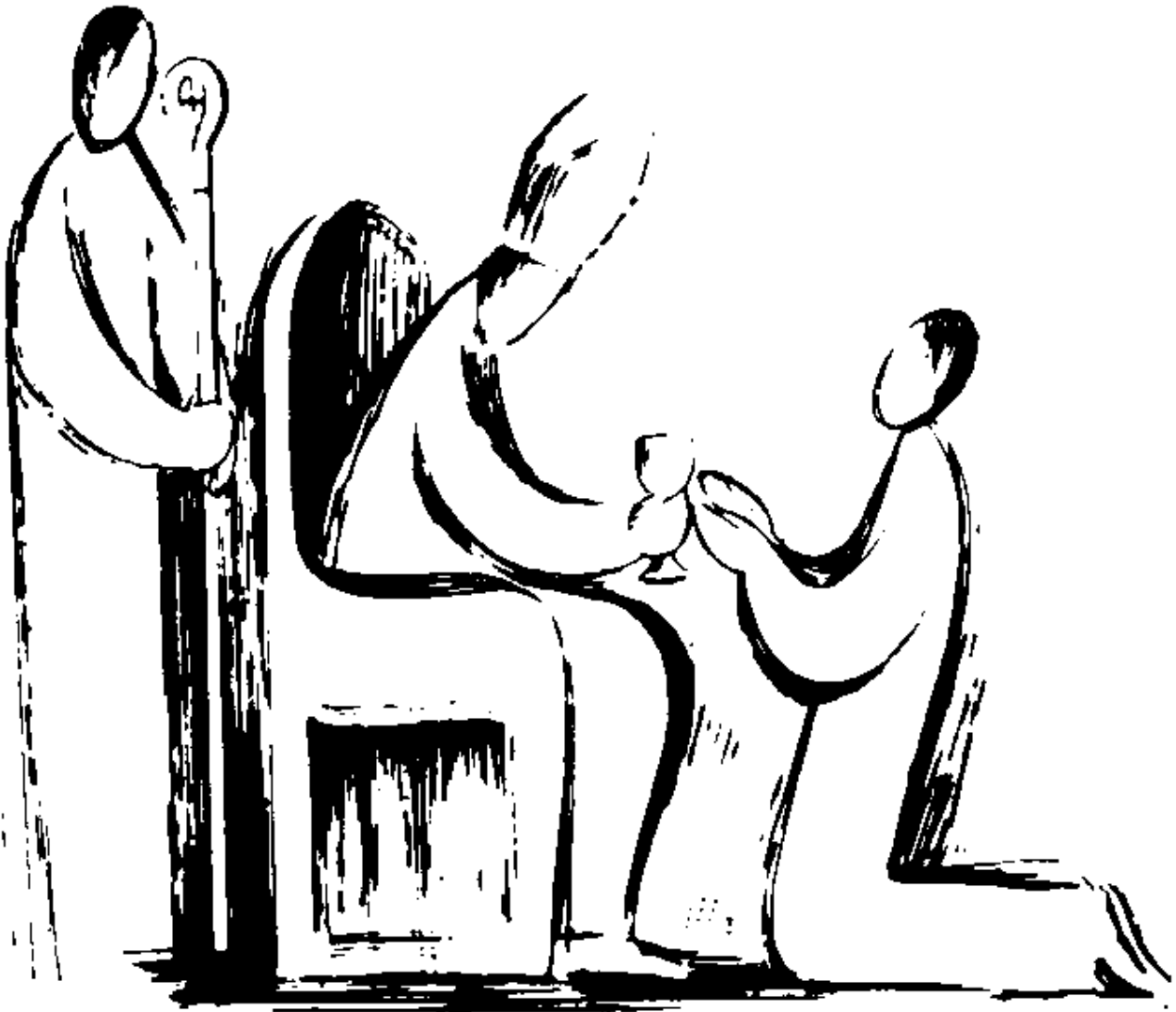


All you need to know about...
The Sacrament of Holy Orders



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What is it and what is its purpose?

