

“This volume brings theological, multicultural, psychological, and psychospiritual insights to bear on the multifaceted and intriguing question: What does it take to become and remain a happy, healthy, and holy priest? Probing the inner life of the priest in search of those dimensions of ‘affective maturity’—the *sine qua non* of priestly ministry today—McGlone and Sperry offer no facile, one-size-fits-all, cookie-cutter answers. I encourage seminarians, priests, and all who are entrusted with seminary formation and the ongoing formation of priests to take to heart the wisdom found in these pages.”

—The Most Reverend Gerald R. Barnes,  
bishop of San Bernardino, California

“McGlone and Sperry are both clinical professionals with many years of experience in priestly formation. Their book explores the ways that good clinical practice and good formation work together to produce and support happy, healthy, holy priests. Every formation director, seminary rector, vocation director, and vicar for clergy should have *The Inner Life of Priests* on his reference shelf.”

—Mary L. Gautier, PhD, senior research associate,  
Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate  
(CARA), Georgetown University

“*In The Inner Life of Priests* Jesuit father and psychologist Jerry McGlone and Catholic psychiatrist Len Sperry offer a thoughtful, articulate, and evidence-based reflection on the multifaceted inner life of Catholic priests today. During a time when priestly life has come into question and sometimes scandalized, this much-needed book provides an insightful and reasoned discussion that cuts through the myths and misinformation about this important and still noble vocation. It is a must read for everyone who wears a Roman collar, for the layperson in the pews, and anyone interested in the inner life of Catholic priests today.”

—Thomas G. Plante, PhD, ABPP, professor of  
psychology and director of Spirituality and Health  
Institute at Santa Clara University

“At last a book about American priests, neither anecdotal nor “a priori” but data-based and well analyzed.”

—Rev. Robert Curry, SJ, chaplain, Saint John Vianney  
Center; former pastor and superior in the Maryland  
Province of the Jesuits

“This carefully researched collection of articles makes important distinctions based on observation of various aspects of the lives and personalities of priests. It offers new categories for thinking about the priestly and religious life based on recent trends in American society, such as the cultural diversity of the Catholic population in general as well as the new seminarians and international missionaries to America. The historical perspective on the development of the role of psychology in evaluating priests and seminarians is a very helpful context in the life of the church and society. The book also provides very helpful tools for dealing with the priestly sexual abuse scandal by presenting solid data about the abusers and the effects of the scandal on other priests.

While *The Inner Life of Priests* is a well-informed analysis of psychological, social, and physical dimensions of priestly and seminary life, it carefully and boldly incorporates the theological and spiritual dimensions into the discussion as completely normal and necessary. The insights derived from this more holistic approach to the needs of seminarians and priests stem from the careful integration of all these aspects. Faith is treated as a normal and necessary dimension—faith in God and his gracious call, faith in the need for the church, and faith in an authentically Catholic anthropology. This faith is presented as a natural ally of the psychological, social, physical, and cultural dimensions of priestly and seminary life.

This collection of articles is not only closely in tune with the most recent developments in the situation of American priest and seminary life but it also extracts from these situations some of the trends for the future. It makes important recommendations for correcting gaps in already existing psychological, professional, and cultural analyses of priests and seminarians. This book will be very useful to seminary staff, diocesan bishops, religious superiors, vocation directors, and anyone else involved in the promotion of vocations to the priesthood. Furthermore, the average priest can read this book with great benefit to help him examine factors in his own personality and social relationships with a refinement based on the excellent research done by these authors.”

—Rev. Mitchell C. Pacwa, SJ, PhD, television host,  
EWTN

“*The Inner Life of Priests* is a timely and important review of issues confronting the selection, formation, and ministry of those called to the priesthood. It provides a comprehensive review along with the developing issues that need to be considered and confronted for improving the life and mission of priests.”

—Ronald J. Karney, PhD, senior psychologist,  
Catholic Clinical Consultants, Philadelphia

“Not since the bygone days of Kennedy and Greeley has there been a serious attempt to contextualize the psychological and spiritual landscape of American priests. This attempt is not rosy or sugarcoated, but it does present a comprehensive portrait and offers a great deal to think about. A welcome addition to the literature.”

—Rev. John Allan Loftus, SJ, PhD, former executive director of the Southdown Treatment Center in Ontario; former president of Regis College at the University of Toronto

“A much-needed appeal to seminaries, religious communities, and dioceses to be true spaces of ongoing human formation. This book not only calls attention to the proper role of psychology, it provides a road map to wholeness and holiness for those called to ministry in the church.”

