

REFORMED ETHIOPIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA (RECCSA)

The Reformed Ethiopian Catholic Church of Southern Africa herein known as RECCSA is extending invitation to the young men who feel that they are called to priesthood in a Catholic Church. We have qualities that we are looking for those who feel they are called.

What are the qualities that the Church looks for in a candidate for the Priesthood?

A man who loves God and the Church, goes to Mass regularly, spends time in prayer and wishes to grow in holiness. He should be physically, emotionally, and mentally healthy. He should be willing to grow, learn, and to be formed. Formation, the process of becoming a priest, is basically learning to “decrease so that He may increase”.

We want to see our candidates for Orders thriving in genuine friendships with men and women, single and married, and planning on being sustained in their priesthood by a close-knit network of such friendships.

Am I called?

A vocation is an initiative of love from the heart of God. He calls in a gentle and loving way and invites us to respond in freedom. Discerning a vocation to the priesthood takes time, prayer, reflection, patience and attentiveness to God’s action – undertaken with the assistance of others. It also takes courage to respond to the interior movements of the Holy Spirit. Could God be calling you to be a priest? The Church has always understood this Christ-originated calling as the primary motive for seeking ordination to the priesthood—notwithstanding the historical reality of men who have been ordained for other motives, sometimes to the great harm of the faithful. This is why it is a matter of co-discernment: you, the candidate and those who represent the Church engage in a process of discerning *whether you have a genuine call to the priesthood*. Sadly, it has always been possible, and remains so today, to pursue the priesthood for all the *wrong* reasons.

Explore below the signs of a calling to the priesthood, some of the challenges of responding to a call, and the joys priests experience in their vocation.

The key question for a candidate to the priesthood is always this: Have you experienced a “call” from Christ? The word ‘vocation’ itself derives from the Latin verb, *vocare*, *to call*. A ‘vocation’ is a call, as in: “He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message” (Mk 3: 13-14).

The key to that co-discernment is to uncover motivations that transcend the mere humanitarian appeal of the Catholic priesthood (“serving others”). For the man called to the priesthood, there must be profound, rooted-in-the heart motives, a whole interwoven

set of them that form a core drive in one's life, in addition to sound motivations like the desire to serve others. To name just a few:

- A love for the Eucharist;
- A longing to administer the sacraments to the people of God;
- A hunger to build up the Church and promote bonds of profound ecclesial communion especially in the dynamics of parish life;
- A drive to be a servant-leader and spiritual father to your brothers and sisters in the faith;
- A zeal to live to its ultimate consequences a deep-rooted experience of Christic discipleship.

Granted, these motivations might only be incipient as you prepare to enter a college seminary program. But your ability to identify several of these motivations and “connect the dots” between them constitutes a considerable piece of evidence that your vocation is genuine.

Ultimately, your primal motivation should arise from your intimate friendship with Jesus Christ. Certainly by the time of your ordination, your seminary formators will want to hear from you a credible story about your personal encounter, once upon a time, with Jesus Christ, living and risen, who approached you on the shores of your life and got into your boat, and whose divine person became irresistibly attractive. In the best case scenario, you will be able to share with them how you feel a call to priesthood the emanates from your love for Jesus Christ, how you want, like Jesus, to take on the Church as your bride, and serve her exclusively and unconditionally throughout the rest of your life.

It's not enough for a candidate to the priesthood simply to “decide” that he wants to “serve others” as a priest; his heart has to be irrevocably set and fixated on Jesus from whom he has perceived an undeniable invitation and calling to follow him more intimately through priestly ordination.

10 Signs of a Calling to Serve

These signs apply to all vocations! Are *any* of these things true in your case?

1. I have a love for God, a desire to know Him intimately and serve Him with the gifts I've been given.
2. I love my neighbours, care for their well-being and want them to know God in the same way I do.
3. I feel unworthy of being called and genuinely humbled by being called.
4. I am willing to serve God and am open to His plans for my life.
5. I want to live out the word of God in my life; I want to be a saint!
6. I want to attend Mass regularly and receive nourishment from the Eucharist.
7. I know priests I admire and look up to.

