**Clergy**

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

(left to right) [George Carey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Carey), Archbishop of Canterbury (1991–2002), [Jonathan Sacks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan_Sacks), Chief Rabbi ([UK](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UK)), [Mustafa Cerić](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mustafa_Ceri%C4%87), Grand Mufti of Bosnia, [Jim Wallis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_Wallis), Sojourners, USA. 2009 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

*For other uses, see* [*Cleric (disambiguation)*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cleric_%28disambiguation%29)*.*

**Clergy** is a generic term used to refer to the formal religious leadership within some [religions](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion). A **clergyman**, **clergywoman**, **clergyperson**, **churchman**, or **cleric** is a member of the clergy, especially one who is a [priest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priest), [preacher](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preacher), [pastor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pastor), or other religious professional. Clergy have different functions in different religious traditions. They may lead certain rituals, or help in spreading religious [doctrines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Doctrine) and practices.

In [Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity), specific names and roles of clergy vary by [denomination](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_denomination), and there is a wide range of formal and informal clergy positions, including [deacons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deacon), [priests](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priest), [bishops](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop), [preachers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Preacher), [pastors](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pastor), and [ministers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_minister). In [Shia Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shia_Islam), a religious leader is often known as an [imam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imam) or [ayatollah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayatollah). In Jewish tradition, a religious leader is often a [rabbi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbi) or [hazzan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hazzan) (cantor).

**Etymology**

The term ultimately comes from the [Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language) "κλῆρος" - *klēros*, "a lot", "that which is assigned by lot" ([allotment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Athenian_democracy)) or metaphorically, "inheritance". Within [Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity), especially in [Eastern Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Christianity) and formerly in Western [Roman Catholicism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Catholicism), the term *cleric* refers to any individual who has received the clerical [tonsure](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tonsure), including [deacons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deacon), [priests](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priest), and [bishops](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop). In [Latin Roman Catholicism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_rite), the [tonsure](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tonsure) was a prerequisite for receiving any of the [minor orders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minor_orders) or [major orders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Major_orders) before the tonsure, [minor orders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minor_orders), and the [subdiaconate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subdiaconate) were abolished following the [Second Vatican Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Vatican_Council). Now, the clerical state is tied to reception of the diaconate. [Minor Orders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minor_Orders) are still given in the [Eastern Catholic Churches](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Catholic_Churches), and those who receive those orders are 'minor clerics.'

The use of the word "cleric" is also appropriate for [Eastern Orthodox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox_Church) minor clergy who are tonsured in order not to trivialize orders such as those of Reader in the Eastern Church, or for those who are tonsured yet have no minor or major orders. It is in this sense that the word entered the Arabic language, most commonly in Lebanon from the French, as *kleriki* (or, alternatively, *cleriki*) meaning "[seminarian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seminarian)." This is all in keeping with Eastern Orthodox concepts of clergy, which still include those who have not yet received, or do not plan to receive, the diaconate.

The term [clerk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clerk_%28position%29) derives from cleric, since in medieval times the clergy were one of the few groups who could read, and therefore were often employed to do bookkeeping and similar work. The term clerical work continues to this day to refer to such functions.

A priesthood is a body of [priests](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priest), [shamans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shaman), or [oracles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oracle) who have special religious authority or function. The term priest is derived from the [Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language) [presbyter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyter) (πρεσβύτερος, *presbýteros*, elder or senior), but is often used in the sense of [sacerdos](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacerdotalism) in particular, i.e., for clergy performing [ritual](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ritual) within the sphere of the [sacred](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacred_%28comparative_religion%29) or [numinous](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Numinous) communicating with the [gods](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gods) on behalf of the community.

**Buddhism**

[14th Dalai Lama](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/14th_Dalai_Lama), Tenzin Gyatso in 2007

*see also* [*Bhikkhu*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhikkhu)

[Buddhist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism) clergy are often referred to as the [Sangha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sangha) and consists of the order of monks ([bhikshus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhikshu)) and nuns ([bhikshunis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhikshuni)) founded by [Gautama Buddha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gautama_Buddha) during the 5th century BC, as well as lay priests in the modern era and [ngagpas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ngagpa) of the Tibetan tradition. According to scriptural records, these celibate monks and nuns in the time of the Buddha lived an austere life of meditation, living as wandering beggars for nine months out of the year and remaining in retreat during the rainy season. In modern times, however, the role of Buddhist clergy can vary greatly across different countries. For instance, in [Japan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japan) and in some sects in [Korea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korea), monastic law regarding celibacy has been abandoned and Buddhist clergy do not take the ordination of a monk or nun but take alternate ordination which allows them to marry (though nuns, at least in Japan, tend to remain unmarried). Likewise, there are some lamas (Buddhist teachers) of the Tibetan tradition called "[ngagpa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ngagpa)," who do not receive monastic ordination. On the other hand, countries practicing [Theravada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theravada) Buddhism, such as [Thailand](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thailand), [Burma](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burma), [Cambodia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cambodia) and [Sri Lanka](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sri_Lanka), tend to take a much more conservative view of monastic life, and continue to observe precepts that forbid monks from touching women or working in certain secular roles.

