

May, 2008

DEAR READER,

Many years ago when I was teaching at the seminary in Los Angeles, I started writing meditative poems about the priesthood. From time to time I add some to my collection. Since Catholics seem to like them, including some of the priests I write them for, I thought you might like them and want to just copy and paste and send them to your priest friends to encourage them.

Ronda Chervin

Our Priest

Eagerly,

he emerges from his door,

not as a cuckoo clock figure,

but as if on urgent personal business,

as he is.

Intently,

he speaks to us,

not as to the distracted ,

but as if we longed to be reached,

as we do.

Tenderly,

he holds up the Eucharist,

not as though the bread was only a symbol,

but as if it were a body frail and broken,

as it was.

Carefully,

his hands enfold the cup,

not as though the wine were only sign,

but as if it was the holy grail,

as it is.

Graciously,

he offers us the Mystery,

not as a sop to the naïve,

but as pure love,

as it is.

Priests of God – Endangered Species?

Priests of God,
endangered species,
how have you survived?

How have you survived –
our bored indifference to Gospel values;
our double-standard-demand
that you be perfect and we'll just be so-so!

Our blaming God for the
effects of our own betrayals;
wanting the Church to supply
the beauty and forgiveness we withhold.

Yet you adopt us,
pew-sitting orphans,
as your own,

ennobling our pain,
you lift
our mutilated hearts
to God.

Nailed to the cross
of your self-surrender;
you advise,
endure,
absolve,
consecrate.

Priests,
loving us in Him
enough to
lay down your lives:
do you even know
how much
we love you?

Mary's Beloved Priest

By motherly love held secure,
your heart
is worn on your sleeve.

Overshadowed by the Holy Spirit,
your fervor
glows without restraint.

Taught by one whose love knows no limit,
your caring
passes no-one by.

Closened to be Christ again to the world,
your feet
can never flee the cross.

Attached by beads to a glorified Queen,
your hope
is boundless!

Metaphysics of Priesthood

**A good priest IS his priesthood;
in time, less and less non-priesthood.**

He wears his soul on his vestment.

**His people feel they know him well;
Though he talks little about himself,**

**For more and more his self-revelation
is word and sacraments.**

“Not I, but Jesus lives in me.”

Jesus says:

**“Behold, my beloved son,
In whom I am well-pleased.”**

Alter Christus

**Today the priest offered the Mass
as if anointing
Your crucified body
and our broken bodies, too**

**so I could see You,
Jesus, as mercifully
binding my wounds
with Your bloody shroud**

and teaching me

**“To those who struggle
I am tender,
won't you be, too?”**

Ordained to be our Priest

**Father God,
come lead Your son
to the altar of sacrifice.**

**He,
the Isaac,**

who understand, obeys,
lays down his life.

Yet, unlike Abraham,
You, Father,
sing and dance,
as you bring your new son;

for the Lamb
has already been slain,
and the follower has come,
not to be immolated,
but to celebrate...

and in your space and time:
no population problem,
no limit to those of us who will be saved,
to the generations that will be blessed!

Priest of Baptism

We insist:
Our baby must never be touched by evil!
You proclaim:
Satan begone!

We insist:
Our baby's soul be white as snow!
You proclaim:
Sparkling holy water flow
o'er this child!

We insist:
Our baby shall be surrounded by tenderness!
You proclaim:
Give the little one into
the arms of sisters and brothers
in the Church of Love!

We insist:
Our baby ought never die!
You proclaim:
Behold, the Lord opening
the gates of eternal life, forever, Amen.

Priest of Marriages

Always the third,
are you
envious
yet relieved?
or
happy to be
the friend of the bridegroom
always welcome?

The third who is not a crowd
in the company of two
for you stand for
the Triune
God of Love
who
made each of the two
to be lovable,
who rejoices in their love
who blesses their love
who will renew their love.

And when their love
seems dead
you will be there waiting
in the room of peace
to bring
Christ's forgiveness
to their worn-out hearts.

And someday
you will
celebrate with them
the wedding of the Lamb
in
the world without end!

Priests for the Infirm

After the Fall,
angels
with flaming swords
guard the Gates of Eden.