8. I have a generous heart and a willingness to make sacrifices to give glory to God.
9. I have a compassion for those in need and a desire for justice.
10. I have been given the gifts of intelligence and a sound mind.

7 signs of a calling to the Priesthood

Here are some signs of a calling to the priesthood. Have you experienced *any* of these?

1. I wish to give myself completely to God. I want to exclusively identify myself with Christ and His Church.
2. I want to contemplate the Word of God and share it with others through preaching and teaching.
3. I feel a certain sense of attraction to the priesthood. Sometimes I imagine myself being a priest, preaching and helping those in need.
4. Thoughts of the priesthood have remained with me over a period of time.
5. I have a love for prayer and the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.
6. I experience a sense of joy and peace deep in my heart when I think about being a priest.
7. I simply want to love like Jesus Christ.

Noticed any of these signs?

Take some time to reflect on these points. If you find that any of these signs are resonating with you, then don't ignore them! Share your thoughts and feelings with God and ask Him for the courage to take action. You may also find that when you think about a vocation to the priesthood, your first reaction is one of fear or resistance. This is a very common response among young men who are searching, and it does not mean you are not called to be a priest. See the next section on the challenges involved in responding to a call to the priesthood.

Acknowledging the Signs

If you are being called to be a priest, you will see visible signs. The Church calls these visible signs areas of formation. A man called to priesthood must be open to be molded or formed by the Church into a man of virtue, prayer, integrity, and holiness.

There are four areas of formation

- **Human** – you are someone whom others trust and turn to, you draw people around you closer to Christ.
- **Spiritual** – you have a lively and personal love for Jesus Christ and the Church, the people of God and you desire to courageously serve Christ.
- **Intellectual** – you have the capacity and desire to learn and grow in your understanding of Jesus Christ, the Church, our world, and culture.

- **Pastoral** – you have a desire to care for God’s holy people, by serving them as the Good Shepherd serves them. You make a difference in people’s lives through your witness to Christ.

If you recognize these qualities or their potential in yourself or others, it might be the seed of a priestly vocation.

Are you being called by the Father to be a priest?

Take this quick discernment quiz to find out! Answer “yes” or “no” to the following questions:

- Does the idea of becoming a priest keep coming back time and time again even though you thought you had moved on in your life and forgotten about it?
- Do you feel called to give more, to be more?
- Does your relationship with God sustain you, enliven you, invigorate you in such a way that you want to share His Truth and Love with others?
- Do you desire to courageously and selflessly give all to Christ, to cast out into the deep and follow Him, wherever He calls you?
- Do you long for more than what “the world” teaches us to strive for – money, sensuality, power, self-indulgence and comfort at any cost?
- Do you have a sneaking suspicion that you are on the brink of a major life decision?
- Are you afraid to tell friends and family that you are thinking about priesthood?
- Does the idea of becoming a priest attract you and at the same time frighten you because you feel “unworthy?”
- Have you ever felt your heart move as a priest celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and thought what it would be like to stand at his place at the altar?
- Have others encouraged you to consider priesthood?

What to do next?

If these signs grow stronger and come together, then we should take the next step – contact **Archbishop Banele Mente** at reccsachurch16@gmail.com 0812196109 (whatsapp) or **Bishop Makomela Mokoena** at bishopmsmokoena@gmail.com 063 143 9239 [whatsapp]). When we do this, we move to a new stage in our discernment, which is trusting in the discernment of the Church. This is more objective and ‘public’ – it involves other people and ultimately the Bishop, who is the one with the final responsibility of calling people to the priesthood on behalf of Christ. It can be hard to take this step and approach the Church and involve others; but it will also give us great peace – because it is no longer just us trying to find what is right, we have the support and advice of others.