While female monastic ([*bhikkhuni*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bhikkhuni)) lineages existed in most Buddhist countries at one time, the [Theravada](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theravada) lineages of Southeast Asia died out during the 14th-15th Century AD. Furthermore, it appears that the bhikkhuni lineage was never transmitted to Tibet in the first place and only the novice ordination is available to them. The status and future of female Buddhist clergy in these countries continues to be a subject of debate. In countries without a formal female monastic lineage, women may take other religious roles, but they are generally not granted the same rights and privileges as recognized male monastics.

The diversity of Buddhist traditions makes it difficult to generalize about Buddhist clergy. In the United States, [Pure Land](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pure_Land) priests of the Japanese diaspora serve a role very similar to Protestant ministers of the Christian tradition. Meanwhile, reclusive Theravada forest monks in Thailand live a life devoted to meditation and the practice of austerities in small communities in rural Thailand- a very different life from even their city-dwelling counterparts, who may be involved primarily in teaching, the study of scripture, and the administration of the nationally organized (and government sponsored) Sangha. In the Zen traditions of China, Korea and Japan, manual labor is an important part of religious discipline; meanwhile, in the Theravada tradition, prohibitions against monks working as laborers and farmers continue to be generally observed.

Currently in North America, there are both celibate and non-celibate clergy in a variety of Buddhist traditions from around the world. In some cases they are forest dwelling monks of the Theravada tradition and in other cases they are married clergy of a Japanese Zen lineage and may work a secular job in addition to their role in the Buddhist community. There is also a growing realization that traditional training in ritual and meditation as well as philosophy may not be sufficient to meet the needs and expectations of American lay people. Some communities have begun exploring the need for training in counseling skills as well. Along these lines, at least two fully accredited Master of Divinity programs are currently available: one at Naropa University in Boulder, CO and one at the University of the West in Rosemead, CA.

**Christianity**

Main article: [Minister (Christianity)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minister_%28Christianity%29)

In general, Christian clergy are [ordained](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ordained); that is, they are set apart for specific [ministry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_ministry) in religious rites. Others who have definite roles in worship but who are not ordained (e.g. [laypeople](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laity) acting as [acolytes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acolytes)) are generally not considered clergy, even though they may require some sort of official approval to exercise these ministries.

Types of clerics are distinguished from offices, even when the latter are commonly or exclusively occupied by clerics. A Roman Catholic cardinal, for instance, is almost without exception a cleric, but a cardinal is not a type of cleric. An archbishop is not a distinct type of cleric, but is simply a bishop who occupies a particular position with special authority. Conversely, a youth minister at a [parish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parish) may or may not be a cleric. Different churches have different systems of clergy, though churches with similar [polity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesiastical_polity) have similar systems.

**Anglicanism**

Main article: [Anglican ministry](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglican_ministry)

Bishop Maurício Andrade, [primate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primate_%28religion%29) of the [Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglican_Episcopal_Church_of_Brazil), gives the [crosier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crosier) to Bishop Saulo Barros.

In [Anglicanism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglicanism) clergy consist of the orders of [deacons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deacon), [priests](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priest) (presbyters) and [bishops](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop) in ascending order of seniority. [*Canon*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canon_%28priest%29), [*archdeacon*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archdeacon), [*archbishop*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archbishop) and the like are specific positions within these orders. Bishops are typically overseers, presiding over a [diocese](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocese) composed of many [parishes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parish), with an archbishops presiding over a [province](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Province), which is a group of dioceses. A [parish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parish) (generally a single church) is looked after by one or more priests, although one priest may be responsible for several parishes. New clergy are ordained deacons. Those seeking to become priests are usually ordained priest after a year. Since the 1960s some Anglican churches have reinstituted the diaconate as a permanent, rather than transitional, order of ministry focused on ministry that bridges the church and the world, especially ministry to those on the margins of society.

For the forms of address for Anglican clergy, see [Forms of address in the United Kingdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forms_of_address_in_the_United_Kingdom).

For a short period of history before the ordination of women as deacons, priests and bishops began within Anglicanism they could be "deaconesses". Although they were usually considered having a ministry distinct from deacons they often had similar ministerial responsibilities.

In Anglican churches all clergy are permitted to marry. In most national churches women may become deacons or priests, but while fifteen out of 38 national churches allow for women bishops, only five have ordained any. Celebration of the [Eucharist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eucharist) is reserved for priests and bishops.

