

Reapers for the Harvest: A Treatise for Laymen and Women

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Publications of the Catholic Truth Society, Volume 24. 1895
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I. THE CLERGY AND THE LAITY.

1. The Church's Constitution.

The whole Christian Church is divided into two great classes, the clergy and the laity. The clergy do not form one among several classes or professions. Clergymen are not one class, medical men a second, soldiers a third, lawyers a fourth, laborers a fifth, and so on. This may be so in the world's view; but before God and the Church, medical men, soldiers, lawyers, laborers and the rest, together with women of every class, form one portion of Christ's mystical Body, the Church. This portion is called the laity (from the Greek word *laos*, meaning people). The clergy of all ranks (so called from the Greek word *kleros*, meaning a lot or allotment), form a second portion; and these two portions make up the whole. Certain writers call this distinction a usurpation, and say that it was unknown to the Greeks and Romans. That may be so; in the false religions of the heathen the priesthood may have been a mere class or order of society, a trade or profession. But it was otherwise among the people of God. The Levites were, by origin, only one of the twelve tribes of Israel; but after their dedication by God to the service of the Tabernacle, the whole nation formed two classes, of which the Levites were one, and the rest of the tribes the other.

"Number not the tribe of Levi, neither shalt thou put down the sum of them with the children of Israel, but appoint them over the Tabernacle." "I have taken the Levites for {i.e., in the place of} every first born among the children of Israel, and the Levites shall be mine: I am the Lord" (Numbers i. 49., iii. 12).

So also, from the very beginning of Christ's Church, there was a class of men set apart, by Divine institution, for the service of God and of their brethren; and this class, for reasons to be explained presently, was known from the beginning and is still known, by the name of *clergy*, and thus distinguished from the *laity*, or the rest of God's people.

It is no slight or insult to a plebeian family if a branch of it is ennobled. On the contrary, the glory of that branch redounds to the honor of the rest. We read in the sacred history that Core, Dathan, and others murmured and rebelled against Moses and Aaron, saying: "Let it be enough for you that all the multitude consisteth of holy ones, and the Lord is among them. Why lift you up yourselves above the people of the Lord?" Moses replied that the sin of ambition was not in him, but in those who, not content with the honor done them by God, wished "to challenge to themselves the priesthood also," and God confirmed his legate's words by the terrible destruction of the rebels (Numbers xvi.). At a later

period Moses reminded the Israelites that they would be renowned through all nations for having the priesthood and law established among them. So also the whole Christian Church is honored, not because all its members are of equal spiritual dignity or capable of the same functions, but because the priesthood of Christ is visibly perpetuated in their midst.

2. Clergy and Spiritual Priesthood.

There is however, a sense in which the laity, both men and women, as well as the clergy of all ranks, are priests: "You are a chosen generation," wrote St. Peter, "a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people, that you may declare His virtues Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 St. Peter ii. 9). Every Christian man, woman, and child, is a priest to praise God, to offer to Him spiritual sacrifices, to make known His name by word and deed. But this universal and spiritual priesthood no more excludes a distinct, external, and official priesthood in the Church, than the spiritual royalty, belonging to all, excludes temporal kings, or the "declaring of God's graces," which is a universal duty, excludes that public teaching in the Church in which women have no share (1 Cor. xiv. 34). St. Peter, later on in the same epistle, wrote to specially ordained men, whom he calls the "ancients or presbyters," as follows: "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking care of it not by constraint but willingly, according to God; not for filthy lucre's sake, but voluntarily; neither as lording it over the clergy, but being made a pattern of the flock from the heart. And when the Prince of Pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never-fading crown of glory" (1 St. Peter v. 2+).

It is clear from these words that the universal spiritual priesthood of which the Apostle had before spoken is subject to the pastors specially ordained, and does not encroach on their functions. In this passage the word clergy, which in the Greek has the plural form, is used in its original sense of "lots," and means, either the various ranks of the junior ecclesiastics, or more probably the various congregations of the Christian people, the pens, so to say, of the Divine sheepfold. In either case the words of St. Peter clearly mark the two elements of the Church's constitution—the sheep and the shepherds; and they imply that the authority of the shepherds, or presbyters, was so great that they needed to be warned against its abuse.

