" (Luke 18:35, 38-43).

Pause to match the passage with a priest's activity.

"And just then some people were carrying a paralyzed man lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven'" (Matthew 9:2).

Share the following:

We have looked at Holy Orders through the lens of vocation or call, and through the lens of service. We have looked at the Rite and what it teaches us about this sacrament. We have reflected on what priests do to live out their call.

At your tables, discuss what you think the heart of priesthood is, based on what we have experienced in this session.

Children, add one symbol to your stoles which to you says what priesthood is. Then share that with your table group.

Part 4. Sharing Learning Reflections (20-25 minutes)

Materials Needed

- Handout #7

The whole group sharing experience provides an opportunity for each age group to share something they have learned with the entire group. Ask participants to share at their table one new insight into the Sacrament of Holy Orders which they learned in this session. Then invite them to take their footprint and quietly reflect on how they see priesthood—both the common priesthood in which they participate and the ministerial priesthood to which some are called through the Sacrament of Holy Orders—as modeling the service which Jesus demonstrated when he washed the apostles’ feet.

Still in silence, ask them to use words or images to express their thoughts. On one side of their foot, ask them to write one way in which they can continue the mission of Christ on earth, and on the other side ask them to write one way in which they can support their priest(s) in being ministers of service.

Invite several people of different ages to share what they wrote on their footprints with the entire group.

Instruct each table group to write a prayer for the priest(s) in their parish or for all priests, bishops, and deacons. Ask them to appoint one person from their table to read the petition during the closing prayer service.

Part 5. Closing Prayer Service (10 minutes)

Preparation

Choose an appropriate song for the close.

Have a banner with “Priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus” as the title on display in the front of the room.

Gather

God of us all, you have called us to be a priestly people, and you have called some of us to embrace the ministerial priesthood of your Son Jesus as bishop, priest or deacon. Help us to live our call and support those called to Holy Orders who live in our midst. We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus, our priest and brother. Amen.

Listen

Matthew 28:16-20

Respond

Invite the designated person from each table group who has a petition prepared to come forward. After each petition, ask the assembly to respond:

Bless our priests, O Lord.

After all petitions have been shared, ask the priest(s) and deacon(s) of the parish to stand in the middle of the community. Then invite all the assembly to raise their hands and extend a blessing over him. Choose a blessing which your community already uses or try one of the following:

- Sing “May the blessing of the Lord be upon you. We bless you in the name of the Lord. May the blessing of the Lord be upon you. We bless you in the name of the Lord.”
- Recite together the blessing from the Book of Numbers: “The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace.” (Numbers 6:24-26)

Go Forth

God of love, you called forth special people to answer the call to serve your people as priests. We ask you to bless them always, and to give them the faith and courage they need to be at the service of communion. Help all of us to embrace our part in the mission of Jesus. Help us to be priests, prophets, and kings in the world so that your kingdom will come and all people will know your limitless love. We ask this in the name of your Son Jesus. Amen!

Tell participants to bring their footprints to the “Priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus” banner as they sing an appropriate closing song. Invite them to tape or pin their footprints to the banner.