

DENVER CATHOLIC

WHY A HIERARCHY?

All baptized people make up the christian faithful. *We are all equal in dignity.*

The Christian faithful are divided into two groups

1

CLERGY



All sacred ministers (bishops, priests, deacons) who have been ordained through Holy Orders.

2

LAITY



Everyone else, including religious men and women who are not ordained.

All of the Christian faithful are supposed to live poverty, chastity and obedience in a way that fits their state of life.

Each group also has its own special jobs

Essentially, their job is to serve Christ and His Church. This breaks down into six specific obligations.

- 1 Show obedience to the Pope and their local ordinary (usually a bishop or archbishop)
- 2 Various spiritual duties, such as pursuing holiness of life, fulfilling duties of their ministry, and devoting time to pray.
- 3 Continue their studies, especially in theology and Sacred Scripture
- 4 Wear specific clothes (called clerics) in accord with local law and customs. Some permanent deacons are excused from this.
- 5 May not assume public office, or engage in secular business.



Because we are in the world, it's our job to engage the world and lead it to Christ. We are the front lines of the Church. By

our Baptism and Confirmation, we were entrusted by God to spread the Good News of Salvation.

Religious (monks, nuns, etc) are drawn from both groups. They promise to live chastity, poverty and obedience through vows or other sacred bonds

Each stage of Holy Orders carries to the next



6 May not volunteer for military service without bishop's permission (doesn't apply to serving as a chaplain)



So, all priests are also deacons, and all bishops are also priests and deacons. The Pope is bishop of Rome. Basically, an ordination doesn't go away. It changes his soul forever. Another ordination will just change him more, and configure him more closely to Christ.

HERE ARE THE THREE MAIN HIERARCHICAL ROLES:

BISHOP

Lots of different titles, but most people will be familiar with archbishops and bishops.

SPECIAL POWERS:

- Successor to the apostles (can trace line of succession back 2,000 years!)
- Has fullness of the three degrees of the sacrament of Holy Orders
- Is the visible head and sign of unity for that local church (usually a diocese or archdiocese)

BECOMES BISHOP BY:

Ordination

ENTOURAGE:

The diocesan curia. This is made up of all the institutions and people who assist the Bishop in governing the diocese. They include the vicar general, episcopal vicars, judicial vicar and other offices, like the chancellor

HAS THREE MAIN JOBS:

Teaching: especially how to apply to truths of the faith to life in that diocese

Sanctifying: Offers the Eucharist himself, and has his priests offer it

Governing: Has authority within his own church

SPECIAL NOTE:

All the bishops together, including the Pope as its head, are the College of Bishops. When this college is united with the Pope, they have supreme and full authority over the whole Church. For example, if they all agree with something in an Ecumenical council, and are united with the Pope, then it can become a teaching for the whole Church.

PRIEST

The guy you're used to seeing. He has promised obedience to the bishop of his diocese, as well as that bishop's successors.

SPECIAL POWERS:

- Has second highest degree of Holy Orders. This seals his soul in a special way that configures him to Christ. This allows him to forgive sins in Confession, offer the sacrifice of the Mass, and anoint the sick, and care for souls in other ways.
- There are several different jobs a priest can have. Some of the most common include:

Chaplain: a priest entrusted with a certain community or particular group of the faithful (ie, the people stuck inside a hospital, or serving in the military, or going to a certain school).

Pastor: The priest to whom the bishop has entrusted a parish

Parochial vicar: Other priests, also assigned by the bishop, who act as a representative of the pastor. He works under the pastor's authority.

BECOMES PRIEST BY:

Ordination

ENTOURAGE:

Finance council (required), parish council (optional)

DEACON

SPECIAL POWERS:

- Has the foundational degree of Holy Orders. This configures them to Christ as the servant of all.
- Have a service of word, liturgy, and charity.

Started with the first Apostles, when they realized they didn't have enough time to pray. Their job is to take over other functions so that the priests can celebrate the sacraments.

TWO TYPES:

Transitional: Men who will later be ordained priests.

