

DOCTRINAL SECTION

THE REFORMED ORDINATION RITE FOR PRESBYTERS

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I. Introduction

The general rubrics for all three major orders are basically the same, so that, in view of the remarks on the ordination rite for deacons, they must not be repeated. Only some further clarifications are here added, where this seems necessary.

In order to get as many people as possible to attend the ordination rites for the presbyterate, the bishop may — especially if there are only a few ordinands — confer the ordination in the home parish of one of them, as is now done in many parts of the world, and also occasionally in this country.

The ordination Mass should be a concelebrated Mass of the newly ordained with the officiating prelate. It is to be recommended that the bishop invite to the ordination Mass also older priests as concelebrants. "All priests, together with bishops, so share in one and the same priesthood and ministry of Christ, that the very unity of their consecration and mission requires their hierarchical communion with the order of bishops. At times they express their communion in a most excellent manner by liturgical concelebration."¹ There is no better occasion for this concelebration with the bishop as main celebrant than the ordination Mass, when the newly ordained have just been given a share in the priesthood of Christ which the older priests and their ordaining bishop already possess.

The older concelebrating priests are, according to the new ordination rite, given additional functions in the course of this celebration,

¹ Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, art. 7.

which, together with their participation in the ordination Mass are manifestations that the newly ordained are received into a sacramental brotherhood, the order of presbyters: "Established in the priestly order by ordination, all priests are united among themselves in an intimate sacramental brotherhood. In a special way they form one presbytery in a diocese to whose service they are committed under their own bishop."²

In the case of the participation of other priests in the ordination Mass, the newly ordained should receive some place of honor in this Mass, wherein they have been ordained and exercise for the first time their priestly functions. One could think of the places next to the bishop during the Mass. The older priests could also assist at this Mass in alb and stole only. This will be the normal solution if the number of these priests will be so great, that the chasubles available might not be sufficient. The permission granted by the second post-conciliar Instruction on the Liturgy "Tres abhinc annos" of May 4, 1967, n.27 could be applied in this situation.

II. *The Liturgy of the Word*

The bishop enters the church, fully vested for Mass, flanked by two deacons or priests. In this procession the older concelebrating priests take the place immediately in front of the bishop. They are preceded by the ordinands, who are vested, as until now in alb and diaconal stole. The rubric which ordered them to carry their chasuble over their arm has disappeared, so that the chasubles can be prepared on a table in the sanctuary of the church. This will prevent distraction of the candidates during the ordination rite. In front of the candidates for ordination goes the subdeacon carrying the Gospel book which is to be placed in the center of the altar after the bishop kissed the altar and the book after the beginning of the Mass.

The first part of the ordination Mass follows the normal rubrics. One is free to choose from among the lessons found in the Appendix of the new Pontifical where there are 31 pericopes for ordination Masses: 4 from the Old Testament for the first reading, 14 from the New

² Ibid., art. 8.

Testament for the second reading and 13 for the Gospel, an indication that for these occasions the three-reading system is to be adopted. This conclusion seems to be supported by the fact that we find in the same Appendix eight responsorial psalms to be sung or recited after the first reading and four Alleluia verses to be sung before the Gospel. It is obvious, however, that this practice cannot be introduced before the so-called "Missa normativa" has been made public and obligatory.

As texts recommended for the ordination of presbyters the Appendix offers Num. 11, 11b—12. 14—17. 24—25a; Is 61, 1—3a and Acts 20, 17—18a. 28—32. 36. This however, is a recommendation, not an obligation; one may freely retain the lessons of the Mass of the day if they are suited to the occasion.

In all ordination Masses the Credo and the Prayer of the Faithful are omitted. The bishop's allocution during the ordination rite serves as the homily of the Mass.

III. *The Ordination Rites*

1. Presentation and Election of the Candidates

No bans are to be announced at the beginning of the ordination rites. Also the permission of the local ordinary for another bishop to ordain within the territory of his jurisdiction must not be read before the people. These are matters which affect the conscience of the ordaining bishop and should not be brought to the attention of the Christian people. — After the Gospel the bishop sits down with his mitre on. One of the assisting deacons (or priests) calls the ordinandi:

Let those who are to be ordained priests come forward.

