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ABSTRACT OF DOCTORAL THESIS

**HUMAN QUALITIES –FUNDAMENTAL
CONDITION FOR THE ELECTION AND
ADMISSION OF CANDIDATES TO PRIESTHOOD,
ACCORDING TO THE ORTHODOX AND ROMAN-
CATHOLIC CANON LAW.
CANONICAL PROVISIONS AND PASTORAL
PERSPECTIVES**

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ABSTRACT OF THE WORK

This doctoral research project, dedicated to human qualities, a fundamental condition for accessing priesthood, aims to be a guide, as well as a fundamental line of conduct for both moral and spiritual life.

1. Motivation and Choice of Topic

In order to understand the priestly ministry, the Church has always strived to give canons and rules to have priests respectable and worthy of the missionary and salvation work meant to be exercised according to the doctrine of Christ and the Holy Apostles. Therefore, for a servant, or future servant of the holy altars of our Good God, it is not indifferent whether the person knows or does not know the duties of this dignity.

As, in the period when I chose this topic, I was working as a church administrative counsellor within the Archdiocese of Arad, I discussed with His Holiness Timotei Sevcicu, Archbishop of Arad and Pr. Univ. Prof. Dr. Constantin Rus, about the topic of my doctoral thesis, and together with them, I chose as main topic “Human Qualities - a Fundamental Condition for the Election and Admission of Candidates to Priesthood, taking into account the Human Qualities. Canonical Provisions and Pastoral Perspectives”

and the reasons for choosing this topic were of a practical kind.

Due to the fact that no retirements of the clergy were made in the Archdiocese of Arad, together with the appointment in office, we proposed the application of the law in the Bishopric of Arad as well, and, as a result, over 35 parishes would be vacated. Therefore, first and foremost, it was necessary that I personally master the laws, as well as the requirements established by the holy canons. Moreover, it was still necessary to be aware of the relation between the science of theology and the sacrament of priesthood, of the connection and mission they have in common and as regards the spiritual needs of life in contemporary times. I have no doubt that every priest asks himself these questions, but especially those that have the duty to make proposals to the head of the bishopric concerning the admission of priests to the clergy.

2. Objective and Originality

In contemporary times, the Christian apostolate, through the servants of the altars, means a “clear attitude” towards its mission, as well as “flawless knowledge of the work and the missionary field”, followed by fervour for vocational service which we have to embrace not only with the soul but also with the body through our way of life.

All these aspects have led me to research for and seek not only for suitable elements for the best admission of candidates to ordainment, but also for permanent formation after receiving the ordainment. We have also considered that there are too few approaches to this topic therefore, this research is greatly useful, both for those in leadership positions in charge with the appointment of the clergy and the admission of theologians to the clergy and of all their trainers. We do not exclude from this category those who

are in the training period, as this knowledge will help them in their growth and formation.

As far as originality is concerned, I have tried to bring added value, by highlighting the fact that the vocation or human quality received from God can be fructified but cannot be formed where it had not been granted by the Creator. The vocation, as we know it, is a gift from God; as a substance, we can no longer bring anything new to it, but as a form of manifestation, vocation is permanently received and revived. In fact, there are opinions claiming that vocation can be formed even where it does not exist. But, considering the fact that we are dealing with the gift of God, namely that we appoint a male person in the position of a servant of the altar, he will acquire these experiences to the stage of union with Christ throughout time, but, in this case, this cannot be considered vocation. The calling for priesthood comes only from God, and here we can only refer to “the conversion of the individual”, based on the religious education received within the theological schools.

If we were to treat this topic thoroughly, it would not be enough to be studied only from the canonical-liturgical point of view, but it is also mandatory to regard it from a moral, psychological, dogmatic, but especially Vetero-testamentary point of view, as vocation is found within a wide range of actions. It would be impossible to encompass and exhaust the research on the training and election of candidates to priesthood, considering only the human qualities. This topic needs to be developed through a detailed research based on the Holy Canons and the Writings of the Church Fathers, and, as an area of understanding, the psychological research, both moral and those related to personality, role, conduct, self, etc..

Another approach to this topic can be made in the light of comparison between the conditions of admission to

clergy according to the Orthodox Canon Law and the Canon Law of the Roman Catholic Church, considering the fact that the two Churches had been together throughout the entire period of formation and building of faith teaching.

