

**ministry** may best be understood as any work for the \*church that is recognized by the church. It occurs when a person, whether \*lay or \*ordained, performs a task on behalf of the community that is recognized by the community. But it has often been restricted to a narrower, clerical sense. The most used NT term for ministry, *diakonia*, contains ambiguity that has led to contrasting emphases on either lay or ordained ministry (see *DIACONATE*).

The 'lay' interpretation starts from the literal meaning of *diakonia* as service. Every Christian is called to serve God and the community, therefore every Christian has a ministry. This view tends to locate ministry within the ethical sphere of general service or benevolence and carries the danger of detaching it from its theological basis in the divine commission bestowed upon the church as a body and attaching it instead to the ethical obligations common to individual Christians. The 'clerical' interpretation starts from the official recognition rather than the semantics of *diakonia* and emphasizes the aspect of commissioning and \*authority. It reflects the historical experience of most churches in which the 'ministry' has long been synonymous with the work of the ordained though in the early church 'orders' included such 'lay' posts as acolyte and door-keeper.

Ministry, whether lay or ordained, is grounded in certain ecclesiological principles: (1) All ministry is that of Jesus Christ in his church. Ministry is simply Christ at work through the presence of the Holy Spirit, leading, teaching, sustaining, and governing his body through unworthy human instruments. Because ministry manifests Christ, the servant king, it embodies both authority and the spirit of service. (2) Ministry is grounded in baptism, the foundational sacrament of the church, because it is through baptism that Christians are united with Christ in his death and Resurrection and share in his threefold office as prophet, priest, and king. As prophets Christians discern and proclaim the word of God. As priests they offer spiritual sacrifices of prayer, praise, gifts, and ultimately themselves. As a royal priesthood they play their part in the governance of Christ's kingdom. Baptism incorporates a believer into the ministerial community, in which, however, there is a variety of gifts and services, every limb of the body of Christ having its own role to play (1 Cor. 12). (3) Ministry is representational in that it consists of public actions, owned by the community, that manifest the nature and life of the community. The public ministers of the church represent both Christ and the church (Christ-in-the-church), not in the vicarious sense that they take the place of an absent Christ, but in the realist sense that they make Christ truly present and show forth the true nature of the church as his body. The ministry leads the way in doing what the church must do and acting as the church must act.

Some locate the representational role of the ordained ministry in the *persona* of the minister and see him or her as an icon of Christ, grounding this in the 'character' bestowed at ordination and the authority that goes with it. This ontological view sees little scope for lay representational ministry and may be linked with the notion that only males can represent Christ, since there must be a natural resemblance between Christ and the priest. Others adopt a more functional view of ministry, locating the representation of Christ in the actual performance of the tasks committed to the church: proclaiming the gospel, administering the sacraments, providing \*pastoral care, and facilitating conciliarity. Both points of view have something to offer. The first presumably would not insist that a minister who never preached, presided, or pastored still represent-

ed Christ. The second presumably would not recognize that Christ was represented by someone who took it upon himself, without authority and charisma, to exercise the functions of public ministry.

The connection and distinction between the ministry or royal \*priesthood of all the baptized and the ministry or priesthood of the ordained remains, nevertheless, a major \*ecumenical issue and its resolution is a precondition for further progress towards interchangeability of ministries between churches. It has not yet been clarified sufficiently. \*Vatican II stated that the 'common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood' are different 'in essence and not only in degree', though they are related by being 'each in its own special way ... a participation in the one priesthood of Christ' (*Lumen Gentium*, 10). Anglican-Roman Catholic dialogue (ARCIC) followed suit in separating but not integrating the two. Other ecumenical dialogues have had difficulty with this. Adopting an insight from the eastern tradition, we may say that the ordained ministry (priesthood) is a divinely instituted *economy* within the whole priestly body: a limitation of public priestly functions to a part for the benefit of the whole.

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**miracle.** Miracles are generally understood in Christianity as extraordinary actions by God in the physical world, standing over against the normal order of nature for a religious purpose. Various Hebrew and Greek words have been used to identify miracles: in Hebrew *oth* (sign), and *mopheth* (wonder) occur; and in Greek *semeion* (sign), *teras* (wonder), *ergon* (work), and *dunamis* (power) are used. Each term reflects a key element of the traditional understanding of miracle. Miracles are 'signs' pointing to a greater reality; they are 'powers' emanating from forces not usually associated with nature; they are 'wonders' leading humans to reflect upon greater things; and they are 'works' because they are seen as being in some way connected to the greater work of God.

Accounts of miracles are found in both the biblical record and in ecclesiastical history. In the OT they are generally clustered into two cycles: one in the narratives concerning the \*exodus and the Israelite sojourn in the wilderness, and a second in the stories associated with the prophets Elijah and Elisha. In the NT they are found in both the gospels and Acts. The Synoptic Gospels have many of these stories in common, while \*John includes accounts (such as the miracle at the marriage feast in Cana and the raising of Lazarus) that are recorded nowhere else. Students of the gospels have offered various classifications for these miracle accounts. Some, such as the \*Virgin Birth and the \*Resurrection, serve to frame the earthly ministry of \*Jesus. Others are directed towards human beings as miracles of \*healing or restoration, including exorcisms. Still others are nature miracles, such as the walking upon the waters (Mark 6: 45-52 and parallels) and the stilling of the storm (Mark 4: 35-41 and parallels). The book of Acts contains numerous miracle stories associated with the early mission of the church and interprets such signs as reflective of the presence of the \*Holy Spirit in