

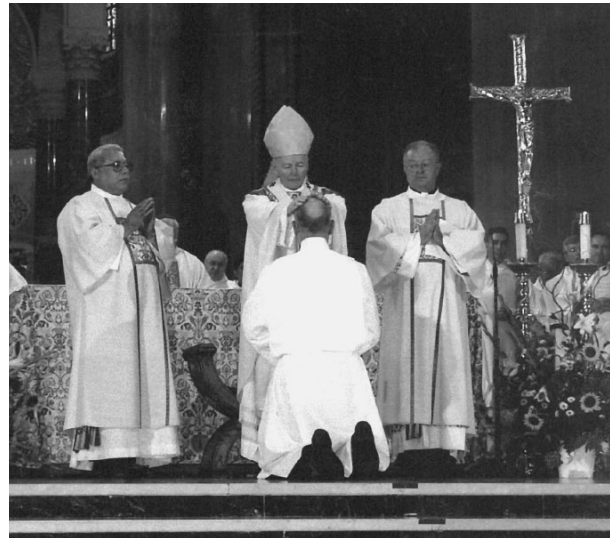
MASS OF ORDINATION TO THE SACRED PRIESTHOOD

Let the Lord, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation, who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in; that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep which have no shepherd. ~ Numbers 27:16-17

SINCE THE BEGINNING, the ordained ministry has been conferred and exercised in three degrees: that of bishops, that of presbyters, and that of deacons. The ministries conferred by ordination are irreplaceable for the organic structure of the Church: without the bishop, presbyters, and deacons, one cannot speak of the Church”¹ (CCC 1593).

“Through the sacrament of Holy Orders priests share in the universal dimensions of the mission that Christ entrusted to the apostles. The spiritual gift they have received in ordination prepares them, not for a limited and restricted mission, ‘but for the fullest, in fact the universal mission of salvation “to the end of the earth,”’² ‘prepared in spirit to preach the Gospel everywhere’³ (CCC 1565).

“The priests, prudent cooperators of the episcopal college and its support and instrument, called to the service of the People of God, constitute, together with their bishop, a unique sacerdotal college (*presbyterium*) dedicated... to a variety of distinct duties. In each local assembly of the faithful they represent, in a certain sense, the bishop, with whom they are associated in all trust and generosity; in part they take upon themselves his duties and solicitude and in their daily toils discharge them.⁴ Priests can exercise their ministry only in dependence on the bishop and in communion with him. The promise of obedience they make to the bishop at the moment of ordination and the kiss of peace from him at the end of the ordination liturgy mean that the bishop consid-



ers them his co-workers, his sons, his brothers, and his friends, and that they in return owe him love and obedience” (CCC 1567).

“All priests, who are constituted in the order of priesthood by the sacrament of Orders, are bound together by an intimate sacramental brotherhood, but in a special way they form one priestly body in the diocese to which they are attached under their own bishop...⁵ The unity of the presbyterium finds liturgical expression in the custom of the presbyters’ imposing hands, after the bishop, during the rite of ordination” (CCC 1568).

“This sacrament configures the recipient to Christ by a special grace of the Holy Spirit, so that he may

“This sacrament configures the recipient to Christ so that he may serve as Christ’s instrument for his Church.”

¹ Cf. St. Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Trall. 3,1

² *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 10; *Optatam Totius* 20; cf. Acts 1:8

³ *Optatam Totius* 20

⁴ *Lumen Gentium* 28 § 2

⁵ *Presbyterorum Ordinis* 8

serve as Christ's instrument for his Church. By ordination one is enabled to act as a representative of Christ, Head of the Church, in his triple office of priest, prophet, and king" (CCC 1581).

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Laying on the Hands and Prayer of Consecration: After these prayers, the candidate goes to the bishop and kneels before him. In silence,

the bishop lays hands on the candidate. This is the essential act in the sacrament of Holy Orders. Then all the priests present, wearing stoles, silently lay hands on the candidate (see *Rites of Ordination* 20-21). The bishop then recites or sings the prayer of consecration. The concluding section of this prayer appears here:

Almighty Father, grant to this servant of yours the dignity of the priesthood. Renew within him the Spirit of holiness. As a co-worker with the order of bishops may he be faithful to the ministry that he receives from you, Lord God, and be to others a model of right conduct. May he be faithful in working with the order of bishops, so that the words of the Gospel may reach the ends of the earth, and the family of nations, made one in Christ, may become God's one, holy people. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever (*Rites of Ordination* 22).

Investiture with Stole and Chasuble and the Anointing of Hands: After the consecratory prayer, the helping priest arranges the stole for the newly ordained as priests to wear. He then vests the new priest in a chasuble (see *Rites of Ordination* 23). The bishop anoints with chrism the palms of the new priest who kneels before him. The bishop says: "The Father anointed our Lord Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. May Jesus preserve you to sanctify the Christian people and to offer sacrifice to God (*Rites of Ordination* 24).

Presentation of Gifts and Kiss of Peace: The deacon assists the bishop in receiving the gifts of the people. He prepares the bread on the paten and the wine and water in the chalice. The bishop then gives the paten and chalice to the new priest. The bishop exchanges the sign of peace with the newly-ordained priest.

Liturgy of the Eucharist

The Mass, concelebrated by the bishop, the newly ordained priests, and all priests present, continues as usual.

(CCC 1562-1568, 1581, 1593)

Outline of the Rite of Ordination

Liturgy of the Word

The Liturgy of the Word proceeds as usual, though the profession of faith and general intercessions are omitted. The ordination begins after the Gospel.

Calling of the Candidates: The deacon of the Mass calls each priestly candidate by name. The candidate responds: "Present." He then goes to the bishop and makes a proper sign of reverence. The bishop then asks a designated priest to testify that the candidate has received proper training and is worthy of ordination.

Election by the Bishop and Consent of the People: The bishop says: "We rely on the help of the Lord God and our Savior Jesus Christ, and we choose this man, our brother, for priesthood in the presbyterial order" (*Rites of Ordination* 13). All present respond: "Thanks be to God," or show their assent in some other way.

Homily: The bishop addresses the people and candidate on the nature of priestly duties. He stresses the role of the priest as one of serving Christ the teacher, priest, and shepherd.

Examination of the Candidate: The candidate now stands before the bishop, who asks him about his willingness to serve Christ and his Church. The bishop asks if the candidate is willing to discharge faithfully the office of priesthood, to celebrate the sacred mysteries of Christ, to exercise the ministry of the word worthily and wisely, and to consecrate his life to God in union with Christ the high priest (see *Rites of Ordination* 15). To all these questions, the candidate responds: "I am."

Promise of Obedience and Prayer: The candidate kneels before the bishop and promises him his respect and obedience. The bishop invites all to pray for the candidate, after which follows the Litany of the Saints, during which the candidate is prostrated on the floor. The bishop then invokes the Holy Spirit to pour out graces on the priest-to-be (see *Rites of Ordination* 16-18).