3. Research Methodology

Regarding the research method, we will again emphasize that our attempt was to perform an interdisciplinary theological analysis, which is why we have used several research methods. Since the election and admission of candidates to priesthood has been a concern since the time of the Holy Apostles, continuing through their descendants, the bishops, we have approached the historical method, which has helped evoke the most important stages in the life of the Church, and, here, we refer both to the Primary Church and to the post-schism period, the Eastern Church and the Western Church, transiting the entire apostolic spectrum, until the contemporary one.

The analytical method has helped us investigate the challenges, due to the specific theological differences that the Orthodox Church needs to consider while exercising its mission and missionary work in terms of ecumenicity as well as ecumenism nowadays. The documentary analysis of various sources and laws concerns several aspects regarding the conduct of the Church, as well as inter-human life and the way these are valued inside and outside the Church.

Another Method used in this academic research is the sociological observation by analyzing the social relationships of individuals regarding the role of the Church in society and the formation of characters. This analysis has facilitated the deepening of knowledge in the field of psychology, according to the new challenges regarding the Church and the communities.

The comparative method contributed to the proper understanding of the Orthodox specificity, being

emphasized in relation to the canonical and moral rules of Western nature, keeping unaltered the teaching of Orthodox faith.

Through the synthetic method, we have tried to develop responses to the new challenges of modern society, especially to those related to the morality of the clergy.

4. Limits of the Work

Although this work has a number of merits and contributions to enriching the general knowledge regarding the election and admission of candidates to priesthood, considering the human qualities based on canonical provisions and pastoral perspectives, this study has limits but, which corroborated with empirical results based on existing treaties, offers the possibility to explore and deepen new future directions.

This study has been realised in the context of current rules and requirements of the Romanian Orthodox Church, being a perspective to be treated also according to the rules of the Roman Catholic Church.

Moreover, thirdly, due to the contextual nature, to the virtues and human qualities, considering the “conversion of the individual”, a moral and philosophical approach would be useful, framed in the so-called lack of vocation of the clergy.

5. Stage of Research

The issue of admission to clergy and the issue of vocation has been studied and introduced into a research thesis to a lesser degree. Sciences that would be meant to research vocation have not done so in the perimeters of theology and neither regarding to God. Professor Constantin Enăchescu claims that we have hardly begun to perform methodological research on vocational facts, under the name of typology and character, which, even if in an incipient

stage, are meant to be developed within a new science, that of the vocation.

As far as the issue of vocation is concerned, it has also been studied from a theological point of view, but in this work, we have tried to deal with this problem, in canonical-pastoral terms.

As regards the current state of research, unfortunately there is currently no author or group of authors who have written any other scientific reference work on human qualities - a fundamental condition for the election and admission of candidates to priesthood, with the addition of canonical and pastoral provisions.

6. Structure and Content of the Work

As a structure, this work consists of 5 major chapters, preceded by the reasoning and introduction, while, at the end, the general conclusions of the research work can be found.

Chapter 1 of the thesis presents defining aspects regarding the Church Law, the Holy Sacraments and the priesthood. Here, we have tried to define the Holy Sacraments and see what the Church Law is and the relationship within the Sacraments. The Church Law is highlighted by the application of canons, the laws of the church, as well as by the decisions of the Holy Synod, which offer the clergy and the faithful elements of conduct, as well as a real vision of the universal and local Orthodox Church under its aspect of divine-human institution. Thus, it has been highlighted that the Church Law is a law for all its members. We cannot talk about the Church without considering the Canon Laws. As regards the Holy Sacraments, we have highlighted their visible and invisible work, as the dogmas teach us and are managed in the service of the Church. In this chapter, we have tried to make a legal and doctrinal analysis, with pastoral-missionary implications

highlighted by the topic treated. In the subchapters, the notion and the effectiveness of the juridical acts have been reasoned within the Holy Sacraments, emphasized in the canon law, highlighting the rules and guidelines forming the validity and legality of the sacraments. Moreover, the third subchapter deals with the sacrament of priesthood itself, emphasizing the right of access to priesthood, the election of candidates, their admission to the clergy, as well as the relationship between priesthood, sacerdocy and the ordained person. Here, research has been focused on the ordained persons, as it is very important that the Church have prepared and honourable servants, according to the requirements and demands resulting from them, as regards admission to priesthood. Canons and Church law, through the work of the Church, remain a fundamental line of conduct, for both moral and spiritual life.

