

BOOK II—LITURGY AND SACRAMENTS, SESSION 11

Holy Orders, a Sacrament at the Service of Communion

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 5: 1-10

Chapter 5

1 ¹ ² Every high priest is taken from among men and made their representative before God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

2 He is able to deal patiently ³ with the ignorant and erring, for he himself is beset by weakness

3 and so, for this reason, must make sin offerings for himself as well as for the people.

4 No one takes this honor upon himself but only when called by God, just as Aaron was.

5 In the same way, it was not Christ who glorified himself in becoming high priest, but rather the one who said to him: "You are my son; this day I have begotten you";

6 just as he says in another place: ⁴ "You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."

7 In the days when he was in the flesh, he offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, ⁵ and he was heard because of his reverence.

8 Son though he was, ⁶ he learned obedience from what he suffered;

9 and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him,

10 declared by God high priest according to the order of Melchizedek

CATECHISM OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

CHAPTER THREE

THE SACRAMENTS AT THE SERVICE OF COMMUNION

1533 Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist are sacraments of Christian initiation. They ground the common vocation of all Christ's disciples, a vocation to holiness and to the mission of evangelizing the world. They confer the graces needed for the life according to the Spirit during this life as pilgrims on the march towards the homeland.

1534 Two other sacraments, Holy Orders and Matrimony, are directed towards the salvation of others; if they contribute as well to personal salvation, it is through service to others that they do so. They confer a particular mission in the Church and serve to build up the People of God.

1535 Through these sacraments those already consecrated by Baptism and Confirmation¹ for the common priesthood of all the faithful can receive particular consecrations. Those who receive the sacrament of Holy Orders are consecrated in Christ's name "to feed the Church by the word and grace of God."² On their part, "Christian spouses are fortified and, as it were, consecrated for the duties and dignity of their state by a special sacrament."³

¹ Cf. LG 10.

² LG 11 # 2.

³ GS 48 # 2.

ARTICLE 6

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS

1536 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: thus it is the sacrament of apostolic ministry. It includes three degrees: episcopate, presbyterate, and diaconate.

(NOTE: In this session, only the sacramental means by which this ministry is handed on will be treated. To read about the institution and mission of the apostolic ministry by Christ, see BELOW, no. 874 ff. THE TEXT FOR SESSION 11 RESUMES AT NO. 1546 BELOW).

I. THE HIERARCHICAL CONSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH

Why the ecclesial ministry?

874 Christ is himself the source of ministry in the Church. He instituted the Church. He gave her authority and mission, orientation and goal:

In order to shepherd the People of God and to increase its numbers without cease, Christ the Lord set up in his Church a variety of offices which aim at the good of the whole body. the holders of office, who are invested with a sacred power, are, in fact, dedicated to promoting the interests of their brethren, so that all who belong to the People of God . . . may attain to salvation.³⁸⁹

875 "How are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? and how are they to hear without a preacher? and how can men preach unless they are sent?"³⁹⁰ No one - no individual and no community - can proclaim the Gospel to himself: "Faith comes from what is heard."³⁹¹ No one can give himself the mandate and the mission to proclaim the Gospel. the one sent by the Lord does not speak and act on his own authority, but by virtue of Christ's authority; not as a member of the community, but speaking to it in the name of Christ. No one can bestow grace on himself; it must be given and offered. This fact presupposes ministers of grace, authorized and empowered by Christ. From him, they receive the mission and faculty ("the sacred power") to act in persona Christi Capitis. the ministry in which Christ's emissaries do and give by God's grace what they cannot do and give by their own powers, is called a "sacrament" by the Church's tradition. Indeed, the ministry of the Church is conferred by a special sacrament.

876 Intrinsically linked to the sacramental nature of ecclesial ministry is its character as service. Entirely dependent on Christ who gives mission and authority, ministers are truly "slaves of Christ,"³⁹² in the image of him who freely took "the form of a slave" for us.³⁹³ Because the word and grace of which they are ministers are not their own, but are given to them by Christ for the sake of others, they must freely become the slaves of all.³⁹⁴

877 Likewise, it belongs to the sacramental nature of ecclesial ministry that it have a collegial character. In fact, from the beginning of his ministry, the Lord Jesus instituted the Twelve as "the seeds of the new Israel and the beginning of the sacred hierarchy."³⁹⁵ Chosen together, they were also sent out together, and their fraternal unity would be at the service of the fraternal communion of all the faithful: they would reflect and witness to the communion of the divine persons.³⁹⁶ For this reason every bishop exercises his ministry from within the episcopal college, in communion with the bishop of Rome, the successor of St. Peter and head of the college. So also priests exercise their ministry from within the presbyterium of the diocese, under the direction of their bishop.

878 Finally, it belongs to the sacramental nature of ecclesial ministry that it have a personal character. Although Christ's ministers act in communion with one another, they also always act in a personal way. Each one is called personally: "You, follow me"³⁹⁷ in order to be a personal witness within the common mission, to bear personal responsibility

before him who gives the mission, acting "in his person" and for other persons: "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ..."; "I absolve you...."

879 Sacramental ministry in the Church, then, is at once a collegial and a personal service, exercised in the name of Christ. This is evidenced by the bonds between the episcopal college and its head, the successor of St. Peter, and in the relationship between the bishop's pastoral responsibility for his particular church and the common solicitude of the episcopal college for the universal Church.

The episcopal college and its head, the Pope

880 When Christ instituted the Twelve, "he constituted [them] in the form of a college or permanent assembly, at the head of which he placed Peter, chosen from among them."³⁹⁸ Just as "by the Lord's institution, St. Peter and the rest of the apostles constitute a single apostolic college, so in like fashion the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, and the bishops, the successors of the apostles, are related with and united to one another."³⁹⁹

881 The Lord made Simon alone, whom he named Peter, the "rock" of his Church. He gave him the keys of his Church and instituted him shepherd of the whole flock.⁴⁰⁰ "The office of binding and loosing which was given to Peter was also assigned to the college of apostles united to its head."⁴⁰¹ This pastoral office of Peter and the other apostles belongs to the Church's very foundation and is continued by the bishops under the primacy of the Pope.

882 The Pope, Bishop of Rome and Peter's successor, "is the perpetual and visible source and foundation of the unity both of the bishops and of the whole company of the faithful."⁴⁰² "For the Roman Pontiff, by reason of his office as Vicar of Christ, and as pastor of the entire Church has full, supreme, and universal power over the whole Church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered."⁴⁰³

883 "The college or body of bishops has no authority unless united with the Roman Pontiff, Peter's successor, as its head." As such, this college has "supreme and full authority over the universal Church; but this power cannot be exercised without the agreement of the Roman Pontiff."⁴⁰⁴

884 "The college of bishops exercises power over the universal Church in a solemn manner in an ecumenical council."⁴⁰⁵ But "there never is an ecumenical council which is not confirmed or at least recognized as such by Peter's successor."⁴⁰⁶

885 "This college, in so far as it is composed of many members, is the expression of the variety and universality of the People of God; and of the unity of the flock of Christ, in so far as it is assembled under one head."⁴⁰⁷

886 "The individual bishops are the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular Churches."⁴⁰⁸ As such, they "exercise their pastoral office over the portion of the People of God assigned to them,"⁴⁰⁹ assisted by priests and deacons. But, as a

member of the episcopal college, each bishop shares in the concern for all the Churches.⁴¹⁰ The bishops exercise this care first "by ruling well their own Churches as portions of the universal Church," and so contributing "to the welfare of the whole Mystical Body, which, from another point of view, is a corporate body of Churches."⁴¹¹ They extend it especially to the poor,⁴¹² to those persecuted for the faith, as well as to missionaries who are working throughout the world.

