



Opening Question:

Who has helped you as a middle man in negotiations?

Have you ever been caught in the middle? Have you ever been a mediator between two parties? You might even represent the face and interests of one party to the other and viz a versa. Think of that relationship but on a grander scale.

Who is the mediator between God and humanity? The priest. He represents the people to God. He is the one who presents the people's offerings and sacrifices to the Almighty. The priest also represents God to people. He is the one who declares God's blessings on the faithful.

Jesus, the High Priest

As Christians, Jesus is our High Priest. He sacrificed himself for us and showers us with God's blessings. As the author of Hebrews stated:

We have a great high priest who has gone into heaven: Jesus, the Son of God! He understands every weakness of ours because he was tempted in every way that we are. But he did not sin!

Hebrews 4:14-15

But, since we are one with Christ, we share in his priesthood. Along with him, we offer the Father our sacrifices. And, along with him, we bless others through our words and deeds. As the author of First Peter said:

You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

1 Peter 2:9



Holy Orders

We are the Church, God's priestly people. But like other groups, we need leaders to guide us in our worship. We need someone to lead us in praise of God and to represent God to us in word and action. These men are the ordained. They have received the sacrament of Holy Orders.

Why do we call it "orders?" The term came from the Latin "ordo" which means "body" or group. Holy Orders consists of three bodies: the order of bishops, the order of priests, and the order of deacons. Men within each of these orders have a specific function.

Order of Bishops

Bishops are the direct successors of the apostles. They are ordained to the fullness of Holy Orders. They can administer all the sacraments. They can even ordain others to become bishops. They are called to accurately and completely teach the faith. They sometimes have the obligation to lead the local Church in a particular region. This area is called a diocese.

Order of Priests

The priest is sometimes called a presbyter, a Greek word that means "elder." The sacramental priest helps the bishop he's assigned to. He can administer all the sacraments except Holy Orders. He cannot ordain others. In many cases, he

cannot confirm people without his bishop's permission. Many priests are pastors of local congregations. In this way, they lead as representatives of their bishop.

Order of Deacons

The order of deacons was established for service to the local community. In Acts chapter 6, foreign born widows complained local widows received more food than they did. The Apostles complained the job of food distribution distracted them from preaching the Good News. So, the community chose men for service to the poor and widows.

And these men were brought to the apostles. Then the apostles prayed and placed their hands on the men to show they had been chosen to do this work.

Acts 6:6

Even today, deacons serve local parishes and other areas according to the bishop's direction. Deacons have no power to administer sacraments. But they can witness Church marriages and baptize people.

Signs of Holy Orders

is the imposition of hands and prayer to the Spirit. The bishop ordains as he lays his hands on the head of a man. Then he prays for the spiritual gift contained in that particular office. The gift confers an indelible spiritual character on the man. It's permanent. So, no matter the office, a man is ordained to act as the representative of Christ and the entire Church.

Who acts as a priest today?

The Risen Christ both in his body the Church and in his chosen representatives. On one level, we together as the Body of Christ are the face of God to the world through our words and deeds. We are also the face of the world to God through our prayers and supplications. On another level, bishops, priests and deacons are the face of Christ to us especially in our worship. These are ordained men who, along with Christ, proclaim God's blessings on us and present our offerings to God.

Closing Question:

Who is your bishop? Your pastor? Your parish deacon?

Reference to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraphs CCC 1536-1600.

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