THE PRIEST

Artwork by Br. Aegidius Roeder SDS

Reflections by Fr. Winfrid Herbst SDS
ABOUT THIS WORK –

In 1909, the Salvatorians in Germany published a book called “Priester und Welt” (“Priests and World”) featuring the artwork of Brother Aegidius Roeder SDS with commentaries by Professor Richard Basel. In the commentaries, Basel wrote about various aspects of the life, works and spirituality of the priests of the time. In each article, he would draw attention to sections of the individual art pieces by Brother Aegidius. The entire work, as such, was never translated into English or republished in the United States. The various art pieces by Brother Aegidius, however, were often reprinted in Salvatorian publications over the years.

In the late 1930’s, while promulgating the “Priest’s Day” devotion of Father Paschal Schmid SDS here in the United States, Father Winfrid Herbst SDS, the main editor for the Salvatorian Publishing Department in St. Nazianz, Wisconsin, wanted to do something similar to the 1909 German book. While not creating translations of Basel’s commentaries, he used them as a basis for his own reflections on the various aspects of the life, work and spirituality of priests. Borrowing the titles from the chapters in the German book, and relying much more heavily on each of Brother Aegidius’ art pieces, Father Winfrid created a series of articles that were spread across many months in the Salvatorians’ family magazine, “The Savior’s Call.” These reflections carefully inspected each part of Brother Aegidius’ drawings and gave the readers a greater insight into the life and work of their parish priests, as well as a deeper appreciation for the detailed artwork created by Brother Aegidius. Near the end of each article, Father Winfrid advised the reader to bring these reflections into their prayer each month on Priest’s Day.

It appears that Father Winfrid may have one day hoped to reproduce those reflections in a single publication, similar to the original German book. In the USA Province Archives of the Society of the Divine Savior, a hand-made book created by Father Winfrid was found. This work contained a copy of each of Roeder’s art pieces, and the reflections Herbst had written about the various works, cut from the pages of “The Savior’s Call” and pasted into the crude book, with some editing notations. This book was assembled in the same order and layout of the original German publication. But this work was never published … until now. This is the work we present here. On the paper cover of the make-shift book, Herbst had titled it simply “The Priest.”
ABOUT THE ARTIST –

Brother Aegidius Roeder SDS was born on November 30, 1865, in Rumberg, Bohemia. He entered the Society as a Brother candidate in October 1886, and he made his Profession of Vows on March 9, 1888. His first position was that of shoemaker. When his artistic talents were discovered, he was sent to the Art Academy in Munich. He was then stationed at the Society’s Motherhouse in Rome, and his artwork became well known through the Society’s publications, both in Europe and the United States. In 1915 he was transferred to the community in Meran, Italy, because of an ever-increasing ailment in his lungs. The air in the city of Rome was proving to be unhealthy for him. He died in Meran on September 11, 1928, at the age of 63.

A personal reflection (likely written by the General – Father Pancratius Pfeiffer) found in ANNALES - March 1929, offers these thoughts about Brother Aegidius, written shortly after the time of his death: “He had an especially lively temperament and one may plainly say that as a result of long years of creating art his nerves were completely spent. Everything made especially deep impressions on him, and considered from the point of view of religious life, one must say that community life very often burdened him quite heavily. If he still endured it and persevered until the good God called him, then we must see in this not only a special gift of God, but must also see God truly collaborating at his side.

“Brother Aegidius expressed the desire to speak to me before his death. I could not refuse him and drove from Rome to Meran; this was a few days before his death. I found him very ill, although he did not give the impression that he would soon be entering eternity. Even though he suffered much, he was nevertheless still in good humor. But in all this he remarked to me: ‘The only real consolation in all these sufferings is the thought of the suffering of the Savior, everything else fails one.’ This is a remarkable saying, and just talking about him should not fail to make the right impression on us too. At least the remark made a deep impression on me.

“Now with regards to the meaning of Brother Aegidius to the Society, it may be said that he exercised an extraordinarily blessed apostolate. The innumerable images he produced, despite all the sickness and indispositions he endured over the years, entered into thousands and thousands of Christian families. And we know from experience how deeply such religious images can spur people to action. In this way he made the Society more widely known and greatly contributed to the dissemination of our writings.” (Original German translated by Fr. Daniel Pekarske SDS)
ABOUT THE AUTHOR –

**Father Winfrid Herbst SDS** was born in 1891 in Poygan, Wisconsin. All his studies for the priesthood were done at Salvatorian Seminary in St. Nazianz, where he also spent his Novitiate year, beginning in 1914. He made his profession of vows on October 26, 1915, and was ordained a priest in St. Ambrose Chapel on August 28, 1921.

Father Winfrid was a gifted writer, with a talent he would use throughout his entire religious life. Until 1953, he lived in St. Nazianz, serving as writer and editor in the Publishing Department. For many years, he edited the very popular Salvatorian publications, “Manna” and “The Savior’s Call.”

He also wrote hundreds of articles, brochures, books, and pamphlets, the topics of which ranged from the history of the Society and the lives of the saints, to spiritual advice columns and popular devotions of the time. In later life, he developed the Salvatorian Cassette Tape Apostolate, directed towards those who had difficulty reading. In addition to his own writings, he also translated many of the German documents and books from the Society’s history. For three years, he served as spiritual director of the students at Divine Savior Seminary in Lanham, Maryland; and for eleven years, he was retreat master in Jordan Seminary in Menominee, Michigan. He returned to St. Nazianz in 1967, and he remained with the community during its relocation to the Jordan House in Milwaukee in 1985. The following year, failing health demanded greater care, which he received at St. Mary’s Nursing Home in Milwaukee until his death on September 18, 1988. At the time of his death at the age of 97, he was the oldest Salvatorian priest in the world.

