

APPROVAL OF A NEW RITE
FOR THE ORDINATION OF
DEACONS, PRIESTS AND
BISHOPS

APOSTOLIC CONSTITUTION

POPE PAUL VI

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Pontificalis Romani

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PAUL, BISHOP

Servant of the Servants of God
For Everlasting Memory

The revision of the Roman Pontifical is prescribed in a general way by the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council¹ and is also governed by special norms in which the holy Synod ordered that the rites of ordinations be changed "in ceremonies and in texts."²

Among the rites of ordinations the first to be considered are those which constitute the hierarchy through the sacrament of Order, conferred in several grades: "Thus the divinely instituted ministry of the Church is exercised in various orders by those who already in antiquity are called bishops, presbyters, and deacons."³

In the revision of the rites of sacred ordination, besides the general principles which must direct the entire restoration of the liturgy according to the decrees of the Second Vatican Council, the greatest attention must be paid to the important teaching on the nature and effects of the sacrament of Order which was proclaimed by the Council in its Constitution on the Church. Evi-

dently the Liturgy itself should express this doctrine in its own way, for "the texts and rites should be drawn up so that they express more clearly the holy things which they signify; the Christian people, so far as possible, should be enabled to understand them with ease and to take part in them fully, actively, and as befits a community." ⁴

The holy Synod teaches that "by episcopal consecration the fullness of the sacrament of Order is conferred, that fullness which is truly called—in the Church's liturgical usage and in the language of the Fathers—the high priesthood, the apex of the sacred ministry. But together with the office of sanctifying, episcopal consecration also confers the offices of teaching and governing. These, however, of their very nature can be exercised only in hierarchial communion with the head and members of the college [of bishops]. For from tradition, especially the tradition expressed through liturgical rites and through the practice of the Church in both East and West, it is clear that by the imposition of hands and the words of consecration the grace of the Holy Spirit is so conferred and the sacred character so impressed that bishops undertake Christ's own role as Teacher, Shepherd, and Bishop in an eminent and visible way and that they act in his person." ⁵

To these words should be added the several clear doctrinal statements [of the Council] concerning the apostolic succession of bishops and their duties and functions. Even if these matters are also contained in the rite of episcopal consecration, still it seems that they should be better and more accurately expressed. To achieve this, it appeared appropriate to take from ancient sources the consecratory prayer which is found in the document called the *Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus of Rome*, written at the beginning of the third century, and which is still used in large part in the ordination rites of the Coptic and West Syrian liturgies. Thus the very act of ordination may witness to the harmony of the tradition in both East and West concerning the apostolic office of bishops.

With regard to priests, the following should first be recalled from the acts of the Second Vatican Council: "Although priests

do not possess the highest degree of the pontificate and although they are dependent upon the bishops in the exercise of their power, they are nevertheless united with the bishops in priestly dignity; in virtue of the sacrament of Order and in the image of Christ the eternal high priest (Heb. 5:1-10, 7-24; 9:11-28), they are consecrated to preach the gospel, shepherd the faithful, and celebrate the worship of God as true priests of the New Testament.”⁶ In another place the Council says: “By sacred ordination and by the mission they receive from their bishops, priests are promoted to the service of Christ the Teacher, the Priest, and the King. They share in his ministry of unceasingly building up the Church on earth into the People of God, the Body of Christ, and the Temple of the Holy Spirit.”⁷ In the ordination of priests, as found in the Roman Pontifical, the mission and grace of the priest as a helper of the episcopal Order has been very clearly described. Yet it seemed necessary to restore the entire rite, which has been divided into several parts, to greater unity and to express in sharper light the central part of the ordination, that is, the imposition of hands and the consecratory prayer.

Finally, with regard to deacons, in addition to the content of our apostolic letter *Sacrum Diaconatus Ordinem* issued *motu proprio* on June 18, 1967, the following should be especially recalled: “In the lower grade of the hierarchy are deacons on whom hands are imposed ‘not for the priesthood, but for the ministry’ (Constitutions of the Church of Egypt, III, 2). Strengthened by sacramental grace, they serve the People of God in the *diaconia* of liturgy, word, and charity, in communion with the bishop and his presbytery.”⁸ In the ordination of deacons only a few changes were to be made, taking into account both the recent prescriptions concerning the diaconate as a proper and permanent grade of the hierarchy in the Latin Church and also a greater simplicity and clarity of the rites.

