



DOCUMENTATION

CONSTITUTION ON REVISION OF ORDINATION RITES

Following is a translation of *Pontificalis Romani*, the Apostolic constitution issued on June 18 in which the revision of the rites of ordination and conservation were announced.

The Second Vatican Council prescribed the revision of the Roman Pontifical not only in a general way¹ but also with special indications which lay down the reform of the Rite of Ordinations in the ceremonies as well as in the texts².

Among the rites of Ordination, those must be considered above all which through the conferral of the sacrament of the Orders in the various grades, constitute the sacred Hierarchy: "The divinely established ecclesiastical ministry is exercised on different levels by those who from antiquity have been called bishops, priests and deacons"³.

In the revision of the rites of sacred Ordinations, in addition to the general principles of the Second Vatican Council for the general revision of liturgy, the admirable teaching must be kept in mind on the nature and the effects of the Order, affirmed by the Council itself in the Constitution on the Church. This teaching must be expressed by liturgy in the manner which is its own; indeed "both texts and rites should be drawn up so that they express more clearly the holy things which they signify. Christian people, as far as possible, should be able to understand them with ease and to take part in them fully, actively and as befits a community"⁴.

The sacred council teaches, in fact, that "by episcopal consecration there is conferred the fullness of the sacrament of orders, that fullness which in the Church's liturgical practice and in the language of the holy Fathers of the Church is undoubtedly called the high priesthood, the apex of the sacred ministry.

“But episcopal consecration, together with the office of sanctifying, also confers the office of teaching and of governing. (These however, of their very nature, can be exercised only in hierarchical communion with the head and the members of the college). For from tradition, which is expressed especially in liturgical rites and in the practice of the Church both of the East and of the West, it is clear that, by means of the imposition of the hands and the words of consecration, the grace of the Holy Spirit is so conferred, and the sacred character so impressed, that bishops in an eminent and visible way undertake Christ’s own role as Teacher, Shepherd and High Priest, and that they act in His person”.

To these words many other excellent points of doctrine are to be added on the apostolic succession of the bishops and on their offices and duties which, although they are contained in the rite of the episcopal Consecration, appear as if they should be expressed better and with greater precision. For this purpose it seemed fitting to draw from ancient founts the prayer of consecration which is found in the so-called “*Traditio apostolica*” by St. Hyppolitus, written at the beginning of the third century, most of which is retained, even in our days, in the Ordination liturgy of the Copts and of the Syrian-Eastern Church. Thus, in the very moment of Ordination the convergence of the Eastern and of the Western tradition regarding the apostolic office of the bishops is affirmed.

Among matters treated at the second Vatican Council regarding priests, we recall this above all; “Although priests do not possess the highest degree of the priesthood, and although they are dependent on the bishops in the exercise of their power, they are nevertheless united with the bishops in sacerdotal dignity. By the power of the sacrament of orders and in the image of Christ the eternal High Priest (Heb. 5:1; 7:24; 1:11-28), they are consecrated to preach the Gospel, shepherd the faithful and celebrate divine worship as true priests of the New Testament”⁶. It is stated further: “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 priestly ordination in accordance with the rite of the Roman Pontifical, the mission and the grace of priesthood as the cooperator of the episcopal order were very clearly expressed. It seemed necessary, however, to give greater unity to the entire rite, and to give greater prominence to the central nucleus of Ordination, that is to say, the imposition of the hands and the consecration prayer.

As regards the deacons, lastly, in addition to what is stated in our *Motu Proprio* of June 18, 1967, the words of the "Lumen Gentium" Constitution must be remembered above all: "At a lower level of the hierarchy are the deacons upon whom hands are imposed" not unto the priesthood, but unto a ministry of service (*Constitutiones Ecclesiae Aegypiacae*, III, 2). For, strengthened by sacramental grace, in communion with the bishop and his group of priests, they serve the People of God in the ministry of the Liturgy, of the world and of charity"⁸.

In the rite of the Ordination of deacons, there was little to be changed, in consideration of the new legislation of the diaconate as a separate and permanent grade of the hierarchy in the Latin Church and of the greater clarity and simplicity of the rite.