National Anglican churches are presided over by one or more [primates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primate_%28religion%29) or [metropolitans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metropolitan_bishop) (archbishops or presiding bishops). The senior archbishop of the [Anglican Communion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglican_Communion) is the [Archbishop of Canterbury](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archbishop_of_Canterbury), who acts as leader of the [Church of England](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_of_England) and 'first among equals' of the primates of all Anglican churches.

Being a deacon, priest or bishop is considered a function of the person and not a job. When priests retire they are still priests even if they no longer have any active ministry. However, they only hold the basic rank after retirement. Thus a retired archbishop can only be considered a bishop (though it is possible to refer to 'Bishop John Smith, the former Archbishop of York'), a canon or archdeacon is a priest on retirement and does not hold any additional honorifics.

**Catholicism**

[Archbishop](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archbishop) Karl-Josef Rauber, [Cardinal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cardinal_%28Catholicism%29) [Godfried Danneels](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Godfried_Danneels), [Bishop](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop_%28Catholic_Church%29) [Roger Vangheluwe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_Vangheluwe) and Bishop [Jozef De Kesel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jozef_De_Kesel)

See also: [Bishop (Catholic Church)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop_%28Catholic_Church%29), [Priesthood (Catholic Church)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priesthood_%28Catholic_Church%29), and [Deacon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deacon)

[Ordained](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Orders) Catholic clergy are deacons, priests or bishops, i.e., they belong to the diaconate, the presbyterate, or the episcopate. Among bishops, some are [metropolitans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metropolitan_bishop), [archbishops](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archbishop), or [patriarchs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patriarch), and the [Pope](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope) is the Bishop of [Rome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocese_of_Rome). With rare exceptions, [cardinals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cardinal_%28Catholicism%29) are bishops, although it was not always so; formerly, some cardinals were people who had received [clerical tonsure](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clerical_tonsure), but not [Holy Orders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Orders_%28Catholic_Church%29). The [Holy See](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_See) supports the activity of its clergy by the [Congregation for the Clergy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregation_for_the_Clergy), a [dicastery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dicastery) of [Roman curia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_curia).

[Canon Law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Canon_law_%28Catholic_Church%29) indicates (canon 207) that "by divine institution, there are among the Christian faithful in the Church sacred ministers who in law are also called clerics; the other members of the Christian faithful are called lay persons". This distinction of a separate ministry was formed in the early times of Christianity; one early source reflecting this distinction, with the three ranks or orders of [bishop](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop_%28Catholic_Church%29), [priest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyter) and [deacon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deacon), is the writings of Saint [Ignatius of Antioch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignatius_of_Antioch).

Holy Orders is one of the [Seven Sacraments](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacraments_of_the_Catholic_Church) that Catholic doctrine considers to be of divine institution. In the Catholic Church, only men can be clerics.

In the [Latin Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_Church) before 1972, [tonsure](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tonsure) admitted someone to the clerical state, after which he could receive the four [minor orders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minor_orders) (ostiary, lectorate, order of exorcists, order of acolytes) and then the [major orders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Major_orders) of [subdiaconate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subdeacon), diaconate, presbyterate, and finally the episcopate, which Catholic doctrine sees as "the fullness of [Holy Orders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Orders)". Since 1972 the minor orders and the subdiaconate have been replaced by [lay ministries](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_ministry) and clerical tonsure no longer takes place, except in some [Traditionalist Catholic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traditionalist_Catholic) groups, and the clerical state is acquired, even in those groups, by Holy Orders. In the Latin Church the initial level of the three ranks of Holy Orders is that of the diaconate. In addition to these three orders of clerics, some [eastern Catholic Churches](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Catholic_Churches) have what are called "minor clerics".

Members of [institutes of consecrated life](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institute_of_consecrated_life) and [societies of apostolic life](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society_of_apostolic_life) are clerics only if they have received Holy Orders. Thus, unordained monks, [friars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Friar), [nuns](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nun), and religious brothers and sisters are not part of the clergy.

The Code of Canon Law and the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches prescribe that every cleric must be enrolled or "[incardinated](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incardination_and_excardination)" in a [diocese](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocese) or its equivalent (an [apostolic vicariate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apostolic_vicariate), [territorial abbey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Territorial_abbey), [personal prelature](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personal_prelature), etc.) or in a [religious institute](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_institute), [society of apostolic life](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Society_of_apostolic_life) or [secular institute](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Secular_institute). The need for this requirement arose because of the trouble caused from the earliest years of the Church by unattached or vagrant clergy subject to no ecclesiastical authority and often causing scandal wherever they went.

Current canon law prescribes that to be ordained a priest, an education is required of two years of [philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy) and four of [theology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theology), including study of dogmatic and moral theology, the Holy Scriptures, and canon law have to be studied within a [seminary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seminary) or an ecclesiastical faculty at a university.

