

3.9.73: 12.55 p.m.

9. An essential element in the ordained ministry is its responsibility for 'oversight' (episcopate). This responsibility involves fidelity to the apostolic faith, its embodiment in the life of the Church today, and its transmission to the Church of tomorrow. The commission in ordination carries with it the ministry of preaching the Word. The minister is called to be a messenger, watchman, and steward of the Lord; and in the original witness given in Holy Scripture lies the source and ground of his preaching and his authority. He therefore has a high responsibility both to the people under his pastoral care and to the gospel itself. (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 6:11-19). Because the sacraments are the sacraments of the faith, his place in their celebration must be seen as one with the ministry of the Word, since through both the Christian encounters the living word of God. His responsibility in the Christian community involves him in being not only the person who normally administers baptism, but also the one who admits converts to the communion of the faithful and re-admits those who have fallen away through sin or unbelief. The authority to pronounce God's forgiveness of sin, given to him at his ordination, is exercised by him to assist Christians to a closer communion with God and with their fellow men through Christ and to assure them of God's continuing love and mercy.