

AM WELL PLEASED

THE DIACONATE, DEACONS AND ALTAR SERVERS

Holy Orders or Ordination is one of the seven sacraments of the Church, and one of the three major or main orders is that of the Diaconate (Deacons). The other two major orders are the Priesthood (Priests) and the Episcopate (Bishops).

In the beginning, the Apostles were the sole ministers in the Church. They were the teachers, sanctifiers, and rulers of the Church. As membership in the Church increased, the Apostles created other officers to assist them and the first order established was that of the Diaconate.

As heirs to the power of the Apostles, only the Bishops can administer the sacrament of Ordination. *Tzernatrootiun* (Ordination) translates into "Laying on the hands" because the one act that is common to all of the orders is the "imposition of the hands" by the Bishop during the ceremony.

There are five minor orders. The first four minor orders are given at the same ordination ceremony and the rank is called *Tbir* (Clerk). The *Tbir* is entitled to sing in the choir, serve as an acolyte, and read the lections during the Divine Liturgy.

An *Ouraragir* (Stole-bearer) holds the first four minor orders with the right to wear the *Ourar* (Stole) which is given through the ceremony of *Devchootiun* (Bestowing of). The *Ouraragir* has all the privileges of a *Tbir*, may also serve at the altar, and may do the censuring in the Church.

A *Guis-a-sargavak* (Sub-deacon) holds the highest rank of the minor orders having reached the fifth minor order. The fifth rank is given through Ordination and allows the *Guis-a-sargavak* all the privileges of the first four minor orders. In addition, he may handle and read the Gospel, may carry the empty *Skih* (Chalice), and may do the censuring in the Church.

A *Sargavak* (Deacon) holds the sixth order which is the first of the major orders of Ordination. The *Sargavak* has the responsibility to assist the Priest during the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and during hourly services or special rites of the Church. By his rank, the *Sargavak* has the privileges of the five minor orders, and in addition, he may carry the unconsecrated *nushkar* and wine (Gifts) in the *Skih*.

In order to administer to the spiritual necessities of the faithful in a Diocese, the Primate or Ordinary of the Diocese (*Arachnort*) may grant special privileges, such as preaching, distributing Holy Communion, and rites of the Church to a *Sargavak* at the time of his Ordination. These special privileges, granted by a Primate to *Sargavaks* within his

jurisdiction, normally apply to serving a particular church at and for a particular time.

The *Ourar* (Stole of Orarion) is the distinctive vestment of an ordained *Sargavak*; however, permission to wear an *Ourar* is sometimes given by a Bishop to persons holding the first four minor orders. The *Ourar* is a band or riband about nine feet long and four inches wide which is worn on the left shoulder, hanging loosely in front and back. A cross is sewn at the shoulder, front bottom, and back bottom of the *Ourar*.

*St. John Armenian Church of Greater Detroit
Detroit, Michigan, 1980*

The Deacon (Sargavak)

Functions of an "Avag Sargavak" (Senior Deacon):

- Performing the Anaphora (*Varaberoom*) in the Badarag.
- Read the Jashou lection of the Gospel.
- Chant the biddings of the Badarag and other services.
- Cense the altar and congregation.
- Carry the chalice and other sacramental objects.

A *Gisasargavak* (Subdeacon) is entitled to all prerogatives of an "avag sargavak" except the right to perform the "Vera-beroom" (Anaphora).