Introspective and quiet by nature, people got to know Father Winfrid more from his writings than in person. His popular writings from the first half of the twentieth century, which reflected a piety from simpler times, continued to be sought by nostalgic readers long after his death. Father Winfrid was brother to Father Leo Herbst SDS, also of the USA Province. (“On Whose Shoulders We Stand – the Necrology of the USA Province”)
I - Chosen! Blessed! Consecrated!
This drawing is entitled “Chosen! Blessed! Consecrated!” See how, from out a flaming cloud, the Son of God, Jesus, the Savior of the world, sends this priest to continue His work on earth. “As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” (John 20:21) And, as from a glowing sun, a stream of graces descends upon him.

See how, as the newly chosen, blessed, and consecrated one descends the steps leading from the portal of the cathedral, his features, his whole bearing radiate the yearning of his heart, humbled at the thought of his unworthiness of his sacred calling: “I will go in unto the altar of God.”

See how he is clad in alb and stole, symbols of purity of soul, fullness of grace, glowing charity.

See how the angels await him beneath the portal. Note the awe and reverence, the joy and fear, the expectation and confidence depicted on their faces.

Two of them float above his head protectingly, bearing the chalice and paten for the Sacrifice of the Mass. Their names? We might call them: The Grace of Vocation and Dedication to Calling.

See how CASTITAS (Chastity) is about to hand him the lily of purity. CARITAS (Charity) is ready to present the roses of love, with thorns, too – the ingratitude which he will often meet with in the world. EGO TE ABSOLVO (I absolve thee) is ready with the key for the forgiveness of sins. VERBUM DEI (the word of God) bears the sword of God’s word, preaching and teaching. VOS ESTIS SAL TERRAE (you are the salt of the earth) bears a dish of salt, symbolizing the salt of wisdom, with which he will exercise his priestly functions for the preservation of souls. VOS ESTIS LUX MUNDI (you are the light of the world) bears a globe illumined by a diminutive sun, signifying that this priest is to be light and warmth for a loveless world.

See the flowers scattered at his feet. You look in vain for the hands that cast them there. But they were strewn there by men, not by angels. They are going to wither away there. Are they symbols of fleeting earthly joys? The welcome of faithful souls? Tokens of honor for the person, the office, the dignity of the priest? And why is one of the angels looking so pensively out into the world? And did the thorns in the hands of CARITAS grow in heaven? And the globe held in the hands of LUX MUNDI, is it not dark and cold?

And now for a few appropriate remarks suggested by our picture. Would you like to save souls if you could? Would you like to become most dear to the Sacred Heart of the Savior of the world? The task of winning and keeping souls for Christ is chiefly entrusted to those “other Christs,” to priests. Therefore, the best way to save souls is by helping priests to be true priests and by providing more and holy priests. And you can do that by praying for priests, for good priests, for more priests. You can do it by taking up yourself and spreading to the utmost of your ability the devotion of praying for priests on Priest’s Day, approved and blessed by Pope Pius XI, by Pope Pius XII, and by Bishops the world over.
II - Mediator Between God and Man
This drawing is called “Mediator Between God and Man.”

Angels appear in many of our artist’s drawings. So also here. See first of all the two angels who support the arms of the priest as he raises the consecrated chalice aloft. Even for angels it is bliss thus to assist at the Adorable Sacrifice. They consider themselves unworthy even of that, as they bow their heads and cast down their eyes in adoration.

At the top of the picture we see the Father’s hands, ready to receive and to give, to accept and to distribute. “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17)

Through the ministry of the priest the bloody Sacrifice of the Cross is being mysteriously renewed in an unbloody manner. When the Son of God, obedient to the Father and obedient to the word of his priest, hides Himself in infinite humiliation under the appearance of bread and wine, then in the hands of the priest and in place of all mankind does He, even as once upon the cross on which He is so strikingly depicted here, glorify the majesty of God with divine honor, then He gives thanks with us and pleads with us, then He satisfies for the pride and disobedience of sin.

Notice the angel heads in the broad, upflowing streams of adoration and reparation, of thanksgiving and petition. They proclaim that only faith and purity, only humility and love are open to an understanding of this mystery. But from the Father’s hands, like a rain of manna upon the earth, flow benevolence and response, mercy and pardon.

Besides the altar boy, only one figure kneels upon the hard stone floor. Those folded hands are toilworn. They are accustomed to prayer. Those bent shoulders have borne much. But soon she will raise her head and gaze into angel splendor. The light of heaven will transfigure the handmaid of the Lord. Is this perhaps the woman of the Gospel, who has lost a coin and seeks until she finds it? It is a figure of the Church praying on earth.

She knows that the first point of modal difference between the Sacrifice of the Cross and the Sacrifice of the Mass is that on Calvary the Divine Savior was the sole Pontiff, while on the altar He is offered not only by Himself as the principle and efficient Priest but also by the celebrant as a true though subordinate priest and, besides, by the whole body of the faithful through the medium of their representative. She knows, too, that, though the Sacrifice of the Mass is essentially the same as the Sacrifice of the Cross, there follows another and very important difference, namely, that in Holy Mass the Mystical Body of Christ, the Catholic Church, forms part of what is offered to God, while on Calvary Jesus was the sole Victim. For the outward sacrifice, that is, the action witnessed by the senses, derives all its meaning from the fact that it is symbolically expressive of the inward worship by which a man submits and devotes himself entirely to God.

This picture reminds us of the apostolate of prayer and work for priests, known as Priest’s Day. Will you not take part in this holy work? It is very simple. All that is asked is that, on Priest’s Day, you offer through the hands of Our Blessed Lady all your prayers, your good works, your Holy Mass, your Holy Communion, in fact, everything, for the sanctification of priests. Begin this blessed task and spread it among others.
III - Herald of the Truth
This drawing is entitled “Herald of the Truth.” It shows a priest preaching to the people from an elevated platform on which there is a large, life-sized crucifix. “A city seated on a mountain cannot be hid.” (Matthew 5:14) This city, founded by the Savior, is the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Here we see the priest as her ambassador, the Herald of the Truth. She has sent him to preach the Gospel to both the poor and the rich, to all men. Can you distinguish the various kinds of people in the picture? From the dress and other indications we see before us the poor, the rich, the noble, the learned, those in high station. All have an immortal soul; and each soul stands in need of salvation. Each soul has its needs; and whoever is in need is poor; so that, truly, all are poor and to the poor the Gospel is preached.

