

# THE LITURGY OF **ORDINATION**

*In the Light of Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Liturgical Documents*

Lit 009

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## INTRODUCTION

Ordination is a sacrament priests do not perform on others. And yet it is one for which future candidates prepare to themselves to undergo. For that reason it is important for them to understand not only its liturgical celebration but its theological meaning as well. The ordination of a bishop is something which is rare and more the immediate concern of a bishop and a bishop to be rather than an ordinary priest. For that reason it is not included in the study here, although it is recommended that students make a private study of it.

In the following study on ordination the important things to bear in mind are 1) the meaning of the rite and the decisions involved, 2) the proper celebration and roles of the candidate, as well as 3) the things one has to prepare ahead of time for the liturgy.

We humans forget very quickly. This applies to priests as well. For that reason they renew their promises every year at Chrism Mass. This renewal is at the same time is a reminder to them of what they promised and a call to renewed commitment. At so the last part of this book examines and elaborates on the liturgy of the renewal of the priestly promises.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF ORDINATION

### IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Christ called the Twelve in a special way and for a special mission. They were to share his life, and to learn from him, and later to do what he had done. He sent them out to teach, to cast out devils and to baptise. He promised them the Holy Spirit, whom they received later on Pentecost. He also gave them power to forgive sins. All this is was part of that special mission.

But apart from the inner circle of the twelve Christ also called others who were to share in the ministry of the apostles. He called the seventy-two and sent them out with about the same mission as that which he had given to the twelve. At the ascension when he commanded his disciples to go out to the whole world and proclaim the good news, it was not just the twelve around him. Luke tells us that over 500 of the brethren had gathered for the occasion. They were also to share in that mission of evangelisation.

As in the case of other sacraments Christ who instituted the sacrament of ordination did not leave an elaborate rite for the conferring of this sacrament. He gave the disciples the essentials and left them the gift of the Holy Spirit to guide them in working out the details. Nor was the first ordinations made on the same occasion. At one time he institutes the Holy Eucharist



and gives them the mandate to do as he has done. At another occasion he blows on them and gives them the Holy Spirit with the power to forgive sins on earth which would be considered forgiven in heaven. This Holy Spirit descends on the apostles on another occasion. Yet at another he commands them to teach, to heal and to cast out demons.

It was very clear that those whom Christ commissioned to go out to the whole world and teach all nations could simply not do that. The world is big and they were a handful. Very soon they would all be dead. So they had somehow to pass on that work to others.

The apostles dedicated themselves mainly to the work of evangelisation which required them to move from place to place. In order to consolidate the faith they had planted they lay hands on men who were judged fit for the mission thus instituting them as bishops. (Επισκοποι). They also established elders or presbyters (Πρεσβυτεροι) who were to assist the bishops and to manage smaller territories. The former in turn lay hands on their successors, a process that has continued up to today. Thus a valid priestly ministry is established among other things by *apostolic succession*, which is the unbroken chain of the imposition of hands that is ultimately traced back to the apostles and to Jesus. The link with the apostles through the imposition of hands is only the external manifestation of the inner reality which entails undertaking to pass on the entire deposit of faith as authentically transmitted by the apostles.

In time other rites developed either as expansions of or as explanatory to the rite of ordination and the accompanying words. And so today we have in the rite of ordination also the presentation of the candidate, vesting, anointing with Chrism,

litany to the saints, handing to the newly ordained the instruments of their vocation, prostration, etc.

## THE DIACONATE<sup>1</sup>

The deacons were first chosen to serve a secular ministry, that of distributing food. They were to assist and relieve the apostles so that the latter could dedicated themselves to the more spiritual ministry of prayer and evangelisation. However, they were to be chosen as men who were prominent in faith and Christian living. And in fact soon enough the prominence of their faith was testified to by the martyrdom of St. Stephen the first martyr who was a deacon.

The early Church had a number of ministries that included apostles, deacons, overseers, elders, prophets, virgins, widows, etc. As time went on, especially with the peace of the Constantine era there was a clarification of ministries. In this era the overseers gained greater ecclesiastical and civil power. They were to govern over both ecclesiastical and civil territories. They borrowed insignia from the civil Roman world as symbols of their social position. Many of these have been retained to distinguish this ministry until today.

The deacon continued as helpers to the bishop. They also often acted as treasurers of the diocese. Their financial power and nearness to the bishop gave them considerable power. But the deacon's importance declined with the expansion of the Church.

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<sup>1</sup> See also Paul VI, Apostolic Letter, issued *Motu Proprio*, "Laying Down Certain Norms Regarding the Holy Order of Deacons", in *The Rites* Vol. II. P. 31ff.

They could not reach all the places that the bishop needed to send them to. The bishop had to rely entirely on the elders to take care for the needs of these places. Again the deacons lacked the power to celebrate the Eucharist. Quite often a bishop ordained a deacon to priesthood, and in fact this eventually led to the practice of the diaconate being an intermediary stage towards the priesthood.

