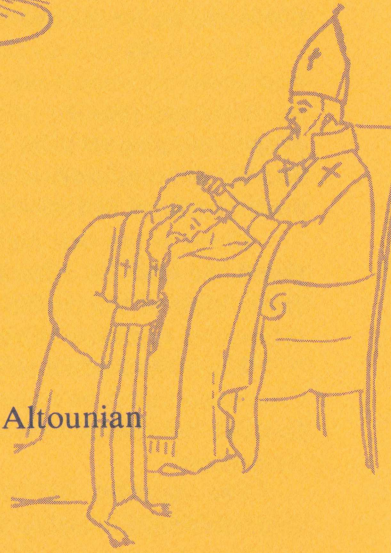
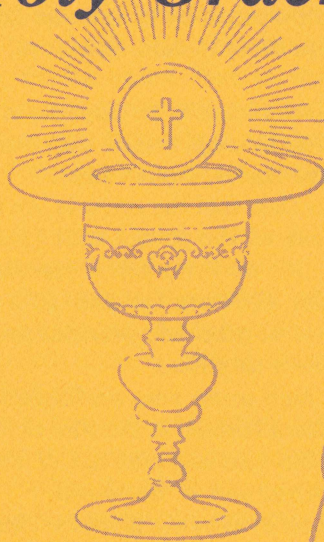


Holy Orders



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HOLY ORDERS

The Sacrament of Holy Orders is the calling of men to serve Christ in His Church. But what is the Church? The church is the community of people who believe in Christ and do His will, thus forming a new society. And as every society has various organizations in it but all are led by one authority, that is, by men in that position, so also in the church. In the church this authority is called jurisdiction, centralized in the office of the Bishop.

Now, most of the organizations in the world being natural, use natural means for natural ends, but the church is a supernatural society composed of men indeed, and it is for men, but has a supernatural origin and supernatural purpose, the church is in the world, but is not of the world.

Since the church is also the kingdom of God, it should therefore have competent people who are called by its founder and who have received the authority to govern. The Holy Orders, therefore, are the execution of this authority.

The church also gives authority to dispense divine grace to the faithful through the Sacraments, through which they form the fellowship of all Christians under the one leader, Jesus Christ.

It naturally follows then that the priest is, on the one hand, the person who is the representative of the people with God, offering to Him their sacrifices and prayers, and on the other, a representative of God with the people, bringing to them, in return for their gifts and sacrifices, both pardon for sin, and those most great and precious promises by which they are made partakers in Christ's sacrifice.

Christ is the first high priest who performed this supreme act of His priesthood when He offered Himself in sacrifice to His heavenly Father on the cross, both as the perfect and supreme act of divine worship and as the efficacious expiation of the sins of the world.

The spiritual power referred to was given by Christ to the Apostles with the Command that it be transmitted by them to their followers because Christ founded the church so that the church could glorify God until the Day of Judgement.

The Apostles did transmit this power by means of Sacramental Consecration, i.e. laying on of hands, praying and anointing the elect.

How do men receive this power? Through Ordination. The Ordination is the act of the Bishop who through his authority as overseer and governor appoints and separates men from other men, who dedicate themselves to the worship of God in His church.

Just as Baptism made the person a follower of Christ, just as Chrismation made the person a soldier of Christ, Ordination makes the person a minister of Christ. This is the reason why these three Sacraments are not to be repeated.

After the ordination the person repeats the actions of Christ. He repeats Christ's words, plays His role and last but not least, unites men to God leading

them in the paths prescribed by His Lord, Jesus Christ.

It is important to bear in mind, whenever we talk about Ordination that we are referring to valid, apostolic ordinations, i.e. the Bishop who is ordaining should be able to trace the source of his authority down to the Apostles.

There was one uniform sacramental rite of ordination used in time of the Apostles, and that was laying on of the hands accompanied by prayer (Acts 6:6, 13:1-3, 14:22).