—Rev. Alejandro Crosthwaite, OP, faculty of Social Sciences, Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (Rome)

“This study on the inner life of priests marries richly researched knowledge with encouraging yet hard-won insights about how priesthood in the Roman Catholic communion of faith might be lived healthfully and integrally in the increasingly multicultural reality of North American life. The text contributes immensely to essential information for all those seeking to foster and develop vocations to the priesthood in wholesome ways.”

—Rev. John Pavlik, OFM Cap, executive director, Conference of Major Superiors of Men (CMSM)

“*The Inner Life of Priests* is a practical presentation, grounded in research and clinical pastoral experience that serves as a helpful resource for those who are involved in the work of formation for priestly ministry in the church. The use of data and case studies provides meaningful insights into the joys and challenges of living authentically and faithfully the call to holiness, and to following Christ in serving the people of God as a priest.”

—Rev. John P. McGarry, SJ, rector, Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University; former provincial, California Province of the Society of Jesus

“Father McGlone and Dr. Sperry have explored and described the complex psychologies of men called to the celibate priesthood with an eye for accuracy and depth. This timely book serves as an excellent and necessary resource for those providing psychological services to priests, as well as spiritual directors and those in the work of formation of priests.”

—Jeffrey Feathergill, PsyD, psychological consultant to dioceses and religious orders

“With honesty, insight, and respect, this book offers a long, loving look at the priesthood of Jesus Christ. This is a must read for those engaged in formation and anyone engaged in work within the life of the Catholic Church.”

—Rev. Thomas M. Dragga, DMin,  
president-rector, Borromeo Seminary, Cleveland

“Few times have I read a book that both impressed and encouraged me. This book by Fr. McGlone and Dr. Sperry was impressive in its use of research and hopeful in providing us with solutions to our problems.”

—The Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, DD, JCL,  
bishop of Scranton, Pennsylvania

“This book is the necessary conversation by psychologists and those in seminary formation. It will be a great resource for seminary admission committees, vocation directors, and bishops as it provides a contemporary portrait of priestly life from the perspective of psychological and sociological research that is grounded in the theological anthropology of the Roman Catholic tradition.”

—Rev. Mark A. Latcovich, PhD, vice-rector and  
academic dean, Saint Mary Seminary & Graduate  
School of Theology

“Father McGlone, SJ, Len Sperry, and others address the inner life of the priest in a very insightful and helpful way. They use spirituality and psychology in a way that enables the priest to come to a deeper understanding of himself and his vocation.”

—The Most Reverend Gregory Aymond, archbishop of  
New Orleans

# The Inner Life of Priests

Gerard J. McGlone, SJ, and Len Sperry



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In loving memory of my deceased parents  
Mary and Steve McGlone, and to my sister Kathleen;  
*and*  
to Patti, the love of my life,  
and our children Christen, Tim, Jon, and Steve;  
*and*  
to those who have served, will serve, and currently serve  
the church we love.

*Thank you!*



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## Preface

Presiding at the Eucharist, hearing confessions, giving homilies, visiting the sick, speaking words of advice and encouragement, attending and chairing meetings—these and much more represent the outer life of priests. These responsibilities amount to eight or ten hours a day of visible and public ministry, the outer life of priests. But what about the rest? What about those hours when the priest is out of the public eye, offstage, and by himself? This is the invisible and private ministry—this is the inner life of priests.

So what is this inner life? Is it all psychological? Is it the unconscious? Is it dominated by unfinished business and regrets from roads not taken? Is it (or much of it) spiritual and grace-filled? Is it different than the inner life of laypersons? Is it similar to or different from the inner life of religious sisters and brothers? Just what is the inner life of priests really like?

For many laypeople, there is an air of mystery about priests who are set apart by their lifestyle and perhaps even their clothing. This mystery evokes a curiosity about their private lives, their prayer lives, their aspirations, and their longings. The reality is that most priests seldom—if ever—talk about these matters with fellow priests, except possibly for their spiritual directors. Until now there has been no book, article, or website to turn to for answers.

This book lays the foundations for how a man enters and understands that inner world more fully and honestly. The reader will be challenged by the research and data, yet also humbled by spiritual profundity. Few resources exist that give the historical and current integrated perspectives through which one can judge (and be judged) more accurately and profoundly. This book first plots the unique maps of the church and the arena of psychology. It then leads us through the necessary views about God, self, and others that allow us to view our Catholic tradition in a healthy and holy manner.

