
changes since Vatican II:

- laypersons on the altar: readers, giving out communion; cleaning chalice and putting hosts back in tabernacle; altar girls!!
 - some priests have felt threatened by this («things that only a priest can do»)
- parish councils
 - some priests have welcomed this because it frees them to do priestly work
 - but some have seen councils as infringing on their power
- sometimes laypeople have preached (Vatican is not pleased by that)
- lay/wo/men function as assistant and even associate pastors
- in some places, they preside at communion services, «substituting» for the absent priest
- in some respects the old clericalism has come to an end
 - that is, the notion that the priest belongs to a separate caste, that he is the only one competent in sacred matters, that «father always knows best»
- the priesthood of all the faithful
 - that is, not that priest has powers no one else has, but he stands in for all of us

the apparent cause of these changes mentioned here:

- many think these changes have been forced on the church because of the shortage of priests, but this is not the case
 - Vatican II inaugurated many of them, and that was long before the priest shortage was being felt in most parts of the world
- others trace the new activities of the laity to the initiative called «Catholic Action» which was inaugurated under Pius XI
 - But this was a (probably unconscious) attempt to cope with the emergence of the laity in the church

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- the immediate cause of these changes:
 - Vatican II had a much better picture of the church than the one which was current since the counter-reformation
 - better, that is, than Bellarmine's definition, which saw the church in legal and juridical terms
 - *the insight that we are the church*
 - but the real roots of the changes are much older, and, in fact, go back to the earliest days of the church
 - at the beginning, no distinction between clergy and laity; there was only this priestly people
 - no «priests» in the earliest communities we really know anything about: that is, the Pauline communities («hiereus»)
 - this suggests that we need a wholly new way of thinking about the laity in the church
 - we *are* the church, and not an inferior group within the church
 - we are responsible for the church