887 Neighboring particular Churches who share the same culture form ecclesiastical provinces or larger groupings called patriarchates or regions.⁴¹³ The bishops of these groupings can meet in synods or provincial councils. "In a like fashion, the episcopal conferences at the present time are in a position to contribute in many and fruitful ways to the concrete realization of the collegiate spirit."⁴¹⁴

The teaching office

888 Bishops, with priests as co-workers, have as their first task "to preach the Gospel of God to all men," in keeping with the Lord's command.⁴¹⁵ They are "heralds of faith, who draw new disciples to Christ; they are authentic teachers" of the apostolic faith "endowed with the authority of Christ."⁴¹⁶

889 In order to preserve the Church in the purity of the faith handed on by the apostles, Christ who is the Truth willed to confer on her a share in his own infallibility. By a "supernatural sense of faith" the People of God, under the guidance of the Church's living Magisterium, "unfailingly adheres to this faith."⁴¹⁷

890 The mission of the Magisterium is linked to the definitive nature of the covenant established by God with his people in Christ. It is this Magisterium's task to preserve God's people from deviations and defections and to guarantee them the objective possibility of professing the true faith without error. Thus, the pastoral duty of the Magisterium is aimed at seeing to it that the People of God abides in the truth that liberates. To fulfill this service, Christ endowed the Church's shepherds with the charism of infallibility in matters of faith and morals. the exercise of this charism takes several forms:

891 "The Roman Pontiff, head of the college of bishops, enjoys this infallibility in virtue of his office, when, as supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful - who confirms his brethren in the faith he proclaims by a definitive act a doctrine pertaining to faith or morals.... the infallibility promised to the Church is also present in the body of bishops when, together with Peter's successor, they exercise the supreme Magisterium," above all in an Ecumenical Council.⁴¹⁸ When the Church through its supreme Magisterium proposes a doctrine "for belief as being divinely revealed,"⁴¹⁹ and as the teaching of Christ, the definitions "must be adhered to with the obedience of faith."⁴²⁰ This infallibility extends as far as the deposit of divine Revelation itself.⁴²¹

892 Divine assistance is also given to the successors of the apostles, teaching in communion with the successor of Peter, and, in a particular way, to the bishop of Rome,

pastor of the whole Church, when, without arriving at an infallible definition and without pronouncing in a "definitive manner," they propose in the exercise of the ordinary Magisterium a teaching that leads to better understanding of Revelation in matters of faith and morals. To this ordinary teaching the faithful "are to adhere to it with religious assent"⁴²² which, though distinct from the assent of faith, is nonetheless an extension of it.

The sanctifying office

893 The bishop is "the steward of the grace of the supreme priesthood,"⁴²³ especially in the Eucharist which he offers personally or whose offering he assures through the priests, his co-workers. The Eucharist is the center of the life of the particular Church. The bishop and priests sanctify the Church by their prayer and work, by their ministry of the word and of the sacraments. They sanctify her by their example, "not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock."⁴²⁴ Thus, "together with the flock entrusted to them, they may attain to eternal life."⁴²⁵

The governing office

894 "The bishops, as vicars and legates of Christ, govern the particular Churches assigned to them by their counsels, exhortations, and example, but over and above that also by the authority and sacred power" which indeed they ought to exercise so as to edify, in the spirit of service which is that of their Master.⁴²⁶

895 "The power which they exercise personally in the name of Christ, is proper, ordinary, and immediate, although its exercise is ultimately controlled by the supreme authority of the Church."⁴²⁷ But the bishops should not be thought of as vicars of the Pope. His ordinary and immediate authority over the whole Church does not annul, but on the contrary confirms and defends that of the bishops. Their authority must be exercised in communion with the whole Church under the guidance of the Pope.

896 The Good Shepherd ought to be the model and "form" of the bishop's pastoral office. Conscious of his own weaknesses, "the bishop . . . can have compassion for those who are ignorant and erring. He should not refuse to listen to his subjects whose welfare he promotes as of his very own children... the faithful ... should be closely attached to the bishop as the Church is to Jesus Christ, and as Jesus Christ is to the Father":⁴²⁸

Let all follow the bishop, as Jesus Christ follows his Father, and the college of presbyters as the apostles; respect the deacons as you do God's law. Let no one do anything concerning the Church in separation from the bishop.⁴²⁹

II. THE LAY FAITHFUL

897 "The term 'laity' is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church. That is, the faithful, who by Baptism are incorporated into Christ and integrated into the People of

God, are made sharers in their particular way in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ, and have their own part to play in the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the World."⁴³⁰

The vocation of lay people

898 "By reason of their special vocation it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will.... It pertains to them in a special way so to illuminate and order all temporal things with which they are closely associated that these may always be effected and grow according to Christ and maybe to the glory of the Creator and Redeemer."⁴³¹

899 The initiative of lay Christians is necessary especially when the matter involves discovering or inventing the means for permeating social, political, and economic realities with the demands of Christian doctrine and life. This initiative is a normal element of the life of the Church:

Lay believers are in the front line of Church life; for them the Church is the animating principle of human society. Therefore, they in particular ought to have an ever-clearer consciousness not only of belonging to the Church, but of being the Church, that is to say, the community of the faithful on earth under the leadership of the Pope, the common Head, and of the bishops in communion with him. They are the Church."⁴³²

900 Since, like all the faithful, lay Christians are entrusted by God with the apostolate by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, they have the right and duty, individually or grouped in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth. This duty is the more pressing when it is only through them that men can hear the Gospel and know Christ. Their activity in ecclesial communities is so necessary that, for the most part, the apostolate of the pastors cannot be fully effective without it."⁴³³

The participation of lay people in Christ's priestly office

901 "Hence the laity, dedicated as they are to Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit, are marvellously called and prepared so that even richer fruits of the Spirit maybe produced in them. For all their works, prayers, and apostolic undertakings, family and married life, daily work, relaxation of mind and body, if they are accomplished in the Spirit - indeed even the hardships of life if patiently born - all these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. In the celebration of the Eucharist these may most fittingly be offered to the Father along with the body of the Lord. and so, worshipping everywhere by their holy actions, the laity consecrate the world itself to God, everywhere offering worship by the holiness of their lives."⁴³⁴

902 In a very special way, parents share in the office of sanctifying "by leading a conjugal life in the Christian spirit and by seeing to the Christian education of their children."⁴³⁵

903 Lay people who possess the required qualities can be admitted permanently to the ministries of lector and acolyte.⁴³⁶ When the necessity of the Church warrants it and when ministers are lacking, lay persons, even if they are not lectors or acolytes, can also supply for certain of their offices, namely, to exercise the ministry of the word, to preside over liturgical prayers, to confer Baptism, and to distribute Holy Communion in accord with the prescriptions of law."⁴³⁷

Participation in Christ's prophetic office

904 "Christ . . . fulfills this prophetic office, not only by the hierarchy . . . but also by the laity. He accordingly both establishes them as witnesses and provides them with the sense of the faith [sensus fidei] and the grace of the word"⁴³⁸

To teach in order to lead others to faith is the task of every preacher and of each believer.⁴³⁹

905 Lay people also fulfill their prophetic mission by evangelization, "that is, the proclamation of Christ by word and the testimony of life." For lay people, "this evangelization . . . acquires a specific property and peculiar efficacy because it is accomplished in the ordinary circumstances of the world."⁴⁴⁰

This witness of life, however, is not the sole element in the apostolate; the true apostle is on the lookout for occasions of announcing Christ by word, either to unbelievers . . . or to the faithful.⁴⁴¹

906 Lay people who are capable and trained may also collaborate in catechetical formation, in teaching the sacred sciences, and in use of the communications media.⁴⁴²

907 "In accord with the knowledge, competence, and preeminence which they possess, [lay people] have the right and even at times a duty to manifest to the sacred pastors their opinion on matters which pertain to the good of the Church, and they have a right to make their opinion known to the other Christian faithful, with due regard to the integrity of faith and morals and reverence toward their pastors, and with consideration for the common good and the dignity of persons."⁴⁴³

Participation in Christ's kingly office

908 By his obedience unto death,⁴⁴⁴ Christ communicated to his disciples the gift of royal freedom, so that they might "by the self-abnegation of a holy life, overcome the reign of sin in themselves":⁴⁴⁵

