

PRIESTS ARE NOT TO SET A POOR EXAMPLE

Jesus is warning myself and all Priests to practice what we preach (Matt 23:1-12) and to understand that we belong to Him. We are not to be hypocrites. We do not belong to ourselves, but solely to God, who is the real Father. We are not to lead His flock down the wrong path of unsound doctrine. Jesus preached by example. In the first reading, God reprimanded the Priests for setting a poor example that caused many people to stumble in their faith. (Malachi 1:14-2:2,8-10). For example, if a Priest casually takes the Name of *Jesus Christ* in vain, then parishioners will follow this sinful example. If a Priest does not respect the sacrifice of chastity and celibacy, then parishioners will begin to adopt this mind set too etc. We Priests are ordained to preach the living Word of God and not our own personal opinions or disbeliefs based on human philosophy (1 Thess 2:7-9,13). We are called to strictly preach what the Teacher - Jesus Christ - teaches us, and not what we think will make us popular among parishioners. We must humbly serve and imitate the Lord, accepting the fact, that even if the Gospel of Truth is uncomfortable for some to hear, that we have an obligation to preach it and live by it. Our mission is to save souls from going to hell.

PRIESTS ARE NOT SELF-EMPLOYED BUT WORK FOR GOD

God the Father is our only Father, and we, as priests, represent Him, in our role as spiritual 'Fathers'. We represent Him and not ourselves. Priesthood does not belong to the Priest, but belongs to God. When a Priest is addressed as 'Father', we must, and especially the Priest understand, that we are acknowledging the presence of God the Father, first and foremost. In confession when we say; 'Bless me Father for I have sinned', It is not the Priest we are addressing, but God the Father of Mercy to forgive our sins. The Priest is a screen because only God can forgive sins. A biological father is part of a partnership to conceive a child, that he can claim, is of his making, and called his own. However, as a 'Father Priest', we can never claim to have conceived the Word of God or twist it, in order to make it our own. We are not to misinterpret it like Satan did in the desert with Jesus (Matt 4:1-11). A Priest is only a spiritual father in the likeness of God, who is the only Father. Our fatherhood is simply a reflection of the Father in Heaven. We are not God. We are ordained to warn and prepare the flock and ourselves for the Day of Judgement. We are ordained to administer all the Sacraments of the Church.

DRESS CODE SHOULD BE TO IMPRESS AND HONOUR GOD

We are asked to wear the black clerical uniform, because the colour black symbolises our detachment from ourselves and the ways of the world. Our white neck collar is our wedding band, because we entered a spiritual nuptial with God and His Church, at our ordination. It is around our necks to show that we are 'slaves and servants' to the teachings and Words of Jesus. We are ordained to live by God's Commandments and not our own. Jesus is not fooled by the Priest who dresses smartly, but inwardly is dressed in the rags of sin, which He calls a *magnificent pretence* to the world. This is *offensive* to God. Everything the proud priest does is done to attract attention to himself and not Christ. Mass is not an opportunity for a Priest to express his own personality by promoting himself over God. He should be '*in the Person of Christ*'. We are to empty ourselves in the service of God and others. The Altar is not built on a performing stage but on a sacred sanctuary. When a Priest is observed struggling with his faith, it is very important that prayers are exercised for him. God bless, Fr. Brendan.