Within the [Catholic Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church), clerical celibacy is mandated for all clergy in the [Latin Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_Church) except deacons who do not intend to become priests. Exceptions are sometimes admitted for ordination to transitional diaconate and priesthood on a case-by-case basis for married clergymen of other churches or communities who become Catholics, but ordination of married men to the [episcopacy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop_%28Catholic_Church%29) is excluded (see [Personal ordinariate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Personal_ordinariate#Married_former_Anglican_clergy_and_rules_on_celibacy)). [Clerical marriage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clerical_marriage) is not allowed and therefore, if those for whom in some [particular Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Particular_Church) celibacy is optional (such as permanent deacons in the Latin Church) wish to marry, they must do so before ordination. [Eastern Catholic Churches](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Catholic_Churches) either follow the same rules as the Latin Church or require celibacy only for bishops.

In medieval times clergy in western Europe had four privileges:

1. **Right of Canon**: whoever committed real violence on the person of a cleric committed a [sacrilege](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacrilege). This decree was issued in a Lateran Council of 1097 (requested by [Pope Urban II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Urban_II)), then renewed in the [Lateran Council II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Council_of_the_Lateran) (1139)
2. **Right of Forum**: by this right clergy could be judged by ecclesiastical [tribunals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribunal) only. [Emperor Constantine I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantine_I_of_the_Roman_Empire) granted this right for bishops, which was subsequently extended to the rest of the clergy by Imperial Decree
3. **Right of Immunity**: clergy could not be called for military service or other duties or charges incompatible with their role
4. **Right of Competence**: a certain part of the income of clergy, necessary for sustenance, could not be sequestered by any action of creditors

**Latter-day Saints**

Main article: [Priesthood (Latter Day Saints)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priesthood_%28Latter_Day_Saints%29)

[The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Church_of_Jesus_Christ_of_Latter-day_Saints) (Mormons) has no dedicated clergy, and is governed instead by unpaid local [priesthood holders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priesthood_%28Latter_Day_Saints%29) and paid [general authorities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/General_authority). No formal theological training is required. All clergy members are called by revelation and the laying on of hands by one who holds authority. [Jesus Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_Christ) stands at the head of the church and leads the church through revelation given to a living [prophet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prophet) and [Twelve Apostles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twelve_Apostles). The Prophet and Apostles lead over the quorums of the [seventy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seventy) which are assigned geographically over several "stakes" within the church. Each stake has a stake president who has two counselors and a high council which preside over the stake. The stake is made up of several congregations, which are called "wards" or "branches." Individual congregations ("wards") are led by a [Bishop](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop_%28Latter_Day_Saints%29) or branch president who was called to his position through revelation by the church's hierarchical leadership, and he serves until released from the position.

Generally, all worthy males at (or above) the age of 12 are ordained to the [Aaronic Priesthood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aaronic_priesthood_%28LDS_Church%29) as deacons, teachers or priests, authorizing them to perform certain ordinances and sacraments, and adult males are ordained to the [Melchizedek Priesthood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Melchizedek_priesthood_%28Latter_Day_Saints%29), as elders, seventies, or high priests in that priesthood, which is concerned with spiritual leadership of the church. Although the term "clergy" is not typically used in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it would most appropriately apply to ward bishops and stake presidents. Merely holding an office in the priesthood does not imply authority over other church members or agency to act on behalf of the church.

**Orthodoxy**

[Eastern Orthodox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox) clergy: [bishop](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bishop) (right, at [altar](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altar)), [priest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Priest) (left), and two [deacons](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deacon) (in gold)

The Orthodox Church has three ranks of holy orders: bishop, priest, and deacon. These are the same offices identified in the [New Testament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament) and found in the [Early Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Early_Church), as testified by the writings of the [Holy Fathers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Fathers). Each of these ranks is ordained through the [Sacred Mystery](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacred_Mystery) (sacrament) of the [laying on of hands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laying_on_of_hands) (called [*Cheirotonia*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cheirotonia)) by bishops. Priests and deacons are ordained by their own [diocesan bishop](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diocesan_bishop), while bishops are [consecrated](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Consecrated) through the laying on of hands of at least three other bishops.

Within each of these three ranks there are found a number of titles. Bishops may have the title of [archbishop](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archbishop), [metropolitan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metropolitan_bishop), and [patriarch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patriarch), all of which are considered [honorifics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Honorific). Among the Orthodox, all bishops are considered equal, though an individual may have a place of higher or lower honor, and each has his place within the [order of precedence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_precedence). Priests (also called [presbyters](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyter)) may (or may not) have the title of [archpriest](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archpriest), [protopresbyter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protopresbyter) (also called "protopriest", or "protopope"), [hieromonk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hieromonk) (a [monk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monk) who has been ordained to the priesthood) [archimandrite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archimandrite) (a senior hieromonk) and [Hegumen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hegumen) (abbot). Deacons may have the title of [hierodeacon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hierodeacon) (a monk who has been ordained to the deaconate), [archdeacon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Archdeacon) or [protodeacon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protodeacon).