This book details ways the two worlds of theology and psychology might converge and diverge. Each area clearly has its special claim and authority, but new forms of dialogue and respect emerge here. The explanations of each expertise is simultaneously differentiated and integrated.

This book provides the priest and those who care about him the ability to contextualize and better understand him as a man and as a priest. It also allows those who are to direct, form, and guide that man the necessary language and skills to serve the community to which this man is called. It allows the layperson a focused lens through which she or he may see the man who both mystifies and leads others to holiness on a regular basis.

The priest in modern society is seen quite differently than in years past. Of course the priest is not alone in this regard; many public figures have “fallen from grace.” But when a priest or minister falls, the implications and the repercussions seem to be far more challenging. The public arena is often full of contradictions, controversies, and conundrums. Such complexity must find resolution somewhere. This book begins to place the reader within that world more fully. It challenges the priest himself to search that world.

Priests must face that interior dimension of a celibate world within a new cultural and societal challenge. The many facets of this celibate world are explored in both their beauty and their darkness. Few books detail the challenge and grace in celibacy and the skills necessary to live such a life well.

Essential to this book is a new model of what the inner life can be, needs to be, and indeed ought to be. It is timely written for the Church and her present and future needs. What became clear in writing this book was that the life of the priest today is one of hope.

It is both mystery and clearly seen. It is both pure grace and sinful. It is communal and yet very solitary. It is both deeply intimate and yet starkly lonely. It is sometimes filled with promise and pathology. It is both transcendent and immanent. It is profoundly complex and yet utterly simple. It is a pure gift and a learned process. It is both known and utterly unknowable. It is very human and clearly called into the divine. It is the inner life of priests.

This book is our gift to the Church. We hope that diocesan, provincial, and seminary personnel will appreciate the insights contained herein, in addition to seminarians and those considering religious and priestly vocations. And, most of all, we hope it will be of inestimable value to priests themselves.

Gerard J. McGlone & Len Sperry  
Easter Triduum 2012

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We wish to express our heartfelt appreciation to all who have made this book possible:

To our loved ones, friends, and colleagues who by their encouragement and example have directly and indirectly influenced our personal and professional lives—including this book.

To J. Michael Miller, CSB, archbishop of Vancouver; Fernando Ortiz, PhD; Katarina Schuth, OSF; Msgr. Jeremiah J. McCarthy; Jan Slattery; and Allan Figueroa Deck, SJ, for their wise contributions and timely commentaries, which have elevated the conversation regarding inner lives to a level that will undoubtedly influence the formation of seminarians and the continuing formation of priests for the better.

To the staff at Liturgical Press: thanks for everything! Peter Dwyer, director, immediately recognized the value and importance of this book in the lives of priests, and Trish Vanni, publisher, seamlessly operationalized the process of getting the book to press in record time. This was made possible by the expertise of Colleen Stiller, J. Andrew Edwards, Monica Schulzetenberg, and Stephanie Lancour.

Finally, to all those from the Saint John Vianney Center and Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary who participated in the groundbreaking Joint Conference: A Necessary Conversation, held in Philadelphia in June 2010. We express our deep gratitude for joining us on this inner journey for which this book has been our inspiration.





# **The Inner Life of Priests: Introduction and Overview**

*Gerard J. McGlone, SJ, and Len Sperry*

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## **Introduction**

Recently, when at a priests' convocation, I asked each individual priest, four to five in one row and section and four to five in another row and section of the hall, "Are you happy with yourself, your work, your parish, and your ministry? Is your morale high?" The individual responses were clear, unambiguous, emphatic, and a resounding *yes!* Then, I asked a group of priests in one row a very different question: "Are you all happy with where you are as priests today? Where the church is today, where you are as men, with the demands placed upon you, with your sense of meaning and mission? How you are viewed in society?" The group of priests in the row and the priests in the hall also had a resounding answer: "*No!*" It was quite clear and quite emphatic. This example highlights the limitation and downright naiveté of asking individuals about their morale, well-being, and happiness and does not take into account the power and influence of the situation. Social and organizational psychology has been critiquing such an approach for almost forty years. The jury is not out anymore, the research is clear and overwhelming in this regard. Any such research is simply not valid nor is it descriptive of the true reality and situations facing clergy today. Hence, the rationale for this book is to place the life of priests in a more appropriate and fuller context. *The Inner Life of Priests* is about the full reality facing today's church.