After the Resurrection,
priests

with anointing oils
open the Gates of Eternity...

try to heal our broken bodies,
washing our filthy wounds,
signing our souls...

as we stumble
poor and wretched
with desperate hope

toward the New Jerusalem!

Priest of the Word

Did you once dream,
my priest,
of fiery sermons,
for a flock of saints?

When, then, do you feel now,
my priest,
when you look out at your
patiently enduring sheep

who
endure everything—
the Word?
the homily?

Your face tells me
that you trust
the long endurance:
wives of husbands,
husbands of wives;
workers of bosses,
bosses of workers;
brothers of sisters,
sisters of brothers –

Trust endurance
as a good yet unripe seed;
the fruit –
we shall eat together
in another pasture,
in perfect joy.

Priest of the Consecration

**My Savior,
your blood
thicker than water
does not quench, yet**

**coloring
my lips
the red of
the Passion**

**changes my wounds
from self-lacerations
to badges of love.**

Priest of the Confessional

**Weary,
willing,
welcoming,
you await my coming,
to wring my dirty linen
over your tired head.**

**And after absolution,
Your glance of weathered hope warms.
Your blessing nudges me back into the world
where I return
weary,
willing,
welcoming Him.**

Ragpicker Priest

**We clutch our rags of sin
tightly around us
as if adornments
or, at least, necessities.**

Our priest deliberates:

“tear off those rags?

I’ve power and wit

But, maybe not.”

Naked, they might rush

to buy but another

tattered coat

from Satan’s supermarket.

I prefer to weave

a cloak of hope

and offer it from

Jesus’ bargain basement.

Sundays,

I invite them:

“Come and get it,

Confession is at 4.”

“Robes of hope

for rags of sin,”

The rags they shed

I offer to the Prince of Peace

For nothing less than heaven!

Lamentations of a Pastor

When, O Lord,

will my flock desire

**sacrifice more than comfort,
beauty more than hoopla,
relationship more than answers,
process more than coercion,
healing more than relief?**

And Jesus replied:

When you desire

only Me

**and Mercy
all these things
will be added unto you,
In the final kingdom
they will not have to choose.**

Called to be an 'Ordinary' Priest

**Do only what you, uniquely, can do!
proud dictum of an individualistic age!**

What?

**Only a Beethoven or a Michelangelo
would then be worthy?**

**No! What anyone could do
may still be great.**

**Anyone can say I love you,
yet those words be ever beautiful.**

**Anyone can plant a seed,
yet the rose be ever sweet.**

**Anyone can bear a child,
yet each one be ever new.**

**Anyone might be called to priesthood,
Yet Eucharist be ever glory!**

A Priestly Visit

**Not an ordinary guest,
my priest is always a priest.**

**He cannot fail to bless and pardon.
He witnesses “be not afraid.”**

**Out of toxic waste
he plucks flowers**

**And then we wonder
that we smell so sweet.**

My Priest, My Friend

**It’s not in the job description –
well, friendly, yes,
but not to offer hope,
he’d be a real friend.**

**The tone in the voice
that changes
so swiftly
from amiable availability
to compassion for my pain.**

**The gleam in the eye
that catches
so swiftly
the humorous nuance
beneath my speech.**

**The diverted attention
that darts
so swiftly
away from a display
of my weaknesses.**

**The occasional hug
that extends
so swiftly
to prove I’m welcome
in spite of my faults.**

**The admonishing stare
that startles**

so swiftly
when I cross him
and he's actually right.

The life-line
that plunges
so swiftly
down to the bottom
when I'm in a pit.

The open acceptance
that greets
so swiftly
my family on visits
we so cherish.

Our responding love
he absorbs
so swiftly
with joyful glee
but never dependence.

His greatest wish?
I think that we would
know his love
is but a mirror of
our mutual friend Divine!

Priest of Purgatory

Might the final task of our priest be,
to hang nooses around our necks.
A 'baptized co-dependency'
is his, as he drags along
his captive0-flock,
in his sacerdotal triumph
along the paths of purgatory,
through the pearly arches.

For A Seminarian

If you entrust to me
the fragile chalice
of your vocation

and I do not let it fall

**one day will you
add my tears
to His blood:
lift me up?**

Will you be *my* priest?