That man is rightly called a king who makes his own body an obedient subject and, by governing himself with suitable rigor, refuses to let his passions breed rebellion in his soul, for he exercises a kind of royal power over himself. and because he knows how to rule his own person as king, so too does he sit as its

judge. He will not let himself be imprisoned by sin, or thrown headlong into wickedness.⁴⁴⁶

909 "Moreover, by uniting their forces let the laity so remedy the institutions and conditions of the world when the latter are an inducement to sin, that these may be conformed to the norms of justice, favoring rather than hindering the practice of virtue. By so doing they will impregnate culture and human works with a moral value."⁴⁴⁷

910 "The laity can also feel called, or be in fact called, to cooperate with their pastors in the service of the ecclesial community, for the sake of its growth and life. This can be done through the exercise of different kinds of ministries according to the grace and charisms which the Lord has been pleased to bestow on them."⁴⁴⁸

911 In the Church, "lay members of the Christian faithful can cooperate in the exercise of this power [of governance] in accord with the norm of law."⁴⁴⁹ and so the Church provides for their presence at particular councils, diocesan synods, pastoral councils; the exercise in solidum of the pastoral care of a parish, collaboration in finance committees, and participation in ecclesiastical tribunals, etc.⁴⁵⁰

912 The faithful should "distinguish carefully between the rights and the duties which they have as belonging to the Church and those which fall to them as members of the human society. They will strive to unite the two harmoniously, remembering that in every temporal affair they are to be guided by a Christian conscience, since no human activity, even of the temporal order, can be withdrawn from God's dominion."⁴⁵¹

913 "Thus, every person, through these gifts given to him, is at once the witness and the living instrument of the mission of the Church itself 'according to the measure of Christ's bestowal.'"⁴⁵²

III. THE CONSECRATED LIFE

914 "The state of life which is constituted by the profession of the evangelical counsels, while not entering into the hierarchical structure of the Church, belongs undeniably to her life and holiness."⁴⁵³

Evangelical counsels, consecrated life

915 Christ proposes the evangelical counsels, in their great variety, to every disciple. the perfection of charity, to which all the faithful are called, entails for those who freely follow the call to consecrated life the obligation of practicing chastity in celibacy for the sake of the Kingdom, poverty and obedience. It is the profession of these counsels, within a permanent state of life recognized by the Church, that characterizes the life consecrated to God.⁴⁵⁴

916 The religious state is thus one way of experiencing a "more intimate" consecration, rooted in Baptism and dedicated totally to God.⁴⁵⁵ In the consecrated life, Christ's

faithful, moved by the Holy Spirit, propose to follow Christ more nearly, to give themselves to God who is loved above all and, pursuing the perfection of charity in the service of the Kingdom, to signify and proclaim in the Church the glory of the world to come.⁴⁵⁶

One great tree, with many branches

917 "From the God-given seed of the counsels a wonderful and wide-spreading tree has grown up in the field of the Lord, branching out into various forms of the religious life lived in solitude or in community. Different religious families have come into existence in which spiritual resources are multiplied for the progress in holiness of their members and for the good of the entire Body of Christ."⁴⁵⁷

918 From the very beginning of the Church there were men and women who set out to follow Christ with greater liberty, and to imitate him more closely, by practicing the evangelical counsels. They led lives dedicated to God, each in his own way. Many of them, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, became hermits or founded religious families. These the Church, by virtue of her authority, gladly accepted and approved.⁴⁵⁸

919 Bishops will always strive to discern new gifts of consecrated life granted to the Church by the Holy Spirit; the approval of new forms of consecrated life is reserved to the Apostolic See.⁴⁵⁹

The eremitic life

920 Without always professing the three evangelical counsels publicly, hermits "devote their life to the praise of God and salvation of the world through a stricter separation from the world, the silence of solitude and assiduous prayer and penance."⁴⁶⁰

921 They manifest to everyone the interior aspect of the mystery of the Church, that is, personal intimacy with Christ. Hidden from the eyes of men, the life of the hermit is a silent preaching of the Lord, to whom he has surrendered his life simply because he is everything to him. Here is a particular call to find in the desert, in the thick of spiritual battle, the glory of the Crucified One.

Consecrated virgins

922 From apostolic times Christian virgins, called by the Lord to cling only to him with greater freedom of heart, body, and spirit, have decided with the Church's approval to live in a state of virginity "for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven."⁴⁶¹

923 "Virgins who, committed to the holy plan of following Christ more closely, are consecrated to God by the diocesan bishop according to the approved liturgical rite, are betrothed mystically to Christ, the Son of God, and are dedicated to the service of the Church."⁴⁶² By this solemn rite (Consecratio virginum), the virgin is "constituted . . . a

sacred person, a transcendent sign of the Church's love for Christ, and an eschatological image of this heavenly Bride of Christ and of the life to come."⁴⁶³

924 "As with other forms of consecrated life," the order of virgins establishes the woman living in the world (or the nun) in prayer, penance, service of her brethren, and apostolic activity, according to the state of life and spiritual gifts given to her.⁴⁶⁴ Consecrated virgins can form themselves into associations to observe their commitment more faithfully.⁴⁶⁵

Religious life

925 Religious life was born in the East during the first centuries of Christianity. Lived within institutes canonically erected by the Church, it is distinguished from other forms of consecrated life by its liturgical character, public profession of the evangelical counsels, fraternal life led in common, and witness given to the union of Christ with the Church.⁴⁶⁶

926 Religious life derives from the mystery of the Church. It is a gift she has received from her Lord, a gift she offers as a stable way of life to the faithful called by God to profess the counsels. Thus, the Church can both show forth Christ and acknowledge herself to be the Savior's bride. Religious life in its various forms is called to signify the very charity of God in the language of our time.

927 All religious, whether exempt or not, take their place among the collaborators of the diocesan bishop in his pastoral duty.⁴⁶⁷ From the outset of the work of evangelization, the missionary "planting" and expansion of the Church require the presence of the religious life in all its forms.⁴⁶⁸ "History witnesses to the outstanding service rendered by religious families in the propagation of the faith and in the formation of new Churches: from the ancient monastic institutions to the medieval orders, all the way to the more recent congregations."⁴⁶⁹

Secular institutes

928 "A secular institute is an institute of consecrated life in which the Christian faithful living in the world strive for the perfection of charity and work for the sanctification of the world especially from within."⁴⁷⁰

929 By a "life perfectly and entirely consecrated to [such] sanctification," the members of these institutes share in the Church's task of evangelization, "in the world and from within the world," where their presence acts as "leaven in the world."⁴⁷¹ "Their witness of a Christian life" aims "to order temporal things according to God and inform the world with the power of the gospel." They commit themselves to the evangelical counsels by sacred bonds and observe among themselves the communion and fellowship appropriate to their "particular secular way of life."⁴⁷²

Societies of apostolic life

930 Alongside the different forms of consecrated life are "societies of apostolic life whose members without religious vows pursue the particular apostolic purpose of their society, and lead a life as brothers or sisters in common according to a particular manner of life, strive for the perfection of charity through the observance of the constitutions. Among these there are societies in which the members embrace the evangelical counsels" according to their constitutions.⁴⁷³

Consecration and mission: proclaiming the King who is coming

931 Already dedicated to him through Baptism, the person who surrenders himself to the God he loves above all else thereby consecrates himself more intimately to God's service and to the good of the Church. By this state of life consecrated to God, the Church manifests Christ and shows us how the Holy Spirit acts so wonderfully in her. and so the first mission of those who profess the evangelical counsels is to live out their consecration. Moreover, "since members of institutes of consecrated life dedicate themselves through their consecration to the service of the Church they are obliged in a special manner to engage in missionary work, in accord with the character of the institute."⁴⁷⁴