The inner life of priests is an intriguing, complex, multifaceted, and important topic. Recently, when at this same gathering of priests at their

annual convocation, the men and their struggles touched me deeply. It became clear to me that I, as a religious priest, and we missed something in our formation and human development. Our documents, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (PDV), the Vatican statement Guidelines for the Use of Psychology in the Admission and Formation of Candidates for the Priesthood (Guidelines), and the Program of Priestly Formation, fifth edition (PPF), all speak of an interiority expressed in a term called “affective maturity.” The documents are exquisite and inspiring. In this book, two leading experts will give their views on the role that the church and psychology have played and can play in this regard in both chapters 3 and 4. These insights provide you with an important historical context through which you can view the fuller and more complex ecclesial and psychological lenses through which we can view and discuss the inner life of priests today. They also detail some concerns, cautions, and important ways that these two fields of expertise can collaborate in the future life of priests and the church.

The practical manifestations and the practical manner within which these church documents are embodied is, unfortunately, another story. In reality, most of us in religious and diocesan life have not been taught to develop our emotions, our affects, and we downright avoid them and maybe some of us actually fear them. Affective maturity is not only a recent term and concept in these documents but it also was not specifically taught as a skill set in formational programming in seminaries and religious houses of formation. This fact poses significant problems. Most priests never heard of the term affective maturity and therefore have not been taught the reality, and, though more recent priests have heard the term and can cite all the four pillars (human, spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral) of formation in PDV, they cannot detail how they were taught to manage their emotions. They took no classes on emotional intelligence, no seminars on pastoral maturity, and no classes on affective and normal development. Unfortunately, it has been assumed as one of those skills that you “just learn” in the real world. All research to the contrary with business executives and professionals being brushed aside (Goleman, 2006; 2007), most seminary curriculum is superb on the pastoral, intellectual, and spiritual pillars but lacking on the human pillar most concerned with affective development.

This lack of training also has a cumulative, disturbing, and more recent effect. An example of this is the startling data that is seen across the country in almost every diocese in that priests overwhelmingly want to live alone in rectories built for four to eight priests and yet yearn to connect with their brothers in a new fraternity and a “brotherhood of brothers” as imagined in

John Paul II's PDV. Rectory living is not being seen by many as interpersonally life-giving. They desire celibate intimacy yet do not know how to achieve it. They do not know what it looks like and how to attain it in their daily lives. These lives are experienced more and more often in solitary, sometimes isolating, and often lonely internal struggles. They often eat alone and yet "break bread" in communal sacramental settings with their parishes or communities regularly. This disconnect and dissonance is startlingly unhealthy and yet more common than previously imagined. It strikes at the very heart of the inner life of priests. How can I be a man of *communio* (Latin for "communion") if I live, eat, pray, and drink alone regularly? In survey after survey, isolation and loneliness are themes about which priests consistently request knowledge and information. Struggles, conflicts, divisions, and strategies in communication amongst and between groups of priests who differ in their ecclesiologies are avoided. Such communication and confrontation skills are fundamental to their well-being as individuals, as presbyterates, and as religious communities. Yet, they feel paralyzed and often fearful to achieve this connection and level of intimacy, and to manage these conflicts.

In survey after survey conducted at all of these convocations across the country, the constant source of stress most often cited by priests is their "spiritual" stress. It is not that they are overworked, feeling sad or anxious, or overwhelmed with cognitive or intellectual worries. They publicly represent something or someone with whom they do not spend time, with whom they lack intimacy and yet yearn to love more, with whom they want to communicate, with whom they long to see and know better—God! Like many males in our American society, priests are abandoning their religious intimacy in the same way that some men are abandoning and running from their essential emotional-affective bonds of relational, spousal, and familial intimacy. Fear of the unknown is at the root cause of this abandonment. This fear is not irrational. It is built upon the fact that with little training in these emotional and spiritual realms, as males, they flee from what they *feel* they can't do. Males are doers, action-oriented creatures; our well-being is most often associated with our "doing." If as male, I do not feel competent in an action, I avoid it. It is the basic type of information and learning one sees in a developmental psychology 101 class.

