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What is the Priesthood?

The Catholic Priesthood According to the Teaching of the Church

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P. Philipon touches on all the major topics of *Lumen Gentium*: the Church as mystery, as the implantation of the trinitarian life in mankind; the Church as God's people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood; the hierarchy within the total ecclesial framework; the lay christian as son of God and sharer in Christ's threefold mission; the call to holiness which is the vocation of each christian, and the meaning of the religious life in its fivefold aspect (theocentric, christiform, apostolic, ecclesial and eschatological); ecumenism; Mary in the Church.—The chapter on the hierarchy, the most developed one in the book (pp. 91-165), treats of Christ's invisible presence in the Church, the primacy, the sacramentality of episcopal consecration and the collegiality of the episcopate, the priesthood and the diaconate: it is an excellent commentary on Chapter III of *Lumen Gentium*. Of this particular chapter one reviewer has noted: "It is a perfect commentary: everything that needs to be pointed out in the chapter is pointed out, and there is always an admirable sureness of doctrine."

The publishers tell us that P. Philipon was a member of the commission which worked on the text of *Lumen Gentium*. This should serve as an additional recommendation for a book which merits translation into other languages. Those who have read the author's *The Sacraments in the Christian Life* will want to read this new work also. For all who desire a better understanding of *Lumen Gentium*, this book will be of real value.

C. G. ARÉVALO, S.J.

WHAT IS THE PRIESTHOOD?

THE CATHOLIC PRIESTHOOD ACCORDING TO THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH. BOOK II: PAPAL DOCUMENTS OF PIUS XII. Edited by Monsignor Pierre Veuillot. Translated by John A. O'Flynn. Westminster, Md.: Newman Press, 1964, 302 pp.

Thirty-seven documents of Pope Pius XII make up the contents of this volume, Book II of the English translation of *Notre Sacerdoce*. The first two volumes of the original French edition were published in 1954; the present work takes up where the first book of the English edition leaves off, and gives us texts of Pius XII from 13 April 1954 (a letter from Monsignor Montini, then pro-Secretary of State, to the national congress of the Union of Catholic Works of France, on preaching) till 19 October 1958 (a discourse prepared by the pope for the 50th. anniversary of the seminary of Apulia, but which death prevented him from delivering).

Msgr. Veuillot has prefaced each selection with a brief introductory note; has numbered each paragraph for ready reference; added footnotes which either reproduce other papal citations illustrating points brought up by the text or indicate cross-references; given subtitles throughout; rounded up the volume with an index of scriptural texts, a chronological index of pontifical documents on the priesthood from Leo XIII to Pius XII, and an analytical index.

Even a hurried inspection of the analytical index (composed with really painstaking care) reveals the breadth of Pius XII's doctrine. "The first fact," Msgr. Veuillot remarks, "that strikes one about the teaching of Pius on the priesthood is its exceptional amplitude." One remembers the often repeated statement that Pius XII did lay the groundwork for much of the work of his successor, Pope John, and the Vatican Council. A careful reading of this volume lends substance to such a claim.

In the preface to the earlier volume, written in 1954, the then pro-Secretary of State, Msgr. Montini said:

It seems to me...that the present work comes at a most opportune time; it brings the answer to that pressing problem of our own day: what is the true notion of the priesthood? Under the pressure from without of modern needs, and the interior stimulus which comes from the incessant activity of the mind and the action of divine grace, the answer to that question is being urgently sought.

It is well-known that this problem has engaged the earnest attention of thoughtful minds in our own time, both within the Church and outside the fold....

It is with this complex and tormenting problem of the true concept of the priesthood that the spirituality of our own day has been chiefly exercised; the hopes of the faithful, and indeed of many clear-minded lay men in civil life, especially during and after the tragic experiences of the war, have turned to it too: a true priesthood, one that is good, humane and saintly, would save the world. It is beyond question that the spirit has a role to fulfill. Even atheism has its militants, dedicated to the ideal of their cause. Fraternal dedication to the good of those who are one's brothers is the only lever which can raise the world; even in a world of triumphant materialism, the idea of sacrifice and redemption still remains a beacon guiding all genuine social and moral endeavours. Even at the present day, the ability to proclaim noble doctrines of the widest application and, at the same time, in virtue of these same doctrines, to interest oneself in every form of human suffering, in the fate of the poor, the orphaned,

the delinquent and the despairing, this still continues to be regarded as the outstanding means whereby the humanism of the new age can be given an authentic art of the priesthood. So too the capacity of giving expression to the sense of the meaning of life, of noble ideals and of hope: It is the unfathomable truths which surround us, to draw near and yet not profane the mystery in which the world is wrapped, to give meaning to things, an inner voice to the mind and a vibrant tongue to toil and sorrow and the love of men, in a word, prayer, which is true as light and like light, poetry and life, this too can be priestly; and it also still lives in the hearts of men of the twentieth century.

These reflections, reproduced at the beginning of this book, from a thoughtful introduction—by the future Pope—to the words of one of his predecessors. At this time when the age of the laity has been decisively ushered in by the great documents of Vatican II, the question, What is the priesthood?, is more than ever what the then Msgr. Montini called “a burning topic.”

E. E. Y. Hales has said somewhere that the words of Pius XII often made a limited impression because his language was “too philosophical”; one might say, perhaps, often *too formal*, *too “roman.”* There is truth to this remark, I think, and it applies even to the texts in this book. But it remains a most useful work, nonetheless, for one who would reflect on the priesthood and its meaning in the world of today, and its pages should provide both priest and layman with food for thought and prayer.

C. G. ARÉVALO, S.J.

TOWARD ECUMENISM

THE EASTERN CHURCHES AND CATHOLIC UNITY. Edited by Maximos IV Sayegh, Patriarch of Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem. New York: Herder and Herder, 1963. 237 pp.

This collection of essays and documents written by distinguished members of the Melkite hierarchy (Catholics of the Byzantine rite in Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt) aims ultimately at the union of all Christians and proximately at the removal of impediments to it. Underlying all obstacles is the desire manifested by certain non-Eastern prelates, contrary to the wishes of the popes, to “latinize” the Eastern churches, i.e., to dominate them and deprive them of rights which in some cases were guaranteed when they entered into com-