Whatever may be the sense of the word clergy, as here used by St. Peter, it is certain that, from the days of the Apostles it has been universally and exclusively applied in its present sense, to ecclesiastics as distinct from the laity. Some think the clergy were so called as being divided into several ranks or orders, or as being "allotted" to various functions. St. Jerome however, in the fourth century, writes: "They are called clerics because they belong to God's lot, or because the Lord Himself is the lot and portion of clerics;" and so the word is now understood.

3. Clergy and External Priesthood.

In the Christian Church the clergy are those who participate in various degrees in the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the great High Priest for ever. He impresses His priestly character on some who are called priests and bishops, and the other orders gradually lead up to and prepare for these. Many speak and write as if a priest was in some way less than a layman; whereas he has everything he

would have as a layman and something far beyond. That "something" is a peculiar relation to Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God and great High Priest.

With regard to the functions and duties of the clergy, it will be enough here to mention some of the titles given to them in Holy Scripture. In relation to men they are God's ambassadors, God's messengers (the words apostle and angel both mean messenger); they are fishermen or shepherds, sowers, planters, reapers, architects, builders. They are the light of the world and the salt of the earth. They are called bishops and prelates, *i.e.*, overseers and rulers. They are also called, according to their respective dignity, rank or function, ancients or elders (presbyters, priests), deacons, and by other names. "Being ascended above all the heavens, that He might fill all things, Christ our Lord gave some (to be) apostles and some prophets, and others evangelists and others pastors and doctors, for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying of the Body of Christ" (Eph. iv. 10).

It is not necessary here to explain the work of the clergy in offering sacrifice, administering the sacraments, preaching, ruling, consoling, assisting and interceding. These things are sufficiently familiar to those for whom I am writing.

4. Distinction not Separation.

There could be no greater wrong and calumny than to attribute this distinction of state to the pride and usurpation of ecclesiastics. It is well known that priests are accustomed to assemble year after year in retreat, not to nourish pride and ambition, nor to puff themselves up by the consideration of their rights and privileges; but on the contrary to consider their duties, and how their position obliges them to a stricter account. Far from wishing to draw apart and avoid contact with the people of God, they wish to multiply the bonds of union; and the object of this little paper is to point out and strengthen some of the links that bind them together I now pass to the second branch of my subject— whence come the clergy, and how do men become clergymen, lawfully and validly?

II. WHENCE COME THE CLERGY?

I. The Jewish Priesthood Hereditary.

Among the Jews the state of a clergyman was hereditary. The priests were the descendants of Aaron, the brother of Moses, of the tribe of Levi; and the whole tribe of Levi was set apart to the service of the Altar of the Tabernacle, or the Temple. When the Israelites under the guidance of Moses had been led out of the captivity of Egypt, with a great display of God's miraculous power, they most wickedly and ungratefully relapsed into the impure idolatry with which they had become familiar in Egypt; but at the call of Moses the Levites became avengers of God's honor. While their hands were still red with the blood of the idolaters, Moses said, "You have consecrated your hands this day to the Lord" (Exod. xxxii. 29). Later on Phinees, the grandson of Aaron, distinguished himself by a terrible but most righteous act of zeal, in the slaughter of some scandalous sinners, and the covenant of the priesthood was confirmed to him and to his descendants (Numbxxv.). Such was the origin of the clergy and priesthood among the Jews. It was founded in holy wrath against sin and in the bloodshed of

sinner. Even the great annual rite of the Paschal Lamb, while it spoke of mercy to the Israelites and prefigured our Divine Redeemer, commemorated the awful plague or chastisement of the death of all the first-born of Egypt by the hands of the destroying angel.

And as the origin and functions of the Jewish priesthood and clergy indicated rather God's justice than His mercy, so also its mode of transmission partook more of nature than of grace. The transmission of the priesthood and of the service of the Tabernacle was by marriage. No one from another tribe than that of Levi could obtain admission to those functions; and no competent and qualified man of the tribe of Levi could evade them.

2. Christian Priesthood not Hereditary.

Very different is the origin and transmission of the Christian priesthood and clerical state. Every properly qualified man may aspire to the Christian priesthood, or may be enrolled in the ranks of the clergy. The priesthood is not hereditary; and this is not merely because of the celibacy of the clergy. Even were the clergy married they could not transmit their priesthood as an inheritance, though, of course their children might aspire, and be admitted, to the work and dignity of their fathers.