## **The Current Pastoral Context**

This interiority issue is a major concern that tends to express itself in the life of priests and it's linked to an essential spiritual vacuum or lack

of faith development. Most often, priests are extraordinary workers in the vineyards (Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate [CARA], 2010). Generally, “they priest well.” There are always exceptions to this rule but usually, priests are good “workaholics.” Most often priests work hard in their communities, their schools, or parishes with an amazing amount of dedication and devotion. If anything, there is too much dedication and devotion that is directed externally. The pastoral realities often consume these men to such an extent that they neglect themselves and their well-being. Research has indicated that they adapt well, if not too well. They adapt too much to the situation so that the inner sense of self is diminished, if not neglected totally. This lack of understanding and training in the power and demands within the pastoral situation often expresses itself in a cadre of unhealthy adaptations. These will be explored further in this book. Suffice it to say, though they “priest” others well, most often they fail to “priest” themselves and their fellow priests or religious. This creates both personal and situational problems; the pastoral context is in crisis.

At the root of these problems is an essential lack of training and a fear. The complex life of managing emotions well is not an easy task or discipline nor is it for the fainthearted (Goleman, 2006). The consistent lack of formation in the basics of this aspect of our emotional life and well-being has several implications (Schuth, 1999; 2006). The first is an inability to know and manage what one experiences on a regular and consistent basis. This lack of training and knowledge is the context within which most priests function today. Second, it also shows itself in the current sexual abuse crisis affecting the church as will be discussed in chapter 7. Priests fear the pastoral situation, as never before. They too, like the people in the pew, are victims of secondary trauma. Pastoral collaboration and cooperation is viewed with suspicion and a great deal of trepidation. The current sexual abuse crisis stirs enormous emotions of fear, paralysis, and confusion with little expertise, knowledge, or training in how to manage such complicated, nuanced, and traumatized emotions. The biggest emotion felt in priests is that of fear, the fear to be intimate and the fear that their own failings in sexual intimacy would be known by others, as their brother priests’ secrets have become known in the media. Lack of knowledge about sexual intimacy and the many fears in this issue cloud and distort the pastoral context.

Ronald Rolheiser (2002), in his article “On Carrying the Sexual Abuse Scandal Biblically,” aptly describes how the current place of the church might be best viewed as being set at the “foot of the cross.” This is a difficult place for any person or collective body to be and to remain. There is precedence

and many apostolic models have been given to us in this regard. But, it is the unspoken part of the scandal that we run from and into which God is calling us. Most of the apostles did run, and they ran for a reason: fear.

Difficult challenges and emotions require an essential training in the basics of how to identify, acknowledge, and manage what is present affectively. To manage this task well requires training that is given for “ministerial” or “pastoral” capacities. Most priests face these situations quite well when they minister to others. They confront the burials, the anointings, and the deaths and dying of so many, so often. They all too often forget that they too might have losses, deaths, and grieving that need the same attentive time, processing, and care they give to others. They often forget to “priest” themselves. Additionally, they do not “priest” each other. They, like the apostles, do what most men do: they run from their fear, their pain, and their grief.

The dilemma, indeed crisis, facing the church and the clergy today is a problem with this type of spirituality. If I am trained to be superficially and externally proficient in all matters clerical and ecclesial, that is where I will work, stay, and thrive. The current crisis and situational factors demand a new and yet more traditional spiritual, internal capacity and prowess. This prowess is a mystical skill and discipline. It is not a “white-knuckling” mysticism. One can’t just “pray it away,” as many have falsely attempted to do with their sexuality and their losses. Feelings once felt need expression. It is a standing within the moment. It demands a “standing at the foot of the cross” capacity as Rolheiser aptly describes. It demands facing our darkest fears, failings, and difficult feelings with courage, consistency, and persistence. The mystics have written extensively of this skill. So too have the new schools of psychology who see the connections of mental and psychical well-being and the proper role of a healthy spirituality. The current situation demands a new mysticism that we will speak of throughout this book and especially in chapter 7.