At the end of the day, we can trust the Church to help us discern. If the Vocations Director encourages us to apply to the RECCSA; and then if the Vocation Committee

supports us and our Bishops accepts us, then this is the surest sign possible that the Lord is inviting us at least to take the next step into seminary. It still leaves to discern and become sure – but we can have the assurance that we are doing the right thing for the moment. If the Vocations Director suggests we hold back for a bit, or if the Bishop decides not to accept us for priesthood at this point, this is not a rejection or a negative thing – it is the way that God is leading us to something else, something that is more right for us, a different way of life where we can be holy and live out a different vocation. It may be that we come back to priesthood later; it may be that we become clearer about another direction. In all of this, it is essential to listen to the wisdom of the Church and not only our own subjective ‘signs’. The Church is not looking for volunteers to the priesthood – she is looking for those who are being called by God to this extraordinary vocation and this needs to be discerned by both the candidate and by the Church.

There’s also an Incardination form one has to complete or fill in and send it to the Archbishop on the email above. The applicant has to download it from our website at: www.reccsa.org.za or request it from the Church.

Note to those who wish to apply to RECCSA Priesthood:

By posting this, we do not want in any way to become seen as a source of orders for other churches who wants to use us as their step leader. That would run counter to our mission and impair our relationship with the Order of Corporate Reunion and Catholic Episcopal Coalition which rightly does not want to see a multiplication of smaller churches and clergy time and again. It also recalls some of the bad mistakes that are happening which creates confusion and contradictory situation through repeated involvement in this sort of activity that will take us a long time to resolve. Some young men applied to us to be ordained. When they are ordained, they ran away. Ultimately, in terms of mission, we want those who wish to be involved with us to join our own communion and be diligent (not after money but doing God’s work).

RECCSA is so sensitive when it comes to the conferring of the Holy Orders because it is the Sacrament in which a person becomes a priest and vows to lead other Catholics in the way of Jesus Christ. He administers all of the sacraments to them as well.

THOSE WHO ARE ALREADY ORDAINED

Those who are already ordained to Diaconate and Priesthood and wish to apply to our jurisdiction are to produce the following documents:

1. Academic and theological qualifications,
2. Ordination certificates (Diaconate and Priesthood),
3. Baptismal and Confirmation Certificates,
4. Curriculum Vitae,
5. A resignation letter that states the reasons for leaving your previous jurisdiction
6. An acceptance letter of your resignation from your previous jurisdiction

Also RECCSA is looking the following quality of Priests:

Mass

The Mass is “the source and summit of the Christian life.” The Church encourages its priests to celebrate mass daily, even if the faithful are not present. It is that act of Christ and the church in which priests fulfill their primary function.

Every Day is Different

Priests accompany people in very dramatic moments of their lives: the birth of a child, a wedding engagement, or even death. There is a saying, “What a person goes through in a lifetime, a priest goes through in a day.” It’s important for a priest to maintain a healthy prayer life to sustain himself in the midst of these emotional events.

Always On Call

Being a Priest is not a 9:00am – 5:00pm job. Parishes are not businesses with office hours. A priest is always a priest and always present. The priest is preeminently a man of sacrifice. Priests are called to be agents of mercy and compassion by bringing people to God and God to the people.

The Life of a Priest

The life of a priest is one of sacrifice and service because it is the life of Christ. Wherever there is sacrifice, love abounds even more. The priest administers the Sacraments and cares for the people. He is the shepherd of the flock entrusted to him, just as Christ is the shepherd of the entire human family. He is also the person who mediates between God and humanity, sanctifying the people and bringing them closer to God.

Each new day brings its own unique challenges and its rewards; it is truly the life of the Gospel.

A SERVANT

Every priest shares in the Mission of Jesus Christ, and therefore shares in the three roles of Christ:

Teacher – He instructs others in the faith, proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. He teaches by preaching the Word, instruction of the people and by the example of his own sacrificial life.

Shepherd – The priest as head of the people entrusted to his care, becomes the shepherd of his flock. He guides, unites, and encourages his flock, his spiritual children to whom he is FATHER.

Sanctifier – Through the administration of the Sacraments, God’s work of sanctification of his people takes place. God is made truly present and active in their lives.