The presbyters worked as parochial vicars, often in the remote places that the bishop did not visit frequently. Usually such presbyters had some other trade for the sustenance of themselves and their families, much as is the case today with catechists. At first their power was inferior to that of deacons, but with the expansion of the Church it increased, since they met practically all the spiritual needs of the people in their territories.

With the growth of the clerical ministry of bishops, deacons and priests the lay ministry diminished in importance, and with time some of the ministries actually died out.

At the time of the Reformation Martin Luther objected among other things to the great power invested in the Church's clerical state and the subsequent diminution of the ministry of the lay faithful. He stressed therefore the universal priesthood. He also stressed the authority of Scripture. For him priesthood was indeed a necessary ministry, but not a sacrament. The Counter-Reformers in reaction stressed the sacramental nature of the priesthood and made further theological elaboration of the nature of the priesthood.

## ORIGIN OF THE CLERICAL CELIBATE STATE<sup>2</sup>

It is a fact that some of Jesus' apostles were married. From scripture there is reference to Peter's mother in law whom the Lord cured of fever. Extra-biblical sources also point to Philip and Nathaniel as having been married men. But even in the apostolic age the celibate state was considered as preferable to the extent that it was more conformed to the lifestyle of the Master. It also permitted absolute freedom for dedication to the apostolic mission which left little time for a married life. Nonetheless, the celibate state was not an absolute requirement for the clerical state. For a long time the married state for a cleric was quite acceptable. One of the qualities of one aspiring to the position of the overseer was that he was capable of governing his own home. But continence was always held in high esteem. For instance clerics in some areas were required to abstain from sex on the day before Sunday in anticipation of the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Now with time the Eucharist came to be celebrated, not only on Sunday, but everyday. In some areas this brought about abstinence from sex right from the day of ordination. One who was already married would be required to stay with his wife without further sexual intercourse. Obviously this would result in great tension for the family, for such a decision may not take into consideration of the rights of the partner who may not have been party in the decision to make a perpetual dedication to the service of God. Even when it was agreed between the couple that the man embrace the clerical state, such a decision for the rest of their lives was asking much

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<sup>2</sup> Paul VI, Encyclical letter on Priestly Celibacy, (*Sacerdotalis caelibatus*, 24 June, 1967) Flannery vol, 2.

from nature, with regard to the average person. Many would feel that it was much better not to marry at all.

The abstinence from marriage had other advantages as well. It reduced the dangers of nepotism in a feudal era. Secondly it permitted one freedom to dedicate oneself entirely to one's mission. Moreover it reduced the gap between the celibate priest-monk and other priests. In the 12<sup>th</sup> century celibacy became an obligatory condition to the priestly ministry.

## **PRIESTHOOD ACCORDING TO THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL**

The Second Vatican Council developed an elaborate theology of the priesthood which is contained mainly in three documents: *Christus Dominus* for the bishops, *Presbyterorum Ordinis* for the Priests and a part of *Lumen Gentium* for the deacons.<sup>3</sup> The Council has also restored the permanent diaconate, subject however, to the decision of the local Episcopal conferences. It has also suppressed the minor orders of Tonsure and sub-diaconate and instead established the candidacy to the major orders as a step in which candidate reflects more seriously on the step about to be taken.

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<sup>3</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 29.

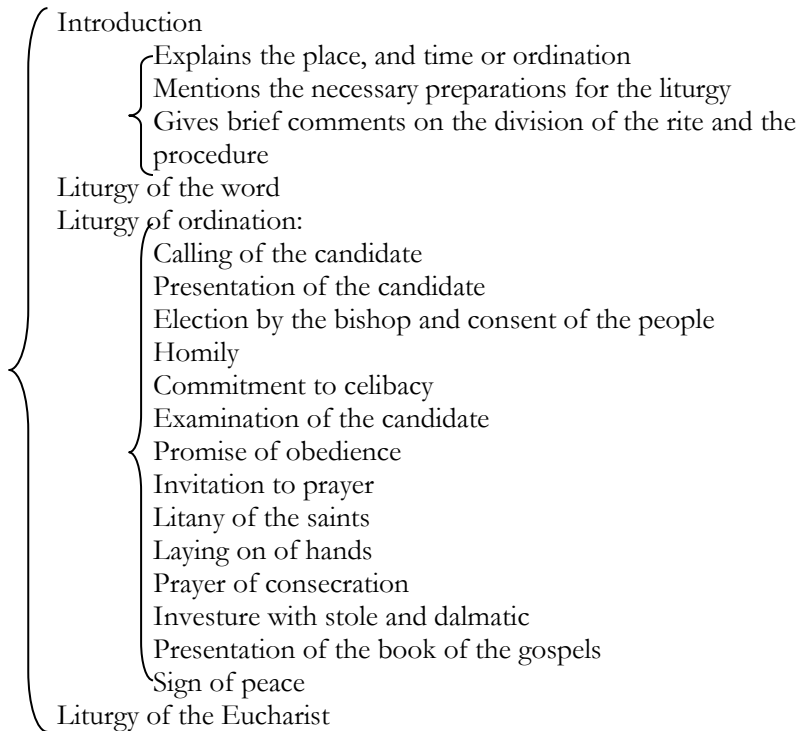
## ORDINATION OF DEACONS AND PRIESTS

The diaconate described below is that which is a step to the ministerial priesthood as opposed to the permanent diaconate.