Moreover, among the documents of the supreme magisterium of the sacred Orders particular mention is due to the Apostolic Constitution "Sacramentum Ordinis" of our predecessor Pius XII, published on November 30, 1947, in which it is declared that "the essential matter of the sacred Orders of the diaconate, of priesthood and of the episcopate is the imposition of hands and the single form are the words which determine the application of this matter and which clearly express the sacramental effects, that is to say, the power of Orders and used by the Church". After this premise, the same document establishes which imposition of hands and which words constitute the matter and the form of each Order.

Since in the revision of the rite it has been necessary to add, remove or alter something, either in order to restore faithfulness to the most ancient documents to the texts, or to make the expressions clearer or yet to express better the effect of the sacraments it is necessary in order to avoid any controversy or reasons for the disturbance of consciences, to declare which parts of the reformed rite are to be regarded as essential.

Therefore, by our supreme apostolic authority, we decide and establish the following regarding the matter and the form of each Order.

The matter of the Ordination of the deacons is the imposition of hands of the bishop, made in silence to each of those to be ordained, before the consecratory prayer. The form is constituted by the same consecratory prayer, of which the essential words—and therefore required for validity—are: “Emitte in eos, Domine, quaesumus, Spiritum Sanctum, quo in opus ministerii fideliter exsequendi munere septiformis tuae gratiae roborentur.”

Likewise, the matter of the ordination of priests is the imposition of hands made in silence by the bishop to each of those to be ordained before the consecratory prayer. The form is constituted by the same consecratory prayer, of which the essential words, and therefore required for validity, are: “Da, quaesumus, omnipotens Pater, his famulis tuis Presbyterii dignitatem; innova in visceribus eorum Spiritum sanctitatis; acceptum a te, Deus secundi meriti munis obtineant, cencensuramque morum exemplo suae conversationis insinuent.”

Finally, the matter of the Ordination of the bishop is the imposition of hands on the head of the bishop-elect, made in silence by the consecrating bishops, or at least principal consecrator, before the consecratory prayer. The form is constituted by the words of the same consecratory prayer, of which the essential, and therefore required for validity, is: “Et nunc effunde super hunc Effectum eam virtutem, quae a te est, Spiritum principalem, quem dedisti dilecto Filio Tuo Jesu Christo, quem Ipse donavit sanctis Apostolis, qui constituerunt Ecclesiam per singula loca, ut sanctuarium tuum, in gloriam et laudem indeficientem nominis tui.”

Therefore, the rite for the conferral of the sacred Orders of the diaconate, of priesthood and of the episcopate revised by the “*Consilium ad Exsequendam Constitutione de Sacra Liturgia*” “with the help of competent persons and with the advice of the bishops of various parts of the world”¹⁰, is approved by us with our apostolic authority and establish that it henceforth be used in the administration of these orders instead of the one contained in the Roman Pontifical.

What we have here established and ordered we wish to remain valid and effective now and in the future notwithstanding anything that may be contrary in the Constitutions and in the Apostolic Regulations of our predecessors and in other statutes, however worthy of particular mention and derogation.

Given in Rome, at St. Peter, on June 18, 1968, the fifth year of our Pontificate.



Notes on the Apostolic Constitution "Pontificalis Romani"

1. II Vat. Council, Const. "Sacrosanctum Concilium," n. 25, A.A.S. 56, p. 10.
2. -ibid- n. 76, p. 119.
3. II Vat. Council, Dogmatic Const. "Lumen Gentium" n. 26, A.A.S. 57, 1965, p. 33-34.
4. II Vat. Council, Const. "Sacrosanctum Concilium," n. 21 A.A.S. 19-64, p. 106.
5. II Vat. Council, Dogmatic Const. "De Ecclesia, Lumen Gentium" n. 21, A.A.S. 57, 1965, p. 25.
6. -ibid- n 28, A.A.S. 57, 1965, p. 34.
7. II Vat. Council, Decree De Presbyterorum vita et ministerio, "Presbyterorum Ordinis" n. 1, A.A.S. 58, 1966, p. 991.
8. II Vat. Council, "Lumen Gentium," n. 29, A.A.S. 57, 1965, p. 36.
9. A.A.S. 40, 1948, p. 6.
10. II Vat. Council, Constitution de sacra Liturgia "Sacrosanctum Concilium" n. 25, A.A.S. 56, 1964, p. 107.