He calls them subsequently with their names, and each one answers:

Present (Adsum)

Each candidate comes forward and makes his reverence before the bishop, which, since Sept. 8, 1968 is never to be genuflection, but a bow of the body, both during and outside liturgical functions.³ When all

³ Cf. Instruction "Pontificales ritus" of June 21, 1968, n. 25.

have taken their place before the bishop, the priest, to whom the bishop has entrusted this task,¹ presents them to the bishop, saying:

Most Reverend Father, our holy mother the Church asks, that you ordain these our brothers for the office of presbyter.

The bishop asks:

Do you know them to be worthy?

The priest says:

The Christian people have been asked. Those who were in charge of these candidates gave a favorable vote. So I do attest that they have been found worthy.

Before the whole assembly of the Christian people the bishop then proclaims his election of the candidates, saying:

With the help of our Lord God and of our Savior Jesus Christ we choose these our brothers for the order of presbyters.

All present answer:

Thanks be to God.

They give in this way their consent to the bishop's election. Other modes to show their consent may be introduced here in accordance with a remark of the rubrics. One should take into account the cultural, respectively the sociological situation.

2. The Allocution of the Bishop

Now all sit down and the bishop addresses both the people and the candidates, speaking on the ministry of priests. The New Pontifical offers a model allocution, but the bishop may also address the congregation with his own words and thoughts.

Dear brothers and sisters! These our sons, members of your families and your friends are now to be ordained priests. This is an important position in the Church to which they are being raised.

¹ Most reasonably the rector of the major seminary, or someone else of the seminary staff, who was in a responsible position for the training and education of the future priests.

It is true, the entire holy People of God is a royal priesthood in Christ. But our High Priest, Jesus Christ, elected some of his disciples to exercise a public priestly office in behalf of men in the Church and perform it in His name. Because He, sent by the Father, in turn sent His apostles into the world. He desired to discharge continuously His Office of Teacher, High Priest and Shepherd through them and the bishops who are their successors. The presbyters have been established as co-workers of the bishops. United with them in the priestly office, they are called to serve the people of God.

These our brothers, after mature deliberation and sincere reflection want now to be ordained to the priesthood in the order of presbyters. They are to assist Christ the Teacher, Priest and Shepherd. By their service, Christ's Body, that is, the Church, is to be built up and to grow into the People of God, into a Holy Temple.⁵

They have to mold themselves according to Christ the High and Eternal Priest. They are called to share in the priesthood of the bishops. They are to be ordained as true priests of the New Testament to preach the Gospel, to feed the People of God and to celebrate the liturgy, especially in the Lord's sacrifice.

But you, my beloved sons, who are to be ordained priests, perform the sacred task to teach in Christ, the Teacher to the best of your ability. It is your duty to proclaim to others the word of God which you received in joy.⁶ Reflect on the law of God; believe what you there read; teach what you believe and put your teaching into practice.⁷

Let your teaching be a nourishment of the People of God. May the impact of your lives bring joy to Christ's faithful. By your word and example build up the house, that is the Church of God.⁸

To you is also entrusted the task of sanctifying in Christ. By your ministry the spiritual sacrifice⁹ of the faithful is to be brought to perfection. It is to be joined to the sacrifice of Christ which will be offered by your hands upon the altar in an unbloody way in the celebration of the sacred mysteries. Realize, therefore, what you are doing:

⁵ Cf. Eph 2, 21.

⁶ Cf. 1 Thess 1,6.

⁷ Cf. the oration "Deus sanctificationum auctor", in the former ordination rite for priests. The source is the Gelasian Sacramentary: *Liber Sacramentorum Romanae Ecclesiae* (ed. I. C. Mohlberg, Rome 1960) n. 148.— In future quoted as "Gel" with its number.

⁸ This paragraph is basically found in the admonition of the old rite: "Sit doctrina... familiam Dei."

