



ACTION LINE

CASES — QUERIES — LETTERS

Dispensation from the Breviary

There are times when I have to celebrate three Masses on Sundays. These plus the sermons, confessions, baptisms etc., leave me in no disposition to pray the Breviary. Cannot the Bishop give a dispensation from the praying of the Breviary to be applicable automatically whenever a priest finds himself in the above situation?

A Parish Priest

ANSWER

The answer is YES. A dispensation from the recitation of the Divine Office may be obtained from the Bishop or his Vicar General in the case of diocesan priests, or from the Major Superiors in the case of the religious.

In this case the reason for dispensation is more than sufficient. Moreover the actual conditions of the faithful and the clergy being what they are nowadays, such situations are expected to be the lot of many priests. A sacred and happy lot anyhow. Thus, the priest concerned should obtain definite dispensation encompassing all the days wherein he finds himself in such straits.

Not only the freedom needed for the psychological frame of mind to serve the people with alacrity, but also the filial approach to God on the part of the priest advises such as dispensation. Let us enucleate further.

1. *The Bishop.* Besides the matter of the Divine Office, the Diocesan Bishops enjoy almost boundless powers towards dispensation from the general laws of the Church, especially after the Motu Proprio of Paul VI *De Episcoporum muneribus* issued June 15, 1966 (Cfr. *Boletín Eclesiástico*, 1966, p. 468, sq.). Whenever a sufficient and

reasonable cause will support the dispensation, especially when the dispensation is prompted by the spiritual care of souls (*ib.n.8*), the Bishop will dispense. According to this extensive power the Bishop may dispense with all his priests in his Diocese if he, in his wisdom and zeal for souls, deems it conducive.

2. *The Vicar General and the Major Superior.* This power is granted to them by Vatican II:

In particular cases, and for a just reason, ordinaries can dispense their subjects wholly or in part from the obligation of reciting the Divine Office. (*Const. on S. Liturgy, n. 97.*)

3. *Sufficient reason.* For those who are in the ministry, the very formulation of the case by our interrogator points to a real solid reason for the granting of this dispensation. Except the priest himself, no one will understand better the exhaustive effects and the exaction of nerves caused by the hearing of confessions and baptisms and by the three homilies preached in three Masses than the Bishop who carries the solicitude for souls in the whole Diocese and who is the witness to the scarcity and difficulties of his priests. Thus he will most readily exercise his power on behalf of the spiritual profit of the children of God already committed by himself to the care of his coadjutors, the priests.

Unlikely though it may appear, the very purpose of the Church in prescribing the Divine Office brings us to the same conclusion. Says Vatican II:

. . . the sanctification of men in Christ and the glorification of God, to which all other activities of the Church are directed as toward their end . . . *Const. on S. Liturgy, n10.*

By tradition going back to the early Christian times, the Divine Office is divided so that the whole course of the day and night is made holy by the praises of God. *Ib.n.84.*

Because the purpose of the Office is to sanctify the day . . . it will be necessary to take into account the modern conditions in which daily life has to be lived, especially by those who are engaged in apostolic works. *n-88.*

On the strength of these concepts, as we have already anticipated, the circumstances of our Parish Priest more than warrant the dispensation from reciting the Office. If the Canonical Hours do sanctify day and night, and if they do sustain the piety of the priest during week days, will not the celebration of three Masses, the preaching of three homilies, the administration of sanctifying grace in both Penance and Baptism obtain this very effect to even an infinitely greater extent?

Quintin M. Garcia, O.P.

On Bination and Trination Stipends

There is a religious congregation who runs a Seminary in the Diocese, and has asked from the local Bishop the faculty for its religious priests to binate and trinate, when needed, within the confines of the diocese. According to the provisions of the diocese, all bination and trination stipends must go to the Diocesan Curia for the Diocesan Seminary.

It is however the contention of the religious mentioned above, that since they are also running a religious seminary of their own, they can retain the said stipends for the needs of their own seminary.

May we know your opinion on the case.

A Diocesan Chancellor

ANSWER

1. Except on Christmas and on the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed, no priest may celebrate more than one Mass on the same day unless he has an apostolic permit of the Ordinary of the place where he celebrates. (Can. 806 § 1).

If the needs of the faithful so warrant, the Local Ordinary can permit his priests to celebrate two Masses on Sundays and Holydays of Obligation (Can. 806 § 2); in fact they can allow their priests to binate on weekdays and trinate on Sundays and Days of Obligation, but only when there exists a true pastoral need. (Litt. Apost. Motu Proprio Pastorale Munus, n. 2 — 30 Nov. 1963; AAS LVI, 1964, p. 7).