[Ethiopian Orthodox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ethiopian_Orthodox) clergy lead a procession in celebration of [Saint Michael](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Michael)

The lower clergy are not ordained through *Cheirotonia* (laying on of hands) but through a blessing known as *Cheirothesia* (setting-aside). These clerical ranks are [subdeacon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subdeacon), [reader](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reader_%28liturgy%29) and [altar server](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Altar_server) (also known as [taper-bearer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taper-bearer)). Some churches have a separate service for the blessing of a [cantor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cantor_%28church%29).

Ordination of a bishop, priest, deacon or subdeacon must be conferred during the [Divine Liturgy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divine_Liturgy) (Eucharist)—though in some churches it is permitted to ordain up through deacon during the [Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liturgy_of_the_Presanctified_Gifts)—and no more than a single individual can be ordained to the same rank in any one service. Numerous members of the lower clergy may be ordained at the same service, and their blessing usually takes place during the [Little Hours](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Little_Hours) prior to Liturgy, or may take place as a separate service. The blessing of readers and taper-bearers is usually combined into a single service. Subdeacons are ordained during the Little Hours, but the ceremonies surrounding his blessing continue through the Divine Liturgy, specifically during the [Great Entrance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Entrance).

Bishops are usually drawn from the ranks of the archimandrites, and are required to be celibate; however, a non-monastic priest may be ordained to the episcopate if he no longer lives with his wife (following Canon XII of the [Quinisext Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quinisext_Council)) In contemporary usage such a non-monastic priest is usually [tonsured](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tonsure) to the monastic state, and then elevated to archimandrite, at some point prior to his consecration to the episcopacy. Although not a formal or canonical prerequisite, nowadays bishops are normally required to have attained a University degree, usually but not necessarily in [theology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theology).

Usual titles are *Your Holiness* for a patriarch (with *Your All-Holiness* for the [Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecumenical_Patriarch_of_Constantinople)), *Your Beatitude* for an archbishop in charge of an [autocephalous church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Autocephaly), *Your Eminence* for an archbishop, *Master* or *Your Grace* for a bishop and *Father* for priests, deacons and monks though there are variations between the various Orthodox Churches.

Orthodox priests, deacons, and subdeacons must be either married or celibate (preferably monastic) prior to ordination, but may not marry after ordination. *Re*marriage of clergy following divorce or widowhood is forbidden. Married clergy are considered as best-suited to staff parishes, as a priest with a family is thought better qualified to counsel his flock.

**Protestantism**

Lutheran pastor confirming the youth of his congregation

Clergy in [Protestantism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestantism) fill a wide variety of roles and functions. In many [denominations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_denominations), such as [Methodism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methodism), [Presbyterianism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyterianism), and [Lutheranism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutheranism), the roles of clergy are similar to Roman Catholic or Anglican clergy, in that they hold an [ordained](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ordained) pastoral or priestly office, administer the sacraments, proclaim the word, lead a local church or parish, and so forth. The [Baptist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptist) tradition only recognizes two ordained positions in the church as being the elders (pastors) and deacons as outlined in the third chapter of I Timothyin the Bible. The [Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyterian_Church_%28U.S.A.%29) ordains two types of [presbyters](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyter) or elders, teaching (pastor) and ruling (leaders of the congregation which form a council with the pastors). Teaching elders are seminary trained and ordained as a presbyter and set aside on behalf of the whole denomination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Ordinarily, teaching elders are installed by a presbytery as pastor of a congregation. Ruling elders, after receiving training, may be commissioned by a presbytery to serve as a pastor of a congregation, as well as preach and administer sacraments.

The process of being designated as a member of the Protestant clergy, as well as that of being assigned to a particular office, varies with the denomination or faith group. Some Protestant denominations, such as [Methodism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Methodism), [Presbyterianism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presbyterianism), and [Lutheranism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutheranism), are hierarchical in nature; and ordination and assignment to individual pastorates or other ministries are made by the parent denominations. In other traditions, such as the [Baptist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptist) and other [Congregational](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregational) groups, local churches are free to hire (and often ordain) their own clergy, although the parent denominations typically maintain lists of suitable candidates seeking appointment to local church ministries and encourage local churches to consider these individuals when filling available positions.