The conditions for admittance to the ordained state are spelled out in detail in canons 1024-1052. The person should be endowed with good moral qualities. He has among other things to be free from mental or physical disabilities. He must also desire to dedicate his life to the service of God and of the Church. he should have at least twenty years of age, and should have undergone the requisite theological studies. More details about the theology and the juridical requirements can be found in the documents referred above. Below we focus on the liturgical part, first by outlining the rite, then by looking at its detailed layout and finally by examining the main theological implications of the words and the actions involved in the rite. Overall structure is as follows:

## THE RITE OF ORDINATION

The general structure of the rite of ordination to diaconate is as follows:



Below is the detailed analysis of the combined rite of ordination of priests and deacons.<sup>4</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

Ordination should normally be held on Sunday. This would enable a large number of the faithful to attend. However, pastoral constraints often require that it is held on a Saturday so that not only the faithful but also priests, particularly those who work in parishes and who need to be present in their respective communities to celebrate the Sunday Mass, are also given a chance to attend. The priest is ordained for the people, and so he makes his promises before God and before the people he is going to serve. But at the same time his ordination puts him in the college of fellow priests with whom he is going to carry out the same work. Thus the time of ordination should be chosen taking into account both the presence of the a large number of the faithful as well as the priests of the diocese or congregation which the newly ordained joins.

The place of ordination is normally the Cathedral Church. It is on occasions like these that the bishop of the diocese in his capacity as the chief shepherd of the diocesan flock sits in his Cathedra which is a symbol of that authority and service. However, it is more important for the people to see and follow what is going on than to emphasise that Episcopal authority. Thus where the cathedra is fixed and a bit removed from the full view of the people another chair may replace it and be placed in

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<sup>4</sup> The Ritual for Ordination has three separate rites for Ordination of priests and deacons: the Rite of Ordination of a Deacon; the Rite for Ordination of a priest and the Rite for Ordination of Deacons and Priests in the Same Celebration. To avoid repetition by treating deacons and priests separately, in this book the structure of the combined rite is expounded.



a place visible to the people, for instance in front of the altar. A movable cathedra may also be transferred to the same place.

It is quite acceptable also to have the ordination in a more suitable place outside the Cathedral church. Where ordinations are not many the ceremony can take place in the home of the one ordained, or at least in his home parish. That may also serve as an incentive to stimulate vocations in the place. But when those to be ordained are many it may not be possible for the bishop to ordain each one of them individually in their homes or home parishes. The practical thing to do in many places is to have priestly ordinations in places of origin of the respective new priests and the to combine the ceremony with the ordination to diaconate in the same place. Deacons can then afterwards have a thanksgiving Mass celebrated in their respective homes or home parishes. They can wait for their own priestly ordinations which will be held in their homes or home parishes if this is possible.

The candidate to diaconate wears an alb tied with a cincture if necessary. Other provisions are possible, for instance, there are albs that are of such a fashion that they do not require a cincture. Those to be ordained priests wear an alb (with cincture) and a deacon's stole. In addition to what is needed for the celebration of Mass, there should be ready also the Roman Pontifical with the rite of Ordination, as well as a stole and dalmatic for the candidate. For the candidates to priesthood there should be prepared a chasuble, a priest's stole, holy Chrism and whatever is needed for the washing of hands. Where the priests who are to lay hands on the priestly candidates do not carry personal vestments these should also be prepared.

The seats of those to be ordained as well as for their parents or guardians who are to perform the rite of handing them over, where this is customary, should be prepared somewhere near the sanctuary. Other seats for those to be ordained should be prepared

within the sanctuary. They are to occupy these after they are called from among the people. Besides, mats and pillows for the prostration of the candidates during the singing of the litany should also be prepared. Even the space for their kneeling and prostration should be preserved before hand.

When everything is ready, the procession moves through the church to the altar in the usual way. A deacon carries the Book of the Gospels; he is followed by the candidate(s) to diaconate, then the candidates to priesthood and finally by the bishop between two other deacons. Where it is the custom for parents or foster parents to hand over the candidates, the former flank their children in the procession. In some areas the candidates may also be required to carry the vestments of the new ministries they are about to undertake.

#### LITURGY OF THE WORD

The liturgy of the word takes place according to the rubrics, in respect to the day on which the celebration of ordination takes place. The readings may be taken in whole or in part from the Mass of the day or from the texts listed in chapter IV of the Rite of Ordination. What determines the choice is the time of year in the calendar, or whether there is a feast on that day, and what kind of feast it is. The procession of faith is not said, nor are the general intercessions. Presumably what the candidate is about to promise is tantamount to professing of the Christian faith. As regards intercessions, the needs for the candidate(s) are in a way incorporated in the litany and the various prayers of ordination.

