

"...the ordination rites for bishops had become longer and longer in the course of time, and at the same time more complicated. Thus a simplification of these ceremonies was overdue."

THE REFORMED ORDINATION RITE FOR BISHOPS *

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Second Part

4. The Litany

As in the ordination rites for deacons and priests the litany is introduced by an invitation to prayer. It is the ancient formula with a slightly modified introduction and without conclusion:

Beloved let us pray for this man chosen to provide for the needs of the Church. Let us pray that almighty God in his goodness will fill him with abundant grace.

Then the deacon orders the whole congregation to kneel. The bishops consecrators kneel in front of their seats, while the bishop-elect prostrates himself on the floor of the sanctuary, since nothing is said in the new rubrics that he should prostrate on the steps of the altar, which was a very awkward and uncomfortable place. Special invocations may be inserted into the litany. Also those invocations are now sung by the schola or choir which were formerly reserved for the principal consecrator.

The Litany finds its conclusion in the prayer "Propitiare" of the former rite which sums up the petitions for the bishop-elect, expressed in the Litany. While only the principal consecrator stands, facing the candidate, he says or sings:

Lord God, listen to our prayers. Send this servant the fulness of priestly grace and fill him with your powerful blessing. Through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

* In the previous issue, the sequence of pages should be the following: After page 577; comes page 580; then page 579; subsequently 578; finally 581 etc.

5. The Ordination proper

a) The Imposition of Hands

After the deacon ordered the congregation to rise, the consecrators stand before the seats, facing the people. The bishop-elect comes before the principal consecrator and kneels down. The latter lays his hands upon the candidate's head saying nothing. The words of the former rite "Receive the Holy Spirit" have been omitted. After the principal consecrator all bishops present, first the co-consecrators lay their hands on the head of the bishop-elect. In the fact that *all* bishops present should ordain the bishop-elect the doctrine of collegiality finds expression. All have also to pronounce the words of the sacramental "form"; this is a true and genuine concelebration of the sacrament of holy Orders. In it the bishop-elect is not only admitted into the succession of the apostles but also into the "ordo episcoporum," a college, entrusted with feeding the Lord's flock. The number Three which was mentioned in the earlier rite, was never more than a minimum. In a collegial act the candidate is incorporated into the "order of bishops". For the lawful exercise of his new authority the bishop must remain in communion with his colleagues. This communion is made manifest subsequently in turn presupposes a common faith. Here we have a theological reason for the insertion of the ordination rite into the Eucharistic celebration.

b) Imposition of the Gospel Book

Then the principal consecrator places the open book of Gospels upon the *head* of the bishop-elect. Two deacons, standing at either side of the candidate hold the book *above* his head until the prayer of ordination is finished. This rite is partly new. According to the former rite the principal consecrator with the assistance of the two co-consecrators placed the open book upon the neck and the shoulders of the bishop-elect: the Gospel was a yoke to be carried by the bishop; a symbol of the responsibility of the bishop, to preach the Gospel.

Now the book is held over the bishop-elect, but not physically touching it. It is, so to say, hovering over the future bishop. This seems to symbolize the power of the Gospel which comes to fill the ordinand when, in the subsequent ordination prayer, the Holy Spirit is invoked upon him. One could here think of the Holy Spirit descending on

Jesus after his baptism, or of the tongues of fire, descending upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost.³⁶

c) Prayer of Consecration

With hands stretched out, the consecrating prelate pronounces then the ordination prayer; he alone says it, not the other consecrating bishops. The former rite had stated that the co-consecrators must recite the prayer "Propitiare" together with the entire consecratory prayer with the principal consecrator. They had likewise to read in a low voice everything which the main consecrator read or chanted, with the exception of the blessings of the episcopal insignia.

In future, the only words which the co-ordaining bishops (all) have to pronounce with the principal consecrator are the words of the so-called sacramental "form". While they pronounce them they have their hands joined.

The text of the ordination prayer itself is new, because the old ordination prayer had its particular problems. It is true that it was basically an ancient Roman text,³⁷ into which a part of a Gallican ordination prayer had been inserted.³⁸ Some thoughts of this insertion were real enrichments of the Roman text, but other sentences seemed inadmissible to the Consilium when it tried to reform the ordination liturgy.³⁹

One could have expected that in view of these difficulties the Consilium would decide to return to the ancient Roman prayer of the Gregorian Sacramentary. But this proved to be impossible. This prayer did not contain any reference to the priesthood of Christ; it insisted only on the high priesthood of the Old Testament: as Aaron was high priest of old, so the bishop is the high priest of the New Testament. The two

³⁶ Cf. the book "The Sacrament of Holy Orders." Collegeville 1962, p. 24 f.