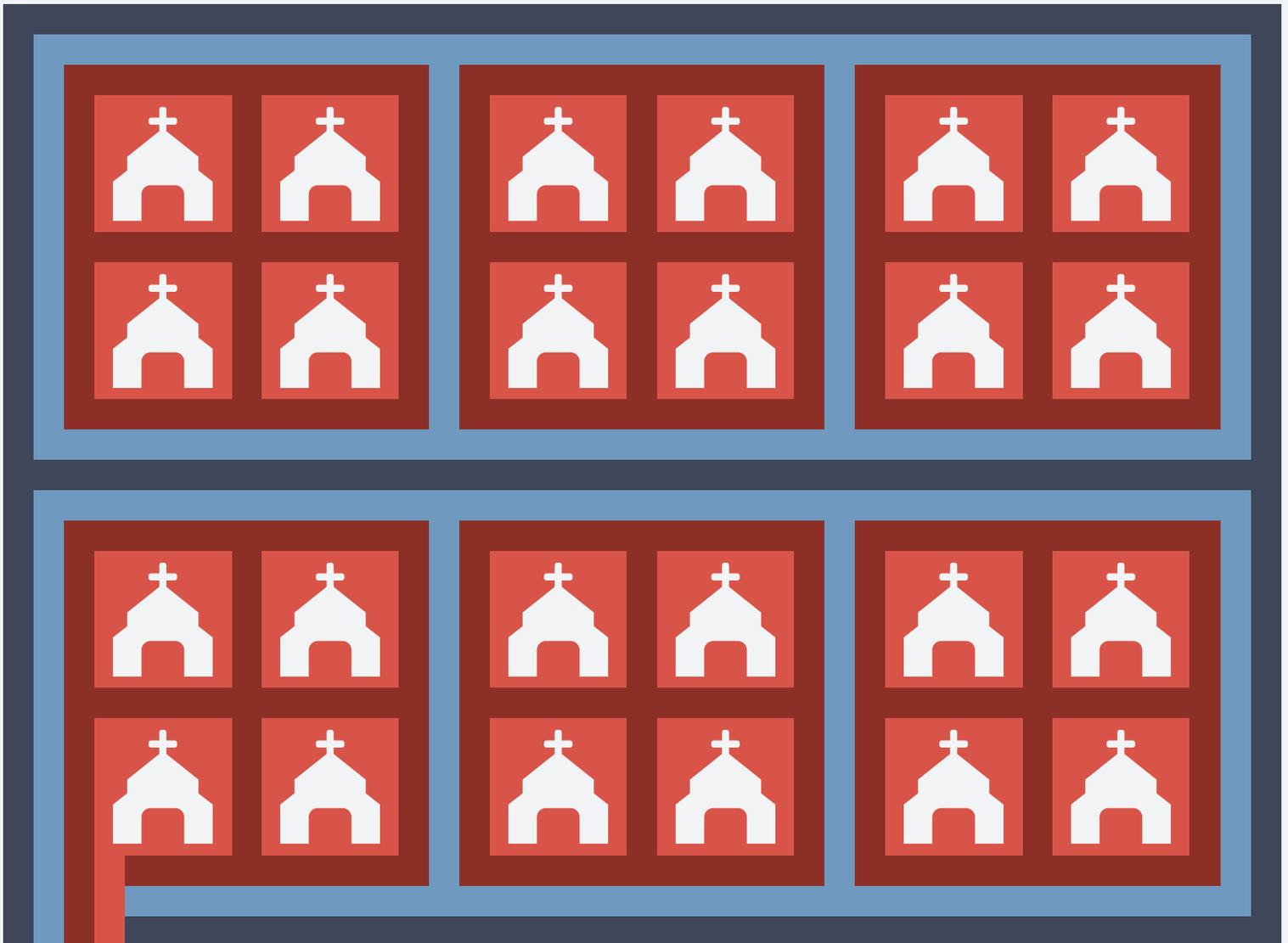
Permanent: Men who will not receive further ordination.

Word: They always proclaim the Gospel, if at Mass.

Liturgy: They prepare the altar so the celebrant (priest or bishop) can offer the sacrifice of the Eucharist.

Service: They are supposed to know the needs of the people, especially the materially poor and poor in spirit. This is why they read the intentions at Mass—they are supposed to know us best of all.

Sometimes clergy are given special jobs within a curia or province. However, you can find most of them in following hierarchical structure:



PARISHES:

Where most people experience the life of the Church. A parish is a defined community of the faithful within a diocese with a geographic boundary. Some parishes are defined by rite, nationality, or language.

GOVERNED BY: Pastor, with parochial vicars working under him. The bishop may also assign deacons to help him.

DEANERY:

Section of a diocese made up of parishes and other Church institutions.

COORDINATED BY: A dean (a priest appointed by the archbishop)

ARCHDIOCESE/DIOCESE:

Made up of all the Catholics usually within a specific geographic territory in and through which the one and only Catholic Church exists. An archdiocese is the chief diocese of that ecclesiastical province.

GOVERNED BY: Archbishop/bishop

ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCES:

Grouping of an Archdiocese and neighboring dioceses.

GOVERNED BY: Metropolitan Archbishop

Sources: The 1983 Code of Canon Law Latin-English Edition, The Catholic Encyclopedia, newadvent.org
Content: Melissa Keating | Design: Filippo Piccone | Special thanks to Fr. Giovanni Capucci

denvercatholic.org