

2.9.73: 9.40 p.m.

REVISION OF PARAGRAPH 11

The priestly sacrifice of Jesus was unique, as is also his continuing High Priesthood. Despite the fact that in the New Testament ministers are never called 'priests', Christians came to see the priestly role of Christ reflected in these ministers and used priestly terms in describing them. Because the Eucharist is the memorial of the sacrifice of Christ, the presiding minister, who recites again the words of Christ at the Last Supper and distributes to the assembly the holy gifts, is seen to stand in a sacramental relation to what Christ himself did in offering his own sacrifice. So our two traditions commonly use priestly terms in speaking about the ordained ministry. Such language does not imply any negation of the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ by addition, continuation or repetition. It is because of the centrality of the Eucharist in the Church's life that, whatever words we may use to express it, the essential nature of the Christian ministry is most clearly seen in its celebration; for in the Eucharist thanksgiving is offered to God, the Gospel of salvation is proclaimed in word and sacrament, and the community is knit together as one body in Christ. Christian ministers are necessarily members of this redeemed community. Not only do they share through baptism in the priesthood of the people of God, but they are - particularly in presiding at the Eucharist - representative of the whole Church in the fulfilment of its priestly vocation of self-offering to God as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). Nevertheless their ministry is not an extension of the common Christian priesthood but belongs to another realm of the gifts of the Spirit. It exists to help the Church to be "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, to declare the wonderful deeds of him who called them out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).