³⁷ Cf. the Gregorian Sacramentary (ed. H. Lietzmann) n. 2, 3-7.—In the Leonine Sacramentary (ed. L. C. Mohlberg) n. 947.

³⁸ It had already penetrated the ancient Gelasian Sacramentary (ed. L.C. Mohlberg) n. 770.

³⁹ As e.g.,: "Endow him, Lord, with the ministry of reconciliation in word and deed and sanction it by signs and wonders... May whoever shall curse him be himself accursed..."

rites of the ordination of Aaron (clothing and anointing) find their fulfillment in the ordination of a bishop in a spiritual manner. These shortcomings did not recommend this text, even in its strictly Roman form.

But if a Roman text was to be adopted, it would be best, so the *Concilium* reasoned, to return to the Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus, whose ordination prayer for a bishop is a relatively short text,⁴⁰ is, theologically speaking, up-to-date, and is also ecumenical, since it is, (except for some later additions) even today the ordination prayer for bishops in the Coptic, West-Syrian and Maronitic rites.⁴¹ It is a strange fact that Hippolytus who, in his own time, was known to be conservative and a traditionalist, becomes the one, who, in the 20th century offers liturgical texts for the reformed liturgy of the Roman Church.⁴²

In the "new" ordination prayer the ordaining bishop asks God to shed upon the bishop-elect the "princely Spirit." The grace sought for the bishop-elect is an outpouring of that sovereign Spirit which had been given to Jesus by the Father, and to the Apostles by Jesus. The Spirit in question is the Spirit imparting a special grace. The word "principalis, hegemonikón" is to be translated as "sovereign Spirit" or "the Spirit of sovereignty."⁴³ The Apostles, in turn, built up the Church, of which the ancient temple was only the figure, to the honor of God.

The tasks of the bishop are: to feed the flock of the Lord, to exercise the high priesthood by serving God continuously, to propitiate God and to offer the gifts of the Church. The bishop has to remit sins, to assign ecclesiastical offices and to loose all bonds by virtue of the power given to the apostles. Thus the threefold ministry of the bishop finds a clear expression in this prayer which is more than 1700 years old. The bishop, it states, is the successor of the Apostles; he receives their spirit and exercises their functions.

⁴⁰ Of. the critical edition (in French) by B. Botz, *La Tradition apostolique de Saint Hippolyte. Essai de reconstitution.* Münster 1963, pp. 6-11.

⁴¹ Cf. H. Denzinger, *Ritus orientalium.* Vol. II, pp. 23-24. 33-34. 48-49.

⁴² In addition to this ordination prayer also, in its essentials, the new Eucharistic Prayer II.

⁴³ Cf. G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, Fasc. 3, Oxford 1964, p. 599, a.v. hegemonikón.—J. Lécuyer, *The Mystery of Pentecost*, in: *The Sacrament of Holy Orders*, Collegeville 1962, p. 134 f.

The prayer is concluded with a typically Hippolytan doxology,⁴⁴ wherein we find the expression that we give glory to the Father through his Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit "in the holy Church." This praise "in the holy Church" points toward the community which is sanctified by the activity of the Holy Spirit, or, to use one of the favorite expression of St. Paul "in Christ." Basically we encounter, therefore, the same idea whether we proclaim in a doxology that we praise God "in Spirit and in Truth"⁴⁵ or "in the Holy Spirit" or "in the Holy Church" or "in the name of Jesus" or "in Christ."

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, merciful God, bringing comfort to all (2 Cor 1, 3), from your heavenly home you look with care on the lowest of your creatures (Ps 112, 5-6), knowing all things even before they come to be (Dan 13, 42). Your life-giving revelation has laid down rules for your hark from the beginning: in that Church you have established a government and priesthood, so as not to leave your sanctuary without its liturgy; and from the beginning of the world it has pleased you to be glorified by the ministers whom you have chosen.

(The following of the prayer is recited by all the consecrating bishops, their hands joined.)

Now pour out upon this chosen one that power which flows from you, the sovereign Spirit (Ps 50, 14) whom you gave to your beloved Son Jesus Christ, the Spirit whom He gave to the Apostles, who established the Church in every place as the sanctuary where your name would always be praised and glorified.

(Then the principal consecrator continues alone:)

Father, you know what is in every heart. Inspire the heart of your servant whom you have chosen to make a bishop. May he feed your holy flock and exercise the high-priesthood without blame, ministering to you day and night to reconcile us with you and to

⁴⁴ Cf. J. A. Jungmann, *The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer*. London 1965, pp. 182-192. — Id., *Die Doxologien in der Kirchenordnung Hippolyts*, in: *Zeitschr. fuer kath. Theol.* 86 (1964) 321-326.