⁹ Cf. 1 Pt 2,5.

model yourself on what you handle. As you celebrate the mystery of the Lord's death and resurrection, see to it that your bodies are wholly dead to every vice, and that you walk in the newness of life.¹⁰

When you add members to the People of God in Baptism, when you forgive sins in the name of Christ and of His Church in the Sacrament of Penance, when you help the sick by Holy Anointing when you celebrate the liturgical rites, when you say the Breviary during the hours of the day and thereby offer praise, thanksgiving and petitions not only for the People of God, but also for the whole world, then keep always in mind, that "you are chosen from among men, that you have been appointed to act in behalf of men in relation to God."¹¹ Fulfill, therefore, in constant joy, the task of Christ the Priest in true charity. Do not look after your own interests, but after those of Jesus Christ.¹²

Finally, you have to discharge the function of Christ the Head and Shepherd according to your ability. Therefore, my beloved sons, united to the bishop and obedient to him, bring the faithful together into one community, so that you can lead them through Christ in the Holy Spirit to God the Father. Have always before your eyes the example of the Good Shepherd, who did not come to be served but to serve. He came to seek and to save what had been lost.¹³

Looking closer at this beautiful text we observe once again how strongly the decrees of Vatican II influenced the words of this allocution, which is to be a model. If a bishop chooses to address the people and especially the candidates on this occasion with his own words, he knows where to look for authentic thoughts on the priestly ministry and life. The Decree of Vatican II with the same title has its dogmatic basis in the Constitution on the Church. It is interesting to note how article 28 of the Constitution "Lumen gentium" gave part of its thoughts and even words to the episcopal allocution.

Allocution

Christo summo et aeterno
Sacerdoti configurandi,
Sacerdotio Episcoporum coniun-
gendi, in veros Novi Testamenti

"Lumen gentium" art. 28

... cum eis
(Episcopis) tamen sacerdotali honore
coniuncti sunt, et vi sacramenti
Ordinis, ad imaginem

¹⁰ Cf. Rom 6,4.—The whole passage from "Realize" on is taken, with some modifications from the former admonition.

¹¹ Hb 5,1.

¹² Cf. Phil 2,21.

¹³ Cf. Mt 20,28 and 18,11.

sacerdotes consecrabuntur ad Evangelium praedicandum, populum Dei pascendum cultumque divinum in dominico praesertim sacrificio celebrandum.

Christi, summi atque aeterni Sacerdotis, ad Evangelium praedicandum fidelesque pascendos et ad divinum cultum celebrandum consecrantur, ut veri sacerdotes Novi Testamenti.

Very extensive are the borrowings of the text of the Latin allocution from the Decree on the priestly Ministry and Life, where the following texts are only examples, but striking ones, and do not make any claim on completeness.

Allocution

... ut Christo Magistro, Sacerdoti et Pastori inserviant, cuius ministerio corpus eius, id est Ecclesia, in populum Dei, in templum sanctum aedificatur et crescit.

"Presbyterorum Ordinis," n. 1

... ad inserviendum Christo Magistro Sacerdoti et Regi, cuius participant ministerium, quo Ecclesia in Populum Dei, Corpus Christi et Templum Spiritus Sancti, hic in terris, indesinenter aedificatur.

Baptismo homines Dei populo aggregantes, Poenitentiae sacramento peccata in nomine Christi et Ecclesiae dimittentes, oleo sancto infirmos sublevantes, ... laudes cum gratiarum actione et precibus per horas diei offerentes non tantum pro populo Dei, sed et pro mundo universo...

Ibid., n. 5 and 6.

Baptismate quidem nomines in Populum Dei introducunt; Sacramento Poenitentiae peccatores cum Deo et Ecclesia reconciliant; oleo infirmorum aegrotantes alleviant... laudes et gratiarum actiones quas adhibent... ipsi Presbyteri ad diversas horas diei dilatant in Divino persolvendo Officio, ... pro toto populo sibi commisso, immo pro universo mundo...

Munere denique Christi Capitis et Pastoris pro vestra parte fungentes, ... Episcopo iuncti et subditi, fideles in unam familiam adunare studete, ut eos per Christum in Spiritu Sancto ad Deum Patrem adducere valeatis.

Munus Christi Capitis et Pastoris pro sua parte auctoritatis exercentes, Presbyteri, nomine Episcopi, familiam Dei, ut fraternitatem in unum animatam colligunt, et per Christum in Spiritu ad Deum Patrem adducunt.

