

Spirituality for Priests

For Seminarians and Priests in Parishes

Based on Christ's threefold works, His *tria munera*:

- **PROPHET:** Intellectual Formation of seminarians in philosophy and theology by those who are themselves “Masters in Israel” (John 3:10) and holding the priestly vocation in great esteem.
- **PRIEST:** Spiritual Formation must be given by those fervent in faith and virtue: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:6).
- **KING:** Character formation by discipline is under the fatherhood of the rector or bishop, to learn self-restraint: “For what son is there whom his father does not discipline?” (Hebrews 12:7).

CONTRASTING ORDER

Council, Code & Catechism list the *tria munera* differently for clergy and laity, probably because the priestly vocation is to activate the laity in apostleship.

See *Handouts n. 10, Bishops & Priests: Teachers, and Teachers of Teachers* (on two sides of an A4). For the laity and the Church generally, the order is Priest, Prophet & King, consistently contrasting with Prophet, Priest & King for priests & seminarians:-

In the Church there is diversity of ministry but unity of mission. To the Apostles and their successors Christ has entrusted the office of *teaching, sanctifying & governing* in His name and by His power. But the laity are made to share in the *priestly, prophetic & kingly* office of Christ; they have therefore in the Church and in the world their own assignment in the mission of the whole People of God.

VCII *Apostolate of Laity (Apostolicam Actuositatem* §2

SPIRITUALITY

Spirituality is a perfecting of one's moral life.

Morality flows from doctrine.

Doctrine is revealed teaching on God and His plan.

Devotion, piety, prayer life, are foundational for doctrine, morality, spirituality, catechesis & theology. So catechisms start with prayers to be memorized, then Creed, Sacraments, Covenant Commandments and the doctrine of Prayer.

LAY SPIRITUALITY — see over

Read 1 Peter 3:1 - 4:19 and Colossians 3:1-17. Also,

What is most necessary in the world today is to have in each parish a group of laymen who are at the same time virtuous, enlightened, determined and really apostolic.

St Pius X, quoted in *The Soul of the Apostolate*

PRIESTLY SPIRITUALITY

Read 1 Peter 5: Greek *presbyteros* is usually *priest* in DRV, and *presbyter* is an English word usually meaning ‘priest’. Note letters PR-ES--T in both Greek & English. KJV, RSV, JB have ‘elder’ or ‘senior’; Knox sometimes has ‘presbyter’.

Priestly & seminarian spirituality includes:-

1. Adoration of God, our *raison d'être*, “reason-to-exist”.
2. A growing friendship with the Lord Jesus.
3. Mary, our mother in discipleship, is His greatest disciple.
4. Becoming His prophet on whom rests the Holy Spirit.

5. Celibacy: spiritually married to the Church, thereby making Christ's Bride fruitful with offspring (see *Handouts n. 52*).
6. Serving the laity by *activating* them in their apostolate.
7. Radiating charity: joy and optimism of the Resurrection.
8. Fighting the Devil, a life-long battle.
9. Unworldly in life-style, an example of “Repent & Believe”, to hand on the Good News, publicly and courageously.
10. Laughing at one's own absurdities, the road to humility.
11. Priestly reserve, self-respect, inspire reverence for Christ.

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. **Spirituality** builds up our Covenant with God, hence it must be **SCRIPTURAL** and **LITURGICAL**.

2. **Reciting the Office:** worthily, attentively, devoutly (*digne, attente ac devote*), even moving the lips to **meditate the Psalms** in monastic-style contemplation.

3. **Daily Holy Hour coram Sanctissimo:** “Speak, Lord, Thy servant is listening” (1 Samuel 3:10); “The Master is here and calls thee”, (John 11:28).

4. **Daily Mass**, including Mondays on the weekly “day-off” with other priests: “Do this in memory of Me” (Luke 22:19-20), for Mass is making the new covenant.

5. **Regular Confession** for a Christ-conformity and to resist Satan (whereby priests experience the shortage of suitable confessors suffered by the laity).

6. **Memorization** and understanding of lots of Scripture and Liturgy, poetry and literature: “Did not our hearts burn within us?” (Luke 24:32) — vital in an upbringing, especially in a seminary-upbringing.

7. **Bringing God** to the laity and the laity to God: our apostolate is to activate the laity; (see above AA §2).

8. **Allocating time** according to scale of priestly priorities, akin to sailors when high aloft amid the billowing canvas, “One hand for the ship and one for yourself” — we must save our own souls first!

TEXTS

St Paul: “Charity is patient and kind...”

1 Corinthians 13:4 - 14:1

St Francis of Assisi:

“Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace...”

Kipling's famous poem “If—” is applicable to priests:

If you can keep your head when all about you,
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you [...]
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster,
and treat those twin impostors just the same [...]
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings — nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
if all men count with you, but none too much [...]
Then you'll be a man, my son.

And so the poem is quite applicable to priests and seminarians but with a new last line:

You'll be a priest, my son!

St Gregory Nazianzen:

“The Art of Arts is the care of souls.”