One great reason of this difference between the old dispensation and the new is this:—The Aaronic priesthood required only such gifts or qualifications as are the common lot of faithful men, and to be obtained by due education. Hence there was no hardship or inconvenience in obliging all the men of the tribe or family, age after age, to perform certain functions, especially as they were well provided for in temporal matters. The Christian priesthood on the contrary is so sublime as to require gifts and virtues which are not the ordinary portion even of Christians; and it entails sacrifices such as God would not impose on a whole race, though He expects them from the more generous and heroic.

3. Priests and the High Priest.

I have said that the Christian priesthood is a participation of our Lord's priesthood. The priest is not the successor of Jesus Christ. The Bishops of Rome or Popes are successors one to another and to St. Peter, but not to Jesus Christ. The Pope is called the Vicar of Jesus Christ, not His successor. All priests are in their degree the Vicars or lieutenants of our Lord. He is the High Priest, Who offered Himself a sacrifice on the Cross by the shedding of His Precious Blood; and in an unbloody manner at His Last Supper, in the institution of the great Eucharistic Rite, which fulfilled and abolished all former sacrifices. And it is our Lord who offers Himself in every Mass, though He does it by the hands and the mouth of a mortal man.

In this great function of the priesthood, the least and youngest priest just ordained, is equal to the venerable bishop who has ordained him; nay, even to the Sovereign Pontiff, the chief of all bishops. Therefore, our Holy Father Pope Leo XIII. in 1888 called on the whole world to celebrate with him the Jubilee, or 50th anniversary, of his simple priesthood. He considered the fact of his having been ordained priest and allowed to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass for fifty years, a matter so high, and a grace so splendid, that he invited all crowned heads and all nations to join in his joy and gratitude to God.

4. Grace of Priesthood.

If the Christian priesthood is raised so far above the Jewish in its nature and mode of transmission, it is also contrasted with the Jewish priesthood in the grace and clemency of its origin. I have stated that the Jewish priesthood began in the slaughter of sinners; whereas our Lord consecrated the hands of the Apostles, not in the blood of sinners, but in His own Precious Blood, about to be shed for sinners, when He instituted the most holy Sacrifice and Sacrament of the Altar. Therefore, at the present day the hands of the priest are anointed at his ordination with the holy oil, which typifies not justice, but mercy.

For functions such as those of the Christian priest, great graces are required, and great virtues may be demanded. We cannot have sinless priests, yet the candidate must be "without crime, holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (i Tim. iii. q). Let anyone compare the list of virtues mentioned by St. Paul in his Epistles to St. Timothy and St. Titus, with the list of bodily or physical qualities enumerated by Moses as necessary for the Jewish priest, if he would understand the difference between the two covenants.

5. Priests, how derived.

How then may a Christian youth become a priest? To become a priest, legitimately as well as validly, two things are necessary, Vocation and Ordination. I will say a few words about each, not to instruct the candidate, for he will seek more detailed instruction elsewhere, but so far as may be useful for fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, and for all Christian men and women to possess some knowledge of a matter which concerns the glory of God and the welfare of every member of the Church.

A. *Vocation* may mean God's Providence, gradually worked out, and gradually manifested, as when we say that St. Patrick had the special vocation to be the Apostle of Ireland. It is not in this sense we speak of vocation to the priesthood. We mean God's will manifested *beforehand*, indicating the choice that a youth should make of that special state of life, because God has chosen him to serve Him in it. When our Lord passing by the Lake of Galilee, saw Simon and Andrew casting their nets into the sea, and said to them "Come after Me and I will make you to become fishers of men" (St. Mark i. 16), that was a vocation fully manifested beforehand, though our Lord's special Providence over St. Peter and St. Andrew was only revealed subsequently, and bit by bit.

Now no man may lawfully enter the ministry of the Church unless the will of God, calling him to that ministry, is manifested to him, not indeed by the audible voice of God Incarnate, yet sufficiently to assure him that he is not led by his own interests, or ambition, or caprice, or human zeal, but that he is *obeying* a Divine vocation. To select his own ministers is God's prerogative.