932 In the Church, which is like the sacrament - the sign and instrument - of God's own life, the consecrated life is seen as a special sign of the mystery of redemption. To follow and imitate Christ more nearly and to manifest more clearly his self-emptying is to be more deeply present to one's contemporaries, in the heart of Christ. For those who are on this "narrower" path encourage their brethren by their example, and bear striking witness "that the world cannot be transfigured and offered to God without the spirit of the beatitudes."⁴⁷⁵

933 Whether their witness is public, as in the religious state, or less public, or even secret, Christ's coming remains for all those consecrated both the origin and rising sun of their life:

For the People of God has here no lasting city, . . . [and this state] reveals more clearly to all believers the heavenly goods which are already present in this age, witnessing to the new and eternal life which we have acquired through the redemptive work of Christ and prelude our future resurrection and the glory of the heavenly kingdom.⁴⁷⁶

IN BRIEF

934 *"Among the Christian faithful by divine institution there exist in the Church sacred ministers, who are also called clerics in law, and other Christian faithful who are also called laity." In both groups there are those Christian faithful who, professing the evangelical counsels, are consecrated to God and so serve the Church's saving mission (cf. [CIC](#), can. 207 # 1, 2).*

935 *To proclaim the faith and to plant his reign, Christ sends his apostles and their successors. He gives them a share in his own mission. From him they receive the power to act in his person.*

936 *The Lord made St. Peter the visible foundation of his Church. He entrusted the keys of the Church to him. the bishop of the Church of Rome, successor to St. Peter, is "head of the college of bishops, the Vicar of Christ and Pastor of the universal Church on earth" (☐ CIC, can. 331).*

937 *The Pope enjoys, by divine institution, "supreme, full, immediate, and universal power in the care of souls" (CD 2).*

938 *The Bishops, established by the Holy Spirit, succeed the apostles. They are "the visible source and foundation of unity in their own particular Churches" (LG 23).*

939 *Helped by the priests, their co-workers, and by the deacons, the bishops have the duty of authentically teaching the faith, celebrating divine worship, above all the Eucharist, and guiding their Churches as true pastors. Their responsibility also includes concern for all the Churches, with and under the Pope.*

940 *"The characteristic of the lay state being a life led in the midst of the world and of secular affairs, lay people are called by God to make of their apostolate, through the vigor of their Christian spirit, a leaven in the world" (AA 2 # 2).*

941 *Lay people share in Christ's priesthood: ever more united with him, they exhibit the grace of Baptism and Confirmation in all dimensions of their personal family, social and ecclesial lives, and so fulfill the call to holiness addressed to all the baptized.*

942 *By virtue of their prophetic mission, lay people "are called . . . to be witnesses to Christ in all circumstances and at the very heart of the community of mankind" (GS 43 # 4).*

943 *By virtue of their kingly mission, lay people have the power to uproot the rule of sin within themselves and in the world, by their self-denial and holiness of life (cf. LG 36).*

944 *The life consecrated to God is characterized by the public profession of the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience, in a stable state of life recognized by the Church.*

945 *Already destined for him through Baptism, the person who surrenders himself to the God he loves above all else thereby consecrates himself more intimately to God's service and to the good of the whole Church.*

385 [□](#) CIC, Can. 204 para 1; Cf. LG 31.

386 [□](#) CIC, Can. 208; Cf. LG 32.

387 AA 2.

388 [□](#) CIC, Can. 207 # 2.

389 LG 18.

390 Rom 10: 14:15.

391 [□](#) Rom 10: 17.

392 Cf. [□](#) Rom 1: 1.

393 [□](#) Phil 2: 7.

394 Cf. [□](#) 1 Cor 9: 19.

395 AG 5.

396 Cf. [□](#) Jn 17: 21-23.

397 [□](#) Jn 21: 22; Cf. [□](#) Mt 4: 19. [□](#) 21; [□](#) Jn 1: 4[ETML: C/].

398 LG 19; cf. [□](#) Lk 6: 13; [□](#) Jn 21: 15-17.

399 LG 22; cf. [□](#) CIC, can. 330.

400 Cf. [□](#) Mt 16: 18-19; [□](#) Jn 21: 15-17.

401 LG 22 # 2.

402 LG 23.

403 LG 22; cf. CD 2,9.

404 LG 22; cf. [□](#) CIC, can 336.

[405](#) [□](#) CIC, can. 337 # 1.

[406](#) LG 22.

[407](#) LG 22.

[408](#) LG 23.

[409](#) LG 23.

[410](#) Cf. CD 3.

[411](#) LG 23.

[412](#) Cf. [□](#) Gal 2:10.

[413](#) Cf. Apostolic Constitutions 34.

[414](#) LG 23 # 3.

[415](#) PO 4; cf. [□](#) Mk 16:15.

[416](#) LG 25.

[417](#) LG 12; cf. DV 10.

[418](#) LG 25; cf. Vatican Council I: DS 3074.

[419](#) DV 10 # 2.

[420](#) LG 25 # 2.

[421](#) Cf. LG 25.

[422](#) LG 25.

[423](#) LG 26.

[424](#) [□](#) 1 Pet 5:3.

[425](#) LG 26 # 3.

[426](#) LG 27; cf. [□](#) Lk 22:26-27.

[427](#) LG 27.

[428](#) LG 27 # 2.

[429](#) St. Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Smyrn. 8, 1: Apostolic Fathers, II/2, 309.

[430](#) LG 31.

[431](#) LG 31 # 2.

[432](#) Pius XII, Discourse, February 20, 1946: AAS 38 (1946) 149; quoted by John Paul II, CL 9.

[433](#) Cf. LG 33.

[434](#) LG 34; cf. LG 10, [□](#) 1 Pet 2:5.

[435](#) [□](#) CIC, can. 835 # 4.

[436](#) Cf. [□](#) CIC, can. 230 # 1.

[437](#) [□](#) CIC, can. 230 # 3.

[438](#) LG 35.

[439](#) St. Thomas Aquinas, STh. III, 71, 4 ad 3.

[440](#) LG 35 # 1, # 2.

[441](#) AA 6 # 3; cf. AG 15.

[442](#) Cf. [□](#) CIC, cann. 229; [□](#) 774; [□](#) 776; [□](#) 780; [□](#) 823 # 1.

[443](#) [□](#) CIC, can. 212 # 3.

[444](#) Cf. [□](#) Phil 2:8-9.

[445](#) LG 36.

[446](#) St. Ambrose, Psal 118:14:30: PL 15:1476.

[447](#) LG 36 # 3.

[448](#) Paul VI, EN 73.

[449](#) [□](#) CIC, can. 129 # 2.

[450](#) Cf. [□](#) CIC, cann. 443 # 4; [□](#) 463 ## 1 and 2; [□](#) 492 # 1; [□](#) 511; [□](#) 517 # 2; [□](#) 536; [□](#) 1421 # 2.

[451](#) LG 36 # 4.

[452](#) LG 33 # 2; cf. [□](#) Eph 4:7.

[453](#) LG 44 # 4.

[454](#) Cf. LG 42-43; PC 1.

[455](#) Cf. PC 5.

[456](#) Cf. [□](#) CIC, can. 573.

[457](#) LG 43.

[458](#) PC 1.

[459](#) Cf. [□](#) CIC, can. 605.

[460](#) [□](#) CIC, can. 603 # 1.

[461](#) [□](#) Mt 19:12; cf. [□](#) I Cor 7:34-36.

[462](#) [□](#) CIC, can. 604 # 1.

[463](#) Ordo Consecrationis Virginum, Praenotanda 1.

[464](#) Cf. [□](#) CIC, can. 604 # 1; OCV Praenotanda 2.

465 Cf. [□](#) CIC, can. 604 # 2.

466 Cf. [□](#) CIC, cann. 607; [□](#) 573; UR 15.

467 Cf. CD 33-35; [□](#) CIC, can. 591.

468 Cf. AG 18; 40.

469 John Paul II, RMiss 69.

470 [□](#) CIC, can. 710.

