

The Real Ministry



I was attending a meeting the other day, when I was asked: “So, how long have you been a minister?”

Now you may know that at times I can be a trifle sharp—almost prickly, some might say. So, you should not be surprised to hear that I responded quickly:

“I’m not a minister, I’m a priest—you’re a Minister—so, tell me—what is your particular Ministry and how well are you doing?”

Aside from the shock value of my answer—an answer that that person is not likely to forget for a while—my response was absolutely correct.

That person who spoke to me had been baptized and confirmed—and to be honest, he was already doing an effective job in his ministry for Christ—but he needed help in seeing that what he was **already doing in his ministry** was the **REAL** ministry of Christ—not just some small service for his parish church.

The Book of Common Prayer teaches us that we have 3 kinds of clergy—bishops, priests, and deacons—and that everyone else is a Minister, with a Ministry to do for Christ. Years ago, there was an incorrect idea that the priest was supposed to do the Ministry, while the people just “paid and prayed”—sort of like going to a football game to see the players play the game, while we in the stands just bought our ticket to cheer or criticize as seemed needed. But that, my brothers and sisters, was not and is not right!

All of you are Ministers, doing the real Ministry of Christ, and your priest is your support person. That’s why he was ordained as a Priest—so to call him a minister is to deny your own Ministry—and believe me, the Ministry that is done by each of you is the Ministry that really counts. We priests are here to train and support you in doing your Ministry—**not** the other way around.

So, what is the Ministry of the People of God?

Each of you has a specific ministry, a ministry that Jesus is counting on you to do. It could be witnessing for Christ, or visiting the sick, or teaching the faith—or one of hundreds of different ministries, and they all fit together to be the Ministry of Christ in the world. But in general, the Ministry can be divided into 4 main types—and if you are to be an effective Minister, you should know what they are.

First type of Ministry: **“Bringing people into a new Relationship with God through Jesus Christ.”** In technical terms, this is called Witnessing and Evangelism,—but in

common terms, it is Bringing People into that Relationship in Christ which changes their life and redirects all their hopes and dreams. I must admit that we Anglicans are not very good at this type of Ministry—which is a shame, because it is central to the Ministry of the people of the Church. On the other hand, Fundamentalists are good at it, and that is why they are growing, and we are not. The Ministry of Bringing People to Jesus is crucial—and it is best done by you, the Ministers of God. It is difficult for a priest—because he or she rarely moves in the circles of the unconverted—but you do every day. So, the first type of Ministry is done by you, when you introduce people to Jesus, and help them come to Him, in repentance and joy.

The Second type of Ministry is: **Bringing People to Worship God**. We Anglicans do a rather better job at this type of Ministry—it is done when you and others come to Church, so that you and they can experience the Mystery and Holiness of God in Worship. We do this best when we come to the Eucharist—because that is the only service that Jesus gave us. It is in the Eucharist (if it is done well) that people catch a vision of the glory and mystery and awe of their creator—and discover that He is with them and wanting to feed and walk with them. In the Eucharist, you, the Ministers of God, actually offer the Holy Sacrifice of Christ, actually participate with Jesus in what He is doing right now—interceding for us in Heaven. To Worship God is a vital and marvelous ministry—and definitely, it needs to be part of every person's Ministry.

The Third type of Ministry is: **Helping People Become Saints**. Being a Christian is not a static idea, but a Dynamic Growing Pilgrimage—a Journey towards the Heart of God. This is a lifelong Journey, and through it we are changed bit by bit into God's desire for each of us. You may have heard that God has a Plan for you—and He does—His Plan is to make each of you into a Saint. Is that Scary? You bet! Much better to settle for something rather mediocre or moderate—but God has no intention of settling for half measures—He wants every Christian to become a Saint—that's the process He began in our Baptism, and He will not leave us alone until we are One with Him in Heaven. We grow in Holiness as we read the Bible thoughtfully, spend time in prayer and meditation, intercede for others, make a Sacramental Confession, receive Communion, read Spiritual Books, and spend time with others sharing our Growth in Christ. This type of Ministry is a place where your parish priest can often support you. That's what he's trained for. He wants to see each Minister grow in holiness—and to help others grow in Holiness. Ask your priest how you can do just that—so you can become a more effective Minister. It's a lifelong process, and you'll be glad you asked.

Finally, the Fourth type of Ministry is: **Building the Kingdom**. Not the Kingdom in Heaven, though that is important too—Building the Kingdom on earth, right here right now, that's really important. Changing our communities where we live, changing our society to reflect the love and justice and mercy of God. Believe me, that is a big job. Our North American society is becoming farther and farther away from the real Kingdom of God—instead, it's becoming the Kingdom of Walmart, or the Kingdom of Television, or the Kingdom of Consumers or the Kingdom of Sex. Our society values what sells, and therefore discards what is religious or decent or honest. You, the Ministers of God, have a frightfully difficult job to do out there. You're charged with starting a revolution—a

revolution of loving equality, of caring service and equal justice, with God at the centre of it all. Your Ministry is to turn us from Consumers into Saints.

Now, no one can do all of that—but God calls each of you as a Minister to take hold of one vital piece of these four types of Ministry and begin to work at it. Do you need Training or Support? That's where your priest can help. Ask him—he will be delighted to get you the help you need to become a better Minister. But he's not going to do YOUR Ministry. That's your job—that's why you were confirmed—that's your Ministry for God. **And Christ is counting on you.**

In the Name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Amen