All of these roles are roles of service. At the Last Supper, Jesus washed the feet of the disciples and said "What I have done for you, you must do for one another."

A priest must be a servant to the people. He brings the love and strength of Christ into the parish, the school, the hospital room, the prison ... wherever God's people.

A MAN OF PRAYER

First and foremost a priest should be a man of prayer. His most important prayer of any day is to represent the Sacrifice of Jesus in the Mass. Each day, his people will request of him 'Father please pray for ...' and 'Father will you please lead us in a prayer ...'

A priest also spends time each day in personal prayer with the Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office) and personal time with the Lord in silent prayer, deepening his own relationship with God and feeding his ministry.

A priestly ministry without prayer is a dry, arid ministry that does not bring life to the priest or to the people.

A PREACHER OF THE WORD

Since the very beginning, the people of God have needed voices to help them understand the Word of God. In Old Testament times we have the example of the prophets, and in these times it falls to the priest to break open the Word that people may come to understand the will of God more clearly.

When a priest is articulate, vibrant and meditative when preaching the Word, his people are inspired about their faith and encouraged to put it into practice. Therefore, the priest has a duty to teach his people how Christ's life is relevant to their own, answering the question "How can I live my faith today?"

A MAN OF THE PEOPLE

There can be a tendency among people to put the priest on a pedestal for the wrong reasons. YES the priest is a marked man ... marked by God to continue the saving work of Christ. But it is important to realise that the priest is still a man. He is a vital servant of the Christian community, but also a member of that community.

Jesus came among us for the forgiveness of sins, but he also came among us so that God may experience humanity in its completeness. By experiencing the human condition and remaining faithful to his Father, Jesus open the gates of heaven to humanity and restore what was lost. He understood what it was to be human and the challenges we face "in all things, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15).

We believe that Jesus is fully human and fully divine. The priest is fully human, but with the divine character of Christ impressed upon him through the grace of ordination. We call this 'ontological change'. This means that deep down in the fiber of his being, the priest is given the necessary gifts to complete his work. It does not mean that the priest is divine;

Being a man of the people the priest is able to better understand the situations he faces. He engages with the people around him to come to know them and walk with them on the pilgrimage through life. In a priest can experience a whole lifetime of events from the Baptism of a new baby to the funeral of someone who has recently died. In all this, the priest is a man of the people and for the people, a part the one family of God.

UNWORTHY

Many men when they contemplate a Vocation to the priesthood have many doubts and (in their eyes) have many reasons not to become priests as though they somehow don't fit a character profile. They feel a great sense of unworthiness and apprehension. This is quite normal.

No one is worthy of the priesthood. But the Lord calls the weak ... just look at some of the apostles! Peter, the greatest, the Rock, the first Pope pleaded 'Leave me, Lord; I am a sinful man' (Luke 5:8). What matters right now is not how you feel but whether Christ is calling YOU.

Priesthood is a free gift from God, we shouldn't be asking 'Why me?' but saying 'Here I am Lord, help me to do your will'. He doesn't choose men because they are better than others or are more worthy. The priest is in need of salvation, forgiveness and healing just like the rest of us. He strives to live up to the call to holiness that we all were called to at baptism. So we shouldn't be discouraged when God calls us to this great ministry, but we should take heart that he calls us to that which can help us to live up to the call of holiness.

The priest is a man of humility, realizing that in his weakness God calls him to do great things, and that in doing these things, it is God who acts through him in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Lord, wash away my iniquity; cleanse me from my sin. – Prayer of priest when washing his hands at Mass

This is the very heart of the call to priesthood. Aware of his own unworthiness, the priest is a man who joyfully walks in the footsteps of Christ. He bears the teaching of Jesus and through his own example, images to others, God's call to a life of holiness.

The celebration of Mass best exemplifies this role. After preaching the Good News, the priest becomes the fragile instrument that makes Christ truly present in His fullness in the Eucharist. The priest is the catalyst of the faith of the Church bringing forth new life.

Pax Vobiscum+++

Most Rev BC Mente

Archbishop