- The Sacrament of Holy Orders is one of the seven sacraments of the Church.
- It is one of the two Sacraments of Commitment.
- The Sacraments of Commitment are sometimes referred to as Sacraments of Vocation or of Mission as they are ones which shape the course of adult life in a very marked way.
- It is the Sacrament by which men are ordained as deacon, priest or bishop. Whilst other men and women may choose to live a vocational life as part of a religious order their profession of vows is not part of a Sacramental Rite.
- A deacon or priest may be ordained for a Diocese or a particular Religious Order. A bishop is appointed to any Diocese that has been selected for him and it is not necessarily to his own.
- The three Orders of deacon, priest and bishop are clearly distinct from each other particularly in terms of what Sacraments, Rites and ministries they confer.
- In order to become a priest a man must already be an ordained deacon. Likewise, in order to be a bishop, the man must already be an ordained priest. However, Cardinals and Popes are not ordained: they are installed into these roles as they already have been ordained as bishops.
- Not all men who are ordained as Deacons go on to become priests. These men are known as permanent deacons.
- The Holy Father nominates a priest to become a bishop. He is ordained to the episcopacy. Three bishops are required to complete the rite of ordination to the episcopacy.

How did Holy Orders originate?

- Jesus called the twelve apostles because he had a specific role for them. In his three years of ministry he showed them by his words to them and to other people, by his specific instructions to them and by all his actions what he wanted them to do as his first priests.
- From these twelve Jesus selected Simon and gave him the name 'Peter' which means 'rock'. Jesus chose Peter to be the one upon whom he would build his Church. As the leader of the early Church, Peter led the Christian community in Rome where tradition tells us he died for his faith. He was the first Bishop of Rome. The Pope is the Bishop of Rome and successor to St. Peter.
- To aid the Apostles in their ministry Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit so that they would have God's power to assist them. On Pentecost Day the Apostles

received the Holy Spirit and went out into the streets of Jerusalem to spread the Good News. This is the day that the Church was born and why Pentecost is celebrated as the Church's birthday.

- In time the twelve Apostles themselves appointed other men to help in spreading the Good News. This is known as apostolic succession. Every bishop ordained in the Catholic Church is a successor to the apostles.
- The history of the early Church shows us that the Order of Deacons began in order to allow the apostles to devote themselves to teaching and preaching. Deacons were called to ministers of service. The Greek word 'diaconia' means 'Service.' Every deacon shares in the ministry of the bishop of service in the name of the Lord Jesus.
- The successors to the apostles, sometimes called 'elders' (whom we now call bishops), needed help to exercise their ministry as the Church grew larger throughout the known world. It was at this time that 'presbyters' were appointed by the 'elders' to support them in their ministry. Their responsibilities included teaching and preaching the celebration of the Eucharist and other Sacraments along with care for the people. So the Order of Priests was established. Every priest is given a share in the priesthood of Christ which the bishop has received in its fullness. Priests are essential co-workers with the bishops of the Church.

When is the Sacrament of Holy Orders celebrated?

- After a period of discernment men will attend a seminary for seven years. During this period of time they may be ordained to the Diaconate, usually after five years. Not all men who start at seminary will complete the seven years: some will decide their vocation lies in another sphere and others will be judged not to be suitable candidates. They are not ordained as priests until their studies have been completed after seven years.
- Married men who apply to be Permanent Deacons study for four years on a part time basis. Their wives and families often take part in their formation programme.
- The decision to appoint priests as Bishops is made by the Pope after a long, discreet process where advice and opinions are gathered from a variety of sources.

Where does the Sacrament of Holy Orders take place?

- A man may be ordained by the bishop as deacon or priest in his own parish church. A number of men may be ordained deacons or priests in the Cathedral. A bishop is usually ordained in a Cathedral.
- The Sacrament of Holy Orders always takes place within the celebration of Mass.

Can anyone be ordained?

- Only baptised men who are free to do so and who have been accepted into a seminary for training can eventually be ordained.
- Married men can be ordained as deacons only.

How many times can you be ordained?

- A man is ordained into each Order only once.

Who can Confer the Sacrament of Holy Orders?

- Only a bishop has the authority to ordain a priest or a deacon. The bishop shares the fullness of Christ's Priesthood and is therefore able to celebrate the seven Sacraments.
- A priest cannot ordain another priest or deacon. With the appropriate faculty given by the diocesan bishop he is able to celebrate the six other Sacraments within the parish community he serves and within the diocese. He may well celebrate these Sacraments outside of the diocese with the permission of the local bishop.
- A deacon is only allowed to celebrate the Sacraments of Baptism and Marriage.

Who has to be present at Holy Orders?

- The bishop who is ordaining.
- The candidates for ordination.
- Other priests and deacons from the Diocese or Order will also be present. Ordinations are hugely important celebrations which are enjoyed and shared with as many of the brother priests and deacons.