Chapter 2 presents the main research directions regarding the importance of human qualities for admission to clergy according to ancient philosophy, the Holy Scripture and the Church Fathers. Here, we have treated human virtues, viewed from a theological and philosophical point of view. Thus, human virtues in ancient philosophy, in the Holy Scripture, as well as in the thinking of the Church Fathers were discussed.

The three great Cappadocian fathers, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa, fought to defend the faith, and proved that resorting to it does not mean giving up the world, but instead, this is the way the world is led to perfecting one's own vocation.

We have talked about the definitions and differences of virtues from a moral point of view, underlining the fact that virtues, as well as the moral value they support, can be researched from two viewpoints, namely, theoretical and

practical. The former is the theory of virtues, while the latter is the ethics of virtues.

In the history of ancient philosophy, virtues were rarely separated, the theory of virtues, having purposes of ontological substantiation, respectively, the specificity of virtue being an ethical modality of being of the individual. Thus, we have proved that moral values are axiological determinations of human existence, while moral virtues are skills, powers, human provisions, which aim at the realization of good. Here we see an alternation, namely, that good is achieved through exercising the virtues, and virtues can only manifest in relation with the good.

According to the Cappadocian Fathers, virtues are divided into five categories, namely human virtues, natural virtues, intellectual virtues, moral virtues, supernatural and theological virtues. We have emphasized here that the mind must always be cultivated with all the values that engage the human being towards truth, good and beauty, thus helping it unleash from the inferior lusts that drag it through passions. Having preached virtue as a way that leads and fulfils the holiness of likeness to God, the Cappadocian Fathers could not remain indifferent to the way it was conceived by the thinkers of the time. They showed that the virtuous man is the rational man who has dedicated his life according to his reason and conduct. Man, by virtue, becomes rational not only in his individual life, but also in the life with his fellow men.

Among the topics treated in moral philosophy and moral theology, virtue has an important place. Then, these two sciences must be investigated if one wants to get a clear idea of virtues and thus, of human qualities. Our approach will lead us to the philosophical-theological teaching of scholasticism. As Thomas Aquinas is the most authoritative representative, his teaching of virtues in the Summa

Theologiae seems to be the best starting point to understand the significance of human qualities quoted by the Church Law. However, we must admit that Thomas Aquinas did not invent everything. He relied on the existing considerations that he improved.

The terms of quality and virtue, human and moral qualities, the nature of human qualities, which can be: social virtues, the relationship of the individual with other creatures and events, the integrity of the individual, human maturity, and the right intention. We have highlighted the aspect of human quality, emphasizing the fact that this is a concept used in all the areas of economic and social life, but which has a subjective character and particular significance. Human qualities and other qualities of the individual are highlighted in the third subchapter, being related to the divine grace manifested in the human being.

As another aspect related to human qualities, human qualities according to the Holy Scripture and the Church Fathers were highlighted. In the writings of the Holy Scriptures, the human qualities required for the priests had an educational role for the entire community, and the sacerdotal qualities had the character and meaning of symbol for those who would come.

Positive human qualities, just like nowadays, intertwined with negative human qualities. This can be seen in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10), which proves the decay of the priesthood and departure from the great mission that they had been called for, to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah. This is also obvious from the behaviour of the High Priests Anna and Caiaphas, the images of the fallen priesthood. The opposite of the priesthood of the Old Testament and the qualities of a servant, they will reflect in the priesthood of the New Testament: "The provisional character and decadence of the

priesthood of the Old Testament will be remedied by establishing the definitive priesthood of the New Testament.” The lack of human qualities in the priesthood of the Old Testament was remedied by the Saviour Jesus Christ Himself, through the priesthood of the New Testament, perfected by the Holy Spirit, which will manifest the work of good in the human being.