## **The Historical Context**

Throughout this book, one will see the role of psychology and its relationship with the church. This history is central to our discussion. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, it is essential to consider the actual living situation and environment of most priests. Until recently, most priests have lived with many other priests in rectories built for two, four, or eight, and sometimes more. Priests were typically formed in huge monastic-like seminaries, expected to conform to authority from the central office, and sent to live in rectories. In these rectories, they were expected to live

a “priestly” life in the parish or school within which they were to serve or teach. Though not ideal, most often the camaraderie and the support necessary to live the priestly life was more easily accomplished, easily known and seen. There was an inherent relational accountability. Oftentimes, there was little to say if the pastor did not want it said. In healthier situations there was a good communal sharing and fraternity; the opposite was also likely and true in the more unhealthy rectories. These situations created an unhealthy dependency (McGlone, 2001). The monastic-like structures of the seminary and the hierarchical structure of the diocese and rectory had created adolescent-like maturity and often dependent responses, which can be seen in the data from the John Jay study (Terry, 2010). The situation in both seminary training, dioceses, religious institutes, and in the rectories created situational unhealthy living (Schuth, 1999; 2006).

This situational reality has changed dramatically and is changing quickly in most religious orders and dioceses (CARA, 2010). Because of the priest shortage, it is more and more rare to have priests actually residing in the same rectory or community. This new pastoral living situation is both challenging and forcing new skills that have not been considered in priests’ formation. There is less and less relational accountability and less and less opportunity for celibate intimacy. There is a situational setup for even less relational and celibate accountability. The situational pressures of today have the possibility for creating new, even more isolating, dependency-building, and insulating lives for the priests of tomorrow. These factors often form the basis for more sexual misconduct problems and addictive disorders, and more problems in anger management conflicts, authority issues, and conflict resolution. These situations challenge the priest at his core and in his essential character as priest. The challenge and the opportunity is an essential new understanding of the power of the situation, a new and healthier spirituality rooted in a healthier sense of self and others.

## **Theological Perspective**

There are two theological considerations that greatly influence the inner life of each priest on a daily basis. They are the priest’s anthropology and his theology of ministry.

### **Anthropology**

Every priest has a theory or framework for understanding what it means to be a human person, how sin occurs, and how restoration results. For some,

this theory is *implicit*, meaning that it has not been consciously and logically articulated, while for others it is *explicit*. This theory is referred to as an anthropology, and it can profoundly influence one's attitudes, decisions, and actions. When it is compatible with the Catholic vision, it is a Catholic anthropology. Whether explicit or implicit, this anthropology guides the priest's inner life.

Central to a healthy Catholic anthropology is the belief that all individuals are made in the image of God and can respond to grace, and that human nature is viewed as good, albeit tainted by original sin. However, there can be a disconnect between knowing this and acting in light of it because negative early life experiences, including trauma and deprivation, can distort or override an individual's formal learning and religious beliefs. In such an anthropology, there is redemption; life has a transcendent purpose; and healing, spiritual growth, and living life to the full are considered normative (Brugger, 2009).

There are also unhealthy Catholic anthropologies. Common to these is the view that human nature is basically bad and that individuals are too damaged or conflicted to effectively cooperate with grace. Negative early experiences, cravings and compulsions, or other factors are understood as accounting for one's problems with little expectation for transformation or growth, except for mere adjustment to life circumstances. Such a sense of spiritual futility is inconsistent with the Catholic vision, and adversely affects the priest's personal and spiritual well-being. These beliefs are more consistent with "cultural Calvinism" than with a Catholic anthropology. Priests whose outer life and inner life are guided by such a view of human nature will perform priestly functions of preaching, confession, teaching, moral guidance, or spiritual direction quite differently than a priest with a healthier anthropology. Not surprisingly, they often fail to develop emotionally and spiritually. Chapter 10 further discusses anthropologies.

## **Theology of Ministry**

Just as a priest's anthropology reflects his core convictions about self, the world, and human nature, so does his theology of ministry. Basically, there are two distinctively different theologies of ministry: effortful and effortless. In the more effortful view, ministry is understood as a personal responsibility in which the priest focuses his talent and energy on serving others. The focus is on action and results, and the "doing" pole of existence. Compulsiveness and perfectionistic tendencies are not uncommon, and delegation is difficult (Sperry, 2003). Loneliness, burnout, and compassion fatigue are also associated with this view of ministry.

In the more effortless view, ministry is understood as being in God's hands and that everything also works out. "Being" is favored over planning and focused efforts at implementation. Shared leadership is valued and is seldom problematic as long as parishioners or other stakeholders are ready for mutual collaboration and the priest sufficiently leads. Instead of burnout and compassion fatigue, priests with this theology are more likely to "rust out" and be viewed as procrastinators, lazy, under involved, or emphasizing faith over works.

