



Diocese of Missouri
THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Qualities We Seek in a Priest

The Commission on Ministry of the Diocese of Missouri, through conversations and a listening process, has defined a set of qualities we are looking for in people called to the priesthood. The qualities listed below are not meant to be an exhaustive list, and we do not anticipate that every potential priest exhibits every quality. Knowing that seekers come to discernment at varying stages of life, we fully anticipate that in a younger candidate, these qualities may be in “seed” form. In a more mature person, we would anticipate these qualities should also be more mature. Likewise, we hope to recruit future priests that represent the diversity of our region in terms of race, gender, orientation, and language. We would anticipate that some of these qualities manifest themselves differently in different contexts.

1. **Passion for the Gospel** – Priests proclaim the Good News of God in Christ, and they interpret the Gospel for their specific context. “A priest helps the congregation understand its own story in terms of God’s saving acts in history. A priest helps a congregation see God’s saving grace active in its common life.” (Theology of Ministry.)
2. **Prayerful Commitment to Spiritual Practice and Sacramental Life** – “As the deer longs for the water-brooks, so longs my soul for you, O God.” Psalm 42 describes a holy longing for God. In the life of a priest, a degree of structure should develop to regularly engage in prayer, the sacraments, and study. A potential priest should feel the centrality of the sacraments in their life and the life of the community. Such a commitment is critical to the ongoing health of clergy in the demanding work of church leadership.
3. **Ability to Lead/Organize Others** – Many of us grew up in a time when priests were known primarily for pastoral care, teaching, and service. In our day we need new leaders who are able to build up new communities of faith and to grow

organizations. We are looking for leaders with a certain degree of magnetism, able to gather others.

4. **Clear and Effective Communication** – We need priests who are willing to speak other languages to help the church to reach into areas and cultures not currently well served by our tradition. We are looking for priests who will be effective preachers in the pulpit, on the street corner, and online.
5. **Non-anxious Caring Presence** – Priesthood invites a person into the center of a community, and to the holy moments in individual lives. Priests are summoned to hospitals, and to lead difficult meetings about the future of organizations. As such, we seek leaders who are comfortable in their own skin, and who can bring wisdom, care, and grace to others during life's great joys and sorrows.
6. **Collaboration** – An effective priest seeks to build up a community of peers in ministry. While the priest has a specific and central call to preach and preside, they should be eager to share the limelight, and to distribute leadership humbly and effectively so that the whole church might live into its vocation of ministry.
7. **A Passion for Service and Justice** – While this quality is the hallmark of the diaconate, it is also important for priests. For priests this passion may come with a particular nuance, a desire to ask questions about how the systems of the church might be more just, and how scripture and sacrament might sustain the community's engagement in the world.
8. **Courage and Vocational Flexibility** – We find ourselves at a pivotal moment in the life of the church as an institution. The Diocese of Missouri cannot guarantee full-time employment, a pension, and benefits to every priest we ordain. Some priests will have to sustain their church work with secular employment. Many of our institutions are coming to moments of critical discernment about their future. We need priests who see this challenge with a sense of courage and excitement. We need clergy who are willing to plot out the future, to plant new missional communities, and to reorganize the church.