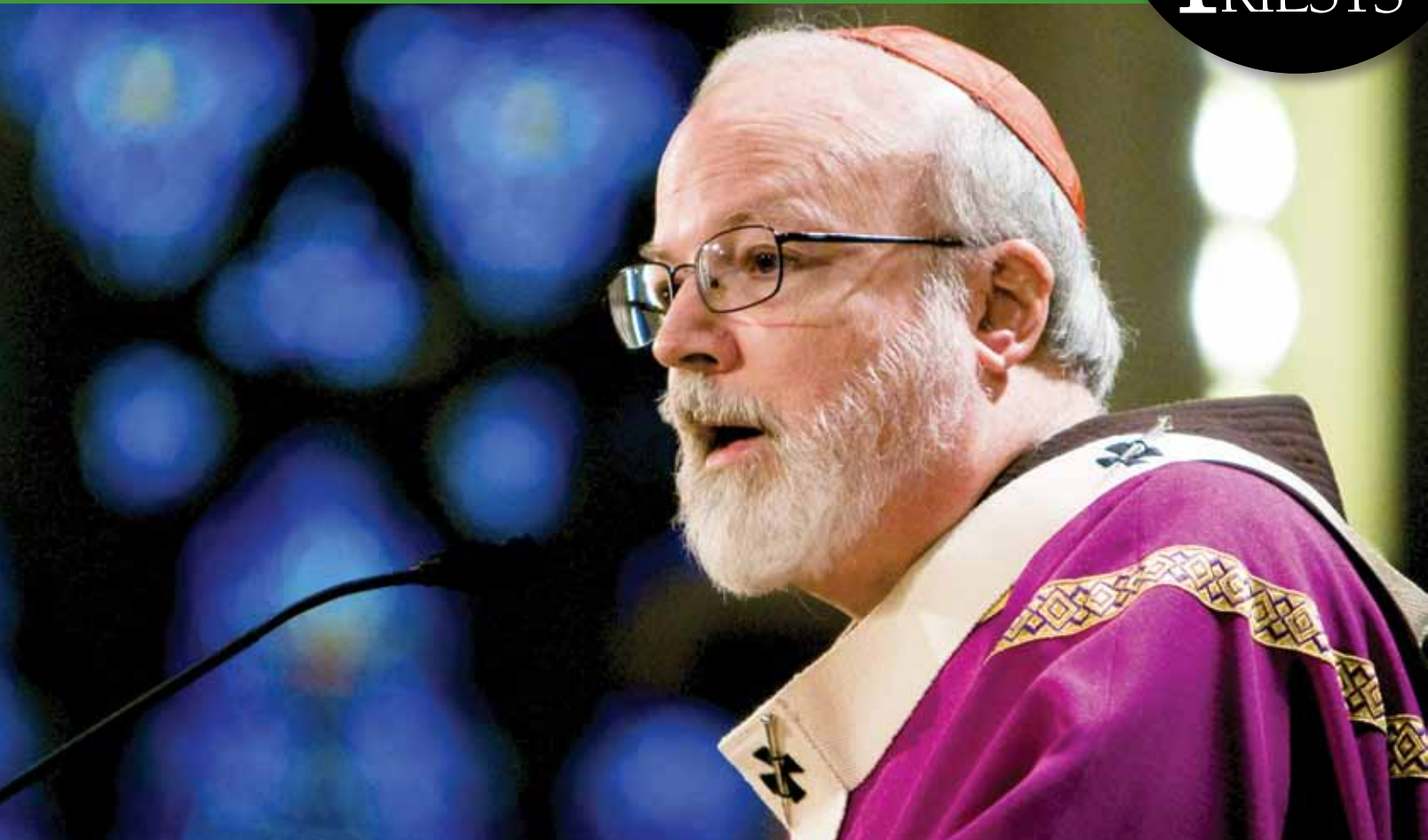


Diocesan priest – religious priest What's the difference?

By Doug Culp



Cardinal Sean O'Malley of the Archdiocese of Boston, is a Franciscan.

Q: What is the difference between a diocesan and religious priest?

A: They're both priests, but their ministries are a bit different.