The Apostle draws attention to this prerogative saying: "Neither doth any man take the honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as Aaron was; so Christ also did not glorify Himself that He might be made a High Priest, but He that said to Him 'Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee,' and He saith also in another place 'Thou art a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchizedek'" (Heb. v. 4). Speaking of the ministry of the Christian Church, God said by the prophet Isaias, "I will take of them [the Gentiles] to be priests and Levites" (Is. Ixvi. 21). Our Lord too reminded His Apostles, "You

have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you" (St. John xv. 16). He chose His twelve Apostles after spending the night in prayer to His heavenly Father, and He afterwards spoke of them as the gift of His Father: "I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou hast given me out of the world. Thine they were, and to Me Thou gavest them. . . . Holy Father keep them in Thy Name whom Thou hast given Me. . . . While I was with them, I kept them in Thy Name. . . . None of them is lost, but the son of perdition" (St. John xvii.). This son of perdition was Judas Iscariot. He had a true vocation. He was one of those given by the Eternal Father to His Son, and was loved and watched over by Jesus Christ, because he was the gift of that Father. He became a son of perdition by his own fault and obstinacy. He threw away his vocation and his soul. He *would* be lost. Alas! if a man chosen by God may be lost even in the company of the Apostles, and of Jesus Christ, how can any one hope to save his soul, if, without being called and given by God, he intrude himself from unworthy motives, into that sacred company? Not only should youths well consider this, but their parents also. It is indeed a most holy work to develop and help forward a vocation given by God; but it is a fearful and sacrilegious invasion of God's prerogative for parents to force or persuade their sons to become priests from motives of interest; nor must they urge them to it from mistaken piety, without considering seriously whether they have a divine vocation. It is also an invasion of God's right to prevent a son from following a clear vocation given to him by God. How the existence of a vocation may be known I do not explain here.* Parents should seek the advice of a prudent priest—not indeed on the fact of their child's vocation, for that must be left of course to his confessor—but on their own duties with regard to him. I will explain presently how they may cooperate in a divine vocation.

B. *Ordination.* In addition to vocation, there must be ordination before a man can become a lawful minister of Jesus Christ and of His Church. When our Lord Himself appeared to St. Paul for his conversion, He sent him to learn His will from human lips and to be baptized by human hands (Acts ix.). He ever acts in conjunction with the Church which He has Himself established. We read in the same holy book, "Now there were in the Church, which was at Antioch, prophets and doctors, among whom was Barnabas and Saul. And as they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Ghost said to them: 'Separate me Saul and Barnabas for the work where unto I have taken them'. Then they fasting and praying, and imposing their hands upon them sent them away " (Acts xiii.). God chose, the Church sent.

One of the seven Sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ is called the Sacrament of Holy Order. It is the Sacrament by which bishops, priests, and other ministers of the Church are ordained, and receive power and grace to perform their sacred duties. It is called Order, because though there are several degrees by which the candidate advances to the priesthood, yet all are ordered and tend harmoniously to one end, viz., a participation in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. The terrible warning of our Lord applies both to vocation and ordination: "Amen, amen, I say to you; he that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up another way, the same is a thief and a robber" (St. John x. 1).

I now come to the third division of my subject.

III. DUTIES OF LAYMEN.

What part have those who are not clergymen, whether they be men or women, in the making of the clergy or in their work?

To this I may answer by enumerating some of the principal duties of the laity with regard to the clergy. They must show them respect and sympathy, render them material help and active co-operation, and especially give them a large share in their prayers.

1. Respect.

With regard to respect a very few words should be sufficient. No man can reflect with faith on the various titles given to priests, and the functions laid on them, without being moved by the highest reverence for their character and their work. I say their character, not their "cloth," according to the Protestant phrase; and by character I do not mean their personal dispositions, but the mark of the great High Priest indelibly imprinted on their souls. It is Jesus Christ Himself who is revered in His priests. "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God" (i Cor. iv. 1). Where this respect for the priesthood of Jesus Christ exists, the richest and noblest families will esteem it a great honor if one of their members is chosen by God for such an office, even though he occupy but a humble position in the clerical ranks; while no poor man will dare to think of raising his family in respectability or wealth by pushing a son into the priesthood without vocation.

Though respect for priests need not make us blind to personal faults or shortcomings, it should make us very silent with regard to them, except when we speak to God with hearts full of sorrow and compassion.