History showed the need for a hierarchy, i.e. the class of men who possess these sacred powers or authority, and are organized in their successive grades and ranks.

Originally, the Sacrament of Holy Orders existed for the Administration and the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, because that was the primary and essential act of Christian priesthood meaning that the priest exists to offer the bread and wine after having consecrated them.

Nevertheless, it should be added that in the present ecclesiastical hierarchy the Bishop holds a superior rank, because he has jurisdictional power, while the priest does not. It is only the Bishop who can transmit the Orders to others. He alone can consecrate churches and other sacred vessels.

It is a known fact that a man does not become a priest, or a bishop, all at once, but he passes progressively through the various degrees of the hierarchy which include the four minor orders, of door-keeper (porter), reader (lector), exorcist and acolyte. And then the candidate goes through the other three Major Orders, namely: Deacon (preceded by the office of subdeacon), Priest and Bishop.

Note also that even before being admitted into the first degree the candidate should spend years of preparation in a seminary and at the end of his education, if found worthy, the Bishop will ordain him.

The imposition of hands is essential element in the Sacrament while the Holy Spirit is invoked upon the ordinand.

What are the conditions necessary for a person to be worthy of receiving Holy Orders?

1. Not to have any natural deformities (blindness, lameness, etc.).
2. To possess purity of morals and to be certified by the testimony of the faithful as to the integrity of his character.
3. To have knowledge of the Holy Scriptures so as to be able to teach the people of God (II Tim. 2:2, I Tim. 4: 7-9), and to be orthodox in his faith.
4. The candidate should be of the male sex and should have been baptized (I Cor. 14:34-35, II Tim. 2: 11-12).

The Deacon is a minister himself in this capacity. He is to serve the Priest or the Bishop in the discharge of their priestly functions (Acts 6: 1-6). The Deacons, as we read in the Book of Acts (6: 1-6), are in charge of the temporal administration of the goods of the church. They were men, who

were subject directly to the Apostles, since they, the Apostles, did not have enough time to spend on temporal things. Stephen and Philip, the first Deacons started to preach the Gospel, instructed the converts and baptized, because they were men "Full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom" (Acts 6: 1-6).

A few words on the characteristics and the duties of the Priest. First of all the Priest is the appointed man in the church to repeat the actions of Christ i.e. the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, forgiving sinners and sending them in peace, visitation of the sick, etc. It was Christ who commanded "I was sent from the Father and now I send you, go and do these things".

Beside repeating Christ's actions the Priest repeats His eternal words. anyone can read the Bible, but it is the church who explains it.

And then the Priest is found in the role of Christ, at the Holy Eucharist, at Confession, at the administration of Baptism and Marriage. Wherever he goes, and whatever he does it so happens that the people look upon him as their spiritual father. He joins young people in marriage in the name of Jesus, he anoints and baptizes children in the name of Jesus. It is the Priest who administers the Sacraments and yet it is Christ who administers them. And just as in His Eucharist Jesus can be present in all the lands of the earth so through the Priesthood He is visible and Present everywhere there is a priest.

In his role representing Christ, the Priest does not stop from being a man. While the monk or the hermit renounce the world, the priest plunges into it. Because he is human, compassionate, and understanding, easy to approach, he is ready to console, encourage and instruct his people in terms which are familiar to everyone. He meditates. The worries, the difficulties, the sufferings of his people belong to him, also their joy, faithfulness to the church and everything happy that is in life. People should show an infinite respect for the Priest because he is a representative of Christ. This respect also should contain friendship and unceasing love. The priest should not be left alone in the discharge of his commission, but every Christian should pray for him so that he may be a worthy minister of Christ.

Through his daily routine diverse functions the Priest thus leads and unites men to God. He is everywhere in the fields and in the work place, at homes, at meetings, in the factory and wherever his faithful people spend their earthly life. Because he believes that His Lord Jesus Christ is everywhere caring for His followers, therefore, the Priest also should be there. This is the way to build the city of God. The Priest is its mason.