Some Protestant denominations require that candidates for ordination be "licensed" to the ministry for a period of time (typically one to three years) prior to being ordained. This period typically is spent performing the duties of ministry under the guidance, supervision, and evaluation of a more senior, ordained minister. In some denominations, however, licensure is a permanent, rather than a transitional state for ministers assigned to certain specialized ministries, such as music ministry or youth ministry.

Many Protestant denominations reject the idea that the clergy are a separate category of people, but rather stress the *priesthood of all believers*. Based on this theological approach, most Protestants do not have a [sacrament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacrament) of [ordination](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Orders) like the pre-[Reformation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant_Reformation) churches. Protestant ordination, therefore, can be viewed more as a public statement by the ordaining body that an individual possesses the theological knowledge, moral fitness, and practical skills required for service in that faith group's ministry. Some Lutheran churches form an exception to this rule, as the [Lutheran Book of Concord](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_Concord) allows ordination to be received as a sacrament.

Some Protestant denominations dislike the word *clergy* and do not use it of their own leaders. Often they refer to their leaders as [pastors](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pastor) or [ministers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religious_minister), titles that, if used, sometimes apply to the person only as long as he or she holds a particular office

[The Very Reverend](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecclesiastical_Addresses) [Philippus Rovenius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippus_Rovenius), Dutch apostolic vicar

[Sir George Fleming, 2nd Baronet](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sir_George_Fleming%2C_2nd_Baronet), British churchman.

The Reverend [Hans G. Ridderstedt](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Hans_G._Ridderstedt&action=edit&redlink=1) (1919-2007), Assistant Vicar at [Stockholm Cathedral](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stockholm_Cathedral)

**Islam**

[Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islam), like [Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judaism), has no clergy in the [sacerdotal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacerdotal) sense. The title [*mullah*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mullah) (a Persian variation of the Arabic *maula*, "master"), commonly translated "cleric" in the West and thought to be analogous to "priest" or "rabbi", is a title of address for any educated or respected figure, not even necessarily (though frequently) religious. The title [*shaikh*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shaikh) ("elder") is used similarly.

The nearest Islamic analogue to the parish priest or pastor, or to the "pulpit [rabbi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbi)" of a synagogue, is called under [Sunni Islam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sunni_Islam) the [*imam khatib*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imam_khatib_%28Sunni_Islam%29)*.* This compound title is merely a common combination of two elementary offices: leader *(imam)* of the congregational prayer, which in larger mosques is performed at the times of all daily prayers; and preacher *(khatib)* of the sermon or *khutba* at the required congregational prayer on Friday. Although either duty can be performed by anyone who is regarded as qualified by the congregation, at most well-established mosques *imam khatib* is a permanent (part-time or full-time) position. He may be elected by the local community, or appointed by an outside authority -- *e. g.,* the national government, or the [waqf](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waqf) which sustains the mosque. There is no ordination as such; the only requirement for appointment as an *imam khatib* is recognition as someone of sufficient learning and virtue to perform both duties on a regular basis, and to instruct the congregation in the basics of Islam. An imam has no religious authority, higher or special position in religious sense. Their opinions might be found valuable to their congregation because of their knowledge on religious matters, but an imam's view of a religious matter is in no sense binding, infallible or absolute like the Catholic Church.

The title [*hafiz*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hafiz_%28Qur%27an%29) (lit. "preserver") is awarded to one who has memorized the entire Qur'an, often by attending a special course for the purpose; the *imam khatib* of a mosque is frequently (though not always) a *hafiz.*

The title *`alim* (pl. [*`ulamah*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulama)), or "scholar", denotes someone who is engaged in advanced study of the traditional Islamic sciences *(`ulum)* at an Islamic university or [*madrasah jami`ah*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Madrasa). In modern Shi`ah Islam, scholars play a more prominent role in the daily lives of Muslims than in Sunni Islam; and there is a hierarchy of higher titles of scholastic authority, such as [*Ayatollah*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ayatollah). Since around the mid-19th century, a more complex title has been used in Twelver Shi'ism, namely Marja' al-taqlid. A marja' is a source and taqlid is a form of religious obedience or imitation. Lay Shi'is must identify a specific marja' whom they emulate, according to his rulings (fatwas) or other writings. On several occasions, the marja'iyyat has been limited to a single individual, in which case his rulings have been applicable to all those living in the Twelver Shi'i world. Of broader importance has been the role of the mujtahid, a cleric of superior knowledge. Mujtahids are few in number, but it is from their ranks that the Maraji' al-taqlid are drawn.

There are several specialist offices pertaining to the study and administration of Islamic law or [*shari`ah*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sharia)*.* A scholar with a specialty in *fiqh* or jurisprudence is known as a [*faqih*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faqih). A [*qadi*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qadi) is a judge in an Islamic court. A [*mufti*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mufti) is a scholar who has completed an advanced course of study which qualifies him to issue judicial opinions or [*fatawah*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fatwa). But again they are merely law professors, judges and lawyers; not priests.