2. Sympathy.

The life of a priest is often a very lonely life, for his state is exalted and his work supernatural. By "lonely" I do not mean lacking domestic ties and little mixing in society, for this is his own choice. He has chosen a life undivided and entirely consecrated to God, without solicitude except how he may please God, and do God's work. I speak of the unsympathetic loneliness that he often experiences in doing the work of God, although he has the greatest claim on the interest of the laity, since he is working for their good and for the glory of a common Master. "Bear ye one another's burdens," writes St. Paul, "and so you shall fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. vi. 2). The priest fulfills the law of Christ by bearing the burdens of the laity; of the ignorant when he instructs them, of the thoughtless when he reminds and entreats or reproves them, of the sad and afflicted when he consoles and relieves, of the penitent when he helps to lift the burden of their sins. God and the Church take care that he shall bear his people's burdens, for he is obliged to preach, to visit, to minister sacraments, to offer sacrifice, to intercede, aye, and to give an account of their souls. They must not then forget to bear the priest's burdens. "Obey your prelates," writes the Apostle, "and be subject to them; for they watch as being to render an account of your souls; that they may do this with joy and not with grief, for this is not

expedient for you" (Heb. xiii. 17). There are generally some in every parish who positively dislike the priest because he interrupts their easy walk along the broad road that leads to destruction. There are always many to whom the priest and his work are indifferent, for they care only for the things of this world. But there are also some, and often many, who sympathize with his priestly zeal. I cannot forbear copying some of the salutations with which St. Paul concludes his epistle to the Romans. "Salute Prisca and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus, who have for my life laid down their own necks, to whom not I only give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles Salute Mary, who hath labored much among you. Salute Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me. Salute Ampliatus, most beloved to me in the Lord," and so on through a long litany of saintly names. St. Paul writes of the "joy and refreshment" that he experienced in the company or even the memory of such men and women (Rom. xv.); and St John that he "had no greater grace than this, that his children walked in truth " (2 St. John i. 4).

3. Help.

Sympathy will always show itself actively by rendering, according to means or opportunities, both material help and spiritual co-operation.

As regards the former, our Divine Lord had laid it down as a principle in teaching His Apostles: "Freely you have received- freely give." Spiritual things cannot be bought or sold. On the other hand He had taught that the spiritual laborer should be supported by those for whom he labors. When He sent out the seventy-two disciples, He forbade them to take purse or money, for their journey. They should seek for a house of good report, and "eat and drink such things as they have, for the laborer is worthy of his hire" (St. Luke x. 7). Not only the laborer must be maintained, but he requires material help to accomplish his various works, especially those of mercy. Hence the Acts of the Apostles show us many of the first Christians reducing themselves to poverty, and living on a common stock, in order to enable the Apostles to carry on their various labors more effectively; and no small part of the letters of St. Paul are taken up with the question of collections made for those in need. This great Apostle would accept no help from those to whom he was ministering at the time (2 Cor. xi. 8); yet he took care to vindicate his right and the rights of others. "Who serveth as a soldier at any time at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof? ... If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter if we reap your carnal things? .. The Lord hath ordained that they who preach the Gospel, shall live by the Gospel" (1 Cor. ix.). "Let him that is instructed in the Word communicate to him that instructeth him in all good things" (Gal. vi. 6). Miraculous powers were seldom, if ever, used to dispense with this dependence on the justice or generosity of the Faithful; for it was in the interests of both priests and people that they should be drawn together by mutual offices of giving and receiving.

These principles are for all times, but it has belonged to the varying discipline of the Church to determine the mode and measure of lay support as well as of clerical obligations; so that at one time or place we have tithes, oblations, mortuaries; at another, dues, offertories, honoraries, stole-fees, and the rest. For my purpose, it is enough to add here that no work has a stronger claim on the laity than the education of the candidates of the priesthood, whether among the secular or the regular clergy.

Far beyond money is free and active co-operation. St. Paul speaks of the names of his fellow-laborers, both men and women, as being written in the Book of Life (Phil. iv. 3); not in a register of electors, a list of landed gentry, or a court-guide, but in God's book of life eternal! There are many ways in which, without encroaching on the functions of the clergy, the laity can take a share in their work; as in instructing children or converts, the management of confraternities, the organization of charities, visiting the poor and the sick, laboring for the beauty of God's house, and the service of the altar and choir. It is well known how many religious orders of laymen and women devote their lives to such tasks. The first deacons were appointed to relieve the Apostles from the overwhelming burdens of charitable ministrations. "Look ye out among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts xii. 3). And there is a "ministry" requiring neither the sacred nor the minor orders; "I commend to you Phoebe, our sister, who is in the ministry of the Church that is in Cenchre, that you receive her in the Lord as becometh saints, and that you assist her in whatsoever business she shall have need of you. For she also hath assisted many and myself also" (Rom. xvi. 1). Happy the parents who can themselves minister to the Church in this lower degree, by devoting their children to the higher ministry of prayer and preaching. Happy all those who can in any way co-operate in such a work. To foster vocations, to watch over them, to remove obstacles, to aid in their fulfillment, is one of the noblest works of zeal both for priests and laymen.

