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The Diocesan Priest: Secular Priesthood in the New Church

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in the vernaculars (not only in Tagalog); and which will apply to more writers in English the same demanding measurements used with Villa, Gonzalez, Joaquin and Bienvenido Santos.

Now modern literary criticism in the Philippines has begun.

LEONARD CASPER

THE DIOCESAN PRIEST

SECULAR PRIESTHOOD IN THE NEW CHURCH. Gerard S. Sloyan, Editor. New York: Herder and Herder, 1967. 252 pp.

Until recent years the secular priesthood was often regarded as "*a compromise with the world*", or as merely a "*clerical religious manque*". Many still consider the secular priesthood (Diocesan) as a sort of partial and imperfect edition of the Religious Priesthood (Regular). In other words, the common conception about the secular priesthood is that it is only for those who cannot measure up to the discipline or the rigidity of the religious life. Therefore, the secular priesthood has through the years been pre-judged and looked down as "*second-rate*".

In the Philippines, the secular clergy's image has not reached the stature which their Regular confreres are enjoying. They are actual heirs of an historical prejudice which was a by-product of Spanish lack of foresight, particularly the now infamous "*patronato system*" which left no scope for a secular clergy, and condemned it to the essentially false position of a subordinate instrument.

"*Secular Priesthood in the New Church*" is precisely a kind of book which is a "must" for cleric as well as lay people for a keener insight and deeper appreciation of the pristine nature, mission and destiny of the secular priesthood.

It is a compilation of provocative articles stated with acute candor. In all its chapters experts air their views regarding all aspects of the secular priesthood, doctrinal and pastoral, theoretical as well as practical.

The Church, bound up in a spirit of *aggiornamento* and drawn by pressures to update its outlook, has enacted more dramatic changes in the last five years than what history relates of its preceding 500 years. Vatican Council II has done much to sharpen the image of the secular priesthood. It has offered a number of insights into the

mystery of the Christian Priesthood and at the same time laid a solid foundation upon which the developing theology of the secular priesthood can rest. Vatican Council II describes the Diocesan priest as

one who through a total dedication to his diocese effected by incardination, co-operates with the local bishop and surrenders himself as a victim to the service of the local Church. He will find his sanctification within the work of his ministry provided that he gives himself to this work with total surrender that the victimhood of Christ's priesthood entails. His apostolate is as one which entails the gift of himself to the people of the diocese through teaching, sanctifying and counselling. It makes the Eucharistic celebration the center of his priesthood, the high point towards which he directs all his pastoral activity, and the source from which he derives his strength.

Its dignity lies in its conformity to Christ the priest through perpetual and intimate fellowship with its chief representative in the community, the bishop. Its challenge lies in its requirement to live the victimhood of apostolic charity that such conformity demands.

The sacred priesthood is a sacramental mystery and historic dynamism alive in the Church, which transcends its individual bearers. Yet this same mystery is radicated, made concrete, alive in the lives of individual priests. Therefore, both of these truths must be maintained in balance in the formulated equation of priesthood and manhood. The first and cardinal principle must be: *"To be fully a priest one must be fully a man."*

Since the priest is one who must act as a *"continuum"* of charity in the community by bringing together in love the many individual members of the community to which he belongs, it is altogether necessary that the priest himself be a man deeply related to others and enjoying that freedom and manful responsibility which enables him to live and act in this fashion.

If the secular priests then expect to be fit instruments of mediation between God and man, they must be professionals in their own right, constantly improving themselves in the pursuit of holiness, learning and public relations. *Secular Priest in the New Church* merits earnest reading from today's Catholic.

LEONARD C. AGCAOLI