

"From the Depths of Our Hearts"

THE MISSION OF THE PRIEST

What does it mean to be a priest of Jesus Christ? (...) The essence of the priestly ministry is defined in the first place by the fact of standing before the Lord, to keep watch for Him, being there for Him. (...) This means for us to stand before the Lord who is present; that is, it points to the Eucharist as the center of priestly life. (...) The priest must be someone who watches. He must be vigilant in the face of the threatening powers of evil. He must keep the world alert for God. He must be someone who stands on the edge: straight in the face of the current of time. Straight in the truth. Straight in commitment to the service of good. Standing before the Lord must always also mean taking care of men before the Lord who, in turn, takes care of all of us before the Father. And this must mean supporting Christ, his Word, his truth, his love. The priest must be upright, courageous and even willing to suffer insults for the Lord. (...) The priest must be a person full of rectitude, vigilant, who stands upright. To all this is added the need to serve. (...) If the liturgy is a central duty of the priest, it also means that prayer must be a priority reality which must be learned ever anew and ever more deeply at the school of Christ and of the saints of all times.

—*Benedict XVI*