## RITE OF ORDINATION

### *Calling of the candidates*

Immediately after the proclamation of the gospel and before the preaching of the bishop the Master of Ceremonies or a deacon or someone else designated for the purpose summons the candidates. When summoned the candidate answers “present” and moves to the sanctuary. First he calls the candidates to diaconate and later those to priesthood. It is customary in Uganda that the candidate is flanked by his parents or foster parents as he moves towards the sanctuary. The same parents will have come on either side of him in the procession to the church. One of them, usually the father, presents him to the bishop with appropriate words, (not too long) and then both withdraw back to their seats.

### *Presentation of the candidate*

The presentation of the candidate is done by a priest designated by the bishop. This is to be distinguished from the one who summons them. The role of one who presents is also that of publicly attesting to the worthiness of the candidate, that is why the presenter has to be a person of suited to the task. This rite can also be termed “public attestation to suitability of the candidate”. The usual choice is that of a diocesan vocation director, or a vicar general. In the case of diocesan major seminaries, or where a lector of a national seminary happens to be present this also may do the task of the presenting the candidate(s). The one who attests asks the bishop on behalf of the faithful to ordain the candidates. The bishop asks him whether the candidate is worthy. He answers positively on the basis of inquiry and seminary evaluation.

### *Election by the bishop and consent of the people<sup>5</sup>*

The bishop publicly accepts to ordain the candidate with the words: “we rely on the help of God and of our Saviour, and we choose this man, our brother, for the priesthood in the presbyteral order”.<sup>6</sup> By these words he shows that ultimately it is God who elects and not man (recall the election of David and the anointing by Samuel. According to human judgement David was the least likely candidate. We also recall the election of the twelve before which Christ spent a whole night in prayer. Even after careful scrutiny human mistakes can be made. That is why one relies on the help of God). By the same words the bishop also indicates that all the faithful are brothers and sisters, and that leadership in the Church is a service not exertion of authority. The candidate is chosen for priesthood in the presbyteral order. This is a recognition of another form of priesthood in the Church; the universal priesthood of all the faithful. The priest is called to exercise a different form of priesthood but one that is ordained to the service of the universal priesthood.

The election by the bishop is accompanied by the consent of the people. This they express in some appropriate way such as responding to the words of the bishop with “thanks be to God”. Alternatively they may answer with the clapping of hands, or with a short joyous song of thanksgiving, accompanied by

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<sup>5</sup> In the actual celebration of the liturgy the first the presentation and election by the bishop is done for those to be ordained deacons. Then the same process is repeated for the priestly candidates. Here, for study purposes, presentation is treated separately from the choice. The same will apply to other separated rites.

<sup>6</sup> In the case of deacons-to-be he says: “We rely on the help of the Lord God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, and we choose these men, our brothers, for the order of deacons.”

drumming and dancing. Again this thanksgiving should not take too long so as to delay the process of ordination.

### ***Homily, main points to be considered***

Then the bishop gives his homily. It is recommended in the rite that he bases it on the readings.<sup>7</sup> He adjoins the homily the text given in the rite. The address mentioned in SC 76<sup>8</sup> is not the homily itself. However it is very important in so far as it gives the basics which both the candidate and the faithful need to know about the sacrament taking place. In fact the promises that are made soon after are based on what is contained in this sermon. That is why a bishop would do well not simply to ignore it in favour of his own sermon which quite often will not mention some of the things that are said in the address.

The address to the deacon expound on his office as well as the character and qualities necessary for that ministry.<sup>9</sup> This is among the ministries instituted for the good of the whole body of the Church. He is a helper to the bishop and his body of priests as a minister of the word, the altar and of charity. As a minister of the word he brings God's word to believers and unbelievers alike at the discretion of the bishop. He also presides over public prayer. As a minister of the altar he proclaims the gospel, prepares the Eucharistic sacrifice and gives the Lord's body and blood to the community of believers. As a minister of charity he performs works of Christian love in the name of the bishop or pastor. However, charity should pervade and characterise all that he does, so that he manifests Christ who

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<sup>7</sup> *Rite of Ordination*, 14.

<sup>8</sup> "...the addresses given by the bishop at the beginning of each ordination or consecration may be in the vernacular...".

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Paul VI, Apostolic letter Containing Norms for the Order of Diaconate, (*Ad Pascendum*, 15 August, 1972). Flannery vol. 1 p. 433.

came not to be served but to serve. The deacon also administers sacraments and sacramentals such as baptism, blessing of marriages, giving of viaticum to the dying, leading of the rite of funerals. Again he undertakes to pray the Divine Office on behalf of the Church.

The qualities required of a deacon are also mentioned. The best way to render them is to quote the entire text: From the homily in the rite of ordination: "... as a deacon you will serve Jesus Christ, who was known among his disciples as the one who served others. Do the will of God generously. Serve God and mankind in love and joy. Look upon all unchastity and avarice as worship of false gods; for no man can serve two masters. Like the men the apostles chose for works of charity, you should be a man of good reputation, filled with wisdom and the holy Spirit. Show before God and mankind that you are above every suspicion of blame, a true minister of Christ and of God's mysteries, a man firmly rooted in faith. Never turn away from the hope that the Gospel offers; now you must not only listen to God's word but also preach it. Hold the mystery of faith with a clear conscience. Express in action what you proclaim by word of mouth. Then the people of Christ, brought to life by the Spirit, will be an offering God accepts. Finally, on the last day, when you go to meet the Lord, you will hear him say: "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord."