⁴⁵ Cf. the new translation of the "Quam oblationem" in English: "Make it acceptable to you, an offering *in spirit and in truth.*"

offer the gifts of your Church. By the spirit of this high-priesthood may he have the power to forgive sins, as you commanded (Jn 20, 233). May he assign the ecclesiastical offices according to your will and loose every bond by the power you gave the apostles (Mt 18, 18). May his gentleness and singleness of purpose stand before you as a sweet offering through your Son Jesus Christ. Through Him and power and honor are yours, with the Holy Spirit in the holy Church, now and forever.

All: Amen.

6. Clarifying Rites

The rites clarified in the old ordination rite had to be reformed in order to be in harmony with our present-day insight into the essence of the episcopal office. These rites were formerly very numerous: the anointing of the head with the accompanying chant, the anointing of the hands, the porrection of the staff and ring with the previous blessings. Then came the "traditio Evangelii." After the Mass a last group of special rites had been added: the handing over of the mitre and gloves with their previous blessings, the enthronisation, the singing of the hymn *Te Deum* while the newly-ordained went through the church and blessed the people and the *Ad multos annos* afterwards with the giving of the *Pax*.

A number of these ceremonies has been abolished entirely; others have been simplified, and others got a new and more correct meaning.

a) The Anointing of the Head

The rather colorless text which formerly accompanied this rite has been supplanted by a new formula which is first attested, at least in its essentials, in the Romano-germanic Pontifical.⁴⁶ The text reads now:

God has made you a sharer in his high priesthood. May He pour upon you this oil of mystical anointing and make you fruitful with spiritual blessing.

⁴⁶ C. Vogel-R. Elze, *Le Pontifical romano-germanique du dixième siècle*. Vol. I (Citaaá del Vaticano, 1963) p. 220, n. 37 for the anointing of the new bishop's thumb: "Deus et pater domini nostri Iesu Christi, que te ad pontificatus sublimari voluit dignitatem, ipse te christmate et mysticae delibationis liquore perfundat et spiritualis benedictionis ubertate fecundet ..."

The anointing of the hands has been abolished. Today all those who are ordained bishops received earlier the ordination of presbyters. In the rite of priestly ordination the anointing of the hands has its proper place. In future for the anointing of the hands chrism is used, not the oil of catechumens; formerly chrism had been reserved for the ordination of bishops. Since "useless repetitions" had to be avoided, a second anointing of the hands could be omitted in the rite of episcopal ordination. The reformed rite returns here one again to an ancient Roman practice. The *Ordo Romanus* 35 said those who, being only deacons when they were ordained bishops, had to receive the anointing of the hands. If the candidate for episcopal ordination was already a priest, the anointing of the hands was omitted.⁴⁷ Of 15 popes of the 8th and 9th centuries of whom we possess biographies with detailed data of their lives, six were deacons when they were directly ordained bishops, and nine were priests before their episcopal ordination.

b) The Presentation of the Gospel Book

The new formula which goes with the "traditio Evangelii" is shorter and simpler than the old text. It has been influenced by 2 Tim 2,4, a text also mentioned in the model allocution above: "Proclaim the word . . . be unfailing in patience and in teaching."

Receive the Gospel and preach the word of God with all the patience that the work of teaching requires.

c) Investiture: Ring, Mitre and Staff

The insignia should be blessed before hand, so as not to prolong unduly the celebration. The text accompanying the handing over of the episcopal ring is basically the same as before; only slight alterations have been introduced.

Take this ring as a seal of faith. Keeping faith, guard and protect holy Church which is the Bride of God.

The mitre is handed over without any explaining word. We find here the same kind of change as in the ordination of presbyters where

⁴⁷ M. Andrieu, *Les Ordines romani du haut moyen-âge*. Vol. IV, p. 45, n. 69: "Hac expleta (= ordination prayer) consecrat ei manus si nondum habuerit eas consecratas..."

the investiture (stole and chasuble) is now performed without any explaining word.

The gloves are not mentioned at all in the new ordination rite, nor is any blessing formula provided for them. The Instruction on the Simplification of the pontifical Rites made their use optional.⁴⁸ It seems they are on their way out, together with the pontifical shoes and "caligae".

The staff is now seen as a symbol of the shepherd's office. The new text takes up the admonition of St. Paul to the elders of the church of Ephesus, when he saw them for the last time (Acts 20, 28).

Take the staff as a sign of the shepherd's office, and watch over all the flock to which the Holy Spirit has assigned you as bishop to govern the Church of God.