A more balanced theology of ministry is midway between these two extremes: an individual that is focused and effective who can practice a ministry of presence. Doing springs from the "being" pole of existence, and action flows from contemplation rather than compulsiveness. Achieving such balance may require considerable experience and some transformation of personality. Moderating compulsive and perfectionistic dynamics are necessary for priests with a more effortful theology of ministry, just as dealing with the tendency to procrastinate for priests with a more effortless theology of ministry. Chapter 8 provides an extended discussion of theology of ministry.

## **Psychological and Psychospiritual Perspectives**

### **Psychological Perspective**

Psychological factors can and do impact the inner life of priests. Of all these factors one stands out as one of the two best predictors of positive outcomes in life, which includes inner life, and that is self-control (Baumeister and Tierney, 2011). The other is intelligence. Unlike intelligence, which cannot be permanently improved, it is possible to improve self-control. Self-control is the capacity to control one's emotions, behaviors, desires, and impulses to achieve long-term goals. In the past self-control was known as willpower. A high level of self-control is associated with good physical health, emotional maturity, goal attainment, career success, and effective interpersonal relationships. In contrast a low level of self-control is associated with all behavioral and impulse-control problems, including overeating, alcohol and drug abuse, smoking, and sexually impulsive behavior, as well as emotional problems, underachievement, and various failures at task performance. It is also linked to relationship difficulties and dissolution (Baumeister, Vohs, and Tice, 2007). Needless to say, the inner life is significantly impacted by levels of self-control.

## **Psychospiritual Perspective**

Related to the psychological perspective is the psychospiritual perspective, which focuses on the relationship of the psychological to the spiritual. In terms of the inner life of priests, the psychospiritual is reflected in the relationship of emotional maturity and spiritual maturity. While there is a difference between emotional and spiritual maturity, the two are interrelated. Emotional maturity is reflected in the quality of our relationships with others, and spiritual maturity is reflected in the quality of our relationship with God. Scripture points to this interrelationship: “You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt 22:37-38). Research also suggests that emotional maturity interacts with and influences spiritual development and maturity (Tischler, Biberman, and McKeage, 2002). In short, self-control is a vital strength and virtue and is central to an emotionally and spiritually mature inner life. Chapter 9 continues the discussion of psychological factors influencing a priest’s inner life.

## **Cultural Perspective**

The American Catholic Church has always been a diverse church but until very recently, cultural competence among ministry personnel was optional, which is to say that some priests would volunteer or be “volunteered” for ethnic parishes or to mission assignments, while the majority were “safe” and relatively immune from the requirements of cultural competence. Today, however, the broadening scope of diversity is requiring higher levels of cultural competence from a greater percentage of ministry personnel than ever before. It is hard to imagine that many, if any, priests will remain immune from this requisite in the near future. This is not to suggest that most priests and ministry personnel totally lack cultural competence. Not at all. In fact, most have some level of cultural competence, but these levels are insufficient in light of what is and will be needed.

Cultural sensitivity is the capacity to anticipate likely consequences of a particular cultural problem or issue and to respond empathetically (Sperry, 2011a). Cultural competence is the capacity to effectively draw upon cultural knowledge, awareness, sensitivity, and skillful actions in order to relate appropriately and work or minister effectively with others from different cultural backgrounds.

The challenge of increasing the level of cultural competence in priests, religious, and other ministry personnel is immense. To deal with this challenge, changes in the education and formation of seminarians and religious, as well as continuing education for priests and other ministry personnel, will be inevitable. Changes will also be required in the organizational dynamics of diocesan and religious life, as well as parish life. The measure by which such changes will be evaluated as successful is the extent to which ministry personnel are able to recognize cultural factors and to respond appropriately and effectively to them. Chapters 5 and 6 provide an extended discussion of cultural sensitivity and competence.

This book invites you, the reader, to explore the various aspects that might encompass the inner life of priests. Chapter 2 will provide you with a new model of conceiving this inner world both in formation programs in seminaries and in the ongoing formation programs of priests. Chapters 3 and 4 provide you with the necessary historical context within which this can be understood today. Chapters 5 and 6 allow you to enter the growing world of cultural diversity in the church today and the nuances within intercultural competency for priests and religious. The other chapters allow you to see the world of sexuality and the person from new and important perspectives. In chapter 11, we conclude with an important look at priests throughout the life span in light of the current sexual abuse scandal. Finally, we have gathered experts from across various disciplines and a broad spectrum to give you their perspectives on the inner life of priests.