

## Honorific positions, grandiose titles encourage careerism, clericalism

Isabella R. Moyer | Jan. 8, 2014 NCR Today

[Pope Francis has abolished the practice](#) [1] of rewarding priests under the age of 65 with the title of "monsignor." Wonderful! I wholeheartedly support any and all attempts to level the hierarchical structure that encourages both careerism and clericalism in our church.

In French, "Monseigneur" is the traditional title used to address bishops. Its literal translation is "My Lord" and hearkens back to the days of French royalty. Many years ago, a dear friend was ordained a bishop and moved to a French-speaking diocese in Saskatchewan. He did not want to be addressed as anyone's Lord and cringed when the title was used. Bishop Nunzio Galantino, the new secretary of the Italian bishops' conference, [refuses to be called "Your Excellency."](#) [2] Feeling discomfort with the use of such grandiose titles is a good sign of servant leadership.

I've had to write a few official letters to bishops and cardinals over the years. Always uncertain of the protocol, I search the Internet for the correct salutations. Is it Your Excellency, Your Grace, Reverend, Most Reverend, Most Holy and Exalted One ... ? I find and use the correct title because it is the proper thing to do, but is it right and just? Does ordination automatically confer holiness on a person in ever-increasing levels of sanctity as one climbs the hierarchical ladder?

Pope Francis seems determined to have a more humble church. Letting go of honorific positions such as "monsignor" is one step. Dispensing with grandiose salutations and titles could be another step in the right direction.

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**Source URL (retrieved on 06/24/2017 - 15:52):** <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/honorific-positions-grandiose-titles-encourage-careerism-clericalism>

### Links:

[1] <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/report-pope-abolishes-monsignor-honor-most-priests>

[2] <http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/tick-tock-developments-pope-beat>