4. Prayer.

There is a means by which all can co-operate, men, women and children, and with this I conclude. All Christians, as has been said, have a royal priesthood, and one of the great functions of this priesthood is intercessory prayer. During the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the priest, after kissing the altar, turns to the people, saying, *Orate fratres ut meum ac vestrum sacrificium acceptabile fiat apud Deum Patrem Omnipotentem.* "Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Almighty Father." Priest and people here unite in one common act of worship; but being separated in space they still unite in prayer one for the other. Every priest and every cleric in holy orders recites daily the Divine Office, occupying between one hour and one hour and a half of time, even when said in private ; and the office is not merely an oblation of praise to God, but also a great act of intercession for all. I have quoted many words of St. Paul in this little paper. In almost every epistle he protests that he prays for his disciples, and at the same time with the greatest emphasis he urges on them the duty of praying for himself. He writes to the Romans, " I beseech you, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the charity of the Holy Ghost, that you help me in your prayers for me to God, that I may be delivered from the unbelievers that are in Judea, and that the oblation of my service may be acceptable in Jerusalem to the saints" (Rom. xv. 30). He was carrying to Jerusalem a sum of money that had been collected in several places for the relief of the poor persecuted Christians of the mother city. There were misunderstandings among some as to his position and work, and with the greatest delicacy, instead of looking on himself as a benefactor, he asks prayers that his ministry may be acceptable. Notice the motives by which he appeals to the Romans for himself and for the Christians or "saints of Jerusalem." They are exactly the same as those by which we appeal to God. "Through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the charity of the Holy Ghost." Yes, for our Lord is not merely mediator between God and man, but

also between man and man: and the Holy Ghost is the bond of union, not only between the Father and the Eternal Son in the ever-blessed Trinity, but between the souls of men on earth or in heaven.

Could not God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, deliver St. Paul from the unbelievers, and make him acceptable to the Saints, without the prayers of the Christians of Rome? He could, doubtless; but it was His will that the Romans should have a share in these works of Divine Providence and grace. And he writes in the same spirit to the Philippians: "I know that this shall fall out to me unto salvation, *through your prayer* and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil. i. 19); and again to the Colossians: "Be instant in prayer, watching in it in thanksgiving; *praying withal for us* also, that God may open unto us a door of speech to speak the mystery of Christ, that I may make it manifest as I ought to speak" (Col. iv. 2). We have seen the Apostles reserving to themselves, as their peculiar appanage, "prayer and the ministry of the word;" yet here St. Paul urges on the faithful intercessory prayer that he may acquit himself well in the ministry of the word.

I could add other passages, but these are enough to show that the laity must pray for the clergy no less than the clergy for the laity. And now I must bring forward some words of our Lord Jesus Christ, which I entreat all my readers to write in their hearts, or rather to ask the Holy Spirit to write in their hearts.

We are told by St. Matthew that our Lord being moved by the desolate state of the people, turned to His disciples saying: "The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that He send laborers into His harvest" (St. Matt. ix. 30). We must note each word:

"*The harvest is great.*" Imagine that you stand on a hill side, and as far as the eye can reach there stretches before you a plain covered with ripe and yellow corn. It is time to reap it, and if it is not soon gathered into barns or stacked, it will perish. The grain will drop from the ears, the wind will lay low the stalks, the autumn and winter rains will fall and the harvest will rot on the ground. You note also that scattered over the plain are a few men engaged in reaping and carrying the corn, and you see with sorrow and anxiety that they are utterly insufficient to save even a tenth of this great harvest.

Such was the sight that moved our Lord's heart to compassion. He saw the multitudes then in the towns and villages of Galilee and Judea, among whom He had been preaching. This was the special harvest that He pointed out to His Apostles: but with the eyes of His soul He saw a vaster multitude than this. He saw all the souls then living, and that would live in future time. This harvest He points out to us.