3. Examination

In the examination or scrutiny the candidates manifest their willingness to become priests with all the obligations and demands inherent in their calling. The bishop addresses the candidates:

Beloved sons, before you are ordained priests, you must openly declare before the people that you are willing to receive this office.

Are you willing to fulfil without fail the priestly ministry in the rank of presbyters, as trusted co-workers of the order of bishops by tending the flock of the Lord¹⁴ under the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

After each question they answer together:

Yes, I am willing.

Are you willing to celebrate the mysteries of Christ faithfully and religiously to the glory of God and the sanctification of the Christian people, in accordance with the Tradition of the Church?

The candidates say:

Yes, I am willing.

Are you willing to exercise the ministry of the word worthily and with prudence by preaching the Gospel and explaining the Catholic faith?

The candidates say:

Yes, I am willing

Are you willing to unite yourselves more closely from day to day to Christ the High Priest who offered Himself for us to the Father as a spotless sacrifice, and to consecrate yourselves with Him to God for the salvation of men?

The candidates say:

Yes, I am willing, with the help of God

¹⁴ Cf. 1 Pt 5, 2.

4. Promise of Reverence and Obedience

Each candidate then approaches the bishop and kneels down before him. He places his joined hands between the hands of the bishop. According to the cultural and sociological conditions of the place, also other rites may be employed for these promises which indicate that the relationship of priest and bishop is not of the kind that exists between an employer and his employee, but is analogous to that of God the Father to His Son, the Word Incarnate. Christ was always ready, not to do his own will, but the will of Him who had sent Him. In love of God and their fellowmen the candidates embrace obedience. They know that "the priestly ministry is the ministry of the Church herself which can be discharged only by hierarchical communion with the whole body. Therefore, pastoral love demands that acting in this communion, priests dedicate their own wills through obedience to the service of God and their brothers. This love requires that they accept and carry out in a spirit of faith whatever is commanded or recommended by the Sovereign Pontiff, their own bishop, or other superiors."¹⁵

To the question of the bishop

Do you promise me and my successors reverence and obedience? the candidate answers

I do!

If the bishop is not the candidate's own Ordinary, he asks: "Do you promise your Ordinary obedience and reverence?" Acknowledging the promise the bishop says:

God, who began the good work in you, will also bring it to perfection.

5. The Great Litany

As Fr. Bughini, C.M., the secretary of the Roman Consilium for the implementation of the Constitution on the sacred liturgy wrote, this abbreviated form of the Litany of All Saints is to be used in future not only for ordination rites, but also for all consecrations and solemn blessings, as e.g., the blessing of an abbot and the consecration of a church.¹⁶

¹⁵ Decree on Priestly Ministry and Life, art. 15.

¹⁶ L'Osservatore Romano, Dec. 7, 1968, p. 2.

Also in these cases certain additions may be made, not only by adding the names of more Saints, but also by inserting special intentions in the second and third section of the Litany. The general principle for the "Prayers of the Faithful" that some additional intentions may be added according to the particular needs of the place and the time, has here been extended also to the so-called Great Litany.

a) Invitation to Prayer

The bishop introduces the Litany with an invitatory. Standing, without mitre, with hands joined he says or sings, facing the congregation:

Dearly beloved brothers and sisters, let us pray to God the Father Almighty, to shower his heavenly gifts on these his servants, whom he has chosen for the office of priests.

This is an ancient Roman prayer formula, which can be found already in the Gelasian Sacramentary (GeV 143).

b) The Litany

After this invitation all kneel down, ordered to do so by the deacon with the word:

Let us kneel.

The bishop remains kneeling until the end of the Litany, not interrupting the prayer by a special blessing. At the end he alone rises and concludes this bidding prayer with a formula which, with only minor changes, is the prayer "Exaudi nos" of the former ordination rite, again of ancient Roman origin (GeV 144).

c) Concluding Prayer

Hear and heed our prayer, we ask you, Lord our God, and pour out on these your servants the blessings of the Holy Spirit and the strength of priestly grace. May those whom we now present to your fatherly love for ordination continually enjoy the abundance of your gifts, through Christ our Lord.

The congregation answers with

Amen.

and, ordered by the deacon to do so, rises.

