

The Priesthood



In early Church writings as far back as the “Diahe” (Teaching of the Twelve) which dates from the 2nd century, the use of the terms “bishop” and “priest” are used. In this same time period, St. Ignatius of Antioch speaks of the differences between bishop, priest and deacon, “Without these [three] it cannot be called Church” (Ad Trall., iii). Even in I Timothy 5:17, St. Paul mentions “presbyters” (elders or priests) who were subordinate to the “episcopoi” (or bishop), who was Timothy.

Today holy orders are more clearly defined. Bishops have the fullness of priesthood and priests share in their ministry. In our parish, we are blessed to have two priests, myself and Fr. Thomas. I am a diocesan or, secular priest. Fr. Thomas is a religious order priest. The basic difference between the two of us is how we have chosen to live out our priesthood. Diocesan priests do not always live in community, by rule, nor do we take a vow of poverty.

We do, however, make a solemn promise to live a simple life. To that end, we own possessions, and earn a salary. For the IRS, we are considered “self - employed” so we pay income tax as well. The direct superior for diocesan priests is the bishop of a particular diocese. In contrast, the direct superior for a religious order priest is the superior of their particular order. Though “religious” priests serve under the authority of the diocesan bishop, he is not their direct superior. Religious priests

do not usually own many possessions because they have taken a vow of poverty. That means that their particular religious order furnishes them with whatever needs that they may have.

Diocesan priests are ordained for service in their Respective dioceses and spend their lives ministering to the needs of the diocesan church. Religious Order priests dedicate their lives to the service and the work of the particular order they join and their areas of service can be very large, including one or several countries, even. When diocesan priests are ordained, they make a solemn promise of obedience to the bishop, to live a chaste, celibate lifestyle and a simple personal life. In contrast, religious order priests take on vows of chaste celibacy, obedience to their religious superior and poverty (meaning that they will not own personal possessions).

St. Luke the Evangelist, pray for us.

Fr. James