Are any special clothes worn?

- Those who are to be ordained bishop, priest or deacon will wear the vestments of their office once they have been ordained.
- For a bishop these will include the Mass vestments worn by any priest and a cross, a mitre on his head and a ring on his finger. The ring is a sign of his fidelity to the Church and the mitre a sign of his teaching office. The bishop may also carry a crozier as a sign of his pastoral care for the People of God.
- A Priest will be vested with Mass vestments. Over his alb he will receive the stole worn around his neck as a sign of the office of priesthood and a chasuble. These vestments in a special way denote that in celebrating the Sacraments he has become by virtue of ordination, "another Christ."
- A deacon will be vested with the vestments of a deacon. Over his alb he will wear a stole crossing his left shoulder and the dalmatic over his body. These vestments indicate the servant nature of Christ's ministry.

What happens at the Ordination of a Priest?

- At the ordination of a bishop, priest or deacon, the candidate is presented to the bishop. Firstly, a declaration of his worthiness is made before the bishop elects him and the people give their consent.

In becoming a priest the candidate will become part of a fraternity or brotherhood of men: those who are ordained are brothers for one another.

- The bishop asks a series of questions to ensure that the candidate is prepared to take on all the role of priest. The candidate also makes a promise of obedience.

The candidate has to declare that he is prepared to lead the people in prayer, celebrate the Sacraments, preach and teach the Word of God.

The candidate also has to promise to obey the bishop as he is the chosen leader within the Diocese or Order.

- The candidate lies prostrate on the floor while the Litany of Saints is said/sung.

By lying on the floor the candidate is demonstrating his submission and acceptance of the will of God. This humble posture reminds him that he is called to serve and not to be served.

The Litany of Saints is calling upon the saints and their intercession for the candidate. The list of saints may include those who are associated with the Diocese, the patron of the parish and the names of the candidate.

- The Bishop and all the priests in turn lay their hands upon the candidates head and then the Bishop says the prayer of consecration extending his hands over the candidates head as he does so.

The actual moment the Sacrament is received is through the laying on of hands and the words of the prayer of consecration.

The laying on of hands is significant because it is the same gesture the first apostles used in order to call down the Holy Spirit upon those people who became converts to the early Church (Acts 6:6, 8:14-19).

- The new priest is vested in his stole and chasuble.

The vestments worn by a priest are all symbolic of his office. Now that the candidate is a priest he is entitled to wear them.

- The Bishop anoints the new priests hands with the Oil of Chrism.

In Jewish tradition only kings were anointed as it was believed they had been specially chosen by God. By anointing the priest with the oil of Chrism it is emphasising that they too have been chosen by God to use their hands in the service of His work. The act of anointing is seen as making a mark or a seal upon the child which is indelible. Because the mark is permanent there is no need for the Sacrament ever to be re-administered.

Chrism comes from the Greek word meaning 'oil of anointing'. The Oil of Chrism is olive oil perfumed with balsam. The richness of the fragrance serves to remind us of the importance of this anointing.

The Oil of Chrism is blessed by the Bishop at a special Mass during Holy Week at which all the clergy are present. Traditionally this is celebrated on Holy Thursday but, in the Archdiocese of Birmingham, for practical reasons it is celebrated on Holy Wednesday.

- The new priest is presented with the paten and chalice.

One of the requirements made of a priest is that he should say Mass every day. The presenting of the paten and chalice reminds him of this.

- The bishop gives the new priest the kiss of peace.

This action is a symbolic reminder of the brotherhood into which the new priest has now entered.

If you want to know more about the Sacrament of Holy Orders you can...

- watch a short film clip featuring Bishop Christopher Coyne on the Catholic TV Network from a series of talks 'Everything you wanted to know about Catholic Liturgy' www.catholictv.com/shows/everything-you-wanted-know-about-catholic-liturgy/why-does-the-bishop-wear-all-stuff
- watch a short film clip on www.bustedhalo.com/video/holy-orders-what-ordination-means
- read more about it in 'Youcat' ('Youth Catechism of the Catholic Church') available from CTS
- read more about it in the 'Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church' available from CTS
- read more in 'The Catholic Source Book' Harcourt Religion Publishers

The Rite of the Sacrament of Holy Orders

The Rite of the Sacrament of Holy Orders takes place within the celebration of Mass. It begins during the Liturgy of the Word just prior to the Homily of the Bishop.

The rite outlined below is that for a priest.

