

The Sacrament of Holy Orders

Q. 218. What is the sacrament of Holy Orders?

The sacrament of Holy Orders (1) makes certain members of the Church particularly like Christ the High Priest, (2) entrusts them with a ministry of special service in the Church, and (3) provides them the sacred power to fulfill this ministry.

1. The sacrament of Holy Orders makes certain members of the Church particularly like Christ the High Priest.

Holy Orders is the act by which certain men, called by God, are enabled to mediate, in a special way, Christ's high priestly ministry. These men, bishops, priests and deacons, are set apart and given grace for their vocation in the sacrament of Holy Orders.

2. The sacrament of Holy Orders entrusts bishops, priests, and deacons with a ministry of special service in the Church.

Through the sacrament of Holy Orders, Jesus Christ makes Himself present, through bishops and priests, to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, to baptize, to administer the sacrament of Confirmation, to distribute His Body and Blood in Holy Communion, to forgive the sins of penitents in the sacrament of Penance, to anoint the sick, and to bless and sanctify marriages. Assisting the bishops and priests in this ministry of service, and sharing with them the sacrament of Orders, are the deacons.

3. The sacrament of Holy Orders provides bishops and priests the sacred power to fulfill this ministry.

By His own authority Jesus chose the Apostles to be His priests to continue His ministry in the world. At the Last Supper, Our Lord gave His Apostles the power to change bread and wine into His Body and Blood. "And he took 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'" (Luke 22:19). After His Resurrection, Jesus granted them the power to forgive men's sins when He said: "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:22-23).

Sacred Scripture

These [the seven candidates for the diaconate] they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands upon them. *Acts 6:6*

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they believed. *Acts 14:23*

And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. *Ephesians 4:11-12*

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Catechism of the Catholic Church

1548 In the ecclesial service of the ordained minister, it is Christ himself who is present to his Church as Head of his Body, Shepherd of his flock, high priest of the redemptive sacrifice, Teacher of Truth. This is what the Church means by saying that the priest, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, acts *in persona Christi Capitis*:¹

“It is the same priest, Christ Jesus, whose sacred person his minister truly represents. Now the minister, by reason of the sacerdotal consecration which he has received, is truly made like to the high priest and possesses the authority to act in the power and place of the person of Christ himself (*virtute ac persona ipsius Christi*).”²

“Christ is the source of all priesthood: the priest of the old law was a figure of Christ, and the priest of the new law acts in the person of Christ.”³

1592 The ministerial priesthood differs in essence from the common priesthood of the faithful because it confers a sacred power for the service of the faithful. The ordained ministers exercise their service for the People of God by teaching (*munus docendi*), divine worship (*munus liturgicum*) and pastoral governance (*munus regendi*).

1596 Deacons are ministers ordained for the tasks of service of the Church; they do not receive the ministerial priesthood, but ordination confers on them important functions in the ministry of the word, divine worship, pastoral governance, and the service of charity, tasks which they must carry out under the pastoral authority of their bishop.