In the contents of the four Holy Gospels, there is great concern about the human, philosophical, literary condition necessary for the contemporary man. In the Gospels, the individual, the subject of the Saviour's wonders, is not only the essence of social relations or of different biological healings seen in a narrow viewpoint, instead the Saviour Jesus Christ revives in the individual the longing for God, helping him regain in his soul his power to believe, faith granted as a gift, and only by achieving such measure of faith, was the miracle of healing in his life accomplished.

Difficulties encountered in life, work, and preparation for priesthood are studied in the second part of this chapter. Here, I highlighted the factors leading to difficulties, the impact on the candidates to priesthood and the impact on priests.

The third chapter deals mainly with the human qualities according to the Orthodox Canon Law, Church and state legislation. Here, we highlighted the conditions of election for priesthood and the conditions of admission to priesthood. Thus, this chapter shows that those who wish to enter the clergy need an exquisite religious-moral education, corresponding to their calling, as teachers and leaders of the people, so that they can educate the people.

The basic conditions of access to priesthood were emphasized, namely: vocation, baptism, male gender, canonical age, proven virtues, and the intellectual conditions

required. These conditions are fundamental to access to priesthood. Through baptism, according to the doctrine of our Church, the individual improves, obtains enlightenment and sanctification, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit and unites with Christ. The 49 Apostolic Canon states that baptism is the death and resurrection with Christ. The vocation for priesthood is necessary, because by vocation, the individual manifests the gifts received from God. Only male individuals have access to ordainment, as also revealed in the Holy Scriptures, the woman must be quiet in the Church, as Canon 70 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council orders it.

It also emphasized the physical and psychological conditions required from the candidates to priesthood. Physical qualities are health-related, which are understandable in terms of body integrity and age. One of the conditions of entry into the clergy is to be free from physical problems, namely, to be integral, the 21 Apostolic Canon states this issue.

The psychic and moral qualities are extremely important, because, as we have emphasized here, the clergy must have strong and unwavering faith, knowing the truths of faith. The Canons of the Church require that the clergy shall be accessed only by the free will of the candidate (Canon 10 of St. Basil the Great), expressing the internal vocation for spiritual service. Another aspect is that church servants are not prevented from fulfilling their mission by worldly duties, it is required that the person entering the priesthood shall abandon these duties before entering the clergy (Apostolic Canons 6, 81, 83).

The human qualities established by the Byzantine state laws, the Nomocanons, the town-laws, and church laws, preceded by human qualities according to the Second

Vatican Council, are the subject of research in the third and fourth subchapters.

In the content of the nomocanons, we can find decisions regarding the human conditions and qualities that the candidates to priesthood must meet. As we can also see in the Canons of the Holy Apostle, and in the nomocanon in 50 titles, the bishop is the foundation of the Church organization, and the equality between them shows the continuity of the equality between the apostles, as well as the continuity left by Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Founder and the Head of the Church.

The old town-laws have stated that the priests should learn the good qualities, and set an example of respect in front of everybody and everything, emphasizing obedience and respect towards state authorities. Therefore, our Town-Laws have achieved several qualities of conduct and the moral religious life of the clergy. Even if these canons have witnessed long past times, they still have authority, and many of them are contemporary, still being mandatory for both priesthood and servants of the altars.

Chapter 4 presents the human qualities according to the canonical doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church. The presentation of the conditions for the admission of candidates to priesthood has allowed us to regard human qualities as an integral part of these conditions. But what do human qualities mean?

This research project is performed within the canon law. The significance of the terms and expressions used by this law does not always include the common meaning assigned to them. This is the reason why we are going to try and reach an understanding of human qualities, starting mainly from the canonical provisions.

However, their legal significance is not always divergent from the history of their use or the use of other

terms. This is why the present approach is going to start from a terminological elucidation of virtue, especially as regards the determinations of scholastic theology in terms of morality.

But this research is not sufficient to highlight the entire meaning of human qualities. Confronting other realities present in the canonical provisions, with similar or related significance, on the one hand, and with other qualities of the candidate, which are already present in him or are being acquired on the other hand, it can help anticipate the lesser known human qualities. These considerations lead us to keep the following points in this chapter as separate parts:

- The significance of the human qualities;
- Human qualities and other qualities of the individual.

The *Optatam totius* decree presents the need to continue and perfect priestly formation even after the end of the study period in the Seminaries or Theological Faculties. This training, even if it is directed towards young priests, does not exclude other categories of priests and tends to renew spiritual and pastoral formation.