The address to the deacons is immediately followed by the commitment to celibacy. The candidates who are to manifest their intention of a commitment to celibacy stand before the bishop. He addresses them on the freedom of choice of this state of life, the meaning and motive of celibacy. He makes it clear that clerical celibacy is a sign and motive of pastoral charity, that it is a source of spiritual fruitfulness in the world, and that it is a consecration to Christ in a new and special way by living in

this state in total dedication and in sincere love of him. Celibacy confers certain advantages to the cleric: it engenders easier adherence to Christ with undivided heart. It also promotes a more free service of God and mankind. Finally, it is witness to all that God must be loved above all else.

At the end this discourse the bishop asks the candidates whether they are resolved to remain celibate for the sake of the kingdom and in lifelong service to God and mankind. Each candidate answers in the vernacular.

The address to the priest candidates also follows the same pattern as that to the deacon candidates; exposing the main duties the candidates are undertaking and how they should be performed. The text runs as follows: "My sons, you are now to be advanced to the order of the presbyterate. You must apply your energies to the duty of teaching in the name of Christ, the chief Teacher. Share with all mankind the word of God you have received with joy. Meditate on the law of God, believe what you read, teach what you believe, and put into practice what you teach.

Let the doctrine you teach be true nourishment for the people of God. Let the example of your lives attract the followers of Christ, so that by word and action you may build up the house which is God's Church.

In the same way you must carry out your mission of sanctifying in the power of Christ. Your ministry will perfect the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful by uniting it to Christ's sacrifice, the sacrifice which is offered sacramentally through your hands. Know what you are doing and imitate the mystery you celebrate. In the memorial of the Lord's death and resurrection, make every effort to die to sin and to walk in the new life of Christ.

When you baptise, you will bring men and women into the people of God. In the sacrament of penance, you will forgive sins in the name of Christ and the Church. With holy oil you will relieve and console the sick. You will celebrate the liturgy and offer thanks and praise to God throughout the day, praying not only for the people of God but for the whole world. Remember that you are chosen from among God's people and appointed to act for them in relation to God. Do your part in the work of Christ the Priest with genuine joy and love, and attend to the concerns of Christ before your own.

Finally, conscious of sharing in the work of Christ, the Head and Shepherd of the Church, and united with the bishop and subject to him, seek to bring the faithful together into a unified family and to lead them effectively, through Christ and in the Holy Spirit, to God the Father. Always remember the example of the Good Shepherd who came not to be served but to serve, and to seek out and rescue those who were lost."

### ***Examination of the candidates***

The examination of the candidates both for the diaconate and priesthood is followed by a promise of obedience. The candidates are questioned whether they are willing to be ordained deacons, whether they are resolved to discharge their duties as required, to be faithful to the teaching of the Church, to maintain a spirit of prayer, especially of the Divine Office and to imitate Christ. The priestly candidates are questioned whether they carry out the priestly ministry faithfully as co-workers with the bishops and in collaboration with fellow priests; to be faithful to Church doctrine and tradition, to exercise the ministry of the word worthily and wisely and to consecrate his life daily to God for the salvation of his people. The promise of obedience has the same wording both for diaconal and priestly candidates;



the promise of obedience is made to the present bishop and his successors. Again it emphasises the importance of exercising the priestly and diaconal ministries under the guidance of the bishops.

### *Invitation to prayer and Litany of the Saints*

The invitation to prayer as well as the litany of the saints are said for both the diaconal and priestly candidates together. The ministry which both the deacons and priests undertakes, as is already clear from the words of exhortation above requires more than human effort. It is a ministry whose successes depends on knowledge of one's weakness and need of God's assistance. It the rite too at this stage the bishop invites all present to pray for the candidates, not only that they may transformed to receive God's consecration, but also that they may be assisted in their new ministry. The intercession includes, apart from those present, also the triumphant Church of the saints in heaven.

At the singing of the litany of saints the candidates prostrate themselves and, except during the Easter season, the rest of the congregation kneels. For ordinations celebrated outdoors in a shade it may be difficult for all the people to kneel, particularly if the ground is wet. The cantors or choir begin the litany. They may add, at the proper place, names of other saints (for example the patron saint, the titular of the church, the founder of the church, the patron saints of those to be ordained, local saints and martyrs of the place or country) or petitions suitable to the occasion. At the end of the litany the bishop alone stands and says a prayer. This is not yet the prayer of consecration. Rather, it is only invoking God's help on the candidates, as a conclusion to the intercessions of the congregation.