Vatican Council II

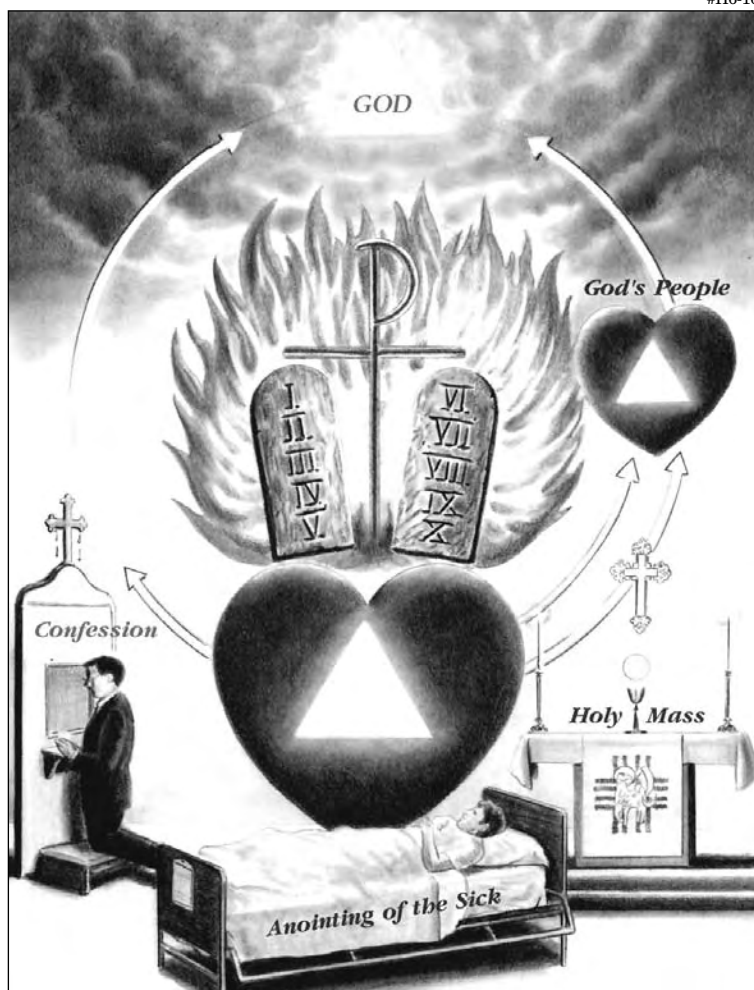
Christ, whom the Father hallowed and sent into the world (John 10:36), has, through his apostles, made their successors, the bishops namely, sharers in his consecration and mission; and these, in their turn, duly entrusted in varying degrees various members of the Church with the office of their ministry. Thus the divinely instituted ecclesiastical ministry is exercised in different degrees by those who even from ancient times have been called bishops, priests and deacons. *The Church, 28*

Summary Prayer

Heavenly Father, by the power of the Holy Spirit, You anointed Your only Son as Messiah and Lord of creation. Through the sacrament of Holy Orders, You have given to some a share in His consecration to priestly service in Your Church. Help your priests to be faithful witnesses in the world of the salvation which Christ won for all mankind. We ask this in His most holy Name. Amen.

Catechism by Diagram

#H6-16



The Powers of the Priesthood. Holy Orders, in a special way, conforms certain members of the People of God to Christ the Mediator (monogram). It puts them in positions of special service for building up the Body of Christ, whose mission it is to lead (arrows) people to God. It gives them a sacred power to help them fulfill that ministry of service (Pentecostal flame). Christ bestows a permanent charism of the Holy Spirit that enables the priests to guide (Ten Commandments) and shepherd (arrows from heart to God) God's People. Representing Christ, they primarily offer the Sacrifice of the Mass. Also, as His representatives, they administer the sacrament of Penance for the forgiveness of sins and the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

Q. 219. What does episcopal consecration or ordination confer?

Episcopal consecration (or ordination) confers the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders. This consecration, which is known as the high priesthood, confers the office (duty, function) of sanctifying. It also confers the duties of teaching and ruling in communion with the head and members of the College of Bishops.



#H6-15

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1560 As Christ's vicar, each bishop has the pastoral care of the particular Church entrusted to him, but at the same time he bears collegially with all his brothers in the episcopacy the *solicitude for all the Churches*: "Though each bishop is the lawful pastor only of the portion of the flock entrusted to his care, as a legitimate successor of the apostles, he is, by divine institution and precept, responsible with the other bishops for the apostolic mission of the Church."¹

1573 The *essential rite* of the sacrament of Holy Orders for all three degrees consists in the bishop's imposition of hands on the head of the ordinand and in the bishop's specific consecratory prayer asking God for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and his gifts proper to the ministry to which the candidate is being ordained.¹

Q. 220. What special grace is given by Jesus in the sacrament of Holy Orders?

In the sacrament of Holy Orders, Jesus bestows a permanent charism or grace of the Holy Spirit on the ordained man which enables him to minister to and guide those who believe, to proclaim and explain the Gospel, and to lead and sanctify the people of God. Jesus bestows this grace through the action of the laying on of hands by the bishop.