RITE OF HOLY ORDERS

Calling of the Candidate

The Bishop, wearing his mitre is seated in his chair. The Deacon calls the candidate who responds and goes before the bishop and makes a sign of reverence:

Deacon: Let N. who is to be ordained priest please come forward.

Candidate: Present

Presentation of the Candidate

Once the candidate is in his place a priest designated by the bishop says:

Priest: Most Reverend Father, holy mother Church asks you to ordain this man, our brother, for service as priest.

Bishop: Do you judge him to be worthy?

Priest: After enquiry among the people of Christ and upon recommendation of those concerned with his training, I testify that he has been found worthy.

Election by the Bishop and Consent of the People

Bishop: We rely on the help of the Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, and we choose this man, our brother, for priesthood in the presbyteral order.

All: Thanks be to God.

Homily

In his homily the Bishop will speak of the role of the priest as Teacher, Priest and Shepherd. He will also address the candidate directly and remind him that he is in the service of Christ.

Examination of the Candidate

The Bishop then addresses the candidate with a series of questions.

Bishop: My son. Before you proceed to the order of the presbyterate, declare before the people your intention to undertake this priestly office.

Are you resolved, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to discharge without fail the office of priesthood in the presbyteral order as a conscientious fellow worker with the bishops in caring for the Lord's flock?

Candidate: I am.

Bishop: Are you resolved to celebrate the mysteries of Christ faithfully and religiously as the Church has handed them down to us for the glory of God and the sanctification of Christ's people?

Candidate: I am.

Bishop: Are you resolved to exercise the ministry of the word worthily and wisely, preaching the Gospel and explaining the Catholic faith.

Candidate: I am.

Bishop: Are you resolved to consecrate your life to God for the salvation of his people, and to unite yourself more closely every day to Christ the High Priest, who offered himself for us to the Father as a perfect sacrifice?

Candidate: I am, with the help of God.

Promise of Obedience

The candidate now kneels before the bishop and places his joined hands between those of the bishop.

Bishop: Do you promise respect and obedience to me and my successors?

Candidate: I do.

Bishop: May God who has begun the good work in you bring it to fulfilment.

Invitation to Prayer

All those present stand whilst the bishop without his mitre says:

Bishop: My dear people, let us pray, that the all-powerful Father may pour out the gifts of heaven on this servant of his, whom he has chosen to be a priest.

Litany of the Saints

Everyone now kneels whilst the candidate prostrates himself. The cantors lead the Litany. After this the Bishop stands and says/sings:

Bishop: Hear us, Lord our God, and pour out upon this servant of yours the blessing of the Holy Spirit and the grace and power of the priesthood. In your sight we offer this man for ordination: support him with your unfailing love. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Laying on of Hands

Everyone stands and the candidate goes and kneels before the Bishop who lays his hands upon the candidates head in silence and this action is repeated by all of the priests who are present. Once this has been done the priests stand on either side of the Bishop until the prayer of consecration has been said. During this prayer the Bishop extends his hands over the candidate's head.

Bishop: Come to our help, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God; you are the source of every honour and dignity, of all progress and stability. You watch over the growing family of man by your gift of wisdom and your pattern of order. When you had appointed high priests to rule over your people, you chose men next to them in rank and dignity to be with them and to help them in their task; and so there grew up the ranks of priests and the offices of levites, established by sacred rites.

In the desert you extended the spirit of Moses to seventy wise men who helped him to rule the great company of his people, you shared among the sons of Aaron the fullness of their father's power, to provide worthy priests in sufficient number for the increasing rites of sacrifice and worship. With the same loving care you gave companions to your Son's apostles to help in teaching the faith: they preached the Gospel to the whole world.

Lord, grant also to us such fellow workers, for we are weak and our need is greater.

Almighty Father, grant to this servant of yours the dignity of 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, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Investiture with Stole and Chasuble

The Bishop, now wearing his mitre sits whilst the candidate stands. The priests return to their seats whilst one of the priests helps place the stole and chasuble upon the new priest.

Anointing of hands

The Bishop now uses the Oil of Chrism the palms of the new priest and says:

Bishop: 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.

Presentation of the Gifts

The bishop now presents the new priest who is kneeling before him with the paten and chalice saying:

Bishop: 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.

Kiss of Peace

The bishop stands and gives the kiss of peace to the new priest saying:

Bishop: Peace be with you

New Priest: And with your spirit.

The Mass now resumes with the Liturgy of the Eucharist.