### *Laying on of hands and Prayer of Consecration*

After the prayer by the bishop all stand. One by one the diaconal candidates go to the bishop and kneel before him. The bishop lays his hands on the heads of each, in silence. Concelebrants do not lay hands on those being ordained deacons. Both this and the prayer that follows the laying on of hands constitute the matter and form of the sacrament of ordination. The laying on of hands is the matter while the form consists in the words of the consacratory prayer,, of which the following belong to the essence and are consequently required for validity:

“Lord, sent forth upon them the Holy Spirit, that they may be strengthened by the gift of your sevenfold grace to carry out faithfully the work of the ministry”

In the ordination of priests likewise the matter is the laying of the bishop’s hands on the individual candidates while the form consists in the words of the consacratory prayer, of which the following belong to the essence and are consequently required for validity: “Almighty Father, grant to these servants of yours the dignity of the priesthood. Renew in them the Spirit of holiness. As co-workers with the order of bishops may they be faithful to the ministry that they receive from you, Lord God, and be to others a model of right conduct.”

The laying on of hands by the concelebrating priests on the newly ordained priest is not consacratory, for they do not share in the power of consecrating a new priest which the bishop possesses. Rather it is a sign of collegiality, a welcome to the new member who has joined their rank. Bishops too welcome a new bishop to their college of bishop. Because here too it is not participation in the act of ordaining the gesture recommended rather than required by Vatican Council II: "In the consecration of a bishop the laying on of hands may be done by all the

bishops present" (SC, 76). Deacons do not lay hands on a newly ordained deacon to welcome him in their "college";<sup>10</sup> but they have the privilege of wishing him a sign of peace immediately after the ordaining bishop does so, and before the concelebrants.

### ***Investure with Vestments proper to Each Ministry***

The new deacons are invested with a stole and dalmatic, while the new priests are invested with a priestly stole and a chasuble. Thus the vestments symbolise the new order the candidate has entered. The bishop, wearing his mitre, sits. The newly ordained stand. An assistant deacon or a parish priest or any other priest chosen by the candidate himself helps him to dress in the vestments of his new ministry. Meanwhile the choir sings an appropriate song. After the vesting the candidate might turn to the congregation so that they see him in his new attire, to their joy.

### ***Anointing and Presentation with tools of the Ministry***

Only the priestly candidates are anointed with Chrism after the investure. The bishop anoints the palms of each of the new priests as the latter kneels before him. Actually the words that the bishop pronounces at the anointing show that only Christ is the Anointed one of God. The prayer is that Christ the anointed one may preserve the new priests to sanctify the Christian people and to offer sacrifice to God. In other words, the priest only performs the functions of Christ the only priest of the New Testament. While the anointing is taking place the hymn "*Veni*

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<sup>10</sup> Nor do lay people lay welcome a new member through baptism by laying hands on them. However, the parent and god-parent do make a sign of the cross on the forehead of the candidate immediately after the priest does so.

*Creator Spiritus*” or psalm 110 which refers to Christ the Anointed One may be sung.

The new deacons are presented with the book of the gospels because by this ordination they become ordinary ministers of God’s word. In the absence of the Book of the Gospels a lectionary or a bible may be used. The bishop hands it to him with the words: “receive the Gospel of Christ whose herald you now are. Believe what you read, teach what you believe and practice what you teach.” The new priests are presented with the gifts from the people, symbol of their new role of offering the sacrifice of the Mass. The serving deacon assists the bishop in receiving the gifts of the people and then he prepares the bread on the paten and the wine and water in the chalice for the celebration of Mass. He brings the paten and chalice to the bishop, who hands them to each of the new priests as he kneels before him. The bishop says: “Accept from the holy people of God the gifts to be offered to him. Know what you are doing, and imitate the mystery you celebrate: model your life on the mystery of the Lord’s cross.”

After this presentation follows the Sign of Peace. The bishop gives the newly ordained a sign of peace other deacons and concelebrants do the same. This is expressed in a manner appropriate to local usage; but it appears incorrect that the newly ordained kiss the bishop’s finger. It is desirable that parents also give the sign of peace to their children at this stage. However, it is advisable that the rest of the Christian community does that later. At the exchange of peace an appropriate song may or psalm 146 be sung.

#### LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The rite for the concelebration of Mass is followed with these changes: a) the preparation of the chalice is omitted, since it has

already been done. However, if there are other chalices to be prepared due to the number of concelebrants present they may be prepared at this stage; b) if Eucharist prayer I is used then the special form of Father, accept this offering is said: "Father, accept this offering from your whole family and from those you have chosen for the order of priests and deacons. Protect the gifts you have given them, and let them yield a harvest worthy of you." The new deacons receive communion under both kinds. The new priests take the parts of the concelebrating priests in the Eucharistic prayer.

## **MEANING OF THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE RITE**

The rite of ordination just seen above brings out the essential elements of each ministry if one looks carefully both that the words and gestures. The same analysis can be made on each individual ministry, whether priestly, or even that of bishops which is not treated here. By way of example, the essential elements of the priestly ministry are mentioned below.

### **ORDAINED FOR THE CHURCH**

In the first place it is clear that a priest is ordained for the Church. That is why it is required that ordination take place on a Sunday or holiday when a large number of the people can gather for the occasion. When the one presenting the candidate asks the bishop that he may ordain him, he does so on behalf of the Church, so that in fact the Church through one person asks for

the ordination of the candidate.<sup>11</sup> Again when the bishop assents to the request, the congregation, on behalf of the entire Church shows its assent to the bishop's election with some appropriate gesture.<sup>12</sup> The triple ministry of Christ therefore, which the priest undertakes to carry out is to be done in the service of the Church for which he was ordained.