471 Pius XII, Provida Mater; cf. PC 11.

472 Cf. [□](#) CIC, can. 713 # 2.

473 Cf. [□](#) CIC, can. 731 ## 1 and 2.

474 [□](#) CIC, can. 783.; cf. RM 69

475 LG 31 # 2.

476 LG 44 # 3.

I. Why Is This Sacrament Called "Orders"?

1537 The word order in Roman antiquity designated an established civil body, especially a governing body. Ordinatio means incorporation into an ordo. In the Church there are established bodies which Tradition, not without a basis in Sacred Scripture,⁴ has since ancient times called taxeis (Greek) or ordines. and so the liturgy speaks of the ordo episcoporum, the ordo presbyterorum, the ordo diaconorum. Other groups also receive this name of ordo: catechumens, virgins, spouses, widows,....

1538 Integration into one of these bodies in the Church was accomplished by a rite called ordinatio, a religious and liturgical act which was a consecration, a blessing or a sacrament. Today the word "ordination" is reserved for the sacramental act which integrates a man into the order of bishops, presbyters, or deacons, and goes beyond a simple election, designation, delegation, or institution by the community, for it confers a gift of the Holy Spirit that permits the exercise of a "sacred power" (sacra potestas)⁵ which can come only from Christ himself through his Church. Ordination is also called consecratio, for it is a setting apart and an investiture by Christ himself for his Church.

the laying on of hands by the bishop, with the consecratory prayer, constitutes the visible sign of this ordination.

4 Cf. [□](#) Heb 5: 6; [□](#) 7: 11; [□](#) Ps 110: 4.

5 Cf. LG 10.

II. The Sacrament of Holy Orders in the Economy of Salvation

The priesthood of the Old Covenant

1539 The chosen people was constituted by God as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."⁶ But within the people of Israel, God chose one of the twelve tribes, that of Levi, and set it apart for liturgical service; God himself is its inheritance.⁷ A special rite consecrated the beginnings of the priesthood of the Old Covenant. the priests are "appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins."⁸

1540 Instituted to proclaim the Word of God and to restore communion with God by sacrifices and prayer,⁹ this priesthood nevertheless remains powerless to bring about salvation, needing to repeat its sacrifices ceaselessly and being unable to achieve a definitive sanctification, which only the sacrifice of Christ would accomplish.¹⁰

1541 The liturgy of the Church, however, sees in the priesthood of Aaron and the service of the Levites, as in the institution of the seventy elders,¹¹ a prefiguring of the ordained ministry of the New Covenant. Thus in the Latin Rite the Church prays in the consecratory preface of the ordination of bishops:

God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
by your gracious word
you have established the plan of your Church.

From the beginning,
you chose the descendants of Abraham to be your holy nation.
You established rulers and priests

and did not leave your sanctuary without ministers to serve you....¹²

1542 At the ordination of priests, the Church prays:

Lord, holy Father, . . .

when you had appointed high priests to rule your people,

you chose other men next to them in rank and dignity

to be with them and to help them in their task....

you extended the spirit of Moses to seventy wise men....

You shared among the sons of Aaron

the fullness of their father's power.¹³

1543 In the consecratory prayer for ordination of deacons, the Church confesses:

Almighty God . . .

You make the Church, Christ's body,

grow to its full stature as a new and greater temple.

You enrich it with every kind of grace

and perfect it with a diversity of members

to serve the whole body in a wonderful pattern of unity.

You established a threefold ministry of worship and service,

for the glory of your name.

As ministers of your tabernacle you chose the sons of Levi

and gave them your blessing as their everlasting inheritance.¹⁴

The one priesthood of Christ

1544 Everything that the priesthood of the Old Covenant prefigured finds its fulfillment in Christ Jesus, the "one mediator between God and men."¹⁵ The Christian tradition considers Melchizedek, "priest of God Most High," as a prefiguration of the priesthood of Christ, the unique "high priest after the order of Melchizedek";¹⁶ "holy, blameless, unstained,"¹⁷ "by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified,"¹⁸ that is, by the unique sacrifice of the cross.

1545 The redemptive sacrifice of Christ is unique, accomplished once for all; yet it is made present in the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Church. the same is true of the one priesthood of Christ; it is made present through the ministerial priesthood without diminishing the uniqueness of Christ's priesthood: "Only Christ is the true priest, the others being only his ministers."¹⁹

Two participations in the one priesthood of Christ

1546 Christ, high priest and unique mediator, has made of the Church "a kingdom, priests for his God and Father."²⁰ The whole community of believers is, as such, priestly. the faithful exercise their baptismal priesthood through their participation, each according to his own vocation, in Christ's mission as priest, prophet, and king. Through the sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation the faithful are "consecrated to be . . . a holy priesthood."²¹

1547 The ministerial or hierarchical priesthood of bishops and priests, and the common priesthood of all the faithful participate, "each in its own proper way, in the one priesthood of Christ." While being "ordered one to another," they differ essentially.²² In what sense? While the common priesthood of the faithful is exercised by the unfolding of baptismal grace - a life of faith, hope, and charity, a life according to the Spirit - ,the ministerial priesthood is at the service of the common priesthood. It is directed at the unfolding of the baptismal grace of all Christians. the ministerial priesthood is a means by which Christ unceasingly builds up and leads his Church. For this reason it is transmitted by its own sacrament, the sacrament of Holy Orders.

In the person of Christ the Head . . .

1548 In the ecclesial service of the ordained minister, it is Christ himself who is present to his Church as Head of his Body, Shepherd of his flock, high priest of the redemptive sacrifice, Teacher of Truth. This is what the Church means by saying that the priest, by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, acts in persona Christi Capitis:²³

It is the same priest, Christ Jesus, whose sacred person his minister truly represents. Now the minister, by reason of the sacerdotal consecration which he has received, is truly made like to the high priest and possesses the authority to act in the power and place of the person of Christ himself (virtute ac persona ipsius Christi).²⁴

Christ is the source of all priesthood: the priest of the old law was a figure of Christ, and the priest of the new law acts in the person of Christ.²⁵

1549 Through the ordained ministry, especially that of bishops and priests, the presence of Christ as head of the Church is made visible in the midst of the community of believers.²⁶ In the beautiful expression of St. Ignatius of Antioch, the bishop is typos tou Patros: he is like the living image of God the Father.²⁷

1550 This presence of Christ in the minister is not to be understood as if the latter were preserved from all human weaknesses, the spirit of domination, error, even sin. the power of the Holy Spirit does not guarantee all acts of ministers in the same way. While this guarantee extends to the sacraments, so that even the minister's sin cannot impede the fruit of grace, in many other acts the minister leaves human traces that are not always signs of fidelity to the Gospel and consequently can harm the apostolic fruitfulness of the Church.

1551 This priesthood is ministerial. "That office . . . which the Lord committed to the pastors of his people, is in the strict sense of the term a service."²⁸ It is entirely related to Christ and to men. It depends entirely on Christ and on his unique priesthood; it has been instituted for the good of men and the communion of the Church. the sacrament of Holy Orders communicates a "sacred power" which is none other than that of Christ. the exercise of this authority must therefore be measured against the model of Christ, who by love made himself the least and the servant of all.²⁹ "The Lord said clearly that concern for his flock was proof of love for him."³⁰

. . . "in the name of the whole Church"

1552 The ministerial priesthood has the task not only of representing Christ - Head of the Church - before the assembly of the faithful, but also of acting in the name of the whole Church when presenting to God the prayer of the Church, and above all when offering the Eucharistic sacrifice.³¹

1553 "In the name of the whole Church" does not mean that priests are the delegates of the community. the prayer and offering of the Church are inseparable from the prayer and offering of Christ, her head; it is always the case that Christ worships in and through his Church. the whole Church, the Body of Christ, prays and offers herself "through him, with him, in him," in the unity of the Holy Spirit, to God the Father. the whole Body, caput et membra, prays and offers itself, and therefore those who in the Body are especially his ministers are called ministers not only of Christ, but also of the Church. It is because the ministerial priesthood represents Christ that it can represent the Church.