“We preach Christ crucified.” (1 Corinthians 1:23) See how the right arm of the priest embraces the crucifix. He is preaching in the name of the crucified Savior. Hence from the lips of the God-Man come the words: (in German) “Who hears you hears Me.”

The priest is preaching. And “the word of God is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword … and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12) Notice how intently his hearers are listening. Observe some of the effects of the word of God. See that young man on the steps contritely kissing his crucifix, as he drops his atheistic book entitled Voltaire. He is sad now and wonders why he did not realize sooner the terrible danger into which he was placing the salvation of his soul and the souls of others. And there at the lower right you see a young man and a young woman. The angel protectingly places his right hand on the woman’s shoulder, while with the left he gently pushes away the youth who now sees into what danger he was about to plunge his soul and the soul of this other. Notice how the two men are being reconciled by the other angel as they tread underfoot the document marked (in German) “Lawsuit.” With the grace of God the bitterest enmities can be overcome. And there, at the lower left, a lady, evidently of noble lineage, has experienced a change of heart. That heart, heretofore so proud and hard, now has compassion on the poor. See how gently she places her right hand on the shoulder of that poor woman with her sick child.

Do you pray for priests? Are you one of the millions who now observe Priest’s Day throughout the world? From one of the Priest’s Day pamphlets we quote this little prayer, asking you to say it many times:

“Jesus Christ, Son of God, You have said: The harvest is indeed great, but the laborers are few; pray therefore to the Lord of the harvest, that He may send laborers into His vineyard.

“Behold, we beg You to increase the number of holy priests who walk in Your footsteps and labor in Your vineyard with apostolic zeal.

“Give them Your light and Your grace, that they may convert unbelievers and heretics, strengthen the weak, and spread Your Kingdom ever more and more upon earth. Grant that in unshakeable fidelity we may stand firmly by Your representative, may listen to his words, and support the labors of the shepherds of our souls by a devout and Christian life.

“Let our prayers be acceptable to You, and hear our petitions. You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.”
IV - All Heart for the Little Ones
This drawing bears the title “All Heart for the Little Ones.”

Here you see a priest, a pastor, advanced in years, seated at the entrance of his parish church, surrounded by a group of children, boys and girls. “The Word of God is not bound.” (2 Timothy 2:9) It is not restricted to any time, nor to any one place, nor to any external circumstances, least of all when children are concerned.

Gaze again at this priest, the central figure of our drawing. His whole bearing, his very attitude, shows that he is truly like his Divine Master, the Friend of Children, Who said: “Let the children come to Me.” These words (in German) are written underneath the bas-relief above the entrance of the church, at the top of our picture, which shows the Savior surrounded by a group of children, and shows how the mothers hasten to him with their little ones that He may bless them. What a striking similarity there is between the sculptured group above and the living group below, where the priest is speaking, probably explaining the catechism, to the children gathered around him.

Notice how attentive the children are, how happy and contented the expressions on their faces, how innocent and trusting withal! See the two girls who are hastening to join the group, evidently coming from their little house in the background. That poor little house is surmounted by a cross. It must indeed be a truly Catholic home.

The priest’s heart is full of love for the little ones of Christ. For them he has a father’s soul and a mother’s heart. He has experienced that “their angels in heaven always see the face of My Father Who is in heaven.” (Matthew 18:10) He earnestly desires that all the children, whether rich or poor, pampered or neglected, should know and love and serve their Creator and Father, their Redeemer and Sanctifier. They should know and love God’s Blessed Mother. They should know and seek the Kingdom of heaven. They should know that “we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come.” (Hebrews 13:14)

When this good pastor has finished instructing the children and telling them stories of holy things, as he is doing so gently and earnestly, he will certainly take the little group into the church to adore Him Who has said, “Suffer the little children, and forbid them not to come to Me: for the Kingdom of heaven is for such.” (Matthew 19:14) With the children the aged pastor is a child again, mindful of the Savior’s other words: “Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter the Kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 18:3)

As the priest loves the children, the lambs of Christ’s flock, so too the children love the priest. They, too, enter wholeheartedly into the devotion of Priest’s Day. This devotion of prayer for priests brings about an intimate union between priests and people. People everywhere welcome with great joy the opportunity thus given to cooperate, by prayer and sacrifice, with the priest in all the work that he does for the parish. And thus they will merit to have, and will efficaciously make, zealous and holy priests. Experience shows that also the children, as we have suggested, easily understand the devotion of Priest’s Day and enter with this apostolate.
V - The Good Shepherd
This drawing is entitled “The Good Shepherd.”

Here we see a priest in the confessional, clad in surplice and stole and wearing the biretta. Notice how recollected he is, with downcast eyes. His right hand is raised in blessing as he pronounces the sacred form of sacramental absolution, in which occur those pardoning words: “I absolve you from your sins, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” Observe the penitent kneeling at his side. He has just told his sins and now, with his face buried in his hands in sorrow and shame, is making again his act of contrition.

“We are helpers in your joy.” (2 Corinthians 1:23) Thus also this priestly shepherd of souls seems to say to the contrite soul before him, whose sorrow for sin has been turned into the joy of forgiveness. Thus, too, he seems to call up to heaven, where the Good Shepherd, the Divine Savior, lovingly receives the newly sanctified soul with the words “Through My wounds you were healed.” (Cf Isaiah 53:5) The Father has given all judgment to the Son; and by the Son the priest has been entrusted with that same divine power.

But, as St. John Chrysostom says, the priest of the New Law must have a clear understanding and should have a thousand eyes in order to view the state of the soul from all sides. This is symbolized by the haloed angel heads at the top of our drawing, those cherubs in a bow of light.

