

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY ORDERS

Definition:

The Sacrament of Holy Orders is the Sacrament of the Priesthood. It is a **CALLING**, and an **AUTHORITY**. "Then he **called** his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and **authority** .." (LUK 9:1)

THE CALLING:

Has to be from God, "And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is **called of God**, as was Aaron." (HEB 5:4)

Jesus called His disciples by the two simple words, "**Follow me**". Peter and Andrew (Mat 4:19), John and James (Mat 4:21), Matthew (Mat 9:9) and Philip (John 1:43).

THE AUTHORITY:

Is also from God, Jesus told His disciples, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." (John 20:21). "He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despithes you despithes me, and he that despithes me despithes Him that sent me." (Luk 10:16). Jesus even instructed His disciples, "And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrhah in the day of judgment, than for that city. (MAR 6:11).

THE COMMISSION:

After calling His disciples and giving them authority, Jesus commissioned his disciples to **preach**, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and **preach the gospel**." (MAR 16:15). "And as ye go, **preach**, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." (MAT 10:7)

The Lord also commanded them to **perform the Sacraments**. On Maundy Thursday, the Lord established the **Sacrament of the Eucharist**, then He ordered them to do the same, "And he took

bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: **this do** in remembrance of me." (LUK 22:19)

He ordered them to perform the **Sacrament of anointing the sick**, "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give." (MAT 10:8) "And they anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them" (Mar 6:13).

He gave them authority to bind people together in the **Sacrament of Matrimony**, "Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (MAT 18:18). As proof of this the Lord told the Pharisees, "What therefore God hath joined together let no man put asunder." (MAT 19:6).

He gave them the authority to forgive sins through the **Sacrament of Confession**, " And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. (JOH 20:22-23).

Someone may say, the Lord gave this authority to the disciples, who gave this authority to the priests? The answer is in the tradition called:

The Apostolic Succession:

The Apostles went on to preach the Gospel, and wherever they went, they ordained **Bishops, Priests, and Deacons**. They did this by **laying their hands** on them. The Bible has many examples of this ordination by the laying-on of hands of the Apostles. "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have **called** them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and **laid their hands on them**, they sent them away." (ACT 13:2-3). Paul and Barnabas were **ordained by the laying-on of the hands** after they were **called** by the Holy Spirit to the ministry. Later on, Paul and Barnabas would do the same, ordaining **Priests** (called Elders in KJV) by **laying on their hands on them**. "And when they had **ordained** them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed." (ACT 14:23).

St. Paul ordained two of his disciples as **Bishops**, these are Timothy and Titus. He reminds Timothy of this saying, "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." (2TI 1:6). He admonishes Timothy to do the same by choosing persons that are suitable for ordination, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." (2TI 2:2). He warns him however not to ordain any person hastily, since he will be responsible for the actions

of those on whom he lays his hands, "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure." (1TI 5:22).

He writes to Titus, his disciple, and now Bishop of the Mediterranean Island of Crete, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." (TIT 1:5).

The same happened with the other Apostles, they ordained Bishops and Priests and gave the Bishops authority to ordain other Bishops, Priests and Deacons. In a very short time, this three tiered system of the clergy was established in every Apostolic church through the tradition of **Apostolic Succession**. This is obvious in many passages in the Bible, "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons." (PHI 1:1).

First Timothy has concrete rules for the ordination of Bishops and Deacons (1Ti 3:1-13), as well as rules for rewarding and disciplining Elders (Priests) (Chapter 5).

The functions of the Bishop:

A Bishop is the over-seer of a city, he preaches, administers the Diocese and ordains Priests and Deacons. A Bishop of a Metropolis (large city) is called a Metropolitan. A Bishop of a village is called a Chor-Episcopus. Three Bishops are required to ordain another Bishop. The Pope is also ordained by at least three Bishops, but usually, all the Bishops attending his ordination take part in laying on of their hands on him.

The functions of the Priest:

The priest administers the Sacraments, he teaches and administers his church under the guidance of the Bishop. He cannot ordain.

The functions of the Deacon:

Who is a Deacon? Full time Deacons assist the priest, they can give the Blood during communion. They teach but cannot take confessions or administer the Sacraments. They wear black robes but no black hat. Deacons assist in looking after the needy among the congregation. (The eyes and hands of the Bishop or Priest.)

Subdeacons:

Are helpers to the Deacon, they are allowed to touch the holy vessels, but cannot give communion. They make sure that the people are keeping good order; that no one is sleeping or talking .. etc.

Readers:

Are allowed to read the Bible in church and explain it to the young (in Sunday School). They can teach Catechumens if allowed to do so by the priest

Singers :

Are the "Deacons" who sing the responses. They are ordained when they are six or seven years old.

The Ordination Service of a Priest:

After the Prayer of Reconciliation, the Bishop Lays his hands on the head of the future priest, saying, "I call you a priest in the holy church of God in the Christ-loving city of ... In the name ... Blessed be God the Father ... This is done three times in the name of the Trinity. The people respond, Amen. Then they sing, Axios (worthy) Abba ... pi presvitiro. The Bishop robes him with the Tunic and kisses him and he joins in the Liturgy. Before communion, the Bishop breathes in his mouth, then he teaches him how to say the confession, then he gives him communion.

He then immediately goes to a monastery to spend forty days of seclusion and study, attending masses every day. One particular day, he is asked to offer the oblation, assisted by his mentor, and from that day on he is allowed to celebrate the Eucharist on his own. He also receives instructions and training in the other Sacraments. After the conclusion of the forty days, he goes back to start service in his church.