⁶ Ex 19:6; cf. Isa 61:6.

⁷ Cf. Num 1:48-53; Josh 13:33.

8 [□](#) Heb 5:1; cf. [□](#) Ex 29:1-30; [□](#) Lev 8.

9 Cf. [□](#) Mal 2:7-9.

10 Cf. [□](#) Heb 5:3; [□](#) 7:27; 101-4.

11 Cf. [□](#) Num 11:24-25.

12 Roman Pontifical, Ordination of Bishops 26, Prayer of Consecration.

13 Roman Pontifical, Ordination of Priests 22, Prayer of Consecration.

14 Roman Pontifical, Ordination of Deacons 21, Prayer of Consecration.

15 [□](#) 2 Tim 2:5.

16 [□](#) Heb 5:10; cf. [□](#) 6:20; [□](#) Gen 14:18.

17 [□](#) Heb 7:26.

18 [□](#) Heb 10:14.

19 St. Thomas Aquinas, [□](#) Hebr. 8, 4.

20 [□](#) Rev 1:6; cf. [□](#) Rev 5:9-10; [□](#) 1 Pet 2:5, 9.

21 LG 10 # 1.

22 LG 10 # 2.

23 Cf. LG 10; 28; SC 33; CD 11; PO 2; 6.

24 Pius XII, encyclical, Mediator Dei: AAS, 39 (1947) 548.

25 St. Thomas Aquinas, STh III, 22, 4c.

26 Cf. LG 21.

27 St. Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Trall. 3, 1: SCh 10, 96; cf. Ad Magn. 6, 1: SCh 10, 82-84.

[28](#) LG 24.

[29](#) Cf. [□](#) Mk 10 43-45; [□](#) 1 Pet 5:3.

[30](#) St. John Chrysostom, De sac. 2, 4: PG 48, 636; cf. [□](#) Jn 21:15-17.

[31](#) Cf. SC 33N; LG 10.

III. The Three Degrees of the Sacrament of Holy Orders

1554 "The divinely instituted ecclesiastical ministry is exercised in different degrees by those who even from ancient times have been called bishops, priests, and deacons."^{[32](#)} Catholic doctrine, expressed in the liturgy, the Magisterium, and the constant practice of the Church, recognizes that there are two degrees of ministerial participation in the priesthood of Christ: the episcopacy and the presbyterate . the diaconate is intended to help and serve them. For this reason the term sacerdos in current usage denotes bishops and priests but not deacons. Yet Catholic doctrine teaches that the degrees of priestly participation (episcopate and presbyterate) and the degree of service (diaconate) are all three conferred by a sacramental act called "ordination," that is, by the sacrament of Holy Orders:

Let everyone revere the deacons as Jesus Christ, the bishop as the image of the Father, and the presbyters as the senate of God and the assembly of the apostles. For without them one cannot speak of the Church.^{[33](#)}

Episcopal ordination - fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders

1555 "Amongst those various offices which have been exercised in the Church from the earliest times the chief place, according to the witness of tradition, is held by the function of those who, through their appointment to the dignity and responsibility of bishop, and in virtue consequently of the unbroken succession going back to the beginning, are regarded as transmitters of the apostolic line."^{[34](#)}

1556 To fulfil their exalted mission, "the apostles were endowed by Christ with a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit coming upon them, and by the imposition of hands they passed on to their auxiliaries the gift of the Spirit, which is transmitted down to our day through episcopal consecration."^{[35](#)}

1557 The Second Vatican Council "teaches . . . that the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders is conferred by episcopal consecration, that fullness namely which, both in the liturgical tradition of the Church and the language of the Fathers of the Church, is called the high priesthood, the acme (summa) of the sacred ministry."^{[36](#)}

1558 "Episcopal consecration confers, together with the office of sanctifying, also the offices of teaching and ruling.... In fact ... by the imposition of hands and through the words of the consecration, the grace of the Holy Spirit is given, and a sacred character is impressed in such wise that bishops, in an eminent and visible manner, take the place of Christ himself, teacher, shepherd, and priest, and act as his representative (in Eius persona agant)."³⁷ "By virtue, therefore, of the Holy Spirit who has been given to them, bishops have been constituted true and authentic teachers of the faith and have been made pontiffs and pastors."³⁸

1559 "One is constituted a member of the episcopal body in virtue of the sacramental consecration and by the hierarchical communion with the head and members of the college."³⁹ The character and collegial nature of the episcopal order are evidenced among other ways by the Church's ancient practice which calls for several bishops to participate in the consecration of a new bishop.⁴⁰ In our day, the lawful ordination of a bishop requires a special intervention of the Bishop of Rome, because he is the supreme visible bond of the communion of the particular Churches in the one Church and the guarantor of their freedom.

1560 As Christ's vicar, each bishop has the pastoral care of the particular Church entrusted to him, but at the same time he bears collegially with all his brothers in the episcopacy the solicitude for all the Churches: "Though each bishop is the lawful pastor only of the portion of the flock entrusted to his care, as a legitimate successor of the apostles he is, by divine institution and precept, responsible with the other bishops for the apostolic mission of the Church."⁴¹

1561 The above considerations explain why the Eucharist celebrated by the bishop has a quite special significance as an expression of the Church gathered around the altar, with the one who represents Christ, the Good Shepherd and Head of his Church, presiding.⁴²

The ordination of priests - co-workers of the bishops

1562 "Christ, whom the Father hallowed and sent into the world, has, through his apostles, made their successors, the bishops namely, sharers in his consecration and mission; and these, in their turn, duly entrusted in varying degrees various members of the Church with the office of their ministry."⁴³ "The function of the bishops' ministry was handed over in a subordinate degree to priests so that they might be appointed in the order of the priesthood and be co-workers of the episcopal order for the proper fulfillment of the apostolic mission that had been entrusted to it by Christ."⁴⁴

1563 "Because it is joined with the episcopal order the office of priests shares in the authority by which Christ himself builds up and sanctifies and rules his Body. Hence the priesthood of priests, while presupposing the sacraments of initiation, is nevertheless conferred by its own particular sacrament. Through that sacrament priests by the anointing of the Holy Spirit are signed with a special character and so are configured to Christ the priest in such a way that they are able to act in the person of Christ the head."⁴⁵

1564 "Whilst not having the supreme degree of the pontifical office, and notwithstanding the fact that they depend on the bishops in the exercise of their own proper power, the priests are for all that associated with them by reason of their sacerdotal dignity; and in virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, after the image of Christ, the supreme and eternal priest, they are consecrated in order to preach the Gospel and shepherd the faithful as well as to celebrate divine worship as true priests of the New Testament."⁴⁶

1565 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,'"⁴⁷ "prepared in spirit to preach the Gospel everywhere."⁴⁸

1566 "It is in the Eucharistic cult or in the Eucharistic assembly of the faithful (synaxis) that they exercise in a supreme degree their sacred office; there, acting in the person of Christ and proclaiming his mystery, they unite the votive offerings of the faithful to the sacrifice of Christ their head, and in the sacrifice of the Mass they make present again and apply, until the coming of the Lord, the unique sacrifice of the New Testament, that namely of Christ offering himself once for all a spotless victim to the Father."⁴⁹ From this unique sacrifice their whole priestly ministry draws its strength.⁵⁰

1567 "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, it is, true 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."⁵¹ 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 considers them his co-workers, his sons, his brothers and his friends, and that they in return owe him love and obedience.

1568 "All priests, who are constituted in the order of priesthood by the sacrament of Order, 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. . . ;"⁵² The unity of the presbyterium finds liturgical expression in the custom of the presbyters' imposing hands, after the bishop, during the Ate of ordination.

