



THE FAITHFUL SHARE IN THE OFFICE OF THE PRIESTHOOD

POPE ST. LEO THE GREAT LOH IV 1548—1550 NOV 10

Although the universal Church of God is constituted of distinct orders of members, still, in spite of the many parts of its holy body, the Church subsists as an integral whole, just as the Apostle says: *We are all one in Christ*, nor is anyone separated from the office of another in such a way that a lower group has no connection with the head. In the unity of faith and baptism, our community is then undivided. There is a common dignity as the apostle Peter says in these words: *And you are built up as living stones into spiritual houses, a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices which are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. And again: But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of election.*

For all, regenerated in Christ, are made kings by the sign of the cross; they are consecrated priests by the oil of the Holy Spirit, so that beyond the special service of our ministry as priests, all spiritual and mature Christians know that they are a royal race and are sharers in the office of the priesthood. For what is more king-like than to find yourself ruler over your body after having surrendered your soul to God? And what is more priestly than to promise the Lord a pure conscience and to offer him in love unblemished victims on the altar of one's heart?

Because, through the grace of God, it is a deed accomplished universally on behalf of all, it is altogether praiseworthy and in keeping with a religious attitude for you to rejoice in this our day of consecration, to consider it a day when we are especially honored. For indeed one sacramental priesthood is celebrated throughout the entire body of the Church. The oil which consecrates us has richer effects in the higher grades, yet it is not sparingly given in the lower.

Sharing in this office, my dear brethren, we have solid ground for a common rejoicing; yet there will be more genuine and excellent reason for joy if you do not dwell on the thought of our unworthiness. It is more helpful and more suitable to turn your thoughts to study the glory of the blessed apostle Peter. We should celebrate this day above all in honor of him. He overflowed with abundant riches from the very source of all graces, yet though he alone received much, nothing was given over to him without his sharing it. The Word made flesh lived among us, and in redeeming the whole human race, Christ gave himself entirely.