Notice that the youth whom the Savior is tenderly embracing with His pierced hands and who is being raised aloft to Jesus by the beautiful angel with the happy, rapturous expression (is it his guardian angel?), it is the same youth who is kneeling below and is receiving absolution. But now he is clad in the fair garment of sanctifying grace. His hands still cover his face, in grateful love and in regret for having offended so good and merciful a God. Perhaps he is saying: “I love Him, my Jesus, and I will never cease to love Him. One thing only do I fear – ever to hurt my Beloved again.”

Notice the Savior’s beautiful face, as He gives His embrace of welcome. What love in the whole attitude of the Good Shepherd as He takes the sheep, lost and found again, into His divine arms! The postures of the rows of little angels around the Savior’s mantle are expressive of joy, reverence, adoration, admiration. One of them, at the upper left, instinctively extends his arms in token of welcome. Study each angel face. Marvel at the heavenly expressions.

Is not the guardian angel also floating protectingly over the priest, as if to ward off from his soul the world’s contagion? O mystery of the confessional, mystery of joy in which the mystery of pain is dissolved!

Let us pray for priests. And let us spread the devotion of Priest’s Day as much as we can.

Let us pray: Divine Savior, Redeemer of the human race, You have appointed your priests to administer the Holy Sacrament of Penance and have bestowed on them the power of forgiving sins. We thank You for having given to sinful humankind this truly divine Easter gift of Your love. Grant that all the days of our life we may hold sacred this Sacrament of peace and receive its benefits with grateful hearts. Enlighten Your priests and let them exercise their exalted office in the confessional as good shepherds and as Your representatives. Enlighten them, that they may know the state of our souls, and give counsel to us in all our faults. Help them to be patient with the weak, merciful with sinners, lovable with the children! For it is You who speaks through them. It is the grace of Your redemption that they administer to us. Amen.
VI - Father of the Poor
This drawing is called “Father of the Poor,” for the priest is truly a Father to all and especially to the poor. He follows in the footsteps of his Divine Master, Who first began to do and then to teach and Who said: “To the poor the Gospel is preached.”

Society in our day must yearn for the angel of peace whom we see at the top of our drawing. Gaze upon that angel. See the sympathetic, kindly expression on his face. His arms are extended in blessing. He is the angel of peace and charity; and in the arc beneath the outspread wings, bordered below by flames of love, we read the words (in German): “Peace be to this house and joy and consolation.”

In the upper picture of the drawing we see a priest visiting a poor family. This family is living in an attic, as can be seen from the dormer window. Everything in the room is poor. A cheap picture hangs on the wall, an almanac on the cracked plaster near the broken window pane. The chair is rough and rude; the table too, with its clumsy mug. We observe the family: the father, the mother, the two children. The priest is comforting the breadwinner of that family, who is evidently out of work and clearly heartbroken because he cannot provide for his dear ones. He seems to be almost in despair. Alas, in such attic rooms above the abodes of the well-to-do or in cold basements below, many revolutionary plans are concocted by just such despair and desperation. But this man is trying hard to be resigned.

If only human society were left to our Lord and Savior, then indeed would all seek the Kingdom of God and His justice and all other things would be given to both the rich and the poor.

The Savior went about doing good. And His Church has always followed in His footsteps. She has ever begotten martyrs of Christian charity. The charitable works of Holy Church are as numerous as are human needs – and as various.

There is no form of human misery for the alleviation of which the Church has not established a special agency. Everywhere she has established hospitals for the sick, orphanages for little children bereft of the care of father and mother, institutions for the incorrigible and delinquent, homes for the friendless and the aged, homes for the social outcasts of womanhood. Indeed, into the aching wounds of society the Church has for ages, and is today, pouring the rich stream of the healing balm of humanitarian charity. And she has sent many a Father Damien of Molokai into the world, to astonish it with the utter heroism of Christ-like charity.

But to return to our picture. How gently and understandingly the priest stoops down and puts his right hand on the poor man’s shoulder. What is he saying? Notice the lovely girl clinging to her father’s knee. The boy with the basket filled with loaves of bread and perhaps other food has accompanied the priest, thus helping to feed the hungry. See how the mother raises her hand in grateful astonishment as he uncovers the treasures. The baby, too, on her right arm, must be looking hungrily at the precious food.

Now look at the picture below, showing another priest presenting a poor family to a well-to-do couple. The man is counting out some money for them; the lady of the house is bringing some clothing for the needy ones. These priests have become poor with the poor; they have not ceased to lead the rich to the huts of the poor and to bring the poor to the palaces of the rich. They ever admonish us in the words of the Savior: “Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these, My least brethren, you did it to Me.” (Matthew 24:40)

Let us pray for priests, for more priests, for holy priests. This apostolate of prayer for priests is pleasing to God. Practice and spread this devotion.
VII - Disciple of Learning
The drawing pictured here is entitled “Disciple of Learning.” It shows a young priest who seems to be undergoing an examination before his professors in Rome, the Eternal City. Or has he found a new method of demonstrations or a new proof for some old truth? Is he making assertions and proving them?

Notice the young cleric as he stands there in his priestly robe, with rosary attached to his waist band. See how calm he is and how sure of himself in the presence of these men of learning. See how with his fingers he is enumerating his proofs. His features show deep thought and quiet assurance. We can almost hear him speak as a stream of eloquence flows from his lips – deep thought clearly expressed in words. He has risen from the chair. Notice the books all around and the globe, indicative of learning.

See the young priest behind him, with biretta. He is evidently his confrere and companion, next to be examined. Notice the four professors, the one seated on the armchair in the foreground evidently a prelate, the one seated at the table a Dominican, the two standing in the background members of other religious orders. The expression on the face of each one of these listeners shows joyful surprise, great satisfaction, astonishment almost. The young cleric will pass the examination with great praise, that is clear. The religious in the rough brown habit in the background seems to be saying something to his companion robed in black, without, however, taking his eyes from the defender of the thesis. Perhaps he is whispering: “That man will go far.”