The ordination of deacons - "in order to serve"

1569 "At a lower level of the hierarchy are to be found deacons, who receive the imposition of hands 'not unto the priesthood, but unto the ministry.'"⁵³ At an ordination to the diaconate only the bishop lays hands on the candidate, thus signifying the deacon's special attachment to the bishop in the tasks of his "diakonia."⁵⁴

1570 Deacons share in Christ's mission and grace in a special way.⁵⁵ The sacrament of Holy Orders marks them with an imprint ("character") which cannot be removed and which configures them to Christ, who made himself the "deacon" or servant of all.⁵⁶ Among other tasks, it is the task of deacons to assist the bishop and priests in the celebration of the divine mysteries, above all the Eucharist, in the distribution of Holy Communion, in assisting at and blessing marriages, in the proclamation of the Gospel and preaching, in presiding over funerals, and in dedicating themselves to the various ministries of charity.⁵⁷

1571 Since the Second Vatican Council the Latin Church has restored the diaconate "as a proper and permanent rank of the hierarchy,"⁵⁸ while the Churches of the East had always maintained it. This permanent diaconate, which can be conferred on married men, constitutes an important enrichment for the Church's mission. Indeed it is appropriate and useful that men who carry out a truly diaconal ministry in the Church, whether in its liturgical and pastoral life or whether in its social and charitable works, should "be strengthened by the imposition of hands which has come down from the apostles. They would be more closely bound to the altar and their ministry would be made more fruitful through the sacramental grace of the diaconate."⁵⁹

32 LG 28.

33 St. Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Trall. 3,1: SCh 10, 96.

34 LG 20.

35 LG 21; Cf. [□ Acts 1:8](#); [□ 24](#); [□ Jn 20:22-23](#); [□ 1 Tim 4:14](#); [□ 2 Tim 1:6-7](#).

36 LG 21 # 2.

37 LG 21.

38 CD 2 # 2.

39 LG 22.

40 Cf. LG 22.

41 Pius XII, Fidei donum: AAS 49 (1957) 237; cf. LG 23; CD 4; 36; 37; AG 5; 6; 38.

[42](#) Cf. SC 41; LG 26.

[43](#) LG 28; cf. [□](#) Jn 10:36.

[44](#) PO 2 # 2.

[45](#) PO 2.

[46](#) LG 28 cf. [□](#) Heb 5: 1-10; [□](#) 7: 24; [□](#) 9:11-28; Innocent I, Epist. ad Decentium: PL 20, 554 A; St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Oratio 2, 22: PG 35, 432B.

[47](#) PO 10; OT 20; cf. [□](#) Acts 1:8.

[48](#) OT 20.

[49](#) LG 28; cf. [□](#) 1 Cor 11:26.

[50](#) Cf. PO 2.

[51](#) LG 28 # 2.

[52](#) PO 8.

[53](#) LG 29; cf. CD 15.

[54](#) Cf. St. Hippolytus, Trad. ap. 8: SCh 11, 58-62.

[55](#) Cf. LG 41; AA 16.

[56](#) Cf. [□](#) Mk 10:45; [□](#) Lk 22:27; St. Polycarp, Ad Phil. 5, 2: SCh 10, 182.

[57](#) Cf. LG 29; SC 35 # 4; AG 16.

[58](#) LG 29 # 2.

[59](#) AG 16 # 6.

IV. The Celebration of This Sacrament

1572 Given the importance that the ordination of a bishop, a priest, or a deacon has for the life of the particular Church, its celebration calls for as many of the faithful as

possible to take part. It should take place preferably on Sunday, in the cathedral, with solemnity appropriate to the occasion. All three ordinations, of the bishop, of the priest, and of the deacon, follow the same movement. Their proper place is within the Eucharistic liturgy.

1573 The essential rite of the sacrament of Holy Orders for all three degrees consists in the bishop's imposition of hands on the head of the ordinand and in the bishop's specific consecratory prayer asking God for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and his gifts proper to the ministry to which the candidate is being ordained.⁶⁰

1574 As in all the sacraments additional rites surround the celebration. Varying greatly among the different liturgical traditions, these rites have in common the expression of the multiple aspects of sacramental grace. Thus in the Latin Church, the initial rites - presentation and election of the ordinand, instruction by the bishop, examination of the candidate, litany of the saints - attest that the choice of the candidate is made in keeping with the practice of the Church and prepare for the solemn act of consecration, after which several rites symbolically express and complete the mystery accomplished: for bishop and priest, an anointing with holy chrism, a sign of the special anointing of the Holy Spirit who makes their ministry fruitful; giving the book of the Gospels, the ring, the miter, and the crozier to the bishop as the sign of his apostolic mission to proclaim the Word of God, of his fidelity to the Church, the bride of Christ, and his office as shepherd of the Lord's flock; presentation to the priest of the paten and chalice, "the offering of the holy people" which he is called to present to God; giving the book of the Gospels to the deacon who has just received the mission to proclaim the Gospel of Christ.

⁶⁰ Cf. Pius XII, apostolic constitution, *Sacramentum Ordinis*: DS 3858.

V. Who Can Confer This Sacrament?

1575 Christ himself chose the apostles and gave them a share in his mission and authority. Raised to the Father's right hand, he has not forsaken his flock but he keeps it under his constant protection through the apostles, and guides it still through these same pastors who continue his work today.⁶¹ Thus, it is Christ whose gift it is that some be apostles, others pastors. He continues to act through the bishops.⁶²

1576 Since the sacrament of Holy Orders is the sacrament of the apostolic ministry, it is for the bishops as the successors of the apostles to hand on the "gift of the Spirit,"⁶³ The "apostolic line."⁶⁴ Validly ordained bishops, i.e., those who are in the line of apostolic succession, validly confer the three degrees of the sacrament of Holy Orders.⁶⁵

[61](#) Cf. Roman Missal, Preface of the Apostles I.

[62](#) Cf. LG 21; [□](#) Eph 4:11.

[63](#) LG 21 # 2.

[64](#) LG 20.

[65](#) Cf. DS 794 and Cf. DS 802; [□](#) CIC, can. 1012; CCEO, can. 744; 747.

VI. Who Can Receive This Sacrament?

1577 "Only a baptized man (vir) validly receives sacred ordination."⁶⁶ The Lord Jesus chose men (viri) to form the college of the twelve apostles, and the apostles did the same when they chose collaborators to succeed them in their ministry.⁶⁷ The college of bishops, with whom the priests are united in the priesthood, makes the college of the twelve an ever-present and ever-active reality until Christ's return. the Church recognizes herself to be bound by this choice made by the Lord himself. For this reason the ordination of women is not possible.⁶⁸

1578 No one has a right to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders. Indeed no one claims this office for himself; he is called to it by God.⁶⁹ Anyone who thinks he recognizes the signs of God's call to the ordained ministry must humbly submit his desire to the authority of the Church, who has the responsibility and right to call someone to receive orders. Like every grace this sacrament can be received only as an unmerited gift.

1579 All the ordained ministers of the Latin Church, with the exception of permanent deacons, are normally chosen from among men of faith who live a celibate life and who intend to remain celibate "for the sake of the kingdom of heaven."⁷⁰ Called to consecrate themselves with undivided heart to the Lord and to "the affairs of the Lord,"⁷¹ they give themselves entirely to God and to men. Celibacy is a sign of this new life to the service of which the Church's minister is consecrated; accepted with a joyous heart celibacy radiantly proclaims the Reign of God.⁷²

1580 In the Eastern Churches a different discipline has been in force for many centuries: while bishops are chosen solely from among celibates, married men can be ordained as deacons and priests. This practice has long been considered legitimate; these priests exercise a fruitful ministry within their communities.⁷³ Moreover, priestly celibacy is held in great honor in the Eastern Churches and many priests have freely chosen it for the sake of the Kingdom of God. In the East as in the West a man who has already received the sacrament of Holy Orders can no longer marry.

66 [□](#) CIC, can. 1024.

67 Cf. [□](#) Mk 3: 14-19; [□](#) Lk 6: 12-16; [□](#) 1 Tim 3: 1-13; [□](#) 2 Tim 1: 6; [□](#) Titus 1: 5-9; St. Clement of Rome, Ad Cor. 42, 4; 44, 3; PG 1, 292-293; 300.