In *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, this concern extends to all the priests. Bishops are responsible for the severe sacredness of priests, and, therefore, they must take utmost care of the continuous training of their priests.

The fifth chapter, entitled “Canonical Provisions and Pastoral Perspectives” examines the right of the church to prepare priests with regard to the quantity and quality required. Also, it highlights the consequences for the Church of the problems concerning the lack of human qualities and the obligation to give to the Church priests gifted with human qualities.

School is the main factor of education, and the church has always undertaken the right and duty to educate and prepare the clergy. The theological school is the “source of education of the human being”, because it is directly the theologian’s duty, but it is indirectly the duty of the faithful fulfilled by this theologian “when his time comes”.

Education is a right honoured by the most important national and international documents, and based on this premise, we see that Siberia is deeply involved, placing Theological Education at the forefront of its hierarchy of preoccupations.

In the theological schools, the school of church singers, theological high-school seminary, the theology faculty (bachelor, master’s degree and doctoral degree), the theologian, receives his education, which later serves him “as base” of his future pastorhood. Education is a basic pillar in the preparation of the clergy, and wisdom comes not only from the divine grace but also from the knowledge acquired, transmitted both in writing and by word of mouth through the living Christ, the Holy Apostles and their disciples.

Proposals for solving problems related to lack of human qualities are listed in part two of Chapter Five. Here, we have highlighted the necessity of a process of human growth, as well as character, that the future priest must have.

The urgent ways for discernment, guidance and training are the third point of this chapter. Here, the sacerdotal human qualities have been highlighted, the means of implementing a choice, guidance and admission in the best conditions. To satisfy these, moral training needs to be considered, that is the “supreme law” for priesthood. Moral cleansing is holiness, and holiness is one of God's attributes. Since priesthood is a divine ministry, it requires from the candidate profound piousness and exquisite wisdom,

according to Saint John Chrysostom. This can also be seen from the words of the Apostle Paul who says, "For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory." (II Corinthians 3:10). Thus, the priest is required "an exquisite and deeply religious sensibility" a strong sense of the divine.

In conclusion, we can state that the purpose of the research project, stated from the beginning and often specified throughout the paper, is a summary of searching the ways and means of giving to the Church priests gifted with human qualities necessary to exercise the power of the church in its three branches: teaching, sanctifying and leading or pastoral.

The pursuit of this purpose required a preliminary research by identifying the connection to be established between the Church Law and the Holy Sacraments and, by presenting the conditions established by the lawmaker for access to the priesthood. As far as the first point is concerned, we have seen the way the theology of law and the fundamental philosophical theory have been used, which, each in its own way, has its own modality to prove that the Church Law and the Holy Sacraments are not excluded. The Holy Sacraments, themselves, contain a legal character that makes them juridical acts. The Sacramental Acts are juridical acts which need to be valid and lawful, according to the canonical and legal provisions established for this purpose. But even if the validity or legitimacy of a Sacrament is not questioned, it must be administered according to the prescribed canonical norms and for the good of the Church and the faithful.

The Holy Sacraments are generally considered rights for the faithful, but the Holy Sacrament of Priesthood is somewhat more, because it is not a right for a faithful person. However, its administration is subject to the same

laws as the other Holy Sacraments. The reason is that this Holy Sacrament is a right not for the individual asking for it, but for the moral person that is the Church. Specifically due to the fact that it is not a right for the individual, but for the Church, the access to it requires special provisions and precautions, the main being the election and prior admission before the administration of this Sacrament. Administration, which paves the way for exercising priesthood, towards receiving the rights and duties related to it.