The pastoral care function of the Christian clergy such as a Catholic priest or Protestant pastor is fulfilled for many Muslims by a *murshid* ("guide"), master of the spiritual sciences and disciplines known as *tasawuf* or [Sufism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sufism). Sufi guides are commonly titled *Shaikh* ("Elder") in both speaking and writing; in North Africa they are sometimes called [marabouts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marabout). They are traditionally appointed by their predecessors, in an unbroken teaching lineage reaching back to [Muhammad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muhammad) himself. This lineal succession of Sufi guides is the nearest approach within Islam to the concept of Christian ordination and apostolic succession, but the similarity is superficial and a murshid is not a priest but merely a teacher of Sufi philosophy; they do not have any special or higher position than any other Muslim.

An aspiring Sufi pledges himself (or herself) to a *murshid* by taking a vow of obedience, or [*bai'ah*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bay%27ah)*.* The aspirant is then known as a *murid* ("disciple" or "follower"). A *murid* who takes on special disciplines under the guide's instruction, ranging from an intensive spiritual retreat to voluntary poverty and homelessness, is sometimes known as a [dervish](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dervish).

During the [Islamic Golden Age](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_Golden_Age), it was common for scholars to attain recognized mastery of both the "exterior sciences" *(`ulum az-zahir)* of the madrasahs, and the "interior sciences" *(`ulum al-batin)* of Sufism. [Al-Ghazali](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Ghazali) and [Rumi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rumi) are two notable examples.

**Judaism**

Rabbi [Moshe Feinstein](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moshe_Feinstein), a leading Rabbinical authority for Orthodox Jewry

[Regina Jonas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regina_Jonas), the world's first female rabbi, ordained in 1935, killed in the [Holocaust](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust) in 1944.

Judaism does not have clergy as such, although according to the Torah there is a tribe of priests known as the [Kohanim](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kohen) who were leaders of the religion up to the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 70AD when most [Sadducees](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sadducee) were wiped out; each member of the tribe, a [Kohen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kohen) had priestly duties, many of which centered around the sacrificial duties, atonement and blessings of the Israelite nation. Today, Jewish Kohanim know their status by family tradition and DNA, and still offer the priestly blessing during certain services in the synagogue and perform the Pidyon Ha-ben (redemption of the first-born son) ceremony.

Since the time of the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, the religious leaders of Judaism have often been [rabbis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbi), who are technically scholars in Jewish law empowered to act as judges in a rabbinical court. All types of Judaism except Orthodox Judaism allow women as well as men to be ordained as [rabbis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabbi) and [cantors](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hazzan). The leadership of a Jewish congregation is, in fact, in the hands of the laity: the president of a synagogue is its actual leader and any adult Jew (or at least any male adult Jew in Orthodox congregations) can lead prayer services. Rabbis are not intermediaries between [God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God) and humans: the word "rabbi" means "teacher", and the rabbi functions as advisor to the congregation and counselor. The rabbi is not an occupation found in the [Torah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torah) (Five books of Moses); the first time this word is mentioned is in the [Mishnah](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mishnah). The modern form of the rabbi developed in the [Talmudic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talmud) era. Rabbis are given authority to make interpretations of [Jewish law and custom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halakha). Traditionally, a man obtains one of three levels of [Semicha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Semicha) (rabbinic ordination) after the completion of an arduous learning program in Torah, [Tanakh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tanakh) (Hebrew Bible), Mishnah and [Talmud](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talmud), [Midrash](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midrash), Jewish ethics and lore, the codes of [Jewish law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halakha) and [responsa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Responsa), [theology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theology) and [philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy).

Since the early medieval era an additional communal role, the [*Hazzan*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hazzan) (cantor) has existed as well. Cantors have sometimes been the only functionaries of a synagogue, empowered to undertake religion-civil functions like witnessing marriages. Cantors do provide leadership of actual services, primarily because of their training and expertise in the music and prayer rituals pertaining to them, rather than because of any spiritual or "sacramental" distinction between them and the laity. Cantors as much as rabbis have been recognized by civil authorities in the United States as clergy for legal purposes, mostly for awarding education degrees and their ability to perform weddings, and certify births and deaths.

Additionally, Jewish authorities license [*mohels*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohel), people specially trained by experts in Jewish law and usually also by medical professionals to perform the ritual of circumcision. All types of Judaism except Orthodox Judaism license women as mohels, called *mohelot* (pl. of *mohelet,* f. of mohel). As the Jewish News Weekly of Northern California states, "...there is no halachic prescription against female mohels, but none exist in the Orthodox world, where the preference is that the task be undertaken by a Jewish man.".