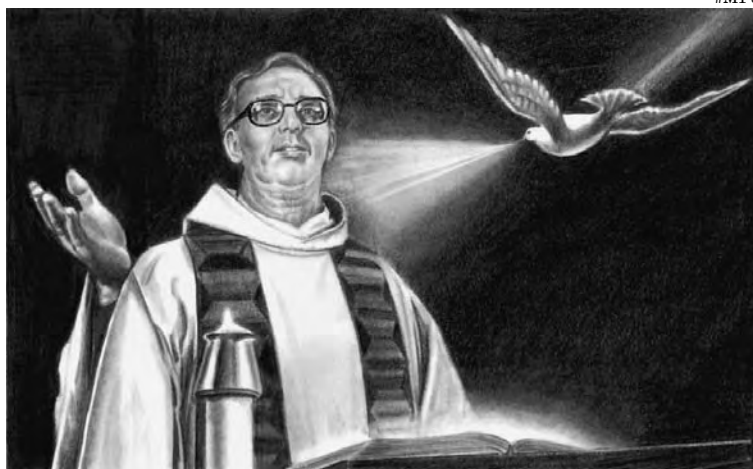
Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He instructed the Apostles to continue the work which He began to shepherd His flock (cf. Matthew 28:18-20).

Jesus commissioned His Apostles to preach the Good News, the Gospel of the New Covenant, to every nation, because He desired His Kingdom, the Church, to include all people. St. Paul says, "And his gifts were that some should be apostles,

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.

some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the equipment of the saints, for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-12).

The successors of the Apostles carry on Christ’s priestly work as mediators between God and man. They bring the mercy and grace of God to the people of the New Covenant and, in return, offer man’s praise to God. It is Jesus Christ the High Priest Who is present, acting in and through them when they perform their priestly functions.



#M1-8

Sacred Scripture

Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophetic utterance when the elders laid their hands upon you...Take heed to yourself and to your teaching; hold to that, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers. *1 Timothy 4:14, 16*

I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands. *2 Timothy 1:6*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1581 This sacrament configures the recipient to Christ by a special grace of the Holy Spirit, so that he may serve as Christ’s instrument for his Church. By ordination one is enabled to act as a representative of Christ, Head of the Church, in his triple office of priest, prophet, and king.

Summary Prayer

Heavenly Father, at their ordination, priests accept the responsibilities of the priesthood out of love for the Lord Jesus and His Church. May they be resolved to unite themselves more closely to Christ and to try to become more like Him by joyfully sacrificing their own pleasure and ambition in order to bring His peace and love to their brothers and sisters.

Help them to be faithful ministers of the mysteries of God, especially in celebrating the Eucharist and the other liturgical services with reverence and sincere devotion. Give them the grace to imitate Jesus Christ, the Head and Shepherd of the Church, by teaching the Catholic faith for the well-being of the people they were sent to serve.

Bless Your priests and deacons with the fullness of Your love. Help them to be faithful ministers of Christ the High Priest, so that they will be able to lead people to Him, the fountain of their salvation.

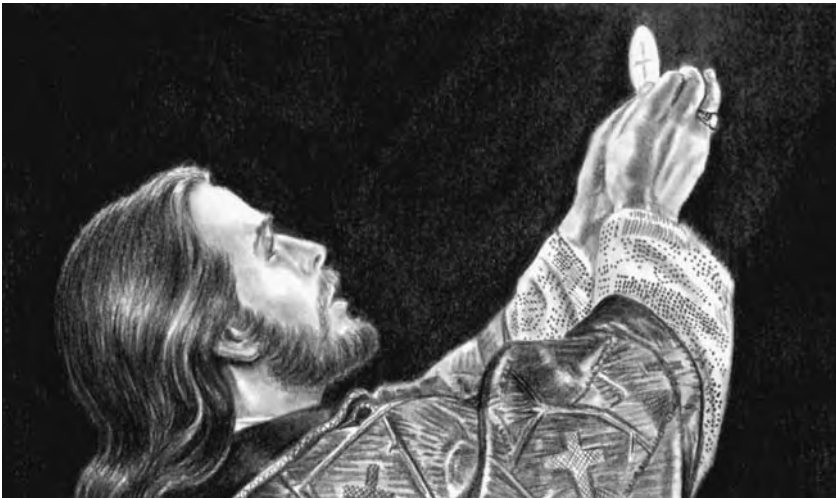
We pray for the bishops, that, despite their own unworthiness, they may faithfully fulfill the office of Apostles which Jesus Christ has entrusted to them. We pray that they may become more like our High Priest and Good Shepherd, the Teacher and Servant of all, and thus be a genuine sign of Christ's presence among us.