As the priest must be holy, so, too, he must be a man of great learning. Students for the priesthood have a long hard course of at least twelve years of study before ordination, often many years more, and not infrequently years of post-graduate studies. No wonder the priesthood of Christ has ever excelled in learning – in universities, observatories, libraries, archives, museums, exploration, history, literature, oratory, in short in all branches of sacred and secular science.

Indeed, how could it be otherwise? The priest of the New Law is the servant of the “God of all Knowledge” (1 Kings 2:3), the friend of the Lord of learning, the representative of Him Who is the Truth itself, the cherished disciple of her who, because she is the Mother of God, is rightly honored and praised and invoked as the “Seat of Wisdom.” At the top of our drawing, seated on the radiant throne in the clouds, overshadowed by the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, surrounded by an arc of stars, is SEDES SAPIENTIAE (Seat of Wisdom), Mary, the good Mother of all priests. She extends her arms in benediction.

Notice the four little angels, each pair evidently conducting a learned disputation themselves. At the left JUSTITIA (Justice) and THEOLOGIA (Theology) both have a hand raised in earnest discussion. At the right ASTRONOMIA (Astronomy) is earnestly explaining something to PHILOSOPHIA (Philosophy).

Let us pray for priests. We take the following prayer from one of the pamphlets used on Priest’s Day:

Let us pray: Divine High Priest and Teacher of the world, You have given to Your Apostles and their successors for all time the power to proclaim Your word to all, to teach and to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Behold us at Your feet, beseeching You to fill Your priests with wisdom and strength, that they may conscientiously fulfill the duties of their sublime office according to Your will. Let them defend Your word with apostolic courage before the great and the mighty, before the poor and the lowly. Enkindle in them the fire of true love of God and neighbor. Bestow upon them the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Amen.
VIII - Patron of the Arts
This work bears the title “Patron of the Arts,” for such is the priest of God.

The priest seated in the armchair in the foreground is gazing appraisingly upon the large and beautiful picture of the Divine Savior. An easel holds the large canvas upright for the painter’s convenience. Beside it stands the artist, with palette and brushes, eagerly awaiting the impressions of the priest. Another priest, at the side of the pastor, is also studying the painting carefully. Notice the expressions on the faces of the persons already mentioned. The venerable pastor, who is raising his glasses to see better in the distance, is very probably the one who has planned the magnificent church, the structure of which we see in the distance through the window. The building will soon be completed. Joy and satisfaction light up the face of the enterprising priest-architect.

He is filled with gratitude to God and to all those who contributed their mite that this house of God might be built. Already artists, to whom he has thrown open his house, are busy preparing the paintings, statues, pictures, for the adornment of the new church. Observe the sculptor as he shows to another priest, probably one of the assistants, a finished statue of the Blessed Virgin. See how the priest gazes at it appraisingly while the sculptor scans his face for the verdict. On the table are the plans for the church; on the floor is a folder of preliminary sketches for interior decoration.

At the top of our drawing we see the Royal Psalmist, King David, with the harp on which he played as he sang to God his inspired psalms. On the scroll are these words from Psalm 25:8 (in German): “I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Your house.”

This picture reminds us of all that the Church, with the bishops and priests leading the people, has done for the fine arts. Painting, sculpture, architecture, music, poetry, and song all strive to excel in gratitude for the consecration and crown they have received from the Church and her priesthood. Priests are cooperators with God and make use of His creation for the fashioning of beautiful things unto His greater honor and glory. And it is but natural that they do so; for, if the first and last law of art is truth, then he who teaches the truth and who serves it, cannot remain indifferent to art. And the hearth upon which the first of priestly enthusiasm for art is fanned into flame and kept burning is love. “I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Your house and the place where Your glory dwells.” (Psalm 25:8)

The priest is an artist of the Lord. Under his hand, which administers the Sacraments, arises the supernatural likeness of God. Under God, he fashions the soul in justice and holiness; he strengthens it. More enduring than marble and bronze, he raises it as a temple of the Holy Spirit, that it may follow the Lamb wherever He goes, singing a canticle of praise. (Cf. Revelation 14:3-4)

Do you pray for priests? There are beautiful prayers to be said on Priest’s Day. Here is a prayer from one of the pamphlets:

Let us pray: Divine Savior, You have bestowed great powers upon Your priests. They are not only the preachers of Your word, the dispensers of Your mysteries; no, more, through them You also communicate to us Your divine blessings. From the cradle to the grave they accompany us with their priestly blessing. They bless our children and our houses, our labors and our crops, our life and our death. Reward them abundantly for all the good they do us in body and soul. Be the greatest joy in their labors, the sweetest consolation in their sufferings, the strongest support in their adversities; be their light in darkness and their exceeding great reward in the hour of death. Extend Your hands in blessing over Your royal priesthood even to the end of time. Amen.
IX - Friend of the People
This art piece is called “Friend of the People.”

In the lower half of our drawing we see a priest at a workingmen’s guild meeting. These men are having a conference in the interests of their association. It seems to be a regular meeting, conducted in due form; for we see a bell on the table and the minute book and some other reading matter – for reference, no doubt. The priest is earnestly addressing them (note his features and attitude); and these men at the speaker’s table are all attentive, as are, doubtless, the others present but not shown in the drawing. Notice how eagerly the men follow their leader’s discourse. They seem to be hungry for his kindly words of counsel.