Among the other documents of the Supreme Magisterium pertaining to sacred Orders, we consider one worthy of particular mention, namely, the apostolic constitution *Sacramentum Ordinis* published by our predecessor, Pius XII, on November 30,

1947. In this constitution he declared that "the sole matter of the sacred Orders of diaconate, presbyterate, and episcopate is the imposition of hands; likewise the sole form is the words which determine the application of this matter, which univocally signify the sacramental effects—namely, the power of Order and the grace of the Holy Spirit—and which are accepted and employed by the Church as such."⁹ Having said this, the document determines what imposition of hands and which words constitute the matter and form in the conferral of each Order.

It was necessary in the revision of the rite to add, delete, or change certain things, either to restore texts to their earlier integrity, to make the expressions clearer, or to describe the sacramental effects better. We therefore think it necessary, in order to remove all controversy and to avoid anxiety of conscience, to declare what in the revised rite should be said to pertain to the nature of the Order. By our supreme apostolic authority we decree and establish the following with regard to the matter and form in the conferral of each Order.

In the ordination of deacons, the matter is the imposition of the bishop's hands upon the individual candidates, which is done in silence before the consecratory prayer; the form consists of the words of the consecratory prayer, of which the following pertain to the nature of the Order and therefore are required for the validity of the Act: "Send forth the Holy Spirit upon them, we ask you, O Lord, that they may be strengthened by him, through the gift of your sevenfold grace, for the faithful discharge of your service."

In the ordination of priests, the matter is likewise the imposition of the bishop's hands upon the individual candidates, which is done in silence before the consecratory prayer; the form consists of the words of the consecratory prayer, of which the following pertain to the nature of the Order and therefore are required for the validity of the act: "We pray you, almighty Father, confer the dignity of the priesthood on these your servants; renew in their hearts the Spirit of holiness; may they obtain the office of second

order received from you, O God and, by the example of their lives, inculcate the pattern of holy living.”

Finally, in the ordination of a bishop, the matter is the imposition of hands on the head of the bishop-elect by the consecrating bishops, or at least by the principal consecrator, which is done in silence before the consecratory prayer; the form consists of the words of the consecratory prayer, of which the following pertain to the nature of the Order and therefore are required for the validity of the act: “And now pour out upon this elect that power which comes from you, the perfect Spirit whom you gave to your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, the Spirit whom he gave to the holy Apostles, who established the Church in every place as your sanctuary, for the unceasing glory and praise of your name.”

This rite for the conferral of the sacred Orders of Diaconate, Presbyterate, and Episcopate, has been revised by the Consilium for the implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, “with the assistance of experts, and with the consultation of bishops, from various parts of the world.”¹⁰ By our apostolic authority we approve this rite so that it may be used after this for the conferral of these Orders in place of the rite now found in the Roman Pontifical.

We wish that these our decrees and prescriptions may be firm and effective now and in the future, notwithstanding, to the extent necessary, the apostolic constitutions and ordinances issued by our predecessors, and other prescriptions, even those deserving particular mention and derogation.

Given at Rome, at Saint Peter’s, June 18, 1968, the fifth year of our pontificate.

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¹ II Vatican Council, const. on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, art. 25: *AAS* 56 (1964) 107.

² *Ibid.*, art. 76: *AAS* 56 (1964) 119.

³ II Vatican Council, dogm. const. on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, n. 28: *AAS* 57 (1965) 33-34.

⁴ II Vatican Council, const. on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, art. 21: *AAS* 56 (1964) 106.

⁵ II Vatican Council, dogm. const. on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, n. 21: *AAS* 57 (1965) 25.

⁶ *Ibid.*, n. 28: *AAS* 57 (1965) 34.

⁷ II Vatican Council, decree on the Life and Ministry of Priests, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, n. 1: *AAS* 58 (1966) 991.

⁸ II Vatican Council, dogm. const. on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, n. 29: *AAS* 57 (1965) 36.

⁹ *AAS* 40 (1948) 6.

¹⁰ Cf. II Vatican Council, const. on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, art. 25: *AAS* 56 (1964) 107.