### RELATION WITH THE ROYAL PRIESTHOOD

Secondly, priestly ordination elevates and sets one apart from the common priesthood. And so in the rite, up to the time of ordination the candidate sits among the laity.<sup>13</sup> But at the beginning of the ordination rite he is called to come into the sanctuary. The bishop actually says: "this man your relative and friend is now to be raised to the order of priests."<sup>14</sup> The priest is set apart through the Holy Spirit whom he receives by the laying on of hands. He is also set apart by the anointing he receives, so that Jesus may preserve him to sanctify the Christian people and to offer sacrifice to God. The order of this priesthood which he receives is forever, according to that of Melchisedech.

### QUALITIES OF THE PRIEST

Thirdly the candidate to the priesthood must be of proven worthiness. The bishop inquires from the one presenting the candidate whether he is worthy. The presenter in answer attests to his worthiness on the basis made among the people and on the recommendation of those concerned for his training. Even

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<sup>11</sup> *Rite of Ordination*, 12.

<sup>12</sup> *Rite of Ordination*, 13.

<sup>13</sup> *Rite of Ordination*, 10.

<sup>14</sup> Bishop states at the beginning of his homily, if he takes the proposed text in the rite.

after such inquiry of course human judgement may still err. That is why the bishop accepts the candidate relying on divine help.

#### A MINISTRY FREELY CHOSEN

Fourthly the candidate must freely consent to being ordained. That is why in the rite the examination of the candidate is made after he is told what his work will entail. Of course, by this time, after so much preparation in the long years of priestly training, the candidate should know what his calling involves. But he is reminded of that for the sake of those present and for legal reasons. He is made to state publicly his intention not just of undertaking priesthood in general; rather the isolated undertakings are pronounced: whether he is willing to be a fellow work with the bishop and under his authority, whether he promises to celebrate the mysteries as the Church has handed them down, whether he undertakes to exercise the ministry of the word worthily according to Catholic teaching, whether he is ready to consecrate his life to God for the salvation of the world, whether he is ready to unite himself daily to Christ. To each of these questions he answers affirmatively. It is presumed that he has had time to study the rite, and that at this stage he knows whether he is ready. If the answer is “no” he need not have waited until this moment. Still if the magnitude of his undertaking seems never to have impressed him until the present moment, he is still free to change his mind even up to that moment.

#### THE MISSION OF THE PRIEST

Fifthly, his elevation also implies a definite mission, namely the three-fold ministry of Christ. He undertakes the ministry of sanctification, which requires him to pay attention to what he celebrates; to know what he does. The celebration of Mass or

any other function through which God sanctifies his people should never be allowed to grow to a mere routine that is done almost unconsciously. The ministry of sanctification is the administration of sacraments. In the Eucharist he is to unite his own sacrifice with that of Christ by dying to sin and by rising to a life of virtue. In baptism he brings new members to the Church. In anointing he relieves and consoles the sick. In the Liturgy of the Hours he offers thanks and praises to God on behalf of the entire Church. He also prays for the people of God and for the entire Church. The ministry of teaching requires him to meditate on the word of God. To believe what he reads, teach what he believes and practice what he teaches. He is to teach others both by Christian witness as well as by Christian teaching. The ministry of shepherd requires him to be united with the bishop who is the chief earthly shepherd. Under the guidance of the bishop he strives to bring the faithful together into a unified family. Often one who seeks to shepherd the flock independent of the bishop only succeeds in dividing it and setting it against that part of the flock that is loyal to the bishop, and this is counter-productive to the ministry of Jesus. In his shepherding the priest must seek to imitate Christ who did not come to be served but to serve, and who came to seek and to save the lost. So like Christ the priest should also carry out his ministry of shepherding with love.

Once a seminary professor put a question to his theology class: what the primary role of a priest is. Some of the students answered that it is that of the administration of Mass and the sacraments. The professor tried to convince the students, with good reasons, that the primary role is that of preaching the word of God, in word and action. The opinion of the writer sides neither with the answer of the students nor with that of the professor. The primary role of the priest is not the ministry of



the sacraments, nor that of the word, nor even that of charity.<sup>15</sup> The primary role of the priest is the three ministries combined inseparably. Failure in one is betrayal of the whole role. It is not good pedagogy to contrast two essential goods. Children in primary five can have a simple debate with a motion “fire is better than water”, or “mother is better than father” or “the heart is better than the head”. But when we grow older we know better. Each of these pairs does not consist of opposites but of complements, and the complete picture requires both without opposing one against the other.