6. Ordination Proper

In his Apostolic Constitution "Pontificalis Romani recognitio" of June 18, 1868, Pope Paul VI re-affirmed again the statement of Pius XII that "in the ordination of presbyters, the matter is the imposition of the hands of the bishop, which takes place in silence over each one of those to be ordained, before the prayer of ordination. The form consists in the words of the same prayer of consecration, of which the following pertain to the essence of the rite, and hence are required for validity: "We ask you, all-powerful Father give these servants of yours the dignity of the presbyterate. Renew the Spirit of holiness within them. By your divine gift may they attain the second order in the hierarchy and exemplify right conduct in their lives."¹

After the bishop all priests present place their hands also on the head of each one of the elect. These con-celebrating priests take then their place at the right and the left of the bishop and remain there until the end of the ordination prayer. With his hands extended the bishop then pronounces the prayer of ordination which he begins without the former introduction, which marks in the future exclusively the beginning of the Eucharistic Prayer in Mass. The ordination prayer is the one, known from the former ordination rite. Only few changes have been introduced, which, with the exception of the last passage, amount to the restoration of the original text.

The more important changes will be indicated in the footnotes.

Be ready to assist us, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God. You are the source of all honors, the author of all dignities. From you come all growth and strength, all that by an ordered progression develops rational natures to fuller excellence. Thus the priestly orders and the functions of the Levites, established with symbolical rites increased, when you chose men of lesser degree and lower rank to be the associates and helpers of the high priests whom you appointed to rule the people.

Thus in the desert through seventy prudent men you spread abroad the spirit of Moses, and with their aid he was able to rule the vast multitude

without difficulty. So too you rightly endowed the sons of Aaron¹⁷ from their father's plenty, in order that the priestly merit¹⁸ should not lack means to offer sacrifices for the people's welfare, and perform the sacred rites more frequently. This same providence of yours, O Lord, provided teachers of the faith as companions of your Son's apostles, who, aided by these preachers of second rank¹⁹ spread the good tidings all over the world.

We beg you, Lord, grant support also to our weakness; our need is the greater, because our strength is so much less.

We ask you, all-powerful Father, give these servants of yours the dignity of the presbyterate. Renew the Spirit of holiness within them. By your divine gift may they attain the second order in the hierarchy and exemplify right conduct in their lives.

May they be excellent co-workers of the order of bishops,²⁰ so that the words of the Gospel may reach to the end of the earth, and the fullness of nations²¹ assembled by Christ, may be converted into one holy People of God.

Through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

All answer:

Amen.

7. Investiture and Anointing of the Hands

After the ordination prayer the older priests return to their places in the sanctuary of the church and the bishop sits down with his mitre on. The newly ordained rise and approach the older priests who arrange first the stoles of the new priests in the form of a cross and then place the chasuble on each of them saying nothing. With this an ancient

¹⁷ Their names have been omitted in accordance with ancient Roman sources.

¹⁸ The sources read "meritum" and not as the old rite had "ministerium."

¹⁹ B. Botte had proposed "praedicatoribus" instead of "praedicationibus." Cf. Holy Orders in the Ordination Prayers, in: The Sacrament of Holy Orders, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville (1962) p. 9, n. 1.—The Council documents still hesitated whether to adopt "praedicatoribus" or leave "praedicationibus." Cf. the official Latin edition of the Decree on the Priestly Ministry and Life, art. 4, footnote 5.—The English translation of Abbott omits this reference.

²⁰ The subsequent part of this paragraph is a new formulation.

²¹ Cf. Rom II, 25.

Roman custom has been re-introduced; it is a new sign of the "Romanization" of the ordination rites which we found already when we analyzed the ordination rite for deacons. But the rite is meaningful. This investiture of the new priests by their older fellow priests is a beautiful sign of the acceptance of the newly ordained into the brotherhood of the presbyterate.

In the meantime the bishop takes the linen gremial, the only one that has been retained by the Instruction "Pontificales ritus" of June 18, 1968, n. 16,b. The bishop anoints the hands of the new priests who kneel before him. He uses Chrism, not "oleum catechumenorum." Thereby he says:

The Lord Jesus Christ whom the Father anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power²² may protect you for the sanctification of the Christian people and the offering of the sacrifice to God.

