



Dear Folks,

At the priest conference, Dr. Timothy O'Malley said that if there is going to be Eucharistic revival, we must deepen our sense of the Baptismal priesthood. He reminded us that when we got ordained, we had a different role in the Church and the world, and the presence we bring is different, but it doesn't immediately "attune" our thinking and our behavior to our new reality. That is a task we take up from then on, to be who we have become. I gradually got used to the fact that people looked at me differently because I was a priest, and there were different sets of expectations (that is several conversations right there). When he got married, there was a similar process. Our faith tells us our baptism changes us. We remember from the rite that we are anointed "priest, prophet and king," a participation in the anointing of Christ (we remember that "Christ" means "anointed." We are then called to attune our view of ourselves, and how we approach the world, according to that reality.

The Second Vatican Council called for renewal of awareness of the Baptismal priesthood, but what was often done was to erase the distinction between the baptismal and ordained priesthood. People started saying priests' parts at Mass, and there wasn't room to talk about the unique gifts that the ordained priesthood brought to the Church. When I was in the seminary, it was pretty rare to talk positively about the ordained priesthood, except when they were talking about ordaining women (the dropout rate was very high). The mistake was thinking it was a zero-sum game, that for one to shine, the other had to be in the shadow. We can celebrate both vigorously.

The council said that the two priest hoods differed in kind, rather than degree. Think about how love relationships can differ in kind: the love between husband and wife, the love between siblings, the love between parent and their children are different kinds of relationships, each with some different qualities and proper ways of expressing themselves. We do not start by ranking them according to intensity but appreciating their uniqueness.

The baptismal priesthood is exercised in sanctifying the world. The Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium) says, "Though they differ essentially and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are none the less ordered one to another; each in its own proper way shares in the one priesthood of Christ. The ministerial priest, by the sacred power that he has, forms and rules the priestly people; in the person of Christ, he effects the eucharistic sacrifice and offers it to God in the name of all the people. The faithful indeed, by virtue of their royal priesthood, participate in the offering of the Eucharist. They exercise that priesthood, too, by the reception of the sacraments, prayer and thanksgiving, the witness of a holy life, abnegation, and active charity (LG 10)." People help sanctify the world through their worship, through their seeking to grow in holiness, through their family life, through their work, and through their enduring suffering and trials with patience and faith. Again, the council says, "For all their works, prayers and apostolic undertakings, family and married life, daily work, relaxation of mind and body, if they are accomplished in the Spirit—indeed even the hardships of life if patiently borne—all of these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Pet 2:5) in the celebration of the Eucharist these may most fittingly be offered to the Father along with the body of the Lord. And so, worshipping everywhere by their holy actions, the laity consecrate the world itself to God (LG 34)."

Let's face it; the world needs lots and lots of sanctifying.

Blessings,
Fr. Jim