68 Cf. John Paul II, MD 26-27; CDF, declaration, Inter insigniores: AAS 69 (1977) 98-116.

69 Cf. [□](#) Heb 5: 4.

70 [□](#) Mt 19: 12.

71 [□](#) 1 Cor 7: 32.

72 Cf. PO 16.

73 Cf. PO 16.

VII. The Effects of the Sacrament of Holy Orders

The indelible character

1581 This sacrament configures the recipient to Christ by a special grace of the Holy Spirit, so that he may 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.

1582 As in the case of Baptism and Confirmation this share in Christ's office is granted once for all. the sacrament of Holy Orders, like the other two, confers an indelible spiritual character and cannot be repeated or conferred temporarily.⁷⁴

1583 It is true that someone validly ordained can, for a just reason, be discharged from the obligations and functions linked to ordination, or can be forbidden to exercise them; but he cannot become a layman again in the strict sense,⁷⁵ because the character imprinted by ordination is for ever. the vocation and mission received on the day of his ordination mark him permanently.

1584 Since it is ultimately Christ who acts and effects salvation through the ordained minister, the unworthiness of the latter does not prevent Christ from acting.⁷⁶ St. Augustine states this forcefully:

As for the proud minister, he is to be ranked with the devil. Christ's gift is not thereby profaned: what flows through him keeps its purity, and what passes through him remains

dear and reaches the fertile earth.... the spiritual power of the sacrament is indeed comparable to light: those to be enlightened receive it in its purity, and if it should pass through defiled beings, it is not itself defiled.⁷⁷

The grace of the Holy Spirit

1585 The grace of the Holy Spirit proper to this sacrament is configuration to Christ as Priest, Teacher, and Pastor, of whom the ordained is made a minister.

1586 For the bishop, this is first of all a grace of strength ("the governing spirit": Prayer of Episcopal Consecration in the Latin rite):⁷⁸ The grace to guide and defend his Church with strength and prudence as a father and pastor, with gratuitous love for all and a preferential love for the poor, the sick, and the needy. This grace impels him to proclaim the Gospel to all, to be the model for his flock, to go before it on the way of sanctification by identifying himself in the Eucharist with Christ the priest and victim, not fearing to give his life for his sheep:

Father, you know all hearts.

You have chosen your servant for the office of bishop.

May he be a shepherd to your holy flock,

and a high priest blameless in your sight,

ministering to you night and day;

may he always gain the blessing of your favor

and offer the gifts of your holy Church.

Through the Spirit who gives the grace of high priesthood grant him the power

to forgive sins as you have commanded

to assign ministries as you have decreed

and to loose from every bond by the authority which you

gave to your apostles. May he be pleasing to you by his gentleness and purity of heart,

presenting a fragrant offering to you,

through Jesus Christ, your Son....⁷⁹

1587 The spiritual gift conferred by presbyteral ordination is expressed by this prayer of the Byzantine Rite. the bishop, while laying on his hand, says among other things:

Lord, fill with the gift of the Holy Spirit
him whom you have deigned to raise to the rank of the priesthood,
that he may be worthy to stand without reproach before your altar
to proclaim the Gospel of your kingdom,
to fulfill the ministry of your word of truth,
to offer you spiritual gifts and sacrifices,
to renew your people by the bath of rebirth;
so that he may go out to meet our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, your only
Son,
on the day of his second coming,
and may receive from your vast goodness
the recompense for a faithful administration of his order.⁸⁰

1588 With regard to deacons, "strengthened by sacramental grace they are dedicated to the People of God, in conjunction with the bishop and his body of priests, in the service (diakonia) of the liturgy, of the Gospel, and of works of charity."⁸¹

1589 Before the grandeur of the priestly grace and office, the holy doctors felt an urgent call to conversion in order to conform their whole lives to him whose sacrament had made them ministers. Thus St. Gregory of Nazianzus, as a very young priest, exclaimed:

We must begin by purifying ourselves before purifying others; we must be instructed to be able to instruct, become light to illuminate, draw close to God to bring him close to others, be sanctified to sanctify, lead by the hand and counsel prudently. I know whose ministers we are, where we find ourselves and to where we strive. I know God's greatness and man's weakness, but also his potential. [Who then is the priest? He is] the defender of truth, who stands with angels, gives glory with archangels, causes sacrifices to rise to the altar on high, shares Christ's priesthood, refashions creation, restores it in God's image, recreates it for the world on high and, even greater, is divinized and divinizes.⁸²
and the holy Cure of Ars: "The priest continues the work of redemption on earth.... If we really understood the priest on earth, we would die not of fright but of love.... the Priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus."⁸³

74 Cf. Council of Trent: 1 DS 1767; LG 21; 28; 29; PO 2.

75 Cf. [□](#) CIC, cann. 290-293; [□](#) 1336 # 1 3, [□](#) 5, [□](#) 1338 # 2; Council of Trent DS 1774.

76 Cf. Council of Trent DS 1612; DS 1154.

77 St. Augustine, In Jo. ev. 5,15: PL 35, 1422.

78 Cf. Roman Pontifical, Ordination of Bishops 26, Prayer of Consecration; cf. CD 13; 16.

79 Roman Pontifical, Ordination of Bishops 26, Prayer of Consecration; cf. St. Hippolytus, Trad. ap. 3: SCH II, 44-46.

80 Byzantine Liturgy, Euchologion.

81 LG 29.

82 St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Oratio 2, 71, 74, 73: PG 35, 480-481.

83 St. John Vianney, quoted in B. Nodet, Jean-Marie Vianney, Cure' d' Ars, 100.

IN BRIEF

1590 St. Paul said to his disciple Timothy: "I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands" ([□](#) 2Tim 1:6), and "If any one aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a noble task." ([□](#) 1 Tim 3:1) To Titus he said: "This is why I left you in Crete, that you amend what was defective, and appoint presbyters in every town, as I directed you" ([□](#) Titus 1:5).

1591 The whole Church is a priestly people. Through Baptism all the faithful share in the priesthood of Christ. This participation is called the "common priesthood of the faithful." Based on this common priesthood and ordered to its service, there exists another participation in the mission of Christ: the ministry conferred by the sacrament of Holy Orders, where the task is to serve in the name and in the person of Christ the Head in the midst of the community.

1592 The ministerial priesthood differs in essence from the common priesthood of the faithful because it confers a sacred power for the service of the faithful. the ordained

ministers exercise their service for the People of God by teaching (munus docendi), divine worship (munus liturgicum) and pastoral governance (munus regendi).

1593 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 (cf St. Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Trall. 3,1).

1594 The bishop receives the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders, which integrates him into the episcopal college and makes him the visible head of the particular Church entrusted to him. As successors of the apostles and members of the college, the bishops share in the apostolic responsibility and mission of the whole Church under the authority of the Pope, successor of St. Peter.

1595 Priests are united with the bishops in sacerdotal dignity and at the same time depend on them in the exercise of their pastoral functions; they are called to be the bishops' prudent co-workers. They form around their bishop the presbyterium which bears responsibility with him for the particular Church. They receive from the bishop the charge of a parish community or a determinate ecclesial office.

1596 Deacons are ministers ordained for tasks of service of the Church; they do not receive the ministerial priesthood, but ordination confers on them important functions in the ministry of the word, divine worship, pastoral governance, and the service of charity, tasks which they must carry out under the pastoral authority of their bishop.

1597 The sacrament of Holy Orders 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.

1598 The Church confers the sacrament of Holy Orders only on baptized men (viri), whose suitability for the exercise of the ministry has been duly recognized. Church authority alone has the responsibility and right to call someone to receive the sacrament of Holy Orders.

1599 In the Latin Church the sacrament of Holy Orders for the presbyterate is normally conferred only on candidates who are ready to embrace celibacy freely and who publicly manifest their intention of staying celibate for the love of God's kingdom and the service of men.

1600 It is bishops who confer the sacrament of Holy Orders in the three degrees.