7. The Seating of the Bishop

Immediately after the investiture the new bishop is led, if the ordination took place in the cathedral of the newly-ordained, to the *cathedra episcopalis*. In line with the Instruction on the Simplification of the Pontifical Rites the new rite tries to avoid the appearance of an enthronisation. The official seat of the bishop is not a throne but a cathedra.⁴⁹ Consequently, the baldachin has to disappear. Only reasons of art may keep it in the one or other place. The number of steps leading to the cathedra should only ensure good visibility to the whole congregation assembled in the cathedral, so that the bishop really appears as presiding over the whole congregation. This, however, is not the case if the cathedra has its place at one of the side walls of the sanctuary and faces the other side wall. It should face the congregation.

There can only be *one* cathedra episcopalis in a diocese. In functions, therefore, which are attended by a number of bishops, archbishops and cardinals, these prelates should be given other seats which, however, have to avoid the appearance of a cathedra.⁵⁰

If the ordination took place at the cathedra, the principal consecrator simply vacates the seat which he occupied until this moment and

⁴⁸ Ibid., n. 10

⁴⁹ Ibid., n. 11-13.

invites the new bishop to occupy it. He himself takes his place at the right of the new bishop. If the episcopal ordination took place in another church or diocese, or in the case of an auxiliary, bishop, the main consecrator invites the newly-ordained to take the place of honor at his right side.

8. Kiss of Peace

The new bishop gives then the pastoral staff to one of the servers and receives the fraternal kiss of peace from the main consecrator and subsequently from all other bishops present. This marks the end of the ordination rites in the strict sense. The kiss of peace symbolizes the reception of the new bishop into the communion of the order of bishops; now he is their colleague.

After the presentation of the staff and until the end of the ordination rites the following antiphon may be sung:

Go into the world, alleluja, and teach all people, alleluja.

This antiphon is to be repeated after every two verses of Ps. 95. The Gloria Patri is not said. The psalm is interrupted and the antiphon repeated when all have given the kiss of peace to one another. A suitable hymn in the vernacular can take the place of the antiphon and psalm.

IV. The Eucharistic Celebration

There is no offertory procession. Consequently, the practice to offer candles, two loaves of bread and two little barrels of wine has been abolished. From the offertory on the Mass proceeds as any other celebrated pontifical Mass. Any one of the Eucharistic Prayers may be used. In case one chooses the first one (the Roman Canon) the proper *Hanc igitur* is to be said:

Father, accept this offering from your whole family and for the one chosen for the order of bishops. Protect the gifts you have given him and let him yield a harvest worthy of you.

(Through Christ our Lord. Amen.)

At the conclusion, of the postcommunion the Hymn *Te Deum* or another suitable hymn is sung in the vernacular. Meanwhile the new

bishop is led by the two co-consecrators through the church and blesses the congregation.

After this rite the new bishop may stand either before the altar or at his seat, with mitre and staff, and address the people briefly. This should not be omitted if he has been consecrated in his own cathedral. He has here the opportunity to address for the first time the members of the flock entrusted to his care by the Lord.

In the course of the present reform of the liturgy attempts have been made to revive the ancient form of blessing which uses for the various occasions (feasts, liturgical seasons) different formulas, and not the stereotype form which we use today. For the ordination Mass of a bishop this type of blessing is found for the first time. If the newly ordained bishop was the main celebrant of the ordination Mass he may use the following formula:

Lord God, you care for your people with kindness; you rule them with love. Give your Spirit of Wisdom to these whom you have made teachers and pastors. By advancing in holiness may the flock become their eternal joy.

All answer: Amen.

In your power you allot us the number of our days and the measure of years. Look favorably upon the service we humbly perform, and give perfect, lasting peace in our time.

All answer: Amen.

May those you have raised to the order of bishops please you in the performance of their office. May the clergy and people come to love them affectionately, so that the shepherd may not be without the support of the flock, or the flock without the loving concern of its shepherd.

All answer: Amen.

To the foregoing he may add:

May the blessing of almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, descend upon you and remain with you for ever.

All: Amen.

But if the principal consecrator was also the main celebrant of the ordination Mass, he gives this solemn blessing, using the subsequent formula. If he wants, he may also use the usual pontifical blessing formula.

May the Lord bless and keep you, just as he chose, to set you as bishop over his people. May you know happiness in this present life and share unending joy.

All answer: Amen.

He has freely gathered together both clergy and people. By his care and your stewardship may they be governed happily for many years.

All answer: Amen.

May they follow the Lord's commands and be free from hardships, enjoy every good thing and assist you in your ministry with faith. May they be blessed with peace and calm in this life, and come to share with you in the fellowship of the citizens of heaven.

All answer: Amen.

Then the principal celebrant may add (but may also omit):
May the blessing of almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit descend upon you and remain with you for ever.

All then leave in procession.
