

# THE SACRAMENTS OF VOCATION HOLY ORDERS AND MARRIAGE

## HOLY ORDERS

Dear People of St. Andrew the Apostle:

The Sacrament of Holy Orders is central to the mission of the Church. It allows the Church to carry on the mission of Christ until the end of time. It is the sacrament of apostolic ministry (carrying on the mission and ministry of the apostles) until the end of time.

We read in the gospel of Luke, “do this in memory of me.” Do what? Celebrate the Eucharist. The divine power to change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, a power only God has, is transferred to the apostles. They become priests. We read an even earlier account in Paul, “This is my Body, do this in remembrance of me.” Paul clearly understands that the power to consecrate the Eucharist is given to the apostles. We read in the Acts of the Apostles that men are set aside and hands laid upon them (creating new priests).



The Biblical roots of Holy Orders are clear to us as Catholics. Jesus has passed on His divine power to the apostles, who in turn have passed it on to those they choose and appoint as apostles and pastors. This power is expressed both in Biblical times and in modern times in three “orders”:

1. The Order of the Episopoi, or the Order of Bishops.
2. The Order of the Presbyterate, or the Order of Priests.
3. The Order of the Diakonia, or the Order of Deacons.

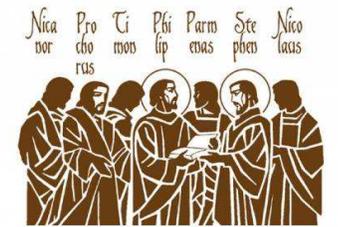


The Order of Bishops are ordained and receive the fullness of the priesthood of Jesus. They can celebrate all seven sacraments. Holy Orders and Confirmation are both reserved to Bishops, although the Bishop can delegate Confirmation to certain priests when pastorally necessary. Bishops are appointed by the Pope and generally serve the people of a Diocese (i.e., the Diocese of Phoenix.) Some Bishops are advanced to the level of Archbishop. Ordination of a Bishop is usually accomplished in a celebration by other Bishops.

The Order of Priests are ordained to be co-workers with the Bishop. They can celebrate Baptisms, Eucharist, Reconciliation, Marriage, and Anointing of the Sick. (Confirmation is automatically delegated for adult converts and some priests designated as Vicars are delegated to assist the Bishop with Confirmations when the number of Confirmations exceeds the ability of the Bishop to do celebrate them all.) Priests are ordained by a Bishop and appointed as pastors, parochial vicars, and other positions within the Diocese. Some priests are ordained by a Bishop but are appointed to their ministries by religious superiors (such as Fr. Rick who is a member of the Crosier order of priests, deacons, and brothers.)

The Order of Deacons are ordained to serve in ministry. They are ordained by the Bishop and, with the consent of a Pastor, assigned to their ministry within a parish. Some deacons are appointed to administrative positions in the Diocese as well. Deacons can be married at the time of their ordination, but once ordained cannot if they are single, become married. A widowed deacon may not remarry. The order of deacon was established by the Apostles when a complaint was lodged in the early Church that the widows were not being treated fairly. The apostles called for the community to meet and select seven men to take over this issue on their behalf. The diaconate was born.

(See Acts 6:1-3). Deacons can assist priests and bishops at the altar, distribute Holy Communion, witness and bless marriages, preside at funerals and burials (without a Mass), proclaim the Gospel and preach, and perform baptisms. Above all, their ministry, like the first deacons, is a ministry of charity.



### Why are Only Men invited to Holy Orders?

Canon 1577 of the Code of Canon Law states that only a baptized man validly receives sacred ordination. The Canon points out that Jesus called only men to become Apostles, and that they did likewise in appointing a successor to Judas, and in appointing priests and deacons in the early Church. We believe we are bound to the choice our Lord made.

## **What is Celibacy and Why is it Required for some Deacons, and all Priests and Bishops?**

Celibacy is a two-fold promise made at the time of ordination (except for married men ordained as deacons).

- One of the promises made is to remain unmarried for the sake of the Kingdom of God.
- The other promise is to refrain from all sexual activity for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus refers in the gospel of Matthew (19:11-12) to eunuchs who are made so for the Kingdom of God. While we would normally think of a eunuch as someone who has been castrated, there is no evidence that this was Jesus' Intent. Rather, we believe that it is a reference to men who adopt celibacy as a way of life. Jesus did not make it mandatory for his apostles. It was to be a voluntary decision on the part of the person.

St. Paul is, perhaps, the greatest advocate of celibacy, suggesting in 1 Corinthians 7:25 that people who are virgins remain so for life, as he has done.



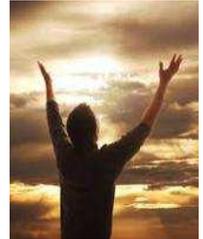
We know that our first Pope, St. Peter, was married. The discipline of the early Church did not require celibacy in those who were chosen as bishops, priests, and deacons. However, it was a highly regarded state of life but needed to be voluntarily entered into. For St. Paul, celibacy was a way of overcoming sins of the flesh and suggested that it was a better way of life than marriage.

Celibacy is a reflection of life in Heaven, a source of detachment from the material world which aids in one's relationship with God. Celibacy is designed to "consecrate themselves with undivided heart to the Lord and to "the affairs of the Lord, they give themselves entirely to God and to men. It 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. (Canon 1572 of the Code of Canon Law).

Celibacy has been mandatory in the Latin Rite of the Roman Catholic Church since the 1st Lateran Council in 1139. All ordained priests and bishops must be celibate. Unmarried persons who are ordained as Deacons must also be celibate. Married men who are ordained as Deacons are, obviously, not required to be celibate, but if they become widowed or separated from their wives they may not re-marry.

When viewed as a call from the Lord to embrace the virtue of celibacy, one can find great joy in their ministry and in the life they have embraced. There will be times of struggle, just as there are times of struggle in marriage, but the life of celibacy can be equally fulfilling and life-giving.



## **Is the Pope ordained to yet another level of Holy Orders?**

No. The Pope is elected by the Cardinals of the Church from among their own members. He is already a Bishop and has the fullness of Holy Orders. After election, the Pope is "installed" in a special Mass celebrated at the Vatican.

Similarly, Cardinals are not another level of Holy Orders. They are Bishops given the title "Cardinal" by the Pope. They serve as special advisors, they chair secretariats of the Holy See in Rome, they govern the Church in the time between the death of one Pope and the election of another, and if they are less than 80 they serve as electors of the new Pope.



## **A Personal Reflection on the Sacrament of Holy Orders**

God has placed each of us in this moment in time, in this period of history, and in this Church that we call Catholic. Despite its issues, its controversies, its achievements and its disappointments, this is a wonderful time to be a Follower of Jesus in the Church that He founded. I cannot imagine myself doing anything else. Priesthood is an immense gift—the gift of being part of peoples' lives at different moments—in times of joy as we baptize, celebrate 1st Communion, perform marriages, and counsel people in difficult times—and in moments of struggle and sorrow as we face the reality of sin, the path of suffering, the death of loved ones, the tragedy of illness and injury. I feel both fulfilled and life-giving in what I do and in most of what I experience as a priest and pastor. I pray that many others will answer the call—it is truly a great life.