“I have compassion on the multitude,” the Savior once said. (Matthew 15:32) Were the priest not to speak and act after the example of the Master, neither friend nor foe would understand it; he would be a traitor to his vocation. As the priest comes from the people, so he belongs to the people. The Lord, Who is present in the Most Holy Sacrament and in His Church, has entrusted Himself to the priest, as once He entrusted Himself to St. Joseph, the man of work and want. It devolves upon him to fulfill St. Joseph’s office in reference to the people of God. Yes, as regards origin and education, consecration and mission, vocation and responsibility, the priest belongs to the people. His whole calling obliges him to declare with conviction: “I also have a heart as well as you: for who is ignorant of these things, which you know?” (Job 12:3)

The priest knows the words of Holy Scriptures: “A wise man instructs his own people, and the fruits of his understanding are faithful.” (Sirach 37:22) And with St. Paul, he can say: “So desirous, we would gladly impart unto you not only the Gospel of God, but also our own souls; because you have become most dear to us.” (1 Thessalonians 2:8) Therefore, if needs be, like Bethlehem’s shepherds he watches over his flock in the open fields and guards them during the night.

So the priest goes to the people, mingles with them, and at one and the same time rejoices and enlightens the hearts of those who gaze upon him, as we see in our drawing. He is engaged in mission activities, in charitable associations, in labor unions, in sodalities and confraternities of students, young men, young women; in the diverse organization for men and women of all callings and every state of life. And as a result of his manifold labors how often it happens that, in the words of Holy Scriptures: “Mercy and truth have met each other, justice and peace have kissed.” (Psalm 84:11) To him we may also apply the words of Isaiah (18:2): “Go, swift angels, to a nation rent and torn in pieces.”

At the top of our drawing we see the glorious St. Joseph, model of workingmen. He stands in a stream of light, beneath a radiant bow of brightness; he, the greatest saint in heaven next to the Blessed Virgin. Lilies surround him, symbolical of the utter purity of him who was the Immaculate Mary’s most chaste spouse. See how he looks down with understanding love upon the group below, his hands extended in fellowship. One of the angels holds a tablet on which are inscribed the words (in German): “St. Joseph, a life full of work and want.” What veneration in the upturned gaze of this angel. The other angel holds the saw and square, symbols of the carpenter’s trade, and looks calmly and peacefully down upon the group below. Is the priest telling the men about Joseph and asking them to imitate his virtues in their workaday world?

Do you pray for priests, for more priests, for holy priests? You should. Practice the devotion of Priest’s Day and spread it.
X - Apostolic Missionary
This drawing is entitled “Apostolic Missionary.”

Tens of thousands of priests have been sent by the Popes as apostolic missionaries into every part of the world, to labor for the conversion of pagans and unbelievers of all kinds. They share in the lot, the hardships, the trials, the dangers, the sacrifices of the Apostles. Everywhere they scatter the seeds of the Gospel and plant the cross of Christ. Courageously they toil on, even unto martyrdom, if such should be God’s blessed will.

Our picture shows us a poor mission station in Assam, British India. In the year 1889, Pope Leo XIII established an Apostolic Prefecture for Assam. Assam is situated on the Brahmaputra, at the foot of the eastern Himalayas, surrounded by Tibet, Burma, and Bengal, a territory of 194,000 square miles with a population of almost nine million people of diverse tribes, languages, customs, and religious practices. At least seventy different languages were spoken in this district. The natives, sunk in paganism, practicing the most disgusting idolatry and superstition, were low in the scale of morals. The fruitful plains and valleys suffer from heat and floods, the mountainous regions from torrential rains that last for months and from fearful storms and destructive earthquakes. Birds of all kinds, except song birds, abound and also dogs, monkeys, deer, antelope, wolves, bears, jackals, leopards, tigers, elephants. This difficult mission field was entrusted by Pope Leo XIII to the Salvatorian Fathers, who in 1890 began the work which they were so solidly to establish before their enforced departure for other mission fields.

With their arrival the cross of Christ shone brightly over Assam, as is here symbolized by the cross at the top of the picture. The missionaries we see in the picture are Salvatorians wearing the Salvatorian habit, which, in mission countries, may also be white with a red cincture instead of the usual black with the black cincture.

See that Father at the lower left, with biretta. He is teaching the truths of our holy faith to a group of natives. He has already mastered their difficult language. How attentively they listen to his every word. Some are wearing their rosaries around their necks. All are at least decently clad, considering that hot climate.

At the left, above, we see another missionary teaching music with a violin to the little group at the entrance of the school. In the background is the neat little church. At some distance in front of it we see a Salvatorian missionary Brother teaching the natives to till the soil. Though directing the work, he, too, is working along. Notice the shovel, the apron he has on over the habit, the broad-brimmed hat to protect him from the blazing sun. At the right we see a white-robed missionary returning from a mission journey to outside stations. The staff shows that he has been walking far. On his left arm he carries a stole and in his left hand a book. Evidently he has been out on sick-calls and for the administration of the Sacraments.

The charity of Christ urges the missionaries on in their apostolic labors; and it should also urge us on to aid them in every way, with prayers and contributions. Pray for missionary priests, pray for all priests.

Let us pray: Divine Savior, Jesus Christ, You have admonished us to pray for worthy laborers in Your vineyard. Behold, we beseech You to raise up worthy priests from the midst of Your people. Grant them a truly apostolic zeal for souls, one that seeks only the glorification of Your name and the salvation of the human race for heaven. Strengthen them in sufferings and persecutions, and grant that they, as well as we, may ever be ready, if it be Your will, to lay down our lives for our holy faith. Raise up zealous missionaries who will announce the glad tidings of the Gospel to infidels and heretics. Strengthen them in all dangers. Be their unfailing comfort in sufferings and adversities. Amen.
XI - Consoler of the Dying
This art piece is called “Consoler of the Dying.”

Here we see a priest assisting a dying man. He had the priest called in time. The bottom picture shows how the priest is bearing the Blessed Sacrament to his humble home in the country. He has received Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction. And now the moment of death has arrived – death, which means to forsake the world and the body, to breathe one’s last on earth and for the first time to breathe, so to speak, the life of eternity. See the crucifix there, seeming to say: “If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me.”