In many places, mohels are also licensed by civil authorities, as circumcision is technically a surgical procedure. Kohanim, who must avoid contact with dead human body parts (such as the removed foreskin) for ritual purity, cannot act as mohels, but some mohels are also either rabbis or cantors.

Another licensed cleric in Judaism is the [*shochet*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shochet), who are trained and licensed by religious authorities for [kosher](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kosher) slaughter according to ritual law. A Kohen may be a shochet. Most shochetim are ordained rabbis.

**Orthodox Judaism**

In contemporary Orthodox Judaism, women are forbidden from becoming rabbis or cantors in the Orthodox world primarily because this would affect many aspects of communal observances and practices. Most Orthodox rabbinical seminaries or yeshivas also require dedication of many years to education, but few require a formal degree from a civil education institutions that often define Christian clergy. Training is often focused on Jewish law, and some Orthodox Yeshivas forbid secular education.

In [Hasidic Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hasidic_Judaism), generally understood as a branch of Orthodox Judaism, there are dynastic spiritual leaders known as [*Rebbes*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rebbe), often translated in English as "Grand Rabbi". The office of Rebbe is generally a hereditary one, may also be passed from Rebbe to student, or recognized by a congregation conferring a sort of coronation to their new Rebbe. Although one does not need to be an ordained Rabbi to be a Rebbe, most Rebbes today are ordained Rabbis. Since one does not need to be an ordained Rabbi to be a Rebbe, some points in history there were female Rebbes as well, particularly the [Maiden of Ludmir](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maiden_of_Ludmir).

**Conservative Judaism**

In [Conservative Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservative_Judaism), both men and women are ordained as rabbis and cantors. Conservative Judaism differs with Orthodoxy in that it sees Jewish Law as binding but also as subject to many interpretations, including more liberal interpretations. Academic requirements for becoming a rabbi are rigorous. First earn a bachelor's degree before entering rabbinical school. Studies are mandated in pastoral care and psychology, the historical development of Judaism and most importantly the academic study of Bible, Talmud and Rabbinic Literature, Philosophy and Theology, Liturgy, Jewish History, and Hebrew Literature of all periods.

**Reconstructionist and Reform Judaism**

[Reconstructionist Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconstructionist_Judaism) and [Reform Judaism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reform_Judaism) do not maintain the traditional requirements for study as rooted in Jewish Law and traditionalist text. Both men and women may be rabbis or cantors. The level of Jewish law, Talmud and responsa studied in five years of these denominations is similar to that learned in the first year of the more traditional Jewish seminaries. The rabbinical seminaries of these movements hold that one must first earn a bachelor's degree before entering the rabbinate. In addition studies are mandated in pastoral care and psychology, the historical development of Judaism; and academic biblical criticism. Emphasis is placed not on Jewish law, but rather on sociology, modern Jewish philosophy, Theology and Pastoral Care.

**Sikhism**

Sikhism strongly recognizes the Guru of Sikhism as its Supreme Authority on Earth. But in events of a need of a more of physical authority then the five [Jathedars](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jathedar) of the five holy [Takhts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Takht_%28Sikhism%29) are to be approached. As they are considered as the Supreme Temporal authority of [Sikhism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sikhism).

**Traditional religions**

Main article: [Imperial cult](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imperial_cult)

Historically [traditional](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traditional) (or [*pagan*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pagan)) religions typically combine religious authority and political power. What this means is that the [sacred king or queen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacred_king) is therefore seen to combine both kingship and priesthood within his or her person, even though he or she is often aided by an actual high priest or priestess (see, for example, the [Maya priesthood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maya_priesthood)). When the functions of political ruler and religious leader are combined in this way, [deification](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apotheosis) could be seen to be the next logical stage of his or her social advancement within his or her native environment, as is found in the case of the Egyptian [Pharaohs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pharaoh). The [Vedic priesthood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vedic_priesthood) of [India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India) is an early instance of a structured body of clergy organized as a separate and hereditary caste, one that occupied the highest social rung of its nation. A modern example of this phenomenon, meanwhile, is that of the priestly monarchs of the [Yoruba](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yoruba_people) holy city of [Ile-Ife](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ile-Ife) in [Nigeria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria), where ritual ceremonies have been performed for centuries by the reigning [Onis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_rulers_of_Ife) of the realm for the sustenance of the entire planet and its people.

**Health risks**

In recent years findings have arisen that clergy are more at risk than the general population for obesity, hypertension and depression. Life expectancies for clergy have fallen in recent years. In the last decade the use of antidepressants by clergy has risen. It is not clearly known why these deteriorating qualities of life are now applying to members of the clergy. A likely explanation is a lack of time off from the job. Cell phones and e-mail combined with a sense of responsibility to both God and humanity are likely contributing factors.

**See also**

* [Holy orders](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_orders)
* [Ordination](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ordination)

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