The second preliminary point is represented by the conditions required for the election and admission to priesthood. Theological institutions are ordered to contribute to the election and lead to the admission. These are the theology seminars and faculties. If the graduation of the first degree of theological education and even its existence is not compulsory, the second degree, the higher education is presented as a normal framework for all those aspiring to priesthood. A number of conditions are established for the immediate or later admission, while others regard to the individual himself, namely, to his intrinsic or acquired qualities. These conditions are spiritual, intellectual, physical and psychological, human and moral. Spiritual personal conditions or spiritual qualities are expressed in a state of mind acquired by the practice of living, as well as in the baptismal character, the integrated faith, the proven virtues, and in the state of celibate life lived and accepted. The intellectual qualities are summed up in an ensemble of knowledge both in the profane and the religious field that must be acquired. Humanistic and scientific, theological and doctrinal education offered both at Theological Seminaries and at the Faculties of Theology aim at strengthening the spiritual qualities. As regards the physical and mental conditions required, the male gender, physical integrity, canonical age, physical and mental health as well as family

heredity play a significant role in their realization. The personal human conditions or human qualities of the candidates to priesthood, well understood and well-discussed, must be remembered and considered within all the qualities mentioned above.

The preliminary issues have served as a starting point to reach the essence of the topic. In the first two chapters, several concepts used in the statement of the topic and other related realities benefited from a terminological elucidation. What is left to address is the significance of human qualities, as knowledge of their acceptance is not less important. In order to present their meaning, the human virtues were exposed, both according to the thinking of the Cappadocian Fathers and of Thomas Aquinas. In their reflections, based on the ancient philosophy and the previous theological data, they distinguished between natural and human virtues, as well as between intellectual and moral virtues. Virtues are qualities, qualitates, they repeat endlessly. Then, the Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church specifies the term *doctes* which has almost the same meaning. Considering that the comparative study of the use of the term *qualitas* and that of *dos* in the Code of Canon Law makes it possible to discover the quasi-identity of their significance, we have come to the conclusion that considering the context of their use, the expressions “human qualities”, “moral qualities”, “human virtues” and “moral virtues” can cover the same significance.

According to the perspectives of several authors, the acceptance of human qualities has been pushed beyond the social virtues in order to cover the individual’s orderly relationships with himself, with others, with the events. And, since the human qualities regarded are not those of a human being but those of the candidates to priesthood, their research has extended to the related anthropological data,

namely, the integrity of the individual, human maturity, the lawful intention, and affective maturity. The individual who is able to integrate his personality, who is mature and equipped with a right intention, possesses authentic human qualities, open to the priesthood. The desire to obtain the most widespread understanding of the acceptance of human qualities have led to the confrontation with other personal conditions, with the other qualities of the individual, namely the spiritual and intellectual qualities, the physical and psychical qualities that have already been presented. None of the qualities of the individual can be isolated and separated from the other qualities.

At this stage of the research process, we can conclude that the meaning of human qualities has been understood and that we embrace in a glance a little of their understanding. But this is not enough to define the conditions and modalities to perceive them and form them in the candidates to priesthood. Their justification and historical approach has proven to be necessary. Indeed, if it is necessary for the candidates to priesthood to possess human qualities, it is because Christ, whose mission they need to continue and need to be identified with, possessed human qualities reflected in His person, in His teaching, in everything He did. The Holy Gospels avow abundantly about these human qualities. The Beatitudes and parables contain acceptable lessons of conduct, applicable by any human being, regardless of religion. Jesus Christ is then the master of human virtues, and the apostolic writings, especially those of Saint Apostle Paul, illuminated by his life and teaching, explain and expose the morally expected conduct of those who adhere to Christ, of those whom He has ordered to continue His mission and those aspiring to priesthood. The New Testament, besides exposing the

virtues, also presents the vices to be avoided by the candidates to priesthood.

If belonging to the life and teaching of Christ can justify the presence of canonical provisions upon human qualities, it is necessary to mention that, from a historical point of view, new factors have appeared in the universe of humans and the consequences they have brought, the preparation of the Second Vatican Council, the celebration and the implementation of its teaching further explain this presence.

The factors to be mentioned include, among others, scientific and technological progress, industrialization and urbanization, the development of media, ideologies, social and economic changes, social movements; and, within the Church, doctrines directly related to people's conduct. These factors have deeply affected the family, breaking it up, compromising its role as the natural environment for the harmonious growth of children and young people. These factors, through the loss of human qualities, obscure the life of priesthood, preventing and complicating the guidance of candidates.

Priesthood is not an ordinary or easy service, for it requires a great amount of knowledge and understanding, of mental balance and pastoral tact, of involvement and responsibility, which leads Saint John into claiming that "Making a list of difficulties involved in the priesthood is like trying to measure the ocean".

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