

Oh, how I love garlic, and lots of it in the food I cook, and I'm talking bulbs, not just cloves! And when it's appropriate to have incense at Holy Mass (and when isn't it?), there should be a cloud, I mean, like: Honey, what happened to the kids; I can't see them?

I try to accommodate liturgical non-smokers by using hypo-allergenic incense. The best is Trinity brand, Powder Blend - the blue stuff. It puts out a lot of smoke with a pleasing scent. It costs \$39 a pound, but that's affordable with the money we save from not smoking.

My love for garlic and incense inspired me to compose a slogan: Priests are like garlic in cooking and incense at Mass, more is better! And so, we pray for more priests, invite youth to consider it, and speak positively, if not about priests, then at least about priest-*hood*.

Truth be told, we already have lots of priests. By last count, we have a little over 185K priests! Okay, not what we call ministerial priests, who are ordained, but the priesthood of believers, who are priests by virtue of their Catholic faith and Baptism.

The Second Reading says that Jesus made us *all* priests to offer the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving in Holy Mass, and to offer prayers of petition for ourselves and others, like for the end of the pandemic, or for a good harvest, and to lead others in prayer and worship.

Our problem is, that we not only don't have enough from the ministerial priesthood for our parishes, we also don't have enough from the priesthood of the baptized active in parish ministries. That is part of synodality: all of us bear a share of responsibility for ministry.

A parish is more than a place to fulfill the Sunday obligation, and is measured by more than the numbers. A parish is created when Catholics gather to do as a community what they each do individually: serve the poor, learn and teach the Gospel, pray and worship.

Those three things make up the ministry of the priesthood of believers. If we don't do them as individuals and as a parish, then it isn't really a parish, and parishioners have thereby determined that it will close, even if it has the largest number of registered parishioners.

If you can't share my enthusiasm for garlic in cooking and incense at Holy Mass, I hope you will at least join me in praying for more ministerial priests for our parishes, as well as doing those priestly things essential to helping our parishes survive, and even thrive. Please, God.