Notice the face of the dying man, with open mouth and breaking eyes. How faithful the artist’s conception! The good pastor is helping him hold a blessed candle in his right hand, a crucifix in his left. Note that priest’s attitude of prayer and supplication for his dying parishioner. At the foot of the cot stands this dying Catholic’s Guardian Angel. He holds open a book titled (in German) the “Thoughts, Words and Deeds” of this man’s life. It reminds us of the awe-filled justice of God. With an all-embracing and instantaneous glance, conscience beholds in blinding clearness the life that is now drawing to a close, all its thoughts, words, and deeds. But, though the justice of God is severe, His mercy is above all His works, and the mercy of the Divine Savior has taken that soul into its grace-giving embrace through the holy sacraments just received. See how the loving Jesus is awaiting His dying child above, ready to welcome him, to take him into His arms: for “our Savior Jesus Christ has destroyed death and brought him to life.” (2 Timothy 1:10)

At the Savior’s left you see St. Michael the Archangel, with fiery sword unsheathed in order to ward off the assaults of the devil. And at the Savior’s right another beauteous angel holds the palm of victory, ready to present it to this man, who is indeed blessed because he is dying in the Lord. As that body grows cold and still on earth, faith and hope and charity raise the soul aloft to heaven. “Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of His saints.” (Psalm 115:15)

In this drawing the Divine Savior is seated above in a glow of heavenly light. And behind Him is the sign of our redemption, the cross. Death is the heaviest cross; and we should bear it as a last great act of penance and in humble acknowledgment of God’s supreme dominion and absolute sovereignty, as a last act of adoration and love. Yes, death is bitter; and bitter death separates from all things and ushers in the night wherein no man can work; and after death comes the judgment. Yes, only one light shines in the dark night of dying and only one consoler draws near and only one love perseveres; the Light that is Christ, and the Consoler that is Christ, and the Love that is Christ – Christ the crucified Love, in His sacraments, in His priesthood. In His priesthood! How fervently that good pastor of souls prays; how he seems to be saying, in the words of Holy Scriptures: “But I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls; although loving you more, I be loved less.” (2 Corinthians 12:15) “Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation, which is in Christ Jesus, with heavenly glory.” (2 Timothy 2:10) “Day and night was I parched with heat, and with frost, and sleep departed from my eyes” for the sake of Your flock. (Genesis 31:40) Lord Jesus, give me also this soul – for Your glory.

As St. John Chrysostom says: “If a friend is in danger and I am supposed to save him, I will give my own life to do so; I know of no other way to love.”

Let us pray: Almighty and eternal God, our Father, we come before You in order to thank You for the great grace of the holy priesthood. And at the same time we humbly beg of You to grant Your assistance and Your abundant blessings to those who serve You in Your sanctuary. Amen.
XII - The Priest’s Sacred Place of Refuge
This artwork bears the title “The Priest’s Sacred Place of Refuge.”

That place is the sanctuary of the church. Here we see an aged priest kneeling before the tabernacle in his church. He has placed his biretta down beside him, has laid his breviary aside, and now bows his head in silent prayer and supplication, kneeling at the altar rail. Notice the beautiful altar in the background, the brightly burning sanctuary lamp, the stained glass window, the massive architecture.

But you will no doubt first of all notice his angel, standing at his side and offering the incense of his prayer to God. The smoke of that incense floats towards the tabernacle, to the hidden God in the house of God.

What is the priest saying in the depths of his soul, we wonder. Is he not, in substance, praying in these words of Holy Scripture, taken from the verses of Psalm 118: “I will come into Your house; I will worship with awe towards Your holy temple. My soul cleaves to the pavement, hasten to me according to Your word. For I have become like a bottle in the frost, I have not forgotten Your justifications. They had almost made an end of me upon earth, but I have not forsaken Your commandments. My soul slumbered through heaviness, strengthen me with your words. My eyes have failed me for Your work, saying: when will you comfort me? I long for Your face with all my heart, have mercy on me according to Your word. Trouble and anguish have found me, Your commandments are my meditation. Many are they who persecute me and afflict me, but I have not declined from Your testimonies. Sinners have laid a snare for me, but I have not erred from Your precepts. The earth, O Lord, is full of Your mercy, teach me Your justifications. O let Your mercy be my comfort, according to Your word to Your servant. Look upon me and have mercy on me, according to the judgment of those who love Your name.”

He is praying, praying with the Church, praying for the whole world and all its needs, praying for you. Are you praying for your pastor and for all priests? Say this prayer that comes from the booklet “Prayers and Devotions for Priest’s Day”:

A PRAYER FOR MY PASTOR AND FOR ALL PRIESTS

Divine Savior Jesus Christ, Who has entrusted Your Holy Church to priests, with all the fervor of my heart I recommend to You the wants of my pastor and all priests. Enrich them more and more with true priestly sanctity. Give them generous, all-embracing, apostolic hearts, full of love for You and for all Your souls, so that they, being themselves sanctified in You may sanctify us who are entrusted to their care and may lead us safely to heaven. Bestow upon them in rich abundance all Your priestly graces. Let them ever give us a glowing example of love and fidelity towards Holy Mother Church, towards the Pope and bishops, and grant that by word and example they may shine as models of every virtue.

Most loving Jesus, bless all their priestly labors and sacrifices. Bless all their prayers and words at the altar and in the confessional, in the pulpit, in the school, in confraternities and at the bedside of the sick. Protect and preserve them in all dangers from within and from without!

Divine Savior, give to Your Church priests who abound in true holiness. Call many good boys and young men to the priestly and religious state. Aid and sanctify all those who are to become Your priests. And to the souls of departed priests, grant everlasting rest.

But to me give a true spirit of faith and humble obedience, in order that in my pastor I may ever behold the representative of God and willingly follow all his teachings. Amen.
SEELIG SIND DIE EINER REINES HERZ HABEN; DENN SIE WERDEN GOTT ANSACHT.

