

## EVERYONE WHO ENTERS MINISTRY...

“Everyone who enters ordained ministry will, at some time, be called upon to do powerful and terrible things - like these that I mention for illustration:

- To celebrate marriages and deal with divorces
- To be with a family as they bring an infant into the household or to bury a dead infant into the ground.
- To visit the people as they move into a new home or when they find themselves newly homeless
- To pray for those who are dying that they may be restored to life and to pray for those who are dying that they might peacefully die, so they could be raised to New Life
- To counsel with persons who want to live in reconciliation with those from whom they have become estranged
- To counsel with persons who are ready to take their own lives and end the wreckage of their wretched existence
- To work with people of other religious traditions on addressing neighborhood problems
- To discover chasms of mistrust that deeply divide religious communities as they search, almost in vain, to discover common ground
- To order the Church by leading prayers of confession and offering forgiveness, and to order the Church by exercising discipline over those other ordained ministers who have abused the office by misconduct
- To preach sermons that thousands will hear and to preach sermons that no one will hear because the prophetic edge of the message was unwelcomed by those exposed to it
- To deliver the bread and the cup from the Lord’s table to people who hope that it will help bring change to their lives
- To deliver the bread and the cup to those who are adept at resisting every venture of change that the grace of God might bring
- To be energized by the Spirit that dwells in the Church and to enervated by the political strife that dwells in the Church
- To pray for people who labor for peace and to pray for people who are sent in war
- To wait in a courtroom with someone who has been victimized by a grievous act, and hope for justice
- To sit a prison cell with someone who had been the perpetrator of a grievous act, and hope for mercy
- To help anyone, including in the end, oneself, who is struggling at the boundaries of unbelief

There are other professions that achieve justice, like the practice of law. Other professions provide healing, like the practice of medicine. Other professions instruct or encourage or build, like those held by teachers and counselors or construction engineers. Other professions engage in great art, like music, painting and poetry.

But there is nothing, nothing, nothing like the [ordained] ministry.”

— *Dean William Lawrence*