

19 Ways to Let Your Parish Priest Know You Appreciate Them

Our parish priests are some of the hardest working members of the Church. The typical parish priest works every weekend and holiday, lives in the same building as their office, and only gets one day off a week, not to mention they're being asked to care for more souls and take on more responsibilities and roles than ever before.

We asked a few parish priests how we could best let them know we're thankful for them and all the work they do for us.

In no particular order:

1. Pray for Your Priest(s)

"The most important thing a parishioner can do for his/her priest is pray for them. We are always praying for someone, even required to offer a Mass every Sunday and Holy Day of Obligation on behalf of our parishioners. It's just good to know that they pray for us everyday."

"A rosary, a holy hour, a small offering or a daily suffering offered for the priest."

"Send cards to priests with assurances of prayer for their intentions."

"The offering of prayers for the priest and his ministry. (It's a great joy to know of prayers since I know that my life and ministry are only as fruitful as the people praying for me.)"

2. Cook Them a Meal, Especially on Their Busy Days

"It would be nice if someone made sure that the priest(s) of the parish had a nice cooked meal on Sundays and major holidays. We often have no cooks and after a long morning, it would be nice to come home to something we didn't have to make."

"Find out his favorite meal and make it for him."

3. Celebrate Their Special Days

“Celebrating the priest’s birthday and ordination day are good thoughts, too.”

“It's nice to be remembered on the day of my priestly ordination.”

4. Pray More, Complain Less

“The vast majority of interactions seem to revolve around a complaint about the priest, the parish, a parishioner, the music, the temperature in the church, a burned out lightbulb, a decision, etc. and rarely about the supernatural realities.”

5. Offer to Help

“Don’t wait to be asked! Priests are ordained to give, and it’s hard for us to ask for things.”

“Volunteer your time to the parish as a sign of support and service.”

“Consider increasing your tithe to show your support for the parish and priest.”

6. Go to Mass and/or Confession

“Nothing will make a priest happier.”

“Pick a day, go to a Mass that he's celebrating, and get a bunch of people to sit in the front rows. When Father asks you after Mass why, tell him you were offering your participation at Mass in thanksgiving for His priesthood.”

7. Write Them a Note Expressing Your Gratitude

“A note, especially to a priest with whom you’ve lost touch, letting him know how his priesthood impacted your life - and that you’re still with the program - means a lot.”

“My favorite thing to receive from people is a letter. Not a card with a few words. Those are nice too, but I love receiving a letter or a card with a substantial message in it. It is very powerful to hear somebody describe

exactly HOW the thing I said or did was so fruitful for them. It is a reminder that Jesus is a lot bigger than me and he can do great things with the little I have to offer.”

“I really appreciate when people say to me personally or send notes of gratitude: "Thanks for your priesthood", "Thanks for being our pastor." 'Thanks for answering the call.'”

“Tell them that they have made a difference in your life.”

“Write them a thank you with a tone of appreciation.”

“Simple notes mean a great deal to priests these days. Things like notes of appreciation after funerals and weddings a simple compliment after a well prepared homily.”

“Being specific helps!”

8. Say Thank You

“Thank the priest for every Mass. Even if you don't necessarily like the priest, as the Mass is always about the presence of Jesus.”

“Even something as simple as saying to the priest after confession "Thank you for your ministry and I will pray for you" can mean a great deal.”

“Make a video asking random parishioners one thing they would like to thank Fr. _____ for.”

9. Give Them a Compliment

“Look for opportunities to compliment priests. Even ones you don't particularly like.”

“I always cheer up when someone tells me after Mass, 'That was a beautiful Mass, Father.'”

10. Look Out for Their Wellbeing

“Encourage priest to take time off.”

11. Save the Drama for Yo Mama

“Avoid and discourage gossip about priests and parishes.”

“Don’t gossip or criticize, instead offer to help and to build up. I wonder how many vocations were ruined when young people hear adults tear down the priest, usually because of some petty parish dispute.”

12. Let Him Know You Have His Back

“When you witness a situation when someone is being rude to a priest, let him know that you noticed and express compassion.”

13. Establish a Relationship

“Don’t tell him what you don’t like if that’s the first time you’ve bothered to talk to him.”

“Say hello before telling him what’s wrong.”

14. Have Realistic Expectations and Be Helpful

“He’s probably not a plumber, so don’t expect him to fix the leaky pipe. But definitely do ask him if he knows it’s leaking.”

“Always assume good will. Offering feedback is helpful, but criticism and complaint given without humility and sincere love is draining after a while.”

15. Don’t Be a “Priest Collector”

“Don’t think that you have to have the priest over every Sunday. Don’t expect to be the priest’s friend - he is your pastor/assistant and he needs to keep things professional. Don’t brag to fellow parishioners how “Close you guys are” as then that creates animosity or jealousy - and THAT stresses the priest out.”

16. Be Supportive

“Whenever there is something that is stressful, such as a difficult time during the parish, I know "reinforcement" is appreciated. I haven't had much of that in my first 5 years (yet) but I recall some tremendously difficult funerals where people sent a nice note. I recall discovering a stash of notes here at St. Mary's from 23 years ago when the school closed. The newspapers and some very vocal but few people were out for the pastor, using attacks of "racist" and "uncaring." The pastor, then, saved all the dozens of notes from people offering to him their understanding at the difficult decision he made.”

17. Give Him Space

“Sometimes it's good to be just left alone, too. Stay away from what is called "unkind kindness" which is assuming Father is (Lonely, depressed, stressed, anxious, etc) when sometimes he needs to just blow off some steam.”

18. Invite Him Over

“It's nice when people think to invite me to family gatherings: special birthdays or anniversary celebrations, holiday dinners (even though I usually decline because I'm with my own family -- it's nice to be invited).”

19. Strive for Holiness

“Ultimately, being the saint God desires them to be! There's nothing more exciting for a priest than witnessing holiness in the lives of the people to whom he ministers; not only is that an experience of grace that his labor is bearing fruit but it's also tremendously edifying in his own pursuit of holiness.”

I hope this list has inspired you to do something for your priest. Remember, each priest has his own preferences and ways that make him feel appreciated. Some may really like being invited over for dinner, while other priests may recharge with a quiet dinner alone in the rectory. Every priest I contacted mentioned a well-thought, meaningful letter or card mentioning specific ways he helped you. Maybe that's a great place to start. No matter what you do, let's make sure we let our priests know just how much we care for them.

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