Lord, in Your love, keep Your bishops, priests, and deacons close to You always, and may they bring all of us to eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise (see Appendix B for answer key)

1. What members of the Church receive the sacrament of Holy Orders? What is their distinct role in the Church?
2. In what ways has your parish priest been another Christ to you and to your family?
3. Pray every day for priests throughout the world, that they will remain faithful to their vocation and to the teachings of the Church. Pray especially for your own parish priest.

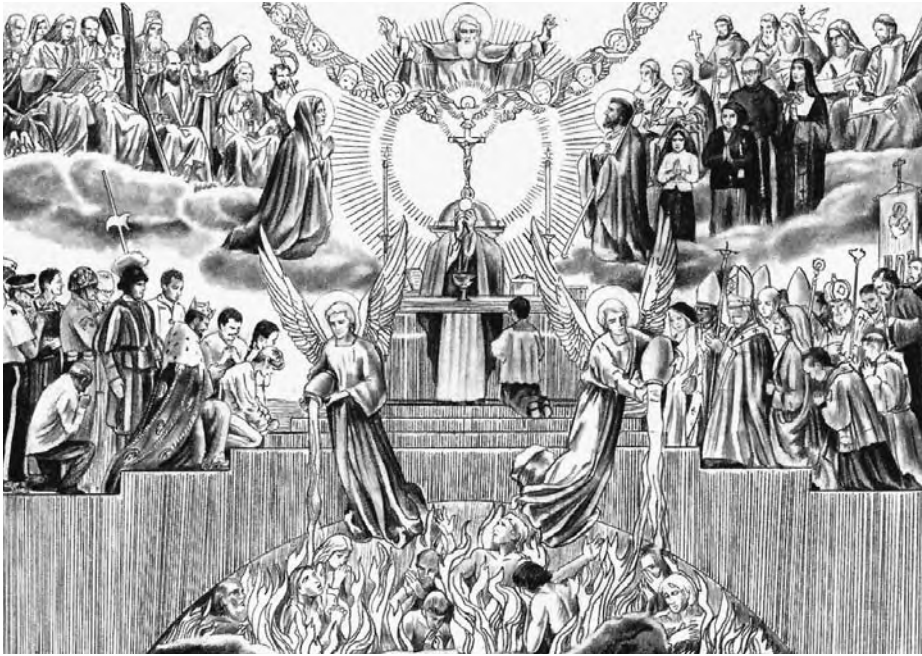
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Q. 221. What can priests do as representatives of Jesus?

As representatives of Jesus, priests (1) offer the Sacrifice of the Mass to the Father, (2) administer the sacrament of Penance for the forgiveness of sins, and (3) administer the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

For commentaries on each question with Cardinal Arinze, Sr. John Vianney and Fr. Straub (in Spanish), see Appendix E.



1. As representatives of Jesus, priests offer the Sacrifice of the Mass to the Father.

Knowing that Christ's priesthood and Church were to continue to the end of time, the Apostles, by ordaining bishops and priests, passed on their priestly power to them. In order to become a priest, a deacon is ordained by a bishop and thereby receives the grace that is necessary to make the sacrifices required of a life so much like Christ's. He becomes a special representative of Christ, having been given His priestly powers.

