

DECREE ON THE MINISTRY AND LIFE OF PRIESTS

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Prior to the Council, priests were seen primarily as ministers at the altar and administrators of the sacraments. Both their sacred duties and their unique way of life separated them from the laity, giving them a special aura of holiness. They were schooled in a monastic type of asceticism that emphasized purity and isolation from the things and people of the world.

The Council Fathers urge priests to work among the laity of the Church as fathers, shepherds, teachers, collaborators in ministry, fellow disciples, and members of the one Body of Christ. They are also encouraged to seek out those who have fallen away from the sacraments, to bring them home. (#9)