## THE CHALLENGE TO BECOME HOLY

### *A Call to Heroism*

Sixthly one is to realise that the ministry to which he is called requires more than human strength alone. This is not to mean that God calls him what is impossible to accomplish. It is possible to accomplish but only through the help of God; however, that help is readily available to anyone who invokes it. For example that ministry requires obedience to the bishop and his successors, but bishops are also human and some are prone to error, to injustice, to selfishness. The ministry requires total consecration as symbolised in the rite of prostration; but there will be many occasions in the life of the priest in which he is tempted to this total self-surrender. It requires a dedication to a life of celibacy, usually from a man who is young and full of life and who has so many females that he attracts and that he is

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<sup>15</sup> Someone else might argue that the ministry of service in charity is primary. For Christ said that on judgement day he will tell some of those who have preached the word in his name, and even cast out devils in his name, that he does not know them, since they failed in attending to basic needs of the least of his brethren.

attracted to. The desire for a spouse, a female companion, for a family, for children and so on will be constant temptations. The new priest promises to imitate Christ, but that requires holiness. All these requirements are made on one who does not change his constitution and ingrained habits on the day of ordination. He remains with all his character flaws and evil inclinations, and sometimes with ordination some the flaws may even become more pronounced, now that he is finally free from seminary discipline and has considerable freedom of action. All this boils down to the fact that the candidate needs divine help. That is why in the rite a big part is dedicated to praying for him. At certain points when asked whether he is ready he has to give the answer: “I am, with the help of God”. Similarly the bishop says to him “May God who has began in you the good work bring it to completion”.

### ***Available Aids***

Later he is to obtain divine help through the faithful accomplishment of the duties undertaken. This is explained very clearly in the Vatican document on the Life of Priests (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*):

Priests will acquire holiness in their in their own distinctive way by exercising their functions sincerely and tirelessly in the spirit of Christ. Since they are ministers of the Word of God, they read and hear every day the Word of God which they must teach to others. If they strive at the same time to make it part of their own lives, they will become daily more perfect disciples of the Lord, according to the saying of the apostle Paul to Timothy: “Practise these duties, devote yourself to them; so that all may see your progress...”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Life of Priests (Presbyterorum Ordinis)*, no. 13.

In pursuit of this personal holiness it is recommended that the priest strives to celebrate Mass every day. “Remembering always that in the mystery of the Eucharistic Sacrifice the work of redemption is continually being carried out, priests are to celebrate frequently. Indeed, daily celebration is earnestly recommended,<sup>17</sup> because, even if it should not be possible to have the faithful present, it is an action of Christ and of the Church in which priests fulfil their principle role.”<sup>18</sup>

### RELATION TO THE BISHOP

The seventh point is that this ministry must be exercised in union with and obedience to the bishop. The bishops are the successors to the apostles, while the priests are co-workers. And so the candidate makes a separate promise of obedience to the bishop.<sup>19</sup> Particularly in the prayer of ordination the relationship between priest and bishop in the exercise of their ministry comes out clearly. The prayer makes reference to a) the men who were chosen to *help* the high priest and to be second to them in rank; b) the spirit of Moses that extended to the seventy elders who *helped* him, c) the sons of Aaron *shared* in the fullness of their father’s priesthood, d) the companions to the apostles were to *help* in the teaching of the faith, and, e) the prayer ends with a petition: “grant to us (bishops) such *fellow workers*. However, this submission to the bishop is not meant as to be understood in terms of servitude. The bishop addresses the candidate as “our brother”. After ordination he is the first to give him a sign of peace. Indeed in some places it is the practice that after the ordination Mass the bishop kneels to receive the new priest’s

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<sup>17</sup> *General Instruction 2002*, no. 19.

<sup>18</sup> Canon 904.

<sup>19</sup> *Rite of Ordination*, 16.

blessing. Authority in the Church should be exercised as a service, for unity and harmony of activity.

#### RELATION WITH FELLOW PRIESTS

And finally the ministry is to be exercised in collaboration with fellow priests. And so they all lay hands on the candidate which symbolises their collegiality. They also give him a sign of peace, symbolic of their welcoming him to their ranks.

# ANNUAL RENEWAL OF PRIESTLY PROMISES

## THE PROMISES

## THE PREFACE

...By your Holy Spirit you anointed your only Son High Priest of the new and eternal covenant. With wisdom and love you have planned that this one priesthood should continue in the Church. Christ gives the dignity of a royal priesthood to the people he has made his own. From these, with a brother's love, he chooses men to share his sacred ministry by the laying on of hands. He appoints them to renew in his name the sacrifice of our redemption as they set before your family his paschal meal. He calls them to lead your holy people in love, nourish them by your word, and strengthen them through the sacraments.

Father, they are to give their lives in your service and for the salvation of your people as they strive to grow in the likeness of Christ and honour you by their courageous witness of faith and love...<sup>20</sup>

As stated in the General Instruction to the Roman Missal, this preface enunciates and clearly explains the meaning of the office of the ministerial priesthood. It brings to light the conferral of the priestly power accomplished through the laying on of hands; and, by listing the various duties, it describes that power, which

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<sup>20</sup> Preface of Chrism Mass.

is the continuation of the power of Christ the High Priest of the New Testament.<sup>21</sup> We now take a more detailed look at what is contained in the preface.

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<sup>21</sup> *General Instruction 2002*, no. 4.