The most important work of the priest is offering the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. He acts in the Person of Christ, i.e., in union with Him, as Christ renews the sacrifice of the Cross in an unbloody manner for the glory of God and the salvation of all people.

2. As representatives of Jesus, priests administer the sacrament of Penance for the forgiveness of sins.

Through His priests, our Lord forgives sins and becomes for all of us a merciful and faithful High Priest. As it is written in the Letter to the Hebrews: "Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17).

3. As representatives of Jesus, priests administer the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

Through His priests, Jesus comforts those suffering serious illnesses and prepares them for their final union with God in the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

Sacred Scripture

For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God. *Hebrews 5:1-4*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

1566 “It is in the Eucharistic cult or in the *Eucharistic assembly* of the faithful (*synaxis*) that they exercise in a supreme degree their sacred office; there, acting in the person of Christ and proclaiming his mystery, they unite the votive offerings of the faithful to the sacrifice of Christ their head, and in the sacrifice of the Mass they make present again and apply, until the coming of the Lord, the unique sacrifice of the New Testament, that namely of Christ offering himself once for all a spotless victim to the Father.”¹ From this unique sacrifice their whole priestly ministry draws its strength.²

Vatican Council II

All priests, whether diocesan or religious, share and exercise with the bishop the one priesthood of Christ. They are thus constituted providential cooperators of this episcopal order. *Bishops, 28*

Whilst not having the supreme degree of the pontifical office, and notwithstanding the fact that they depend on the bishops in the exercise of their own proper power, the priests are for all that associated with them by reason of their sacerdotal dignity; and in virtue of the sacrament of Orders, after the image of Christ, the supreme and eternal priest (Heb. 5:1-10; 7:24; 9:11-28), they are consecrated in order to preach the Gospel and shepherd the faithful as well as to celebrate divine worship as true priests of the New Testament. *The Church, 28*

The Lord also appointed certain men as ministers, in order that they might be united in one body in which “all the members have not the same function” (Rom. 12:4). These men were to hold in the community of the faithful the sacred power of Order, that of offering sacrifice and forgiving sins, and were to exercise the priestly office publicly on behalf of men in the name of Christ....Because it is joined with the episcopal order, the office of priests shares in the authority by which Christ himself builds up and sanctifies and rules his Body. Hence the priesthood of priests, while presupposing the sacraments of initiation, is nevertheless conferred by its own particular sacrament. Through that sacrament priests by the anointing of the Holy Spirit are signed with a special character and so are configured to Christ the priest in such a way that they are able to act in the person of Christ the head. *Priests, 2*

The People of God is formed into one in the first place by the Word of the living God, which is quite rightly sought from the mouth of priests. For since nobody can be saved who has not first believed, it is the first task of priests as co-workers of the bishops to preach the Gospel of God to all men. In this way they carry out the Lord’s command: “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16:15) and thus set up and increase the People of God. *Priests, 4*

Priests exercise the function of Christ as Pastor and Head in proportion to their share of authority. In the name of the bishop they gather the family of God as a brotherhood endowed with the spirit of unity and lead it in Christ through the Spirit of God the Father. For the exercise of this ministry, as for the rest of the priests’ functions, a spiritual power is given them, a power whose purpose is to build up. *Priests, 6*

The spiritual gift which priests have received in ordination does not prepare them merely for a limited and circumscribed mission, but for the fullest, in fact the universal mission of salvation “to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The reason is that every priestly ministry shares in the fullness of the mission entrusted by Christ to the apostles. *Priests, 10*



Papal Document

For the nurturing and constant growth of the people of God, Christ the Lord instituted in the Church a variety of ministries, which work for the good of the whole body.