Though the text of the old rite, which accompanied the anointing of the hands was beautiful, it was misleading. It asked to consecrate and sanctify the hands of the newly-ordained by the anointing so "that whatever they consecrate may be consecrated and sanctified." The power to bless and consecrate is not given by the anointing with material oil; it is given in the very ordination to the presbyterate. The anointing of the hands only manifests and further clarifies the powers that have been given in the sacramental rite of the ordination.

During the investiture and the anointing of the hands one may sing either the "Veni creator" (not to be begun by the bishop), or Ps 110 (109) with the antiphon.

Christ, the Lord, High Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech, offered bread and wine.

or any other suitable song in the vernacular. — After the anointing the bishop as well as the new priests wash their hands.

8. Presentation of the Gifts

While the preceding ceremonies are being performed, one of the assisting deacons (or priests) of the bishop prepares the bread on the

²² Cf. Acts 10, 38.

paten and the wine and water in the chalice for the celebration of Mass. That means that he places a sufficient number of hosts on the paten and prepares the chalice for the Mass. He may do this either at the altar or at the credence table. He brings the paten and chalice to the bishop, who presents them to each of the neopresbyters, as he kneels before the bishop. In doing so the bishop says:

Receive the gifts of the People of God, to be offered to the Lord. Realize what you will be doing. Model yourself on what you are to handle, and conform your life to the mystery of the Lord's Cross.

This beautiful text, in its second part formerly belonging to the episcopal admonition before the ordination, acquires here a new and deeper meaning. The former words which accompanied the handing over of the chalice and paten in the old rite led to a wrong understanding: "Receive the power to offer sacrifice to God and to celebrate Mass . . . "They created the impression that they gave, together with the presentation of the "instruments" the new priest the power to offer holy Mass. This was lastly the reason why in the Middle Ages theologians were led to the opinion that the "traditio instrumentorum" was at least part of the essential rite.

9. Kiss of Peace

The bishop gives then to each of the new priests the kiss of peace. He greets in them "sons and friends."²³ He greets in them brothers and friends "on account of the communion in the same priesthood and ministry."²⁴ He greets in them "necessary helpers and counselors in the ministry and in the task of teaching, sanctifying and nourishing the People of God."²⁵

Also the other priests present may, with the kiss of peace or a similar rite, show that they welcome the newly-ordained as their fellow priests "in virtue of an intimate sacramental brotherhood."²⁶

²³ Const. on the Church, art. 28

²⁴ Decree on priestly Ministry and Life, art. 7.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., n. 8.

During these rites Ps 99 "Iubilate Deo omnis terra" may be sung with the antiphon.

You are my friends, says the Lord, if you do what I command you.

This antiphon is repeated after every two verses. As usual in these rites the Gloria Patri is not said at the end of the psalm. The latter is interrupted and the antiphon repeated when all have received the kiss of peace. The psalm however, remains, optional. Any other suitable hymn may be sung in its stead, or also the venerable "Iam non dicam vos servos" of the former ordination rites.

IV. The Eucharistic Celebration

From the offertory on all priests present, the neopresbyters as well as the older priests, concelebrate with the ordaining prelate. Since paten and chalice have been prepared for holy Mass, the bishop starts right away with the prayers prescribed for offertory (or with the rites prescribed according to the "Missa normativa" as soon as it is published). Consequently, there is no offertory procession of the newly ordained with their candles or gifts. If the first Eucharistic Prayer (Roman Canon) is used during this Mass, a special *Hanc igitur* is prescribed for this occasion:

Father, accept this offering from your whole family and from the ones chosen for the order of priest. Protect the gifts you have given them, and let them yield a harvest worthy of you. (Through Christ our Lord.)

During the distribution of holy Communion to the faithful the new priests should assist the bishop. There are no special rites to be held after holy Communion and at the end of the Mass. No "power" to forgive sins is handed over, no profession of faith is made, no imposition of hands is found, nor a special blessing for the newly ordained. They are not given any "penance." Consequently, they have no obligation to say the three holy Masses in honor of the Holy Spirit. Our Lady and for the souls in purgatory.

With the blessing of the bishop and the subsequent "Ite, missa est" of the assisting deacon the ordination Mass comes to an end. All leave the church in procession as they had entered before.