A diocesan priest, or secular cleric, is ordained for a geographically defined area called a diocese. It is within this diocese that the priest ministers to the local church, generally serving in parish communities – although he may also assist in schools, hospitals and prisons, depending upon the local needs.

A diocesan priest does not take any vows – but he does make promises. He commits to living celibately and to be obedient and respectful to his local bishop. He does not live in a religious community, though he may live with other priests. It's customary for him to wear a Roman collar.

On the other hand, a religious order priest is not ordained for a particular diocese. He belongs to a religious community, such as the Franciscans, Claretians or Dominicans. He

strives to live the charism – or grace/mission/goal – of the community's founder.

Religious order priests often have a ministry related to that charism, such as education or health care. However, at the request of a bishop, a religious priest may also do parish work, sometimes in a parish that has been entrusted to his order or congregation. He remains under the authority of his superior and the rule of his community – except as it regards the particular parish ministry where he is to follow the directives of the bishop.

Unlike his diocesan counterpart, a religious order priest professes the three vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. According to canon law (c.599 – c.601), the vow of chastity “assumed for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” entails the obligation of perfect self-restraint in celibacy. The vow of poverty refers to a life poor in both fact and spirit. It requires both dependence and limitation in the “use and disposition” of goods according to the rules of the religious order. The vow of obedience requires the submission of the

priest to the will of the legitimate superior as to his occupation, his place of living, his schedule and the rules and regulations of his order or congregation.

A religious priest normally lives in one of the communities of his order. He typically wears the religious habit of his order. Cardinal Sean O'Malley of Boston, for instance, usually wears the brown robe of a Franciscan. Order priests have initials after their names that identify their religious orders. For example, the Jesuits have the letters "SJ" after their names because the technical name is *Societas Jesu*, the *Society of Jesus*, in Latin. Likewise, the title for the Dominicans is *Ordo Predicatorum*, the Order of Preachers, thus "OP" follows their names.

Q: What is the life of a typical religious order priest?

A: Religious order priests normally live together as a community. As a community, they typically follow a pre-determined schedule that includes a combination of prayer, work and leisure.

With that said, what an individual religious order priest does daily is so varied and complex that it is almost impossible to do anything but generalize. For example, many are unable to live in community for extended periods of time because they are engaged in mission work that carries them to distant lands. Some have one main occupation such as teaching, parish ministry or social work and their lives reflect the demands of these positions. Others are contemplatives who spend their days combining prayer with some form of labor in order to sustain the community.



cope:

>> The cope is a long mantle or cape, worn around the shoulders and fastened at the chest with an ornamental clasp. For years, it was used simply as a cloak for warmth and gradually came to be specialized as a vestment for the chant of the Divine Office. Copes were particularly associated with cantors. Today, the cope is worn by priests, bishops or deacons during ceremonial functions other than the Mass.

Major orders and their charisms

>> A religious order is distinguished by a charism, or particular grace granted by God to the religious order's founder or the order itself. Here is a list of a few of the priestly religious orders and their charisms:

Order:	Charism:
Dominicans	Preaching
Benedictines	Liturgical prayer and monasticism
Franciscans	Poverty
Jesuits	Education and mission
Passionists	Preaching of the Passion
Fathers of Divine Mercy	Preaching of divine mercy of God
Carmelites	Contemplative prayer
Augustinians	Genuine community life
Maryknoll	Mission
Vincentians	Champion needs of the poor
Redemptorists	Preach the Gospel to the poor
Salesians	Pastoral charity in missionary expansion

How has Hollywood depicted Catholic priests?

>> We often hear complaints about how priests and the church are portrayed in the movies. Have things really changed? Take a look back at some priestly depictions from the 1930s and '40s – an era some call the 'golden age' of filmed priest-heroes.

In 1937, Father Flanagan's Boys Town had become so well-known that MGM Studios offered to donate \$5,000 toward making a movie about it. Although he originally declined, Father Flanagan agreed to the movie after he saw a script he liked. The movie, starring Spencer Tracy and Mickey Rooney, was filmed on the campus in Omaha, Neb., and was one of the most popular films of 1938. Spencer Tracy won an Academy Award for his role as Father Flanagan. He donated the famous gold statue to Boys Town, where it remains on display today.