From the apostolic age the diaconate has had a clearly outstanding position among these ministries, and it has always been held in great honor by the Church. Explicit testimony of this is given by the Apostle Paul both in his letter to the Philippians, in which he sends his greetings not only to the bishops but also to the deacons, and in a letter to Timothy, in which he illustrates the qualities and virtues that deacons must have in order to be worthy of their ministry. *Paul VI, Apostolic Letter Containing Norms For the Order of Diaconate*

Summary Prayer

Heavenly Father, by Your Holy Spirit, You anointed Your only Son High Priest of the new and eternal covenant. With wisdom and love, You have planned that this one priesthood should continue in the Church. Christ gives the dignity of a royal priesthood to the people He has made His own. From His people, with a brother's love, He chooses men to share His ministry by having His bishops lay hands on them. He appoints them to renew, in His Name, the sacrifice of our redemption, as they set before Your family His paschal meal. He calls them to lead Your holy people in love, nourish them by Your word, and strengthen them through the sacraments.

Father, may they give their lives in Your service and for the salvation of Your people, as they strive to grow in the likeness of Christ and to honor You by a courageous witness of faith and love. We ask Your help for those You have chosen to be deacons, priests, and bishops. Protect the gifts You have given them and let them yield a harvest worthy of You, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Doctrine • Moral • Worship Exercise (see Appendix B for answer key)

1. Besides acting as Christ's representative in administering the sacraments, what important task has Christ commanded priests to do?
2. What can you do to show that you believe that priests are Christ's representatives? Cite an instance in which you were led closer to Christ by a priest through the sacraments or the preaching of the Gospel.
3. Thank God for the many graces that you have received through the ministry of His priests. Show your gratitude by supporting priests and by praying for them.



#H6-20

Chapter Summary Prayer

Jesus, Divine and Eternal High Priest, the boundless love of Your Heart moved You to establish the sacred ministry of bishops, priests and deacons. I beg of You, let the life-giving waters of Your eternal love flow unceasingly into their hearts. Be the center of their lives and transform them into living images of You. By Your grace make them pure apostles of divine love and dispensers of the heavenly mysteries.

Act in them and through them and grant that they may daily increase in virtue and holiness, and thus faithfully follow in Your sacred footsteps. Fill them with Your Holy Spirit, that they may do, in Your Name, those works of grace which You did on earth for the salvation of the world.

Divine Redeemer of souls, behold the vast number of souls walking in darkness, unbelief, or on the verge of eternal damnation. Look with mercy on the poor, the needy, the weak, and the innocent. Return to us through Your sacred ministers. Live in them; save souls through them; accompany them through life, teaching all of us and dispensing mercy and consolation everywhere. Unite the hearts of men to the Heart of God in that bond of love whereby You are united with the Father. To You, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory. Amen.

Family Wisdom Library: Chapter 62*See Appendix A for more references.***Q. 218. What is the sacrament of Holy Orders?***Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 10, 11, 17, 18-28;**The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People, John Paul II, sect. 22;**Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 14-20, 76.***Q. 219. What does episcopal consecration or ordination confer?***Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 10, 11, 17, 18-28;**The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People, John Paul II, sect. 22;**Sacrosanctum Concilium (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), Vatican II, sect. 76.***Q. 220. What special grace is given by Jesus in the sacrament of Holy Orders?***Catechesis in Our Time, John Paul II, sect. 16;**The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People, John Paul II, sect. 22;**Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 10, 11, 17, 27-29;**On Evangelization in the Modern World, Paul VI, sect. 2, 6-7, 43;**On the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist, John Paul II, sect. 10.***Q. 221. What can priests do as representatives of Jesus?***The Lay Members of Christ's Faithful People, John Paul II, sect. 22;**Lumen Gentium (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), Vatican II, sect. 10, 11, 17, 27, 28;**On the Dignity and Vocation of Women, John Paul II, sect. 26;**On the Mystery and Worship of the Eucharist, John Paul II, sect. 2, 8-9;**Redeemer of Man, John Paul II, sect. 20.***Thought Provokers***Please see Appendix C for the answers.*

Q. 218: Where in the Bible can we find a reference to the sacrament of Holy Orders being given to candidates for the diaconate, i.e., those who are being ordained as deacons?

Q. 219: Who can become a bishop?

Q. 220: Can women become ordained priests?

Q. 221: In addition to administering the sacraments, has Christ entrusted ordained priests with any other responsibilities?