

What kind of priest do we want ?

The thought behind the following document was as follows: Begin with the situation as it is highlighting the problems and difficulties in the present situation and then move positively to some reflection on what is required.

- 1. We do not want someone who feels that he/she has a priestly vocation, that they are called by God.**
We must not lose sight of the of the community base of priestly ministry – it is the community who calls to service of the community.
- 2. We do not want someone who has been plucked out of the community and isolated for six years of training.**
The appropriate maturation as a leader in the community can happen only within the community – emotional development, the ability to form relationships, the ability to dialogue, communication skills...
- 3. We do not want someone parachuted in from outside the community – the ‘Rent a priest system’.**
Our theology, our spirituality must be incarnational. It must be allowed to grow in the soil of the appropriate culture, national and local.
- 4. We do not want a priest who sees himself/herself as ‘in charge’.**
The community is in charge of its own life and must be allowed the scope to develop the mechanisms for living and growing that life. Too many of our priests are burdened by a terrible feeling of ‘being responsible’.
- 5. We do not want a priest who sees himself/herself as being manager of a parish estate.**
The appropriate sector of activity is prayer and the spiritual growth of the community members, the priest included, as they live their lives as members of the kingdom of God.
- 6. We do not want necessarily a highly qualified individual in the realms of dogmatic theology, history or canon law.**
We should reflect on what the requirements of a more ‘pastoral’ theology would be: Certainly communication skills and homiletics, educational qualifications... A profound grounding in sacred scripture for the breaking of the word of God at the community Eucharist – how we so often suffer in the pews!



- 7. We do not want a petrol pump attendant – a priest whose role is simply to say Mass and administer the sacraments.**
Therefore, we require many more priests chosen out of the community, perhaps on a part time basis, so that there is time and opportunity to share in all of the varied aspects of the life of the community.
- 8. We do not want a ‘priestly celibate’.**
The priest may be celibate or not but that must not be seen as part of his/her priesthood. Psychologically this cuts him/her off from so much of the community’s life.
- 9. We do not want a priest who is not representative of the community.**
Count the ratio of male to female in the pews and end discrimination.
- 10. We do not want an obedient priest, a ‘yes person’, hidebound and inflexible under law and episcopal command.**
The gospel is a gospel of freedom for service. We need a person of courage, prepared to act according to conscience. The ability to speak out and dialogue, both with the community and with the institution, is essential.
- 11. We do not want a ‘know it all’ priest.**
The priest must be a lifelong learner, able to join with his or her community as, like the householder in Matthew 13, they find ‘things old and things new’ in the storehouse of the kingdom of God.
- 12. We do not want an individual who wears the symbols of superiority and isolation.**
Dress and lifestyle should be that of the community.
- 13. We do not want a liturgical purist for whom rubrics are more important than content.**
Flexibility, experimentation and learning on your feet are the only way to grow together.
- 14. We do not want a priest whose vision is limited to what we have always done.**
Imagination is demanded, thinking outside the box, so that with a sense of history we can grasp the living, changing reality of our community tradition. Vision is demanded as we step boldly into the future.
- 15. We do not want someone who sees himself/herself as ‘alter Christus’.**
This arrogance elevates the priest above the people of God, the body of Christ. The priest merely presides at the altar as representative of the community whose celebration it is.

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