"*The Lord of the harvest?*" Now remark that this harvest has an owner. Why then does the owner allow it to perish? Why does he not send laborers, without being asked to do so by others? Here we meet again the mystery of prayer. Let us not blunder like rude and heathen minds, like those who ask what need have we of the prayers of the saints. Whether we understand it or not, it is certain that God requires the prayers of saints, aye, and of sinners too. But first let us be certain that God Himself does not look upon His harvest with unconcern. There would be no harvest had He not long ago sowed the field. And now He gazes on the corn and has compassion on it. It is not we that have to move Him from

indifference. It is He that would move us. He does not wish us to stand by idly speculating on His ways, or letting our eyes wander listlessly over the ungarnered crops.

"Pray the Lord that He send laborers" We may not put in our sickle ourselves without His leave. We may not hire and send laborers to reap the fields at our pleasure; for we are not the lords of the harvest. It is He that must send the laborers. If you saw a neighbor's corn in danger of perishing, you might suppose him unacquainted with agriculture, and tell him it was time to reap it. Or if he were absent from home, you could write to him on the subject. In such cases he would feel that you had his interest only in view, and he would not regard your interference as an intrusion. And though God is neither ignorant nor absent, He does not look on our prayers as an impertinence, for they are an act of obedience to Himself. By prayer we never seek to teach an ignorant, or to move a listless God: "Cast all your care upon Him," says St. Peter, "for He hath care for you" (i St. Pet. v. 7). Our confidence when praying for ourselves must rest in the belief in God's love for us. And so too in praying for others, far be from any Christian mind the thought that we are zealous for their salvation and that God is indifferent; that we have the love while God has the power, and that we must communicate our zeal to Him. *Rogat ut rogetur*, says St. Thomas: "God asks us to ask Him." If we would know why, it is no doubt to rouse us from indifference, to move us to charity, to increase our merit, to confer on us the honor of cooperating with God.

All cannot be laborers, all have not vocation to use the sickle, yet all may have a share in the harvest-home. Nuns and the girls they train, lay-masters and their boys, mothers and sisters, peasants and men of business, these cannot reap, but they can multiply the reapers by their prayers and sustain their zeal. St. Thomas well remarks that self-interest will send laborers to gather in their own harvest, and human efforts can provide *hands*, but God's grace alone can send laborers who will gather in God's harvest. Our prayers may rouse up bystanders to enlist under the Lord of the Harvest, and may even change idle hands into toilers.

Our Lord's high injunction has never been forgotten by the Church. She has never deemed it necessary to lower the standard of priestly self-sacrifice in order to recruit laborers more freely. She knows that it is God Who owns the harvest, God Who has to send the laborers, and God Who has to give the zeal, and the strength, and the skill, to the laborers. She calls, therefore, on her children to pray to the Lord of the harvest. This she does at all times, but particularly in the Ember days, which are the regular times of Ordination.

We have seen that with prayer and fasting the hands of the clergy were laid on Paul and Barnabas, and they were sent on their mission. The fast of the four seasons is probably of apostolic institution. It cannot be proved that at first it was in any way connected with the Sacrament of Order, but for many centuries this has been the case; and we should never let these seasons pass without adding prayer to our fasts, or it may be compensating fast by prayer; and our prayer should be then for the clergy, not only those then ordained, though for them especially; but for the Sovereign Pontiff, the cardinals, bishops, parochial clergy, missionaries and religious orders, seminarians, both theological and elementary; and for the grace of vocation to the priesthood. An excellent prayer for this purpose is the Litany of the Saints, in which so many bishops, priests and levites are invoked; or the Rosary may be

appropriately said, grouping those for whom we pray into five classes, corresponding to the five decades.

May God inspire the readers of this paper to pray for the clergy, and for divine vocations to the priesthood, not merely at the Ember days, but at all Masses, Communion, Visits and Benedictions. May they make it a standing intention to pray for the clergy, living and dead, for the priests who baptized them and who have heard their confessions or instructed them, for the bishop who confirmed them; for vocations both many and urgent, and for correspondence with vocation; for young priests, for the middle aged, and for the old; for the weak and afflicted as well as for the strong and fervent. Let them remember that Jesus Christ is the great High Priest, and that prayer for priests must be dear to His heart. Our Lady too is the mother of the High Priest and the Queen of the Apostles. The Church begs her to intercede for the clergy. May her prayers draw down a blessing on this little paper, and may she intercede for the writer, who owes it to her prayers that he has been raised from the dust and from the dunghill, to sit amid the ranks of the princes of God's people (Ps. cxii. 7).