XIII - Finished
This work bears the title “Finished.” The priest’s life here below is at an end. He is dead. He has finished the work which God gave him to do. He is sleeping the sleep of death.

We see his body lying in state here, the arms crossed upon the breast, the crucifix in his left hand. At the head of the catafalque is a larger crucifix between two blessed candles. Jesus is the Light of the world; through His death, we have redemption and life everlasting. The richly appareled angel kneeling in the foreground with a look of contentment, admiration, and heavenly peace on his face, is pointing to the body and holding a plaque with an inscription (in German) from Revelation 13:13 – “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for their works follow them.” Notice how lilies surround the catafalque, symbolic of priestly purity and chastity. Observe the wreath which Art and Science are humbly offering. The two men who are standing represent Catholic societies and workingmen’s guilds. The one has his left hand to his face while his right hands points to the priest still in death; an attitude of keen loss. The other has his hands clasped in grateful prayer while he gazes sorrowfully upon the deceased. Observe how the innocent children, for whom he did so much, scatter flowers upon the remains of their beloved Father in God. Note the expression of loving grief upon the face of the old woman kneeling there; she will pray much for him and speak to all his zeal for souls. Her worn hand is placing a spray of flowers upon the feet. The youth kneeling at her side is utterly heartbroken: he has lost his best friend. A native of India is kneeling there, too, bowed low in grief and clasping the rosary that he has around his neck, symbolical of this priest’s zeal for the foreign missions.

At the top of our beautiful drawing in a large circle surrounded by luminous stars and then by the words of the sixth beatitude (in German): “Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God,” we behold this same priest, whose body lies below cold in death, ascending to heaven, beautiful beyond compare, in a blaze of glory, surrounded by an array of admiring angels, clad in the priestly alb and stole, a glowing host upon his breast, his arms stretched out in longing as with upturned face his eyes gaze upon the vision that calls out to him: “Come, you blessed of My Father, possess the Kingdom.”

Ah, yes; though dead he yet speaks. He seems to say in the words of Psalm 15:8-11: “I set the Lord always in my sight, for He is at my right hand, that I be not moved. Therefore my heart has been glad, and my tongue has rejoiced; moreover my flesh also shall rest in hope. Because You will not leave my soul in hell, nor will You give Your holy one to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life, You shall fill me with joy with Your countenance, at Your right hand are delights even to the end.”

Verily, thus speaks the Lord: “He that shall overcome, shall thus be clothed with white garments, and I will not blot out his name out of the Book of Life, and I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.” (Revelation 3:5)

No wonder the faithful flock in such great numbers to the funeral of a priest! They realize what the priest means to them; they realize what the priest is in the eyes of God. That, too, is why so many millions are already practicing the devotion of Priest’s Day throughout the world. Do you wish to join that number?

“May my soul die the death of the just, and my last end be like to them.” (Numbers 23:10)
XIV - The Priest’s Triumph
The final drawing is called “The Priest’s Triumph.”

The priest, chosen, blessed and consecrated by the Most High, having finished the course of this earthly life, is being ushered into the courts of heaven. Clad in priestly robes, filled with ineffable peace and happiness, the blessed one is being escorted to the throne of the Divine Savior by his angel bearing the large, magnificent palm of victory. What a look of satisfaction and triumph there is on the face of that escorting angel!

Observe how lovingly and trustingly the blessed priest gazes upon the Savior Who so graciously awaits him upon His heavenly throne. How benignly the Word made flesh gazes upon him. From those divine lips we seem to hear the words: “Come, you blessed of My Father; come, you shall be crowned.” At the Savior’s right the angel of the grace of vocation holds on a cushion the three crowns of his threefold office and of his threefold sacred promises of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

See how Mary, the good Mother of priests, the gentle shepherdess of the priesthood, arises from her throne at Jesus’ side and stretches out her arms in welcome. What a heavenly reception! On the steps of the throne little lambs of innocence are seated in a childlike stance; and another group of little ones is singing. Are they not singing our Lady’s jubilant Magnificat – “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior”? Observe the orchestra of angels above the little choristers, accompanying the melody with harp and violin and other instruments and with the thrilling tones of the silver trumpets. Behind the glorified priest you see a throng of blessed souls, the head of the heavenly procession, as it were, of those souls whom this priest saved by his zealous labors in the vineyard of the Lord. They had obeyed the precept: “Obey your priests and be subject to them; for they watch over you and must give an account of your souls.”

What must be the sentiments of this blessed priest as he hears the Savior’s words which we read in Latin at the upper corners of our drawing: EUGE, SERVE BONE ET FIDELIS, QUIA IN PAUCA FUISTI FIDELIS SUPRA MULTA TE CONSTITUAM; INTRA IN GAUDIUM DOMINI TUI: “Well done, good and faithful servant, because you have been faithful over a few things, I will place you over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord.” (Matthew 25:33). Is he not thinking of the many passages of Holy Scriptures that he mediated on so often during his earthly life and saying: “He has saved my life from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from falls. I will go in unto God, unto God Who gives joy to my soul. He Who gave the grace, now gives the glory, too. Now the Lord, God the almighty, is my temple. All who trust in You shall rejoice; they shall be filled with jubilation forever, because You, O Lord, dwell in them. You have taken my right hand and have heaped honors upon me.” But the words are feeble when we attempt to express the triumph of the priest of God.

Do you pray for priests, for more priests, for good priests, for holy priests? You should do so. Millions who are practicing the devotion of Priest’s Day are doing so. Join their ranks.

Let us pray: Jesus Christ, Son of God, we beg You to increase the number of holy priests who walk in Your footsteps and labor in Your vineyard with apostolic zeal. Give them Your light and Your grace, that they may convert unbelievers and heretics, strengthen the weak, and spread Your Kingdom ever more and more upon earth. Grant that in unshakeable fidelity we may stand firmly by Your representative, may listen to his words, and support the labors of the shepherds of our souls by a devout and Christian life. Amen.