

Living in the Kingdom

Lesson 20: Holy Orders

Ministers to the People of God



CCC 1536

1. Holy Orders is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time.

CCC 1537-38

2. "Order" in Roman antiquity = an established governing body. Ordination = a religious and liturgical act, a consecration, blessing or sacrament. Confers a gift of the Holy Spirit that permits the exercise of a "sacred power" which can come from Christ through his Church.

Holy Orders in Salvation History

CCC 1539-40
Ex 19:6, 29:1-30, Num 1:48-53

3. God made Israel "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," but then set apart the tribe of Levi for liturgical service; God himself is its inheritance. A special rite consecrated the beginning of the priesthood.

Heb 5:1

4. Priests are "appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins." Instituted to proclaim the Word of God and to restore communion with God by sacrifices and prayer, this priesthood was still powerless to bring salvation.

CCC 1541

5. The priesthood of Aaron, the service of the Levites, and the seventy elders are a prefiguring of the ordained ministry of the New Covenant.

CCC 1544-45
1 Tim 2:5
Heb 5:10, 10:14

6. The priesthood of the Old Covenant is fulfilled in Jesus, the "one mediator between God and men" and the unique "high priest after the order of Melchizedek," "holy, blameless, unstained."

7. The redemptive sacrifice of Christ is unique, but made present in the Eucharist. Similarly, the unique priesthood of Christ is made present through the ministerial priesthood: "Only Christ is the true priest, the others being only his ministers."

Two Participations in the One Priesthood of Christ:

CCC 1546
1 Pet 2:5, Rev 1:6

8. The whole Church is a priestly people. Through baptism all the faithful share in the priesthood of Christ and partake in his mission as priest, prophet and king.

CCC 1592

9. The ministerial priesthood differs in essence from the common priesthood because it confers a sacred power for the service of the faithful by teaching, divine worship and pastoral governance.

CCC 1548-51

10. The priest acts *in persona Christi Capitis* – in the person of Christ the head. This is not a guarantee that the minister will be preserved from human weaknesses, the spirit of domination, error, or even sin. But the power of the Holy Spirit guarantees the efficacy of the sacraments regardless of the holiness of the minister (*ex opere operato*).

CCC 1552-53

11. The priest also acts in the name of the whole Church when presenting to God the prayer of the Church and the Eucharistic sacrifice.

CCC 1554

Three Degrees of Ordination: Bishops, Priests, and Deacons

12. **Bishops** have the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders because they are the successors of the apostles. A bishop receives the offices of

<p>CCC 1555-61 CCC 1594 1 Tim 3:1</p>	<p>sanctifying, teaching and ruling and is the visible head of the particular Church entrusted to him. Bishops share in the apostolic responsibility and mission of the whole Church under the authority of the Pope (collegiality).</p>
<p>CCC 1562-68 Tit 1:5</p>	<p>13. Priests are co-workers of the bishops and depend on them in the exercise of their pastoral functions. Priests act <i>in persona Christi</i> as have the power to make present and offer the unique sacrifice of the New Testament, the Eucharist.</p>
<p>CCC 1569-71</p>	<p>14. Deacons are ministers ordained for the service of the Church, such as assisting bishop and priest in the celebration of the sacraments, blessing marriages, proclaiming the gospel and preaching, presiding over funerals, and doing ministries of charity. Vatican II restored the permanent diaconate, which can be conferred on married men.</p>
<p>CCC 1572-74 CCC 1597 2 Tim 1:6</p>	<p>15. The sacrament is conferred by the laying on of hands followed by a solemn prayer of consecration asking God to grant the ordinand the graces of the Holy Spirit required for his ministry. Ordination imprints an indelible sacramental character.</p>
<p>CCC 1575-76</p>	<p>16. Who can confer Holy Orders? Validly ordained bishops hand on the "gift of the Spirit," the "apostolic line" because they are the successors of the apostles, to whom Christ gave a share in his mission and authority.</p>
<p>CCC 1577-78</p>	<p>17. Who can be ordained? Only a baptized <i>man</i>, because the priest represents Christ, who was a man and is the <i>bridegroom</i> of the Church. Jesus chose only men to be apostles, and these did the same when they choose successors. Man = priest; woman = temple, sanctuary. No one has a <i>right</i> to receive ordination but is called to it by God through the Church.</p>
<p>CCC 1580 Mt 19:12 1 Cor 7:8, 32-33</p>	<p>18. In Latin Church, priests are normally celibate - an eschatological sign of the new life in Christ. Permanent deacons may be married. In the Eastern Church, married men can be ordained priests.</p>
<p>CCC 1581-84</p>	<p>19. The effects of the sacrament: Configures the recipient to Christ by a special grace of the Holy Spirit, making him Christ's representative in his triple office of priest, prophet, and king. The sacrament confers an indelible sacramental character and cannot be repeated.</p>
	<p>20. For the bishop, this is a grace of strength to guide and defend his Church as a father and pastor, with love for all and especially for the poor, the sick and the needy. This grace impels him to proclaim the Gospel to all, to be the model of holiness for his flock, identifying himself with Christ, not fearing to give his life for his sheep.</p>

Questions for Discussion

1. Why is the priesthood essential to our relationship with Christ?
2. Was the priesthood not abolished by Christ now that we are all "a kingdom of priests"?
3. Why do bishops, priests, and deacons deserve special respect?
4. How does the person of Jesus, true God and true Man, bring strength to priests?