Spirituality of the Lay Faithful

All the baptized are called to holiness, the vocation of all the lay faithful, as well as of priests and Religious

COVENANT SPIRITUALITY

Life on earth is a journey Godward and a great adventure. God-incarnate has come as Mediator of a covenant which is both communal and personal.

Our CREED of FAITH

The Creed of the Covenant is the teaching in the Apostles' Creed.

It is about God, what He is like, what His plan is:-

- the Unity and Trinity of God
- the Incarnation, Life, Death and Resurrection of His Son
- the Mission of the Holy Spirit
- and of the Church.

The Spirituality of the Covenant includes the whole history of salvation, beginning in the Pentateuch, called in Hebrew *Torah*, the Law, which is the Will of God (cf. Psalm 119 [118]) for each and all in daily life.

Our CREED of MORALS

The Ten Commandments are man's Creed of Morals, of natural morality, hence the Biblical Creed of Morals.

These Commandments are underpinned by the doctrine of the Covenant, which is:

- there is only One God, Almighty, Eternal, immortal, invisible, of Whom no image can be made.
- the People of God, the People of the Covenant, united in faith and morals, in Creed and Commandments.
- Hence spirituality revolves about our covenant with God, with a morality made more intensely personal and noble by the Mediator Jesus Christ.

In me there is left no spark of worldly things but only a murmur of living water which whispers within me, "Come to the Father!"

St Ignatius of Antioch

COURAGE to CARRY the CROSS

Throughout out testing time on earth, our joy in Christ's Resurrection is blended with our carrying His cross with Him: "Christianity is a free gift at an appalling price," (C.S. Lewis).

FOURFOLD CHECKLIST

To defeat Satan's assaults on our virtue/integrity:

- Prayer, and not just in time left-over
- Penance to restrain our waywardness
- Godly Reading to feed our minds
- Final hour before going to bed is crucial for virtue.

The Enemy Within the Gate: Resurgent Modernism, by Fr John McKee

Personal Covenant	
Seven Pledges for God's glory-giver	
ON MY HONOUR, I promise	
that I will do my best	
to be God's glory-giver:-	
a child of the Father,	
a cross-bearer with Jesus Christ,	
my Saviour and Friend,	
with the Holy Spirit	
as my Helper and Guide.	
I reject Satan, sin and selfishness.	
I will be a child of Mary and the Church,	
a Good Samaritan to my neighbour	
and faithful to the duties	
of my vocation in life to which	
it has pleased God to call me.	
Saint N., named my patron at Baptism	
(and Saint N. at Confirmation):	
Pray for me.	

A RULE OF LIFE for married, single, Religious

Lay Spirituality is centered on the LITURGY of the Mass and the Sacraments, on Family Prayers and on Private Prayers. This enables the laity to live in the midst of a busy but passing world while living in the spiritual covenant with God. It is the very soul of the lay apostolate to a troubled world.

The Liturgy integrates natural life with covenant life. It gives us integrity of life in intimacy with Our Lord, to work conscientiously to save our souls and to resist the wickedness and snares of the Devil.

See *MY WAY OF LIFE: Daily, Weekly, Monthly Programmes, Always*, in the *Catholic Family Catechism Disciples' Edition* pp. 5-7. It includes simple plans under the headings Loyalty, God's Plan, Good Example, God's Work of Art, Opportunities, Vocation in Life, and the inspiring words:

Man is created to praise, reverence and serve God our Father, and by this means to save his soul. All other things on the face of the earth are created for man to help him fulfil the purpose for which he was created. From this it follows that man is to use these things to the extent that they will help him attain this end. Likewise, he must rid himself of them in so far as they prevent him from attaining it.

St Ignatius Loyola

This leads logically into Daily Prayers, pp. 8-10.

EXERCISE

Spiritual exercise is even more important than *bodily exercise*. "If you don't use it, you lose it!" As all too many do!

Praying to God is truthful and generous and thereby humbling. And humility is the foundation virtue for living in the Covenant-Kingdom of God, to "Repent and believe the Good News". For this He created us.

Listening to God is a vital part of praying, because prayer is lifting our minds and hearts to God.

Remember Our Lady, the greatest disciple and our mother, and also your Guardian Angel and patron saint(s).

Modesty

Goodwill flows forth from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith.

1 Timothy 1:5

LORD, help me save my soul by putting others before myself — their safety, feelings, comfort — and make me pure and humble, truly manly/womanly, modest and well-mannered in gesture, deed and dress, speech and thinking, never rude or crude, and shunning pride and vanity or any vulgar display of my body, talents or successes; may I always imitate Mary, Your lowly handmaid, the Living Catechism of Christ Your Son, Who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, One God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Check the 7 Rs for self & for others

1. Religion
2. Respect (manners)
3. Reason
4. Responsibility (duty)
5. Reading
6. 'Riting
7. 'Rithmetic

Meditate Daily

- O God Almighty!
- O Blessed Trinity!
- O Incarnate Son!
- O Real Presence!