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Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry

William H. Willimon

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Ordained ministry, says Willimon, is a gift of God to the church--but that doesn't mean that it is easy. Always a difficult vocation, changes in society and the church in recent years have made the ordained life all the more complex and challenging. Is the pastor primarily a preacher, a professional caregiver, an administrator? Given the call of all Christians to be ministers to the world, what is the distinctive ministry of the ordained? When does one's ministry take on the character of prophet, and when does it become that of priest? What are the special ethical obligations and disciplines of the ordained? In this book, Willimon explores these and other central questions about the vocation of ordained ministry.

He begins with a discussion of who pastors are, asking about the theological underpinnings of ordained ministry, and then moves on to what pastors do, looking at the distinctive roles the pastor must fulfill. The book also draws on great teachers of the Christian tradition to demonstrate that, while much about Christian ministry has changed, its core concerns--preaching the word, the care of souls, the sacramental life of congregations--remains the same.

Ordained ministry is a vocation to which we are called, not a profession that we choose. To answer that call is to open oneself to heartache and sometimes hardship; yet, given the one who calls, it is to make oneself available to deep and profound joy as well.

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