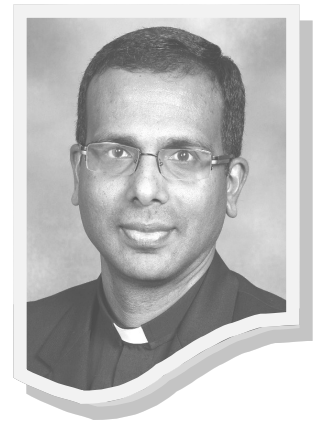




From the Pastor



Ordination to the Priesthood

Jesus Christ, in offering himself up for the sins of all mankind, fulfilled the duties of the Old Testament priesthood once and for all and established a New Priesthood. While all baptized share in the new priesthood of Christ, some are set aside to serve the Church as Christ himself did through the Sacrament of Holy Orders. The Holy Orders is the continuation of Jesus Christ's priesthood, which he bestowed upon his Apostles at the Last Supper. This is why the Catechism of the Catholic Church refers to the Sacrament of Holy Orders as "the Sacrament of Apostolic Ministry." The word "Ordination" comes from the Latin word *ordinatio*, which means to incorporate someone into an order. In the Sacrament of Holy Orders, a man is incorporated into the priesthood of Jesus Christ at one of three levels: the episcopate, the priesthood, or the diaconate.

A bishop receives the fullness of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. He is the Head or Ordinary of the local church. The local area entrusted to him is called a diocese. Ordination as a bishop confers the grace to sanctify others, as well as the authority to teach the faithful and to bind their consciences.

The second level of the Sacrament of Holy Orders is the priesthood. No bishop can minister to all of the faithful in his diocese, so priests act, in the words of the Catechism of the Catholic Church, as "co-workers of the bishops." They exercise their powers lawfully only in communion with their bishop, and so they promise obedience to their bishop at the time of their ordination.

Deacons serve the needs of the Church—they proclaim the Gospel, teach and preach,

baptize, witness marriages, assist priest celebrants at liturgies and help with administration. There are deacons who are studying to become priests who are called transitional deacons, and there are permanent deacons who are usually married men.

Priests receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders in the Rite of Ordination. The bishop lays his hands on the head of the candidate and says a prayer asking for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In one part of the rite, the candidate lies in front of the altar while the Litany of the Saints is sung or recited. In another part of the rite, a priest's hands are anointed with chrism oil. In the rite for a bishop, the new bishop's head is anointed. Ordination to the priesthood is always a call and a gift from God. Christ reminded his Apostles that they needed to ask the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into the harvest. Those who seek priesthood respond generously to God's call using the words of the prophet, "Here I am, send me" (Is 6:8). This call from God can be recognized and understood from the daily "signs that disclose his will through prayer and discernment."

Let us keep Deacon Steve Garza in our prayers as he prepares for his priestly ordination. It is a very special occasion for him and for our parish community.

All are invited to the celebration that begins on Thursday, June 27th, at 6 p.m., followed by a reception in the Catholic Center afterward.

And while we continue to pray for more vocations to the priesthood, let us join in prayer and thanksgiving for Deacon Steve as he is raised to the Order of Priesthood.

—Fr. Jose Thomas